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HBCUs MATTER: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF INVOLVED
STUDENT-ATHLETES CHANGING THE GAME

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Educational Leadership

by
Aris Lane Hall
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Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

Students, faculty, staff, and surrounding communities form the environment, which knit the culture's fabric of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Institutional culture and environment influence student engagement (Astin, 1984/1999); however, research rarely has focused on the engagement of student-athletes within HBCUs. I conceptualized this study of student-athlete leadership involvement phenomenon using two theories, student involvement theory (Astin, 1984/1999) and, given HBCUs social history (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2009; Albritton, 2012; Palmer, Arroyo, & Maramba, 2018), Tierney's (1998) organizational culture theory. For this study, I selected a HBCU with National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I status to investigate the phenomena of student-athletes' organizational involvement and leadership experiences.

This study's purpose was two-fold: (1) to understand the experiences of college student-athletes currently involved in NCAA, Division I sports and campus student organizations; and (2) to investigate the athletes' experiences within a specific HBCU setting and athletic culture. I applied interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith & Osborn, 2008, 2015) as this method involves phenomena combining *place* and *lived experiences* (Murray & Holmes, 2014). The use of IPA helped in my double-hermeneutic interpretation of 10 student-athletes' experiences as they engaged in campus leadership roles. I used campus artifacts and interviews for these participants' explanations of their experiences. My use of IPA focused on finding the similarities among their reported lived experiences.

Five themes emerged through recursive analysis: (a) Leading by Example, (b) Not Just an Athlete, (c) Tough Decisions, (d) Embracing Faith, and (e) HBCU Pride and Appreciation. These student-athletes built networks outside of their respective sport teams through their participation in various campus organizations. Furthermore, nine of the 10 students connected with the HBCU culture and the leadership opportunities it forged for them. As student-athlete campus leaders, these participants desired to lead by example and recounted tough decisions to go beyond perceptions of each as just an athlete. Through these experiences, I generated meaning for a definition of *student-athlete campus leader* and expanded understanding of the HBCU setting in illuminating that definition.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my loved ones who did not get to see me in person fulfill this dream...

- Grandpa Keith, whom I never met, but I know is proud.
- Grandma Ceoria, who didn't have the opportunity to receive the education I have gotten.
- Johnie Mae, a fighter for 92 years, and instilled that in me.
- Patrice, my bestie, taken far too soon, but is my daily reminder to enjoy life and make the best of it.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

First, and foremost, I thank GOD for guiding me through this journey. I encountered many ups-and-downs along the way, but He never abandoned me (*Isaiah 41:10*). With God's watchful eye, he placed family and friends in my life who encouraged me when I doubted myself.

To my parents, Craig and Tracy, your unconditional love, financial support, and more allowed me to worry less and embrace what God had planned for me. I would not be the womyn I am today without you all.

To Dr. Lindle, my chair, advisor, and mentor, I am a better researcher, writer, and practitioner because of you. You believed in me and in-turn I now believe in myself as a scholar-practitioner, and I am forever grateful for your support.

To the rest of my dissertation committee, Drs. Boettcher, Godfrey, and Satterfield, many thank yous for being a collective group of educators who wanted me to succeed in every aspect of life; you all have taught me so much about the academy. To the HESA faculty, I am indebted to you all for the wisdom and guidance you shared with me. Drs. Croom, Phelps-Ward, and Wagner, I am thankful that you all came to Clemson when you did. Drs. Farmer and Gonzales your continued support is immeasurable. I look forward to our future collaborations. To Dean and Mrs. Petersen, Dr. Fleming, Bill, Kris, and Christie, thank you for allowing me to work in your offices and gain invaluable experience.

To my family...Grandma, from your seasonal cards to our phone calls, you have supported me throughout my life and I am appreciative of everything. My brothers and sister-in-love, Alex, Andrew and Demetria, know I love y'all and do this to be an example. Robin (a.k.a. Siobhan), your cousin-love has been tremendous; you've earned your cape! To my other cousins, Mr. and Dr. Jackson and Monique, you all pushed me even when you didn't know it. I am grateful for my extended family, too many to name, who pray, encourage, and love me.

To my “*family*”...Mr. and Mrs. Mason and Zalika, your resilience and generosity knows no bounds. To my prayer warriors, Mr. and Mrs. Black, Ms. Carol, and Mrs. Diane, thank you for praying for me when I couldn’t pray for myself. To my sister-friend and fellow Clemson Tiger, Tia, thank you for 16 years of friendship and many more to go. To my Kentucky State “*family*”, Mrs. Thomas, Alex K., Candace O., Tanina S., and others, thank you! Dr. Williams, thank you for encouraging me to apply to Ph.D. programs and cheering me on every step of the way. To my “Just Call Me Dr.” crew: Dr. Garrett, soon-to-be Drs. Allen, Howard, Kenney, and Lange, thank you for listening, encouraging, proofreading, etc. Without you all and our walks around campus, daylong writing parties, and social outings, I’m not sure I would have made it. Thank you all for your wisdom, love, and/or prayers.

To my friends, many soon-to-be doctors themselves...Dr. Anderson, Dr. Emerson, Kayon H., Byron L., Leslie L., Katie M., Chris P., Terrance R., Dr. Reneau, Altheia R., Beth S., Brittany S., Jumah T., Tabitha W., Leslie W., NASPA NUFP/SLI 2008 folxs, and others, I am grateful for your shoulders to lean on and listening ears during countless phone calls, coffee/lunch dates, etc. to listen, laugh, and cry. Your friendship means the world to me.

Lastly, to my nephews and nieces (Kaleil, Ayana, Zayah, Zuri, Kyle Jr., Brielle, & Allen) thank you for loving Auntie. I pray that I inspire you to go after your own dreams; know there is no dream too big for you to imagine. If you can dream it, you can attain it!

Thank each and every one of you, you have played a role in helping me to not only reach but cross this finish line! If I forgot someone, please charge it to my tired mind, and not my heart.

“Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it has been faced. History is not the past. It is the present. We carry our history with us.

We are our history.”

~James Baldwin

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The role of athletics on college campuses in the United States has grown for nearly two centuries, with rapid growth since the 20th century that included the racial integration of college sports teams. Cited often as one turning point for this growth, the 1970 game between the University of Southern California (USC) and the University of Alabama (nicknamed the Crimson Tide) centered on an embarrassing loss for the all-White Tide in its own stadium, 42-21. As depicted in Trank's (2013) documentary, *Against the Tide*, the Southeastern Conference (SEC) prevented integration of any league football teams ("Recalling the Death ...," 1998). At that 1970 Alabama home-opener, the USC team included two Black football players, Sam Cunningham and Alabama native Clarence Davis ("Recalling the Death," 1998; Reese, 1998; Trank, 2013). Bear Bryant used the Crimson Tide's defeat to initiate recruitment of Black players (Borucki, 2003; Trank, 2013).

After White college teams desegregated, Black colleges and universities' (HBCUs) enrollment of elite African American student-athletes declined (Cheeks & Carter-Francique, 2015; Lillig, 2009; Lovett, 2015). The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA; 2016) reported Division I student-athletes of color, who attend predominantly White institutions (PWIs), comprised more than 60% of the student-athlete population for revenue-generating sports (i.e. football, basketball). PWIs recruit Black athletes, and such institutions offer resources that HBCUs cannot afford, such as

scholarships and multi-million-dollar facilities (Cooper, Cavil, & Cheeks, 2014; Wiggins, 1999).

Embedded in American higher education is the long, tumultuous history of HBCUs, and the intense cultural misconceptions and doubt many of these institutions have had to overcome (Harris, 2012). Prior to 1975, HBCUs enrolled the majority of Black students, including student-athletes of color (Allen & Jewell, 2002). Since then, HBCUs have fostered a culture of learning while combating naysayers about their relevancy in the 21st Century (Brown, 2013; Cantey, Bland, Mack, & Joy-Davis, 2013; Harris, 2012). Despite today's steady declining enrollment and naysayers (Allen, Jewel, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007; Brown, 2013; Cantey et al., 2013), HBCUs' history is rich, and as a graduate of one such HBCU, my intent and purpose for this research was to highlight the student-athlete experience within the HBCU environment.

While most campuses' student development feature engagement in learning and campus activities, student-athletes have a different level of engagement given dual roles as athletes and students (Gaston Gayles, 2009), and some may add an additional role by engaging in campus organizations as leaders outside of their sport. Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (2007) specifically focused on college students and explained that "leadership is a socially constructed phenomenon" (p. 22), which student leaders construct through their own lenses. Leaders are "purposeful, inclusive, empowering, ethical, and process-oriented" (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2007, p. 65) and are visionaries who want to help their organizations succeed. Leadership, a "core outcome of college" (Dugan & Komives, 2010, p. 526), begins with student engagement in the college environment.

Several researchers define student involvement as the level of participation by students in various activities, both in and out of the classroom (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Specifically, I investigated the culture of a particular HBCU with Division I status in the NCAA. Furthermore, I provided a perspective on student-athletes' experiences that rarely populate media reports or scholarship.

Background of the Study

Postsecondary institutions in the United States introduced intercollegiate athletics as a co-curricular experience over 150 years ago (Cooper et al., 2014). Beginning in 1906, two organizations oversaw the organizational structure of intercollegiate athletics. Those two organizations were the National Collegiate Athletic Association and the Inter-Scholastic Athletic Association (ISAA; Cooper et al., 2014). Wiggins (1999) stated ISAA formed due to the exclusion of Black schools and athletes from taking part in the NCAA and its member schools. The catalyst for an even greater increase in the prominence of intercollegiate athletics in higher education came with returning World War II veterans and the implementation of the GI Bill (Martin & Christy, 2010).

Many studies postulated the historical context of HBCUs as a nurturing, learning environment for Black students at a time when these students were not permitted to enroll in PWIs (e.g. Albritton, 2012; Bettez & Suggs, 2012; Cantey, Bland, Mack, & Joy-Davis, 2013; Gasman & Commodore, 2014; Knight, Davenport, Green-Powell, & Hilton, 2012; Lovett, 2015). HBCUs originated in the mid-19th Century, a time in the U.S. when educational opportunities for Black people were not merely limited, but illegal in many regions, particularly the South (Butchart, 2010; Lovett, 2015). The original, or First,

Morrill Act, introduced in 1862 (Public Law - P.L. 37-108), was supposed to educate a great majority of Americans; however, some states neglected their Black citizens (Neyland, 1990). As Neyland (1990) noted, “the early land-grant colleges became white bastions, barring Blacks from admission by both custom and law” (p. 2). After the Civil War, the Second Morrill Act of 1890 (P.L. 51-841) explicitly required access for Blacks to higher education adding authorization for funding (Exkano, 2013; Redd, 1998). Nevertheless, funding for White land-grant institutions stayed disproportionately higher and persisted as one form of resource inequality discriminating against institutions established to educate Black Americans.

Both Morrill Acts (P.L. 37-108; P.L. 51-841) occurred during the tense period of U.S history covering the Civil War, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow eras. In particular, the Jim Crow era enforced segregation of Blacks from the majority White culture and public businesses and institutions. As one response to *de jure* and *de facto segregation*, HBCUs flourished as a higher learning environment for Black people, where they were welcome to be educated without subtle or overt propaganda about inferiority to White people (Exkano, 2013; Lovett, 2015; Redd, 1998).

In 1954 with the official declaration of desegregation of public elementary and secondary schools (e.g. Brown v. Board of Education), and nearly 65 years after the Second Morrill Act (P.L. 51-841), Black Americans were still advocating for equality within U.S. public education. Later, the Civil Rights movement and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (P.L. 88-352) influenced collegiate athletics. In turn, federal legislation, the Higher Education Amendments of 1986 (P.L. 99-498) which reauthorized the Higher

Education Act of 1965 (P.L. 89-329), designated all postsecondary institutions established prior to 1964 (the year of the Civil Rights Act) with the specific purpose of educating Black people as HBCUs. Three percent of institutions of higher learning in the United States fit the definition of HBCU, with many of these institutions located in the South (Gasman & McMickens, 2010). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2016) lists 102 accredited HBCUs recognized by the United States. Eventually, though, the official requirement to end segregation had a “significantly negative impact on HBCUs as a whole and their athletic programs more specifically” (Cooper et al., 2014, p. 310).

Statement of the Problem

Overall, the literature about student athletes and leadership development seems to overlook issues about African American student-athlete identity, their experiences, and the influence of the HBCU setting. Watt and Moore (2001) gave a historical and overview perspective about student-athlete demographics with recommendations about how student affairs professionals might work with this special population of students. The life experiences of student-athletes, in many ways, may be like non-athletes; however, the *athlete* identity those students embody adds a layer of complexity (Watt & Moore, 2001). Watt and Moore (2001) did not include institutional type as a factor in their work. Steinfeldt, Reed, and Steinfeldt (2010) noted the literature seemed to favor studying African American athletes at PWIs with fewer reports about athletes at HBCUs.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) highlighted African Americans and the influence that attending HBCUs has on them. They stated HBCUs enhanced the career aspirations

of Black students. Co-curricular experiences contributed to the development of students not only within the classroom but also beyond (Montelongo, 2002). Among arguments for studying HBCUs are calls to explain these institutions' unique cultural contributions in addressing student development. Furthermore, few studies pertain to intercollegiate athletics and student-athlete experiences at HBCUs (Cooper, 2013; Cooper et al., 2014; Jones & Bell, 2016).

Cooper (2013), Cooper and Hawkins (2012), and Cooper and Hall (2014) addressed the educational experiences of student-athletes within the HBCU context, focusing on the Black male student-athlete experience. Cooper and Hawkins (2016) examined Black male student-athletes and their motivation to attend an HBCU, as well as their experiences. They found that the HBCU environment was supportive and positive and contributed to the overall college experience, including achieving academic success (Cooper & Hawkins, 2016). Cooper and Dougherty (2015) conducted a cross-sectional analysis study to examine student-athletes' experiences and identify key factors influencing their college and academic experiences. They found that race was still a factor regarding student-athletes' engagement and satisfaction contrasted between Division I HBCUs and PWIs. Although these studies addressed Black student-athletes and their experiences at HBCUs, they did not investigate the intersection of student identity as both student-athlete and campus leader.

Research surrounding HBCUs has grown over the past fifteen years (Allen & Jewel, 2002; Allen, Jewel, Griffin & Wolf, 2007; Brown, 2013, Brown, Parks & Phillips, 2012; Freeman & Thomas, 2002; Gasman & Bowman, 2011; Gasman & Commodore,

2014; Gasman & McMickens, 2010; Lovett, 2015); nevertheless, research on PWIs is far more extensive. In recent years, some questioned the relevancy of HBCUs (Brown, 2013; Cantey et al., 2013). Brown and Freeman (2004) criticized HBCU literature as anecdotal rather than empirical. On the other hand, some (Cantey et al., 2013; Cooper & Hawkins, 2016; Knight et al., 2012) argued that HBCUs remain important to the students they serve and that such institutions provide experiences uniquely valuable to the higher education landscape.

Purpose of the Study

This study explored the experiences of both men and women student-athlete leaders of color. To deepen knowledge about the phenomena of how student-athletes experience and navigate the duality of student-athlete and organizational involvement, I set the context of this research is set in the institutional culture of an HBCU. This study offered insight into the student-athlete experience within the unique institutional and organizational culture of an HBCU, and with application of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith & Osborn, 2008, 2015) addressed one of the literature's criticisms surrounding the current state of knowledge about HBCUs.

Conceptual Framework

Brocki and Wearden (2006) and Smith and Osborn (2015) explained that IPA does not prohibit the use of theoretical frameworks but if used they should bring awareness and not preconceived ideas. I used two theories, (a) student involvement theory (Astin, 1984/1999) and (b) organizational culture (Tierney, 1988), to underpin this research. As the purpose of IPA is exploratory, descriptive, and focused on individuals'

narrative of experiences (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Grant & Osanloo, 2014), the authenticity of these theories were not tested but rather used to connect two concepts: (a) student involvement and (b) organizational culture with the revealed experiences that the participants discussed.

Specifically the concepts about student involvement theorize that student leadership development occurs when students become involved in their campus community (Astin, 1984/1999). As for the concepts surrounding organizational culture, Hirt (2006) characterized HBCUs and their administrators as “guardians” (p. 109), implicating them as *in loco parentis* – that is, watching over students as if they were their own children. Palmer and Gasman (2008) suggested that HBCUs offer social capital, which is key to students’ development in general. That capital contributes to the development of student leaders (Bettez & Suggs, 2012). The juxtaposition of HBCUs’ organizational culture with a form of student involvement among student-athletes who are leaders provided an exemplary place and essence of the phenomenon (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 1973; Murray & Holmes, 2014). This study was designed to expand knowledge about student-athletes’ leadership experiences, as well as a research-based description of a particular HBCU’s contributions to those experiences.

Student Involvement Theory

At the core of Astin’s (1984/1999) student involvement theory is the examination of college influence and impact on student learning and personal growth and development. Astin (1984/1999) defined student involvement as “physical and

physiological energy in various objects” (p. 519). This complex description is multi-dimensional with the following five theoretical propositions:

- (a) there are varying levels of investment;
- (b) such variance in involvement occurs along a continuum;
- (c) this variance can be detected with both quantitative and qualitative measures;
- (d) the variance ranges in quality and quantity; and
- (e) educational policy or practices effects are related, perhaps not causally, to involvement. (Astin, 1984/1999, p. 519 and as cited in Hernandez, Hogan, Hathaway & Lovell, 1999)

For this study, students’ “physical and physiological energy of interest” (to borrow Astin’s [1984/1999, p. 519] phrase) includes athletics engagement alongside roles in campus organizations outside of athletics. Additional studies (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) explored the impact of participation in intercollegiate athletics on student-athletes and their involvement in the college campus environment. As Watt and Moore (2001) noted, student-athletes contributed particular energy to multiple forms of involvement in and out of the classroom.

Student-athletes have prescribed involvement (i.e. practice, study hall, games); however, student-athletes experience varying levels of campus involvement in comparison to their teammates or non-student-athlete peers. Watt and Moore (2001) recognized student-athletes were visible and symbolic leaders as representatives of their institutions on and off campus. Furthermore, Gaston Gayles (2015) described the unique dynamics student-athletes endured and how that participation affected their involvement

in activities outside of their academic and athletic responsibilities. Three key factors for student-athletes included (a) balancing social responsibilities with academics and athletics, (b) maintaining academic performance, and (c) negotiating the subcultures surrounding student-athletes (Gaston Gayles, 2015). This study elicited students' perceptions about how they navigate the complexities of being students and athletes alongside their visibility in leader roles within the HBCU environment.

Organizational Culture

Berger and Milet (2000) referred to HBCU culture as an amalgamation of mission and vision focused on equitable access to higher education in a diverse learning environment. Schein (1990) built on Deal and Kennedy's (1982, 1983) allusions to corporate culture as the ways of an organization. Any organization's culture can be difficult because "the concept of organization itself is ambiguous" (Schein, 1990, p. 111). For higher education, Tierney (1988) proffered a definition of organizational culture as "reflected in what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in the organizations' workings" (p. 3). The six elements of Tierney's framework used in this study include: (a) environment, (b) mission, (c) socialization, (d) information, (e) strategy, and (f) leadership. I used Tierney's framework to collect artifacts, documents, and students' reports of their experiences to illuminate the HBCU context.

HBCUs' internal culture includes the students. Students who attend HBCUs come from a variety of educational, social, and ethnic backgrounds (Allen et al., 2007). HBCUs promote a welcoming environment to encourage, nurture, and develop students as individuals and prepare them to go out into their communities as leaders (Allen &

Jewell, 2002). The intent and history of HBCUs ostensibly met Schein's (1990) notions of healthy organizational culture where they could survive, in the greater higher education environment while providing the support to the students and communities they serve. Considering Astin's (1984/1999) student involvement theory in conjunction with the unique, campus culture found in the HBCU environment provided a means for expanding both knowledge bases (see figure 1.1).

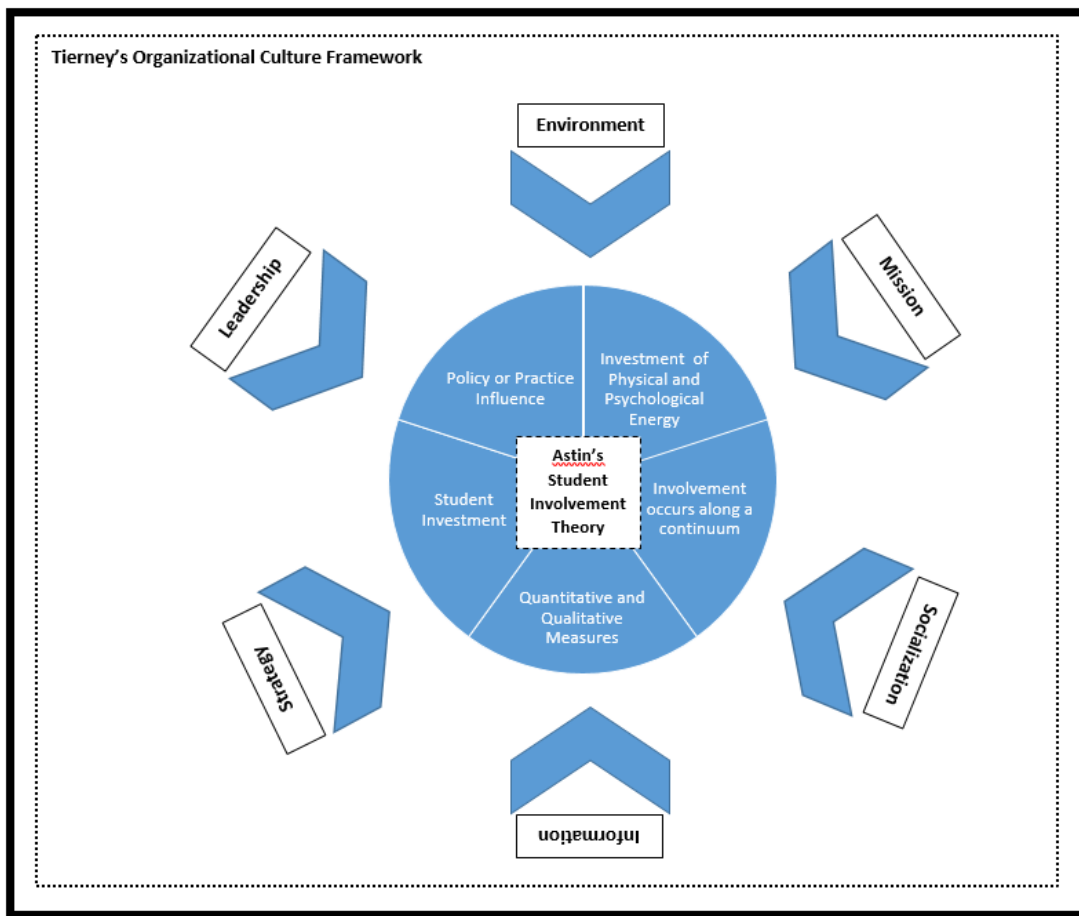


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework using both Astin's (1984/1999) Student Involvement Theory and Tierney's (1988) Organizational Culture Framework

Research Question

This study applied interpretative phenomenological analysis, (IPA; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009), an emergent and constructivist form of research design. For this study addressed one central question: *What are the experiences of student-athletes who are involved in student organizations and attend a historically Black college/university?*

van Manen (1990) described phenomenology's focus as exploration of daily experiences through descriptions with a deep process of meaning making for attaining understanding of experience and place (Murray & Holmes, 2014). My study drew on the interpretation among students' experiences (Finlay, 2012, 2014; Gearing 2004) with those selected, who identified as student-athletes and were involved in co-curricular activities within a specific campus environment with a particular cultural history. The IPA design supported my attempt to understand the lived experiences of students who are both student-athletes and campus leaders in the specific place of a HBCU campus.

Rationale for Methodological Approach

The prevalence of sports in American society and the popularity of intercollegiate athletics were prominent reasons for selecting the student-athlete experience for this study. Many critics of collegiate athletics promote a deficit image of the student-athlete experience academically or socially, and often suggest that student athletes are not engaged on campus (Gaston Gayles, 2009; 2015). Moreover, the history of collegiate athletics bounded in the U.S. history of segregated higher education and the American society's ongoing racial issues. That history contributed to deficit impressions of HBCUs

and an ongoing issue with the survival of HBCUs in the systems of athletics, including NCAA's Division I (Cooper & Cooper, 2015). In this study, I contextualized student-athletes' experience as campus leaders through their stories and lived experiences on an NCAA Division I HBCU campus. I generated meaning and illuminated the definition of *student-athlete campus leader*.

Methodological Approach Overview

In the traditions of interpretative phenomenological analysis, Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1973) established the combined importance of place and experience (Murray & Holmes, 2014) to understand the “unique perspectives and shared experiences” (Landells & Albrecht, 2017, p. 44) of the study's participants. The nuances of IPA and its emergent design in education research (Huff et al., 2014) offered a unique perspective to examine student-athletes of color within an institution of higher education (IHE). I applied IPA (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Smith, 2004; Wagstaff & Williams, 2014) techniques to explore and interpret the *lived experiences* (Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2008, 2015) of selected student-athlete leaders through interviews, artifacts, and documents from a specific type of campus. Methodologists in IPA recommend a flexible but detailed and systematic transcript analysis suitable to the purposes of this study (Huff, Smith, Jesiek, Zoltowski, Graziano, & Oakes, 2014; Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith et al., 2009). The distinctive postsecondary environment of an HBCU with NCAA Division I team sports formed the context to understand this phenomenon (co-curricular, leadership experiences of student-athletes).

As I applied IPA techniques, I interpreted the lived experiences of these student-athlete leaders while using institutional and departmental artifacts and documents to supplement these experiences (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). To attend to their experiences, required a double-hermeneutic approach of carefully bracketing my experiences to understand the participants' experiences better (Alase, 2017; Murray & Homes, 2014). This study drew on a particular subset of college students to understand their experiences as student-athletes within a selected campus environment (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 1973), using two supporting analytic frameworks about student involvement (Astin, 1984/1999) and institutional culture (Tierney, 1988). The application of IPA illuminated the *lived experiences* (Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith et al., 2009) of student-athletes who were involved in campus organizations while also competing in their sport.

Reflexive Process

Given the history of IPA as combining place and lived experiences and the field of student affairs' focus on the student experience as a factor of the institutional environment (Astin, 1984/1999), I used IPA to investigate student-athlete experiences in a unique type of U.S. institution of higher education, the HBCU. An integral component of IPA is the use of double hermeneutics (Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2008, 2015). Double hermeneutics is a multi-layered approach to making sense of the data collected. The researcher is making sense of the participant's sense-making of the phenomena in question (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2015; Huff et al., 2014; Murray &

Holmes, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2008, 2015). However, before engaging in double hermeneutics, I had to acknowledge the lens in which I approached this research.

The lenses used to view my research were as an alumna of a historically Black university and a student affairs practitioner with the desire to contribute to students' growth and development. As a practitioner, I used this opportunity to study the collegiate student experience by examining a particular group of students within the HBCU context and perhaps influence my professional practices in the future. Student-athletes are members of the community and represent their institution both on and off campus (Watt & Moore, 2001). I sought to understand how students, specifically student-athletes in the HBCU environment, experienced and navigated the roles of student-athlete and campus leader. Given these goals – and to authentically analyze my data using the IPA method, I bracketed my prior experiences (e.g. student affairs practitioner, passionate sports fan, and loyal HBCU alumna; Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2015; Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013; Gearing, 2004; Huff et al., 2014; Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2008, 2015). My bracketing helped to engage student participants in their interpretations of their experiences and required that I reiterative bracket during both data collection and analysis.

Two assumptions I had going into this research were: (a) the students would be willing to describe their experiences and (b) they would respond without hesitation about my motives or any possible hidden agenda. Prior to visiting the campus and data collection, I engaged in reflective journaling (e.g. memos, field notes; Vicary, Young, & Hicks, 2016) to fully bracket my assumptions and own experiences. In my journaling, I

reflected on my own experiences as an HBCU student and my frustrations about not receiving much response to my call for participants. I did this so I could reminisce on my experiences prior to the interviews and then set aside these memories so I could focus solely on the participants during their individual interviews. Given some challenges in the access and selection process, I wrote down my frustrations about that portion of the research process so that I could walk onto the final selected campus with an optimistic attitude. Upon my departure from my weeklong campus visit, I wrote another journal entry about my experience and my experience of the campus's wonderful hospitality.

Based on the limited research about NCAA, Division I, HBCU student athletes, and student-athletes of color, who also serve as campus leaders, any findings expand knowledge about this particular group of students in the specific context of the HBCU environment. The literature reported very little about identity development as both athletes and campus leaders or campus involvement. In addition, no literature included any findings concerning athletes participating in NCAA-designated Women's teams. Therefore, this study's findings revealed new knowledge about the experiences of student-athletes of color who are student leaders within the culture of a selected HBCU. Such new knowledge points offer a viable line of research linking culture and student development. This new knowledge also embraces implications for practice in campus-level student support services and collegiate athletics.

Significance of the Study

The prevalence of sports in American society and the popularity of intercollegiate athletics were prominent reasons for selecting the student-athlete experience for this

study. Gaston Gayles (2009, 2015) denoted a deficit mentality in the literature about student-athletes' social engagement outside of athletics. Gaston Gayles (2009) indicated that critics demeaned the student-athlete experience as isolated from campus academics and sometimes from other non-athlete students, ultimately questioning any benefit of the college environment for student-athletes. By contextualizing NCAA Division I student-athletes' experiences as campus leaders through their lived experiences, I generated meaning to further define the term *student-athlete*. In addition, I constructed and interpreted the student-athletes' world outside of athletics to better inform higher education programs and policies in support of this unique student group.

Linking student-athletes' campus involvement as student leaders with the culture of a selected HBCU expands the understanding about HBCU culture and potential to support and nurture student-athletes not only as athletes but also as campus leaders. Such a study can give current and future scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners a more in-depth understanding of how to foster experiences for college athletes as student-athletes and campus leaders.

Definition of Terms

- African American and Black – Throughout this text, I use African American and Black interchangeably. The participants in this study self-identified their race/ethnicity on the participant profile/questionnaire (Appendix G).
- Bracketing – Throughout this experience, I set aside my own experiences, beliefs, and values to focus on the participants' experiences (Ashworth, 1999; Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013; Finlay, 2002; Gearing, 2004; Murray & Holmes, 2014).

Among my research instruments, I developed a Field Notes instrument (Appendix K) to guide my reiterative bracketing and manage the double-hermeneutic process of IPA.

- Co-curricular and Extracurricular – Student involvement in out-of-classroom experiences including but not limited to academic-related organizations, student clubs and groups, intercollegiate athletics, etc., also referred to as extracurricular (Astin, 1984/1999; Kuh, 1995; Tierney, Colyar, & Corwin, 2003).
- Double Hermeneutics – An intricate and repetitive IPA process, which is the researcher’s interpretation of the participant’s understanding of their own experiences (Smith et al., 2009, Smith & Osborn, 2015).
- Historically Black College(s) and University(ies) [HBCU(s)] – Historically Black colleges and universities as statutorily defined by U.S. Code § 1061, Higher Education Act of 1965 (P.L. 89-329) as revised in the Higher Education Amendments of 1986 (P.L. 99-498), which established a specific list of these African American serving institutions. For the purposes of this research, using the method of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith et al., 2009), the HBCU is among the layers of *place* linked to the stories of these participants’ *lived experiences*.
- Intercollegiate Athletics (IA) – Intercollegiate athletics, defined by the National Collegiate Athletic Association’s (2017) core values, is “the collegiate model of athletics in which students participate as an avocation, balancing their academic, social and athletics experiences” (para. 3).

- Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) – A particular genre of phenomenological inquiry with layered understandings of individual experiences within a specific population in a particular place (Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith et al., 2009).
- Lived Experiences – The researcher and participants’ exploration of a particular phenomenon through reflection, understanding, and sense-making (Smith et al., 2009).
- National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) – A consortium of postsecondary institutions and their athletic programs hold membership to compete against one another in various sports.
- Organizational Culture Theory – A framework of culture reflected in an organization’s environment, mission, socialization, information, strategy, and leadership (Tierney, 1988).
- Place – The context essential to the exploration of the phenomena (Murray & Holmes, 2014).
- Predominately White Institution(s) [PWI(s)] – Predominantly White institutions referenced in this study as institutions that have traditionally enrolled students who identify as White and are not deemed HBCUs or any other minority serving institution.
- Student-Athlete(s) – Utilizing the term student-athlete versus athlete signifies the dual importance of these individuals’ athletic ability as well as their academic roles as students (Gaston Gayles, 2009).

- Student Involvement Theory – The participation and learning process of college students both in and out of the classroom (Astin, 1984/1999).
- Student Leader(s) – Students involved in organizations who seek to lead their peers with five characteristics: “purposeful, inclusive, empowering, ethical, and process-oriented” (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2007).

Chapter Summary

This study focused on lived experiences of student-athlete leaders who developed their identities as leaders and as athletes within a specific HBCU environment that included NCAA Division I sports. By highlighting both the selected-HBCU’s student-athlete co-curricular experiences and its culture, this study offered a wedge of knowledge about student involvement within the HBCU context, organizational culture, and higher education. In the following chapters, I included the following: (a) the literature that foregrounds my study (Chapter 2); (b) the description of my methodological approach (Chapter 3); (c) a description of the setting and findings (Chapter 4); and (d) a set of conclusions and implications for practice and research (Chapter 5).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter 2 encompasses a thematic literature review (Hallinger, 2013, 2014) with an overarching focus on the history and role of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs); the engagement and involvement of student-athletes on campus expressly beyond their experiences within athletics itself; and the organizational culture of HBCUs. I provide an overview about research on college athletics (Jones & Bell, 2016) and HBCUs (Gasman & Commodore, 2014) to uncover knowledge and its gaps that indicated a need for further research. This study focused on descriptions from student-athletes about their campus involvement and their interpreted experiences within an influential HBCU organizational culture. In this review, the status of knowledge about student-athlete campus leaders offered a justification of the research question for this study: *What are the experiences of student-athletes who are involved in student organizations and attend a historically Black college/university?*

Sources for this literature review included bibliographic databases, excavation of selected sources' references in a chain of scholarship, and then a thematic analysis of the resulting materials. The initial readings came from the bibliographic databases using the following search terms: (a) historically Black colleges and universities, (b) intercollegiate athletics, (c) student-athletes, (d) organizational culture, (e) student involvement, (f) student engagement, and (g) student leadership.

To analyze the resulting lists of sources, I used the following four criteria: (a) knowledge about the relevancy of HBCUs, (b) foci among sources on student involvement and/or student leadership, (c) reports surrounding intercollegiate athletics at HBCUs, and (d) information about development of institutional and organizational culture. Once I applied those four criteria, I sorted articles and books into the following categories: (a) the history of African American access to U.S. education, (b) the culture and role of HBCUs, and (c) theories relevant to the study of Black student-athlete campus leaders in the environment of an HBCU setting. Given the understudied status of these strands of scholarship, I focused this study on the phenomenon of overlapping development of identities among student-athlete leaders in the specific context of HBCUs with NCAA Division I sports and their roles in campus organizations beyond sports.

Historical Cases and Legislation: Higher Education and the Black American

Black Americans gained access to higher education during the mid to late-19th Century as a result of the Civil War and Reconstruction era strategies for freed slaves and other emancipated African Americans. For higher education, the access to public colleges came through the Morrill Land Grant Acts of 1862 (Public Law –P.L. 37-108) and 1890 (P.L. 51-841). Prior to the Morrill Acts, postsecondary education was obtainable primarily on the East Coast by wealthy, White men who attended private schools, such as Harvard, Princeton, or Yale Universities. Although several public universities, founded as early as the late 18th Century, even before George Washington’s election as the first U.S. president, under the Northwest Territories Act (Jennings, 2011; Kaestle, 1988), these “seminaries of higher learning” were restricted to White men (Jennings, 2011, p.

57). Such an exclusionary system of education furthered a social, financial, and gendered educational divide among Whites and Blacks, men and women, and arguably, high and low socio-economic status.

Morrill Land Grant Acts of 1862 and 1890

The Morrill Land Grant Acts of 1862 (P.L. 37-108) and 1890 (P.L. 51-841) broadened access for those who earned menial wages to receive a postsecondary education. Brown and Davis (2001) discussed the “tangible manifestation of America’s social contract” (p. 34) post-Civil War, which resulted in the First and Second Morrill Land Grant Acts legislation (P.L. 37-108; P.L. 51-841). The Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 (P.L. 37-108) required investment in at least one college from sales or profits of public land (Committee on the Future of the College of Agriculture..., 1995; Lovett, 2015). Additionally, to receive funding for these land grant institutions, the curriculum had to include agriculture and mechanical arts, or engineering, courses (Hall, 2003). The establishment of these institutions provided course offerings in agriculture and mechanical arts, but Kerr (1987) noted many states found themselves financially struggling to provide funding for two state institutions (one for Whites and one for Blacks) given the government’s funding parameters. However, the First Morrill Act (P.L. 37-108) could not, or did not, breach an existing divide in educational access based on race and gender, and still limited accessibility of the greater, and less than wealthy, population to attend institutions of higher education (Neyland, 1990). After the 1862 Act, states funded only four institutions that served Blacks (Neyland, 1990).

The Morrill Act of 1890 (P.L. 51-841) expanded the appropriations of funds for land grant institutions and specifically endorsed access to higher education for African Americans. The 1890 version, known as the Second Morrill Act (P.L. 51-841), required that states, which received funds for these agricultural and mechanical institutions, to provide equitable education and funds to institutions that served Blacks as well (Brown & Davis, 2001; Neyland, 1990). At the time, only eight states funded existing Black institutions of higher education, while other states opened new Black land-grant colleges (Mohr, 2009, p. 15). Nevertheless, resources from the Second Morrill Act (P.L. 51-841) disproportionately distributed lower funding among the public higher education institutions enrolling African Americans (Exkano, 2013). Ultimately, the Second Morrill Act (P.L. 51-841) sustained racial segregation across institutions of public higher education, especially in Southern states (Brown & Davis, 2001; Butchart, 2010; Exkano, 2013; Neyland, 1990). Many historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) established privately by Northern abolitionists and missionaries remained havens for African Americans, especially in the Southeastern United States (Mohr, 2009), despite the intent of the Second Morrill Act (P.L. 51-841) and expressly due to the Jim Crow era (Butchart, 2010).

Civil Rights Movement and Education

Amid the Jim Crow era, HBCUs became an environment that welcomed and accepted Black people to achieve an education. Although these institutions were a prominent fixture in “establishing the Black middle class” (Exkano, 2013, p. 70), the reality of limited allocation of resources meant that many African Americans did not see

social benefits of higher learning in the larger Jim Crow *de jure* segregation of society (Brown & Davis, 2001; Richardson & Harris, 2004). That segregated era lasted throughout the early 20th Century, but in the social and economic aftermath of many post-World War II influences, Black Americans started a social movement, the Civil Rights era (Mohr, 2009; Severin, 2013). The U.S Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision signaled a strategic educational event in the Civil Rights movement as *Brown* changed public education from segregated, Black and White systems yet, created some unintended consequences for HBCUs.

Brown v. Board of Education. The U.S. Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), included a National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) tactic of combining five separate court cases from multiple U.S regions, challenging state and local policies of schooling Black and White students in separate buildings or even systems (Bell, 1979; Severin, 2013). At the time of the *Brown* decision, 90% of Blacks (approximately 100,000 students) attended HBCUs (Exkano, 2013; Richardson & Harris, 2004). Ruled as a decision on the rights of African Americans to receive an equal, integrated education with their White peers, the *Brown* decision eventually brought unified schooling, but with unintentional and unforeseen consequences (Bell, 1979; Exkano, 2013; Lovett, 2015; Richardson & Harris, 2004). One issue that arose was the apparent case for litigation against HBCUs due to reverse discrimination and duplication of programs (Lovett, 2015; Richardson & Harris, 2004). For example, one HBCU, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University's (FAMU) law school, moved to Florida State University, a PWI, in the late 1960s (Evans, Evans &

Evans, 2002). The state of Florida's decision came after the *Brown* case, and illustrated persistent social inequity throughout U.S. postsecondary education, specifically afflicting HBCUs. Despite the First and Second Morrill Acts (P.L. 37-108; P.L. 51-841) and the *Brown* decision, African Americans' restricted access to higher education and comparably lower funding for institutions serving Black students remained an issue through the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (P.L. 88-352).

Civil Rights Act of 1964. On the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act (P.L. 88-352) and the eve of the anniversary of the 1965 Higher Education Act (P.L. 89-329), President Obama (2014) lauded all the federal Civil Rights legislation as “an essential piece of the American character” (para. 30). Although the *Brown* decision deemed school segregation unconstitutional, it was not until 1964 when the Civil Rights Act (P.L. 88-352) expanded federal requirements for non-discrimination. The 11 sections in the Act improved opportunities (e.g. voting rights, public accommodations, equal employment) for underrepresented persons (Hersch & Shinall, 2015; P.L. 88-352). Titles II and III supported the *Brown* decision about schools as it prohibited discrimination at public accommodations and promoted desegregation of public facilities (P.L. 88-352, pp. 243-246). However, many states failed to adhere to Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act until the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare revised desegregation guidelines in 1977 and 1978 (Lovett, 2015). Given these specifications across two decades, colleges and universities, especially those in the South, had to accept students of color.

P.L. 88-352 not only changed the landscape of PWIs, but also that of HBCUs. The impact depressed HBCU enrollment overall (Redd, 1998), and the enrollment of

Black athletes specifically, as such intuitions no longer claimed a role as “sole provider of higher education for African American students” (Cantey et al., 2013, p. 145).

Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 established the desegregation of public facilities, including postsecondary institutions, it was not the only legislation influenced by the Civil Rights movement.

Higher Education Act of 1965. The Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 (P.L. 89-329) stipulated the following statement of purpose: “To strengthen the educational resources of our colleges and universities and to provide financial assistance for students in postsecondary and higher education” (p. 1219). Among other provisions, the original version of HEA provided funding to aid state universities in resolving community problems, strengthen college libraries, and focus support on developing institutions in Title III (p. 1229-1231). By 1986, HEA had been reauthorized four times, and HEA’s Title III, as revised in 1986, (P.L. 94-498, Title III, Part B, §321-327) codified the roles and purposes of HBCUs (pp. 1294-1298). According to P.L. 94-498, Title III, Part B, § 322 (2) institutions clarified the designation of those known as HBCUs to only those established prior to 1964 with the sole purpose and mission to educate African Americans and which were accredited institutions. Also, encapsulated for minority-serving institutional support, Title III recognized Native and Tribal Colleges, as well as Asian American and Pacific Island native-serving institutions (Hegji, 2014). While Part A provided support for Predominantly Black Institutions, HEA differentiates HBCUs as historically important institutions (Hegji, 2014). Federal recognition of HBCUs’ social contributions is one unique characteristic of HBCUs (Brown & Davis, 2001).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

The long history of HBCUs reveals an often-overlooked aspect of American higher education, as some view these institutions' histories with societal misconceptions and doubt (Hale, 2006; Harris, 2012). Despite that view, rooted in HBCUs' mission and vision statements are seeds of equitable access and success, which advocate for life-long, holistic learning (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2009). Ingrained in their mission to nurture their students, HBCUs address holistic learning as "spiritual, intellectual, cultural, and economic development" (Hale, 2006, p. xxiii). Examples from the literature about HBCUs supported the selection of such a setting to investigate the student experience in general, but expressly those experiences of an under-studied group of student-athletes who also engage in campus organizations.

Role and Purpose

Many scholars offer insight on the role and purpose of HBCUs (Albritton, 2012; Allen & Jewell, 2002; Bettez & Suggs, 2012; Cantey et al., 2013; Knight, Davenport, Green-Powell, & Hilton, 2012; Gasman & Commodore, 2014). The role of HBCUs was, and is, to educate African Americans (Albritton, 2012). The originating purpose of these institutions' mission was to educate Blacks at a time when nearly all PWIs excluded them (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2009). Conversely, and although the majority population at these institutions was Black, HBCUs' doors opened to all without regard to race. In their study, Abelman and Dalessandro (2009) suggested HBCUs "promote key characteristics" (p. 124) in their mission and vision statements. In his historical research, Albritton (2012) substantiated Abelman and Dalessandro's study furthering HBCUs' legacy and

their continued history's influence on American higher education and a new generation of Black leaders. Palmer, Arroyo, and Maramba (2018) outlined four distinctive elements of HBCUs: (a) offering of supportive and nurturing environment; (b) preparation of the academically disadvantaged for graduate and professional school; (c) promotion of Black students' success despite underfunding; and (d) openness to all racially and ethnically diverse students. These distinct characteristics continue to define why HBCUs are relevant institutions of higher education in today's society.

Relevancy in the 21st Century

Some of the literature, noting a post-integration phase in higher education, challenged the relevance of HBCUs for the 21st Century (Bennett & Xie, 2003; Cantey et al., 2013; Nealy, 2009). Others argued that despite the 150 years' lapse since their initial establishment, the role of HBCUs is still relevant (Abelman and Dalessandro, 2009; Albritton, 2012). In 2014, the National Center for Education Statistics reported student enrollment at HBCUs increased 32% from 1976 to 2014. The HBCU relevancy debate continues partially due to better graduation rates among African Americans at HBCUs than their counterparts at PWIs (Brown, 2013; Constantine, 1994; Knight et al., 2012). Knight with associates (2012) asserted HBCU's relevancy and stated, "HBCUs remain instrumental in creating an industrious citizenry and will be the cornerstone to globalization of the current and future marketplace" (p. 233). All higher education institutions may claim graduates as enlarging the global workforce, but other institutions cannot duplicate the HBCU culture and environment (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014; Hirt, 2006; Hirt, Amelink, McFeeters, & Strayhorn, 2008). Hirt, Amelink, McFeeters, and

Strayhorn (2008) substantiated the claim about the HBCU culture in their study, which examined the relationships of student affairs administrators and their students. The study's participants nurtured the students as institutional guardians to preserve the "student-focused mission of HBCUs" (Hirt et al., 2008, p. 228). To sustain a "culture of excellence" (p. 145), Cantey, Bland, Mack, and Joy-Davis (2013) explained the challenges HBCUs encounter and the tools they need to address those challenges. One of the tools Cantey and colleagues (2013) listed was HBCUs' leadership management. The key to successful leadership development includes African American leaders, professors, and administrators as role models, among whom students recognized their own identities and projected their potential roles as future societal leaders (Cantey et al., 2013). Engaging students in the collegiate experience has a dynamic impact on their leadership development both in and out of the classroom (Montelongo, 2002). The rich history surrounding student experiences of HBCUs continues to develop even as some question the need for these institutions in the 21st Century (Allen et al., 2007; Brown, 2013; Cantey et al., 2013).

The HBCU Student Experience

Since the late 1980s, the HBCU culture, specifically the student experience, adapted and displayed through television and movies. The TV series, *A Different World* (1987-93), followed the lives of college students and explored their triumphs and tribulations while attending the fictional historically Black college, Hillman College. This series along with the movies, *Drumline* (2002), *School Daze* (1988), and *Stomp the Yard* (2007), showed how students engage in the HBCU culture through participation in

Greek life or the band, but rarely athletics. The television series and movies are fictional but there are various aspects where *art imitates life*.

Notwithstanding the fictional characters and places, the various media gave some insight into the HBCU student experience. The HBCU culture revolves around homecoming, step shows, football classics, and the students' school pride (Copeland, 2006). Represented over the years, higher education highlighted both positively and negatively in various popular culture mediums (Reynolds, 2014). However, to understand student involvement and the student-experience more deeply, Reynolds (2014) suggested an accurate analysis of higher education representation. Substantiated by prior research (Astin, 1975; Kuh, 1995; Terenzini, Yaeger, Bohr, Pascarella, & Amaury, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), I provided further literature to explore into the student experience and specifically for those who attend HBCUs.

Black Student Co-curricular Experiences

For over 100 years, the out-of-classroom experience has been the focus of the National Association for Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA, 2018) and in turn, researchers have investigated the student experience to understand the impact of these co-curricular experiences (Astin, 1984/1999; Kuh, 1995; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Terenzini, Yaeger, Bohr, Pascarella, & Nora, 1997). Montelongo (2002) examined the 15 studies written about student's organizational involvement and determined co-curricular experiences contributed to students' development not only within the classroom but also beyond. This section binds together the research pertaining to co-

curricular experiences of students and more specifically Black students and students who attend HBCUs.

Astin (1984/1999) theorized student involvement to further understand the student experience, and determined the more involved a student is, the greater the impact or result of the college experience. Kuh (1995) explored out-of-classroom experiences and the role they played in college students' learning and personal development. Kuh's research found any institution of higher education's (IHE's) context "influenced learning and personal development" (p. 147). Student learning extended beyond the classroom and enhanced students' reports of overall college satisfaction and success (Kuh, 1995). Fundamentally, the seminal works of Astin and Kuh influenced the research produced beyond this dissertation throughout higher education and particularly in the profession of student affairs.

Astin (1975), concentrated his early research on understanding ways to prevent college students from dropping out, and concluded that student success at HBCUs was due to the isolation African American students experienced at PWIs. Twenty years later, Terenzini, Yaeger, Bohr, Pascarella, and Nora (1997) examined the Black college student experience at HBCUs and PWIs and found African Americans were more satisfied with their HBCU experience. In contrast, Flowers (2004), Littleton (2002), and Parker and Flowers (2003) wrote about the student involvement of African Americans at PWIs. Flowers's (2004) study found African American students who attend PWIs had "fewer positive effects on educational outcomes than did academic-related student involvement experiences" (p. 649). In concert with Flowers's (2004) findings, Pascarella and

Terenzini (2005) further studied the relationship of African Americans and the influence of attending HBCUs. Attending HBCUs enhanced the career aspirations of Black students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In addition, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) found “positive benefits in both academic and social self-concepts” (p. 598) for Black students at HBCUs. The African American student experience examined in both the PWI and HBCU context has shown that the students who attend an HBCU are more satisfied with their collegiate experience (Astin, 1975; Astin, 1984/1999; Kuh, 1995; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Terenzini, Yaeger, Bohr, Pascarella, & Nora, 1997).

HBCU Culture

When Hirt (2006) described HBCU administrators as “guardians” (p. 109), the term implicated them as watching over students and assuming as close a relationship as parents guarding their own children. HBCU administrators, staff, and faculty are the human capital, whose actions and images as Black leaders foster student engagement (Hale, 2006; Lee & Shaw, 2005). The literature (Hale, 2006; Lee & Shaw, 2005; Outcalt & Skewes, 2002) suggested HBCUs engaged and involved students outside of their academics because of its mission, culture, and environment. Cooper (2013) examined an HBCU’s culture first-hand, and noted the commitment to develop their students, specifically their student-athletes holistically. The out-of-classroom experiences supported the mission and promoted a *culture of collective uplift* (Cooper, 2013, p. 315). At the core of the cultural uplift are the students and HBCU missions support their development outside of the classroom.

HBCU Student Involvement and Leadership

Student involvement manifests differently for each student on a college campus but many who attend an HBCU tend to be involved in more than campus activities (e.g. off-campus employment, attend racial/cultural events; Outcalt & Skewes-Cox, 2002). Being involved in the HBCU campus community for its students was also about their interactions with peers and faculty. In addition, Outcalt and Skewes-Cox (2002) found HBCU students had more leadership opportunities. Lee and Shaw (2005) discussed the preparation of student leaders among those who attended HBCUs. HBCU students experience leadership development due to an environment including unique “human and fiscal capital” (Lee & Shaw, 2005, p. 90).

Religion. Many HBCUs, founded under religious organizations (e.g. Baptist, Catholic, Presbyterian), embody the beliefs and morals of that religion (Abelman, 2013; Gasman & Tudico, 2008). Religion created a strong support system for African American students, especially those who attend PWIs, which influenced their college experience (Nance, 2009). Moran (2007) studied a subset of involved students, the Evangelical Christian, and the impact of their religious identity affected student learning identity. In Moran’s study, self-identified Evangelical Christian students found their faith as “life-defining” (p. 428) in their role as students within their college campus. The study was limited in the number of institutional types as well as the racial and ethnic identities of its participants.

Perry, Govan, and Clark (2016) explored the emergence of extracurricular experiences at HBCUs and suggested the religious donations, which assisted in

establishing these institutions, played an underlying role in the influence of student life. The religious affiliations influenced institutional mission enough to include out-of-classroom participation as well (Perry, Govan, & Clark, 2016). They suggested the “emergence of college extracurricular activities” (p. 94) as a welding of spiritual, academic, and holistic education. Perry and colleagues (2016) also described how the holistic approach generated “student pride in their institution” (p. 106) and an evolving institutional mission.

Black Greek-Letter Organizations (BLGOs). Similar to other student groups, the impetus for Greek-letter organizations included development of relationships and leadership skills (Rosch & Collins, 2017). BGLOs meant more for Black student who formed them in response to isolation and rejection experienced on college campuses (Hughey & Hernandez, 2013; Kimbrough, 2003; Kimbrough & Hutcheson, 1998; Laybourn, Goss, & Hughey, 2017). Nearly 100 years since the establishment of the first BGLOs, nine recognized organizations remain prominent on college campuses (Hughey & Hernandez, 2013). These nine comprise the National Pan-Hellenic Council, organized by their founding dates, as follows:

- Alpha Phi Alpha (1906),
- Alpha Kappa Alpha (1908),
- Kappa Alpha Psi (1911),
- Omega Psi Phi (1911),
- Delta Sigma Theta (1913),
- Phi Beta Sigma (1914),

- Zeta Phi Beta (1922),
- Sigma Gamma Rho (1922), and
- Iota Phi Theta (1963). (Kimbrough, 2003)

Kimbrough and Hutcheson (1998) examined BGLO membership and its influence on Black student involvement and leadership development at both PWIs and HBCUs. They found that no matter the institutional type, BGLO membership created more confident and involved leaders (Kimbrough & Hutcheson, 1998). Furthermore, Kimbrough & Hutcheson (1998) found students were not only engaged in BGLOs, but also other campus organizations. Therefore, they learned BGLOs members were more involved than Black non-Greek students were. Hotchkins (2017) argued that students at HBCUs were not only involved in BGLOs but various forms of engagement, which built their competencies as leaders not only on campus but also in the community.

Intercollegiate Athletics. After World War II, intercollegiate athletics grew with the number of veterans enrolling to take advantage of the GI Bill (Martin & Christy, 2010), and that growth occurred after nearly 100 years of sports in U.S. higher education. During that early period, both higher education and collegiate sports were as segregated as the larger U.S. society. To level the playing field, Black college leaders decided to follow their white counterparts and introduced the expansion of athletic extracurricular activities (Perry, Govan, & Clark, 2016). The expansion of school pride and athletics appeared during the 19th and 20th Centuries across a variety of IHEs and was a way for students to compete physically in a demonstration of loyalty and allegiance for their institutions. During this era, the NCAA formed as a White association for predominantly

White colleges' sports teams (Cooper, Cavil & Cheeks, 2014). Given such segregation, the Inter-Scholastic Athletic Association (ISAA) formed and primarily served HBCUs (Wiggins, 1999). A historical perspective on the relationship between athletics and HBCUs foregrounds this study.

Historical perspective of HBCU athletics. Intercollegiate athletics at HBCUs built a sense of community, school pride, and distinction in the mid-20th Century (Jones & Bell, 2016). With the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (P.L. 88-352) historically changed the HBCU athletics landscape (Jones & Bell, 2016). The statutory declaration to end segregation had a “significantly negative impact on HBCUs as a whole and their athletic programs more specifically” (Cooper et al., 2014, p. 310).

Before the Civil Rights era, both amateur and professional athletic leagues were segregated (Borucki, 2003; Cavil, 2015; Reese, 1998). The segregation in intercollegiate sports was particularly concentrated in the NCAA's Southeastern Conference (SEC; Borucki, 2003; Cavil, 2015; “Recalling the Death ...,” 1998). The powerhouse University of Alabama football team, known as the Crimson Tide, and its legendary coach, Paul “Bear” Bryant, both serve as repeated examples of collegiate sports discrimination (“Recalling the Death ...,” 1998; Trank, 2013). Moreover, both played a significant role in watershed changes that emanated from the 1970 Crimson Tide's all-White football team's home opener with the University of Southern California (USC). USC fielded two Black football players, Sam Cunningham and Alabama native Clarence Davis (Cavil, 2015). Alabama suffered an embarrassing loss, and Bear Bryant began to recruit more Black players (“Recalling the Death ...,” 1998; Trank, 2013).

In the 1970s, more PWIs, with arguably better resources (e.g. scholarships and multi-million dollar facilities), began to recruit elite Black athletes, which meant that lesser-resourced HBCUs could not compete (Cooper et al., 2014; Jones & Bell, 2016). Currently, HBCUs still face recruiting challenges (Cooper et al., 2014), and this ongoing challenge justified further research into those student-athletes who chose to attend HBCUs and their experiences.

The Student-Athlete. Student-athletes have significant time-intensive required activities including practice, games, and study hall. These activities represent large time commitments that non-student-athletes do not have. However, not all student-athletes experience the same level of involvement as their teammate or non-student-athlete peers. Gaston Gayles (2015) described the unique dynamics student-athletes endure and how that participation can affect their involvement in activities outside of their academic and athletic responsibilities. Three key factors of student-athletes' experiences included: (a) balancing social responsibilities with academics and athletics, (b) maintaining academic performance, and (c) negotiating the subcultures surrounding student-athletes (Gaston Gayles, 2015). Nevertheless, Gaston Gayles (2015) did not identify how the institutional type supported or hindered student-athletes' involvement. The difference in this study was the attention to the institutional type and its organizational culture that created an environment for these student-athletes to get involved in the campus community beyond their sports. The institution is a culture in which student-athletes navigate as college students.

Black College Student-Athlete Experiences. Steinfeldt, Reed, and Steinfeldt (2010) noted a vast amount of research studying African American athletes at PWIs. On the other hand, Jones and Bell (2016) noted a deficit in research about athletes at HBCUs. Student-athletes' life experiences in many ways may be similar to non-athletes, however, the *athlete* identity those students embody adds a layer of complexity (Watt & Moore, 2001). Although Watt and Moore's (2001) study contributed to knowledge about student-athlete identity, they did not develop knowledge about how this identity developments within contexts of different kinds of higher education institutions. Cooper's research brought attention to the complexity of student-athletes' identity in conjunction with the HBCU context, which gave further perspective into these students' experiences.

Cooper (2012) examined the influence of an HBCU's organizational culture on Black male student-athletes' experiences. The results of this study found the HBCU culture had a positive impact on the socialization and educational experiences of Black male student-athletes. Cooper's (2012) study, however, did not account for women student-athletes nor any specific gender identity campus leadership experiences. Cooper and Cooper (2015) used Critical Race Theory to reveal counter-narratives about Black scholar athletes' experiences within a Division I HBCU. The study's results uncovered the genuine admiration Black scholar-athletes have for the HBCU environment and revealed, "HBCUs should be desirable educational institutions for student-athletes" (Cooper & Cooper, 2015, p. 166). Cooper and Cooper's (2015) study corroborated the decision to use a Division I HBCU to understand the experiences of student-athletes more

deeply. Other works by Cooper and Dougherty (2015) and Cooper and Hawkins (2016) examined the essential components that influenced student-athletes' experiences.

Cooper and Dougherty (2015) conducted a cross-sectional analysis to examine student-athletes' experiences and identify key factors influencing their college and academic experiences. They found that race remained a factor regarding student-athletes' engagement and satisfaction contrasted between both types of Division I institutions, HBCUs and PWIs. In another study, Cooper and Hawkins (2016) examined Black male student-athletes and their motivation to attend an HBCU as well as their experiences. They found the HBCU environment supportive, positive, and that it contributed to the overall college experience, including achieving academic success (Cooper & Hawkins, 2016).

The series of studies by Cooper and colleagues (Cooper, 2012; Cooper & Cooper, 2015; Cooper & Dougherty, 2015; Cooper & Hawkins, 2016) provided insights on Black student-athletes' experiences and involvement in different types of IHEs. While those studies showed some connections among institutions, race, athletics, and student involvement, these Cooper-led investigations also left open other aspects. In my study, I juxtaposed the student-athlete's campus involvement, leadership experiences, and institutional culture, including both men and women athletes, to provide a structure where culture and involvement intersected within a specific, unique institutional setting.

Conceptual Framework

Many studies postulated the historical context of HBCUs as a learned and nurturing environment for Black students (Brown, 2013; Harris, 2012; Lovett, 2015).

The HBCU continues to foster a culture of learning as it combats a deficit image and concerns about its relevancy in a so-called post-racial era (Brown, 2013; Harris, 2012). To explore the experiences of current HBCU students and with a specific focus on athletes' involvement, I used two theories to frame this study: student involvement theory (Astin, 1984/1999) and organizational culture (Tierney, 1988). These frames connected the participants' lived experiences and place (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Interpretative phenomenological analysis does not use theoretical frameworks to confirm or test preconceived ideas in the traditional sense (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2015). I used them to guide my investigations of the phenomena's context and structure the layers of place and lived experiences (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Grant & Osanloo, 2014; Murray & Holmes, 2014).

Student Involvement Theory

Astin's (1984/1999) student involvement theory revolves around students' in- and out-of-classroom activities. This theory guides the work of researchers and practitioners as they look to understand and develop students within the collegiate environment. Astin (1984/1999) focused on "physical and physiological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 518) as a means of conceptualizing student involvement. The academic experience, not limited to the classroom and studying, also includes participating in other kinds of campus activities (Astin, 1984/1999). Astin's (1984/1999) work describes the influence and impact of college on student learning and personal development. Likewise, Astin (1984/1999) theorized about campus involvement with five propositions about the construct of involvement: (a) level of investment in

involvement; (b) presumption that involvement occurs along a continuum; (c) potential quantitative and qualitative measures; (d) importance of quality and quantity; and (e) the effectiveness of educational policy or practices. Astin (1984/1999), Gaston Gayles (2009, 2015), and Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) explored the influence intercollegiate athletics participation has on student-athletes and their involvement in the college campus environment. Their studies found student-athletes engrossed in intercollegiate athletics had increased engagement in their academics and overall satisfaction with their college experience.

For this study, I explored the student-athletes' campus organizational involvement outside of team-based sports. Astin (1984/1999) encouraged educators to "focus less on what they [educators] do and more on what the student does" (p. 522), therefore, I chose to interview the student-athletes, themselves. My study elicited students' perceptions about their simultaneous roles as student-athletes and campus leaders within the HBCU environment.

Organizational Culture

The culture of HBCUs, often explained in their mission and vision statements, focused on equitable access to higher education while creating a diverse learning environment (Berger & Milem, 2000). Organizational culture continues to be a much-studied concept because, as Schein (1990) noted, "the concept of organization itself is ambiguous" (p. 111). Deal and Kennedy (1983) highlighted "the culture of organizations as the prime mover instead of focusing on structure, strategy, or politics" (p. 500). Deal and Kennedy (1983) developed beliefs about organizational culture that emphasized

organizations' distinct culture as based on strength and cohesiveness. Schein (1990) reviewed a variety of organizational culture definitions and observed how bias interferes with the phenomenon. Schein (1990) used an ethnographic approach to define culture as the assumptions, values, and artifacts of the organization. Higher education institutions inhabit their own cultures, and Tierney (1988) developed an organizational culture theory to address higher education institutions and their cultures.

Building off the work of Burton Clark (1970), who specifically examined higher education campus cultures, Tierney (1988) proffered a framework of organizational culture, specifically for these institutions as cultures. An "organization's culture reflected in what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in the organization's workings" (Tierney, 1988, p. 3). To answer these questions, Tierney presented a framework with six elements¹ to describe the "key dimensions of culture" (p. 8): (a) environment, (b) mission, (c) socialization, (d) information, (e) strategy, and (f) leadership. The mission's definition and articulation expressed an "overarching ideology" (Tierney, 2008, p. 28). Tierney explained socialization as what is important to the organization. Culture interpretations, interactions, and communication define the information, strategy, and leadership of an organization. Tierney (2008) summarized the dynamics of an organization to encourage "participants and scholars alike to investigate ways to strengthen culture and highlights how the ignorance of culture can stymie innovation" (p. 28). Tierney's (2008) framework provided a structure for my study where I sought

¹ Elements, components, and dimensions used interchangeably in reference to Tierney's organizational culture framework (Tierney, 1988).

student-athletes' understanding about their campus experiences beyond their sports. For this study, the context of an HBCU in the NCAA's Division, I provide participants' insights into their sense-making about both the institutional and athletic cultures as the study's setting.

Chapter Summary

Students who attend historically Black colleges and universities come from a variety of educational, societal (e.g. rural, suburban, and urban), and ethnic backgrounds (Allen et al., 2007). HBCUs' welcoming environment encourages, nurtures, and develops students as individuals and prepares them to go out into their communities and become leaders (Allen & Jewell, 2002). Tierney's (2008) explanation of cultural frameworks provided a means of analyzing the environment to study student-athletes who are campus leaders, thus, combining the institutional and athletics settings. The unique, nurturing environment of the HBCU culture in conjunction with Astin's (1984/1999) student involvement theory, Gaston Gayles (2009, 2015) and Pascarella and Terenzini's (2005) research on intercollegiate athletics framed my exploration into the lived experiences of student-athletes and their involvement in HBCU campus environment. Watt and Moore's (2001) characterization of student-athletes signaled a way in which I could connect student-athlete identity to the cultural contributions of HBCUs. My study investigated the student-athletes who navigated the simultaneous roles of student-athlete and campus involvement within the distinctive, institutional culture of an HBCU. To enable my understanding of this phenomenon, I selected an emergent method, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Biggerstaff &

Thompson, 2008; Finlay, 2014; Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2008, 2015). In Chapter 3, I describe why IPA was an appropriate method to answer my research question: *What are the experiences of student-athletes who are involved in student organizations and attend a historically Black college/university?*

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the philosophical underpinnings and rationale for my methodological approach, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). I explain my steps for data generation and analysis to answer my research question. The overarching research question for this study: *What are the experiences of student-athletes who are involved in student organizations and attend a historically Black college/university?*

Education research incorporates a variety of methodological approaches to examine and explore people's behaviors, interactions, issues, and experiences. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described qualitative researchers as those "interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 6). Among these extensive approaches are emergent and sense-making forms of research designs such as case studies, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative inquiry, and phenomenology (Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark, & Morales, 2007; Green, Camilli, & Elmore, 2006). Emergent methods offer researchers an opportunity to focus on the individual, on person-to-person experiences, and on specific micro-cultures, that is, social systems (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Pascale, 2011). Typically, such designs elicit how participants construct meaning of their experiences (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Emergent research designs emphasize a connectivity among the researcher, the participants, and the phenomenon studied, while also depicting social meanings within a

specific context. The complexity of my research question led to my decision to use a meaning-making approach that would discern the overlapping experiences of being a student-athlete and campus leader as a phenomenon in a specific institution with a socially-defined mission and culture. Thus, I selected interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).

Epistemology

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) wrote, “All research is interpretive” (p. 22) due to researchers’ acknowledged, or unacknowledged, “set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied” (p. 22). The interpretivist research paradigm encompasses a relationship between researchers and their participants (Sipe & Constable, 1996). My central purpose as an interpretivist is to construct meaning from a particular set of participants’ words, specifically, for this study, those who described their experiences as student-athletes and campus leaders as a phenomenon in a specific place, a HBCU (Murray & Homes, 2014). An essential component of interpretative phenomenological analysis is the ability for me, the researcher, to employ double hermeneutics. To engage in double hermeneutics (Huff et al., 2014; Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2015) I made sense of my insights into the participants’ interpretations of their lived experiences.

To remain authentic to the IPA method in its use of double hermeneutics, I also engaged in bracketing (Ashworth, 1999; Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013; Finlay, 2002; Gearing, 2004). An important characteristic to consider when conducting a phenomenological study is the means by which researchers bracket their presuppositions

from the experiences of study participants (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013; Gearing, 2004). Bracketing required me to engage in reflexive journaling (Finlay, 2008; Vicary, Young & Hicks, 2016) which obligates me to set aside my own personal experiences for deeper reflection about the participants' voices, ideas, and insights throughout the data collection and analysis process. I developed an instrument to record my bracketing in the field (Appendix K). Given multiple points of view from which meaningful truth derives (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014; Sipe & Constable, 1996), endless possibilities open for researchers to uncover deeper meaning and insights into multiple worldviews. As an interpretivist utilizing an emergent research design, I acknowledged my experiences and bracketed them to turn my focus on others' experiences as told through their meanings to interpret and make sense of a particular phenomenon in a specific context.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Over the last 15 years, IPA has become more widely used among researchers in healthcare and education (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Smith and Osborn (2008) stated, "The aim is to try to understand the content and complexity of those meanings rather than their frequency" (p. 66). Interpretative phenomenological analysis is a descriptive and interpretive approach rooted in psychology (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Finlay, 2014; Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2008, 2015). Merleau-Ponty's (1962, 1973, 2002) contributions to IPA noted the essence of place for individuals' *lived experiences* (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2008, 2015; Smith et al., 2009). The literature on HBCUs and student-athletes rarely melds insights into those individuals' experiences

with the *place* of such experiences. Phenomenology allows researchers flexibility to address the phenomenological characteristics they embrace in their research techniques. Philosophers have named at least three different phenomenological perspectives: (a) transcendental, (b) existential, and (c) hermeneutic (Chan et al., 2013; Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). Smith (2004) developed IPA under the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography.

Philosophical Underpinnings of IPA

For this study's methodology I chose interpretative phenomenological analysis, which combined lived experiences, double hermeneutics, and attention to detail of a phenomena in a particular place. The idea of IPA is to acknowledge a particular lived experience through each participant's sense-making and for the researcher to make sense of all participants' experiences while holding the researcher's own experiences a part from the participants'. To understand IPA as a methodological approach I needed to understand the philosophical underpinnings in which the method stemmed.

Phenomenology. Phenomenology as a method can reveal understanding and interpreting of people's experiences (Dowling & Cooney, 2012; Finlay, 2012; Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 1973, 2002; van Manen, 1990; van Manen, Higgins, & Riet, 2016). Phenomenology stemmed from early 20th Century European philosophy as a dual epistemological approach: (a) philosophy and (b) research method (Dowling & Cooney, 2012; Finlay, 2012; Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Specifically, van Manen (1990) described phenomenology's focus as "gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences" (p. 9). Despite the proliferation of

phenomenological perspectives, they espouse similar characteristics: (a) description, (b) epoché (bracketing or reduction), (c) imaginative variation, and (d) essences (Moustakas, 1994). The “multifaceted nature of phenomenology” (Dowling & Cooney, 2012, p. 22) and its complexity proffered confusion when deciding which form of phenomenology to employ. The authenticity and connection to experiences is at the center of all forms of phenomenology. Phenomenology is authentic with “rich, detailed descriptions of the phenomenon being investigated” (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015, p. 252). To apply phenomenology in education research (Peters, 2009; van der Mescht, 2004), the researcher seeks to make sense of participants’ everyday life and learning with a subjective and reflexive lens (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015; King, 2014). Phenomenology calls for the researcher to reduce or bracket their own experiences and knowledge and solely focus on the participants.

Hermeneutics. Husserl’s hermeneutic phenomenology did not agree that the researcher could bracket or reduce their own experiences (Larkin & Thompson, 2011; Tuffour, 2017). Husserl developed hermeneutic phenomenology to interpret the participant’s world specifically through their interactions (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). Hermeneutic phenomenology is descriptive, but more importantly, its interpretative process transcends descriptions to interpretations of the participants’ experiences (Larkin & Thompson, 2011; Smith & Osborn, 2008, 2015; Tuffour, 2017). An essential component to hermeneutic phenomenology is hermeneutic circles or what Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) called double hermeneutics. Researchers use double hermeneutics when they analyze the participants’ expressions about the phenomena and

recount interpretations of the participants' own sense-making of those experiences (Callary, et al., 2015; Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith et al., 2009, Smith & Osborn, 2015). In the double-hermeneutic process, each researcher has to bracket prior memories and experiences to set them aside before making sense of the participants' experiences. Participants relay their experiences through idiography, a term that means to focus on the detailed particulars of each of their lived experiences.

Idiography. Idiography focuses on the minute details of the participant's lived experience through an intricate analysis process. Idiography emphasizes specifics rather than generalities (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2015; Tuffour, 2017). Distinguishing between the specific and the general allows an exclusive focus to be on the individual. From the field notes, transcripts, and artifacts, I concentrated on the specific details to make connections between the individuals and their experiences. A connection between the people to the environment develops an idiographic understanding in which their experiences take place (Smith & Osborn, 2015; Tuffour; 2017). The recursive analysis process in IPA required a focus on detailed differences as well as particular similarities in the participants understanding and recounting of their experiences.

For this study, I included IPA techniques to garner understanding into the lived experiences of students classified as both student-athletes and campus leaders in a selected HBCU campus. Black student-athletes' experiences, their additional participation and student-leader campus roles in general, and even scarcer investigation of such experiences within HBCU settings provided an opportunity for inquiry to detect,

describe, and examine such phenomena. Because the phenomena of interest focused on involvement experiences of Black student-athletes in their HBCU campus leader roles, then their words about their specific campus and their understanding of their experiences was important for answering the research question.

Research Question

This interpretative phenomenological analysis study addressed one central question: *What are the experiences of student-athletes who are involved in student organizations and attend a historically Black college/university?*

Procedures

For an IPA design, Murray and Holmes (2014) focus on the selection of setting and participants as key procedures in uncovering the phenomenological meanings of experiences and context. Given that IPA steps include simultaneous bracketing of the researcher's idiography and recognition of the participants' interpretations and idiographies, I included steps for ongoing double-hermeneutic analysis, a circling of bracketing my experiences in favor of the participants, using a Field Note instrument in Appendix K (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2015; Huff et al., 2014; Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2008, 2015). In my first step for the study, I selected the place, a specific HBCU participating in NCAA Division I athletics and then sought experiences as I took steps to engage a selected group of men and women student-athletes who also identified as involved campus leaders.

Site selection. I established two site selection criteria: (1) institutional accreditation as a HBCU currently listed by the National Center for Educational Statistics

(NCES); and (2) a Division I member institution currently listed with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The HBCU is a specific and unique, U. S. societal institution. Only seven percent (7%) of NCAA member institutions hold joint Division I and HBCU status, which proffered an opportunity to understand this specific context for student-athletes (NCAA, 2013). After generating a pool of institutions that met the criteria, I narrowed the list of institutions to two. One of the institutions indicated initial interest, but then backed out. The remaining institution, Tennessee State University, not only agreed to participate, it proceeded to open communication and access for all institutional requirements for my study.

Participants. Upon Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from both Clemson University and Tennessee State University (Appendices A & B), I began recruiting participants by employing purposive sampling methods and communicating with gatekeepers (Smith et al., 2009). Purposive sampling is consistent with the research design, which allowed me to select participants with a specific experience intentionally. Interpretative phenomenological analysis calls for a limited sample size to assess the depth and breadth of the participants' similarities and differences within the phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). I worked with administrators in the institution's athletics department to access and identify student-athletes, men and women, who were also active in campus organizations outside of their sport(s). Known as reputational sampling this is a specific form of purposive sampling (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Students in dual roles as both student-athlete and campus leader have a unique lens to the college experience, especially at HBCUs, given their historic cultural mission.

Three criteria participants had to embody for selection to participate in this study. The first requirement was they had to be a full-time student (undergraduate or graduate). The second condition was recognized membership on a varsity, NCAA sports team. The final criterion was their active participation in campus organizations outside the athletic team. Although I sought both male and female participants, neither sex nor gender-identity played a focus in this study. My goal was to interview up to 10 participants so that their lived experiences could provide a focused set of relationships between the participants' experiences and the environment (Gill, 2015).

Officials from the HBCU's athletic department nominated athletes who fit the criteria for the study, and I submitted an online questionnaire to that pool of nominees (Appendix G). Initially, 13 student-athletes completed the questionnaire; however, due to scheduling conflicts, I interviewed 10 of those student-athletes. There were six women and four men who participated in this study. The participants self-identified their gender identity on the participant questionnaire. Although I collected the participants' gender identity, I made the decision not to include this information in the aggregated data. This was a research tactic to avoid unveiling the participants' identity given the small participant size and reputational sampling I used. Two of the students engaged in campus organizations and activities beyond their team sport; however, those activities seemed to be tied more to athletics or academics than purely campus-based organizations. Nevertheless, I interviewed them as one student-athlete sought me to participate and the other's idiography proved different from the other nine students. This study's

participants produced a depth of meaningful lived experiences regarding the student-athlete campus leader within the HBCU context.

Data Sources and Data Generation

The phenomenological approach presented a fluid process for obtaining data with a focus on experiences and place (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 1973; Murray & Holmes, 2014). Among the most important characteristics when using IPA, is utilizing direct quotes to substantiate findings and contextualizing the words, meaning, and places (Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith et al., 2009). Along with my contributions as the primary research instrument for eliciting the data, I used three primary data sources: (a) artifacts and documents volunteered by administrators or available from the HBCU, *the place*; (b) photographs of the campus, *the place*; and (c) participant questionnaires and interviews, *the individuals* (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2008, 2015).

The researcher as an instrument and bracketing. To establish a rapport and level of comfort and trust, I sent an introductory video to introduce myself and give background to the study to further the experiences collected in the study (Murray & Holmes, 2014). Within the framework of IPA, I generated the data necessary for ascribing meaning and understanding of the phenomena of interest (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Though not typical of IPA (Alase, 2016; Larkin & Thompson, 2012; van Manen, Higgins & Riet, 2016), I triangulated the semi-structured interviews by gathering artifacts and documents from my visit to the campus, athletic administrators, and openly available information from the selected campus' website. I created a Field Notes form to monitor

my experiences and to bracket my judgments and interpretations reflexively. (Appendix K).

Reflexive journaling allowed me to grapple with my feelings and more authentically focus and engage in the complex notion of double hermeneutics (Huff et al., 2014; Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2008, 2015). During data collection, I used field notes (Appendix K) to bracket and reflect about how my background, beliefs, and experiences could or did influence my interactions with participants and also my interpretation of their words, meanings, and insights (Vicary, Young, & Hicks, 2017). At various points, before I arrived on campus, after each interview, and during transcript analysis, I bracketed my own interpretations through journaling (Finlay, 2008; Vicary et al., 2017) while sorting through my idiography about both place and experiences (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Chan et al., 2013; Gearing, 2004). A requirement of IPA is a constant examination of my position in the relationships with these participants and I did so reflexively recording my own HBCU student and student-leader experiences (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013, Gearing, 2004; Vagle, Hughes & Durbin, 2009).

Beyond my reflexive involvement in the ongoing analysis, I utilized multiple data sources to triangulate the participants' experiences in this study: (a) photographs of the campus; (b) participant profile/questionnaire (Appendix G); (c) participant interviews (Appendix H); and (d) artifacts and documents volunteered by administrators or available from the institution's website (Appendix I; Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). The fluidity of the IPA research design allowed for supplemental data sources to assist in

understanding *the place* in which the phenomena was cemented (Alase, 2017; Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

The place. For *the place*, I collected recruitment publications, the Accelerating Academic Success Program (AASP) Grant proposal, and photos (institutional and departmental artifacts), which characterized the HBCU and athletic culture for student-athletes and exemplified the institution's intended student experience. Additionally, I examined institutional and departmental (athletics and student affairs) mission statements. I used the institution's mission statements as well as those associated with athletics and student affairs as a frame for the words student-athletes' used to describe the institution's culture (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2009; Tierney, 1988). The pictures taken during my visit I used to accompany and illuminate a description of the institution. Moreover, the interplay of these artifacts fit the IPA method (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Larkin & Thompson, 2011; Merleau-Ponty, 1963, 1972, 2002; Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith et al., 2009).

The lived experiences. I used two types of data generation among these participants: (a) a participant profile/questionnaire (Appendix G), and (b) a semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix H). I distributed the profile/questionnaire through email. The semi-structured interviews occurred in person.

The profile/questionnaire generated information about the reputational nominated individuals. Furthermore, the questionnaires allowed the participants to share their experiences with the researcher (Ashworth, 1999) with unfolding of participants' descriptions of their self-identities across race, gender, sports, and as campus leaders (see

Appendix G, questions 1-6). Part of the profile/questions, (items 7-12), set up the face-to-face interviews by eliciting their written thoughts about leadership.

I designed the semi-structured, individual interview schedule (Appendix H) from the gaps in literature, such as Cooper (2012), Cooper and Dougherty (2015), and Cooper and Hawkins (2016), to fully comprehend the personal accounts of student-athlete leaders (Larkin & Thompson, 2012, Smith et al., 2009). From the participants' responses, the interview questions (Appendix H) were one-step in the simultaneous and reiterative data generation-analysis processes (bracketing and reduction) of IPA (Chan et al., 2013; Gearing 2004). My detailed one-on-one interviews co-constructed the participants' lived experiences in this study (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 1973; Murray & Holmes, 2014). I relied on several methods to enable a relationship with participants and establish necessary rapport.

Establishing rapport. My own experiences as a graduate of an HBCU and student-leader served as a foundation for establishing rapport and an authentic relationship with my participants. I established a rapport with the participants by extending e-mail and in-person invitations that explained the study and its purpose. Some participants expressed skepticism about the emails, and that contributed to their lackluster response. To combat this issue I made an introductory video that provided an overview of the study and allowed me to introduce myself. The gatekeepers, TSU athletic administrators, did not inhibit my accessibility to these students; rather they lent support and encouragement to recruit participants who had not responded to e-mails. I conveyed to the participants my genuine interest in uncovering their own unique,

personal experiences as a student-athlete leader to create understanding of this phenomenon. It was important to maintain the participant's trust and all ethical considerations I made were to do so. I maintained the authenticity of the data by having the participants review their transcripts for accuracy and clarification. The student-athletes had a week to review the transcripts and to clarify any misinformation. Of the ten students, only one provided updates to their transcripts I sent to them. Upon receipt of all transcripts, I proceed to complete the data analysis.

Analysis

This study's data analysis process was iterative and determined by the research design. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) indicated data collection and analysis "should be a simultaneous process" (p. 195). Following each phase of data collection, the researcher analyzed the artifacts, questionnaires, and individual interviews through reflexive journaling (Vicary, Young, & Hicks, 2017). From the data collected, I engaged specific steps introduced by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) for interpretative phenomenological analysis to construct the participants' experiences.

In IPA, data analysis steps vary fluidly (Alase, 2017; Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Smith et al., 2009; Vicary et al., 2017; Wagstaff & Williams, 2014). Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) and Vicary, Young, and Hicks (2017) presented step-by-step guides to analyze the data collected while also keeping in mind that the analysis process is an iterative and personal journey. I chose to lean on Murray and Holmes (2014), Smith et al., (2009), and Vicary et al., (2017) to guide my data analysis because of their detailed, comprehensible analytical approach.

Each participant's transcript underwent a detailed data analysis to determine the essence of each one's individual experiences and develop emergent themes (Smith, 2004; Van Gordon, Shonin, & Griffiths, 2015). I read the transcripts multiple times while also making annotations when there were significant or interesting findings. I compiled 15 pages of journal notes that included me bracketing my reactions to participants' interviews. During the first reading of the transcript, I took notes, and upon the second reading transformed the notes into emergent themes. Next, I made connections (cluster) with the emergent themes within each individual participant's transcript. The clustering of themes is an iterative process and "involves a close interaction between reader and text" (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 72). Following the clustering of themes for each participant, I created a "master table" (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 75) to show where the themes converged or not. Lastly, I interpreted the themes using narratives from the transcript. I used a Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), MAXQDA (2018) to aid in the organization of individual cases for each participant, while I manually identified overlapping themes across participants. I interpreted the narratives verbatim from the transcripts to support the authentic and social realities of each participant's case. Instinctively, this research study has personal significance for my past and future roles as an HBCU alumna and higher education professional.

Organizational Culture. In my study, I used Tierney's (1988) organizational culture as a supplemental guide to understand the study's context. Interpreting the experiences from the student-athlete leaders and institutional artifacts from the organization further supported the selection of this study's context. The selected

institution, Tennessee State University, is a unique institutional setting holding both HBCU and NCAA Division I status. Smith et al., (2009) suggested Yardley's (2000) principle, *sensitivity to context*. To do so, I used electronic and hard copy documents from the site and performed document analysis. Document analysis is a method where one analyzes and explicates meaning from electronic and published materials (Bowen, 2009). This iterative analysis "entails finding, selecting, appraising (making sense of), and synthesizing data contained in the documents" (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). I analyzed institutional and departmental mission statements, the visitor guide, and athletic media relations' articles to interpret the organizational culture that the university articulated to its student-athletes. Tierney's (1988) framework of organizational culture along with the document analysis framed my analysis so I could articulate the institution's culture in conjunction with its students' lived experiences.

Bracketing during analysis. An essential element of phenomenology is the ability to balance the reduction of the researcher's own preconceived notions and be open to the participants' experiences (Finlay, 2002, 2008). Specifically, I employed what Finlay (2008) called a *phenomenological attitude*. Finlay (2008) viewed the phenomenological attitude as a *dance*, which she described as the researcher "striving for reductive focus and being reflexively self-aware" (p. 3). Clancy (2013) confirmed how reflexivity influences the depth and rigor of the research design. Acknowledging reflexivity's influence on the data collected holistically shapes the research (Clancy, 2013). Phenomenological reduction and reflexivity were two ways in which I helped assure ethical research practices (Murray & Holmes, 2014; Vicary et al., 2017), while

also constructing meaning to student-athlete leaders' lived experiences and their sense making of those experiences.

Assessing Research Quality

The nature of interpretive and constructivist approaches to research creates tensions over the credibility, rigor, and trustworthiness of the works (Finlay, 2014; Tracy, 2010; Yardley, 2000). Typically, IPA researchers ensure trustworthiness with rigorous attention to participants' words along with using direct quotes as primary evidence (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Murray & Holmes, 2014). As a novice phenomenologist, I chose multiple data sources as a form of triangulation, which was a credibility strategy borrowed from other emergent designs (Murray & Homes, 2014; Tracy, 2010). Furthermore, I elected to use member-checking, sometimes termed, *member reflection*, which is becoming more common in some IPA approaches (Alase, 2017; Koelsch, 2013; Tracy, 2010). By sending the transcripts to the participants for review, I gained clarification and further engaged in the IPA process of bracketing and reduction while attending to the participants' meanings and experiential understandings (Gearing 2004; Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2008, 2015; van Manen, Higgins, & Riet, 2016; Vicary et al., 2017). I asked participants to review their transcripts for accuracy and I only received one revision. Given that this study applied a design chosen to elaborate on experience and place with an interpretive epistemology, and given its internal rigor, it may be replicable; however, transparency demands clarification of the boundaries of this study.

Tracy (2010) presented various means to assess the study's quality. The fluidity of IPA as a research design (Finlay, 2014; Gearing, 2004; Smith & Osborn, 2008, 2015) indicates its meaningful contribution to the canon. While the steps in this study are explicit and replicable, the nature of IPA indicates an aspect of this study, which is bound to these participants' experiences in their specific context (place). The specificity of the site limits this bounded context to a specific group of institutions within postsecondary education. Not only is the site an HBCU, but among HBCUs, it is among a small group with NCAA Division I sports. The idiographic nature of understanding the selected students' lived experiences within this specific campus, and may not reflect others experiences at another HBCU, not even among those members of the NCAA's Division I. Furthermore, the purposive, reputational identification of student-participants was another delimitation.

Emergent, constructivist, and interpretive research designs focus on micro-experiences and descriptions (Murray & Holmes, 2014; van Manen et al., 2016), and though, systematic and rigorous, these designs were not intended to provide causal, generalizable macro-scale laws of behavior (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Smith, 2008, 2015; Tracy, 2010). The student-athletes involved in campus organizations highlighted similarities and differences among each other on the same campus. Therefore, this study offers a glimpse into the leadership experiences of student-athletes within a specific institutional context.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I explained the methodological approach, IPA, for data generation and data analysis, suitable to my epistemology and the research question: *What are the experiences of student-athletes who are involved in student organizations and attend a historically Black college/university?* In the next chapter, I reveal the study's findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

STUDENT-ATHLETE LIVED EXPERIENCES AS HBCU CAMPUS LEADERS

First Impressions

I arrived on campus, Monday, August 28, 2017, to answer the research question: *What are the experiences of student-athletes who are involved in student organizations and attend a historically Black college/university?* Not surprisingly, athletic practice schedules limited student-athletes' availability and my access to them. To work around the athletes' schedules, I gathered data during the first week that campus opened for the 2017-18 academic year.

A gate with a security guard blocked my first sight of campus. The guard informed me that I needed a parking pass and a campus picture identity (ID) card. I never really thought about a campus ID requirement, especially not as a guest, but later discovered this security requirement was part of the university's response to past incidents that happened within and near the urban campus community. Although not an easy process, once I obtained a campus ID (see Figure 4.1) with much personal attention and support from the Associate Athletic Director, who literally walked me through the process; I was ready to start my week at Tennessee State University (TSU).



Figure 4.1 Campus Visitor ID

Collecting data during the first week of school had its benefits, which allowed me to witness the school's culture dynamics in an authentic manner. During my visit, I observed how students interacted and became involved in campus organizations. The first Wednesday of each academic semester, known as *Courtyard Wednesdays* (see Figure 4.2), all organizations set up tables along a main campus walkway with information to inform students about their organizations.



Figure 4.2 Welcome Week Student Organization Tabling

I walked through campus on a sunny and temperate morning to witness *Courtyard Wednesday* in-person. A large group of approximately 100 students gathered in front of the Floyd-Payne Campus Center (see Appendix L) to visit various organizations' tables while a DJ alternated Top 40s Rhythm and Blues with Hip-Hop music. The tables offered candy, informational pamphlets, and members collected contact information via sign-up sheets encouraging people to get involved in the campus community. There were many organizations for any and every one. Members of various student groups greeted

new and returning students, while members of Black Greek-letter organizations (BGLOs) strolled on *the yard* (TSU students refer to the main green-space campus quadrangle). Many of the students wore their groups' respective t-shirts while some were dressed up in business attire; BGLO members wore their fraternities' or sororities' colors and letters. In my field notes for the day, I wrote about the enthusiasm and eagerness displayed by TSU's students. I expressed a sense of luck in the timing of this study so that I could witness this event as relevant to the focus of this investigation. I also noted that my positive reaction stemmed from my belief in co-curricular education.

During my visit, I walked around campus to see the rich history and took particular interest in the athletic facilities (e.g. Gentry Complex and Hankal Hall; see Appendix L) and the Floyd-Payne Campus Center for campus activities and student groups' offices. The Gentry Complex is home to the TSU Men and Women's Basketball and Women's Volleyball teams. While walking around the pristine campus, I noticed buildings with a combination of old exteriors and modern internal renovations as well as other buildings still needing renovations. Many of the buildings exhibited TSU's historical figures. Although brief, from my campus tour and stay I gained insights into the culture of the university where I set my study. Within this place, I engaged with student-athletes' who shared their lived experiences within the HBCU environment connecting two inimitable and minimally researched areas within higher education: HBCU culture and the lives of student-athletes within NCAA, Division I athletics, yet, extended beyond into campus organizations.

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I paint an in-depth picture of the institutional and athletic context surrounding the participants' daily lives as student-athlete campus leaders. The purpose of this study was to understand student-athletes *lived experiences* as active participants in campus organizations in relation to a specific *place*, Tennessee State University, unique existence as an HBCU that participates within the NCAA's Division I. This setting selected for exploration of a distinctive institutional culture among institutions of higher education. There were two criteria for the site selection: (1) recognized by the National Center for Educational Statistics as an accredited HBCU; and (2) NCAA, Division I institutional membership. Among the mere seven percent of IHEs that hold both NCAA, Division I membership and HBCU status (NCAA, 2013), I narrowed the pool of 24 institutions of which two indicated willingness to include their students in this study.

Throughout the data gathering and analysis process, which is nearly simultaneous in the IPA design, I used field notes (see Appendix K) to bracket how I made sense of the participants' answers and insights about their lives. The first section of this chapter gives an institutional context and brief historical perspective of Tennessee State University. In the following section, I analyzed selective documents and photos using Tierney's (1988) organizational culture to frame TSU's institutional and athletic culture. In the third and fourth sections of this chapter, I share the stories of the student-athletes who participated in this study and the overarching themes, which incorporated their experiences. Utilizing direct quotes from the participants' transcripts to narrate the themes I answer the research question and summarize the chapter in the final two sections.

The Place: Tennessee State University

Tennessee State University, a historically Black university, has a rich history which has made a profound impact on local, national, and international communities for more than 120 years. Accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), Tennessee State University, is a comprehensive, coeducational, land-grant university with two campuses, known as Main and Downtown, in Nashville, Tennessee (Tennessee State University, 2014a). Tennessee State's two campuses host over 77 undergraduate and graduate programs including business, education, and agriculture (TSU, 2014a). The Downtown Campus is only 10 minutes from Main Campus. The primary site for my research was TSU's Main Campus, which is where a majority of students, and particularly, all of the participants, attended classes and met their obligations for athletics since only Main Campus houses athletic facilities.

According to the Tennessee State University website (Fall 2014), the institution enrolled 7,073 undergraduate and 1,954 graduate students and employed 405 full-time faculty. The university's mission is to "foster scholarly inquiry and research, lifelong learning, and a commitment to service" (TSU, 2014b). In addition, TSU offers its students over 100 co-curricular experiences (e.g. organizations and intramural sports teams). "Think. Work. Serve." is the university's motto, which encourages students to "grow and develop as a person" and embody TSU's mission (TSU, 2014a). At the core of the university's history is its mission to educate students and for them to serve their communities.

Brief Historical Overview

Although Tennessee State University's (TSU) history is rooted in the 19th Century, there is little literature about this HBCU. Thus, there was a need to rely heavily on the institution's artifacts and Lovett's recent books (2012; 2015). If any additional published articles covered a particular aspect of the institution, I used them to support my description triangulated with artifacts collected while on campus.

Tennessee State University has gone through multiple name changes and locations in the Nashville area. Initially, the Second Morrill Act (P.L. 51-841) of 1890 provided for an institution to educate African Americans, named as the Agricultural and Industrial State Normal School for Negroes. However, the Tennessee State General Assembly did not establish this institution until April 1909 (Lamon, 1973; Lovett, 2012, 2015). The first classes began in June 1912, and ten years later it was established as a four-year teacher college under their new name, Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial (A&I) State Normal School. Tennessee's Governor Buford Ellington (1959-63 and 1967-71) deliberate attempt to ignore the 1941 Tennessee General Assembly mandate to make TSU equivalent to University of Tennessee in terms of student access was an example of the state's continued display of racism (Lovett, 2012). In 1958, the school received its land-grant status (TSU, 2014a). The school's name changed two times before 1968 when the Tennessee State Board of Education (SBOE) gave the latest and longest-lasting name, Tennessee State University. That same year, in the midst of the Civil Rights and desegregation era, the Tennessee SBOE gave authorization to expand

the University of Tennessee-Nashville campus with new construction while refusing to fund new construction or renovations on TSU's campus.

The state of Tennessee chose to ignore the U.S. Supreme Court's rulings (i.e. the *Brown* decision, *Civil Rights Act*, and *Higher Education Act*) to desegregate higher education (Godard, 1980; Lovett, 2012, 2015; Matlock & Humphries, 1979). Due to the failure to segregate and the growing economic gap for construction, Rita Sanders, a TSU faculty member decided to sue the state. Filed in 1968, the lawsuit later became known as *Geier et al. v. Governor Ellington et al.*, to combat the state's decision to create not only a racial but economic divide. The U.S. Department of Justice along with two other faculty members joined Rita Sanders in the lawsuit (Lovett, 2012; TSU, 2014a). Lovett (2012) wrote, "In no way could white leaders accept a Black public university to be advertised as the city's key institution when trying to attract big business to locate in Nashville" (p. 171). Not settled until 1977, the *Geier v. Ellington* case ordered the two schools to merge, and in 1979, Tennessee State University and University of Tennessee-Nashville became one, taking the TSU name (Godard, 1980; Matlock & Humphries, 1979).

Tennessee State University endured much dissent about state funding allocations due to political and racial injustices from state officials (e.g. Governor, state legislatures, state board of education; Lovett, 2012, 2015; Matlock & Humphries, 1979). Many of TSU's Presidents endured injustices, such as underfunding from the state legislature due to the systemic racial oppression, but that did not detour the racial and political activism from its faculty, students, and alumni. The university and neighboring communities

wrote petitions, hosted sit-ins, and marches to combat these racial inequities (Lamon, 1973; Lovett, 2012). The blatant racist behavior from political officials steered the faculty, staff, and students' drive to continue to fight for TSU's local and national presence within higher education. Despite the state's reluctance to merge the two institutions, Lovett (2012) asserted in the late 1980s and early 1990s that TSU "had become Tennessee's most racially diversified institution, public or private" (p. 239). However, the institution would still endure other battles related to race and economic turmoil moving forward.

Despite Tennessee State University embattling racial injustices for more than sixty years since the *Brown* decision, the 120-year-old HBCU prides itself in making "excellence a habit" (TSU, 2014). National and international sports organization record and recognize TSU's athletic program. Furthermore, Tennessee State holds a particularly unique presence among HBCUs as the only HBCU in a predominantly white collegiate athletic conference, Ohio Valley Conference. These combined qualities exceeded my initial two selection criteria, and added to my reasoning for selecting this institution for understanding the lived experiences of student athletes who also engage in campus organization leadership.

TSU Athletics. In 1925, Tennessee Agricultural & Industrial (A & I) State Normal Teachers College's President William Jasper Hale recognized the significance and value that intercollegiate athletics could have on the institution and decided to have students take part (Lovett, 2012). Both men and women participated in all sports with the exception of football. Baseball was the first sport students engaged in on TSU's campus,

while the most notable sport in TSU's history is track and field. In 1930, under President Hale's leadership, Tennessee A&I State College joined a Black college athletic conference (The Southeastern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference). The institution constructed its first football stadium in 1931, which 20 years later TSU named after former President Hale for his commitment to intercollegiate athletics (Lovett, 2012). Since 1931, the TSU athletic facilities expanded to host basketball games in Gentry Complex and track meets at Edward S. Temple Track. Most recently, TSU renovated Hankal Hall in 2015, which housed student-athlete academic services.

Over the years, Tennessee State University's athletic program gained both domestic and global recognition for its accomplishments. The most prominent sports in TSU's athletic history include football, basketball, and track and field sports programs. For three consecutive years in back-to-back winning seasons (1956-57, 1957-58, & 1958-59), then Tennessee A&I State University, won the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) basketball championships (Lovett, 2012). Additionally, the football program won the Black college national football championship four times (1945, 1947, 1954, & 1956), and has sent more than 100 players to the National Football League (Lovett, 2012). One of the most iconic, "world acclaim[ed]" (Lovett, 2012, p. 289) sports team in TSU athletic history is its track and field team. The track and field program began in 1943 and they won multiple athletic conference championships and sent at least one student to the Olympics between the mid-1950s to mid-60s. The remarkable women's track and field team, known as the Tigerbelles, coached under Edward S. Temple won its first national championship in 1955 and had members qualify

for every summer Olympics from 1956 to 1980. Lovett (2012) wrote, “Coach Temple knew how to recruit, retain, and graduate the best of female athletes” (p. 292).

In 1986, Tennessee State athletics joined the all-white Ohio Valley Conference (OVC) as the first historically Black college to join a predominantly White athletic conference at a time when all HBCUs still participated in majority Black conferences (Cavil, 2014). TSU constituents, who expressed apprehension about this move, believed state politics influenced how the institution joined the OVC (Lovett, 2012, 2015). Even with their membership in the OVC, Tennessee State still did not receive the same support as other state institutions such as Middle Tennessee State University or the University of Tennessee. Athletics is an integral part of higher education (Beyer & Hannah, 2000), and Tennessee State has “developed a great legacy in sports competition” (Lovett, 2012, p. 320). Despite lack of recognition and support, the success and prominence of Tennessee State University continues with 13 sports recognized by the National Collegiate Athletic Conference.

Recognized sports. According to the NCAA (2018), Division I categorized their 24 sports teams into three categories—fall, spring, and winter—with football being subdivided by sponsorship [Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) and Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS); see Table 4.1]. Of these 24 teams, eight have distinctions between men and women (M and W, respectively in Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

NCAA Division I Sports

| Division I Sports | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Fall | Winter | Spring |
| Cross Country (M/W) | Basketball (M) | Baseball |
| Field Hockey | Basketball (W) | Golf (M) |
| Football (M) | National Collegiate Bowling | Golf (W) |
| Soccer (M) | National Collegiate Fencing | Lacrosse (M) |
| Soccer (W) | National Collegiate Gymnastics (M) | Lacrosse (W) |
| Volleyball (W) | National Collegiate Gymnastics (W) | Rowing |
| National Collegiate Water Polo (M) | Ice Hockey (M) | Softball (W) |
| | National Collegiate Ice Hockey (W) | Tennis (M/W) |
| | National Collegiate Rifle (M/W) | Outdoor Track and Field (M/W) |
| | National Collegiate Skiing (M/W) | National Collegiate Beach Volleyball (W) |
| | Swimming and Diving (M/W) | National Collegiate Volleyball (M) |
| | Indoor Track and Field (M/W) | National Collegiate Water Polo (W) |
| | Wrestling | |

Note. Recognized NCAA sports at TSU are in boldface.

Tennessee State University, an NCAA, Division I FCS institution, has 13 sports represented on its campus. Among the fall sports, football includes solely men and the sole female-only team is volleyball. Except for the spring sport of softball (women only), all other teams include both men and women or have separate gendered teams for the sport per NCAA regulations.

The Culture

With Tennessee State University athletic administrators' (e.g. Athletic Director, Associate Athletic Director, Academic Advisor) assistance and encouragement, I collected key artifacts (see Appendix I) that added to the depth of TSU's institutional culture. I used document analysis and Tierney's (1988, 2008) six essential components—environment, mission, socialization, strategy, information, and leadership—to convey the culture within Tennessee State University, where this research took place. By using this framework, I drew special attention to an HBCU environment marginally addressed in the literature. In addition, this study used Tierney as a guiding framework to understand TSU's culture as *the place* with a focus on the place as a humanly-constructed phenomenon, not as an evaluation of the institutional culture or the specific organization.

Environment. Upon parking on campus, and walking to Hankal Hall (see Figure 4.3), the Athletic Administration and Academic Services Building, I noticed how immaculate and green the campus grounds were. Hankal Hall was an older building, but from the initial onset, the building was in great condition. In addition, there were many students coming in and out of the building. This renovated building was my home base for the next four days.



Figure 4.3 Edna Rose Hankal Hall: Athletic administration and academic services building

The administration exemplified a commitment to the student-athlete environment because it pursued funding from additional sources, specifically, the NCAA. Given the lack of funding from the state, TSU was among six institutions chosen as recipients for a pilot program, the Accelerating Academic Success Program (AASP) Grant, in 2012. The three-year, \$900,000 grant supported the development and academic success of Tennessee State University student-athletes (NCAA, 2014). This grant gave TSU the opportunity to supply student-athletes with additional funding for courses, academic athletic staff, and renovations for dedicated space for athletic staff and student-athletes (Hankal Hall; see Figure 4.3). The grant fulfilled the university and department's mission when resources were lacking.

Mission. Reflected in the athletic department's mission is an intentional focus on academics and the holistic student-athlete experience, which directly connects to the university mission (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2

Tennessee State University Mission Statements

| University Mission Statement | Athletic Mission Statement |
|---|---|
| As a Historically Black College/University (HBCU), TSU fosters scholarly inquiry and research, lifelong learning, and a commitment to service. | The mission of the Department is to offer wide-ranging programs of both curricular and extracurricular activities which will accommodate the needs and interests of the students. Student-athletes will be given the opportunity to participate in athletic and recreational programs while achieving academic success through rigorous degree-completion programs. All of the Department's activities will reflect a commitment to the academic integrity and the fiscal integrity of the university, as well as the general welfare of student-athletes, both today and in his or her future (TSU, 2017). |
| Building on our heritage of strong instruction and solid research, we prepare you for leadership, professional success, personal achievement, and service to local, national, and international communities in our global society (TSU, 2014b). | |

The NCAA does not require the athletic mission to reflect the institution's mission but does value an inclusive culture, respect and presidential leadership (NCAA, 2017c). The athletic department's mission statement, with its purposeful link to the university's academic mission, provides evidence of a commitment to the *student-athlete*, rather than a limited interest only in athletic ability only.

Strategy. Tennessee State University's mission statement conveys its dedication to its students, which is a cultural strategy (Tierney, 1988). Strategy is not only about what you do but also how it is done (Tierney, 2000). The intentionality for TSU's athletic department to acknowledge and incorporate the institution's mission is an example of Tierney's (1988, 2000) organizational culture component, strategy.

Furthermore, after a conversation with an administrator during my visit to the campus, I realized that the well-being of student-athletes was at the core of many of their decisions. The university and athletic administrators made decisions within the confines of university, athletic conference, and NCAA policies and regulations. The athletic department had a responsibility to multiple entities, and it was the athletic director and her team's responsibility to make decisions in the best interest of the department, its student-athletes, coaches, and the institution (V. Jordan, personal communication, August 29, 2017). The student-athlete athletic organization, which meets monthly with athletic administrators, provides an opportunity for the student-athletes to be a part of the decision-making through their feedback, concerns, and/or ideas. A strategy used in making those decisions was the delivery and communication of information to incoming and current student-athletes, guests, and others. Information, I found through my analysis of the institutional and athletic websites, expressed student and institutional accomplishments, which provided further evidence about the organizational culture.

Information. Tennessee State University Professor Bobby Lovett's (2012) book, *A Touch of Greatness: A History of Tennessee State University* gave historical insight and rich information about the history of TSU. I used this book to collect information about the university. In addition, I collected artifacts (see Appendix I) to gain an understanding how TSU communicates and interacts with its faculty, staff, students and the community. For students, the TSU Student Handbook is a source of information about and for the university. The first page in the handbook is the Alma Mater, which conveys the importance of the institution's history, and contributes to the narrative the

university community receives. *Courtyard Wednesdays* is an event where campus organizations come together and inform new and returning students about opportunities within their particular groups. Student organization leaders share information by speaking to new and returning students and provide brochures and/or collecting contact information to e-mail their peers later. This way, the students become a part of the culture at TSU.

While collecting my data, the Associate Athletic Director, Coach Jordan, introduced me to staff who worked in media relations, compliance, and academic services who had access to an assortment of key artifacts (see Appendix I) used to share the story of Tennessee State University athletics. During the search to get access to student-athletes, it was apparent the athletic director and senior woman's administrator possessed a wealth of knowledge not only about the athletic department but also about the institution as a whole. Because both the athletic director and associate athletic director have been at TSU for over 30 years each (V. Jordan, personal communication, August 29, 2017)), the institutional knowledge and information they possessed was vast and created a relationship that many collegiate athletic programs cannot mirror.

Socialization. Socialization at Tennessee State University conveys what is important to them through their mission statements, motto, and values (TSU, 2014b). The university also provides a Freshmen Orientation course for every student, which according to one artifact, "prepares new students for university life" (Student Handbook, 2016, p. 29) through skill development for course-based successes. A form of socialization, Freshmen Orientation introduces and teaches students about the TSU alma

mater, history, mission, and motto among other aspects of campus engagement. Stressed from the moment students walk on campus is the importance of campus engagement. As students socialize during the first week of school, events like *Courtyard Wednesdays*, plays a role in the socialization of students at TSU, and encourages students to get involved outside of the classroom.

Noted in the athletic department's mission statement is the role of student engagement, and TSU's commitment to the well-being of student-athletes and their holistic development. Socialization of TSU athletes begins with the recruitment process and continues throughout their time as athletes. Both recruited and walk-on student-athletes are educated on the importance of what it means to be a student-athlete at TSU. TSU athletics' mission commits to the socialization of its student-athletes and extends past their involvement in athletics. Getting involved outside of their sport fosters socialization within campus and community organizations. The athletic department communicates the importance of curricular and extracurricular opportunities the department and the university offers.

Administrators, coaches, and alumni all articulated the rich history of the athletic program. Tennessee State named athletic facilities after persons who made an impact on the athletic program (e.g. Edward S. Temple Track). Peer leaders (i.e. team and/or position captains) on each sports team participate in socializing the athletes (Student-Athlete Handbook, N.D.). The team captains create a culture and set an example through team bonding activities and role modeling the expectations that the coach has instilled in

them. The leadership from the institutional and athletic administration, coaches, campus organizations, and student-athletes sets a tone for what is expected.

Leadership. According to the NCAA Manual (2017), the “president is responsible for all aspects of the athletics program” (p. 3). In addition, to the university president, the athletic director and their administration are responsible for the day-to-day activities. Tennessee State University’s President, Dr. Glenda Baskin Glover, assumed her role in January 2013. Tennessee State’s Athletic Director (AD), Teresa Phillips reports directly to President Glover, and has been in her position 11 years longer than the president has. AD Phillips works closely with Associate Athletic Director, Valencia Jordan; both women have each been at Tennessee State University for over 30 years. From the TSU President’s office throughout the athletics department, the athletics executive leadership is a team of Black women, rarely seen in collegiate athletics.

The remaining leadership in the athletics department comprised varying departments and sports (NCAA, 2017). Among the department personnel, compliance officers, media relation staff, academic services staff, coaches, and most importantly student-athletes all assume some form of leadership roles. The student-athlete handbook (n.d.) outlines the athletic administrators and coaches’ expectations for student-athletes within their sport, but also in the classroom. Among the student-athletes, each team has captains, who serve as formal leaders; however, there are informal leaders as well. I selected ten participants from a pool of 13 nominated by Athletic Department officials based on their leadership and involvement not only within their sport but within the university community as well. Given the mission and practice of leadership in the

athletics department, the pool of students and the selected participants exemplified the academic and athletic missions. To make sense of the student-athletes' lived experiences, I worked with athletic administrators to meet with some of their involved student-athletes.

Establishing Rapport

The student-athletes in this study shared their experiences of campus involvement outside of their sport. However, their willingness to participate in the study required that I overcome their skepticism and verify that my work was not a scam or against NCAA rules. Prior to arrival on campus only two student-athletes, nominated by the athletic department's leaders, completed the participant profile/questionnaire and followed-through with scheduled interviews. It was not until I arrived and introduced myself to the student-athletes via the Associate Athletic Director and/or an academic advisor that other students felt comfortable setting up an interview with me. To solicit further participation from student-athletes, one of the Athletic Academic Advisors invited me to sit in his office and introduced me to student-athletes who walked in and fit my study criteria. I then explained to them the overview of the study and if they showed interest, we scheduled an interview.

After gaining some face-to-face introductions to these students, I received 13 questionnaires of which two provided only partial information. I made appointments with and interviewed 10 student-athletes (six women and four men) during my time on campus.

The Student-Athlete Participants

With only a week to complete the interview process, my introduction to a pool of student-athletes and the resulting 10 participants began with a profile/questionnaire (Appendix G). I used the participant profile/questionnaire as a tool to save some introductory time with some background information about each participant before meeting with them; thus, giving me an opportunity to prepare for each individual's interview. In the questionnaire, I sought their input on how they wished to be identified, including what pseudonym they would like used with their lived experiences and quotes. The questionnaire obtained some information about the degree of campus involvement in which the participants engaged, as well as how they defined the terms, *leader* and *leadership*. These latter definitions helped me with the double-hermeneutic process of understanding their sense-making of their experiences (Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2008, 2015). Table 4.3 displays the fundamental information that the participants provided in their written responses prior to the interviews. Although the profile/questionnaire included an open-ended question about gender identity, as a reporting tactic, I did not specify any data based on the student-athletes' gender in Table 4.3. Due to the small participant pool and reputational sampling method, and the way that NCAA defines Men and Women's teams, the gender-identity information may compromise confidentiality, even though I did explain the risks in guaranteeing complete anonymity.

Table 4.3

Student-Athlete Participant Profiles

| Pseudonym | Race | Academic Classification | Sport Season | Athletic Funding | Campus Involvement |
|------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Black Ice | Black American | Senior | Spring | Book Scholarship | • Greek Letter |
| Fran | Black | Junior | Winter | Full Athletic Scholarship | • Greek Letter |
| HA | Black | Senior | Spring | Partial Athletic Scholarship | • Faith-Based Ministry |
| Jas | African American | Junior | Spring | Partial Athletic Scholarship | • Faith-Based Ministry |
| Kali | African American | Sophomore | Spring | Partial Athletic Scholarship | • Performing Arts |
| Laila Anderson | African American | Junior | Spring | Book Scholarship | • Student Life • Performing Arts • Faith-Based Ministry |
| Luke Cage | Black African | Senior | Winter | Full Athletic Scholarship | • Greek Letter • Service |
| Martin Little | Black | Senior | Fall/Spring | None | • Faith-Based Ministry • Professional |
| Sam | Asian | Senior | Fall | Full Athletic Scholarship | • Athletic |
| Ty Perry | African American | Senior | Winter | Full Athletic Scholarship | • Greek Letter • Professional • Academic • Athletic |

These participants chose their pseudonyms in their profile/questionnaires (Appendix G). They also provided their own racial- ethnicity identification in an open-ended question (Q4, Appendix G). The years at TSU ranged from second year through Senior, which provided a better opportunity for the participants' sense-making of their experiences than if they'd only just entered their first year. All sports seasons were represented, and though some made specific reference to their particular teams, to preserve their confidentiality given the small number of participants and the lack of anonymity of these students-athletes based on who were their nominators, I did not provide a list of each of their sports in Table 4.3. Among the participants', all but one reported some scholarship support. The final column displays the range of other campus involvement that the participants' reported.

Beyond the demographic data provided through the questionnaire and displayed in Table 4.3, the student-athletes answered two open-ended questions about leadership: (a) Defining Leader and Leadership: Do you identify as a student leader on campus? Why or why not? and (b) How would you define leadership? These questions set up the interview's focus on their lived experiences so that the participants had time to think about their views of leadership and their leadership roles, if any. As an HBCU alumna who served as a campus leader (e.g. Resident Assistant, Student Life Manager) I wanted to reflect on the participants' perspectives on the terms, *leader* and *leadership*, prior to the interviews to bracket my memories and prevent my interpretations from overshadowing or inhibiting those of my participants. During the interviews and analysis, I bracketed my own experiences as a student affairs practitioner, and asked

follow-up questions to increase my knowledge of their meanings and understanding about their lived experiences. These follow-up questions helped me further discover how they navigated the world of a TSU student-athlete and an involved campus leader.

An athletic administrator or staff member referred nine of the 10 participants while one, Kali, heard about the study and requested to be a participant. The student-athletes who shared their experiences had information and knowledge to communicate regarding the institution and athletic culture. Nine students described in this study were involved in at least one organization not related to their sport or athletics. The student-athletes came from various backgrounds and were candid in their responses during their individual interviews. I introduced and organized the ten participants alphabetically according to the pseudonyms each chose. First, I described each participant and then, second, I explored five themes, from which I coaxed insights and phrases of common sense-making among these participants' transcripts during the data reductive, double-hermeneutic process.

Black Ice. Dedicated to giving back to the community, Black Ice was a leader who set-up service projects for his organization. A senior and member of a Greek organization, Black Ice found serving both the TSU and Nashville communities provided rewarding opportunities to fulfill his mission to give back. Although he did not have a formal leadership role on his sports team, he did find it important to be leader in every aspect of his life. He came to TSU for his sport but found so much more when he joined his fraternity. Black Ice was not only a leader within his sport and in his Greek letter organization but also for the campus community. He described working with other

fraternities and sororities to set-up service events not only on campus but also in the community. Black Ice balanced his roles, which indirectly shaped who he was as a leader, not only at TSU but also in the community.

Fran. While growing up, Fran wanted to attend an HBCU, and her dreams came true when TSU offered her a full athletic scholarship. At a young age, she learned about HBCUs because in “every generation [of] her family” (Fran, personal communication, August 31, 2017) someone attended an HBCU. Her parents not only taught her about HBCUs but also about the power of giving back to the community and getting involved, which led her to join a Greek letter organization. Fran took initiative to be a leader on her campus and decided the process of joining a Greek organization was worth the time commitment. She was not only a campus leader in Greek life but also on her sport’s team; her memberships prepared her to be a leader not only for the present but also after college.

HA. A senior looking forward to her last year at TSU, HA’s coach named her a co-captain for her team during the summer. Despite being the sole woman representing her team as a co-captain, she expressed feeling connected and having a voice among them. Upon receiving the co-captain appointment, HA contacted her teammates prior to the start of the Fall semester to make sure they were “coming back with the right mindset” (HA, personal communication, August 30, 2017). Ha described how she took the role of captain seriously by planning bonding activities to motivate and lead her team. She also held leadership positions within the two faith-based organizations where she cemented her campus involvement. HA’s (2017) organizational involvement allowed for

relationships and connections among non-athlete friends, “We [student organization] just don’t want to single anyone out because they are not an athlete...we don’t ever want to make it seem like that so we reach out to everyone we can, that’s our goal.” She voiced how “blessed” she was to attend TSU and the amazing opportunities she’s had since being there, and “hopes [her] children go to an HBCU one day”.

Jas. A junior from the Atlanta area, Jas, wanted to come to an HBCU after visiting a PWI during her recruitment process and realizing she did not want to be “just a number”. The reason Jas chose to attend an HBCU she said was, “I’m actually a name and I feel like I mean something.” However, she did have a difficult time adjusting during her first semester. A non-Greek leader on TSU’s campus, she explained that the Greek organizations play an integral role in the campus culture. However, she asserted not being in a Greek organization meant, “You’re more so being yourself.”

Jas got involved in an organization that connected her to other people from where she grew up and people who shared the same faith. For Jas, it was more important not only to be involved in organizations but her school as well. For her, being a leader was in her ability to balance being a student-athlete with good grades and actively involved in her organization. She did not allow her student-athlete status to get in the way of her involvement in other organizations. Jas’ involvement gave her a sense of family, connectedness to the institution, and centered her religious beliefs.

Kali. The only sophomore, Kali, volunteered to be a participant in my study after hearing about it from a teammate. Kali offered a unique perspective being that her organizational involvement was academic-related. She witnessed her brother attend an

HBCU and realized that she also wanted to attend an HBCU. However, she recognized she was “lazy in the application process” (Kali, personal communication, August 29, 2017). Although TSU was not her first choice, she came for a campus visit and decided this was the school for her. Still, even with TSU’s acceptance of her application, she sought out scholarships because her parents were not supporting her financially. Kali received a partial athletic scholarship and another for her musical talent.

Not only did she have athletic ability but also she was musically inclined. Kali’s involvement with performing arts corresponded with her minor in music. She played the cello and was the only cellist in the TSU orchestra. Her involvements although limited outside of her sport, Kali said, “it is an activity for me because I choose to do it [and] because I have a passion for music” (personal communication, August 29, 2017). As a sophomore, she was seeking ways to become more involved and was working with a friend to start a new organization focused on mental health. Kali had a desire to be involved and to be a leader but was still trying to figure out what that looked like for her.

Laila Anderson. Laila always knew she wanted to attend an HBCU, and continued a family tradition, so she chose TSU. Her parents and grandparents were alums of other HBCUs, and she talked about her grandmother being “very pro-HBCU, even though she won’t tell you that because she wants to support you.” Laila’s situation was a little different as some of her peers did not know about HBCUs and/or did not intend to attend one. Laila went to high school overseas and a teacher-mentor discouraged from attending a HBCU, but instead encouraged Laila to attend a conservative, predominantly White, Liberal Arts College. “It’s nothing like an HBCU

education...I wouldn't trade in my HBCU experience for anything", said Laila Anderson. However, she did not let her "mentor" (Laila Anderson, personal communication, August 29, 2017) deny her the opportunity to attend an HBCU, where she had imagined she would go since she was young. That same drive helped her development as a student and encouraged her involvement in campus organizations outside of her athletic sport. Laila discovered her voice through her campus organizations; specifically she performed her talent for an audience for the first time while at Tennessee State. Laila was determined to continue her family's legacy of attending a HBCU and along the way, she established herself as a leader and university ambassador.

Luke Cage. An international student, Luke Cage came to the United States to play his sport but found a family and home in TSU. After he walked onto campus for the first time, he discovered Tennessee State was an HBCU. Luke found this fact interesting as an international student from Europe. He learned "about American Universities from TV" (Luke Cage, personal communication, August 31, 2017) and did not know that the United States offered different kinds of higher education institutions. He was an involved student-athlete not only in his sport but was also a leader within the campus and local community. Luke recognized that people gravitated to him, and he used that to his advantage to meet new people, get involved, and get more support for his sport's team. Luke said, "Everyone can have leadership qualities but not everyone is a leader." He described the qualities of leader as one who delegates responsibilities and people were willing to follow. Recognized for his leadership, Luke had the opportunity to take part in a leadership program for student-athletes.

Martin Little. When I met with Martin, he was struggling with whether or not he should remain a member of his athletic team. Martin was not on an athletic scholarship, which played a role in this difficult decision. He loved the sport, but no longer felt the same connection or passion to it, especially because he knew he would not *go pro*. He came to TSU as a transfer student and walked on to the team. Martin immediately felt the differences between his PWI and HBCU experience, and is “grateful for the opportunity” to come to TSU. The time spent at TSU had changed his way of thinking, and he described his journey as a leader to be personal. Martin, a senior, looked forward to life after TSU, and his membership in a professional organization was preparing him for what was next: business school and a career as an entrepreneur.

Ty Perry. A senior, Ty was a well-rounded student who happened to be an athlete. Involved in many different activities outside of her sport she was not allowing anyone to tell her no! While sidelined with an injury, Ty desired to be involved in more than just athletics. During her recovery, she got involved in an array of organizations to meet other students and build her network. Her organizations filled with both academic and leadership opportunities. Ty (personal communication, August 30, 2017) believed leaders should “be an example for the next and younger generation because someone is always looking at you.” She described being a leader as hard and tough. The recognition of a leader’s responsibility was apparent in how passionate Ty was about her role as a leader on TSU’s campus.

Sam. Recommended to participate in the study by one of the athletic gatekeepers was Sam, who identified as an international Asian student. Her sole organizational

involvement remained within the athletics department. Recognized as a leader in her sport, Sam received an appointment as her sport's representative on the student-athlete organization. While on her campus visit as a prospective student-athlete, the coach informed her that TSU was an HBCU. As an international student, she did not know what an HBCU was nor had she ever heard of that type of institution. Sam's connection to the institution as an HBCU was different from her peers. She discussed not being able to relate to the race issues in the United States because she was from a different country. She came to the states solely to play her sport and found connection to the city of Nashville rather than TSU. She did not share the same characteristics as those involved outside of athletics, nor was she connected to the HBCU community like her peers. Her lived experiences as an international, Asian student-athlete offered a unique lived experience.

All of my study's participants were involved in organizations outside of their sport. Although some of them shared experiences, they each had their own lived experiences. Each student-athlete explained their lived experiences as student-athletes involved outside of their sport. After making sense of how each participant described their individual experiences as student-athletes at Tennessee State University, I identified five common central themes among the participants.

The Student-Athletes' Lived Experiences

With transcripts from the individual interviews, I used MAXQDA (VERBI Software, 2018) to organize the transcripts and artifacts. I added manual coding to MAXQDA results to cluster each participant has identified themes for each participant.

The study's participants conveyed enriching stories about their journeys to Tennessee State University, how they have grown and gotten involved in the campus community, as well as their growth as team and campus leaders. Through double hermeneutics (Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2015), five overarching themes—(a) Leading by Example, (b) Not Just an Athlete, (c) Tough Decisions, (d) Embracing Faith, and (e) HBCU Pride and Appreciation—resonated after completing my analysis of the participant transcripts. With ongoing reflexive journaling and bracketing of my experiences, I organized based from my interpretations of how the themes connected to one another through the participants' words. I used the participants' direct quotes, displayed in tables, to amplify the five themes and vocalize the shared experiences of TSU student-athletes involved in organizations outside of their sports (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith et al., 2009).

Bracketing

Using reflexive journaling and field notes (Appendix K), I bracketed my experiences to focus solely on the participants' experiences. I believe in as well as value HBCUs, their contributions, and prominence as institutions of knowledge, so I intentionally selected an HBCU for my setting while also bracketing my opinions to focus on the students who engaged in this educational environment rather than on my own favorable memories, beliefs, and values.

I also bracketed my professional career as a higher education scholar-practitioner and my desire to contribute to postsecondary students' growth and development. As a novice scholar, I used this opportunity to study the collegiate student experience by

examining a specific group of students within the HBCU context and contribute to the knowledge base. Whereas, as a practitioner, I wanted to use the participants' words to inform current and future practitioners and improve practices associated with such a group. These two aspects of my meaning-making spurred this study and opened an opportunity to fill both a knowledge and practice gap. However, within that gap, I sought to reveal student-athletes' campus engagement, and their voices about making sense of that complexity.

With my ongoing journaling and bracketing, I attempted to balance my repeated readings of the participants' transcripts for a focus on their lived experiences in the place of TSU. I searched their words repeatedly for their insights. I found five themes from grouping their words and phrases in making sense of their sense-making about their lived experiences.

Leading by Example

For this study, I elicited the student-athletes' experiences of leadership through two instruments, the profile/questionnaire (Appendix G) with a follow-up semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix H). With this prompting, all of the participants discussed being leaders on TSU's campus. All participants suggested the expectation as TSU student-athletes was to lead by example. This theme, *Leading by Example*, stemmed from their definitions of what it meant to be a leader and how they considered themselves leaders in their sport and on campus. Table 4.4 used the student-athletes' description of leaders, which illuminated leadership-by-example as a theme. All 10 of the participants

used varying expressions of how leading by example formed their understanding of leadership and how they lived that as student-athletes and leaders on campus.

Table 4.4

Theme: Leading by Example

| Direct Quotes |
|---|
| Black Ice: "Leading the way, doing the work, and not just talking about it." |
| Fran: "Leaders are aggressive, they're bold; they take a stand for what they believe in." |
| HA: "Don't try to tell someone to do something if you're not doing it yourself, so that's basically my motto for how I lead my teammates and my organization members." |
| Jas: "...people look at athletes mainly student-athletes...as leaders and it shows others, I can balance being both a student and an athlete at the same time and still have good grades and a good GPA." |
| Kali: "[As a leader] Motivation is key to getting people to do things." |
| Laila Anderson: "I'm approachable and I speak to everyone on campus. I wouldn't know [them]; people might know me, but I'll speak like I know them." |
| Luke Cage: "Having the ability to show basically through action, words and doing, that's leading by example." |
| Martin Little: "Others gravitate towards you...A leader just takes care of their business and others follow." |
| Sam: "I have good grades and I show them [teammates] you can be successful on the court and off the court." |
| Ty Perry: "I believe you have to be an example for the next and the younger generation because someone is always looking at you." |

Each student-athlete used similar words to define what it meant to be a leader on their campus, and described themselves as leaders. Laila Anderson said a leader was being someone people can look up to. Not being perfect but for someone to accept their flaws and see the growth in who you are as a person while also helping others to do the same.

For Laila Anderson, a student-athlete represents the school not only in her sport but also in the classroom and “on the yard” (the TSU students’ expression for being on campus). Laila Anderson’s sense of leadership included leading by example and being a university ambassador. Although they considered themselves leaders, both the Greek and non-Greek participants said the BGLOs were the visible leaders on campus in reference to the greater student body, because they were the ones who hosted many of the events on campus (Laila Anderson, August 29, 2017).

Participants shared that leading by example not only focused on in their sport, in their positions, or on campus, but went beyond to include social media presence, as well. The Tennessee State University Student-Athlete Handbook (n.d.) has a policy about social media where it does not prohibit any student-athlete from using them but does remind students of appropriate behavior (see Appendix I, Artifact 10). The expectation for student-athletes is to be a role model no matter where they were on or off campus. Martin Little described the non-student-athlete as the “normal college student”; I asked him to explain and an example he gave was “you [the student-athlete] can’t do everything like everyone else. You can’t post pictures of partying on social media or you get in trouble for that.” Even after I asked for clarification about the “normal college student”

Martin was not able to define that without describing what the student-athlete was not able to do. For the student-athlete, I understood that posting pictures of partying on internet and social sites was not how student-athletes should portray themselves. Although they all identified as athletes, they did not want that to be their only identity while they were on campus, which led them to join organizations outside of their sport.

Not Just an Athlete

Membership in an organization outside their sport was a criterion for participants to be members of this study. The student-athletes had different reasons for getting involved but the overwhelming sentiment was a mutual desire to be more than just a student-athlete. I used the student-athletes' candor and made meaning that although they enjoyed their sport, they had a desire to be more than an athlete. In Table 4.5, I interpreted and made meaning through the direct quotations about the theme *Not Just an Athlete*.

Table 4.5

Theme: Not Just an Athlete

Direct Quotes

Black Ice: “Most coaches don’t like their athletes to pledge (a process to join a Greek organization). They don’t mind them being in it for the benefits but most of the time they don’t want them to do it because they feel like it’s going to take them away from what they are here for [athletics].”

Fran: “They [athletics staff] always tell us...Go make connections outside of athletics because athletics isn’t going to be there forever, so you need to know how to survive without just your teammates”

HA: “I am an athlete but I also have a ton of non-athletic friends. So, reaching out to them...just welcoming.”

Jas: “The [organization] helped me realize that TSU is not that big...helped me get to know other people [outside of athletics] who were trying to do the same thing as I am and feed off each other.”

Kali: “I’ve been on the [team] for a year...I play the cello. I’m in the school’s orchestra...I’m the only cellist...I’ve been playing for nine years, and I’m more musically inclined than other students.”

Laila Anderson: “Before I got to school I was kind of secretive about my [talent] and I guess that specific club/organization opened me up to broader things and now I’ve performed...in front of crowds.”

Luke Cage: “I just like to get involved with things...there was an opportunity presented [to join a fraternity] and I couldn’t really say no. It’s different because not many people from various sports branch out.”

Martin Little: “When you start to see that [playing professionally] may not happen, you start to see what other gifts do I have, other talents do I have.”

Sam: “[When not playing] I do a lot of adventuring in the city or outside the city. A lot of my friends are Nashville natives, so they like showing me around.”

Ty Perry: “For me I just wanted, I guess you could say I wanted to live two different lives...I was injured and I was kind of forced to live another life. I wasn’t able to travel with the team, so I decided to go to the involvement fair [*Courtyard Wednesday*].”

Participants become involved beyond their sports in different ways and for different reasons. The participants wanted to be more than just an athlete, and recognized that unless they were playing their sport professionally after college they needed to have other interests. In addition, the student-athletes discussed how their involvement in organizations outside of their sport would help with building relationships with their peers.

HA talked about joining organizations beyond her sport and the connection to one group in particular, “I fell in love with [the organization] and I’ve been growing from just a member to a servant leader to now president,” said HA. Her leadership position allowed her to grow the organization for the entire TSU community. Alternatively, Laila Anderson became involved in one of her organizations by accident during *Courtyard Wednesdays* (an involvement fair hosted by organizations to get students involved in campus life). One campus organization in particular that Laila did not remember signing up for contacted her a few days after her first *Courtyard Wednesday* and after attending a meeting immediately became involved. Laila’s accidental involvement allowed her to build a network beyond her time at TSU and share her talent for the first time in front of an audience. She did not “want to be known as the [sport] girl... it’s not my whole life by no means.”

While Kali was involved in the performing arts, which directly related to her academic minor, she had limited involvement outside of her sport. Kali discussed being a sophomore and taking her time to get involved, but she also talked about working with a friend to start an organization that focused on mental health. Kali was still navigating the

best involvement for her, while Fran, a senior, knew the benefits of being involved outside of her sport. Fran said,

If you're just going to class, going to your room or going to class and then going to work, and that's it, you're not really being involved and taking advantage of your opportunities to become a leader or to become what you're here to become as far as your career or anything. You're not putting in the extra work to become what you want to be.

Many of the student-athletes encouraged their teammates and peers to get involved and to avoid other students seeing them as merely an athlete. They also used their involvement as a way to connect and build relationships with non-student-athletes.

Luke Cage echoed ideas about the importance of getting involved and being more than just an athlete. He discovered people did not attend the games because they did not know the players. Luke decided to interact with people in his dorm to encourage attendance at the games; however, it became more than that. He said, "I'm a lifelong learner trying to get myself an opportunity to keep growing regardless of what I do in my lifetime" (August 31, 2017). Martin Little concurred: "Let me dabble in some of these things so I can make sure when I leave school I know what I'm on track to do because that pro athlete life may not be for me." Martin Little realized professionally may not be what he wants to do after his time at Tennessee State, which led him to get involved in organizations that would set him up for his future career as an entrepreneur. Ty Perry described becoming involved outside of her sport as "one of the best things I did here." She got involved in organizations early on due to an injury where she was "forced to live

another life.” As a result, Ty Perry found herself involved in various organizations to prepare her for life after college. Her involvement gave her an opportunity to meet people beyond her teammates and other athletes. These relationships built a network not only while at TSU but later on in life. In all of these cases, the participants wanted to know more people outside of athletics and for others to get to know them as more than athletes.

Black Ice had early influences; friends from high school and his teammates were a part of the same Greek organization he would later join. The role models he witnessed in high school and college in collaboration with the principles of the particular fraternity made him pursue membership there as well. His involvement fulfilled his purpose to give back to the community just as those who had been a part of his life had done. Shown through his community service work, Black Ice was not only a member of the campus community but the local neighborhood as well.

Affiliated with an athletic organization, Sam was a representative for her team, and her organizational involvement was limited to her athletic identity. Sam spoke about her involvement more so in the context of exploring the city rather than her campus involvement, which was unique. Sam’s lived experience referred more to the location of the institution rather than the *place* itself (Murray & Holmes, 2014).

All but one of the study participants received some form of athletic scholarship, which meant they had a responsibility to their teams and to the athletic department. Therefore, all 10 participants never had the option of living as what Martin Little called the life of a “normal college student” (Martin Little, 2017). However, all of the

participants intentionally made a decision to be involved in something outside of their sport in order to grow personally and/or professionally. They navigated the world outside of athletics but they also had to make tough decisions to balance the role of student-athlete and campus involvement.

Tough Decisions

All of the student-athletes had to make decisions to get involved, and some encountered some opposition to their involvement. The direct quotations in Table 4.6 recount the Tough Decisions the student-athletes spoke about, those related to being involved outside of their sports. The Tough Decisions theme referred to the challenges the student-athletes encountered with time management, sacrifice, and support, and sometimes lack thereof, from their coaches.

Table 4.6

Theme: Tough Decisions

| Direct Quotes |
|---|
| Black Ice: "Sports is a full-time gig and so, even though you're an athlete you have classes, student-athlete, classes, and then if you have to work that's something to balance and if you're not good at time management you can fall off in one of those areas." |
| Fran: "You have to figure out time management, it was definitely key." |
| HA: "It's a juggle, especially now, because I'm in a lot of things and I'm working, but my coaches work with me." |
| Jas: "It's not hard but it's not easy trying to be in two places at one time." |

Direct Quotes

Kali: “I want to do other things on campus, but because of the lack of time that I have, to join everything that I want to, there’s actually like four different ones [organizations I want to join], but I’m going to try and join more this year.”

Laila Anderson: “Often times it’s like, oh, I wanna do this, well, do I have the time for it? If I don’t have the time for it can I really do it?”

Luke Cage: “Once I got used to the lifestyle, the schedule, I realized I could do more stuff as far as getting more involved on campus.”

Martin Little: “When you play a sport you have to be disciplined...it’s a certain mentality that people outside of sports want to be around.”

Ty Perry: “You’ll miss events, you can’t be there all the time, and sometimes it really bothers me because sometimes I want to be a chair or co-chair of an event; and I can’t do it because I don’t want [sport] to conflict with it and now I’m backing out and it looks bad on me.”

The participants’ knew that they had a primary obligation to their teams and coaches, even though they wanted to do more than study and practice for their sport. They understood why coaches wanted them to put the sport first. HA said, “They usually work with us because they know our involvement and as long as it doesn’t look like we’re putting things over [sport] but they’re going hand-in-hand with [the sport] they are usually okay with that.” As a senior, HA’s coaches supported her involvement outside of her sport, which I interpreted as her seniority and leadership role on the team.

Other student-athletes did not feel supported, but as Martin Little suggested, such support may depend on the coach’s approach to teams and athletes’ development. He said, “So, you can’t fault them for that but the coaches a lot of times don’t want you to be involved in Greek [life] and other stuff and working because they want you to give your

time to your sport.” Laila Anderson reiterated her insight about the coaches’ expectations when she said, “I don’t complain too much because simply I did walk onto this team myself.”

For Kali, she wanted to be involved but she recognized the “lack of time” that she had. Kali grappled with the tough decision to get involved wanting to “join everything” but as a sophomore, she had not been very involved but wanted to do more in her sophomore year. Kali’s desire to get involved showed her desire to make those tough decisions while balancing her current responsibilities. Given their foremost obligation to their coaches and teams, even their scholarships, the participants worried about balancing that obligation with their desires and interests beyond studying, practices, and games.

Luke Cage joined a Greek organization to be an example for his little brother and recognized that “not many people from [his] team or various sports, kind of branch out.” For Luke Cage it was not a tough decision to get involved in other things, however, he learned that he had to manage his time accordingly to be involved outside of his sport. Though Fran did say, “You have to take it upon yourself to be involved in what TSU has to offer.” A decision to get involved was personal and each student-athlete grappled with managing their busy athletic schedules while also taking advantage of the opportunities offered to them while at TSU. Black Ice said, “I still held up my end [sports obligations],” which was important in his decision, and he believed coaches understand the benefits of getting involved but expect nothing to take away from your sport. Ty Perry took it “day-by-day, one day at a time” and was surprised at how she had done it thus far. Balancing athletic, class and personal schedules was tough for many of these

athletes; however, for Ty it meant taking it one day at a time and not looking too far into the future. As for Sam, she did not discuss making decisions in regards to her time management and involvement, which I interpreted as her involvement being athletic related and cemented in her athletic identity.

To balance their roles as both student and athlete the students grappled with making tough decisions. Outside involvement for nine of the participants meant making sacrifices, and many times that meant their organizational involvement was second to athletics. For some of the participants their faith-based organizational involvement was a tough decision, but their faith and spirituality guided their decision to get involved.

Embracing Faith

Many of the student-athletes spoke about their faith; some in a spiritual manner but others referenced their religion. I interpreted the student-athletes' various references to religion, faith, and spirituality as Embracing Faith. I chose to name this theme, Embracing Faith, because the participants described their faith in numerous ways when speaking about their experiences at Tennessee State. While some students spoke about their faith in how they navigated the decision to attend TSU. Table 4.6 further illustrated my interpretation of how the participants referenced faith in a myriad of ways.

Table 4.7

Theme: Embracing Faith

| Direct Quotes |
|--|
| HA: “Being a Christian, being bold about your religion and faith on a college campus is already pretty tough. So, the fact that I feel like I’ve made that sacrifice makes me a leader in its own self.” |
| Jas: “I started going to church more and that’s when out of nowhere <i>My Sister’s Keeper</i> came up and I was like, ‘okay’ maybe this is the path I need to lean on.” |
| Laila Anderson: “I’m going to take a leap of faith and go to the HBCU, like I wanted to from the beginning.” |
| Luke Cage: “I was fortunate enough to have really good grades and...played pretty well which allowed other schools to see me...I sent my mom the list and she said she was going to pray on it.” |
| Martin Little: “They [teammates] explained what fellowship of Christian athletes was and because I have a strong faith, they asked me to come check it out.” |
| Ty Perry: “TSU hadn’t had a winning season in years, and I just took a leap of faith...my freshmen year I played on national TV...I mean its destiny for me to be here.” |

Note. Kali and Sam did not discuss faith, spirituality, or religion in their interview.

Some of the participants spoke about how their faith played an integral role in their decision to attend Tennessee State University, but others spoke about faith and its influence to join particular organizations. HA, Jas, and Martin used faith as the basis of their decision to join faith-based organizations. I made meaning of their involvement in their faith-based organizations as a means to center them and allow them to stay committed to their religious beliefs during their college careers. HA described her two organizations as “getting [others] involved as we can without, basically, making people uncomfortable because we are Christian organizations.” Jas echoed HA’s sentiments

since her and HA joined the same organization, which included a goal to help people even if they “aren’t very religious.” At the center of their organizational involvement was the desire to embrace their faith despite what others were doing. Embracing Faith allowed these students to focus on their personal growth within their faith-based organization.

For others, faith resonated strongly throughout the participants interviews and precluded their higher education journey. Laila Anderson, Luke Cage, and Ty Perry discussed their faith in relation to their decision to attend Tennessee State. They spoke about how they took a *leap of faith* when they decided to pursue their higher education. Although Laila Anderson’s mentor discouraged her from attending an HBCU that would not be the advice she would take. Laila said, “God had a plan,” in reference to not getting much exposure to her athletic ability due to living overseas, which inhibited her from receiving a full athletic scholarship. For Laila, it was not about her mentor at that point, but her faith in God and what she was destined to do at TSU.

Ty had a few scholarship offers, but “TSU sold her” on their vision and her involvement in the team. Ty Perry explained, “I mean, it’s destiny for me to be here,” which affirmed her decision when she played on national television her freshman year. She embraced her faith and went with the smaller school because she believed that TSU was the school for her. Embracing Faith resonated with me because it encompassed several different aspects of how each of these individuals spoke about their religion, spirituality, and faith. They not only spoke about their faith but for nine of them they embraced the HBCU culture.

HBCU Pride and Appreciation

The theme, HBCU Pride and Appreciation, highlights the student-athletes/campus leaders' love for their institution through direct quotations. In Table 4.8, they acknowledge and compliment the opportunities and culture the HBCU environment offers.

Table 4.8

Theme: HBCU Pride and Appreciation

| Direct Quotes |
|---|
| Black Ice: "It's [TSU] caring...Here, you say 'hey', and someone is going to say 'hey' back to you...it's just a friendly culture." |
| Fran: "It's [the institution] just very uplifting and a confidence builder." |
| HA: "The opportunities I've been blessed with just by going to this institution has been amazing." |
| Jas: "...the different cultures because we have a variety of different ethnicities on campus...it's just an amazing feeling." |
| Kali: "I'd say [Tennessee State] is diverse even though we're all, well a majority of the campus is African American...but they're from different parts of the U.S....it's a melting pot of different cultures." |
| Laila Anderson: "HBCUs teach you to be effective people in the community...I feel like people who do go to a HBCU hold themselves to a certain standard especially in the time we're living in right now...going to an HBCU is just really empowering in this day and age." |
| Luke Cage: "I started to learn a lot more about American history just by being on campus as opposed to being in the classroom. There's a kind of fraternal spirit here, everyone really loves this school." |
| Martin Little: "I'm grateful to be here...I feel like the education is tailored for everyone here." |

Direct Quotes

Ty Perry: “Anything is possible...TSU gives you the platform you just have to step on it and get to work.”

Note. Sam did not speak about having pride and appreciation for TSU as an HBCU.

Some of these participants did not realize Tennessee State University was an HBCU prior to their arrival; however, they embraced TSU and all it had to offer. Upon arrival on campus, Luke Cage, an international student, wondered why he saw so many African Americans on campus. He experienced his first homecoming, and reported, “It’s an experience on its own.” Homecoming epitomized the pride and culture of the HBCU experience, which for Luke Cage could not compare to any other institution. Black Ice did not know what an HBCU was either, but realized “we have a lot of history of great people here from Olympians and people going pro—basketball, football, track, you know winning medals...it’s a pride thing!”. Infused into the pride of Tennessee State University is its rich history which created for its students an appreciation for the HBCU culture.

Nevertheless, this student-athlete’s words² reveal an ardent desire to continue the TSU legacy:

My actual coach went to the Olympics as well. So, the crazy thing about when I decided I was to run for TSU and being at home everybody was like, oh, you’re going to be a Tigerbelle, and I was like, ‘yeah.’...To the greater community, once they see that name across your chest, you are already held to a higher standard.

² I refrained from using the participant’s pseudonym because it could possibly reveal identity

So, it's more like respect. I already sit on a higher platform. Now I have to go out here and actually prove it.

To uphold the TSU legacy meant having respect for those who came before you.

Furthermore, it also was about being proud of the school's history and doing your best to uphold the legacy created by alumni.

Whether it was a student talking about the pride of being among the famous Tigerbelles or discussing how "homecoming is a holiday around here," nearly all the participants conveyed pride through their words and their enthusiasm during the interviews. Historically Black college and university students, not just the student-athletes, have a pride and appreciation for their institution like no other (Knight et al., 2012; Palmer et al., 2018).

Martin Little, who transferred from a PWI, said, "It's just like a barbecue or a reunion." He recognized what he termed "cultural differences" almost immediately upon his arrival at Tennessee State. Martin wanted to play his sport at a NCAA, Division I school and wanted a different climate both literally and figuratively, said "be[ing] around people with similar minds, similar backgrounds, so you can be comfortable and actually enjoy your college experiences as opposed to [the negative thinking of] 'I have to get through this'." The students spoke about TSU's nurturing family environment and the support they received not only from their peers but their coaches, faculty, and the staff. Laila Anderson explained the HBCU culture when she said:

It's nothing [else] like an HBCU education because you just get different types of teachers and you run into different types of people from different walks of life...

I feel like Black people are just lit [outstanding].

Laila's family was influential in her decision to attend an HBCU. Her grandparents had HBCU educations and she wanted to follow their example. Laila felt a "level of comfort" when she came to TSU. Similarly, Fran always wanted to attend a HBCU—she called it her "dream"; however, she thought it would be closer to home, one of the HBCUs in her home state. She said, "Every generation of my family has been to a HBCU so it's never been in my mind to even consider a PWI." The pride these participants felt driven not only by the institution, but more importantly in some cases from their families and the educational stories of those who came before them.

Filled with excitement and appreciation, the student-athletes discussed in the interview their HBCU experience and the culture. The student-athletes revealed their pride for their institution and explained TSU's culture. Ty Perry summed up how TSU helped her.

I feel like TSU has taught me you can't go the way you think you're going to go.

You have to find an alternate route from the jump, if that makes sense. It's always a way to get something done, but you just have to stick with it and get it done.

Invigorated by her drive to be successful Ty Perry discussed how students were challenged but also supported throughout her journey at TSU. I interpreted this as TSU

has expectations for its students and will help them accomplish their goals but they have to work for what they want.

Some of the participants defended their institution. For example, Ty Perry said, “People [non-TSU folks] love to talk bad about TSU, but little do they know [what] they have.” Ty also explained that because the institution was a smaller school, they could not compete athletically; however, she said, “Our pride carries us”. The pride and appreciation of its students and alumni shapes the Tennessee State University culture. Most of the students who participated in this study embraced TSU’s various opportunities. Nine of the student-athletes who I spoke with had a love for TSU that they exemplified through a pride and appreciation for its athletic legacy as well as the institution as a whole.

Whereas, other participants spoke more about the school and appreciation for its community, Sam found a community outside of the campus culture. Sam, “love[d] Nashville, and the city automatically attracted me [to the school]” and what she loved most about the city was exploring it with her Nashville native friends. In addition, she selected TSU over other schools because “their rankings were higher – the highest out of all of the schools that wanted [recruited] me so that was a major choice [to attend]” and the full athletic scholarship. Sam candidly discussed her lack of connection with the HBCU environment. As an international student, she knew very little about TSU or its classification as an HBCU, and did not embrace it in the same way that Luke Cage did. She described her experiences in the classroom, “I do go to an HBCU and there are a lot of minorities [non-Black students] that are hesitant on saying things [that differ from the

more HBCU-dominant African American opinion]...I am hesitant on putting my opinion out there...they'll shut down." Although, Sam is a member of a sports team and wears her sports uniform, she did not talk about the institution with the same pride and appreciation as the other students.

Summary of Themes

Participants in this study shared their experiences and through their own voices I captured their experiences. Through their similarities and differences, and the double hermeneutic process, I cultivated further insight into some shared sense-making among these ten student-athletes' experiences with involvement in campus organizations within a particular higher education institution's culture. They used their faith to guide their decision to attend TSU, but also for their personal growth and development as leaders. These selected participants reinforced the importance of student-athletes' active participation in their collegiate experience.

As leaders, they understood the importance of being role models for their teammates, friends, and others while they were on and off campus. They realized that being a student-athlete was an honor but desired to build networks outside of their sports because they would not always be in that role. Therefore, they took initiative to get involved in organizations outside of their sports. Each student-athlete described how they became involved in campus activities and organizations outside of their specific sport. Taking on a leadership role or organizational memberships outside of their sports meant they encountered tough decisions as it related to how they could dedicate their time. They grappled with managing their time and sometimes even sacrificing sleep to

be a part of the university community. Although, not easy and all of the student-athletes believed it was worth it, and would benefit them in the end. The HBCU Pride and Appreciation theme cemented the influence the institution had on nine of their lives and the ability to get involved. The culture at their institution was unique and integral to who they were as student-athletes.

Chapter Summary

I began this chapter with an introduction to Tennessee State University's campus from my reflections to frame the connections between the selected site and ten participants' lived experiences as student-athletes who are also campus leaders. In this chapter, I gave a historical overview and cultural analysis of TSU and its athletic department. In addition, I introduced my study participants and described their sense-making around five themes: (a) Embracing Faith, (b) Not Just an Athlete, (c) Tough Decisions, (d) University Ambassador, and (e) HBCU Pride and Appreciation. Their words vocalized the five themes that embodied their experiences.

In Chapter Five, I summarize the study and the findings as such pertain to the literature as reviewed in Chapter Two. I offer implications for future practice and research.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

One of the participants, Luke Cage, described his experiences in attending a historically Black university, Tennessee State University, as “a different world.” His words echo from decades before in the name of a late 80s through early 90s television show, *A Different World* (Carsey Warner Company), which highlighted the lives of students who attended fictional Hillman College, a historically Black college and university (HBCU). In this study, 10 selected student-athlete HBCU campus leaders explained their experiences about being student-athletes involved in campus life outside of their sports. This study used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to link a specific place, a HBCU, to selected participants’ lived experiences with the phenomena of being student-athletes as well as involved campus leaders. This chapter summarizes and discusses the (a) study’s findings, (b) implications for future research, and (c) implications for practice. The recommendations and implications reflect the experiences of involved student-athletes at a selected HBCU, a particular type of campus culture, and offer various ways to investigate further how to develop student-athlete leaders.

Summary of the Study and Findings

The study’s purpose was to understand how student-athletes experienced and made meaning of their lives as student-athletes alongside student organization involvement at their NCAA Division I HBCU. While there have been previous studies about HBCU athletics (Cavil, 2015; Cooper, 2012; Cooper & Cooper, 2015; Cooper et

al., 2014; Jones & Bell, 2016), few included both HBCU men and women student-athletes in those investigations nor did those studies explore student-athletes' campus involvement or leadership. Although the literature's gaps warranted inclusion of both men and women in this study since previous studies focused solely on men, the small sample size and the reputational selection approach meant participants' gender-identity could compromise the confidentiality I had promised them. Thus, I do not focus on their experiences from a gender perspective but rather based on their organizational involvement.

I employed, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), an interpretivist approach with a constructivist lens (Sipes & Constable, 1996) to co-construct meaning with the student-athletes as they revealed their *lived experiences* in a specific *place*. In phenomenology, lived experiences link to place (Murray & Holmes, 2014). Researchers in IPA define *place* as the space in relation to the participants' experience of the phenomena (Murray & Holmes, 2014). Tennessee State University was the place for this study. The place's selection criteria included that it hold recognized, accreditation as an HBCU with NCAA, Division I member status. In addition, the criteria to select participants, who could answer the research question about lived experiences, included students who were both athletes and campus leaders. I used recommendations from athletic administrators and staff who suggested 13 potential participants. However, due to scheduling conflicts, only 10 participants and their lived experiences formed the basis of the IPA processes in making meaning of their lived experiences in a particular place. To add to the scholarship surrounding student-athletes, specifically the HBCU student-

athlete experience I utilized IPA to generate data and center their organizational involvement as campus leaders.

According to IPA researchers (Alase, 2017; Murray & Holmes, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2008, 2015), the research design requires that investigators bracket their own experiences while engaging in a double-hermeneutic approach to the data collection and analysis. Throughout the data generation and analysis process, I used field notes and reflexive journaling. I generated data along with simultaneous analysis beginning the moment I entered the place. I used institutional publications, photographs, and unpublished materials to highlight the institutional and athletic organizational culture. In my field note journal, I bracketed my own experiences as an HBCU alum and a higher education scholar-practitioner to focus on the participants' understanding of their experiences. Throughout the data generation and analysis, I also used the field notes template (Appendix K) for my reflexive journaling (Vicary, Young & Hicks, 2016) as I interpreted the student-athletes' lived experiences and made notes of my thoughts about what the participants shared. This IPA process involves the double hermeneutics of how I made sense of student-athletes' making sense of their lived experiences in the HBCU context. As required by IPA, I reductively chose direct quotations to reveal the student-athletes' voices.

With the assistance of MAXQDA (VERBI Software, 2018), as well as manual coding, I analyzed the transcripts in conjunction with the artifacts and field notes through several rounds of coding. As recommended by IPA methodologists, Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), after several rounds of analysis, I developed five overarching themes. I

carefully selected participants' words to highlight their experiences while also clustering commonalities among the meanings they revealed about their experiences. Utilizing direct quotations gave the findings depth and breadth within each theme.

Findings Summary

I used IPA to answer my research question: *What are the experiences of student-athletes who are involved in student organizations and attend a historically Black college/university?* The late Justice Scalia inferred that HBCUs were “less-advanced” and “slower-tracked” than predominantly White institutions (e.g. The University of Texas) in his response to the affirmative action case, *Fisher v. University of Texas* (Carmon, 2015). However, I illuminated that HBCUs Matter utilizing direct quotations from student-athletes who currently attend and are involved in their institution. Nine of the student-athletes expressed pride in their institution, while one student expressed more connection to the city of Nashville than the institution. At the center of their HBCU experience was their scholarship, service, personal and professional growth. Watt and Moore (2001) discussed the student-athlete's complex identity and this study confirmed the complexity of being a student-athlete campus leader. Whether recruited or added to the team as a walk-on, all of the participants recognized they were leaders on their sports team and within the campus community.

I used bracketing and double hermeneutics to make sense of student-athletes' experiences at Tennessee State University. After analyzing the data through several rounds of coding, I extracted five themes: (a) Embracing Faith, (b) Not Just an Athlete, (c) Tough Decisions, (d) University Ambassador, and (e) HBCU Pride and Appreciation.

The findings from this study add to the knowledge-base about HBCU student-athletes and their involvement outside of their sports.

Themes and the Literature

In this section, I discuss the findings in relation to literature compiled in Chapter Two. Gaston Gayles (2009) raised awareness of the complex levels of engagement as both students and athletes. Additionally, Cooper (2012), Cooper and Cooper (2015), Cooper and Dougherty (2015), and Cooper and Hawkins (2012) focused their research on the minimally researched HBCU student-athlete. The findings in this study add to the knowledge base pertaining to the HBCU student-athletes and their campus involvement beyond their teams.

From the words expressed by this study's 10 participants where they made sense of their experiences as both athletes and campus leaders in a HBCU, I identified five themes: (a) Embracing Faith, (b) Not Just an Athlete, (c) Tough Decisions, (d) University Ambassador, and (e) HBCU Pride and Appreciation. The *Leading by Example* theme illuminated how these student-athletes recognized the importance of being a role model. The theme, *Not Just an Athlete*, highlighted that these multifaceted student-athletes understood their visibility due their athletic achievements, still they sought opportunities to get involved outside of their sports. The *Tough Decisions* theme expressed the difficult decisions student-athletes face to make time for their athletic, academic, and organizational responsibilities. *Embracing Faith* emphasized the interplay among of faith, spirituality, and risk in some of the participants' lives. The last theme, *HBCU*

Pride and Appreciation, stressed the impact of the HBCU culture, specifically on the student-athlete experience.

Leading by Example

Watt and Moore (2001) asked the question: who are student-athletes? They asserted that portrayals of student-athletes as “academically unqualified, unintelligent, and socially impotent” (Watt & Moore, 2001, p. 13) contributed to a negative stereotype. Instead, Watt and Moore’s (2001) work offered a depiction of student-athletes as an integral part of the campus’s identity, given their role on campus. Still, Watt and Moore (2001) acknowledge that athletes’ benefits from playing a sport contrasted with the fact that non-athletes do not receive the same benefits. Their work converges with Gaston Gayles’ (2009) observations about complexities in the identities among student athletes.

The participants in this study provided interpretations of how their roles differed from other students’ and they described their uniqueness as university ambassadors and role models. They described their leadership as meaning that no matter where they were, on or off campus, they needed to lead by example. These participants’ awareness of their roles seems to be a similar notion as Cooper and Cooper (2015) wrote about concerning the HBCU scholar-athlete. As with Cooper and Cooper’s (2015) findings, the 10 participants also discussed how coaches, administrators, and peers expected student-athletes to meet a higher standard than the average student. Black Ice said, “It kind of forces you to be better.” These student-athletes took pride in their role as leaders and understood why it was important for them to be an example not only within their sports but also within the greater campus and local community.

Not Just an Athlete

Watt and Moore (2001) suggested that college athletics has grown into a business of winning-losing records and economic investments in the team brand, sometimes but not always synonymous with the institutional brand. Watt and Moore (2001) pointed to the business and branding model as overshadowing student-athletes' academic, or personal, development (Watt & Moore, 2001). Despite the deep shadow of corporate sports on college teams, Astin (1984/1999) and Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) explained how collegiate athletes expressed higher satisfaction with their collegiate experience than other students. In a line of research about the complexity of student-athlete identity, Gaston Gayles (2009; 2015) explained how student-athletes withstand some unique dynamics to navigate their involvement outside of their sports while also balancing their roles as a student and athlete.

In this study, the theme about being more than an athlete revealed how these 10 participants made sense of their college sports experiences with an eye to their futures after college. These student-athletes wanted networks not only during their campus lives, but potentially, after their graduation. Many of this study's participants discussed making sacrifices and managing their time in relation to their role as a student-athlete campus leader.

Tough Decisions

Additionally, this research confirmed Gaston Gayles's (2015) finding about how student-athletes navigate their desires for campus organizational involvement by risking a lack of support from some coaches. The student-athletes knew they had to make tough

decisions in regards to joining other organizations, and while some were encouraged, others expressed that their coaches did not want their involvement to influence their athletics. The student-athletes had time-intensive schedules that included multiple practices, classes, team meetings, and competitions. Apart from their athletic responsibilities, they also encountered balancing organizational involvement as members and as pre-determined by the reputational nomination approach to selecting participants, these student-athletes held leadership positions within these organizations. The 10 participants discussed maintaining “good grades” and balancing academic, athletic and social roles, all while negotiating obligations as student-athletes, seven of whom held scholarships in their sports. In the end, the participants recognized that athletics was their first priority, and they had to make tough decisions as student-athlete campus leaders.

Embracing Faith

Embracing Faith was a theme, which resounded with six of the ten participants. The Christian faith and its centrality in the Black community extend back to slavery and played a pivotal role in the establishment of many HBCUs and the curriculum they offered (Perry, Govan, & Clark, 2016). Perry, Govan, and Clark (2016) discussed how the curriculum influenced growth of co-curricular activities at HBCUs. One area necessary to compete with colonial colleges was athletics and other activities, such as literary societies and Greek life (Perry et al., 2016). Although Perry et al., (2016) neglected to connect the role faith plays in students’ development and involvement, these six participants described faith as necessary for student-athletes who are involved in co-curricular activities.

As a public institution, TSU was not established under Christian principles; yet, the participants referred to either a coach or teammate who encouraged their involvement in a faith-based organization, while others discussed a reliance on faith in their decision-making. Scholars (Hai, Currin-McCulloch, Franklin, & Cole, 2018; Hill et al., 2000) noted how people use the terms religion and spirituality interchangeably. I identified these participants' use of the word faith as related to Hai et al.'s, (2018) definitions of religion and spirituality. Religion is the system of beliefs, while spirituality is the search for universal well-being and meaning through connections with oneself and others (Hai et al., 2018). In my sense-making of these student-athletes' quotes about faith, I found an intermingling of both religion and spirituality.

Nance (2009) found religion was prominent among Black students and the church's direct influence on their collegiate experience. Participants reported involvement in faith-based organizations and found those groups provided a common bond with other people on campus; and they bonded over a pride in their faith (Nance, 2009). Similarly, Moran (2007) studied the exploration and identity development of Evangelical Christians. These students reported how their religion and relationship with Christ changed their lives, and the impact it had on their involvement and relationships within the college environment. In this study, six participants reported how they connected with faith-based organizations because of their teammates or other athletes. Although prior studies (Moran, 2007; Nance, 2009; Perry et al., 2016) discussed religious identity, as well as the development of extracurricular activities because of social and political needs, they did not directly discuss the student-athlete. In that difference, this

study opens another avenue for understanding the complexity of student-athlete identity (Gaston Gayles, 2009; 2015).

Given some indeterminate vagueness about concepts of understanding college students' lived experiences concerning faith, religion, and spirituality, these participants' meaning-making and use of the term faith seemed to intermingle. These participants did distinguish the notion of religion whereas they did reference faith, attending church, or being a member of a faith-based organization. The student-athletes verbalized how much their faith helped them in either making the decision to attend TSU or joining an organization in which they could grow in their faith. This particular theme opened a complication of both the phenomena of lived experience and place, which are at the foundation of IPA.

HBCU Pride and Appreciation

Nine of the ten student-athletes said their HBCU's culture gave them a sense of pride and appreciation to wear that uniform for their school. Histories of HBCUs have indicated that student pride stemmed from the formation of athletic competitions (Perry, Govan & Clark, 2016). While some of the literature argued that HBCUs' intercollegiate athletics suffer limited resources (Cooper, Cavil & Cheeks, 2014; Jones & Bell, 2016), these participants focused on their positive experiences. Hirt (2006) asserted that the *in loco parentis* nature of HBCU administrators enveloped the campus with a family atmosphere. Palmer et al.'s (2018) list of HBCU characteristics emerged in the transcripts of these participants.

For example, Laila Anderson's and Martin Little's descriptions embodied Palmer et al. (2018) characteristics of an HBCU. Laila Anderson said, "There's nothing like an HBCU education," while Martin Little described it has a "barbecue or a reunion." Their words seemed to encompass four distinctive elements of an HBCU are related to the (a) supportive and nurturing environment; (b) academic preparedness deprivation for graduate and professional school; (c) the success of the Black student despite lack of funding; and (d) diversity of its students. The participants' descriptions in addition to essential artifacts added depth and breadth to the understanding of the organizational culture at Tennessee State University. Throughout my interviews, data generation and analysis, reflexive journaling I thought about the implications of my research as a scholar and practitioner.

Implications for Practice and Research

This research study provided insight into the lived experiences of ten student-athletes who attended an HBCU and became involved in campus organizations outside of their sports. During my writing process, I noted ways in which this study would have implications for future research and practice. This particular study contributed to and cemented the need for further investigation into the minimally researched area of HBCU collegiate athletics, specifically student-athlete experiences beyond athletics (Cooper & Cooper, 2015; Jones & Bell, 2016). The findings have implications for higher education, the practitioners and administrators who work specifically with student-athletes, and researchers who study HBCUs and student-athletes.

Implications for Practice

The student-athlete lives a complex life with multiple identities, roles, and responsibilities rare among non-athlete students (Watt & Moore, 2001). Both practitioners and administrators should “facilitate the development of an identity as student *and* athlete” (Watt & Moore, 2001, p. 13) when working with student-athletes. One of the study’s themes, *Not Just an Athlete*, verified that these student-athletes desired more campus involvement than just their sports. The study’s findings indicated how much these student-athletes desired connections with non-athlete students.

The findings from this study also revealed student-athletes have to make *Tough Decisions* to balance their schedules and the sacrifices they make to be involved outside of the athletic department (Gaston Gayles, 2015; Watt & Moore, 2001). However, they understood their sport as the highest priority even though they yearned to be involved outside of their sport. Many of the student-athletes discussed depriving themselves of sleep in order to be at an event or joining certain organizations; yet, for them it was worth it.

Astin’s (1984/1999) student involvement theory theorized campus involvement over 20 years ago, and his work remains germane to higher education. Astin’s work provided a conceptual framework to understand student involvement in higher education, specifically for those researching and working with student-athletes. Student affairs practitioners should work with athletic administrators to support student-athletes to get involved in organizations outside their sports to enhance their learning and personal development.

After speaking with the students about their experiences, I made a list of recommendations based on my observations and the participants' comments. I use the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) guiding principles, Integrity, Innovation, Inclusion, and Inquiry (NASPA, 2018), as an organizer for these recommendations. Student affairs practitioners and athletic departments can use these recommendations as starting point to enhance the student-athlete collegiate experience. The following recommendations are reflective of NASPA's guiding principles:

1. Host leadership development programs on campus. Hosting these development programs may further enable student-athletes' leadership for their own identity development as well as for the purposes of encouraging others' recognition of that leadership role. Such leadership development could be provided to formal and informal leaders, so that all student-athletes can feel empowered to be leaders not only within their respective sports but also within the university community.
2. Engage all student-athletes and not just the star athletes. Recognizing the student-athletes who are not "stars" have an added value, and they can be an untapped resource. In addition, by engaging these student-athletes, you do not overwhelm or monopolize the time of the same people.
3. Encourage involvement outside their athletic sport/talent. Student-athletes involved outside of their sport directly affect their academic and athletic roles (Gaston Gayles, 2015). With athletics, encouragement to get involved in something outside of their sports student-athletes can unveil their other talents.

4. Create space for personal and professional growth. The athletics department can bring coaches, athletics' staff, student-athletes and others to the table to host conversations and programs, which enhance the student-athlete's personal and professional growth not only while on campus but post-graduation.

Recommendation by and for Student-Athletes. These participants encouraged their peers to push themselves outside of their comfort zones to get involved beyond their sports. They suggested making efforts to contact classmates either while sitting in class or as passing by “on the yard.” Luke Cage took advantage of “getting to know people from his dorm” to learn more about why students were not attending his sport's games. Additionally, Ty described being involved as, “one of the best things” she had done since attending TSU. These participants indicated that they would advise other student-athletes to improve their networks as well as interpersonal skills. Fran said, “If you're not taking advantage of the opportunities to become a leader,” then she believed that student-athletes missed the development essential to their future careers. Student-athletes leave their institutions sooner or later for future careers in sports, but as likely, careers outside of sports, and leadership networks and skills matter.

Implications for Research

The goal of my research as a higher education scholar-practitioner was to highlight the experiences of a select group of student-athletes who were involved on their campus, a particular setting within NCAA Division I and an underrepresented type of campus, an HBCU. Of course, the particularity of this study may not reflect the entire student-athlete experience even within that exact campus, much less any other similar

one. Specifically, by highlighting a select group of HBCU student-athletes, the hope was to add an incremental step in filling a gap in literature about HBCUs and student-athlete campus leaders as well as the rare environments of NCAA Division I HBCUs.

Cooper (2012) studied the Black male student-athlete experience but did not include the voice of the female athlete. In this study, I collected experiences from both men and women student-athletes, which Cooper (2012) had not done. To expound upon their lived experiences, I included six women and four men student-athletes. However, due to ethical implications from the reputational sampling steps, their gender identity was not revealed in the reporting of these participants' lived experiences. Nevertheless, intercollegiate sports leagues face questions about equity in teams and scholarships available to men and women athletes. Currently, gender-identity occupies social and political debates from the nation's and states' capitals to college campuses across the United States. These debates form many implications for future research questions in regards to gender identity, expression, and equity among student-athletes.

Throughout this journey, I kept a journal to generate a list of future research questions in relation to HBCU athletics, student experiences, and student-athlete leaders. The following list of research questions opens up my research agenda as I seek to further my knowledge production as a scholar-practitioner:

- What happens to the student-athletes who are not involved in other campus organizations?
- What role does being a Black student-athlete play in the complexity of racial and athletic identity development?

- How do student-athletes navigate the process of joining a National Pan-Hellenic fraternity or sorority during their season?
- “How did you get here?” - in which I elicit stories of Black women who are leading a NCAA, Division I FCS program
- What is the role of an HBCU in a predominantly White athletic conference?
- How do HBCU athletic environments play a role in the Black student’s development?
- How does the NCAA’s gender equity policies influence the gender identity of student-athletes?
- What role does Critical Race Feminism play in the lives of women athletic administrators and student-athletes?
- What are the cultural implications for minoritized, international student-athletes who attend historically Black colleges and universities?

Conclusion

Only recently were HBCUs’ historical role memorialized in U.S. history with recognition in two recent museum openings: (a) the U.S. National Museum of African American History and Culture in 2016, and (b) the first museum solely committed to telling the stories of HBCUs in 2018. Over the same interval, former President Barack Obama and the Entertainment Sports Network (ESPN) focused on race, athletics, and the instrumental role HBCUs play in the development of Black athletes (Fletcher, 2016; Undeafed, 2016). These recent events link the social, cultural, and historical importance

of HBCUs, sports, and the experiences of student-athletes. My study initiated some new evidence about the experiences of student-athletes engaged in their selected HBCU campus beyond the requirements of their NCAA Division I sports' teams. Each of these student-athletes represented a number of sports, backgrounds, and experiences, and while they have many differences, they shared an identity as a student-athlete campus leader. It was my goal to unveil these selected student-athletes' experiences about their engagement outside of sports in the context of their shared HBCU campus.

Ten participants explained how they came to be students at Tennessee State University; what it means to be a student-athlete; and how engaging in campus organizations influenced how they developed as leaders beyond their sports. In their explanations of the meaning they made of their experiences, these HBCU student-athletes expressed the formation of their identities as greater than their athletic abilities, which included leadership in their local and institutional communities. These participants' lived experiences illuminated the depth of the HBCU student-athlete campus leader.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Clemson University: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval



Aris Hall <aris2@g.clemson.edu>

Exempt Determination for IRB2017-183 | Changing the Game: Experiences of Student-Athletes...

2 messages

Amy F Smitherman <smithe3@clemson.edu>
To: Jane Lindle <jlindle@clemson.edu>
Cc: Naline Patin <npatin@clemson.edu>, Aris Hall <aris2@g.clemson.edu>

Mon, May 1, 2017 at 1:31 PM

Dear Dr. Lindle,

The Clemson University Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the protocol "Changing the Game: Experiences of Student-Athletes as Leaders on a Historically Black College and University Campus" using exempt review procedures and a determination was made on May 1, 2017 that the proposed activities involving human participants qualify as Exempt under category B2 in accordance with federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101

No further action or IRB oversight of the protocol is required except in the following situations:

1. Substantial changes made to the protocol that could potentially change the review level. Researchers who modify the study purpose, study sample, or research methods and instruments in ways not covered by the exempt categories will need to submit an expedited or full board review application.
2. Occurrence of unanticipated problem or adverse event; any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects, complications, and/or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Research Compliance immediately.
3. Change in Principal Investigator (PI)

All research involving human participants must maintain an ethically appropriate standard, which serves to protect the rights and welfare of the participants. This involves obtaining informed consent and maintaining confidentiality of data. Research related records should be retained for a minimum of three (3) years after completion of the study.

The Clemson University IRB is committed to facilitating ethical research and protecting the rights of human subjects. Please contact us if you have any questions and use the IRB number and title when referencing the study in future correspondence.

Good luck with your study.

Sincerely,

Amy Smitherman

IRB Coordinator

Office of Research Compliance, Clemson University

391 College Avenue, Suite 406K-1, Clemson, SC 29631

T: 864.656.6460

smithe3@clemson.edu

IRB Email: IRB@clemson.edu (send all new request to IRB inbox)

Website: <http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/>



Appendix B

Tennessee State University: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval



"Think. Work. Serve."

Research and Sponsored Programs
3500 John A. Merritt Boulevard
Nashville, Tennessee 37209-1561
Office: (615) 963-7631
Fax: (615) 963-5068

Office of the Vice President

To: Aris Hall
Aris2@clmson.edu
jlindlc@clmson.edu
Dept.: Educational and Organization Leadership Development

From:

Dr. Monique McCallister, Chair, Institutional Review Board

Re: Protocol #IIS2017-4012

Date: Wednesday, July 12, 2017

The document listed below has been carefully reviewed and found to be in compliance with OPRR document title 45, Code of Federal Regulations part 46, the protection of human subjects, as amended by Federal policy, effective August 19, 1991. This project is **approved** as it presents minimal or no research risks to the pool of impending human subjects. Please make note, that any deviations in the administration of the protocol, accidental or otherwise should be reported to the IRB as soon as possible. The FWA for Tennessee State University is #FWA00007692, which is effective from July 15, 2016 to July 15, 2021.

"Changing The Game: Student -Athletes As Leaders"

This approval is valid for one year from the date indicated above. Continuation of research beyond that date requires re-approval by the Institutional Review Board.

Please contact me at 963-7619 or e-mail irb@tnstate.edu for additional information.

Tennessee State University is an AA/EEO employer.

Appendix C

Athletic Department Letter of Support



Department of Athletics
Office of Administration
Tennessee State University
3500 John A. Merritt Blvd.
Nashville, Tennessee 37209-1561

Dr. Monique McCallister (Interim)
Office of the Vice President
Research and Sponsored Programs
3500 John A. Merritt Boulevard
Nashville, Tennessee 37209-1561

June 8, 2017

Dear Dr. McCallister,

Please allow this correspondence to serve as the formal "Letter of Support" from the Division of Athletics for Ms. Hall as she prepares to complete her application process. We are excited that our student-athletes have been recommended for participation in her dissertation study. We will avail ourselves to ensure that Ms. Hall is successful in this endeavor.

If additional information is needed from Athletics, please feel free to contact me directly. My office phone number is 615.963.5754 and email address, vjordan@tnstate.edu.

Best Regards,

Valencia Jordan, Associate Athletics Director/SWA
Tennessee State University

Appendix D

Nomination Letter to Administrators

Dear [Administrator]:

Hello, my name is Aris Hall, and I am a Ph.D. Candidate in the Educational Leadership (Higher Education) program at Clemson University. I am contacting you now because I am writing my dissertation, and I have an opportunity for some of your students to participate in my research study. The title of my study is “Changing the Game: Student-Athletes as Leaders.” This study conducted by myself under the direct supervision of my Chair and Professor, Dr. Jane Clark Lindle, at Clemson University.

I have chosen you to nominate students who identify as both a student-athlete and campus leader. The student-athletes must be a recognized member of National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), Division I sport(s) and hold membership with active involvement in organizations outside of their athletic sport.

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of historically Black college and university student-athletes who are involved in NCAA, Division I sport(s) and campus student leadership. The study’s focus on the lived student-athlete experiences as leaders will provide support and knowledge for administrators and staff who work directly and indirectly with student-athlete leaders. This study’s results will be presented at regional and national conferences as well as published in peer-reviewed journals and publications.

Upon receiving your nominations, I will e-mail the participants for my study. Their participation will include the following:

- an individual interview (approximately 90 minutes)
- review of interview narratives

The interview will be audio recorded for transcription, analysis, and presentation purposes only.

If your student’s participate in my study, all participants involved would have anonymity (with selection of a pseudonym), and all data collected would be held with the strictest of confidence and security. In addition, the students would receive an informed consent letter that provides more information about the study.

If you are willing to nominate students for my study, please provide their name and e- mail address along with an explanation why they should be a part of this study. If you would like additional information about this study, please contact me via e-mail, aris2@clemson.edu.

Thank you again for considering this research opportunity.

Sincerely,

Aris Hall

Appendix E

Participant Recruitment E-mail

Dear Student:

Hello, my name is Aris Hall, and I am a Ph.D. Candidate in the Educational Leadership (Higher Education) program at Clemson University. I am writing to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a research study. The title of my study is, “Changing the Game: Student-Athletes as Leaders”. This study conducted by myself under the direct supervision of my Chair and Professor, Dr. Jane Clark Lindle, at Clemson University.

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of historically Black college and university student-athletes who are involved in NCAA, Division I sport(s) and campus student leadership. The study’s focus on the lived student-athlete experiences as leaders will provide support and knowledge for administrators and staff who work directly and indirectly with student-athlete leaders.

Under the advisement of athletic and student affairs administrators, I have selected you as a participant for my study because you are a student-athlete involved in campus leadership. I am seeking your participation in the following:

- an individual interview (approximately 90 minutes)
- review of interview narratives

The interview will be audio recorded for transcription, analysis, and presentation purposes only.

If you agree to participate in my study, all participants involved would have anonymity (with selection of a pseudonym), and all data collected would be held with the strictest of confidence and security. In addition, you would receive an informed consent letter that provides more information about the study.

If you are willing to participate in my study, please click on the following link, [INSERT PERSONALIZED LINK HERE], and complete the scheduling form based on your availability for me to schedule a meeting to discuss the study. If you would like additional information about this study, please contact me via e-mail, aris2@clemson.edu.

Thank you again for considering this research opportunity.

Sincerely,

Aris Hall

Appendix F

Participant Recruitment Follow-Up E-mail

Dear Student:

Hello, my name is Aris Hall, and I am a Ph.D. Candidate in the Educational Leadership (Higher Education) program at Clemson University. I am writing to follow-up about the opportunity to participate in a research study, entitled, “Changing the Game: Student- Athletes as Leaders”. This study conducted by myself under the direct supervision of my Chair and Professor, Dr. Jane Clark Lindle, at Clemson University.

The study’s focus on the lived student-athlete experiences as leaders will provide support and knowledge for administrators and staff who work directly and indirectly with student-athlete leaders. You were selected under the advisement of athletic and student affairs administrators, because you are a student-athlete involved in campus leadership. I am seeking your participation in the following:

- an individual interview (approximately 90 minutes)
- review of interview narratives

The interview will be audio recorded for transcription, analysis, and presentation purposes only.

If you agree to participate in my study, all participants involved would have anonymity (with selection of a pseudonym), and all data collected would be held with the strictest of confidence and security. In addition, you would receive an informed consent letter that provides more information about the study.

If you are willing to participate in my study, please click on the following link, [INSERT PERSONALIZED LINK HERE], and complete the scheduling form based on your availability for me to schedule a meeting to discuss the study. If you would like additional information about this study, please contact me via e-mail, aris2@clemson.edu.

Thank you again for considering this research opportunity.

Sincerely,

Aris Hall

Appendix G

Participant Informed Consent and Questionnaire/Profile

Changing the Game: Student-Athletes as Leaders

Description of the Study and Your Part in It

Ms. Aris Hall under the direction of the Principal Investigator, Dr. Jane Clark Lindle, is inviting you to take part in a research study. Dr. Lindle is a Professor at Clemson University. Aris Hall is a doctoral candidate at Clemson University, running this study with the help of Dr. Lindle. The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of historically Black college and university student-athletes who are involved in NCAA, Division I sport(s) and campus student leadership.

Your part in the study will be to share your experiences as a student-athlete and campus leader at a historically Black college and university.

It will take you about a total of two (2) hours to be in this study, including participation in the following: an individual interview (approximately 90 minutes), and review of interview narratives.

Risks and Discomforts

We do not know of any risks or discomforts to you in this research study.

Possible Benefits

We do not know of any way you would benefit directly from taking part in this study. However, this research may help us to understand the lived student-athlete experiences as leaders will provide support and knowledge for administrators and staff who work directly and indirectly with student-athlete leaders.

Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality

The information received via the questionnaire and interviews will be confidential, and you will choose a pseudonym to use throughout the study. The interview will be audio recorded for transcription, analysis, and presentation purposes only. The confidential data will be kept password protected and encrypted or in a locked cabinet (for hard copies) in Ms. Hall's office. Data will be maintained for five years after the completion of the study. At that time, electronic data will be deleted and hard copies will be shredded.

Choosing to Be in the Study

You do not have to be in this study. You may choose not to take part and you may choose to stop taking part at any time. You will not be punished in any way if you decide not to be in the study or to stop taking part in the study.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Dr. Jane Clark Lindle at Clemson University at (864) 508-0629.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights in this research study, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-0636 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside of the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC's toll-free number, 866-297-3071.

Clicking on the "I consent" button indicates that:

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate

You may print a copy of this informational letter for your files.

- I consent, I will participate in this study
- I do not consent, I do not wish to participate

You consented to participate in this study. The following questionnaire will collect information about you in preparation for the individual interview.

Q1 First and Last Name:

Q2 Please select a Pseudonym (name you would like to be used to protect your identity):

Q3 Academic Classification: Based on credit hours, what is your academic classification? For example, first year, sophomore, junior, or senior?

Q4 Race and Ethnicity: How do you identify racially and ethnically?

Q5 Age: Are you 18 years of age or older?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q6 Gender Identity: Please identify your gender.

Q7 Athletic Team(s): Please identify which Division I sport(s) you play for your institution.

Q8 Funding for Athletic Play: Do you receive any scholarship(s) or other funding/resources due to playing for your institution? If so, please explain.

Q9 Organizational Involvement: I am a member of the following organization(s) and I hold this position of leadership...

- ☐ Organization Leadership Position
- ☐ Organization Leadership Position
- ☐ Organization Leadership Position

Q11 Defining Leader and Leadership: Do you identify as a student leader on campus? Why or why not?

Q12 How would you define leadership?

Q13 You consented to participate in this study. The following will help me schedule your individual interview time.

Q14 Please select the best days and times for you to participate in an individual interview. You may select more than one time period for a day.

| | Monday, August 28 | | | | | | | Tuesday, August 29 | | | | | | | Wednesday, August 30 | | | | | | | Thursday, August 31 | | | | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | 10:00 am | 11:30 am | 1:00 pm | 2:30 pm | 4:00 pm | 5:30 pm | 7:00 pm | 10:00 am | 11:30 am | 1:00 pm | 2:30 pm | 4:00 pm | 5:30 pm | 7:00 pm | 10:00 am | 11:30 am | 1:00 pm | 2:30 pm | 4:00 pm | 5:30 pm | 7:00 pm | 10:00 am | 11:30 am | 1:00 pm | 2:30 pm | 4:00 pm | 5:30 pm | 7:00 pm |
| First Choice | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Second Choice | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Third Choice | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Q15 If none of the days/times for the individual interview works for you, please let me know what day/time does work for you; also, if you would not mind sharing what is preventing you from participating at the given times.

Appendix H
Interview Schedule

Date: _____ **Start Time:** _____ **End Time:** _____

I. Let us get to know one another.

- a. Participant introduce him/herself (i.e. name, membership group(s))
- b. Researcher introduces self and explains the purpose for the study

II. The self-identified leader.

- a. In the pre-interview questionnaire, you defined leadership as...how does your definition relate to what being a leader means to you?
- b. Tell me how you differentiate between leader and leadership.
- c. Do you consider yourself to be a campus leader? If so, what makes you say that?
 - i. As athletes?
 - ii. As leaders?

III. The environment.

- a. Describe the environment (institutional culture) here at [Institution].
- b. Why did you want to come to [Institution]?
 - i. Probe for specific aspects of athletics offered during recruitment

ii. Probe for specific involvement activities/opportunities beyond sports

iii. Probe for consideration of [institution] as an HBCU

1. Probe for comparison with PWI, Division I, if any

IV. Involvement, Leadership, and the HBCU.

a. What does being a leader look like on this campus?

b. Does being at a HBCU influence your involvement as students?

c. Does [Institution]'s culture influence your student-athlete collegiate experience?

i. Follow-up: Can you tell me more?

d. How has [Institution] created opportunities for your leadership?

i. Does athletics facilitate leadership opportunities for its student-athletes?

ii. Does your [Institution] engage student-athletes as campus leaders outside of the athletic environment?

1. Follow-up: In what ways do they do this?

e. Has [Institution] and the athletic culture aided in your development as student-athlete and campus leader?

i. Follow-up: Please share more about this.

- V. Think back to when you first got involved in your organization(s).
 - a. Why did you get involved?
 - i. In what ways, has being a student-athlete influenced your decision to become involved on your campus?
 - b. What drew you to your particular member group(s)?
 - c. Why did you decide to take on a leadership role in your organization?
- VI. Are there any other comments you would like to make about being a student-athlete and campus leader at [Institution]?
- VII. Thank the participants for their time.

Appendix I

List of Artifacts

1. 2013 – 2015 NCAA Grant Evaluation, *Analysis of Student-Athletes: Course Completion, GPA, and Honors*
2. NCAA Accelerating Academic Success Program (AASP), Grant Year One End of the Year Report (December 2013)
3. NCAA Accelerating Academic Success Program, Grant Year Two End of the Year Report (November 2014)
4. NCAA Accelerating Academic Success Program, Grant Year Three End of the Year Report (July 2016)
5. NCAA Accelerating Academic Success Program, Initial Impact Assessment Plan
6. Tennessee State University (TSU) Athletic Visitor Guide
7. TSU Student Handbook
8. TSU Campus Map
9. TSU Tigers News Archive: *Student-athletes and coaches participate in leadership training*. (2016, September 2).
10. TSU Student-Athlete Handbook

Appendix J

Participant Narrative Review E-mail

Dear [Pseudonym],

Thank you again for taking the time to participate in my study, and for your patience as I reviewed, transcribed, and analyzed your narratives from the focus group and individual interview. Please take a moment to review each attached document very carefully for accuracy:

Individual Interview Transcription

The individual interview was transcribed verbatim. Review the transcriptions very carefully and reply with any comments to help with clarification of what you said. I will use quotes to represent emergent themes and shared experiences that you and other participants shared during our time together.

If you do not have any thoughts or feedback regarding the transcripts, please respond to this email by typing "I CONFIRM" so I know that you are satisfied with the representation of your words.

Once more, I would like to send my deepest gratitude for your participation in this study. Upon completion of my study, I will share with you my findings.

Thank you and best of luck,

Aris Hall, Researcher
Doctoral Candidate
Clemson University

Appendix K

Field Note Journal

Date: _____ Setting: _____

Describe the research activity which generated/stimulated this journal entry (post-interview? Observation? Transcript review? etc.)

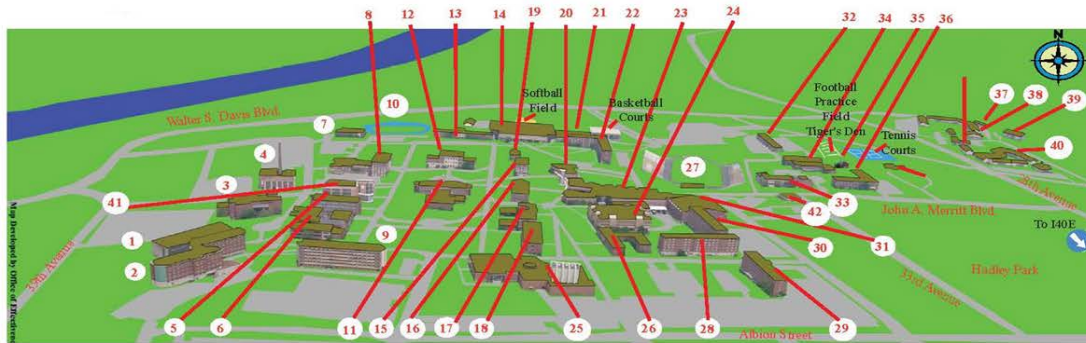
Potential points of reflection:

- What aspects of my work as investigator has enabled a deeper understanding of the participant/s' view?
- What aspects of my prior experiences (alumna of an HBCU, practitioner) has influenced my interpretations of the participant/s' experiences?
- What was surprising to me?
- What did I take for granted, that should be examined more deeply?

Notes:

Appendix L

Tennessee State University: Main Campus Map



BY BUILDING NAME

- | | |
|--|--|
| 6 Boswell Complex (PMB) | 36 Humphries (HEN) |
| 30 Boyd Hall | 16 Industrial Arts Bldg (IND) |
| 24 Brown-Daniel Library | 34 James E Farrell and Fred E Westbrook Agricultural Complex |
| 37 Central Receiving | 31 Kean Hall (KH) |
| 18 Clay Hall (ED) | 33 Lawson Hall (AGR) |
| 26 Clement Hall (CLH) | 17 McCord Hall (MH) |
| 5 Crouch Hall (GRD) | 38 New Apartment Complex |
| 11 Davis Hall (Humanities Bldg) Poag Auditorium | 32 Operations / Physical Plant |
| 8 Elliott Hall (Women's Bldg) Van Gordon Art Gallery | 11 Poag Auditorium |
| 29 Epps Hall | 4 Power Plant |
| 23 Floyd-Payne Campus Center Forum | 7 Queen Washington Health Bldg |
| 40 Ford Apartment Complex | 41 Research and Sponsored Programs Building |
| 14 Gentry Complex (PEC) | 2 Rudolph Hall |
| 19 Goodwill Manor | 25 Strange Music/Performing Arts Bldg (MUS) |
| 12 H M Love Learning Research Center (LRC) | 10 Temple Track |
| 9 Hale Hall | 1 Torrence Hall (ET) |
| 27 Hale Stadium Fieldhouse | 39 TSU Motor Pool |
| 13 Hankal Hall | 8 Van Gordon Art Gallery (WB) |
| 15 Harned Hall (HH) | 28 Watson Hall |
| 42 Health Research | 21 Wellness Center |
| 3 Holland Hall (SB) | 22 Wilson Hall |

BY BUILDING CODE

- | | |
|--------|--|
| 33 AGR | Lawson Hall |
| 26 CLH | Clement Hall |
| 18 ED | Clay Hall |
| 1 ET | Torrence Hall |
| 5 GRD | Crouch Hall |
| 36 HEN | Humphries |
| 15 HH | Harned Hall |
| 11 HUM | Davis Hall / Humanities Bldg |
| 16 IND | Industrial Arts Bldg |
| 31 KH | Kean Hall |
| 12 LRC | H M Love Learning Research Center |
| 17 MH | McCord Hall |
| 25 MUS | Strange Music/Performing Arts Bldg |
| 14 PEC | Gentry Complex |
| 6 PMB | Boswell Complex |
| 3 SB | Holland Hall |
| 8 WB | Elliott Hall / Women's Bldg / Van Gordon Art Gallery |

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