



RESEARCH

2025 Graduate Student Research Grant Recipients

Trauma, Identity, and Transition: The Role of ACEs in Shaping Career Readiness for Black Male College Athletes

Nowoola Awopetu, Virginia Commonwealth University

Research substantiates that Black male student-athletes face unique career development challenges (Eitzen, 1999; Cooper, 2016; Cooper, 2018; Harper, 2013), yet how adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) specifically impact this population's career readiness remains underexplored. This study examines how ACEs influence career preparedness among Black male college student-athletes at NCAA institutions, addressing three key questions: (1) how ACEs affect career readiness and decisions, (2) how athletic identity and systemic barriers shape post-sport career development, and (3) what protective factors support resilience and career preparedness. Findings will aid stakeholders design culturally responsive, trauma-informed career development interventions supporting post-collegiate transitions for Black male student-athletes.

Examining the Roles of Perceived Gender and Racial Representations in Professional Sports Career Self-Efficacy

Carina Chen, Fordham University

Following Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, 2013) and building upon preexisting research, this study will examine how the recent rise in visibility of successful women athletes has impacted women college athletes' career self-efficacy. We hypothesize that the recent increase in women's representation in professional sports will amplify the direct relationship between athletic identity and career self-efficacy. The findings will highlight how social influences impact career development for women college athletes and can enhance our ability to inspire and empower future generations of women athletes considering intercollegiate athletics participation. Implications for supporting athletes' development and career trajectories will be discussed.

On the Sidelines of Success: Academic Advising Experiences of Division I Black/African American Student-Athletes at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs).

Jada Crocker, George Mason University

The multidimensional collegiate experience for Black/African American student-athletes at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) has been extensively researched. However, there remains a notable gap in understanding their experiences at other Minority Serving Institutions. This phenomenological study will investigate the academic dimension of collegiate experiences by examining the academic advising experiences of Division I Black/African American student-athletes at MSIs through participant interviews. Findings will influence policy and practice by identifying barriers to success, promoting tailored support services, and encouraging inclusive practices that foster greater student success and persistence.



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Social Media and Body Image Among NCAA Student-Athletes: A Mixed Methods Exploration of Pressures, Perceptions, and Protective Strategies.

Hannah H. Miller, West Virginia University

Given social media's integral role in student-athletes' daily lives, understanding and mitigating its harmful effects is critical. Social media is increasingly recognized as a source of body pressure among athletes, contributing to body dissatisfaction and potentially disordered eating. This explanatory sequential mixed methods study will examine: (1) social media-related body pressure and its relationship to body dissatisfaction across varying demographic groups; (2) the social media factors perceived as contributing to body pressure; and (3) strategies used to mitigate related adverse effects among NCAA student-athletes. Findings will inform future research and evidence-based clinical strategies aimed at supporting athletes' body image.