

COMPARING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES
WHO DO AND DO NOT PARTICIPATE IN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS

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Comparing Academic Achievement of African-American Males Who Do
and Do Not Participate in High School Athletics

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Abstract

Thomas V. Montgomery, III. COMPARING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES WHO DO AND DO NOT PARTICIPATE IN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS (Under the direction of Dr. Ellen Lowrie Black) School of Education, April 2010.

This study was conducted to investigate the impact on academic achievement that high school athletics had on African-American male students who participated in high school athletics against African-American male students who did not participate in high school athletics during the 2008-2009 school year. The results were measured by grade point averages (GPAs) and surveys developed by the researcher. The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not African-American males that participated in high school athletics showed higher academic achievement than African-American males that did not participate in high school athletics. The study also assessed attitudes about the relation between academic achievement and sports participation, using survey results from African-American male student-athletes and their parents. The results of this study indicated that high school athletics do not have a significant impact on the academic achievement of African-American males. Results of this study indicated that (a) sports participation can both negatively and positively impact academic achievement and (b) coaches' encouragement should be considered an important resource for influencing the academic aspirations of African-American male student-athletes. Suggestions for continued research are included within this study.

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Nothing I do or say could ever express how deeply in debt I am to the Lord. All that I am, and all that I have achieved in my life, are because He loves me despite my many flaws. God placed extraordinary people in my life to guide my steps. I am humbled by the many blessings that He continues to give me. I am truly very grateful that He has placed His hands on me!

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all the young “brothers” out there who are being raised by a single mother as I was. The road is sometimes tough, but hope is not futile. Keep your faith, trust in God, and you too will be able to “see it through.”

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Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

Many social, economic, and academic problems face the African-American male. Often these problems lead to a grim outlook on life due to racism, frustration, despair, dropping out of school, emotional problems, homosexuality, drug addiction, disease, crime, unemployment, incarceration, or even death. These problems sometimes cause African-American males to lose hope and disconnect with the world (Holzer, 2006). To some, the African-American family continues to be regarded with negative perceptions and is subject to deterioration due to early pregnancies, out-of-wedlock births, and single parent homes that are headed by the mother (Pinkney, 1987; Staples, 1986), youth violence, and poverty. In a 2000 report from the U.S. Census Bureau, 65% of African-American children grew up in a home without a father present in the home (Hirsh, 2009). Battle (2002) is one who believes that there has never been a time more crucial than now to begin to identify some of these circumstances, as well as solutions, that plague the African-American family. There is, however, little debate as to where the solutions to these societal problems need to begin, and that is with the African-American male.

Several studies have examined some of these societal problems that contribute to the plight of the African-American male. Studies have also identified possible approaches and solutions to reduce some of these negative factors that influence the lives of African-American males. If educators are truly ever going to address the educational plight of the African-American male and create significant policy changes that will positively impact the academic achievement of African-American males, a full scope of the social, personal, and emotional experiences of African-American males must come into focus (Dorime & Toldson, 2008). One of the theories previously researched is

whether or not high school athletic participation for African-American males impacts their academic achievement. Davis and Cooper (1934) were the first to report a positive relationship between school sports and academic achievement. Research conducted by Field, Diego, Sanders, Fredricks, and Eccles (2001) suggested that high school athletic participation may be one of the many ways to positively influence the direction that an African-American male may take due to motivation, work ethics, and self-reliance. These and other values associated with sports participation have been considered to be strong factors in producing academic achievement. Earlier, Dexter (1999) examined the relationship between sports performance and academic achievement, and the results from the study indicated a small but significant positive correlation in math and English scores. Trudeau and Shephard (2008) suggested that sports participation is more likely to benefit academics if offered in school. However, the findings from previous similar studies on this topic have been limited, and results were inconclusive due to few studies focusing directly on African-American males and sports. Thus, other researchers suggested that further study may be needed (Din, 2006).

Researchers have conducted many studies over several years as to the potential benefits related to academics and high school athletic participation, but Broh (2002) insists that little empirical evidence exists. Others reported that even though a great deal of investigative research and ongoing debate has taken place, the impact that sports has on academic achievement remains unclear (Miller, Melnick, Barnes, Farrell, & Sabo, 2005). In the educational field, high school athletics is often viewed as a nonessential part of education. Many people believed that participation in athletics interferes with the educational process (Arnett, 2006). Hartman (2008) affirmed that the relationship

between academics and high school sports participation is one of the most discussed topics in sports and society. Research has supported a correlation between high school sports participation and increased academic achievement (Hartman, 2008). However, researchers often were not able to control for the various backgrounds of the participants (i.e., race and gender). In addition, researchers were not able to determine whether the relationship between high school athletics and academic achievement was a causal relation or whether more of the high achieving students were participating in high school athletics (Broh, 2002). Many studies also included sports within the realm of extracurricular activities along with band, art, drama, chorus, chess club, and so forth when conducting studies in this area (Crain, 1981; Holland & Andre, 1987).

There also has been debate as to the negative impact that sports participation has on African-American males. Hoberman (1997) wrote that athleticism, which most African-American males are assumed to value, contributed to overt racism and unconscious assaults on African-American males in society from whites. Hoberman (2000) further suggests that the dreams of many African-American males to achieve stardom through sports have influenced many African-American males to reject educational opportunities. This is due in part to the “over-identification” with African-American athletes, which discourages academics in favor of athletics. According to Steele’s (1997) stereotype threat model, perceptions based on stereotypes may be integrated into the self-concepts of students; therefore the student will identify with the perceived perception. Another component of this theory asserted that students tend to minimize areas in which they believe their identified group has had poor outcomes, such as in the classroom. On the other hand, students value areas in which their group has

traditionally excelled, as in this case, athletics and other physical activities.

One of the major fallacious notions, in respect to African-American males and sports participation, is the assumption that all African-American males view sports in exactly the same manner (Sailes, 1996). Excelling in sports has sometimes been viewed as a so-called escape and a way to overcome obstacles that exist within the African-American community. The socioeconomic status of African-American families has been shown to have its influence on African-American males as well. Sailes (1996) conducted research that suggested the more affluent African-American male athletes had higher grade point averages and scored higher on standardized tests.

Due to the fact that high school athletics research is often combined with the examination of the effects that extracurricular activities in general have on academic achievement, the results are sometimes inconclusive (Crain, 1981; Holland & Andre, 1987). Past research on sports and schooling found small, yet positive effects for participation in athletics on various student outcome measures such as grade point averages (Trent & Braddock, 1992). Other previous studies on the relationship between sports participation and academics failed to examine the possibility that the purported positive, negative, or non-relationship may differ based on race or social group (Eitle & Eitle, 2002).

This present study was developed to examine whether or not participation in high school athletics had an impact on the academic achievement of African-American males. The study was based on the data produced from the results from the 2008-2009 school year grade point averages (GPAs) in the core content areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies from African-American males who did and did not participate

in high school athletics. This study also used surveys designed to measure student-athletes' and parents' beliefs and attitudes toward high school athletic participation of African-American males.

This study examined whether or not participation in high school athletics could positively impact the overall academic achievement of African-American males as well as academic achievement in particular core content areas. This dissertation, therefore, addresses inclusion in high school athletics as one of the possible ways to minimize the negative factors that sometimes contribute to the detriment of African-American males in society today, although participation in high school athletics should not be construed as a cure-all for academic problems that African-American males may encounter. The first chapter of this dissertation discussed the background of the study, the problem statement, research questions, the professional significance of the study, an overview of the methodology, a summary of the chapter, and definitions of key terms used.

Background of the Study

Since the days of slavery, African-American males have battled the stigmas that they cannot succeed, that they are not as intelligent as white males, nor can they achieve a high level of success on an academic basis. Unfortunately, these stigmas exist not only in society, but in the educational arena as well. In 1995, then-president of Rutgers University, Frances Lawrence, sparked controversy when he said in obvious reference to African-Americans that "a disadvantaged population does not have the genetic hereditary background" necessary for high-level academic performance (Hoberman, 1997, p. 45).

Marble (1986) suggested that the essential problem for African-American males is that they have an inability to define themselves outside of the negative stereotypes that

the larger society has imposed on them. African-American males tend to internalize these attitudes and stereotypes, and thereby develop negative perceptions about themselves, the educational process, and self-effacing or self-hating prejudices (Kunjufu, 1986). African-American males are losing out, as early as elementary school, in the process to maintain parity with whites (Walker, 2007). Some African-American males feel that there is little hope to escape the barriers of poverty. Richard Milner, Associate Professor at Vanderbilt University stated, “Many African-American males are kidnapped into believing that they are inferior and unable to succeed in school” (Moran, 2007, para. 2). Ideas about African-American inferiority have always served the United States in some capacity by denying that African-Americans possess the ability to rise above subhuman status (Hoberman, 2000). These negative beliefs about African-American males have not only brought on racism and discrimination from some of the majority, but contributed to what Carter Woodson (1990) described as the “mis-education of the negro” from other African-Americans.

Some scholars have concluded that the educational system has often failed African-American males. Many African-American males who come from impoverished backgrounds tend to have less access to educational resources and academically perform at the bottom of America’s educational system (Hodge et al., 2008). The thought that African-American males are inferior academically (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994) has impacted their educational self-esteem. Education has been used as a socializing device to secure the rights and privileges of those in control, while limiting the opportunities of those viewed as inferior (Spence, 2000). Hoberman (1997) believed that the so-called educational deficiencies derived from an attack on the intelligence of African-Americans.

This attack started during slavery by not allowing slaves to learn to read or write and by convincing African-Americans that they were inferior. Typical schooling experiences for African-American males include tracking into the lowest classes (Oakes, Lipton, & Jones, 1995), erroneous special education identifications (Motley-King, 2008), underrepresentation in advanced placement courses leading to college acceptance (Ford, 2006), victimization by negative stereotypes (Stelle, 1997), higher disciplinary actions, and treatment in schools that is reflective of treatment from society (Ogbu, 1998). Parmer (1994) stated that many schools have failed to prepare the student-athlete academically.

Despite the rhetoric of American equality and education reform designed to enhance the educational opportunity for all American students, the school experiences of African-American male students continue to be substantially separate and unequal when compared to white male students (Johnson & Kritsonis, 2006). Some researchers have seen these inequalities as somewhat intentional, based on the idea that “When you control a man’s thinking, you do not have to worry about his actions” (Woodson, 1990, p. xiii). What African-American males are being taught does not match society as they encounter it. The same educational system that was designed to provide equal access for all crushes the spirits and ambition of African-American males by making them feel inadequate and detrimental to their race (Woodson, 1990). Haddix (2010) asked a pointed question: Are African-American males simply failing in schools or is it that schools are failing African-American males?

Philosophically, the United States provides equal educational opportunities to all children, but for many who are disadvantaged or left out of the socioeconomic and

cultural mainstream; those educational opportunities are elusive (Ekeler, 1997). The harmful effect that some school systems have had on African-American males over time is obvious. Livingston and Wirt (2004) suggest that African-American males do not have as much access and perform near the bottom of the educational system when compared to whites. African-American males are considered to be less likely to graduate from high school or finish college when compared to their white peers (Harvey & Anderson, 2005; Holzman, 2004; Eckholm, 2006). In Detroit Public Schools, for example, only 20% of African-American males graduate from high school (Herring, 2009).

Statistics have shown that the rate of imprisonment for young African-American males escalated throughout the 1990s and during this time 16% of African-American males in their 20s, who were not in college, were either in jail or prison (Ross, 2006). Even more alarming was the fact that 60% of African-American male high school dropouts had already spent time in jail or prison before they dropped out of school (Ross, 2006). Donald Jackson authored a book that illustrated some of the many “run-ins” with the law that famous African-American male professional athletes experienced. Some of these legal incidents included driving under the influence of alcohol, domestic violence, guns, and drugs (Jackson, 2007). Of course, this is not true for every African-American male, but the statistics are compelling that the majority of African-American males will track into one or more of the negative stereotypes mentioned.

There are many possible ways to offset the academic pothole into which some African-American males will unfortunately fall. Some researchers and supporters of high school sports argue that high school athletics improve students’ motivation and grades and raises educational aspirations (Rasmussen, 2000). Although the Rasmussen study

focused on primarily Caucasian students, it stands to reason that participation of African-American males in high school extracurricular activities such as athletics have an impact on academic achievement as well. One reviewer of *Darwin's Athletes* states that excellence in sports offers the best chance for a show of African-American intelligence coupled with a chance for a better life (Hoberman, 1997). This statement, though perhaps referring to the educational opportunities that might come in the form of scholarships, confirms the stereotypical attitude that continues to affect the way African-Americans are viewed athletically and academically. Sailes (1998) stated that sport participation is an integral part of African-American male socialization.

Still, the fixation on athletic competition within African-Americans males has discouraged academic achievement in favor of physical self-expression, which is widely considered a racial trait (Hoberman, 2000) that further contributes to the "mis-education of the negro" (Woodson, 1990). Yet, even with the fixation on "making it" through sports, studies show that a high school athlete has about a 1-in-20 chance of playing collegiate sports, and a college athlete has less than a 1-in-50 chance of making it to the level of professional sports (Kirsh, 1995). These odds are even greater for African-American males. African-American males have a 1 in 4000 chance of playing in the National Basketball Association (Entine, 2000). In the 2008 National Collegiate Athletic Association President's Report, Myles Brand reported that "1% of all high school [basketball] players ever realize an opportunity to play in Division I. Thus the likelihood of being drafted by the NBA is about 1% of 1% for high school players" (Brand, 2008, p. 1), even though during the 2008-2009 season, 82% of players in the NBA were African-American (Gonzalez, 2009).

There exists a struggle between sports and academics. Some educators feel that they are in direct competition with athletics with regard to educating African-American males (Lomax, 2000). The efforts to increase student achievement, however, are not in vain. Although negative peer pressure tends to diminish African-American males' motivation to succeed academically, that influence can be reduced or eliminated by verbally and materially rewarding academic achievement in the same way that society acknowledges athletic performance (Hoberman, 1997). African-American males need to understand that "education is the key to fulfilling most dreams" (Weatherspoon, 2007, para. 10).

Problem Statement

Urban school systems that educate large populations of African-American students lack basic resources and highly trained teachers (Fultz & Brown, 2008). Such systems will produce African-American male students who are not reading on grade level and have low test scores. Furthermore, African-American males have an alarmingly high dropout rate from urban schools (Green & Winters, 2006; Ross, 2006). Many African-American males are disconnected from school and have failed to realize that their quality of life would improve greatly by obtaining an education.

Some African-American males feel as though they cannot compete (Thomas-Lester, 2007). One factor that has been consistently associated with the achievement gap is school disengagement by African-American males (Carter, 2003; Polite, 2000). School leaders must find ways to engage African-American students in school life and address the achievement gap that exists between African-American males and white males. One such way could be to involve more African-American males in high school athletics.

Students who participate in team and individual sports learn various attributes and character building traits such as respect for others and themselves, leadership, work ethics, teamwork, resiliency, humility, self-discipline, and sportsmanship. Athletics could be used as a tool to teach many social skills and positive habits that are needed for increased academic achievement and success in life.

Archived data was compared and analyzed to determine if African-American males who participate in high school athletics achieve higher academic achievement in the core content subjects of language arts, math, science, and social studies than African-American males who do not participate in high school athletics. The findings related to the research questions for this dissertation allow the reader to discern whether or not high school athletics impact the academic achievement of African-American males.

Research Questions and Null Hypotheses

1. Will African-American male students who participate in high school athletics demonstrate higher overall grade point averages (GPAs) than African-American male students who do not participate in high school athletics?

Null hypothesis: There is no significant statistical difference in the overall mean grade point averages (GPAs) of African-American males who do and do not participate in high school athletics.

2. Will any of the mean results in each of the core content subjects of language arts, math, science, or social studies show a statistically significant difference in achievement when compared between the two groups of African-American male students who do and do not participate in sports?

Null hypothesis: There is no significant statistical difference between the African-American male students who do and do not participate in sports when comparing the mean results in any of the core content subjects.

- a. There is no significant statistical difference between the two groups of African-American male students when comparing the mean results of language arts.
 - b. There is no significant statistical difference between the two groups of African-American male students when comparing the mean results of math.
 - c. There is no significant statistical difference between the two groups of African-American male students when comparing the mean results of science.
 - d. There is no significant statistical difference between the two groups of African-American male students when comparing the mean results of social studies.
3. Will the survey results from the purposive sample of African-American students and parents show a statistically significant difference in attitude from the convenience sample of African-American students and parents?

Null hypothesis: There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the survey designed to measure participants' and parents' attitudes toward high school athletic participation of African-American males.

- a. There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the parent survey designed to measure motivation and self-esteem.

- b. There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the parent survey designed to measure parental encouragement.
- c. There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the parent survey designed to measure negative attitude toward academics.
- d. There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the parent survey designed to measure positive attitude toward academics.
- e. There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the parent survey designed to measure coach encouragement.
- f. There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the student survey designed to measure motivation and self-esteem.
- g. There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the student survey designed to measure parental encouragement.
- h. There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the student survey designed to measure negative attitude toward academics.
- i. There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the student survey designed to measure positive attitude toward academics.
- j. There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the student survey designed to measure coach encouragement.

Professional Significance of the Study

High school sports are the most popular extracurricular activity in high schools regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Eide & Ronan, 2001). Currently, there is a movement for school districts to reduce or eliminate sports and physical education programs in an attempt to improve academic achievement in schools

(Kirsch, 1997). Additionally, school districts across the country face financial decisions regarding which extracurricular activities to reduce or eliminate (Miller et al. (2005). Furthermore, African-American males are turning away from education in large numbers (Robinson-English, 2006). Previous research has suggested that high school sports participation promotes favorable academic outcomes among students. On the other hand, Fisher, Juszczak, and Friedman (1996) found that there was no association between athletic participation and academic achievement for urban youth. This present study sought to determine whether or not high school athletic participation by African-American males had a positive impact on academic achievement in order to help those involved in the educational environment—whether school administrators, teachers, parents, or community leaders—to make sound, researched-based decisions, as to how to proceed in the inclusion of high school athletics for African-American males. These results could demonstrate how high school athletic participation for African-American males impacts academic achievement.

If participation in high school athletics is a way to motivate and inspire African-American males to perform higher academically, then the research could be a way to justify its continued, if not greater, inclusion in our schools, not only in Kentucky, but nationwide. Furthermore, a positive relationship between high school athletic participation and graduation for African-American males could indicate a need for more high school athletic programs. Various athletic program levels could be developed in schools. The programs in the schools could take place in the form of varsity, junior varsity, or clubs, or at the intramural levels. Potential results could also justify further examination as to how high school athletic participation could positively impact the drop-

out rate of African-American males in cities where the dropout rates for African-American males range from 69% to 59% (Delk, 2008).

Overview of Methodology

The researcher conducted a mixed method study primarily using quantitative analysis from the GPAs combined with a qualitative component provided by written comments from the participants in the surveys to give greater strength to the study. The student survey allowed the participants to add comments about how they felt high school athletics had impacted their motivation for academic achievement. The parent survey allowed the researcher an opportunity to record similar data from the parents' perspective with regard to how participation in high school athletics impacts academics.

This study was designed to be investigative in nature using causal-comparative analysis to determine the relationship between high school athletic participation and academic achievement with African-American males. The researcher obtained the GPAs of African-American male students who attended two different urban, public high schools in Louisville, Kentucky. The GPAs were from the core content subjects of language arts, math, science, and social studies. GPAs of student-athletes were compared with those of non-athletes. Parent surveys and student surveys were designed by the researcher and tested for reliability using descriptive statistical analysis. Only African-American male student-athletes and the parent(s) of these student-athletes were included in the survey.

Definition of Key Terms

1. Academic achievement: the academic performance or success of students in an educational setting.

2. Achievement gap: the observed disparity on a number of educational measures between the academic achievement or performance of groups of students, especially groups defined by gender, race, ethnicity, ability, and socioeconomic status.
3. African-American male: a male citizen or resident of the United States who has origins in any of the black populations of Africa.
4. At-risk: a student who is considered to be in danger of failing to acquire the necessary educational skills for a successful life as indicated by factors such as low achievement, retention in grade, poor attendance, potential to drop out of school, race, single parent homes, and socioeconomic status (Slavin & Madden, 1989).
5. Core content: content that has been identified as essential for all students to know.
6. Disadvantaged youth: students whose families are, according to a federal standard, low income, whose standardized achievement test scores are below the 40th percentile, or whose families live in a neighborhood where the percentage of students graduating from high school is low.
7. Grade point average (GPA): the average grade that is calculated by dividing the total amount of grade points earned by the total amount of credit hours attempted based on a 4.0 maximum scale.
8. High school athletics: competitive sports activities in which there exists a team with an approved, trained coach as the leader in a high school setting.

9. Sports: any physical activity such as basketball, baseball, cheerleading, football, gymnastics, soccer, swimming, tennis, track and field, and wrestling that involves competition and specific rules.
10. Purposive Sampling: one of the most common sampling strategies, which groups participants according to preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question. Sample sizes, which may or may not be fixed prior to data collection, depend on the resources and time available, as well as the study's objectives (Family Health International, n.d).
11. Convenience Sampling: sample where the subjects are selected, in part or in whole, at the convenience of the researcher. The researcher makes no attempt, or only a limited attempt, to insure that this sample is an accurate representation of some larger group or population.

Summary

Chapter One was intended to give the reader an introduction to the dissertation by providing insight to the research and the components within the study. Chapter one provided an introduction, the background of the study, the problem statement, the research questions, the professional significance of the study, an overview of the methodology, and definitions of key terms.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

This chapter provides a review of literature that discusses the beliefs and historical basis as well as previous research that pertains to this study from several theoretical viewpoints. Several important points were examined in this review such as (a) the societal impact that stereotyping has on African-American males, (b) the failure of the educational system, (c) alarming statistics that lead to the bleak outlook on life that some African-American males have, (d) the belief that high school athletics has a positive impact on academic achievement in African-American males, thus increasing their willingness to increase their performance in school, as well as (e) the belief that suggests high school athletics have a negative or non-impact on student achievement. The review of literature emphasizes literature that sets the theoretical foundation for the development of this study as well as previous research that relates to this study.

Theoretical Framework and Related Literature

This dissertation is grounded in several different theories regarding factors that may affect the academic impact that sports has on African-American males. African-American males are sometimes viewed as both victim and participant to their own educational demise (Davis, 2003) when sports participation is emphasized more than academics, and this is an assumption accepted by the researcher. This dissertation reflects foundational theories such as socialization through athletics theory, social learning theory, self-determination theory, Promoting Achievement in School through Sports (PASS) theory, and Bechtol's Sports Participation Theory. Each of these theories and related literature directly relates to the concept from which this study was derived.

African-American Male Socialization Through Athletics Theory

For many years, sports participation has been considered a means to social mobility for disadvantaged youth (Riess, 1980; Sabo et al., 1993). “Disadvantaged youth,” is a term that unfortunately applies to a high percentage of African-American males. Many African-American males feel that one way to escape the ghetto is through becoming a professional athlete (Spence, 2000). The Center for the Study of Sport and Society at Northeastern University reported that African-American families are seven times more likely to encourage African-American males to participate seriously in a sport than a white family (Spence, 2000). This is stark contrast to the reconstruction days after the Civil War, when African-American parents would make “untold sacrifices to secure learning that they had been denied” (Franklin & Moss, 1988, p. 239). Now, African-American parents often place more emphasis on sports than they do on academics (Butler, 2007; Edwards, 1983). Rhoden (2006) believed that African-American athletes became psychological armor, markers of progress, and tangible proof of worth for African-American males as a whole. Some African-American males feel that a relationship with a sports coach can fill the parental void left by a missing father in the household; this is a motivational factor for those who aspire to become professional athletes (Spence, 2000).

In another study, Harris (1994) reported that many African-American males believe that doors to success in areas such as business, science, and politics are only slightly ajar in comparison to those opportunities in professional sports. This could be supported by the fact that less than 2% of doctors, architects, lawyers, and business professionals are of African-American decent (Spence, 2000). One of the problems is

that many African-American male athletes invest a great deal of time and energy toward their sport and have very little time to rely on “preparation for non-sport careers” (Harris, 1994, p. 49), which perpetuates the under-emphasis on achievement in the non-sport careers. Eitle and Eitle (2002) contend that disadvantaged African-American youths, who have limited educational resources, are more likely to perceive sports as the primary vehicle for social mobility, therefore placing more emphasis on sports and less emphasis on academics.

Some scholars have suggested that sports are emphasized in the African-American community because of the perception that sports participation is a means of social mobility (Braddock, 1981; Snyder & Spreitzer, 1990) and because athletic participation has become a part of how African-Americans identify themselves (Griffith, 2007) and achieve “manhood” (Edwards, 1983). Hoberman (1997) believes that African-American males’ obsession with professional sports is destroying their chances for success in society. Rhoden (2006) believed that the participation in sports by African-American males can be rooted in the socialization of slaves on the plantation where physical competition was a means to recover lost self-esteem. Weatherspoon stated that “this dream of playing sports, which plagues black boys, reminds me of slaves entertaining their slave-owners by boxing for tokens and possibly freedom from bondage” (Weatherspoon, 2007, para. 9). Harrison (2007) believes that many African-American males look to professional sports for validation.

Through the many studies conducted regarding the influence that the African-American community has on the involvement of African-American males in sports, there seems to be an agreement about the role the African-American community plays; there is

a heavy emphasis on sports participation in comparison to whites (Harris, 1994). Many modern professional athletes are idolized by youth today, but this is not uncommon and has roots in the days of slavery. On the plantation, the “slave athlete often enjoyed an exalted status among fellow slaves and was regarded as a role model for slave children” (Rhoden, 2006, p. 55). All too often, African-American youth mimic the negative behavior of their sports heroes, which is sensationalized through the media (Harrison & Lampman, 2001).

African-American males are over-represented in the sports world (Beamon & Bell, 2006). This representation has also contributed to African-American males’ early socialization to become athletes and to neglect academic pursuits, according to Beamon and Bell. African-American males “don’t treat academics with the same intensity as they do basketball or football” (Powell, 2008, p. 73). Harrison (2000) noted that, “the struggle for equality by African-Americans is often hidden through the spoils of race, sport, and professionalism” (p. 37). Edwards (2000) argued that African-American families often encourage African-American males to pursue a sports career at the expense of education. Many African-American males view their futures as hopeless and discouraging outside the possibility of success in careers such as sports and entertainment. It is also believed that African-American males’ “overemphasis on sports, coupled with the obstacles for social mobility, leads them on a treadmill to oblivion” (Eitle & Eitle, 2002, p. 124). African-American males tend to focus less on intellectual pursuits in favor of devoting more time to a sport (Spence, 2000). In contrast, Jordan (1999) suggested that participation in sports helps African-American students become more engaged and interested in academics.

Still, the question of why some people participate in sports while others do not was answered in an earlier study conducted by Loy, McPherson, and Kenyon (1978). This particular study found that people who participate in sports are usually influenced by others who serve as role models or family members who had a positive attitude toward sports (Loy et al., 1978). These authors used previous research and studies to show that African-American males attribute sports participation as a means to establish security and escape from the low economic standing that sometimes cripples them. The authors took into account how similar researchers studied the impact that sports participation had on other groups such as white males and African-American females, while acknowledging that further research needed to be conducted to determine what, if any, relationship existed for African-American males between sports participation and academic achievement.

It is important to note that the socialization of the African-American male through athletics theory fails to fully address its focus on the two main sports that most African-American males migrate to most often, namely basketball and football. African-American males have socially and strongly identified with less costly and more accessible sports such as basketball, boxing, football, and track and field (Hodge et al., 2008). Disproportionate to white athletes, more African-American males aspire to obtain professional careers in basketball and football as a means to economic and social mobility (Bilberry, 2000; Burden et al., 2004; Sailes, 1996). At the professional level, basketball and football are the two sports that have a greater percentage of African-American males than any other sport. During the 2008-2009 season, African-American males made up nearly 82% of all players in the National Basketball Association

(Gonzalez, 2009). During the 2008 season, African-American males comprised 65% of all National Football League players (Rhoden, 2006). At the high school level, basketball and football are the two main sports that are most visible and produce the greatest revenue for high schools. Sports such as swimming, golf, or other sports that typically incur a cost for participation for lessons and training may not be available to African-American males who attend schools in poor urban communities or grow up in areas that are not as affluent (Eitle & Eitle, 2002) or who are not as affluent as other ethnic groups who can afford to participate in these sports.

Harris (1994) investigated whether or not African-American students received encouragement from their parents, the African-American community, or other agents such as friends, teachers, or coaches. The study involved a questionnaire presented to 23 participants in the Washington, DC area. The results indicated that African-American student-athletes are likely to get encouragement from friends and coaches more often than from their parents.

Even though this dissertation is not directly related to college athletics, it is worth mentioning that during the first years (1984-1986) of NCAA bylaw 14.3, better known as Proposition 48, 92% of all academically ineligible basketball players and 84% of all academically ineligible football players were African-American (Edwards, 2000). One can infer that these academically ineligible African-American males were not prepared for college and that their high school grades could have been manipulated to ensure that they were eligible to participate in high school athletics, thus leading to inaccurate college entrance qualifications. Moss (2004) is one who believed that academic institutions did very little for African-American male athletes. "I remembered how

universities were willing to throw athletes into courses that offered very little academic substance, certainly not enough to justify credits toward a 4-year degree. ‘Keep them academically eligible so they can play on Saturday,’ seemed to be the collegiate mindset” (pp. 5-6). Even though high school counselors have become more involved with intervention programs to support African-American student-athletes to assist in balancing athletics and academics (Gilley & Hickney, 1986), the previous facts support Harris’ belief that while coaches, parents, teachers, and others in the African-American community feel that they are providing a service to African-American males by encouraging them to participate in sports, they may be providing a “disservice by fostering improbable expectations for athletic careers” (Harris, 1994, p. 49).

Social Learning Theory in African-American Males

Social learning theory is the principle that behavior is learned (Bandura, 1978). As the social learning theory evolved, imitation was considered a powerful force (Dollard & Miller, 1941). Later, Bandura, Ross, and Ross (1963) considered observation to be a factor in behavior. Wells-Wilbon and Holland (2001) believed that the socialization of youth involved the shaping of behaviors toward others with whom the youth were in contact. Hart and Kritsonis (2006) believed that the element of reward was an essential component of the social learning theory. Ormrod (1999) considered other general principles of the social learning theory to be that (a) people can learn by observing the behaviors of others, (b) learning can occur without a change in behavior, and (c) cognition plays a role in learning.

The social learning theory relates directly to how African-American males interact and behave with others in society. Whether the behavior is performed because

African-American males want to imitate basketball icon Michael Jordan, actor Denzel Washington, rapper T.I., attorney Johnny Cochran, the locally famous corner drug dealer that they see, or go to jail to gain “street cred,” the behavior can be desired because of the societal emphasis that is often glamorized in one form or another, whether through lifestyles, money, respect, or fame. Many African-American males do not have positive role models outside of those who are in some way affiliated with professional sports. As NBA player, Allen Iverson, once said, “My heroes don’t wear suits” (Zirin, 2007), referring to Michael Jordan.

This behavioral interaction is supported by the notion that if an African-American male changes his actions to fit into a certain group, the African-American male has a strong likelihood of being accepted by the group (Ormrod, 1999). The behavioral interaction is directly related to the environment and culture in which African-American males live. Hart and Kritsonis (2006) examined how African-American males are depicted in the media. It was determined that the rate of aggressive behavior portrayed in the media for African-American males is twice the actual occurrence and exceeds the population of African-American males in the United States. This fact elevates the potential harm the resulting stereotype can cause when one considers the influence that the media has on youth (Wood, Wong, & Chachere, 1991). Even with the many legal issues that famous African-American males have encountered, as illustrated by singer and entertainer Michael Jackson, the fame and money of these athletes seem to supersede the morality and values that were rooted in the struggles of the African-American family from the days of slavery.

Academic deficiencies in African-American males are rooted in the perception that they are in a lower societal status and have limited opportunities (Lancer, 2002). Ormrod (1999) listed several educational implications that the social learning theory could have in a classroom setting such as the following: (a) students learn by observing other students; (b) describing the consequences of certain behavior can effectively increase desired behaviors; (c) modeling is an alternative to shaping for teaching new behaviors; (d) appropriate behavior must be modeled; and (e) students must believe that they are capable of accomplishing certain tasks and behaviors.

It is important to note that some scholars believe that African-American males do not attain their educational potential because schools and teachers fail to encourage them to reach their potential or to work hard in their academic pursuits. Hurrell (1995) and Milner (2007) both believe that when a teacher feels that an African-American male is inferior, that belief becomes a part of their teaching. In addition, some teachers are simply not highly qualified to teach (Johnson & Kritsonis, 2006), and African-American students are 70% more likely than white students to be taught by a teacher who does not hold proper certification (Hunt, 2009). It has been suggested that the treatment of African-American males in education reflects their treatment in the wider society (Fashola, 2005). Negative beliefs regarding the behavior of African-American males as being violent, disrespectful, unintelligent, and threatening carry over into schools and negatively influence the manner in which African-American males are treated in educational settings (Davis, 2003).

Although some African-American males will imitate behaviors that are praised by a teacher in the classroom, so that they too can receive this praise, the behavior is

unlikely to be imitated if the praise is not frequently aimed at African-American males. However, an African-American male can unwittingly intake situational factors and then imitate those behaviors when similar situations arise (Hart & Kritsonis, 2006).

The football field, baseball diamond, or basketball court are not the only places that tend to have a socialization impact on African-American males. The neighborhood corner, vacant lots, park or recreation centers, bowling alleys, pool halls, clubs, and even drug houses, where African-American males tend to congregate, have come to be known as “the streets” (Oliver, 2006). Several influences such as substance abuse, incarceration, high unemployment, poverty, and negative family situations are key characteristics that cause African-American males to turn to the streets (Anderson, 1999; Wilson, 1996). These locations are where credibility, high visibility, self-respect, and recognition among African-American males are considered to be more prized attributes than achieving high marks in the classroom (Roberts, 1990; Miller 2008). The streets provide many African-American males an alternative route to achieving success and respect in contrast to the traditional structure that often escapes their grasp (Oliver, 2006). The streets are where education does occur, but not the kind of education that occurs in a traditional classroom setting. Instead the streets provide a mechanism for African-American males that places their lives in potential peril.

Urban Education for African-American Males

Being an African-American male in American schools places him at risk in education for a variety of possible negative outcomes: school failure, special education assignment, suspensions, expulsions, drop-outs, and violence (Bailey & Moore, 2004; Davis, 2003; Ferguson, 2000; Moore, 2000; Polite & Davis, 1999). Margaret Spellings,

who was serving as Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, confirmed that some have imposed “soft bigotry” on disadvantaged youth by having low expectations in the classroom (White House Task Force, 2003, p. 6). African-American males have been considered to be an “endangered species” (Majors & Billson, 1992; Mincy, 1994; Muwakkil, 2006; Parham & McDavis, 1987). Some of the reasons this stigma has been placed on African-American males are the disparities that exists in the educational arena as it pertains to academic performance (Garibaldi, 1992), graduation rates, high placement in or the misdiagnoses of special education, underachievement of predominantly African-American high schools, and the disproportionate number of suspensions and expulsions from high school of African-American males when compared to their white peers (Thomas & Stephenson, 2009). Furthermore, these disparities in academic achievement and behavioral practices cause the educational setbacks that far too often fall upon African-American males (Thomas & Stephenson, 2009).

The 2008 Executive Summary, “Given Half a Chance,” produced by the Schott Education for Public Education reported some of these inconsistencies for African-American males in many urban cities within the United States. New York City, Chicago, Indianapolis, Baltimore, Detroit, Buffalo, and Miami showed the greatest failure to graduate African-American males. These cities tend to have more segregated schools in low-income areas and score far worse on standardized tests when compared to similar cities. Many urban school districts have been found to be culturally, ethnically, economically, and racially segregated, and hence offer unequal education quality compared to schools that have a predominantly white student population (Borman et al., 2004; Toppo, 2004). In fact, few students that attend schools that are predominantly

African-American do very well academically. African-Americans constitute an increasing percentage of students in urban public schools. These schools are most often schools that have high levels of low-income families (Noguera, 2003). The 2008 Schott Report indicated that in these cities and in these types of schools, African-American males are less likely to graduate with their cohort.

A report on Kentucky schools released by the Bluegrass Institute for Public Policy Solutions in October 2008 found that achievement gaps in reading and math between African-American and white students in Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) are increasing at more than one-third of the 120 schools included in the study. Bluegrass Institute education analyst, Richard Innes concludes that only 22 of those 120 schools are likely to close the reading gap between African-Americans and whites in the next decade if current trends continue. Furthermore, in August 2009, the Bluegrass Institute issued an alert to address the following finding: the gap between African-American and white students is growing larger at 47 out of 120 schools for reading (among those with usable data) and 44 out of 120 schools for math. At the current rate of improvement, JCPS will not close the reading gap (22.5 points) during the next 25 years, and it will take 33 years to close the math gap (27 points). The failure to close the achievement gap means that unacceptable numbers of African-American males fail to graduate. For example, only 5 of the 19 high schools in Louisville, Kentucky have African-American male graduation rates equal to or greater than the statewide rate of 63.1% for all students. Two of Jefferson County's high schools have been labeled as "dropout factories" in that the graduation rates fell well below 50% (Innes, 2008). The U.S. Justice Department reported that of the African-American males who are high school dropouts, 53% of them

have been incarcerated at one point or another in their lives (Waters, 2008).

Regarding entrance into college, the American College Testing (ACT) reported that only 3 out of 100 African-Americans in Kentucky were prepared for college. African-American students scored 17.3 out of a possible 36 points when compared to 21.2 for white students (Waters, 2008). According to reports from the National Assessment of Educational Progress and other college entrance exams, African-American males are far behind white males (Strayhorn, 2008). In Augusta and Atlanta, Georgia, where the dropout rates for African-American males are 69% and 66% respectively (Delk, 2008) or in Kentucky where The Schott Foundation for Public Education reported that in 2005-2006, the graduation rate for African-American males was only 59%. Education Trust Senior Associate Carlton Jordan said, “Wherever I go, African-American boys are at the bottom,” but at least now, educators are researching ways and have begun new conversations to find solutions for these African-American males (Varlas, 2005, para. 1).

Resources at schools that enroll a majority of African-American students typically are not equal to those that other schools have. The disparities that exist in the justice system between African-American males and white males are partly due to the underfunding of positive and community-based activities in urban areas (Dorime & Toldson, 2008). Urban schooling for low-income and minority youth is commonly inadequate when compared to schooling provided for middle class whites (Fultz & Brown, 2008). African-American male students attending predominantly white schools typically have greater fiscal and educational resources available to them (Borman et al., 2004; Livingston & Wirt, 2004). This could be attributed to the property tax that funds

schools matching the economic status of the parents, which enables certain schools to have more than adequate computer rooms, libraries, science labs, extracurricular programs, and excellent textbooks. It should be noted that African-American males who attend schools that are predominantly white do much better in schools than those that are predominantly African-American (Schott, 2008).

Strayhorn (2009) examined the educational aspirations of African-American males who attended urban, suburban, and rural high schools. It was suggested through the Strayhorn study that African-American males who attended suburban high schools reported the highest aspirations. The African-American males who attended urban high schools reported relatively low and significantly different educational aspirations when compared to African-American males who attended a suburban high school (Strayhorn, 2009). Most studies combine all students regardless of socioeconomic status, or race into a single analysis; therefore the Strayhorn study was limited in that no previous studies were readily available that addressed the educational aspirations of African-American males in urban, suburban, or rural settings. Yet the study supports the 2008 Executive Summary in the Schott Report, which states that when African-American males attended predominantly white or suburban schools, they achieved higher academic success.

African-American Male Crisis Statistics

In April of 2007, the National Urban League issued a report titled “*The State of Black America: Portrait of the Black Male.*” Some of the data from this report is as follows:

1. African-American males are twice as likely to be unemployed as white males.

2. African-American males are seven times more likely to be incarcerated than white males.
3. Twenty-one percent of African-American males who did not attend college had spent time in jail.
4. African-American males between the ages of 15 to 34 are eight times more likely to contract AIDS than white males.
5. African-American males between the ages of 15 to 19 are 46 times more likely to die from homicide than white males.
6. High school dropouts are more likely to receive public aid and assistance than those who receive a high school diploma (Adair, 2001).
7. Thirty-three percent of African-American males will spend some time in jail and will have a difficult time finding meaningful job opportunities (Watson, 2006).
8. African-American males are graduating high school at a rate that is less than 25% when compared to white males (Dyer, 2007).

The number of African-American males incarcerated under state or federal jurisdiction in the United States is greater than any other ethnic group and has increased from 532,400 in 2000 to 535,100 in 2006, to 556,900 in 2007 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009). African-American males make up more than 70% of the total prison population (Nealy, 2008). The high school dropout rate is the driving factor behind the increasing number of African-American males being imprisoned (Dillon, 2009). At a conference in Chicago in 2006, Emil Jones, who was then Illinois State Senate President, said that “dropping out of high school is considered an apprenticeship for prison” (Sum et al. 2009, p. 11). The lack of education is considered to be a pipeline from “cradle to

prison” (Nealy, 2008, para. 7). “When young people drop out of school, they—and American society at large—face multiple consequences (Martin & Halperin, 2006, p. vii) and the President of the United States, Barack Obama agreed that when a person drops out of high school they are quitting on themselves and the country (Sum et. al. 2009). Sixty-nine percent of African-American males who drop out of high school are unemployed (Dillon, 2009). African-American males represent the ethnic group least likely to be employed (Sum et al. 2009). The social issues previously mentioned are detrimental for every ethnic group, but are more severe for African-American males, and this is why African-American males are considered to be in crisis.

Self-Determination Theory

The self-determination theory (SDT) was initially developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan at the University of Rochester. This theory examines human motivation and focuses on the degree to which behaviors are volitional or self-determined and the processes involved (Ryan & Deci, 2000). They further suggest that three psychological needs are inherent to the optimization of the self-determination theory for social development and personal well-being: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Ryan and Deci suggest that when at their best, people are self-motivated, willing to learn, extend themselves, master new skills, and apply their talents responsibly. Furthermore, they go on to contradict this belief with the notion that the human spirit can be demoralized and then reject growth and responsibility. This notion brings on the possibility for a wide range of reactions that can be influenced by the culture and environment of the individual. Experimental paradigms were used to examine the specific conditions in which people’s natural activity and constructiveness would

flourish. This also allowed the examination of those factors that impacted motivation and the lack thereof in various social environments. The self-determination theory is thus a theory that identifies other motivational theories at a particular time, and the consequences for learning and performance, by considering what makes a person act.

In discussing the self-determination theory in her research, Tower (2008) suggested that in determining the factors related to motivation and sports participation, an argument could be made that student-athletes do well in school and academic endeavors because they need to remain eligible to play their particular sport and not because they are genuinely interested in education. Her argument was based on the fact that since schools have eligibility and grade requirements, the success a student-athlete achieves could be for the sake of playing and not for learning. In other words, the reward for good grades is the opportunity to play the sport. This component of motivation is considered to be “extrinsic.” Vansteenkiske et al. (2006) defined this as participating in an activity [sport] to reach a desired outcome [eligibility] that is separate from the activity itself.

The Tower study (2008) examined motivation and competitiveness with respect to its impact on academic achievement. Tower questioned four students who were randomly selected from a New England area high school (2 females and 2 males). The questions involved competition, academic and external pressures, motivation, and the link between academics and sports. She found that the competitive nature of these students motivated them to do well in school. Some of the students in her study stated that they also compete with students and siblings when it comes to grades. Even though this study supports some previous research, the number of participants within the study is a clear limitation of the results of the study.

Promoting Achievement in School through Sports (PASS) Theory

The Promoting Achievement in School through Sports (PASS) Theory is based on the belief that both sports participation and educational attainments can be mutually beneficial to enable students to succeed in all aspects of their lives. The American Sports Institute conducted an evaluation of PASS's impact on the grades, including PASS students and a control group. McClendon (1998) studied the impact of PASS on the academic achievement of African-American high school students, using the resiliency theory as the conceptual framework for the study. McClendon examined several aspects pertaining to PASS: (a) the impact of PASS on PASS students' grades and attendance, (b) a comparison of PASS students' performance and attendance with that of the performance of an ethnically-matched control group, (c) a comparison between African-American PASS students with African-American students in the control group, and (d) a comparison between PASS and non-PASS classrooms. Using a total sample of 900 students, some of the findings were:

1. No significant differences between PASS students' pre- and post-test grade point averages.
2. Post-test GPAs of PASS students were significantly higher than those of the control students.
3. Post hoc analyses revealed African-American students' GPAs were significantly lower than other race-ethnicities at both pre- and post-tests times.
4. African-American students enrolled in the PASS program had significantly higher post-test GPAs than African-Americans who were in the control group.

5. No significant differences in the attendance and tardiness data analyzed for PASS and control groups.

McClendon's study (1998) focused on all students that participated in PASS, along with control groups of students that did not participate in PASS. The study also made a comparison between African-Americans who did and did not participate in PASS. However, as with other previous research, the study failed to examine African-American males as the only group in the study for how PASS or other sports involvement impacted their academic achievement.

Bechtol Sports Participation Theory

The Bechtol Sports Participation Theory is based on the belief that high school sports have a positive and lasting effect on those who participate. Developed by Bechtol (2001), this theory derived from a study that examined the long-term effects of high school sports participation as measured by former participants of high school sports. While the results of the Bechtol study suggest that high school participation does have a lasting, positive effect on students, the study did not identify its specific outcomes to a particular ethnic group or gender.

The Bechtol study examined the long-term effects that high school sports participation had on students by examining organizational factors such as: the size of the school, influential adults, geographical location, racial mix of the school, and content of the classes as well as personal factors such as gender, behavior in school, goals and motives, race, and age of the students. Bechtol suggested the organizational factors that impacted participation in high school athletics were: the content of classes, size of school, and influential adults. According to Bechtol, the personal factors that had an

impact on participation were: gender, behavior in high school, race, and goals and motives. The long-term effects on students were: being competitive, being goal oriented, being physically active, making friends, developing leadership skills, and enhancing self-esteem. Information from Bechtol was to be used by school boards and administrators of high schools to determine whether to decrease the sports offerings, continue to offer the current variety of sports programs in the high schools, or increase the sports program offerings. However, the study could have had a greater impact on educational policy if it concentrated on a specific group and included more participants. The Bechtol study only used 10 participants and included only one African-American male.

The Bechtol Sports Participation Theory was grounded on a belief that was endorsed by the Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB) when it announced in 1992 that “schools should teach skills to young people to prepare them to adapt to a changing society” (p. 1). The SREB went on further to say, “Young people need to learn to cooperate, work on a team, apply basic skills in the work place, think for themselves, and problem solve in challenging situations” (p. 1). Participation in high school athletics was in effect a way to corroborate the opinion of the SREB. Bechtol also suggested an expectation that “youth who participate in sports will become better team workers, self-thinkers, and productive thinkers” (p. 1). Bechtol noted that Debra Rocke, Athletic Director of Norfolk Public Schools, stated that

Sports programs in high schools are designed to teach students the skills of the sport, but they teach students such life skills as working well in a group, thinking positively about self, handling stress, developing healthy relationships, building character, and practicing physical activities throughout life (p. 1).

Additional research conducted by Corneliben and Pfeifer (2007) concluded that sports participation teaches soft skills such as: leadership, working as a team, and socialization. Corneliben and Pfeifer (2007) also determined that sports impacts the character of adolescents because sports teach “motivation, discipline, tenacity, competitive spirit, responsibility, perseverance, confidence, and self-esteem, which cannot always be acquired in classroom” (p. 4).

The Argument Supporting High School Athletics and its Impact on Academic Achievement with African-American Males

Marsh (1993) concluded from his study that sports participation may have an effect on academic achievement in that the participation increases motivation and investment in school. Hawkins and Mulkey (2005) suggested that sports participation created aspirations for African-American males to seriously consider attending college and act more appropriately in school.

Broh (2002) wrote an article that analyzed data from a 1988 National Educational Longitudinal (NEL) Study that tested the effects of participation in extracurricular activities on high school academic achievement. The NEL study focused on four ethnic groups: African-American, Asian American, Hispanic, and American Indian. It also examined the extracurricular activities by type of activity. In examining the impact of high school sports, Broh discovered that the 1988 study provided evidence that high school sports had a positive impact on academic achievement. In the examination, zero-order relationship was used between high school athletics and academic achievement to suggest that participation in high school athletics was positively associated with academic achievement. There was a small, but consistent increase in math and English grades for

students that participated in high school athletics. Similarly, Crosnoe (2002) identified a positive relationship for athletes' grades when compared to non-athletes.

The Broh article also examined other extracurricular activities such as music, drama, and clubs such as journalism and student council. He found that these extracurricular activities had similar, yet limited benefits on academic achievement as compared to high school athletics. Other researchers have also suggested that participation in extracurricular activities improves attendance, behavior, and academic achievement (Black, 2002; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Fujita 2006; Holloway, 2002; Nelson & Gordon-Larsen, 2006).

Although the Broh article supported the notion that participation in high school extracurricular activities improved academic achievement, the article did suggest that the results were based on the type of extracurricular activity the students participated. Some extracurricular activities improved academic achievement while other extracurricular activities negatively affected academic achievement (Broh, 2002). However, it is still somewhat inconclusive which types of sports or extracurricular activities were beneficial.

Rombokas (1995) studied college students who participated in high school extracurricular activities to determine if there was a relationship with academic achievement. She determined that extracurricular activities enhanced both the "intellectual and social development of students" (p. 21). Furthermore, she discovered that athletes had higher grade points averages than students who did not participate in athletics (p. 6). Rombokas also determined that extracurricular activities played a factor in preventing at-risk students from dropping out of school and having disciplinary problems at school (p. 8). The Rombokas study provided insight, but was not designed to

focus solely on African-American males.

Fejgin (1994) conducted a more thorough study of sports participation than Broh. Fejgin examined the relationship between participation in high school athletics and academic achievement, self-esteem, discipline, social status, and educational aspirations. The Fejgin study also examined background, family status, and attributes of the school. Fejgin used data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988, from the base year and first follow up (Ingels et al., 1992). The base year study was a study of 1,052 schools and 26,432 students. The Fejgin study examined responses from questionnaires, student report cards, and parent information and multiple regression analysis was used to examine the relationship from a statistical view point.

Fejgin (1994) found that students who were more involved in school sports had higher grades. Fejgin suggested that participation in high school athletics such as basketball, baseball, and football did not mean that participation in these sports did not have distinct effects, but rather that these effects could not be sorted out in the analysis because students may have participated in more than one high school athletic sports team (p. 218). Although the Fejgin study was more thorough than the Broh study, it did not separate each of the groups based on race and gender.

Fejgin (1994) concluded, based on predictions from the developmental theory, that students who are more involved in high school athletics will attain higher grades. The data showed small effects, yet Fejgin concluded these effects were statistically significant and consistent. Fejgin offered educational considerations in that schools and researchers should consider organizing schoolwork activities to follow models that reflect sports patterns so that all areas of academia can have increased achievement. Fejgin ends

the article by stating, “if schools could reorganize academic work to operate more like sports teams, where a reward system is built in, they could inject into the system what is missing in many schools today, a real achievement orientation” (p. 226).

A Braddock study (1981) found significant positive associations between participation in high school athletics and academic achievement. The hypothesis that sports was an impediment was not supported by the data that came from the National Longitude Survey of the high school class of 1972. The study analyzed curriculum, grades, educational plans, academic self-esteem, and anticipated college enrollment. The study did not, however, account for data particular to African-American males. Even though the Braddock study is not current, the results are consistent with more recent studies that support the belief that high school athletic participation has a positive impact on academic achievement.

Spence (2000) reported that most African-American student-athletes believed post-secondary education would increase their opportunity for success in the future. The participants in the study reported that they took their studies more seriously because of their aspirations in sports. Furthermore, another study reported that high school athletes had higher aspirations than non-athletes attributed to prestige, increased academic support systems, encouragement, and preferential treatment (Coakley, 1986).

Although many studies reported in this section show a positive correlation between academic achievement and sports participation, this does not negate the fact that the highly unlikely dream of becoming a professional athlete can be detrimental in some form or fashion to African-American males, as discussed in the following section.

The Argument Disputing High School Athletics as a Factor for Academic Achievement with African-American Males

Not all researchers agree that participation in high school athletics has a positive impact on academic achievement. In fact, it is often assumed that participation in sports is detrimental to the academic outcomes of adolescents (Cornelissen & Pfeifer, 2007). Thomas (1989) reported in a New York Times article that playing sports does not lift grades. Spence (2000) argued that the media, schools, parents, and friends of African-American male athletes are contributors to the lack of emphasis on academics by demanding more excellence from the playing field than in the classroom. A 1980 “Minorities in Sports” study, funded by Miller Lite, found that although high school athletics participation kept students in school, increased attendance, made them more popular among other students, and led them to participate in other extracurricular activities, there was no immediate effect on academic achievement. This study also found that participation in high school athletics had little to no effect on whether or not student-athletes were successful in college. For example, Kevin Ross, an African-American male athlete, received a full scholarship to Creighton University even though he could not read nor write beyond the second grade level (Edwards, 1985).

The “Minorities in Sports” study was conducted focusing on 18 groups consisting of African-Americans, whites, and Hispanics, both sexes, and demographic areas of urban, suburban, and rural. This study leaves unanswered questions regarding how the results would apply specifically to African-American males who participate in high school athletics.

Streich (2009) suggested that although sports participation has a role within the overall development of the student-athlete, a negative impact on academic achievement is the cost of participation. Coleman (1961) also argued that sports participation takes away time and energy from academics. Reeves (2008) also reported that parents felt students would lose their focus on school activities if students were too busy on non-academic activities. Streich believed that high school sports participation and academics should be a partnership with the overall focus of academics, guiding standards and expectations. Streich goes on to suggest that the late nights at games, travel, and practices may negatively affect academic achievement because the student-athlete does not have enough time or energy to devote to achieving high academic performance levels. Excessive practice schedules may influence when a student studies, and this could negatively impact academic achievement for student-athletes. The Streich article suggested that high school sports participation should be balanced with academics so that the participation itself would not negatively impact academics of students. Similarly, Melnick, Sabo, and Vanfossen (1992) and later Fisher et al. (1996) detected no relationship between academic achievement and sports participation.

One of the more interesting studies, Gayles (2005) conducted qualitative research that examined how three high-achieving African-American male students, who were not participants in high school organized athletics, felt about academics and their resilience toward school. Gayles argued that academic achievement was associated to peer pressure connections and a utilitarian belief. In this study, Gayles interviewed three African-American males who were high school seniors at a low income high school in Bayside, Florida. Each of these African-American males, had very different backgrounds, yet

each of them had high aspirations regarding school and academics. As noted by Dorime and Toldson (2008), the educational aspirations of African-American males are influenced by the opportunities that are available to them. However, despite the fact that these African-American males attended a low income high school, their aspirations were not negatively influenced. One of the African-American males (a) in the study was a star football player who started as a freshman on the varsity team, but quit football after his freshman year because it took away too much of his study time (Gayles, 2005). Another African-American male (b) came from a two-parent home, although he did not have a great relationship with his father. This African-American male (b) was working a part-time job while attending high school and was saving money for an engagement ring he had in layaway for his girlfriend. The third African-American male (c) had the highest grade point average of the participants in the study and was working over 40 hours per week while also attending high school. This African-American male (c) purchased his own car and was saving money for college.

It is important to note that the Gayles study illustrates three African-American males who achieved high academically and yet did not at the time play high school sports. The African-American males in the Gayles study were not from affluent backgrounds and attended a school in a low SES area. These were African-American males who were members of national honors societies and clubs and worked in addition to attending high school. The Gayles study gives examples of high-achieving African-American males who did not participate in high school athletics.

Cotton (1996) introduces his article “Athletics vs. Academics” with a very powerful statement that interscholastic sports may well be the primary impediment to

improving American schools. Immediately, an inference can be made that Cotton is not a proponent of interscholastic sports. He cites the fact that scholars such as Ernest Boyer, Albert Shanker, Chester Finn Jr., Denis Doyle, William Bennett, and TheodoreSizer never mention sports as a way to reform the broken educational system in our schools. Cotton seems to suggest that if sports were really a key method to improve academics, these scholars would include sports as a mechanism to improve academic achievement. Cotton makes a comparison between the amount of time spent on practice and games with that spent on studying. He is among those who believe that the time spent on sports takes away from academics, thus impeding the academic progress that a student could make. Cotton concludes his article with a statement that schools should spend more of their time and energy on education and less of their time and energy on entertainment such as sports.

Even though Hartman (2008) concluded that previous research suggests a strong correlation between high school sports participation and academic achievement, this relationship is not, for the most part, a direct causal relationship. In other words, all of the empirical evidence that demonstrates a strong statistical correlation between sports participation and educational attainment does not mean that sports automatically and inevitably contributes to academic achievement. Hartman examined the cause and effect aspects of the relationship between academics and sports participation. While not denying that a strong relationship exists, he reminds us that correlation does not necessary indicate causation. While students who play sports sometimes attain higher grades than their non-sports participating classmates, their performance could be due to the fact that these athletes were better students in the first place. Hartman also examined

the psychological and social aspects of sports on academic achievement. It is interesting to note that Hartman found that where white students were more prevalent than African-American students in sports, the positive correlation between sports and academic achievement were the most pronounced (Hartman, 2008). The types of sports, however, were not named. Hartman suggested the need for continued research on this topic. The exact link between sports participation and academics continues to be inconclusive.

Summary

While this literature review suggested that there are many factors that could influence whether or not sports participation in high school has an impact on academic achievement in African-American males, the level of impact remains unclear, as does the nature of the impact (i.e., whether negative or positive). The literature on this topic substantiates both positive and negative impacts that sports participation has on African-American males. The literature does, however, present the belief that most African-Americans males view sports as an escape from the perils of the ghetto as well as a way to demonstrate masculinity, make friends, build character, and achieve fame and notoriety.

The literature presented discussed the educational flaws that place African-American males at a distinct disadvantage. These educational flaws began when the first Africans arrived in the colonies. The fact that slaves were not allowed to learn to read or write contributed to the belief that African-Americans were brutes, inferior to whites, and unable to achieve academic success. This has contributed to the negative stereotypes that still exist today. Some still believe that African-American males are superior athletically due to genetics, but others insist that this is another falsehood (Anderson, 1990).

Chapter Three: Methodology

Overview

This chapter describes the methodology of the study. Within this chapter is an academic and athletic profile of the high schools in the study to include the 2008-2009 school year enrollments, a detailed description of the participants, the research design used in the study, a description of instruments used to analyze the data, research problem, research questions and null hypotheses on which the study is based, a description of data analysis methods, and a summary of the methodology. This quantitative research compares (a) the GPAs for core content grades in language arts, math, science, and social studies with (b) survey results from African-American male students and their parents. These surveys include African-American male students who participate in high school athletics and those who do not participate in high school athletics. Comments from the African-American male student-athletes and the parents of these athletes provide a qualitative component to the study. This research was conducted to determine whether athletic participation had an impact on academic achievement in African-American males.

The Population for the Study

The two schools were selected because of their high academic standards and expectations, as well as the variety of socioeconomic backgrounds of the African-American males who attended the schools. Both schools possess an adequate enrollment percentage of African-American male students who do and do not participate in high school athletics.

High School A. Established by the Louisville Board of Education so that African-American students in Louisville could receive a free education, High School A has been a viable part of the Louisville community for over a century. High School A incorporates courses designed to enhance the educational opportunities of African-American students. Currently, High School A consists of educational programs such as law & government, medical, business, banking & finance, computer science, and nursing. Core curriculum subjects consisting of language arts, math, science, and social studies are also taught at High School A. High School A incorporates advanced programs, honors programs, and extended school services. Each student of High School A has the opportunity to participate in different types of internships and partnerships with local businesses, all of which provide a hands-on learning experience for students. Each student at High School A wears an identification card from a lanyard, and the identification card must be present at all times while on school grounds.

During the 2009-2010 school year, High School A had an enrollment of 1,043 students, which consisted of 290 African-American males, 29 white males, 51 white females, 525 African-American females, 34 Hispanic males, 50 Hispanic females, and 64 students listed as Other (see Table 1). In order to be admitted to High School A, each eighth grade student has to complete the following requirements: submit a transcript from the sixth and seventh grade that illustrated a minimum 2.5 GPA; provide math or science teacher recommendations; provide an administrative recommendation; and submit a writing sample verified by an English teacher.

High School A has an accomplished history in athletics. In basketball, before High School A could participate in integrated sports in Kentucky, it won a National

Championship. High School A has won several KHSAA state championships in basketball, football, and track. Most recently, High School A won class KHSAA state championships in football (KHSAA, 2009).

High School B. High School B is one of the oldest high schools in Kentucky. Originally a school that only white males attended, High School B accepted its first white female students in the early 1950s. After the Brown v. Board of Education decision of 1954, African-Americans were permitted to attend in the mid 1950s. The tension from race relations within society seemed to be non-existent at High School B. Not only does High School B have a rich tradition, but High School B has demonstrated itself as a leader in academics. Some of High School B's accomplishments related to academics are: (a) recognition by the U.S. Department of Education as a National Exemplary School, (b) over 30 student appointments to U.S. Service Academies since 1980, and (c) a 100% graduation rate for the class of 2008. The students at High School B are required to adhere to the dress code, which consists of a solid color shirt and khaki pants.

Athletically, High School B has several accomplishments. High School B has earned several KHSAA state championships in football, basketball, baseball, soccer, golf, and track (KHSAA, 2009). During the 2009-2010 school year, High School B had an enrollment of 1784 students, of which 234 were African-American males, 562 white males, 610 white females, 309 African-American females, 11 Hispanic males, 9 Hispanic females, and 49 listed as Other (see Table 2).

Description of the Sample

The number of African-American males at both schools enabled the researcher to collect a sample size that was representative of the population in order to conduct a

reliable study. The sample size in the study is a statistically reliable representation of the population of African-American male students who attend high school in Louisville, Kentucky. The sample for this study was 290 African-American male students from High School A and 234 African-American male students from High School B. Both high schools consist of Grades 9 through 12. Of the 290 African-American males at High School A, 25 student-athletes returned their consent forms and completed the survey, while 7 African-American male non-athletes returned their consent form. African-American males represent 28% of the total student population at High School A.

Of the 234 African-American males at High School B, 43 student-athletes returned their consent forms and completed the survey, while 10 African-American male non-athletes returned their consent form. African-American males represent 13% of the total student population at High School B. The totals from both schools were 68 African-American male student-athletes and 17 African-American male non-athletes. Each African-American male student was provided an opportunity to hear from the researcher as to the rationale for the request to conduct the study and why the two schools were chosen as possible participants for the study. This information session took place prior to the administration of the student survey and then consent forms were sent home with the students to obtain parental consent for the study. The purpose of the study, educational significance, along with statements confirming student anonymity, were also provided.

Table 1

Louisville High School A 2009-2010 Enrollment

Grade	White Male	White Female	African-American Male	African-American Female	Hispanic Male	Hispanic Female	Other	Total
9	10	14	95	156	10	22	23	330
10	5	14	74	128	8	15	16	260
11	9	11	54	115	9	8	17	223
12	5	12	67	126	7	5	8	230
Total	29	51	290	525	34	50	64	1043

Note. Statistics are from Jefferson County Public Schools Student Enrollment Summary Report in September 11, 2009.

Table 2

Louisville High School B 2009-2010 Enrollment

Grade	White Male	White Female	African-American Male	African-American Female	Hispanic Male	Hispanic Female	Other	Total
9	159	143	46	81	6	4	13	452
10	128	163	63	93	1	3	14	465
11	138	141	65	63	3	1	13	424
12	137	163	60	72	1	1	9	443
Total	562	610	234	309	11	9	49	1784

Note. Statistics are from Jefferson County Public Schools Student Enrollment Summary Report in September 11, 2009.

Each African-American male who participated in the study was provided the consent form and returned the consent form to the school. Each participant was then given the parent survey to take home and have one or both of their parents take the parent

survey. These students were requested to return the survey to their school by September 18, 2009. The schools collected the parent surveys and mailed the results to the researcher at the researcher's home address. It should be noted that a possible motivational bias could have existed due to the fact that the researcher made it known during the information session that the researcher was a graduate of a particular high school in Louisville, KY and a graduate of Morehouse College. These two facts may have motivated the African-American male students in the study to participate in the study or discouraged these students from participating in the study.

Sampling Method

Each African-American male student had an equal chance to be included in the study and an equal opportunity to achieve academic success in the classroom, based on random sampling. The researcher controlled for the following variables: the demographics of the participants (gender and ethnicity), the sampling method, the schools involved in the study, the use of GPAs, and the selected year for the GPAs. There was not a minimum GPA requirement for the participants to be included in the study.

Research Design

The causal-comparative research method was used to examine if participation in high school athletics had an impact on the academic achievement of African-American males. The independent variable was participation in high school athletics. The dependent variables were the grade point averages. The African-American males, who did not participate in high school athletics, and their parents, were not included in the survey. A two-sample *t*-test was used to compare the grade point averages of the two

groups of African-American males. A two-sample *t*-test was used to compare the survey results from the different groups of parents and students. The researcher used SPSS and Microsoft Excel 2007 to collect the descriptive statistical data and the results were reviewed by a statistics expert. A complete analysis of these results is discussed in Chapter Four.

Survey Instruments

Development of the survey instruments. The final version of the parent survey (Appendix D) and student survey (Appendix E) were designed by the researcher after three revisions. Both surveys were constructed as a cross-sectional survey designed to measure the participants' attitudes regarding the impact that high school athletics has on academic achievement at the time the survey was taken. The researcher addressed content validity by ensuring that the survey questions were designed to appropriately answer the research questions in this study by developing questions that related to the research questions. Both surveys were amended several times based on feedback from those who contributed to the design of the surveys.

While constructing the survey, the researcher concluded that the Likert 5-point scale would be the most appropriate type of scale to use in this study. The scale used was 5 = *strongly agree*; 4 = *agree*; 3 = *undecided*; 2 = *disagree*; 1 = *strongly disagree*. Due to the construction of the survey questions, the researcher had to account for positively and negatively stated questions as they related to the scoring of the responses. The student survey and parent survey consisted of 21 similar questions that were designed to measure students' and parents' attitudes about how high school sports participation impacts academics. The survey also included a section that afforded the respondent an

opportunity to add comments that provided a qualitative component to the research. Both surveys were designed to mitigate uncertainty about the questions, ensure anonymity, and required a minimal amount of time to complete. This was accomplished by the many revisions and feedback received from those who assisted in the design of the surveys.

Table 3

Survey Questions Measuring Motivation, Character, and Self-Esteem

Question #	Motivation and Self-Esteem
1	Playing high school athletics motivates me to work harder in school
2	Playing high school athletics makes me feel good about myself
3	Playing high school athletics builds good character and work habits
5	My grades would worsen if I did not participate in high school athletics

Table 4

Survey Questions Measuring Parental Encouragement

Question #	Parental Encouragement
6	My parent(s) encourage me to practice my particular sport
7	My parent(s) encourage me to complete my homework
8	My parent(s) encourage me to do well in school
9	My parent(s) are more concerned with my grades than high school athletics
11	My parent(s) discipline me for underachieving in school
16	My parent(s) help me with my homework
17	My parent(s) help me prepare for my high school athletic competition

Table 5

Survey Questions Measuring Negative Attitude Toward Academics

Question #	Negative Attitude Toward Academics
10	My parent(s) are more concerned about high school athletics than my grades
12	I would still be on the team even if my grades were not very good
14	I care more about playing high school athletics than I do about my grades

Table 6

Survey Questions Measuring Positive Attitude Toward Academics

Question #	Positive Attitude Toward Academics
4	My grades would be better if I did not participate in high school athletics
13	I care more about my grades than I do about playing high school athletics
15	Making good grades in school is important to me

Table 7

Survey Questions Measuring Coach Encouragement

Question #	Coach Encouragement
18	My coach(es) is/are more concerned about my grades than high school athletics
19	My coach(es) disciplines me for underachieving in school
20	My coach(es) encourages me to do well in school

Validation procedures for the surveys. The Survey Institute served as a resource guide in the development and construction of the surveys for this study. Before the researcher designed the parent and student surveys, the researcher established goals and desired outcomes for the surveys. The goals and desired outcomes were that the surveys would be instruments that were accurate, valid, and reliable in their measurement of student-athletes' and parents' beliefs and attitudes toward high school athletic participation of African-American males and that the surveys would provide the information they were designed to produce. The student and parent surveys were initially tested by African-American male student-athletes and parents who were not connected to the schools in the study. These pilot surveys were used as a convenience sample. The researcher attended an Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) basketball tournament in Chantilly, Virginia in which the majority of the players were African-American males. The researcher randomly asked 20 players at this tournament, who appeared to be high school students, if they would volunteer to take the survey. The researcher, however, did not ascertain if this sample of students attended a high school in an urban, suburban, or rural community. The researcher asked the age of the students to ascertain if they were of high school age. The researcher did not ask if these African-American males participated in sports at their particular high school. The researcher informed the players of the intent of the survey and asked them if they would help in the research by providing feedback with respect to the clarity and relevance of the survey questions. The researcher asked the following questions of the student-athletes and of the parents to help validate the survey once the student-athletes and the parents returned the survey:

- Are there any questions that you felt should have been included that were not a part of the survey?
- Did the survey appear to address the intent of the research?
- Did the survey questions seem too difficult to respond to?
- Did you feel uncomfortable taking this survey?
- Was the survey too long?
- Have you participated in a survey like this before?
- Did the survey cause you to think about the relationship between academics and high school athletics?

The researcher thanked the students and parents for taking the survey and reassured them that their responses were anonymous. The researcher did not ask for or record any names of the participants who assisted in the validation of the survey. While each student and parent filled out the survey, the researcher walked away and allowed the student or parent to return the survey by placing the survey in a manila envelope so to protect the anonymity of the responses and then asked the validation questions previously mentioned. The researcher did not know whether any of the student and parent participants in this pilot survey were related to one another.

For additional validation of the surveys, the researcher emailed the surveys to both principals of the schools included in the study to gain their feedback and asked the same clarification questions that were asked of the pilot survey participants. One of the principals of the schools earned his doctoral degree in educational leadership and the other principal had several years of experience as a coach and administrator. These qualifications solidified the value of their opinions and feedback regarding the validation

of the surveys. The researcher also requested the opinion of four other educational doctoral candidates to assist in the validation of the survey by giving feedback on the survey questions. Once all feedback was gathered from those who assisted in the validation of the survey questions, the researcher made amendments from the original survey construction and the final survey design was completed. Previous versions of the parent survey are listed as Appendices F and G. Previous versions of the student survey are listed as Appendices H and I.

The survey also provided a section for the participants to make any comments that they wanted to share regarding the study. A few of the comments that were shared by the participants were included in Chapter Four. These comments provided a qualitative component to the study and provided the researcher with additional information from which to draw conclusions regarding the results of the study.

It is important to note that the researcher did not design a different survey for the students that did not participate in sports (i.e., a survey that would not have discussed sports) and their parents. Thus, the researcher failed to consider the attitudes and beliefs of the group of students who did not participate in sports, and their parents. A similar but not sports-centered wording for the survey given to non-sport participant students and their parents would likely have brought more credibility to the study. This exclusion impacted the internal and external validity of the parent and student surveys. However, the confidence level of each construct within the parent and student survey is identified within Chapter Four. The surveys were given the name of “Montgomery Sports and Academics Perception Survey” parent and student version.

Data Collection Procedures

Survey approval process and information session. In the initial stages to receive permission to conduct research, the researcher contacted Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) in July 2009 to inquire about the process to conduct research using students. The researcher was informed that permission from the principals of the schools would be needed before any research could be approved. The researcher emailed the principals at High School A and High School B to receive permission to conduct research using their students. The researcher also followed-up with phone calls to personalize the contact and request. The researcher submitted an abbreviated proposal via an email to the principals and then met in person with both principals to discuss the research and plan. The principals at both High Schools agreed to allow the researcher to conduct research at their schools and to meet with all African-Americans at the respective schools. The researcher then proceeded to receive approval from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and JCPS. Once the Liberty University IRB approved the researcher request to conduct this study, JCPS also approved the researcher's request.

With a school administrator or designee present in the information session, the researcher met with African-American males at the schools to provide information regarding the study and respectfully requested their participation. The researcher provided pertinent details about the study, why the study was being conducted, and the potential impact on education the study could have. The researcher emphasized that the responses of the participants on the survey would be anonymous and that their participation in the study was completely voluntary. After providing details about the study, the researcher passed out the informed consent forms that required both parent and

student signatures. The student and parent surveys were distributed later in the meeting, but students did not take the survey until consent was given. The student-athletes were asked to return the informed consent forms and parent surveys to the school.

Student survey distribution and collection. The survey was provided to 100% of the African-American male student-athletes and their parents who consented to participate in the study. However, the researcher was not able to confirm whether or not the parents received the surveys from their sons. The parents' survey requested the respondent to identify their status as the mother, father, or guardian of the student-athlete and the student survey requested the age of the student. The researcher did not ask students if they needed two surveys, because asking may have embarrassed a student who only had one parent or may have been under foster care. Instead, the researcher passed out two parent surveys to each student and gave the student-athletes the option to return one or both parent surveys to the school administrator. The non-athlete African-American males who were participants in the study were not asked to take the survey.

Once the informed consent forms were returned, the African-American male student-athletes who consented to the inclusion of the study turned in their completed survey to the school administrator or designee. This allowed for a buffer between the participants and the researcher. The surveys were coded according to the school the participant attended. Upon receipt of the completed surveys, the surveys were then forwarded to the researcher so that data analysis and data interpretation of the surveys could begin.

Parent survey distribution and collection. The informed consent forms were sent home with the African-American male student-athletes. The parent version of the

survey accompanied the consent form with the African-American student-athlete. This delivery method was used so that if the parent consented to participate in the study, they would already have a parent survey to complete and return along with the consent form. This method also allowed for a buffer between the participants and the researcher. The parent surveys were coded according to the school of their son and segregated by gender or relationship of the parent. Upon receipt of the completed parent surveys, the parent surveys were then forwarded to the researcher so that data analysis and data interpretation of the surveys could begin. The researcher did not have any control over the number of parent surveys that were returned to each school. Even though multiple efforts were made to increase the number of returned parent surveys, High School A did not return any parent surveys and High School B returned 10 parent surveys. Assuming that each African-American male student-athlete in the study had at least one parent or guardian available to participate in the study, the percent returned for the parent survey was 15%. Even though the number of returned parent surveys was very low, the responses provided interesting information which is discussed in Chapter Four.

Archival data collection: Grade point averages. The researcher retrieved the grades of the students at High School A in person on January 11, 2010. The researcher retrieved the grades from the High School B students, who consented to participate in the study via email on December 1, 2009 from the interim counselor at High School B, who served as the contact person designee for the researcher during the initial stages of the study. Even though the grades from students at High School B were emailed from the counselor to the researcher, the researcher verified the accuracy of the grades while present at High School B on January 11, 2010.

Research Problem

Do African-American males who participate in high school athletics achieve higher academic achievement in the core content subjects of language arts, math, science, and social studies than African-American males who do not participate in high school athletics?

Research Questions and Null Hypotheses

1. Will African-American male students who participate in high school athletics demonstrate higher grade point averages (GPAs) in the core content subjects of language arts, math, science, and social studies than African-American male students who do not participate in high school athletics?

Null hypothesis: There is no significant statistical difference in the overall mean grade point averages (GPAs) of African-American males who do and do not participate in high school athletics.

2. Will any of the mean results in each of the core content subjects of language arts, math, science, or social studies show a statistically significant difference in achievement when compared between the two groups of African-American male students who do and do not participate in sports?

Null hypothesis: There is no significant statistical difference between the African-American male students who do and do not participate in sports when comparing the mean results in any of the core content subjects.

- a. There is no significant statistical difference between the two groups of African-American male students when comparing the mean results of language arts.

- b. There is no significant statistical difference between the two groups of African-American male students when comparing the mean results of math.
 - c. There is no significant statistical difference between the two groups of African-American male students when comparing the mean results of science.
 - d. There is no significant statistical difference between the two groups of African-American male students when comparing the mean results of social studies.
3. Will the survey results from the purposive sample of African-American students and parents show a statistically significant difference in attitude from the convenience sample of African-American students and parents?

Null hypothesis: There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the survey designed to measure participants' and parents' attitudes toward high school athletic participation of African-American males.

- a. There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the parent survey designed to measure motivation and self-esteem.
- b. There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the parent survey designed to measure parental encouragement.
- c. There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the parent survey designed to measure negative attitude toward academics.
- d. There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the parent survey designed to measure positive attitude toward academics.
- e. There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the student survey designed to measure coach encouragement.

- f. There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the student survey designed to measure motivation and self-esteem.
- g. There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the student survey designed to measure parental encouragement.
- h. There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the student survey designed to measure negative attitude toward academics.
- i. There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the student survey designed to measure positive attitude toward academics.
- j. There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the student survey designed to measure coach encouragement.

Data Analysis

Surveys. The researcher organized the survey questions into constructs and determined the descriptive statistics for each construct. The constructs were: Motivation and Self-esteem, Parental Encouragement, Negative Attitude Toward Academics, Positive Attitude Toward Academics, and Coach Encouragement. The constructs of the survey were organized so that the researcher could evaluate the attitudes of both the parent and student as they related to the impact that sports may or may not have on academic achievement. The qualitative portion of the survey (for written comments) was not analyzed because there was not sufficient data to justify a process such as coding themes.

GPA's. In the examination of the data, the researcher calculated each of the student participants' grades (a) for an overall grade point average and (b) in the core content areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies. The results are

presented using descriptive statistics in Chapter Four. The results are discussed in Chapter Five.

Summary

The methodology used in this study set the foundation for the possible replication by other researchers. In compiling the data, the researcher used grade point averages from the core content subjects of language arts, math, science, and social studies, as well as the results from surveys that were designed to measure the participants' attitudes toward academics and high school sports participation. The researcher discussed the background of the schools, provided a description of the schools, described how the surveys were constructed and validated, and detailed how the data was gathered and analyzed. The research problem and research questions were restated. The surveys also included a section for comments from the participants in the study to provide a qualitative component to the study.

Chapter Four: Research Findings

Review of Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to compare the academic achievement between African-American male students who do and do not participate in high school athletics. The analysis was based on examining the 2008-2009 school year grade point averages in the core content areas of language arts math, science, and social studies. Each of the student-athlete participants' grades in the core content areas was recorded and an overall grade point average in each core content area was calculated. The study also examined survey results from African-American male student-athletes and their parents. The survey was designed to measure the participants' attitude toward academics and high school sports participation. Descriptive statistical analysis involved determining the mean, mode, standard deviation, variance, confidence level, and standard error of the mean. The research questions investigated in this study were:

1. Will African-American male students who participate in high school athletics demonstrate higher grade point averages (GPAs) in the core content subjects of language arts, math, science, and social studies than African-American male students who do not participate in high school athletics?
2. Will any of the mean results in each of the core content subjects of language arts, math, science, or social studies show a statistically significant difference in achievement when compared between the two groups of African-American male students?

3. Will the survey results from the purposive sample of African-American students and parents show a statistically significant difference in attitude from the convenience sample of African-American students and parents?

Survey Completion Rates

Of the 524 African-American males available for the study that attended both high schools (290 at High School A and 234 at High School B), only a total of 85 students participated in the study (68 student-athletes and 17 non-athletes). This total represents a 16% participation rate in the study. Each of the 68 student-athletes that consented to the study returned a completed survey. The returned surveys brought a response rate of 100% for student-athletes. However, only 10 parents returned the survey. Under the assumption that each student-athlete had at least one parent or guardian available to participate in the parent survey, the response rate for parents was 15%.

Results for Research Question 1

For research question 1, the null hypothesis was: There is no significant statistical difference in the overall mean grade point averages (GPAs) of African-American males who do and do not participate in high school athletics.

Table 8

Overall Grade Point Averages Statistics

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
Student-Athletes	68	2.28	.74	83	.50
Student (non) Athletes	17	2.41	.63		

Table 8 presents the descriptive statistics of 68 African-American male student-athletes and 17 African-American male students who do not participate in sports. The grades in each of the core content areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies for each African-American male in the study was computed to determine their individual core content area grade point average. The individual grade point averages for both groups were then compiled to arrive at a group grade point average in the core content areas and an overall group grade point average. The grading scale used to determine grade point average was based on A = 4.00, B = 3.00, C = 2.00, D = 1.00, and F = 0.00. Each of these grades was from the 2008-2009 school year.

The overall mean grade point average for the African-American student-athletes was 2.28 and the overall mean grade point average for the African-American males who do not participate in sports was 2.41. The mean difference of the overall grade point averages between the two groups in the study was -0.13. The standard deviation of the overall grade point averages for the African-American student-athletes was .74 while the standard deviation for the African-American students who do not participate in sports was .63. The confidence level of the overall means for the African-American student-athletes was .42 and the confidence level of the overall means for the African-American students who do not participate in sports was .36. The researcher conducted a two-tailed *t*-test from the two groups of African-American male students that brought a result of .5. These statistics indicate the probability that if 100 similar studies were performed, the studies would display similar results 95% of the time. Thus, the results of this study indicate that the null hypothesis for research question 1 should not be rejected.

Results for Research Question 2

For research question 2, the null hypothesis was: There is no significant statistical difference between the African-American male students who do and do not participate in sports when comparing the mean results in any of the core content subjects.

For research question 2a, the null hypothesis was: There is no significant statistical difference between the two groups of African-American male students when comparing the mean results of language arts.

Table 9

Language Arts Statistics

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
Student-Athletes	68	2.28	.99	83	.87
Student (non) Athletes	17	2.24	.90		

The mean language arts grade point average for the African-American student-athletes was 2.28 and the mean language arts grade point average for the African-American males who do not participate in sports was 2.24. The mean difference of the language arts grade point averages between the two groups in the study was .04. The standard deviation of the language arts grade point averages for the African-American student-athletes was .99 while the standard deviation for the African-American students who do not participate in sports was .90. The confidence level of the language arts means for the African-American student-athletes was .56 and the confidence level of the language arts means for the African-American students who do not participate in sports

was .51. The researcher conducted a two-tailed t -test from the two groups of African-American male students that brought a result of .87. These statistics indicate the probability that if 100 similar studies were performed, the studies would display similar results 95% of the time. Thus, the results of this study indicate that the null hypothesis for research question 2a, as it relates to language arts, should not be rejected.

For research question 2b, the null hypothesis was: There is no significant statistical difference between the two groups of African-American male students when comparing the mean results of math.

Table 10

Math Statistics

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
Student-Athletes	68	2.22	.98	83	.36
Student (non) Athletes	17	2.47	1.07		

The mean math grade point average for the African-American student-athletes was 2.22 and the math mean grade point average for the African-American males who do not participate in sports was 2.47. The mean difference of the math grade point averages between the two groups in the study was -0.25. The standard deviation of the math grade point averages for the African-American student-athletes was .98 while the standard deviation for the African-American students who do not participate in sports was 1.07. The confidence level of the math means for the African-American student-athletes was .55 and the confidence level of the overall means for the African-American students who

do not participate in sports was .6. The researcher conducted a two-tailed *t*-test from the two groups of African-American male students that brought a result of .36. These statistics indicate the probability that if 100 similar studies were performed, the studies would display similar results 95% of the time. Thus, the results of this study indicate that the null hypothesis for research question 2b, as it relates to math, should not be rejected.

For research question 2c, the null hypothesis was: There is no significant statistical difference between the two groups of African-American male students when comparing the mean results of science.

Table 11

Science Statistics

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
Student-Athletes	68	2.13	.88	83	.5
Student (non) Athletes	17	2.29	.92		

The mean science grade point average for the African-American student-athletes was 2.13 and the science mean grade point average for the African-American males who do not participate in sports was 2.29. The mean difference of the science grade point averages between the two groups in the study was -0.16. The standard deviation of the science grade point averages for the African-American student-athletes was .88 while the standard deviation for the African-American students who do not participate in sports was .92. The confidence level of the overall means for the African-American student-athletes was .48 and the confidence level of the overall means for the African-American

students who do not participate in sports was .52. The researcher conducted a two-tailed *t*-test from the two groups of African-American male students, which brought a result of .5. These statistics indicate the probability that if 100 similar studies were performed, the studies would display similar results 95% of the time. Thus, the results of this study indicate that the null hypothesis for research question 2c, as it relates to science, should not be rejected.

For research question 2d, the null hypothesis was: There is no significant statistical difference between the two groups of African-American male students when comparing the mean results of social studies.

Table 12

Social Studies Statistics

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
Student-Athletes	68	2.49	.86	83	.48
Student (non) Athletes	17	2.65	.79		

The mean social studies grade point average for the African-American student-athletes was 2.49 and the social studies mean grade point average for the African-American males who do not participate in sports was 2.65. The mean difference of the social studies grade point averages between the two groups in the study was -0.16. The standard deviation of the social studies grade point averages for the African-American student-athletes was .86 while the standard deviation for the African-American students who do not participate in sports was .79. The confidence level of the social studies

means for the African-American student-athletes was .48 and the confidence level of the social studies means for the African-American students who do not participate in sports was .44. The researcher conducted a two-tailed *t*-test from the two groups of African-American male students that brought a result of .48. These statistics indicate the probability that if 100 similar studies were performed, the studies would display similar results 95% of the time. Thus, the results of this study indicate that the null hypothesis for research question 2d, as it relates to social studies, should not be rejected.

Results for Research Question 3

Parent survey constructs. For research question 3, the null hypothesis was: There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the survey designed to measure participants' and parents' attitudes toward high school athletic participation of African-American males.

In the following tables, PP will represent parents in the purposive group sampling and CP will represent parents in the convenient group sampling. The scale used was 5 = *strongly agree*; 4 = *agree*; 3 = *undecided*; 2 = *disagree*; 1 = *strongly disagree*.

For research question 3a, the null hypothesis was: There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the parent survey designed to measure motivation and self-esteem.

Table 13

Motivation and Self-Esteem

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
PP	10	4.03	.81	18	.13
CP	10	4.67	.6		

The mean of the Motivation and Self-Esteem construct for the parents in the purposive group sampling was 4.03 and the mean of the Motivation and Self-Esteem construct for the parents in the convenient group sampling was 4.05. The mean difference of the Motivation and Self-Esteem construct between the two groups in the study was -0.64. The standard deviation of the Motivation and Self-Esteem construct for the parents in the purposive group sampling was .81 while the standard deviation for the parents in the convenient group sampling was .6. The confidence level of the Motivation and Self-Esteem construct for the parents in the purposive group sampling was .17 and the confidence level of the Motivation and Self-Esteem construct for the parents in the convenient group sampling was .13. The researcher conducted a two-tailed *t*-test from the two groups of parents, which brought a result of .13. These statistics indicate the probability that if 100 similar studies were performed, the studies would display similar results 95% of the time. Thus, the results of this study indicate that the null hypothesis for research question 3a, as it relates to the Motivation and Self-Esteem construct, should not be rejected.

For research question 3b, the null hypothesis was: There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the parent survey designed to measure parental encouragement.

Table 14

Parental Encouragement

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
PP	10	3.87	.74	18	.97
CP	10	3.83	.73		

The mean of the Parent Encouragement construct for the parents in the purposive group sampling was 3.87 and the mean of the Parent Encouragement construct for the parents in the convenient group sampling was 3.83. The mean difference of the Parent Encouragement construct between the two groups in the study was .04. The standard deviation of the Parent Encouragement construct for the parents in the purposive group sampling was .74 while the standard deviation for the parents in the convenient group sampling was .73. The confidence level of the Parent Encouragement construct for the parents in the purposive group sampling was .16 and the confidence level of the Parent Encouragement construct for the parents in the convenient group sampling was .16. The researcher conducted a two-tailed *t*-test from the two groups of parents, which brought a result of .13. These statistics indicate the probability that if 100 similar studies were performed, the studies would display similar results 95% of the time. Thus, the results of this study indicate that the null hypothesis for research question 3b, as it relates to the Parent Encouragement construct, should not be rejected.

For research question 3c, the null hypothesis was: There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the parent survey designed to measure negative attitude toward academics.

Table 15

Negative Attitude Toward Academics

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
PP	10	2.1	.74	18	.25
CP	10	1.5	1.03		

The mean of the Negative Attitude Toward Academics construct for the parents in the purposive group sampling was 2.1 and the mean of the Negative Attitude Toward Academics construct for the parents in the convenient group sampling was 1.5. The mean difference of the Negative Attitude Toward Academics construct between the two groups in the study was 0.6. The standard deviation of the Negative Attitude Toward Academics construct for the parents in the purposive group sampling was .74 while the standard deviation for the parents in the convenient group sampling was 1.03. The confidence level of the Negative Attitude Toward Academics construct for the parents in the purposive group sampling was .16 and the confidence level of the Negative Attitude Toward Academics construct for the parents in the convenient group sampling was .22. The researcher conducted a two-tailed *t*-test from the two groups of parents, which brought a result of .25. These statistics indicate the probability that if 100 similar studies were performed, the studies would display similar results 95% of the time. Thus, the results of this study indicate that the null hypothesis for research question 3c, as it relates to the Negative Attitude Toward Academics construct, should not be rejected.

For research question 3d, the null hypothesis was: There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the parent survey designed to measure positive attitude toward academics.

Table 16

Positive Attitude Toward Academics

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
PP	10	3.38	.99	18	.74
CP	10	3.7	.78		

The mean of the Positive Attitude Toward Academics construct for the parents in the purposive group sampling was 3.38 and the mean of the Positive Attitude Toward Academics construct for the parents in the convenient group sampling was 3.7. The mean difference of the Positive Attitude Toward Academics construct between the two groups in the study was -0.32. The standard deviation of the Positive Attitude Toward Academics construct for the parents in the purposive group sampling was .99 while the standard deviation for the parents in the convenient group sampling was .78. The confidence level of the Positive Attitude Toward Academics construct for the parents in the purposive group sampling was .21 and the confidence level of the Positive Attitude Toward Academics construct for the parents in the convenient group sampling was .17. The researcher conducted a two-tailed *t*-test from the two groups of parents, which brought a result of .74. These statistics indicate the probability that if 100 similar studies were performed, the studies would display similar results 95% of the time. Thus, the results of this study indicate that the null hypothesis for research question 3d, as it relates to the Positive Attitude Toward Academics construct, should not be rejected.

For research question 3e, the null hypothesis was: There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the parent survey designed to measure coach encouragement.

Table 17

Coach Encouragement

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
PP	10	2.9	.73	18	.02*
CP	10	4.13	1.2		

If $p < .05$, reject the null hypothesis

The mean of the Coach Encouragement construct for the parents in the purposive group sampling was 2.9 and the mean of the Coach Encouragement construct for the parents in the convenient group sampling was 4.13. The mean difference of the Coach Encouragement construct between the two groups in the study was -1.23. The standard deviation of the Coach Encouragement construct for the parents in the purposive group sampling was .73 while the standard deviation for the parents in the convenient group sampling was 1.2. The confidence level of the Coach Encouragement construct for the parents in the purposive group sampling was .16 and the confidence level of the Coach Encouragement construct for the parents in the convenient group sampling was .26. The researcher conducted a two-tailed *t*-test from the two groups of parents, which brought a result of .02. These statistics indicate the probability that if 100 similar studies were performed, the studies would display similar results 95% of the time. Thus, the results of this study indicate that the null hypothesis for research question 3e, as it relates to the Coach Encouragement construct, should be rejected.

Student survey constructs. In the following tables, PS will represent African-American male student-athletes within the purposive group sampling and CS will represent African-American male student-athletes in the convenient group sampling.

For research question 3f, the null hypothesis was: There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the student survey designed to measure motivation and self-esteem.

Table 18

Motivation and Self-Esteem

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
PS	68	4.02	.86	86	.97
CS	20	4.05	.96		

The mean of the Motivation and Self-Esteem construct for the African-American student-athletes in the purposive group sampling was 4.02 and the mean of the Motivation and Self-Esteem construct for the African-American student-athletes in the convenient sampling group was 4.05. The mean difference of the Motivation and Self-Esteem construct between the two groups in the study was -0.03. The standard deviation of the Motivation and Self-Esteem construct for the African-American student-athletes in the purposive group sampling was .86 while the standard deviation for the African-American student-athletes in the convenient sampling group was .96. The confidence level of the Motivation and Self-Esteem construct for the African-American student-athletes in the purposive sampling group was .07 and the confidence level of the Motivation and Self-Esteem construct for the African-American student-athletes in the convenient sampling group was .14. The researcher conducted a two-tailed *t*-test from the two groups of African-American male student-athletes that brought a result of .97. These statistics indicate the probability that if 100 similar studies were performed, the studies would display similar results 95% of the time. Thus, the results of this study indicate that the null hypothesis for research question 3f, as it relates to the Motivation and Self-Esteem construct, should not be rejected.

For research question 3g, the null hypothesis was: There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the student survey designed to measure parental encouragement.

Table 19

Parental Encouragement

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
PS	68	4.2	.89	86	.28
CS	20	3.68	1.22		

The mean of the Parental Encouragement construct for the African-American student-athletes in the purposive group sampling was 4.2 and the mean of the Parental Encouragement construct for the African-American student-athletes in the convenient sampling group was 3.68. The mean difference of the Parental Encouragement construct between the two groups in the study was .52. The standard deviation of the Parental Encouragement construct for the African-American student-athletes in the purposive group sampling was .89 while the standard deviation for the African-American student-athletes in the convenient sampling group was 1.22. The confidence level of the Parental Encouragement construct for the African-American student-athletes in the purposive sampling group was .07 and the confidence level of the Parental Encouragement construct for the African-American student-athletes in the convenient sampling group was .18. The researcher conducted a two-tailed *t*-test from the two groups of African-American male student-athletes, which brought a result of .28. These statistics indicate the probability that if 100 similar studies were performed, the studies would display

similar results 95% of the time. Thus, the results of this study indicate that the null hypothesis for research question 3g, as it relates to the Parental Encouragement construct, should not be rejected.

For research question 3h, the null hypothesis was: There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the student survey designed to measure negative attitude toward academics.

Table 20

Negative Attitude Toward Academics

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
PS	68	2.36	1.16	86	.75
CS	20	2.22	1.36		

The mean of the Negative Attitude Toward Academics construct for the African-American student-athletes in the purposive group sampling was 2.36 and the mean of the Negative Attitude Toward Academics construct for the African-American student-athletes in the convenient sampling group was 2.22. The mean difference of the Negative Attitude Toward Academics construct between the two groups in the study was .14. The standard deviation of the Negative Attitude Toward Academics construct for the African-American student-athletes in the purposive group sampling was 1.16 while the standard deviation for the African-American student-athletes in the convenient sampling group was 1.36. The confidence level of the Negative Attitude Toward Academics construct for the African-American student-athletes in the purposive sampling group was .09 and the confidence level of the Negative Attitude Toward Academics construct for the

African-American student-athletes in the convenient sampling group was .21. The researcher conducted a two-tailed *t*-test from the two groups of African-American male student-athletes, which brought a result of .75. These statistics indicate the probability that if 100 similar studies were performed, the studies would display similar results 95% of the time. Thus, the results of this study indicate that the null hypothesis for research question 3h, as it relates to the Negative Attitude Toward Academics construct, should not be rejected.

For research question 3i, the null hypothesis was: There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the student survey designed to measure positive attitude toward academics.

Table 21

Positive Attitude Toward Academics

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
PS	68	3.74	.91	86	.77
CS	20	3.47	1.08		

The mean of the Positive Attitude Toward Academics construct for the African-American student-athletes in the purposive group sampling was 3.74 and the mean of the Positive Attitude Toward Academics construct for the African-American student-athletes in the convenient sampling group was 3.47. The mean difference of the Positive Attitude Toward Academics construct between the two groups in the study was .27. The standard deviation of the Positive Attitude Toward Academics construct for the African-American student-athletes in the purposive group sampling was .91 while the standard deviation for

the African-American student-athletes in the convenient sampling group was 1.08. The confidence level of the Positive Attitude Toward Academics construct for the African-American student-athletes in the purposive sampling group was .075 and the confidence level of the Positive Attitude Toward Academics construct for the African-American student-athletes in the convenient sampling group was .16. The researcher conducted a two-tailed *t*-test from the two groups of African-American male student-athletes, which brought a result of .77. These statistics indicate the probability that if 100 similar studies were performed, the studies would display similar results 95% of the time. Thus, the results of this study indicate that the null hypothesis for research question 3i, as it relates to the Positive Attitude Toward Academics construct, should not be rejected.

For research question 3j, the null hypothesis was: There is no significant statistical difference in the overall results from within the student survey designed to measure coach encouragement.

Table 22

Coach Encouragement

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i>
PS	68	3.41	1.21	86	.49
CS	20	3.85	1.16		

The mean of the Coach Encouragement construct for the African-American student-athletes in the purposive group sampling was 3.41 and the mean of the Coach Encouragement construct for the African-American student-athletes in the convenient sampling group was 3.85. The mean difference of the Coach Encouragement construct

between the two groups in the study was -0.44 . The standard deviation of the Coach Encouragement construct for the African-American student-athletes in the purposive group sampling was 1.2 while the standard deviation for the African-American student-athletes in the convenient sampling group was 1.16 . The confidence level of the Coach Encouragement construct for the African-American student-athletes in the purposive sampling group was $.1$ and the confidence level of the Coach Encouragement construct for the African-American student-athletes in the convenient sampling group was $.18$. The researcher conducted a two-tailed t -test from the two groups of African-American male student-athletes, which brought a result of $.49$. These statistics indicate the probability that if 100 similar studies were performed, the studies would display similar results 95% of the time. Thus, the results of this study indicate that the null hypothesis for research question 3j, as it relates to the Coach Encouragement construct, should not be rejected.

The results from this research question, which examined five constructs within the parent and student surveys designed to measure attitudes and opinions regarding sports participation and its impact on academics, indicates that there was very little difference of opinion from the groups within the study. Of the five constructs within the parent and student surveys, only the Coach Encouragement construct within the parent survey suggests rejecting the null hypothesis, as the significant difference was less than the $.05$ level. All other constructs within the surveys suggest not rejecting the null hypothesis as true based on the results of p at a significant level greater than $.05$. Several descriptive tests were run to evaluate the constructs. The table for each of the constructs within the survey provides the results from the descriptive tests. Although the number of the participants in the student groups was different, calculations accounting for this

difference were included in the results. The mean difference of the groups indicated that there was no significant statistical difference between the means in any construct other than Coach Encouragement in the parent survey.

Participant Comments

Parent comments. The following list of shows comments from anonymous parent participants.

- “I believe the discipline he’s been accustomed to in sports has translated into his discipline for studying and working hard on his academics”
- “In all honesty, I do not even know my son’s coach’s name. What I do know is, my son is more active in class when he participates in sports.”
- Usually, I see a drop in his grades when the season is over.”
- “Last year, he played a little more. This year, not so much. I can see a drop in his grades.”

Student comments. The following list shows comments from anonymous student participants.

- “I feel like sports motivates me.”
- “I would still do well without sports.”
- “Athletics is a good mechanism to become a better person. It builds character and discipline.”
- “Sports is a stress release from school.”
- “Sports take away a lot of time and energy from my homework.”
- “Sports make me work harder in school.”

- “High school sports has widened my circle of friends and helped me interact with my peers better.”
- “I am a student first.”
- “Athletics gives me a brighter future.”
- “Early in my life, I was all about sports. Now, I take school more seriously and realized that my grades are more important.”
- “Sports generates leadership qualities.”
- “Sports provides me with something I like to do while in school.”
- “If I want to play, I have to make good grades.”

Summary

This chapter presented the statistical data that directly answered the research questions that were presented in chapter one. The data was the overall grade point averages in the core content areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies from two groups of African-American male students: those who participated in sports and those who did not. The results from this comparison indicated that there was not a significant statistical difference in the overall grade point averages.

Another analysis took place by comparing whether or not any of the core content areas of language arts, math, science, or social studies would indicate a statistically significant difference between the two groups of African-American male students. Although the number of participants is not at a level the researcher would have preferred, the study indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference between the grades of the two groups.

An analysis of the constructs within the parent and student surveys indicated that only the Coach Encouragement construct within the parent survey suggested rejecting the null hypothesis. All other constructs in both surveys indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the parent groups and student groups in the study. The next chapter provides further discussion regarding the findings that were presented within this chapter.

The responses from the participants in the survey indicate a wide range of opinions regarding the impact that sports has on academics. This wide range of opinions regarding the impact that sports has on academic achievement in African-American males provides supporting evidence for those who feel that sports has little to no impact, as well as those who feel sports has a positive or negative impact on achievement. While the grade point averages suggest that there was no statistically significant difference in the outcomes between African-American males who did and did not participate in sports, the comments on the survey make determining a definitive answer very difficult when considering whether or not sports has an impact on African-American male student-athletes' achievement.

Chapter Five: Summary and Discussion

This chapter is a detailed discussion of the findings from the study that were presented in Chapter Four. This chapter begins with a brief overview of the problem, the methodology, and the limitations and delimitations of this study. The results are discussed in relation to the research questions. This chapter also discusses the implications on education that the study may have and present conclusions regarding the application of the results from the study. Detailed recommendations for further research pertaining to the content of this study are also presented.

Re-Statement of the Problem

As stated in Chapter One, the purpose of this study was to examine whether or not participation in high school athletics had an impact on the academic achievement of African-American males. The study was based on the data produced from (a) the results from the 2008-2009 school year overall grade point averages (GPAs); (b) the results from the 2008-2009 school year GPAs in the core content areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies; and (c) surveys designed to measure student-athletes' and parents' attitudes toward high school athletic participation of African-American males. The study examined whether or not any of the core content areas produced a statistically significant difference in GPAs between the two groups of African-American male students. The study also examined five constructs within the parent and student surveys to determine if any statistically significant difference existed between them.

Review of Methodology

This study used grade point averages in the core content areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies to examine whether or not sports participation of

African-American male student-athletes impacted their academic achievement when compared to African-American male non-athletes. The study also used a survey that was designed to measure participants' attitudes regarding the impact that sports has on academic achievement of African-American males. The survey consisted of five constructs. The constructs were: Motivation and Self-esteem, Parental Encouragement, Negative Attitude Toward Academics, Positive Attitude Toward Academics, and Coach Encouragement. Descriptive statistics were used in the evaluation of the overall grade point average, core content averages, and each of the constructs within the survey. The statistics from each group within the study were compared by two-tailed *t*-tests to provide answers to the research questions.

Limitations

The following limitations apply to this study:

- The archival data analyzed for this study was maintained by a metropolitan school district and the individual schools within Jefferson County, Louisville, Kentucky. The data collected consists of the students' GPAs in the core content subjects of language arts, math, science, and social studies. A limitation of the study is whether the data used was entered correctly into the district's database and maintained properly by the Jefferson County Public School Central Office and the schools. The lack of control over specific variables described below may have interfered with the outcomes of this study. Such interference was out of the control of the researcher and therefore is to be considered a severe limitation.
- A severe limitation in the research design is the inability to eliminate other factors that may contribute to a high or low achievement of the participants. The

researcher was not able to control the following factors: the instructional strategies and style used by the teachers, the teachers' training or certification prior to administering lessons that may have affected the students' grade point average, the teachers' experience in teaching the core subjects, and how the teachers designed the pacing and lesson planning of the course content. There may have been other factors that existed at the schools from which the participants attended, such as culture or teacher demographics, and these differing factors may have affected the outcome.

- The administrative staff was responsible for the placement of students in classes, class size, and the design of the schedule for the school. There may have been differences between the two schools in these areas, and these differences may have affected the outcome.
- The researcher was not able to clearly determine whether or not those African-American male students who listed themselves as non-high school athletic participants might have participated in athletics outside of the high school jurisdiction, such as clubs sports or Amateur Association Union sports team. The researcher also was not able to ascertain whether any of the non-athletes in the study were interested in sports or if they had been cut from a particular team. The researcher also did not request that the African-American males who participated in high school athletics identify which sport(s) they played.
- There have been several studies that attribute the predictability of the academic success that African-American males experience to having both parents in the

household. The researcher did not account for this variable and its possible impact on the current study.

- The researcher did not account for the level of difficulty in any of the core content subjects. For example, some students may have been enrolled in algebra while others may have been enrolled in geometry when compiling the grades in math.
- The researcher used data from one school year instead of multiple school years.
- The researcher was not able to account for the socioeconomic background of the participants or whether the African-American males in the study received free/reduced lunch.

Delimitations

The following list describes the scope of this study:

- The participants of this study consisted of a comparison between African-American males who participated in high school athletics or who did not participate in high school athletics during the 2008-2009 school year. Female students and students of other ethnicities were not included in this study.
- The researcher selected the GPAs and surveys as the tools to examine whether or not high school athletics has an impact on academic achievement. The study relied on these tools for comparative analysis.
- The data analyzed did not include level of difficulty of classes taken or socioeconomic status (which was expected to be equivalent between the samples).

Summary of the Results

Research Question 1. The overall mean grade point average for the African-American student-athletes was 2.28 and the overall mean grade point average for the African-American males who do not participate in sports was 2.41. The mean difference of the overall grade point averages between the two groups in the study was -0.13. No statistically significant difference was found, so the null hypothesis should be accepted. The data further suggests that African-American male student-athletes achieve similar academic scores to those African-American males who did not participate in athletics.

Research Question 2. The data from each of the core content areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies indicated that there was not a significant statistical difference in the means. Of the four core content subjects, language arts was the only area in which the African-American male student-athletes obtained a higher mean score. There is inconclusive evidence as to this outcome, as several factors could have influenced this result.

It is unclear as to the type of course the students were taking within the content area. For example, within science, some students could have taken biology while other students could have taken physics. Another example would be that some students could have taken algebra while other students could have taken geometry. The researcher did not account for these differences and included the course in a general content area when compiling the data. This fact could have skewed the data.

Research Question 3. The student survey was designed to give participants an opportunity to provide their attitudes regarding the impact that sports participation had on their academic performance. While both groups of African-American male students

reported similar responses, the GPAs did not indicate the outcome that one would expect based on the responses on the surveys. Even though some of the African-American male student-athletes' responses indicated a high respect for academics and attributed their academic success to sports participation, it appears as though the level of expectation in the classroom was not very high. Both groups of African-American male student-athletes reported a mean score of slightly more than 4.0 based out of 5.0 for how sports motivated them to do well in school. The positive attitude construct was near the 3.5 area and the negative attitude construct was near the 2.5 area (based out of 5.0).

The overall GPAs of the African-American student-athletes in this study are in the average range. Parents from both sample groups reported nearly the same responses. The results from parents' and students' surveys both reflect that academics are important to these African-American male student-athletes. Still, the results are inconclusive as to whether sports participation impacted the academic achievement of African-American males. The comments from the parents and students offered very little assistance in determining the impact that sports participation has on African-American males. There were only a few comments submitted on the survey and the comments given did not provide any real contribution to the study. The comments submitted by the student participants in the study are reflective of the results of the Lickert-scale portion of the survey. Some students place more emphasis on their grades than other students; some felt they would do well in school even without sports, while others stated that sports encouraged them to work harder in school. The range of comments from the student-athletes contributed to the unlikelihood of arriving at a definitive conclusion regarding the impact that sports have on academic achievement in African-American male students.

Discussion

Research Question 1. African-American male student-athletes in this study achieved similar academic achievement to those African-American males who did not participate in athletics. The data appear to show that sports participation is not a factor in the academic achievement outcomes for African-American males.

After the examination of results of this study, it remains unclear as to the effect that sports has on the academic performance of the African-American male student. It also remains unclear as to whether or not the African-American male student-athletes who participated in the study would have achieved similar grades even if they did not participate in athletics. This lack of clarity was shown in the literature review for this study as well; some studies found a positive correlation, some found no correlation, and others found a negative correlation.

Several studies have found small positive effects for African-American male athletes. Broh (2002) found a small, but consistent increase in math and English grades. Marsh (1993) and Spence (2000) concluded that sports participation may have a positive effect on academic achievement in that the participation increases motivation and investment in school. Crosnoe (2002) identified a positive relationship for athletes' grades when compared to non-athletes. Other researchers have also suggested that participation in extracurricular activities improves attendance, behavior, and academic achievement, with small but statistically significant effects (Black, 2002; Braddock, 1981; Fejgin, 1994; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Fujita 2006; Hartman, 2008; Holloway, 2002; Nelson & Gordon-Larsen, 2006; Rombokas, 1995). Some of these studies did not specifically look at African-American males, as noted in the literature review.

Many studies did not find that participation in sports was associated with higher academic achievement (Edwards, 1985; Fisher et al., 1996; Melnick et al., 1992; Spence, 2000; Thomas, 1989). In fact, some studies found sports participation to be detrimental to the academic outcomes of adolescents (Cornelissen & Pfeifer, 2007; Streich, 2009).

Furthermore, as noted by Dorime and Toldson (2008) as well as Gayles (2005), some African-American males have high academic aspirations without participating in sports. Hartman (2008) reminds us that correlation does not necessarily indicate causation. While students who play sports sometimes attain higher grades than their non-sports participating classmates, their performance could be due to the fact that these athletes were better students in the first place. The exact link between sports participation and academics continues to be inconclusive. Thus, with so many studies finding ambiguous results, one might conclude that there are so many factors that affect academic achievement that future studies will continue to find ambiguous results in this area until a great number of influencing factors are controlled for. Alternately, it may be that even with carefully controlled studies, ambiguous results may still be found if the positive and negative influences of sports participation simply balance or cancel each other out.

Research Question 2. The data from each of the core content areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies indicated that there was not a significant statistical difference in the means. Of the four core content subjects, language arts was the only area in which the African-American male student-athletes obtained a higher mean score. There is inconclusive evidence as to this outcome, as several factors could have influenced this result.

As with the previous research question, it is unclear as to why the means of the core content areas indicated no statistically significant difference. The African-American male students selected for this study attended high schools that focus on student achievement, thus the sample differs from samples used in research that focused on low student outcomes and low graduation rates in urban schooling for African-American males.

Other studies noted in the literature review did not look at the effect of sports participation broken down by academic subject area, so there are not other studies to compare to this outcome. It is unclear as to the type of course the students were taking within the content area. For example, within science, some students could have taken biology while other students could have taken physics. Another example would be that some students could have taken algebra while other students could have taken geometry. The researcher did not account for these differences and included the course in a general content area when compiling the data. This fact could have skewed the data.

Research Question 3. The results from parents' and students' surveys both reflect that academics are important to these African-American male student-athletes. While both groups of African-American male students reported similar responses, the GPAs did not indicate the outcome that one would expect based on the responses on the surveys. Even though some of the African-American male student-athletes' responses indicated a high respect for academics and attributed their academic success to sports participation, it appears as though the level of expectation in the classroom was not very high. While it is apparent that the results from the parents' surveys indicate a strong belief and support mechanism for academic achievement, the overall GPAs of the

African-American student-athletes in this study are in the average range. Based on the responses from the parents, one would think that the grade point averages of the African-American male student-athletes would be higher than the results within this study. However, it may be that the parents considered average-range grades to be good grades. The results from the parent surveys showed no statistically significant difference between the two sample groups, and parents from both sample groups reported nearly the same responses.

Coakley (1986) as well as Hawkins and Mulkey (2005) suggested that sports participation seemed to have created positive aspirations, similar to the results of this study, yet the aspirations were not higher than those of the non-athlete students. Still, the results are inconclusive as to whether sports participation impacted the academic achievement of African-American males. One can presume that the grades of these students could go either way, depending on the student and his personal attitudes about academics and sports. Some students place more emphasis on their grades than other students; some felt they would do well in school even without sports, while others stated that sports encouraged them to work harder in school. The range of comments from the student-athletes contributed to the unlikelihood of arriving at a definitive conclusion regarding the impact that sports have on attitudes toward academic achievement in African-American male students.

Implications of the Study

The findings of the research indicate that participation in sports does not have a statistically significant impact on the academic achievement of African-American males when comparing the GPAs of African-American males who do and do not participate in

sports. The findings do not mean that sports participation does not have an impact on academic achievement. However, what remains unclear from the study is if the African-American male student-athletes would have fared better or worse if they did not participate in sports. It is also unclear as to whether or not the African-American male non-athletes would have fared better or worse based on if they participated in high school sports. Further research could be conducted to remove the inconclusiveness from this area of study.

It is clear that even though the African-American male students in the study attend urban high schools, they are more educationally advantaged than the typical African-American male urban high school student. The schools in the study are magnet and traditional programs that have high academic expectations. Both schools have academics as a priority for all students even though athletics has its importance and place. Furthermore, the African-American male students who participated in the study stand a greater chance of graduating high school and continuing education at a college or university than African-American male students at the majority of urban high schools. Both of the schools in the study have graduation rates for African-American males that exceed typical urban high school graduation rates for African-American males. Whether or not sports participation by African-American males or the type of high school they attend influences these outcomes remains unclear.

Although both schools in this study were urban, one was predominantly white and the other was predominantly African-American. The study was not designed to compare the two schools against each other, but rather to examine the academic outcomes of the two sets of African-American males from two different types of schools. The data in this

comparison, however, also did not present statistically significant differences between the two schools. This result does indicate that the ethnic majority of the school, whether African-American or White, did not have an impact on the academic outcomes or attitudes of the African-American student athletes.

Recommendations for Educators

The impact of coaches' encouragement was the one substantiated finding in this study. Coaches thus should be considered an important resource for impacting the academic aspirations of students so that educational improvements can be made to enhance the academic achievement for African-American males and reduce the achievement gap that exists in schools. Both coaches and educators need to believe that African-American males are capable of achieving great heights academically. Coaches and other educators should support each other in rejecting the notion African-American males are academically inferior to white males and that African-American males can only succeed in an athletic arena. Given the slight possibility of obtaining a professional career in sports, coaches especially must realize that they can sometimes provide a disservice to African-American males by continuing to push them toward the improbability of a sports career (Harris, 1994).

Coaches and educators must place the needs of the African-American male "student" before the needs of the African-American "athlete." Coaches and educators must remember that the student is before "student-athlete" and academic needs should and must take priority. But, if sports participation for African-American males is used as an incentive to increase academic achievement, improve school attendance, and reduce behavioral problems, then sports participation should be encouraged and supported.

Recommendations for Further Study

This present research on whether or not athletic participation impacts the academic achievement of African-American males was only one of many previous studies designed to examine this topic. However, as other studies have arrived at inconclusiveness, so has this present study. Even though the academic achievement results of this study suggested that no significant statistical difference existed between the African-American male athletes and African-American male non-athletes, when comparing their core content grade points averages, future research should be conducted in the following areas to enhance the opportunity to arrive at more conclusiveness:

- A further study might increase the sample size for African-American male student-athletes and African-American male non athletes.
- Due to the relatively small number of participants in the study, an increase of the sample size would enable future researchers to make better generalizations about the impact that high school sports has on African-American males.
- Conduct a study to determine whether African-American males' participation in high school sports predicts whether they will graduate from high school or drop out of high school. Currently, there is very little research that makes a connection between African-American male high school dropouts and whether or not these African-American males participated in high school sports. If research was conducted in this area, a possible relationship could help further determine whether sports participation encouraged these African-American males to stay in school.

- Further studies could examine the geographic areas or cities where the greatest rates of dropouts exist to determine why these African-American males dropout of high school. As reported in the 2008 Executive Summary of the Schott Report, urban cities have the highest dropout rates of African-American males. Some have posited that this high incidence of dropouts is linked to poverty in urban centers. Whatever the reason is, it has eluded educators because the dropout rates continue to haunt the education world regardless of the amount of funding dedicated to the problem. More research has to occur, real discussions must take place, and communities must be willing to do whatever it takes to address the dropout rates in these cities.
- Further studies could examine the academic achievement difference of African-American males who attend private and public schooling. Previous research has indicted that African-American males who attend predominantly white schools achieve higher academically than African-American males who attend urban schools. However, little distinction between predominantly white or private schools was made. Further examination in this area needs to occur as some African-American parents are moving toward having their children educated in private schools.
- Further studies could examine the impact that parenting style and parental values have on academic achievement for African-American males. There are several studies that discuss the impact that single parent households headed by the mother has on SES (Pinkney, 1987; Staples, 1986 the academic achievement of African-American males) and living in an area with low SES has been related to lower

educational attainment (Strayhorn, 2009). Further research could be conducted to determine if the parents' attitudes and beliefs about sports participation is connected in any way to the academic achievement of African-American males in a way that ameliorates the affects of low SES.

- Further research could determine whether any academic achievement differences exist between African-American males based on participation in a specific sport or extracurricular activity. It has been noted that basketball and football are the two most popular sports that African-American males participate in high schools (Hodge et al., 2008; Powell, 2008). However, very little research exists to determine if African-American males who participate in band, chess club, chorus, or any other extracurricular activities display a significant statistical difference in academic achievement when compared to African-American males in sports or with those who do not participate in any extracurricular activity.
- Further studies could examine the grades of African-American male student-athletes when they are participating in the season of their sport and compare their grades to when they are out of season for their sport to see if results differ. With GPAs as a key requirement to maintain eligibility, research could be conducted to determine if African-American male student-athletes maintain the required grade level simply to maintain eligibility to participate in a particular sport.
- Further studies could examine whether sports participation has a similar impact on African-American females when compared to African-American males. There is very little research that addresses the academic needs of African-American females. One reason is that African-American females are not considered to be as

academically endangered as African-American males are. However, this does not mean the needs of African-American females should be forgotten.

- Further studies could examine the impact that teachers' personal or religious beliefs have on the academic achievement of African-American males.
- A further study might examine academic achievement and its relation to sports participation using Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory as a theoretical basis, which theory discusses intrinsic motivation and has been shown to have a good fit with recent empirical research (Sachau, 2007).

Conclusion

For research question 1, the findings of this study are that African-American male student-athletes achieved similar academic scores to those African-American males who did not participate in athletics. For research question 2, the findings of this study are that African-American male student-athletes achieved similar academic scores in the three core content areas of math, science, and social studies, compared to those African-American males who did not participate in athletics. The findings of this study are inconclusive about whether African-American male student-athletes achieved similar academic scores in language arts, compared with those African-American males who did not participate in athletics. Although the student athlete's scores were slightly higher, the researcher did not match the groups (athletes and non-athletes) with regard to the difficulty of courses taken, so this result of higher scores cannot be interpreted as greater academic achievement.

For research question 3, the findings of this study are that the attitudes toward academic achievement held by African-American male student-athletes and their parents

who were a part of the purposive group are similar to those attitudes of African-American males and parents who were a part of the convenience group. Specifically, the responses of student-athletes and their parents in the purposive group were similar to those of student-athletes and parents of the convenience group in the following areas: motivation and self-esteem, parental encouragement, and attitude toward academics, coach encouragement.

Sports participation may not be the most effective area of focus for efforts by educators to find suitable and effective solutions to decrease the existing achievement gap between African-American males and white males. The fact that this study found inconclusive results—just as the review of literature indicated mixed and inconclusive results—may indicate that for certain students or for students in certain situations, high school sports participation promotes higher academic achievement, while for other students or for students in other situations, it does not promote higher academic achievement and may even hinder academic achievement.

High school sports participation may or may not be the answer to increasing academic achievement for all students, but this result should not lead to a conclusion that sports participation has no value. If high school sports participation or a high school coach can motivate one African-American male to earn better grades or help prevent an African-American male from joining a gang, going to jail, dropping out of school, using drugs, or becoming a negative statistic, then high school sports has proven its worth and value.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

Comparing Academic Achievement of African-American Males Who Do and Do Not Participate in High School Athletics

Thomas Victor Montgomery, III
Doctoral Candidate and Researcher
Liberty University, Education Department

You are invited to participate in a research study of the possible correlation between academic achievement and participation in high school athletics among African-American males. You were selected as a possible participant because your son is an African-American male at ----- High School or ----- High School that either participates on a high school athletic team or does not participate in high school athletics at his school. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to participate in the study.

This study is being conducted by:

**Thomas Victor Montgomery, III, Doctoral Candidate in Educational Leadership at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, and Education Dept., Committee Chair/Advisor: Dr. Ellen Black.

**Victor Montgomery is a graduate of Louisville Male High School, Morehouse College, B.A., Bellarmine University, MAT, and Western Kentucky University, Rank I.

Background Information:

The purpose of the study is to investigate the impact on academic achievement that high school athletics has on African-American male students that participated in high school athletics against African-American male students that did not participate in high school athletics during the 2008-09 school year.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

- Respond to a parent survey pertaining to the topic;
- Consent to allow your son to respond to a student survey pertaining to the topic; and
- Consent to allow the researcher to include your son's grade point average from the 2008-09 school year in core content subjects only: math, science, language arts (English/reading), and social studies.

Note: Only the African-American males who participate in high school athletics and their parents will be requested to take the research survey.

Research Questions:

1. Will African-American male students who participate in high school athletics demonstrate higher grade point averages (GPAs) in the core content subjects of language arts, math, science, and social studies than African-American male students who do not participate in high school athletics?
2. Will any of the mean results in each of the core content subjects of language arts, math, science, or social studies identify a “significant difference” in achievement when compared between the two groups of African-American male students?
3. Will the survey constructs results from the purposive group of African-American students and parents provide a “significant difference” in attitude from the convenience group of African-American students and parents?

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The study has minimal risks. The risks are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life. There are no psychological or physical risks from participating in the study. The study is being conducted to examine if participating in high school athletics has any impact on the academic achievement of African-American males. The research will not harm the participant in any manner. There are no conditions that would cause the researcher to terminate the study.

The benefits to participation in the study are: 1) Contribution to the study to assist in whether or not participation in high school athletics by African-American males has a positive relational impact on academic achievement; 2) The results of the study could help those involved in the educational environment, whether school administrators, teachers, parents, or community leaders make sound decisions, based on research, as to how to proceed in the inclusion of sports with African-American males; 3) The results, if proven to demonstrate a positive relational impact on student achievement *could* influence the perceptions that the reader may have toward sports participation for African-American males; 4) the results of the surveys could highlight areas that parents and students agree or disagree regarding their beliefs about sports and academics; and 5) Influence future studies to be conducted regarding each demographic so that sports participation in general, could be considered as an influencing factor on students' academic achievement.

Compensation:

There is no compensation associated with this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. However, the findings from this study will be available to anyone who would ask to see the results. This includes, JCPS, ---- and ----- High administrators, parents, and students.

As the researcher, I will guard all data in my home and once all information has been received, compiled, tabulated, and recorded, I will shred all documents at the appropriate time.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the Liberty University or the high school that your son attends. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question on the survey or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is: Thomas Victor Montgomery, III. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions at a later time, **you are encouraged** to contact him at -----. You may also contact my committee chair/advisor, Dr. Ellen L. Black at: -----.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher or the advisor, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 2400, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions that I needed to ask and have received answers to those questions. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____
(Participant)

Date: _____

Signature of parent or guardian: _____
(If minors are involved)

Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B: Survey Information

Comparing Academic Achievement of African-American Males Who Do and Do Not Participate in High School Athletics

Thomas Victor Montgomery, III
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University, Education Department

Convenient Parent Group:

You are invited to participate in a research study of the possible correlation between academic achievement and sports participation among African-American males. You were selected as a possible participant because you are the parent or guardian of an African-American male that either participates on an Amateur Athletic Association (AAU) or high school sports team.

The purpose of the survey is to measure parents' feelings and attitudes toward high school athletic participation of African-American males. The results of this survey will be compared to the results from other parents of African-American male student-athletes in Louisville, KY

This study is being conducted by:

Thomas Victor Montgomery, III, Doctoral Candidate at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, Education Dept, Committee Chair/Advisor: Dr. Ellen Black.

Background Information:

The purpose of the study is to investigate the impact on academic achievement that high school athletics has on African-American male students that participated in high school athletics against African-American male students that did not participate in high school athletics during the 2008-09 school year.

Thank you very much for participating in this survey!

Sincerely,

Thomas V. Montgomery, III

Appendix C: Survey Information

Comparing Academic Achievement of African-American Males Who Do and Do Not Participate in High School Athletics

Thomas Victor Montgomery, III
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University, Education Department

Convenient Student Group:

You are invited to participate in a research study of the possible correlation between academic achievement and sports participation among African-American males. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an African-American male that either participates on an Amateur Athletic Association (AAU) or high school sports team.

The purpose of the survey is to measure students' feelings and attitudes toward high school athletic participation of African-American males. The results of this survey will be compared to the results from other African-American male student-athletes in Louisville, KY

This study is being conducted by:

Thomas Victor Montgomery, III, Doctoral Candidate at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, Education Dept, Committee Chair/Advisor: Dr. Ellen Black.

Background Information

The purpose of the study is to investigate the impact on academic achievement that high school athletics has on African-American male students that participated in high school athletics against African-American male students that did not participate in high school athletics during the 2008-09 school year.

Thank you very much for participating in this survey!

Sincerely,

Thomas V. Montgomery, III

Appendix D: Montgomery Sports and Academics Perception Survey (Parent Version)

Parent Survey to Measure the Impact of High School Sports on Academic Achievement

Parents: This survey is being conducted to measure your feelings on how participating in high school athletics has impacted your son's academic achievement in school. Please take a moment to read over the questions **circle** the most appropriate number for your response. Your responses will not identify you or your son in any manner. Your participation in the survey is voluntary. Thank you for participating.

5 – Strongly Agree	4 – Agree	3 – Undecided	2 – Disagree	1 – Strongly Disagree
1. Participating in high school athletics motivates my son to work harder in school.	5	4	3	2 1
2. Participating in high school athletics makes my son feel good about himself.	5	4	3	2 1
3. Participating in high school athletics builds good character and work habits.	5	4	3	2 1
4. My son's grades would be better if he did not participate in high school athletics.	5	4	3	2 1
5. My son's grades would worsen if he did not participate in high school athletics.	5	4	3	2 1
6. My son would rather participate in high school athletics than do his homework.	5	4	3	2 1
7. My son would rather do his homework than participate in high school athletics.	5	4	3	2 1
8. I encourage my son to practice his particular sport.	5	4	3	2 1
9. I encourage my son to complete his homework.	5	4	3	2 1
10. I encourage my son to do well in school.	5	4	3	2 1
11. I am more concerned with my son's grades than high school athletics.	5	4	3	2 1
12. I am more concerned about my son participating in high school athletics than his grades.	5	4	3	2 1
13. If my son's grades were to suffer, I would remove him from the team.	5	4	3	2 1
14. My son would remain on the team even if his grades were not very good.	5	4	3	2 1
15. My son cares more about his grades than he does about playing in high school athletics.	5	4	3	2 1
16. My son cares more about high school athletics than he does about his grades.	5	4	3	2 1
17. Making good grades in school is important to my son.	5	4	3	2 1
18. My son's coach(es) is/are more concerned about his grades than high school athletics.	5	4	3	2 1
19. My son's coach(es) discipline him for underachieving in school.	5	4	3	2 1
20. My son's coach(es) encourage him to do well in school.	5	4	3	2 1
21. Relationship to your son – I am my son's (<i>please circle</i>): Mother or Father or Guardian				
22. Please provide any additional comments regarding how you feel athletics has impacted your son's academic achievement in high school.				

Appendix E: Montgomery Sports and Academics Perception Survey (Student Version)

Student Survey to Measure the Impact of High School Sports on Academic Achievement

Students: This survey is being conducted to measure your feelings on how participating in high school athletics has impacted your academic achievement in your school. Please take a moment to read over the questions and **circle** the most appropriate number for your response. Your responses will not identify you in any manner. Your participation in the survey is voluntary. Thank you for participating.

5 – Strongly Agree	4 – Agree	3 – Undecided	2 – Disagree	1 – Strongly Disagree
1. Playing high school athletics motivates me to work harder in school.	5	4	3	2 1
2. Playing high school athletics makes me feel good about myself.	5	4	3	2 1
3. Playing high school athletics builds good character and work habits.	5	4	3	2 1
4. My grades would be better if I did not participate in high school athletics.	5	4	3	2 1
5. My grades would worsen if I did not participate in high school athletics.	5	4	3	2 1
6. My parent(s) encourage me to practice my particular sport.	5	4	3	2 1
7. My parent(s) encourage me to complete my homework.	5	4	3	2 1
8. My parent(s) encourage me to do well in school.	5	4	3	2 1
9. My parent(s) are more concerned with my grades than high school athletics.	5	4	3	2 1
10. My parent(s) are more concerned about high school athletics than my grades.	5	4	3	2 1
11. My parents discipline me for underachieving in school.	5	4	3	2 1
12. I would still be on the team even if my grades were not very good.	5	4	3	2 1
13. I care more about my grades than I do about playing high school athletics.	5	4	3	2 1
14. I care more about playing high school athletics than I do about my grades.	5	4	3	2 1
15. Making good grades in school is important to me.	5	4	3	2 1
16. My parent(s) help me with my homework.	5	4	3	2 1
17. My parent(s) help me prepare for my high school athletic competition.	5	4	3	2 1
18. My coach(es) is/are more concerned about my grades than high school athletics.	5	4	3	2 1
19. My coach(es) discipline me for underachieving in school.	5	4	3	2 1
20. My coach(es) encourage me to do well in school.	5	4	3	2 1
21. My Age is (<i>please circle</i>):	14	15	16	17 18
22. Please provide any additional comments regarding how you feel athletics has impacted your academic achievement in high school.				

Appendix F: Parent Survey (Version 1)

Parent Survey to Measure the Impact of Sports on Academic Achievement

Parent: This survey is being conducted to measure your feelings on how participating in basketball has impacted your son's academic achievement in school. Please take a moment to read over the questions and respond with the most appropriate answer. Your responses will not identify you or your son in any manner. Your participation in the survey is voluntary. Thank you for participating.

Key:

**5 – Strongly
Agree**

**4 – Somewhat
Agree**

3 – Agree

**2 – Somewhat
Disagree**

**1 – Strongly
Disagree**

- | | | |
|-----|--|-------|
| 1. | Playing basketball motivates my son to work harder in school. | _____ |
| 2. | Playing basketball makes my son feel good about himself. | _____ |
| 3. | Playing basketball builds good character and work habits. | _____ |
| 4. | My son's grades would be better if he did not play basketball. | _____ |
| 5. | My son's grades would worsen if he did not play basketball. | _____ |
| 6. | My son would rather play basketball than do his homework. | _____ |
| 7. | My son would rather do his homework than play basketball. | _____ |
| 8. | I encourage my son to practice basketball. | _____ |
| 9. | I encourage my son to complete his homework. | _____ |
| 10. | I encourage my son to do well in school. | _____ |
| 11. | I am more concerned with my son's grades than basketball. | _____ |
| 12. | I am more concerned about my son playing basketball than his grades. | _____ |
| 13. | If my son's grades were to suffer, I would remove him from the team. | _____ |
| 14. | My son would remain on the team even if his grades were not very good. | _____ |
| 15. | My son cares more about his grades than he does playing basketball. | _____ |
| 16. | My son cares more about basketball than he does do about his grades. | _____ |
| 17. | Making good grades in school is important to my son. | _____ |
| 18. | My son's coach(es) is/are more concerned about his grades than basketball. | _____ |
| 19. | My son's coach(es) discipline him for underachieving in school. | _____ |
| 20. | My coach(es) encourage him to do well in school. | _____ |

Appendix G: Parent Survey (Version 2)

Parent Survey to Measure the Impact of Sports on Academic Achievement

Parents: This survey is being conducted to measure your feelings on how participating in high school athletics has impacted your son's academic achievement in school. Please take a moment to read over the questions and respond with the most appropriate answer. Your responses will not identify you or your son in any manner. Your participation in the survey is voluntary. Thank you for participating.

	5 – Strongly Agree	4 – Somewhat Agree	3 – Agree	2 – Somewhat Disagree	1 – Strongly Disagree
1. Participating in high school athletics motivates my son to work harder in school.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Participating in high school athletics makes my son feel good about himself.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Participating in high school athletics builds good character and work habits.	5	4	3	2	1
4. My son's grades would be better if he did not participate in high school athletics.	5	4	3	2	1
5. My son's grades would worsen if he did not participate in high school athletics.	5	4	3	2	1
6. My son would rather participate in high school athletics than do his homework.	5	4	3	2	1
7. My son would rather do his homework than participate in high school athletics.	5	4	3	2	1
8. I encourage my son to practice his particular sport.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I encourage my son to complete his homework.	5	4	3	2	1
10. I encourage my son to do well in school.	5	4	3	2	1
11. I am more concerned with my son's grades than high school athletics.	5	4	3	2	1
12. I am more concerned about my son participating in high school athletics than his grades.	5	4	3	2	1

13. If my son's grades were to suffer, I would remove him from the team.

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

14. My son would remain on the team even if his grades were not very good.

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

15. My son cares more about his grades than he does about participating in high school athletics.

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

16. My son cares more about high school athletics than he does about his grades.

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

17. Making good grades in school is important to my son.

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

18. My son's coach(es) is/are more concerned about his grades than high school athletics.

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

19. My son's coach(es) discipline him for underachieving in school.

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

20. My coach(es) encourage him to do well in school.

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

21. Relationship to your son – I am my son's (*please circle*): Mother or Father or Guardian

22. Please provide any additional comments regarding how you feel athletics has impacted your son's academic achievement in high school.

Appendix H: Student Survey (Version 1)

Student Survey to Measure the Impact of Sports on Academic Achievement

Students: This survey is being conducted to measure your feelings on how participating in basketball has impacted your academic achievement in your school. Please take a moment to read over the questions and respond with the most appropriate answer as it applies to you. Your responses will not identify you in any manner and your participation in the survey is voluntary. Thank you for participating.

Key:

**5 – Strongly
Agree**

**4 – Somewhat
Agree**

3 – Agree

**2 – Somewhat
Disagree**

**1 – Strongly
Disagree**

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------|
| 1. | Playing basketball motivates me to work harder in school. | _____ |
| 2. | Playing basketball makes me feel good about myself. | _____ |
| 3. | Playing basketball builds good character and work habits. | _____ |
| 4. | My grades would be better if I did not play basketball. | _____ |
| 5. | My grades would worsen if I did not play basketball. | _____ |
| 6. | My parent(s) encourage me to practice basketball. | _____ |
| 7. | My parent(s) encourage me to complete my homework. | _____ |
| 8. | My parent(s) encourage me to do well in school. | _____ |
| 9. | My parent(s) are more concerned with my grades than basketball. | _____ |
| 10. | My parent(s) are more concerned about basketball than my grades. | _____ |
| 11. | My parents discipline me for underachieving in school. | _____ |
| 12. | I would still be on the team even if my grades were not very good. | _____ |
| 13. | I care more about my grades than I do playing basketball. | _____ |
| 14. | I care more about playing basketball than I do about my grades. | _____ |
| 15. | Making good grades in school is important to me. | _____ |
| 16. | My parent(s) help me with my homework. | _____ |
| 17. | My parent(s) help me prepare for my basketball games. | _____ |
| 18. | My coach(es) is/are more concerned about my grades than basketball. | _____ |
| 19. | My coach(es) discipline me for underachieving in school. | _____ |
| 20. | My coach(es) encourage me to do well in school. | _____ |

Appendix I: Student Survey (Version 2)

Student Survey to Measure the Impact of Sports on Academic Achievement

Students: This survey is being conducted to measure your feelings on how participating in high school athletics has impacted your academic achievement in your school. Please take a moment to read over the questions and respond with the most appropriate answer as it applies to you. Your responses will not identify you in any manner and your participation in the survey is voluntary. Thank you for participating.

5 – Strongly Agree

4 – Agree

3 – Undecided

2 – Disagree

1 – Strongly Disagree

1. Playing high school athletics motivates me to work harder in school.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Playing high school athletics makes me feel good about myself.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Playing high school athletics builds good character and work habits.	5	4	3	2	1
4. My grades would be better if I did not participate in high school athletics.	5	4	3	2	1
5. My grades would worsen if I did not participate in high school athletics.	5	4	3	2	1
6. My parent(s) encourage me to practice my particular sport.	5	4	3	2	1
7. My parent(s) encourage me to complete my homework.	5	4	3	2	1
8. My parent(s) encourage me to do well in school.	5	4	3	2	1
9. My parent(s) are more concerned with my grades than high school athletics.	5	4	3	2	1
10. My parent(s) are more concerned about high school athletics than my grades.	5	4	3	2	1

11. My parents discipline me for underachieving in school.

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

12. I would still be on the team even if my grades were not very good.

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

13. I care more about my grades than I do playing high school athletics.

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

14. I care more about playing high school athletics than I do about my grades.

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

15. Making good grades in school is important to me.

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

16. My parent(s) help me with my homework.

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

17. My parent(s) help me prepare for my high school athletic competition.

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

18. My coach(es) is/are more concerned about my grades than high school athletics.

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

19. My coach(es) discipline me for underachieving in school.

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

20. My coach(es) encourage me to do well in school.

5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---

21. My Age is: 14 ____ 15 ____ 16 ____ 17 ____ 18 ____

22. Please provide any additional comments regarding how you feel athletics has impacted your academic achievement in high school.
