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Publication Date

2023

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Student Identity Shapes High School Student-Athletes' Division I Scholarship Selection

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Education

by

Arneshia Bryant-Horn

September 2023

Thesis Committee:

Dr. Marsha Ing, Chairperson

Dr. Anthony Muro-Villa III

Dr. Michael Moses II

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2023

The Thesis of Arneshia Bryant-Horn is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband DeAndre, my two beautiful children Devin and Ayden, my parents Arlando and Berlinda, my brother Isaiah, and my cousins Tanaya and Donameche for all their love, encouragement, and support. Although this journey was not easy, I was uplifted every step of the way by the best support system. To my father who fostered my love of education and told me that “his princess would change the world”, I hope you are looking down on me and proud of the scholar I have become. To Vanessa, thank you for all the laughs and tears we have had as hermanas over the years. Most of all, thank you to God for bestowing so many gifts onto me that I share daily with the world.

Signed,

Changemaker by being the representation I always wanted to see

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank my committee members who supported my efforts in writing this thesis: Dr. Marsha Ing (chair), Dr. Anthony Muro-Villa III (member), and Dr. Michael Moses II (member). This terrific trio was the perfect combination of support, nurture, and mentorship. To Dr. Marsha Ing, thank you for requiring me to not settle for the obvious but to think about how the small pieces fit into the bigger puzzle. To Dr. Anthony Muro-Villa III, thank you for always being a sounding board for all ideas that arose during this process. No matter the time of day or night, you always reassured me that I could succeed. To Dr. Michael Moses II, thank you for telling me that everything does not have to be answered in one study. I have my whole career to research as many things as I want. To UCR, thank you for providing a safe space filled with diverse students and equitable opportunities for me to learn and thrive.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Student Identity Shapes High School Student-Athletes' Division I Scholarship Selection

by

Arneshia Bryant-Horn

Master of Arts, Graduate Program in Education
University of California, Riverside, September 2023
Dr. Marsha Ing, Chairperson

One decision very few high school student-athletes are faced with is which Division I athletic scholarship to accept. These highly coveted scholarships can cover for all expenses and provide support during and after the undergraduate experience. Yet, even if high school student-athletes accept a Division I offer, it doesn't guarantee their success. Many athletes struggle with student identity as they try to remain eligible to compete at the Division I level. I draw from identity theory on figured worlds to investigate how student success as a Division I athlete is linked to negotiating their figured world of being a student as it informs their decision about which Division I scholarship to accept. Using data from interviews and observations, this study follows two elite high school student-athletes as they make their decision about which Division I scholarship to accept, and how their dual identities as students and athletes shaped their decision-making process.

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Introduction

High school student-athletes who receive multiple Division I scholarship offers are part of an elite group of student-athletes. They not only have the opportunity to play in a Division I school (approximately 2% of all high school students have this opportunity) but receive financial support to do so. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) reported in 2022 that approximately 192,000 high school students received a scholarship to compete at a Division I school; whereas nearly 8 million high school students reported playing sports. Academic and athletic success for this elite group of student-athletes is not guaranteed. Over 60% lose academic eligibility to compete at a Division I school (Harris, 2018). Given the importance of remaining eligible, the decision about which offer to accept becomes critical for elite high school student-athletes. Unfortunately, little research has explored how this decision is made.

This study focuses on football players, who are typically among players who lose eligibility at higher rates compared to men who play other sports. The purpose of this study is to explore how elite high school student-athletes' identities as athletes and students shape their decision-making process. To investigate the decision-making process, a survey was administered to forty-two student-athletes. Two elite student-athletes were selected based on their responses to the survey. The criteria for selection included having at least a 2.5 grade point average (GPA) and at least fifteen Division I offers. The two selected participants completed a survey and interviewed about their academic and athletic identities to understand how they negotiated their student identity when considering which Division I scholarship offer to accept. Better understanding how

these decisions are made can help better support the continued success of these student-athletes.

Compared to other undergraduates, Division I student-athletes have a different set of responsibilities and expectations when deciding which college to attend. Student-athletes cope with public scrutiny and extensive time demands to participate in athletics (Carodine et al., 2001). They attend practices and travel to games. They regularly compete in front of the public and the media which makes them targets of praise and criticism by people they have never met (Thelin, 1996). In addition to these challenges, student-athletes are responsible for meeting academic obligations which requires regularly attending classes, successfully passing assessments, and fulfilling and upholding the eligibility criteria established by the NCAA. If they do not fulfill their academic obligations, their eligibility to participate in competitions, obtain scholarship assistance, and attain graduation status from their respective educational establishments is threatened. Being part of the dual worlds of a student and an athlete can affect how a student-athlete identifies with academics and maintaining their student status at their educational institution.

Background Information

This section provides background information about student-athletes who receive Division I scholarships from the NCAA.

NCAA Divisions I, II, and III

There are three divisions within the NCAA. Compared to the other two divisions, Division I institutions typically allocate the greatest financial resources towards athletic

endeavors, and provide a substantially greater amount of athletic scholarship opportunities. Division I schools include over 350 schools, encompassing 23 historically black colleges and universities. These institutions include a diverse array of nearly 6,700 athletics teams which facilitate athletic participation opportunities for approximately 192,000 individuals each year (NCAA, 2021a).

Division I institutions typically possess the highest enrollment numbers of student-athletes collectively. Compared with Divisions II and III, Division I student-athletes make up the smallest percentage of their campus enrollment (Nimesheim, 2022). Division I schools have the largest median undergraduate enrollment, 8,960, with 1 in 23 students being an athlete (Nimesheim, 2022). At Division II colleges, the median average enrollment is 2,428, and 1 in 10 students is an athlete. At Division III colleges, the median undergraduate enrollment is 1,740, and 1 in 6 students is an athlete (Nimesheim, 2022). Following the formation of its three subdivisions in 1973, the NCAA implemented a divisional split specifically for football in 1978. This involved the subdivision of Division I into three segments based on the type of football programs the participating schools offer. These divisions were categorized as Division I-A, which consisted of the primary football schools; Division I-AA, which encompassed the remaining football-playing institutions; and Division I, which comprised schools that did not sponsor any football programs. In the year 2006, Division I-A and I-AA underwent a renaming process, resulting in the designation of Football Bowl Subdivision and Football Championship Subdivision, correspondingly.

The NCAA annually disseminates approximately 60% of all their revenue, more than \$600 million, specifically to Division I schools and conferences with more than \$150 million going toward financing Division I's 26 championships (NCAA, 2021b). Division I schools collectively grant about 3.6 billion dollars in athletic scholarships each year (NCAA, 2021b). Division I and II schools offer full or partial athletic scholarships. Division III schools do not offer student-athletes financial benefits outside of academic scholarships that are available to all students based on NCAA rules. Division II annually receives 4.37% of all NCAA income, as ensured by the NCAA Constitution. Approximately 60% of the Division II budget is committed to bolster the division's 25 national championships (NCAA, 2021c). Division III annually receives 3.18% of all NCAA income, as ensured by the NCAA Constitution. Roughly 75% of the Division III budget is committed to supporting the division's 28 national championships (NCAA, 2021d). The expenditures above highlight the endless contrast in subsidizing Division I schools as opposed to Division II and III schools.

Division I conferences and member institutions typically vie for opportunities in postseason competitions. At present, the post-season bowl games are graced by the participation of one hundred and thirty Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) programs. The said participation comprises 65 programs hailing from the five autonomy conferences, namely the Atlantic Coast, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12, and Southeastern conferences, alongside the independent football division of Notre Dame. The National Championship, under the supervision of the College Football Playoff, is open to participation for all 130 FBS programs. A cohort of 124 FCS members carries out their post-seasonal activities

via a bracketed tournament organized and executed by the NCAA. At present, a total of 98 Division I educational institutions do not provide sponsorship for football. Postseason competition is important not only for the school but also the conference. Revenue distribution for the institution and conference is substantial:

1. Each conference receives \$300,000 for each of its schools when the school's football team meets the NCAA's APR for participation in a postseason football game. Each institution receives \$300,000 when its football team meets that standard.
2. A conference will receive \$6 million for each team that is selected for a playoff semifinal. A conference will also receive \$4 million for each team that plays in a non-playoff bowl under the arrangement.
3. Each conference whose team participates in a playoff semifinal, Cotton, Fiesta, Peach Bowls, or the national championship game will receive \$2.85 million to cover expenses for each game.

These are just a few of the financial incentives Division I institutions and conferences receive for participating in postseason competitions. There is also a notable boost in popularity among the community, fans, and prospective student-athletes alike when institutions participate in postseason competitions which can lead to increases in alumni donations. Division II and III schools are not eligible for any of these revenue distributions. In addition, Division II and III schools cannot provide full scholarships to athletes.

Division I Scholarships

Division I athletic scholarships are rare. Only about 1% to 2% of undergraduate students in bachelor's degree programs receive athletic scholarships. Among Division I schools, there is a diverse array of scholarship offers extended to athletes. Contrary to popular opinion, not all scholarships provide a full-ride to student-athletes. There are other scholarships provided to Division I athletes that do not cover annual costs. The average athletic scholarship is about \$18,000 per Division I student-athlete. With average tuition and fees at ranked public schools for out-of-state students estimated at \$21,184, and the average cost estimated at \$35,087 at ranked private schools (Soriano & Kerr, 2021). Thus, student-athletes who do not receive a full-ride scholarship, must find a way to pay for their expenses.

A limited number of sports provide scholarships that cover all expenses, commonly known as full-ride scholarships (Soriano & Kerr, 2021). A full-ride means the school pays for the athletes' entire education including tuition, room and board, books, fees, etc. up to the full cost of attendance. Full-ride scholarships can include cash payments that cover additional educationally related expenses that can include travel to and from campus for the semester/quarter, computers/tablets/software, and expenses related to study-abroad. A team belonging to the NCAA Division I Football Bowl subdivision is permitted to provide 85 full-ride scholarships annually. The possession of the full-ride scholarship negates the financial stressors and requires the participants to evaluate which school will provide them with the ability to play football at a competitive level while navigating life as a college student.

In addition to the amount of support provided, the terms of the scholarship can also vary. The prevalent industry practice is that offers are structured as contractual agreements that span a period of one year. After one year has passed, the contract is reviewed for athletic production and GPA eligibility. Student-athletes must sign a national letter of intent – a legally binding agreement between an athlete and their institution of choice. Given that the document is a contract, it is pivotal for student-athletes to understand the terms. Some agreements can be 4-year scholarships but most are one-year renewable scholarships. The NCAA has allowed colleges to provide multi-year scholarships since 2012. Additionally, in 2015, NCAA Division I colleges from the Power Five conferences (colleges in the FBS, plus Notre Dame) agreed to implement a rule that prevented multi-year Division I scholarships from being canceled or not renewed for any athletic reason (Winters, 2019). The key difference to note here is that a four-year scholarship cannot be canceled, revoked or reduced due to athletic underperformance, like a one-year renewable scholarship can. In contrast, a one-year scholarship is the least stable. A one-year renewable scholarship can be canceled mid-season or not renewed at the end of the season. Mid-year cancellation of a scholarship is only possible if an athlete: is ruled ineligible for competition, provides fraudulent information on an application, letter of intent, or financial aid agreement, engages in serious misconduct that rises to the level of being disciplined by the university's regular student disciplinary board, voluntarily quits their team, and/or violates an athletic department or team rule or policy (Athlete, 2022). Most student-athletes believe that the scholarship is guaranteed for 4-years, but it is not (NCSA, 2020). Thus, when elite high

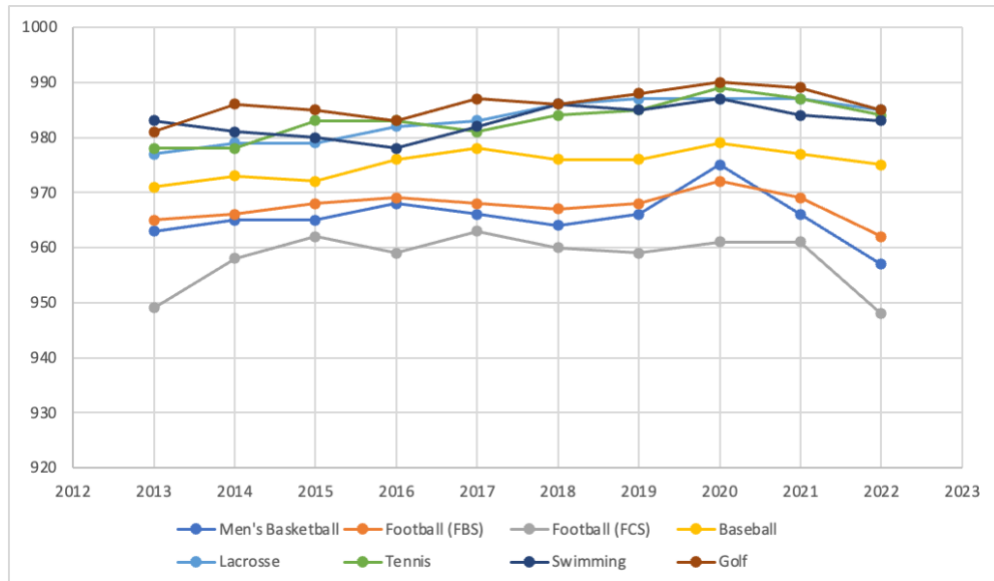
school student-athletes select an institution, they must consider not just the reputation of the institution but also the type and terms of the scholarship.

Division I Academic Progress

Many athletes find themselves with athletic talent to play at the Division I level but academically lacking to remain eligible to play. The NCAA “implemented in 2003 as part of an ambitious academic reform effort in Division I, the Academic Progress Rate (APR) which holds institutions accountable for the academic progress of their student-athletes through a team-based metric that accounts for the eligibility and retention of each student-athlete for each academic term” (NCAA, 2022). The NCAA reports that the average four-year APR for football is 962, on a scale from 920-1000 ($N = 6,068$) with only 24% of schools receiving a top score of 1000 (NCAA, 2023). More selective schools, schools (schools that accept less than 15% of their total applicants), make up the majority of the top 24% of the schools receiving top scores of 1000 (NCAA, 2023). Less selective schools (schools that accept 50% or more of their total applicants) make up the majority of the schools with high percentages of football players who do not meet academic eligibility. There is variation in the APR by sport. Compared to other players in men’s sports, men’s basketball and football players have lower APR (Figure 1).

Figure 1

APR trends in Division I men’s tennis, golf, lacrosse, swimming, baseball, basketball and football



Source: NCAA (2023)

**Note.* Both Football FBS and Football Division I FCS are Division I teams. The primary difference between Football FBS and Football FCS is how a final winner is determined. The FBS has the four-team College Football Playoff while the FCS hosts a 24-team playoff for the NCAA D-I Football Championship.

The four-year average APR eligibility rate for football players is 964 compared to 991 for skiing, 985 for baseball, 972 for basketball (NCAA, 2023). One possibility for these low rates for football players is that they have the athletic ability to compete at the Division I level but academic challenges to remain eligible at the Division I level.

The NCAA has tried to address the eligibility problem. They implemented academic redshirting which “can happen when a player meets a university’s academic standards but is not up to the NCAA-required cumulative GPA of 2.3” (Walker, 2021). However, there is insufficient data to suggest that these efforts to support students once they are enrolled have been successful. It is assumed that institutions are likely doing all they can to maintain and support student eligibility. However, rather than focus on what

institutions are doing to support students, this study approaches the issue before students arrive at the institution. Less research has focused on how to support high school students' decision making for which institution to attend that increases the chances of them remaining eligible to play throughout their college careers. The focus of this study is on how elite high school football players' identity as a student-athlete shape decisions of where to attend college. This study aims to better understand ways to support the success of future student-athletes. By supporting these students to make better decisions about where they might be successful as students and athletes, this approach has the potential to support the success of the elite student-athletes and mitigate loss of NCAA eligibility.

Post-Division I Athletic Advancement

Decisions about which college to attend are also influenced by post-college expectations. Depending on which institution they select, student-athletes have opportunities to compete on a national level and be seen by a broader public. This helps them to compete at a professional level. However, their advancement requires attention to requirements for eligibility to play professionally. According to the National Football League ([NFL], 2022), to be eligible for the draft, players must have been out of high school for at least three years and must have used up their college eligibility before the start of the next college football season. Therefore, every NFL player must attend college in order to be drafted to the NFL. Athletes must decide on a football program that could draw attention to their potential in the NFL while also remaining eligible long enough to

play in the NFL. This further illuminates how vital of a decision selecting the appropriate Division I institution is.

Theoretical Framework

This study is focused on the student identity development of student-athletes after receiving an elite Division I scholarship. Identity is “the way a person understands and views himself and is often viewed by others” (Gee, 2000). An individual’s identity cannot be understood apart from their social context (Erikson, 1959). Identity as an athlete refers to the degree of strength and exclusivity to which a person identifies with the athlete role or the degree to which one devotes special attention to sport relative to other engagements or activities in life (Brewer, Boin, et al., 1993; Edison et al., 2021; Snyder, 1985). This identity is most salient when the student-athlete is competing in their respective sport. Identity as a student refers to a student's ability to learn how they relate to themselves, as a learner, as well as how they interact with, and are perceived by, their peers, mentors, tutors and teachers in academic settings (Berzonsky & Adams, 1999; Lounsbury et al., 2005). Although universities and colleges promote the image of success as a student and as an athlete, they place more emphasis on the athlete role based on the current business-like model of intercollegiate athletics (Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016). For student-athletes, often their athletic identity becomes more emphasized on campus because of how they are viewed publicly through media appearances, whereas their student identity may be more locally located in the courses they take and between their interactions with their instructors. One’s awareness of self and contributions to society are inextricably linked to the core of an individual as well as the core of one’s communal

culture (Erikson, 1980; Gee, 2000; Hand & Gresalfi, 2015; Kidwell et al., 1995). From a social standpoint, student-athletes are the ‘face’ of their college or university as a way to build community and partnership with fans and donors. Student-athletes’ athletic identity are highlighted as walking advertisements for fans to admire and for youth with which to identify and aspire (Gatz et al., 2002). As student-athletes are seen differently in multiple contexts, their identity is being negotiated between how they see themselves in relation to their sport and institution.

People have more than one identity simultaneously (Settles, 2004; Snyder, 1985). Student-athletes can negotiate their identity as an athlete (Brewer et al., 1991; Houle et al., 2010; Ronkainen et al., 2016) and identity as a student (Dunham, 2016) depending on the context. Identity includes one’s goals, values, and beliefs which ultimately shape decisions about the way we engage with the world (Adams & Marshall, 1996; Arduini-Van Hoose, 2013; Wenger, 1998). Just as identity includes both how one see’s themself and how they are viewed by others, these goals, values, and beliefs are constantly negotiated based on the interplay between individual and the social context. For student-athletes, these goals, values, and beliefs can change over the success of a season, with possible injuries, while maintaining academic eligibility, or with their major.

The student identity of student-athletes can differ across different types of sports. Student-athletes who participate in revenue sports like football and basketball typically have lower GPAs and lower graduation dates compared to non-revenue sports (Bell, 2005; Maloney & McCormick, 1993; Symonds, 2009). This emphasis promotes tension and imbalance between the two roles and student-athletes consistently experience (Adler

& Adler, 1990; Harrison et al., 2009; Settles et al., 2002). This imbalance can be lessened if the student-athlete does not subscribe to being either a *pure athlete*, one who is primarily committed to the athletic role with minimal or no commitment to the academic role or a *pure scholar*, one who is primarily committed to the academic role leaves minimal energy for athletics. An ideal balance is reflected by a *scholar athlete*, who has a high degree of commitment to both academics and athletics (Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016; Snyder, 1985).

Figured world theory postulates that identities can change through activity or process. Through activity or process, we “figure out” who we are within different contexts (Bennett et al., 2017). There are three contexts for the production of figured worlds: negotiations of positionality, world making, and space of authoring. Positionality refers to the positions “offered” to people in different figured worlds (Urrieta, 2007). When positioned, people are primarily limited to accepting, rejecting, or negotiating the identities that are being offered to them in varying degrees (Holland, 1998). Student-athletes generally accept their elite positionality in the figured world of sports but often negotiate their positionality in the figured world of being a student. Drawing from Vygotsky's work, through “serious play” new figured worlds are made (Holland, 1998, p. 272). Serious play refers to someone being allowed to play with a new activity to try out new participation to "make" a new world for themselves. An example of serious play in the athletic figured world could be a player trying out a new position after being given the option from a coach. Similarly, an example of serious play in the student figured world could be a change in study focus after an internship experience or elective course.

For student-athletes, this includes explicit participation in both sports and academics in order to negotiate their understanding of the figured worlds in which they participate. Within the space of authoring “people tend to self/sense-make through multiple internal dialogues” (Urrieta, 2007, p. 273). As individuals come to “figure” who they are through these “worlds,” people produce identities through participation that allow them to engage in conceptual and procedural identity production (Holland, 1998, pp.40-41).

Figured world theory has been used to describe choices people make to pursue careers in different fields such as pursuing a career in medicine (Bennett et al., 2017; Dornan et al., 2015; Stubbing et al., 2018). The figured world can be a site of possibility where individuals have agency and choice in the roles they act out and enables us to see how an individual's notion of self within a certain discourse or "world" is centered on choice, agency, and involvement. Student-athletes have less choice and agency in their student self while fulfilling their commitment after accepting a Division I scholarship offer. Most collegiate student-athletes are striving to play their sport professionally which has no “student” or “academic” component attached. The commodification of their athleticism prioritizes athletics over academics when it comes to funding structure, institutional values, and the treatment of college athletes (Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016). This ranking of sport over academics fuels the imbalance that athletes encounter yet they must remain academically eligible to be considered for professional teams.

People often understand themselves relative to at least one figured world (Holland, 1998). Student-athletes balance between at least two figured worlds: school and sports. Earning a Division I offer, is a signal that the pinnacle of athleticism has been

achieved in the figured world of sports. However, this identity of an athlete is understood relative to their identity as a student. Even though students may have an identity as an athlete, their ability to play sports in a Division I institution is influenced by their ability to remain academically eligible. As they “figure out” who they are, elite student-athletes need to make decisions about which institution to attend not just based on their athletic identity but about their chances to remain academically eligible. The decision about which institution to attend draws on their identities as students. Figured worlds theory provides insight to how identity influences how decisions are made for these elite student-athletes. Figured world theory acknowledges the multiple worlds that student-athletes must balance and how such imbalance provides opportunities for student-athletes to consider one identity in relation to the other.

Methods

Researcher Positionality

A researcher’s positioning is crucial to consider throughout the inquiry process (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). In ethnographic fieldwork, the researcher's individual experiences and viewpoints are integral (Hoey, 2014). The precise placement of the researcher within the context of their own fieldwork, and with respect to the subjects of study, is of utmost significance (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). This entails not solely self-identification as an "insider" or "outsider" of a targeted group (Lee, 2022), but also encompasses the dispositions and/or prejudices that the researcher may hold towards said group during their investigation (Dyson & Genishi, 2005).

I am an individual who identifies as a non-athlete African American female researching a male dominated sport. I am positioned as both an insider and outsider. I am an outsider in the sense that I have not participated in football at any level. I am an insider because every male in my family has participated in football at the Division I level. I have witnessed their participation in accepting Division I offers which has yielded varying results with some selecting a school successfully and others less so. Additionally, my partner is a high school football coach. Our banter around the house piqued my interest in how these student-athletes identify themselves and how that identity reflects in their selection of which college/university to attend. This unique positionality has afforded me the opportunity to have access to my target population and build a rapport of trust with them. I position myself with full acknowledgement that I am a researcher, an individual possessing various forms of academic advantage and strive for integrity throughout my research and professional endeavors.

Participants

The participants were selected from a high school in the Western United States. This Western United States public high school serves over 3,400 students. This school is known throughout the local region for both its athletics and academics. With over 35 teams at this school, 27 of these teams at this school have made regular appearances in state playoffs, with over 13 state championship wins. This school is consistently ranked in the top 20% for mathematics proficiency and 10% for reading proficiency in the state. It offers twenty-six advanced placement (AP) classes with a 64% pass rate on AP exams. The demographics include 46% Hispanic, 32% White, 9% African American, 8% Asian,

and 5% students identifying as two or more races, and a graduation rate of 95% (NCES, 2022). The football team consists of 68 varsity players of which 35% are African American, 26% Hispanic, 24% White, 8% mixed race, and 7% Asian, specifically Polynesian.

To select students to participate in this study, a paper-copy of a survey was administered to all football players ($n = 42$; Appendix A). All students responded to the survey and all surveys included complete responses. The survey included items about height, weight, position(s) played, grade level, team level, grade point average, Division I scholarship offers, and which conferences the Division I offers are from. The survey took between five and twenty minutes to complete. Students who took longer to complete the survey were the ones who took the time to identify which schools and conferences they received offers from. Based on survey responses, two student-athletes were selected using the following four criteria: must be an eleventh-grade student in a public high school, must be a current player on varsity football team, must have more than 15 Division I offers, and current grade point average of at least 2.5. Eleventh grade student-athletes are closest to signing their national letter of intent. These students are most likely to have offers and be in the process of deciding which offer to accept. Student-athletes with greater than fifteen offers indicate dominance in the sport which makes them more of an elite athlete compared to a student with one or two offers. All student-athletes need a minimum GPA of 2.5 to be eligible to sign a letter of intent for collegiate sports and accept a full-ride scholarship. The two participants who met these four criteria are the following:

1. Jeff is a 6' 1", African American identifying, 202-pound male identifying 11th-grade varsity football player in the Western United States with 30 Division I offers and a 3.7 GPA. He is ranked in the top 10 in the nation in his grade class and position. Jeff's offers are from various schools within the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC), Big 10 Conference, Big 12 Conference, Ivy League Conference, Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Southeastern Conference (SEC), and the Pac-12 Conference.
2. Sam is a 6'3", Polynesian identifying, 218-pound male identifying 11th-grade varsity football player in the Western United States with 22 Division I offers and a 2.7 GPA. He is ranked in the top 20 in the nation in his grade class and position. Jeff's offers are from various schools within the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC), Big 10 Conference, Big 12 Conference, Ivy League Conference, Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Southeastern Conference (SEC), the Pac-12 Conference, and the Mountain West Conference.

The participants did not take the SAT due to new collegiate regulations. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, that participation was anonymous and voluntary, and that they did not have to participate in the study if they did not want to. Consent forms to participate were signed by at least one of their parents or legal guardian and the student.

Data Sources

This study pulls from data sources: interviews, observations, and a survey. The interviews were conducted to assess student-athletes' decision process in selecting

particular offers. The observations were conducted to document student-athletes' behavior on and off the field as well as gain insight into their internal dialogue about their student and athletic identities. The survey provided information about their perceived academic and athletic identity.

Interviews. McAdams and McLean's (2013) narrative identity theory provides an opportunity to investigate the inner thoughts of student-athletes. Narrative identity is a person's internalized life story, which incorporates the envisioned future and the rebuilt past to give life some degree of coherence and direction (McAdams & McLean, 2013). There is a growing effort throughout the teenage years to provide narrative accounts of one's life that explain how one event caused, led up to, transformed, or in some way was/is meaningfully related to other events in one's life (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). Narrative identity is particularly useful for teenagers because teenagers' life narratives provide rich material that is near to their lived experiences and reveal individual differences in self and relatedness and in ways of constructing meaning (Shiner et al., 2021). Using narrative identity as a lens, I conducted two interviews to allow student-athletes reflect on their past and report how circumstances and experiences influenced how they ascribed values of being a student and an athlete. Participants were interviewed individually using a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix B) for approximately 60 minutes. This initial interview provided background knowledge about the student-athlete, what Division I offers they obtained, and how they viewed their dual role as a student and athlete. The second interview was conducted after the observations and survey were administered. The purpose of this second semi-structured interview was to

learn more about how participants' considered academic aspects to their choice of which offer to accept (Appendix B). Both interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Academic and Athletic Identity Scale. To measure student athletic identity, I administered an 11-item survey, Academic and Athletic Identity Scale (Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2014; Appendix C). The survey items were created using the multiple-role theory (Snyder, 1985). Initially, this scale included ten items that were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (Brewer et al., 1993). Later, it was revised to include only 7 items that focused on more specific themes like anxiety, mental toughness, optimism, and the idea of an enduring or fading athletic identity in the context of ending participation (Brewer et al., 1991). It was revised because under the auspices that identity can be both psychologically and socially based the greater emphasis one ascribes to their athlete role, the more likely one's self esteem, motivation and outlook may be influenced by perceptions of athletic competence, performance and achievements (Brewer et al., 1993). Although Snyder and Coakley's multiple role theory served as the basis for the initial measure, the items only focused on the dimension of athletic identity. To include student identity along with athletic identity, additional items were included (Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2014) to form the Academic and Athletic Identity Scale (AAIS). AAIS consists of 11 items: five-item academic identity subscale and a six-item athletic identity subscale. The response options for the 11 items were adapted from Arnold's (1993) moral and political identity scale, which used a diagram of four concentric circles anchored by 1 (not central to my sense of self) and 7 (the central core to my sense of self) corresponding to a different degree of centrality to the self-identification. This 11 item AAIS scale has

been widely used among high school students (Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2014) as a measure of student-athletic identity. This survey was administered verbally to each participant. I also asked students to elaborate on why they selected particular responses to each item. This allowed participants to think aloud (see for example, Bostic, 2021) about their responses and allowed me to probe further on their responses to each item.

Analysis

Transcriptions of the interviews and field notes from the observations are merely snapshots. These are “fragmented” descriptions of the “holistic experience” of data gathering, which should also entail gaining access to and becoming a member of a particular place (Dyson, 1997, p. 26) . However, “coherence” can be “restored” through data analysis as long as the data are arranged and connected in a way that still captures “the messiness of human experience” (Dyson, 1997, p. 26). I used a process of repeated coding, selecting themes as analytical units, and seeing the collection of data via the aforementioned theoretical lenses. These techniques were employed to understand how Jeff and Sam navigated their decision-making regarding which Division I offer to accept.

The process of iterative coding involved utilizing “initial,” “open,” and “focused” coding (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 85) to analyze data thematically. Open coding is a form of “global brainstorming” (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 92), or a way of categorizing data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006), which I performed through rereading transcribed interviews and field notes line by line (Lee, 2022). In accordance with my research questions, I used this fine-toothed comb to go through my data and identify several themes that served as the basis for my analysis. In focused coding, I further categorized

data based on the initial codes, combining codes that were attuned to similar ideas. The practice of generating analytical in-process memos, as elucidated by Emerson and colleagues (2011) presents a valuable opportunity to engage with a number of important considerations throughout the research process. Among these considerations are

- the theoretical significance of the data being analyzed,
- the identification of appropriate interpretive lenses, and
- the identification of emergent themes that may ultimately inform the coding process.

For instance, after Sam and Jeff informed me about eligibility requirements for collegiate athletes, I used in-process memos to analytically consider the issue. Employing narrative identity provided a lens to understand the participants' decision-making process. As such, these optical implements have influenced the manner in which I systematized and thematically deciphered fragmented signifying systems. Consequently, the utilization of these etic frames served the purpose of conceptual instruments for comprehending my participants' decision-making pillars through repetitive coding techniques and analytical memo-writing procedures (Dyson & Genishi, 2005).

Results

Results suggest that these two student-athletes considered their academic identity in relation to their athletic identity as they made decisions about which Division I offer to accept. Sam and Jeff are both elite athletes with the opportunity to play Division I football at arguably some of the best colleges/universities in the world. Both have over the minimum 2.3 GPA to accept a Division I scholarship offer, but have different

perceptions of their academic identity. For example, when asked if GPA hindered the numbers of offers he received, Jeff considered his GPA to be “pretty good” and that he would likely be able to go to “almost any college.” Jeff also received confirmation from college coaches indicating that his GPA would “make it easier for them to be able to get me into the school.” Jeff’s narrative was consistent with scores on the AAIS. His score (4.2) on the academic portion indicated that he rated academics as “central” to himself. In contrast, Sam had feedback that his GPA could be improved. Sam received confirmation from college coaches indicating that if his GPA could be increased, he would likely receive more offers. Sam’s score on the academic portion (1.8) suggested that he rated academics as “slightly central” to himself. These students expressed different levels of academic identity and an awareness of how their actual academic performance influenced the number of institutions they would have offers from.

Jeff and Sam ended up selecting institutions that they perceived will allow them to remain eligible to play athletics. Jeff committed to a semi-selective university, accepting 12% of its applicants. Sam committed to a less-selective university, accepting 73.8% of its applicants. Results suggest that these decisions to attend more selective (Jeff) or less selective (Sam) institutions were influenced by their student identities. In particular, these students expressed awareness of the need to maintain their academic eligibility to play at a Division I level, their academic capabilities and the match between their academic capabilities with the need to maintain eligibility. They considered their academic identity in relation to their athletic identity in that they have strong athletic

identities but must make decisions around academics to ensure that they are able to remain eligible.

Eligibility

Sam and Jeff were well aware of the importance of remaining eligible to play at a Division I level based on NCAA guidelines. Both expressed an awareness that their ability to play at the Division I level was not about their athletic ability and more about their academic abilities. Jeff acknowledged that he needs to make grades in order to stay eligible for football:

I don't want to choose a school that imma fail out of. The whole point of going to college is to play football. You can't play football if you don't have grades. So, I gotta choose a school where I think I can stay eligible. When I, you know, look up the GPA's of players on the team and their majors, some schools make me nervous and those are probably the schools that I won't go to. Other schools that look, I'm like OK I could probably do this if I go there.

Similar to Jeff, Sam acknowledged the importance of academic eligibility:

I have to make sure that I can stay eligible to be able to play football at the next level. So in my mind I'm thinking about what school can I go to where I have to do the least in order to be able to do the one thing that I'm really at the school to do which is play football. I have one Ivy League school, but I know for sure I ain't going there because I wouldn't be eligible to play probably any semesters.

Realizing the importance of eligibility, both Jeff and Sam considered the academic rigor of institutions they received offers to by conducting preliminary google searches on each school. They paid close attention to the admission GPA and average GPA of players on the football team. To them, GPA was an indicator of whether they could remain eligible to play at Division I level. They filtered their offers into three categories: have the GPA to get in, have the GPA to get in but GPA is high, and do not have the GPA to get in. The category "have the GPA to get in" meant that the student-athlete had no question that

they could matriculate into the college/university based on academic merit because their GPA was higher than required for all students. The category “have the GPA to get in but the GPA is high” meant that the student-athlete could matriculate into the college/university on academic merit but the GPA was close to their GPA. This category included institutions which the student could matriculate but might pose academic challenges. Lastly, the category “do not have the GPA to get in” were institutions where the GPA for matriculation is even higher than the previous category. This category included institutions where students thought they would not be able to matriculate due to academic merit. This initial process of organizing offers from institutions based on the academic rigor of the institution provided clarity of which institutions they were most likely to remain academically eligible to play.

Perceived Capability as a Student

Jeff and Sam expressed different perceptions of themselves as students. In addition to differences in high school GPA, and scores on the AAIS, each expressed different perceived capabilities as students. Jeff indicated that he perceives himself to be a good student and strives to keep his grades up. Jeff’s positive perception of himself as a student includes understanding the “high school system” of completing homework and getting no less than C on exams to pass), knowing how to maximize his production, and taking steps towards being successful as a student. Sam does not have a similar positive perception of himself as a student. While he had a high school grade point average that allowed him to continue to play sports, he perceived his academic capabilities to be less positive, which was consistent with his AAIS score. Sam understood the high school

system but indicated that the amount of work to be successful as a student was more than he wanted to engage in. Although there were differences in how they perceived their academic capabilities, both expressed uncertainty in how well their academic capacities would hold up in college compared to high school. They acknowledged that college would be different in terms of the amount of information they would be required to learn and how their learning would be tested and that it would be “harder” in college.

The Match Between Eligibility and Perceived Capability as a Student

Jeff and Sam were given opportunities to match their understanding of academic eligibility with their perceived capabilities at students during official campus visits. During these visits, the institution may pay for transportation, lodging and meals for a student athlete and parents to visit. It is an opportunity for the student athlete to get a better understanding of the institution by meeting future coaches and teammates. On these official visits, the student-athletes reported matching their understanding of remaining academic eligibility and their capabilities as a student. In talking with other players, they learned more about how hard it was to remain eligible to play. For example, Sam said:

When you go on visits and stuff that's where you find out all the good information about how hard a school really is. I like to talk to the dude on the team with the lowest GPA because that's the person who could really give you the information on how hard the school is.

Both student-athletes reported using this campus visit as an opportunity to assess how current students handled their educational load. This was an opportunity for them to move beyond the initial searches they did for the average GPA of the students at the school to hear directly from peers who have similar responsibilities that they will soon

have of being a student and an athlete. In matching their need for academic eligibility with their perceived capabilities as students, Sam and Jeff considered their academic identity in relation to their athletic identity.

Conclusion

Division I football scholarships provide a unique opportunity to a select group of student-athletes. However, not all Division I student-athletes who accept offers navigate their higher education experiences successfully. Many athletes, particularly male football players, struggle with maintaining academic eligibility to continue playing throughout their higher education career. For student-athletes to be successful in higher education, they need to pay attention to their academic and athletic performance while they are enrolled and prior to accepting a Division I scholarship offer. If a student-athlete accepts an offer to an institution which they are not likely to succeed academically they will not meet the terms of their scholarship. Thus, selecting an institution that they are likely to succeed academically is of great importance.

This selection of institution requires student-athletes to make a decision based on their dual identities as students and athletes (Holland, 1998; Urrieta, 2007). Data from these two elite high school athletes' perceptions of their identities as athletes indicate that negotiating their student identities shaped decisions about where they would achieve the best success between remaining eligible and their academic capabilities, ultimately influencing their choice of offer acceptance. This study suggest that efforts should be made to support student-athletes to make decisions that will consider both their identities as students and as athlete. The support that these elite student-athletes typically get is not

systematic and may contribute to the large number of football athletes not maintaining academic eligibility.

Finding the balance between athletics and academics is the winning combination for student-athletes with Division I offers. There could be different strategies to find this balance. For example, Lawrence, Harrison, and Stone (2009) assert that head coaches play a prominent role in shaping the culture of academic excellence and the developmental trajectories of athletes. Future research could examine the role of the head coaches in shifting the priority from athletics to academics to help student-athletes enter a culture of equity between both their athletic and student identities. This change in priority could spark an examination of the hierarchical structure of revenue generating sports, like football, and theoretically lessen the tension between the two identities.

This thesis adds to the understanding of the process student-athletes go through when selecting a Division I offer however, there are several limitations. This study was purposefully conducted using qualitative methods to provide information based on human experience (Sandelowski, 2004). Starks and Trinidad (2007) assert that when analyzing qualitative data, the researcher assumes the role of the analytical tool and makes decisions on the coding, theming, decontextualization, and recontextualization of the data. Although interviewing additional student-athletes would have provided varying perspectives about the process of accepting a Division I offer, the participants appeared to be honest and forthcoming making the data informative and analyzation of the data rich. Conducting more interviews with the same participants is also a possibility to gather more evidence of the trustworthiness of findings. With time constraints removed, I could

have followed up the think aloud interview with a semi-structured interview which utilizes guides for the useful purpose of exploring respondents more systematically and comprehensively as well as to keep the interview focused on the desired line of action (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). There are also other ways in which I could have gathered information to triangulate the existing data. For example, I could have gathered observational data of the high school players' interactions with college athletes at the campus visits or interviews with the college athletes to provide a better description of what appeared to be a critical component of the high school student athletes' decision. Including information about the scholarly performance and sense-making around their scholarly performance beyond grades would also provide another source of information about student identity. These additional ways of exploring the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings would strengthen future work in this area by addressing threats to validity such as researcher bias, reactivity and respondent bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Despite the small sample size of convenience, this study could have benefited from more systematic coding (Strauss, 1990). Additional data may have provided opportunity for coding which may have allowed for a more in-depth explanation of the decision-making process. Given the restrictions of the requirements for the class project, there was a need to create and carry out interview protocols without any pilot testing and without having fully developed the theoretical framework for the study. In the future, it is anticipated that more time will be available to test the protocols before gathering the data and to more closely integrate these protocols with existing research. Pilot testing of the

protocols would provide information about the appropriateness of the questions to ensure that the research question is being researched and targeted with the interview questions being asked. According to Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2010), pilot studies can aid in pre-testing or “trying out” of a particular research instrument to understand the preparation required for the major study. In addition, given the restrictions of the class project, linking the protocols more closely with figured world theory would also allow for more systematic coding in relation to this particular theory of identity development. This coding might include multiple coders to help ensure consistency and member checking. Some benefits of multiple coders can rest in the inclusion of multiple perspectives in researcher backgrounds and in the opportunities to discuss coding choices and refine the coding system (Berends & Johnston, 2005). Future research in this area could also include greater detail on the contexts and settings to determine whether the findings about the decision of selecting institutions for the two elite high school football student athletes in this study would be applicable to other players of other sports. Ponterotto (2006) asserts that the task of the qualitative researcher is to thickly describe social action in order to make thick interpretations of the actions, present those interpretations in writing, and make them accessible to a large readership.

Although the NCAA has implemented several programs to aid student-athletes with eligibility, they have been unsuccessful. Student-athletes, particularly in some high-revenue sports such as football do not maintain academic eligibility to thrive as both students and athletes. To support their success, this research suggests that student-athletes must critically negotiate their student identity in order to find a balance between the

capacity as a student to stay eligible. If student-athlete make decisions about which Division I offer they accept that is compatible with their student academic identities, this might increase the chances that they are successful as both a student and athlete.

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APPENDIX A Questionnaire

Name:

Height: ____ ft ____ in

Weight: _____ lbs

Position(s):

Grade (check one): 9 10 11 12

Team level (check one): Freshman Junior Varsity (JV) Varsity

Grade Point Average-GPA (check one): below 2.0 2.0-2.4 2.5-3.0 3.0-3.4 3.5-4.0

Number of FBS Division scholarship offers (check one): < 15 (less than 15) 15-20 21-25
 >25 (more than 25)

Which conferences are your FBS Division I scholarships in? (Select all that apply)

- Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC)
- American Conference
- Big 10 Conference
- Big 12 Conference
- Conference USA (C-USA)
- Independent Conference
- Mid-American Conference (MAC)
- Mountain West Conference
- Pac-12 Conference
- Southeastern Conference (SEC)
- Sun Belt Conference

American Athletic Conference

Team	Location	Stadium
Central Florida Knights	Orlando, FL	Brighthouse Networks Stadium
Cincinnati Bearcats	Cincinnati, OH	Nippert Stadium
Connecticut Huskies	Storrs, CT	Rentschler Field (in East Hartford, CT)
Houston Cougars	Houston, TX	Robertson Stadium
Louisville Cardinals	Louisville, KY	Papa John's Cardinal Stadium
Memphis Tigers	Memphis, TN	Liberty Bowl Memorial Stadium
Rutgers Scarlet Knights	Piscataway, NJ	High Point Solutions Stadium
South Florida Bulls	Tampa, FL	Raymond James Stadium
SMU Mustangs	Dallas, TX	Gerald J. Ford Stadium
Temple Owls	Philadelphia, PA	Lincoln Financial Field

Atlantic Coast Conference

Team	Location	Stadium
Boston College Eagles	Chestnut Hill, MA	Alumni Stadium
Clemson Tigers	Clemson, SC	Clemson Memorial Stadium
Duke Blue Devils	Durham, NC	Wallace Wade Stadium
Florida State Seminoles	Tallahassee, FL	Doak Campbell Stadium
Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets	Atlanta, GA	Bobby Dodd Stadium
Maryland Terrapins	College Park, MD	Byrd Stadium
Miami Hurricanes	Coral Gables, FL	Sun Life Stadium
North Carolina Tar Heels	Chapel Hill, NC	Kenan Stadium
North Carolina State Wolfpack	Raleigh, NC	Carter-Finley Stadium
Pittsburgh Panthers	Pittsburgh, PA	Heinz Field
Syracuse Orange	Syracuse, NY	Carrier Dome
Virginia Cavaliers	Charlottesville, VA	Scott Stadium
Virginia Tech Hokies	Blacksburg, VA	Lane Stadium

Wake Forest Demon Deacons Winston-Salem, NC Groves Stadium

Big 12 Conference

Team	Location	Stadium
Baylor Bears	Waco, TX	McLane Stadium
Iowa State Cyclones	Ames, IA	Jack Trice Stadium
Kansas Jayhawks	Lawrence, KS	Memorial Stadium (Kansas)
Kansas State Wildcats	Manhattan, KS	Bill Snyder Family Football Stadium
Oklahoma Sooners	Norman, OK	Gaylord Family Oklahoma Memorial Stadium
Oklahoma State Cowboys	Stillwater, OK	Boone Pickens Stadium
Texas Longhorns	Austin, TX	Darrell K. Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium
TCU Horned Frogs	Fort Worth, TX	Amon G. Carter Stadium
Texas Tech Red Raiders	Lubbock, TX	Jones AT&T Stadium
West Virginia Mountaineers	Morgantown, WV	Milan Puskar Stadium

Big Ten Conference

Team	Location	Stadium
Illinois Fighting Illini	Champaign, IL	Memorial Stadium
Indiana Hoosiers	Bloomington, IN	Memorial Stadium
Iowa Hawkeyes	Iowa City, IA	Kinnick Stadium
Michigan Wolverines	Ann Arbor, MI	Michigan Stadium
Michigan State Spartans	East Lansing, MI	Spartan Stadium
Minnesota Golden Gophers	Minneapolis, MN	TCF Bank Stadium
Nebraska Cornhuskers	Lincoln, NE	Memorial Stadium
Northwestern Wildcats	Evanston, IL	Ryan Field
Ohio State Buckeyes	Columbus, OH	Ohio Stadium
Penn State Nittany Lions	University Park, PA	Beaver Stadium
Purdue Boilermakers	West Lafayette, IN	Ross-Ade Stadium

Wisconsin Badgers

Madison, WI

Camp Randall Stadium

Conference USA

<i>Team</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Stadium</i>
East Carolina Pirates	Greenville, NC	Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium
Florida Atlantic Owls	Boca Raton, FL	FAU Stadium
Florida International Golden Panthers	Miami, FL	FIU Stadium
Louisiana Tech Bulldogs	Ruston, LA	Joe Aillet Stadium
Marshall Thundering Herd	Huntington, WV	Joan Edwards Stadium
Middle Tennessee State Blue Raiders	Murfreesboro, TN	Floyd Stadium
North Texas Mean Green	Denton, TX	Apogee Stadium
Rice Owls	Houston, TX	Rice Stadium
Southern Miss Golden Eagles	Hattiesburg, MS	M.M. Roberts Stadium
UAB Blazers	Birmingham, AL	Legion Field
UTEP Miners	El Paso, TX	Sun Bowl
UTSA Roadrunners	San Antonio, TX	Alamodome
Tulane Green Wave	New Orleans, LA	Mercedes-Benz Superdome
Tulsa Golden Hurricane	Tulsa, OK	Skelly Stadium

Mid-American Conference

<i>Team</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Stadium</i>
Akron Zips	Akron, OH	InfoCision Stadium
Ball State Cardinals	Muncie, IN	Scheumann Stadium
Bowling Green Falcons	Bowling Green, OH	Doyt Perry Stadium
Buffalo Bulls	Amherst, NY	UB Stadium
Central Michigan Chippewas	Mount Pleasant, MI	Kelly-Shorts Stadium
Eastern Michigan Eagles	Ypsilanti, MI	Rynearson Stadium
Kent State Golden Flashes	Kent, OH	Dix Stadium

Massachusetts Minutemen	Amherst, MA	McGuirk Alumni Stadium/ Gillette Stadium
Miami (OH) RedHawks	Oxford, OH	Yager Stadium
Northern Illinois Huskies	DeKalb, IL	Huskie Stadium
Ohio Bobcats	Athens, OH	Peden Stadium
Toledo Rockets	Toledo, OH	Glass Bowl
Western Michigan Broncos	Kalamazoo, MI	Waldo Stadium

Mountain West

<i>Team</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Stadium</i>
Air Force Falcons	Colorado Springs, CO	Falcon Stadium
Boise State Broncos	Boise, ID	Bronco Stadium
Colorado State Rams	Fort Collins, CO	CSU Stadium
Fresno State Bulldogs	Fresno, CA	Bulldog Stadium
Hawaii Rainbow Warriors	Honolulu, HI	Aloha Stadium
Nevada Wolf Pack	Reno, NV	Mackay Stadium
New Mexico Lobos	Albuquerque, NM	Dreamstyle Stadium
San Diego State Aztecs	San Diego, CA	SDCCU Stadium
San Jose State Spartans	San Jose, CA	CEFCU Stadium
UNLV Rebels	Las Vegas, NV	Sam Boyd Stadium
Utah State Aggies	Logan, UT	Romney Stadium
Wyoming Cowboys	Laramie, WY	War Memorial Stadium

Pacific-12 Conference

<i>Team</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Stadium</i>
Arizona Wildcats	Tucson, AZ	Arizona Stadium
Arizona State Sun Devils	Tempe, AZ	Sun Devil Stadium
California Golden Bears	Berkeley, CA	California Memorial Stadium
Colorado Buffaloes	Boulder, CO	Folsom Field

Oregon Ducks	Eugene, OR	Autzen Stadium
Oregon State Beavers	Corvallis, OR	Reser Stadium
Stanford Cardinal	Stanford, CA	Stanford Stadium
UCLA Bruins	Los Angeles, CA	Rose Bowl (in Pasadena, CA)
USC Trojans	Los Angeles, CA	Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum
Utah Utes	Salt Lake City, UT	Rice-Eccles Stadium
Washington Huskies	Seattle, WA	Husky Stadium
Washington State Cougars	Pullman, WA	Martin Stadium

Southeastern Conference (SEC)

<i>Team</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Stadium</i>
Alabama Crimson Tide	Tuscaloosa, AL	Bryant-Denny Stadium
Arkansas Razorbacks	Fayetteville, AR	Donald W. Reynolds Razorback Stadium
Auburn Tigers	Auburn, AL	Jordan-Hare Stadium
Florida Gators	Gainesville, FL	Ben Hill Griffin Stadium
Georgia Bulldogs	Athens, GA	Sanford Stadium
Kentucky Wildcats	Lexington, KY	Commonwealth Stadium
LSU Tigers	Baton Rouge, LA	Tiger Stadium
Mississippi Rebels	Oxford, MS	Vaught-Hemingway Stadium
Mississippi State Bulldogs	Starkville, MS	Davis Wade Stadium at Scott Field
Missouri Tigers	Columbia, MO	Faurot Field
South Carolina Gamecocks	Columbia, SC	Williams-Brice Stadium
Tennessee Volunteers	Knoxville, TN	Neyland Stadium
Texas A&M Aggies	College Station, TX	Kyle Field
Vanderbilt Commodores	Nashville, TN	Vanderbilt Stadium

Sun Belt Conference

<i>Team</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Stadium</i>
Arkansas State Red Wolves	Jonesboro, AR	Indian Stadium
Georgia State Panthers	Atlanta, GA	Georgia Dome
Louisiana-Lafayette Ragin' Cajuns	Lafayette, LA	Cajun Field
Louisiana-Monroe Warhawks	Monroe, LA	Malone Stadium
South Alabama Jaguars	Mobile, AL	Ladd-Peebles Stadium
Texas State Bobcats	San Marcos, TX	Bobcat Stadium
Troy Trojans	Troy, AL	Veterans Memorial Stadium
Western Kentucky Hilltoppers	Bowling Green, KY	Houchens Industries-L.T. Smith Stadium

Independents

<i>Team</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Stadium</i>
Army Black Knights	West Point, NY	Michie Stadium
BYU Cougars	Provo, UT	LaVell Edwards Stadium
Idaho Vandals	Moscow, ID	Kibbie Dome
Navy Midshipmen	Annapolis, MD	Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium
New Mexico State Aggies	Las Cruces, NM	Aggie Memorial Stadium
Notre Dame Fighting Irish	South Bend, IN	Notre Dame Stadium

APPENDIX B Interview Protocols

Thank you for your time to meet with me and share a bit about your educational journey and experiences with sports. To introduce myself, my name is Arneshia Bryant-Horn and I am a PhD student at the University of California Riverside pursuing a doctoral degree in educational psychology. My research interest is regarding student identity in high school-athletes.

I would like to use interview methods to learn a bit more in detail about each individual participants experiences with academics and sports. So today we'll begin this process with a think aloud interview. This interview will start with you reading a survey item from the Academic and Athletic Identity Scale and providing a score for that item on a scale of 1 to 7. I then will ask you to provide the reasoning/logic on why you have chosen that number. I am also curious to know how your previous educational experiences, college visits, and other collegiate players have influenced your negotiation of your student identity.

In general, I'm not looking for any “right” or “wrong” answers to my questions; I'm instead interested in hearing your individual perspective and experience. With this information as a researcher, I'm curious to see what patterns I can identify across individuals that may align or diverge from some of the things I've noticed in my observations and literature review. That said, throughout our conversation, I may ask you to “say a little more about X” or ask, “what do you mean by why?” these requests aren't done to annoy you or suggest that I do not know what you are talking about. Rather, I'm interested in collecting as much rich data as possible; therefore, my request for additional

information is to ensure that a descriptive degree of detail is accounted for in the record for this interview.

I'm looking forward to our discussion period I will be audio recording this interview for data analysis purposes. If at any point, you feel uncomfortable with the direction of the interview and want the recording to stop, please advise and I will happily oblige.

Questions about participants student identity and recruiting process

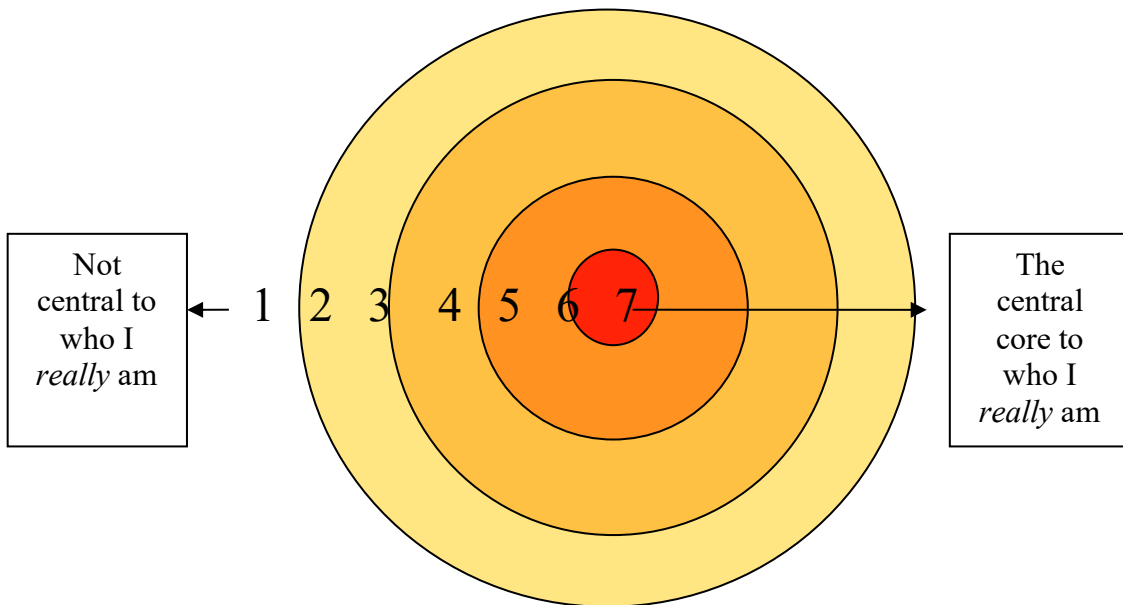
1. When thinking about choosing a school based on academics, what crosses your mind?
2. Do you think GPA has stopped any colleges from offering you?
3. When you look at the GPA requirements for the colleges that have offered you, what do you think about?
4. When you think of selecting a college, what are the educational criteria that you care about?
5. Do you think your level of capability as a student that affects your decision to choose a school when thinking about academics?

APPENDIX C
Academic and Athletic Identity Scale

Directions: Imagine that the figure below is a diagram of you and characteristics that are central to your sense of who you are as a person.

Please think about this figure as you rate the items below. Most people will use a variety of answers, rating some qualities as very central and others as not central to their sense of self. To get a good idea of how you will **compare and rate** the different qualities, please read all of the items before you go back to rate each of them.

Please indicate how central to your sense of **who you really are** is each of the following characteristics. **If a quality seems good or desirable to you but is not an important part of who you are, you should answer “Not at all central to who I really am” (1).** Circle the response that best represents your opinion about each characteristics being central to who you are.



Notes

The score for academic identity is computed by averaging items 1-5.
The score for athletic identity is computed by averaging items 6-11.

<i>How central to your sense of who you really are is each of these characteristics:</i>	<i>Not central</i>	<i>Slightly central</i>	<i>Somewhat central</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Very central</i>	<i>Extremely central</i>	<i>The central core</i>
	<i>...to who I really am</i>						
Being a capable student.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Being satisfied with my academic work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Doing well in school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Getting good grades.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Having high GPA.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Being a capable athlete.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Being a good athlete.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Being athletic.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Being proud to be an athlete.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Being satisfied with my athletic achievements.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Doing well during sport competitions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

APPENDIX D Consent Form

My name is Arneshia Bryant-Horn and I am a doctoral student at the University of California Riverside. I am inviting you to participate in a research study about Athletic and student identity in relation to Division I scholarship offers. Your parent(s) know we are talking with you about the study. This form will tell you about the study to help you decide whether or not you want to take part in it.

What is the key information about this research study?

The purpose of this study is to investigate the formation of student identity in relation to Division I offers. You will be asked to complete a survey and a think aloud interview. You may also be asked to participate in a follow-up interview and/or focus group. We expect that you will be in this research study for two months. The primary risk of participation is disruption to your daily schedule. The main benefit is to help inform research about best ways to help athletes, parents, and coaches navigate Division I offers in which they can stay academically eligible.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of the study is to investigate best ways to negotiate student-athletes student identity, the way athletes see themselves as a student. You are being asked to take part in the study because you are a high school athlete. You cannot take part in this study if you are a high school athlete that is not on the varsity team, have less than a 2.3 cumulative GPA, and have less than 15 Division I offers.

What do I need to do?

If you decide to be in the study, I will ask you to take a survey and complete a think aloud interview. After the think aloud interview, a supplemental one-on-one interview may be requested. This interview will be recorded with audio and the participants personal information will be confidential.

What are the benefits to me?

Taking part in this study may not have direct benefits to you, but it will help me learn how to better inform student-athletes, parents, and coaches navigate Division I offers in which they can stay academically eligible.

Are there any risks to me if I decide to be involved in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks however some young adults have disruptions to their daily schedule and some may experience to fatigue, boredom, anxiety, etc. If you become tired or have anxiety, let me know. We will take a short break.

How will my information be protected?

Your responses will be confidential meaning that only the researcher knows, collects, or has a record of the participant's name or other identifiable information such as e-mail

address, phone number, address, birthdate, student ID, and/or social security but uses pseudonyms during reporting of the data, and the personal information is only accessed by the researcher or the research team who is doing the study. Due to the nature of focus groups, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used. Results will only be shared in aggregate form. Additionally, any test results and audio recording will be stored on a password protected computer, only myself and my research team will have access to the protected files, and the data will be retained for up to 3 years after the project is completed.

Do I have to be in the study?

No, you don't. The choice is yours. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. No one will get angry or upset if you don't want to do this. And you can change your mind anytime if you decide you don't want to be in the study anymore.

Do I get anything in return for participating in this study?

There is no payment involved in this study.

What if I have questions?

If you have questions about the study, you can ask me now or anytime during the study. You can also call me at 310-402-9641 or e-mail me at abrya002@ucr.edu. Additionally, you can contact my faculty advisor, Anthony Villa via phone at (951) 827-2710 or via email at avilla@ucr.edu or my Thesis Chairperson, Marsha Ing via phone at (951) 827-4607 or via email at marsha.ing@ucr.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the IRB Office at IRB@ucr.edu or (951) 827-1012. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Signing below means that you have read this form and that you are willing to be in this study.

Name of the Participant (Write your name on the line): _____

Signature of the Participant (Put your signature on the line): _____

Date: _____