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Off The Beaten Track: The Experiences of Jamaican Student Athletes in US Higher Education

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OFF THE BEATEN TRACK: THE EXPERIENCES OF JAMAICAN STUDENT ATHLETES IN U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION

A Dissertation

Presented to

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Advisor: Frank Tuitt, Ed.D.
ABSTRACT

International student athletes populating American colleges and universities have gained visibility and prestige due to their athletic and academic capabilities. International student athletes emerge from a variety of backgrounds. These backgrounds vary in terms of geographic origin, cultural orientation, and social custom. The students themselves also differ in the amount of change they, as individuals, experience during the migration process from their home countries to the United States. There have been many studies related to the traditional student athlete experience. However, recent literature fails to examine the experiences of international student athletes, and in particular, Jamaican student athletes, in terms of the unique social and institutional challenges they face. The study’s primary purpose was to begin the discussion on this topic in regards to the target population, with a specific focus on the impact of acculturation. Specifically, this study explored the experiences and challenges of former Jamaican student athletes (N = 11) studying in U.S. postsecondary educational institutions and the extent to which those experiences limited or enhanced their academic or athletic success. This research was studied under the lens of a neo-racism framework, methodology of hermeneutic phenomenological study that used open-ended interview questions, as well as use of the modified 7-step van Kaam method in analyzing and interpreting the results. The findings suggested acculturation issues were not the core problem for participants; rather, it was the factor of racial discrimination that exerted the greatest negative impact on the
Jamaican student athletes—discrimination experienced in the attitudes and beliefs of the host country.
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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Colleges and universities are facing multiple challenges in the 21st century because of reduced funding, the need to compete globally for recruitment of students, and mandates to increase cultural diversity (Tuitt, 2003). U.S. colleges and universities successfully encourage talented international students to apply and enroll, with attractive scholarship packages to support continuance of their sporting endeavors and improve diversity in the student body. Although globalization has resulted in an increase in international students enrolled in higher education institutions in the United States, a number of changes have emerged as a result of the increase in cultural diversity.

The expansion of U.S. intercollegiate athletics has provided international student athletes opportunities to attend higher education institutions in the United States. Bok (2003) and Sato and Burge-Hall (2008) found international student athletes comprised 15% of the overall student populations at U.S. institutions of higher education. Unfortunately however, international student athletes are among some of the most isolated populations on college campuses (Kimball, 2007). Caribbean student athletes (CSA) who study and participate in sports in U.S. colleges and universities have varied experiences depending on the level of acculturation of the learner as well as issues of acculturation, academic success, language, and neo-racism (Lee & Rice, 2007). Whereas the experiences of noteworthy international athletes who relocate to the United States
have been documented, a search of the empirical literature revealed little research has been done regarding the experiences of college athletes classified as racial minorities (Adler & Adler, 1990), and none has been conducted regarding minority Jamaican student athletes (JSA).

**Statement of the Problem**

Jamaican student athletes may experience a number of challenges—academic, language, neo-racism, and social problems—when they endeavor to attend higher education institutions in the United States and engage in competitive sports. At the same time, while sharing many of the problems of international students, studies have indicated that some aspects of being an elite athlete may act as a protective factor for international students, thus reducing the negative impact of some challenges (Abbey-Pinegar, 2010; Bluestone, 2009; Burnapp, 2006; DeCourcy, 2004; Frey & Roysircar, 2006; Gardiner & O’Toole, 2002; Harolle & Trail, 2007; Koyama, 2005; Mahavedan, 2010; McLachan & Justice, 2009; Nilsson & Anderson, 2004; Rahman & Rollock, 2004; Ryska, 2001; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006; Weston, 2006; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Nonetheless, a search of the literature failed to reveal any published studies of the challenges Jamaican student athletes face in higher education institutions in the United States. Even though participation of racial minorities in sports has increased, research pertaining to the experiences of Jamaican student athletes in Division I intercollegiate athletics has remained invisible within the discourse of U.S. collegiate sports (Bale, 1991). The problem and challenge undertaken in this qualitative research study was to begin filling the void in the literature on this specific target population and topic, reflecting much needed efforts to document the attitudes and perceptions of these students to be used in
developing strategies that promote their academic and athletic success and reduce their risk of failure.

**Background of the Study**

Recruitment of international student athletes by higher education institutions in the United States was uncommon and limited to Canadian athletes in a small number of sports until after World War II (Stidwell, 1984). The first appearance of international student athletes in intercollegiate athletics occurred in the early 1900s when a small number of Canadian student athletes participated in track and field competitions (Ridinger & Pastore, 2000). Some sport-oriented universities showed growing interest in recruiting international student athletes in the 1960s and 1970s, with track and field sports most popular among the institutions (Ridinger & Pastore, 2000).

By the 1980s, universities with African and Caribbean student athletes dominated in track and field national championships, causing the countries of origin to be the target of college scouts for additional sporting talent (Stidwell, 1984). Ridinger and Pastore (2001) found that international student athletes experienced high levels of success in their native countries before enrolling in higher education institutions in the United States. Their outstanding abilities in competition brought athletic teams at recruiting colleges to a championship level. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Student-Athlete Race and Ethnicity Report stated that over 16,000 international student athletes competed at NCAA schools during the 2006-07 school year (NCAA, 2008), an indication that international student athletes are an integral part of American intercollegiate sports. Lee and Rice (2007) suggested the benefits of recruiting international student athletes are
not limited to athletic acumen and success in competition, but also contribute to
classroom and institutional diversity in an era where diversity is mandated.

Challenges

The psychological adjustment of many international students is directly related to
their ability to cope with daily obstacles. And accordingly, Jamaican student athletes in
the United States face many issues, both educational and social in nature. These issues
encompass, for example, challenges in language barriers, which affect not only their
academics but also social relations, and challenges in decision making between
prioritizing academics or athletics (Sato & Burge-Hall, 2008). Another challenge
includes the demands of adjustment or adaptation to a new environment (Bale, 1991).
Thus, as a Jamaican student athlete enters the United States, he or she is faced with the
demands of acculturation.

Although no published research has provided the reasons why Jamaican students
drop out of U.S. colleges and universities, Daley (2010) explored the reasons why
students never complete their college educations, and those reasons may relate to the
dropout rate of Jamaican and Caribbean student athletes. Daley found the basis for
dropping out was associated with one or more of the following factors: (a) Students never
become part of a group, (b) they experience personality clashes with other students, (c)
their schedule becomes more complicated if they work, (d) they believe they have already
experienced all that the program has to offer, (e) they are pulled between competing
forces, (f) they cannot accept the different belief systems they find among cohorts, (g)
strong involvement patterns never develop, and (h) costs may become prohibitive.
Academics. College completion rates in the United States have been stalled for more than three decades. Consequently, private and 4-year public schools that once expended more energy in recruiting students than in retaining them now struggle to prevent them from dropping out (Bowler, 2009). According to Bowler (2009),

Thirty percent of college and university students drop out after their first year. Half never graduate....“The overall record is quite bad, especially for African-Americans and other minorities,” says Kati Haycock, president of the Education Trust, a nonprofit group in Washington that works to close achievement gaps. (p. 36)

Clearly, the dropout rate among students of color, particularly African Americans, which includes immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa, can be seen as problematic. Although university campuses have been racially integrated for decades, a gap exists between the completion rates of historically underrepresented racial minority students, including Caribbean and African American students, relative to that of the overall college student population. This difference in educational attainment is a major obstacle to the economic mobility of minority students (Furr & Elling, 2002; Museus, Nichols, & Lambert, 2008).

Language. English speaking and Anglophone Caribbean and French speakers exist in the Caribbean. The Anglo-Caribbeans hail from Jamaica, Grenada, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. Despite the language diversity, there are certain commonalities based on Caribbean cultural norms; for example, the belief that academic achievement is invaluable is one cultural similarity (Allen, 1995; Brice-Baker, 1996; Chavkin, 1993). Although English is spoken in Anglophone Caribbean, American English has many language peculiarities that can only be learned
through living in the United States. As such, Caribbean college students may have difficulty with the diction of American English, which in some instances may lead to taunting by American students, causing feelings of marginality, anxiety, and fear (Berry, 1970, 1979). Consequently, many Caribbean student athletes will choose to surround themselves with others from their country of origin or with other international students (Kimball, 2007).

**Growth of International Sports in the Caribbean**

The introduction of formal sports in the Caribbean occurred under the British Empire and had great influence on the spread and development of sports in Caribbean nations, such as Jamaica (Quercetani, 1964). Expansion of sports was promoted through two agencies: the Catholic Church and educational institutions. The church was a major agency through which cultural power and the values of sport were spread. Given the close connection between the church and education in England during the latter 19th century, many young men took holy orders after having been instilled with the spirit of the games. They perceived a connection between healthy sport and the civilian properties of Christianity (Quercetani, 1964).

In the many nations of the Caribbean, the concept and development of sport was founded solely on the public school model. Within the education system, sport was conceived under the rubric of “extra-curricular activity” and “physical education” (Martindale, 1980). As such, the concept of and approach to sport within the education system and the society at large were functionalist in nature, centering around its value as a source of (a) morality or character formation, (b) recreation, (c) health, (d) order, and (e) nationalism (Martindale, 1980). Martindale (1980) suggested independence from
colonial rule in the early 1960s caused newly independent Caribbean nations to organize and develop sports to national status, but Stoddart (2006) noted that class distinctions existed between the sports offered to rich as opposed to poor schools, a delimiting factor.

**Sports Culture in the Caribbean**

A search of the literature revealed an incomplete and unbalanced body of empirical research on the various societal and cultural factors that contribute to the dynamics of Caribbean sports (Besnier, 2009; Burdsey, 2004; Hartmann, 2003; Holden, 2007; Khondker, 2000; McCree, 2002; Odih, 2002; Pope, 2007). In examining why sports has often been excluded from consideration for a role in the economic development of Caribbean nations, McCree (2002) accounted for this oversight by citing that sports culture in Caribbean nations has a different role than in other countries. Although commercialization of sports has contributed significantly to First World economies, it has yet to contribute much to Third World economies (McCree, 2002). McCree (2002) examined the origins of sports in the CARICOM countries, as well as the orthodox and colonial functions ascribed to sport and their legacy in contemporary CARICOM countries. McCree also argued that sports is given a place as a source of nationalism and is seen as an arena in which good character and morality can be developed, primarily through the concept of the amateur-gentleman. Sport is also more likely to be seen as a way to improve health, or simply as a form of play or recreation as opposed to work.

**Sports Culture in Jamaica**

Jamaica has achieved far more medals per capita than any other county in the Olympics (Franklin, 2009). The structure of the track and field system has numerous
players. According to Robinson (2008), among these major players, it is the Jamaica Amateur Athletic Association (JAAA) that functions as the primary developer of amateur athletics and the promotion and organization of athletic meetings. The Jamaica Teachers Association (JTA) organizes the district and parish meets as well as those of the schools, both for primary and junior high. The Inter-Secondary School Sports Association (ISSA) is responsible for organizing and managing the sports program in secondary schools, including their principals and coaches. ISSA also oversees the G. C. Foster College of Physical Education and Sport (the G. C. Foster College) and the University of Technology (UTECH), including the coaches at the tertiary and adult level. The Ministries of Sports, Education, and Defense Force also help in providing logistical and other support for track meets (Robinson, 2008).

Track and field is ingrained in Jamaica because all high schools have a track program in their curriculum (Robinson, 2008). The annual National Boys and Girls Championship (“Champs”), which is held at the National Stadium in Kingston, is the premier event for track and field in Jamaica where future track athletes showcase their skills to the rest of the island and also to the many overseas recruits who attend this event (Franklin, 2009). The annual Boys and Girls Championship was developed in 1910 for boys, and in 1957 for women. In 1999, both meets were amalgamated (Franklin, 2009).

The high school athletes who dominate this event are eventually selected to represent Jamaica in the annual Penn Relays in the U.S. state of Pennsylvania (Robinson, 2008). The exposure at the Penn Relays starts the pipeline for athletic scholarships for many Jamaican athletes to colleges across the United States (Robinson, 2008). (See Figure 1.)
From the early 1940s, Jamaican student athletes began to be recruited by major sport-oriented universities, and many of them were given visibility year after year in collegiate athletic programs in the United States (Ridinger & Pastore, 2000). Applicable to Jamaican student athletes, it was found that international student athletes exhibit higher levels of performance, work ethic, maturity, and goal-oriented behavior compared to domestic student athletes, and they usually out-perform traditional students in academics (Asher, 1994; Bale, 1991).

In the United States, there are a large number of Jamaican student athletes competing in the NCAA. They have continuously increased and played vital roles throughout various collegiate sports, such as track and field, soccer, and tennis (Bale, 1991). At a track field meet in 1983, the men’s 400 meter race was won by a Jamaican, the 800 meters by a Brazilian, the 1,500 meters by an Irishman, the 5,000 and 10,000 meters by a Tanzanian, the 400-meter hurdles by a Swede, the pole vault by a Swiss, the triple jump and hammer throw by a Englishman, and the javelin by an Icelander (Bale, 1991). The women’s 100 meters and 200 meters went to a Jamaican, the high jump to an athlete from Iceland, and the javelin to a Norwegian (Bale, 1991). One may think this was the Olympics, or the World Championship Games; however, these results were from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) championships in Houston, Texas,
1983. The presence of international student athletes changed the recruiting process of the NCAA to the world rather than the nation, thus becoming the recruiting oyster for sport success (Bale, 1991). But one must wonder how these student athletes adjust to this new sport climate and culture.

Track and field holds itself as the international sport of excellence in over 180 nations affiliated with the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF). Countries like Jamaica, which are “underdeveloped,” are frequently able to achieve high levels of success in events where extreme levels of technical expertise and equipment are not required, for example sprinting (Bale, 1991).

Allison (1998) defined *nation* as something you are born into, with your national identity being defined at birth. *Ethnocentrism* is defined as the belief in the superiority of one’s own culture and lifestyle (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). In Allison’s definition of *nationalism*, nationalists must meet one of two conditions: (a) have the tendency to concern themselves with their nation, orienting their actions and judgments toward it, or (b) believe in the nation as a morally demanding form of collective existence. Therefore, sports can act as a catalyst for nationalism and ethnocentrism. The success of Jamaican athletes after the 2008 Beijing Olympics and 2009 Berlin World Championship served as the catalyst to promote individual and national self-esteem—the self-confidence that is cultivated in each Jamaican psyche. There are strong feelings of identification, which is the essence of the relationship between sport and nationality (Allison, 1998). For example, Herbert Elliot, the Jamaican team doctor, described his experience at the Olympics in Beijing: “We Jamaicans are just born to be sprinters; sprint running is part of our heart and soul” (Hao, 2008, para. 6).
Purpose of the Study

The overarching problem that this hermeneutic phenomenological study addressed was the complete void in the literature regarding this population. Thus, a beginning knowledge base was sought. More specifically, the study’s aim was to explore the attitudes and perceptions of Jamaican student athletes pertinent to their experiences in higher education institutions in the United States and the extent to which those experiences limited or enhanced their academic and/or athletic success. The range of exploration focused on neo-racism and social and institutional problems student athletes may face that may or may not contribute to dropout rates or ultimate success. Specifically, the research targeted sprinters because of their popularity in Jamaica and their visibility in international recruiting.

Significance of the Research

Results of the study will inform higher education administrators of specific factors that threaten completion rates of Jamaican student athletes so remediation of those factors can be undertaken. This new knowledge may contribute to stabilizing the participation of recruited student athletes in both the sports and academic arenas. Also, Jamaica may make use of the information to anticipate problems that may occur among their athletes who are being recruited in order to lessen the possibility of failure. Lee and Rice (2007) observed that future efforts and research should not place the burden on international students to simply overcome and assimilate into the host society, but that institutions need to critically examine ways they may be marginalizing international student athletes. Therefore, there is a need for scholarly research to be directed at
international student athletes’ overall experience academically and athletically (Martindale, 1980).

Research Questions

The following research questions drove the methodology of this study. The primary research question asked,

What academic acculturation challenges face Jamaican student athletes studying in U.S. postsecondary educational institutions?

The two sub-questions supporting this primary question were as follows:

SQ1: How does a neo-racist theoretical framework explain academic acculturation challenges of Jamaican student athletes in U.S. higher education institutions?

SQ2: What are salient factors that influence the academic success or failure of Jamaican student athletes of color studying in U.S. higher education institutions?

Bale (1991) contended that international student athletes arise from a variety of backgrounds that differ in terms of geographic, cultural, and social nature, as well as from the level of change experienced during the migration process. Thus, the focus of this hermeneutic phenomenology study was on former Jamaican student athletes and the factors that influenced their experience in U.S. higher education.

Theoretical Framework

Neo-racist theory poses the argument that overt racism has been replaced by covert cultural-based racism; and for the purposes of this study, it suggests that the receptiveness of the host country to Jamaican students and student athletes may be limited and, concomitantly, the acculturation process stalled due to racism (Bonnett,
2006; Gillborn, 2005; Lee, 2007; Lee & Rice, 2007; Liu & Mills, 2006; Silvestri & Richardson, 2001; Williams, 2006). With regard to CARICOM international athletes, although no research has identified any problems specific to this population, the fact that they emerged from a Caribbean sports world characterized by British-derived amateurism values and were introduced to various sports in the context of colonialism may or may not negatively influence the experience of the Caribbean student athletes in the United States. To date, specific studies of this subgroup of international student athletes are limited. The neo-racism framework was used in this study to explore structural racism in the context of migration, where race, culture, and nationality interact complexly to produce a hierarchy of social positions (Besnier, 2009; Burdsey, 2004; Hartmann, 2003; Holden, 2007; Khondker, 2000; McCree, 2002; Odih, 2002; Pope, 2007).

Under the neo-racism lens, there are six key areas that may affect international student athletes: culture shock, symbolic racism, discrimination, cultural differences, culture/national order, and racism and sport. Spears (1999) defined neo-racism as follows:

Neo-racism rationalizes the subordination of people of color on the basis of culture, which is of course acquired through acculturation within an ethnic group, which traditional racism rationalizes fundamentally in terms of biology. Neo-racism is still racism in that it functions to maintain hierarchies of oppression. (p. 26)

The construct of neo-racism may have emerged from the theory of symbolic racism, developed near the end of the Civil Rights Movement (Liu & Mills, 2006). According to this theory, modern racism is not characterized by explicit, overt acts of prejudice against minorities, but by an implicit and subtle expression of prejudice. The emphasis of symbolic racism is that a minority group has done something (as opposed to
simply being, biologically speaking, a person of color) to warrant being disliked, such as receiving affirmative action advantages or a disproportionate amount of welfare support.

To determine the degree to which symbolic racism is manifested in language, a discursive analysis using theory developed by discursive psychologists (Liu & Mills, 2006) was utilized. According to this line of research, covert racists make use of speech with certain rhetorical moves with which, by denying racist intent, they invoke liberal-egalitarian principles; and appealing to common sense, they nonetheless legitimatize racial inequalities. A central concept in discursive analysis is that it provides covert racists with plausible deniability of their racism, allowing speakers to disavow racist intent even when it is tacitly apparent (Liu & Mills, 2006).

**Assumptions and Limitations**

Leedy and Ormrod (2001) defined research assumptions as self-evident truths. An assumption of this study was that the student athletes to be interviewed would have or had had the appropriate F1 status. The validity of the study was predicated on the assumption that the student athlete participants would answer truthfully and accurately the interview questions based on their “personal experience” (Bruyn, 1966, p. 91). Another assumption was that the lived experiences of the participants in the study would positively contribute to leadership decisions in dealing with Jamaican student athletes attending U.S. institutions of higher education.

There was also the assumption that all participants would respond honestly and to the best of individual abilities. The study was not about individual student athletes, but instead the experience of participants as they contemplated the factors they deemed important in the decision to stay or leave institutions of higher education in the United
States. A further assumption was that the interviews would reveal a common area of knowledge and that the participants would perceive the nature and significance of the study. It was also assumed that the audio recording of the interviews would constitute a consistent and accurate representation of each participant’s point of view.

It has been suggested that limitations of a study determine inherent exceptions, reservations, and qualifications of the research, and that recognized limitations identify potential weaknesses of a study (Creswell, 2007; Triol, 2006). It was not assumed that data from the study would necessarily be characteristic of all student athletes from Jamaica. Furthermore, the researcher heeded Yin’s (2003) warning that researcher biases and perceptual misrepresentations are potential limitations in a qualitative study. The researcher also remained alert throughout the interviews to Yin’s caution that how the researcher reacts during the interview may affect the participants’ responses (Yin, 2003). And in the end, the researcher recognized the possibility that an analysis of the data resulting from the interviews would be subject to other interpretations than those presented.

Delimitations are limitations on the research design imposed deliberately by the researcher (Creswell, 2007). The study was limited to a focus on exploring and gaining a deeper understanding of the attitudes and perceptions of Jamaican student athletes participating in the sport of track and field who attended U.S. institutions of higher education.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are presented for clarification of usage in the following
chapters. The general subject of the study was the experiences of student athletes attending U.S. institutions of higher education. The specific subject of the study consisted of the experiences of student athletes from the sport of track and field whose nation of origin was Jamaica.

- **International student.** According to Frey and Roysircar (2006), international students are sojourners, that is, persons taking up temporary residence in the United States for the purpose of receiving an education, a situation that distinguishes them from immigrants.

- **International student athlete (ISA).** An ISA is a university student who is a citizen of a country other than the United States and is also a member of an intercollegiate varsity athletic team (NCAA, 2008).

- **National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).** The NCAA is a voluntary, non-profit organization consisting of approximately 1,200 members, through which colleges and universities in the United States govern their athletics programs (NCAA, 2008). Division 1 is the highest level of intercollegiate athletics as categorized by the NCAA. To qualify for Division 1 classification, the athletic department must be in compliance with NCAA regulations and sponsor no less than 16 varsity sports (NCAA, 2008).

- **Sport.** Sport, for the purposes of this study, refers to well-established, officially governed competitive physical activities in which participants are motivated by internal and external rewards (Coakley, 2009).
• **Student athlete (SA).** A SA is a university student who is also a member of an intercollegiate varsity athletic team (NCAA, 2008).

• **Jamaican student athlete (JSA).** A JSA is a university student from Jamaica who is also a member of an intercollegiate varsity athletic team.

• **Caribbean student athlete (CSA).** A CSA is a university student from one of the Caribbean countries who is also a member of an intercollegiate varsity athletic team.

• **CARICOM.** The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is an organization of 15 Caribbean countries that were formerly British colonies and dependencies. CARICOM's main purposes are to promote economic integration and cooperation among its members. Countries in CARICOM:

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**Organization of the Study**

This dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter 1 described the statement of the problem and the background of the study, including challenges, the growth of international sports in the Caribbean, and sports culture in the Caribbean and in Jamaica, as well as the history of Jamaican international students. Also discussed were the
purpose of the study and its significance, the research questions, and the theoretical framework guiding the study. The literature review in Chapter 2 summarizes the various factors that may affect the academic and athletic success of student athletes from Jamaica who attend or have attended U.S. institutions of higher education and other subjects pertinent to the focus of the study. Chapter 3 provides a summarization of the methodology of the study, which includes the research design and data collection procedures, the approach to data analysis, and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 presents a summary of the results. Chapter 5 consists of a discussion of the results as well as recommendations for future research, recommendations for change, and the conclusion.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The structure and nature of student athlete recruitment is changing and so are the student athletes and where they are coming from. Abbey-Pinegar (2010) remarked that “from everywhere around the world, they are coming to America,” referring to the fact that amateur athletes from across the global community are flocking to the United States to compete at the collegiate level. An estimated 565,039 international students attended U.S. universities in 2005 (Frey & Roysircar, 2006), and of those, the NCAA estimated that 16,000 Division I athletes were from overseas in 2007. As indicated earlier, international student athletes comprised 15% of the overall student populations at U.S. higher education institutions (Sato & Burge-Hall, 2008). U.S. colleges and universities encourage talented international students to apply, with attractive scholarship packages to support continuance of their sporting endeavors and to improve diversity in the student body.

It was found that the majority of international students were non-immigrants seeking educational opportunities not available in their home countries in order to gain prestige by attendance at U.S. universities and that they fully intended to return to their home countries to live once their studies were completed (Koyoma, 2005). According to Lee and Rice (2007), Caribbean student athletes who study and participate in sports in
U.S. colleges have varied experiences depending on the level of acculturation of the learner and issues of academic success, language, and neo-racism. Although a majority of international students reported they were doing well and enjoying the experience of studying at a U.S. university, a significant minority still suffered from uprooting and acculturative stress and were found to be at risk for mental health problems (McLachan & Justice, 2009). Many of the same issues that affect the international student population can affect international student athletes as well.

There is an abundance of writing on international students and student athletes and the experiences of noteworthy international athletes who relocated to America have been documented. However, a search of the empirical literature revealed little research has been done regarding the experiences of college athletes classified as racial minorities (Adler & Adler, 1990).

Among international students and student athletes, Latin American students are the second largest group to receive attention in the literature; however, the body of work often refers to Central America and the Spanish Caribbean. Latin America is geographically considered to be Mexico, Central America, South America, and many of the Caribbean Islands, including those where English is the primary language spoken. There is an assumption that the countries and culture of Latin America are homogenous, and it is difficult to find discussion of the vast differences in culture among the many islands and countries.

The recruitment of international student athletes represented a new wave of exploitation of persons of color, in effect expanding upon the preexisting exploitation of African American athletes on U.S. campuses (Lewis, 2010). African American athletes
at the highest performing, most elite college basketball/football programs have the lowest graduate rates. This situation was termed a “tragedy” by Lewis (2010, p. 12), who indicated that the NCAA was not upholding its academic requirement rules and allowing universities to exploit these student athletes whose graduation rates indicate a lack of academic achievement. The exploitation of these students’ athletic abilities to the benefit of the bottom line for university athletic programs and at the cost of the students’ academic potential is what comprises this tragedy. Student athletes must adhere to strict training schedules and limitations on their academic and social schedules. Oftentimes, students are not free to choose their own majors based on their own interests, but instead must choose from majors that will not be too demanding, giving deference instead to the needs of the university’s sports programs. Unfortunately, there is a long history of exploitation associated with the advancement of many British and U.S. institutions.

**Context**

This section sets the context for the impact of sports culture for Jamaican student athletes of color and the changing nature of sport recruitment in U.S. college athletics. The changing nature of recruitment can be traced to major causes. This discussion includes an exploration of (a) the British influence on Caribbean sports culture, (b) the U.S. influence on Caribbean sports culture (including culture and national order), and (c) the influence of racism in sports culture (as well as the felt discrimination among student athletes and professionals). From there, the discussion turns from these external influential factors to factors that are internal to the athlete. Such factors include sports identity and acculturation (with some discussion of influencing social issues), including the topics of sport motivation, career beliefs, depression, social distance, and help-
seeking behaviors, as well as institutional issues associated with the culture of sports. By exploring both the internal and external influencing factors on athletes, a deeper understanding of the CARICOM student athlete experience will emerge.

**External Factors**

**British influence on the Caribbean sports culture.** Colonialism is often conveniently regarded as primarily an economic issue, or the “exercise of power either through direct conquest or through political and economic influence” (Young, 2001, p. 27). Said’s *Orientalism*, published in 1978, has been largely credited as representing the formal reference point for post-colonialism. Said (1978) suggested that the Orient was a construct of Western epistemologies, the result of which framed the Orient in a particular way and justified the Orient’s conquest and exploration to the West. Said referred to this idea as “Orientalism” and claimed that it involved creating the idea of two different worlds: one describing the Orient as backward while on the other hand, Europe was considered civilized and superior. This dualism is representative of every case of colonialism.

Scholars have taken post-colonial analysis beyond the Manichean approach of Said (Said, 1978). Post-colonialism theory now views colonialism as more complex. This scholarship sees more agency in the colonized areas than Said (1978) originally presented. Further highlighting the enduring effect of colonial experiences and institutions has become a significant agenda of post-colonial theory (Said, 1978).

Post-colonialism as an academic discipline moves the analysis past mere material justification for colonialism and locates at its center ideological cultural considerations and their continuing effects on today’s society (Said, 1978). In addition, ideological and
cultural foundations have produced an enduring system of knowledge that constructed a discourse about the European and non-European people. The idea of the “Other” that lends itself to the longevity of colonialism rests on the internationalism of the notion of qualitative difference, by both colonizer and colonized, which produced binary images of the civilized colonizer and the barbaric colonized (Said, 1978).

The post-colonial approach would further examine the Caribbean student athlete (though somewhat different in form) as rooted in structural inequalities of the past in which large and particular groups were—and continue to be—excluded from opportunities (Said, 1978). By putting this view in context, one sees how our global society (which is largely driven by neo-liberal ideology) is predisposed to reproducing such inequalities. In order to fully grasp this argument, it is important to understand the Caribbean experience emerging out of a colonial project, and therefore, as historically structured to favor a few within the post-colonial state (Said, 1978). This understanding puts into context the significance of how education informs sport participation in Jamaica.

The notion of amateurism emerged in the early 19th century in Europe. This concept embraced lack of payment for participation in sports and ideologies, such as fair play and respect for authority as well as discipline, loyalty, and teamwork. It was thought that a gentleman might display these characteristics (McCree, 2002). This ethos was linked as well to the British public school ethos of courage, stoicism, and collectivism in the 19th century. Concomitantly, sport was about the development of a gentleman of good character, who might well become a future leader. In Foucauldian terms, this so-called “games cult” was interpreted as an early form of a disciplinary technology
designed to regulate and control individual impulses (McCree, 2002). As a result of the development of this ethos, the emergence of professional sports was seen as a threat to the existing order, eventually leading sports clubs to develop a tiered system separating upper and middle from lower classes.

At the time, amateur sports began to ban participants if they had participated as professionals, and refused to compensate athletes for time lost from work (McCree, 2002). The amateur-professional divide was perpetuated by players-versus-gentlemen games in which professionals competed against amateurs, contributing to a split that had long-term consequences. Because a number of CARICOM countries were formerly British colonies, these values were inculcated into their colonial cultures. Elaborating on this point, McCree (2002) argued that perceptions of the role of sport were derived from an orthodox view inculcated in diverse cultures from Britain during the colonial period. He asserted that sports in the Caribbean were “founded squarely” (p. 472) on the British public school model, with a focus on character formation, recreation, health, unity and order, and nationalism. As a result, sport existed not in the economy, but in civil society. Regardless, McCree (2002) concluded that parents in English colonial nations encouraged their children to engage in sports activity as a means of advancing family economic status.

In the British colonial public school system, participation in extracurricular activities, such as sport, was conceptualized as a way to help less intelligent students compensate for their academic weaknesses. Participation in sports was linked with being intellectually challenged in some way. Therefore, physical education was viewed as intellectually undemanding and unimportant, compared to the rest of the curriculum.
These dynamics began a process of marginalization that has persisted in the 21st century, with sports on the negative side of persistent dichotomies separating body/mind, work/play, and intellectual/physical activity (McCree, 2002).

The Caribbean athlete in the 21st century has also been conceptualized as a gladiator who generated pride, prestige, pleasure, and power for the fans. For Afro-Saxon leaders, the primary task of the gladiator was to beat White people and generate pride and prestige for Black people “to compensate for the ravishes of slavery and colonialism” (McCree, 2002, p. 19). Moreover, the Caribbean athlete was perceived to be a gladiator who could defeat all others and bring general pride to the disparate Caribbean people who suffered under leaders that showed no commitment to real change. As such, the Caribbean athlete is a heroic exemplar of anti-imperialist nationalism, a symbolic, amateur, unpaid being who symbolizes the voice of the downtrodden and thus “exists solely to please and satisfy the needs and insecurities of a disempowered Caribbean people suffering from low self-esteem” (McCree, 2002, p. 19).

**U.S. influence on the Caribbean sports culture.** The United States also participated in the formation of Caribbean sports culture where sport became an instrument of imperialism with baseball being exported to Cuba (and later Japan), especially as the United States exerted political muscle against European powers in the Caribbean. U.S. sport “followed the flag” around the world (Pope, 2007, p. 102). The presence of major league baseball in the form of training camps and recruiting centers in Caribbean countries, such as the Dominican Republic, represented another phase of sports development, that of a multinational corporation. The Dominican Republic has produced more professional baseball players than any other country outside the United
States and has been the epicenter of Caribbean baseball since the 1950s (Pope, 2007). Many of the recruiting methods used by major league baseball (MLB) in the country have been criticized, with MLB acting as a multinational corporation seeking talent. The U.S. influence on baseball in CARICOM is matched with the British influence on cricket.

Globalization is often promoted as a new beginning, one that defies traditional constructions of the world, allowing new, previously unimaginable opportunities. This promise has been part of the most seductive arguments of the globalization discourse and is so critically attractive to developing states, many of which are stuck in a condition that has been classified as “underdeveloped.” Most of these countries are former colonial subjects that have been inhibited by both social and material asymmetries resulting from long periods of colonial exploitation. One can therefore understand the allure of the possibility of a new beginning, which allows hitherto unlikely opportunities for advancement. The combination of education and sport is at the heart of these new opportunities and is seen as one of the main sources that will equip its recipients to participate in globalization and extract its benefits.

The context by which international athletes migrate to the United States can be understood through the idea of neo-liberal globalization, which some interpret as a U.S.-promulgated espousal of values of democracy and equality throughout the world, leading to a diverse “globalized” world of locales operating in a single world economy. Or there are those who view globalization as representing the imposition of Americanized, capitalistic, rationalized, modernistic, and nontraditional values on the world stage. Bonnett (2006) noted that as a result of globalization dominated by the U.S. model, many paradoxes have emerged, with anti-racist initiatives in many countries nonetheless taking
place within and against an “overarching global system that is simultaneously U.S.-Americanizing” (p. 1088).

**Culture and national order.** The underlying assumption of most acculturative studies, Lee and Rice (2007) argued, is that the universities are impartial and without fault. Neo-racism theory puts some of the responsibility on the host country to improve its ways of interacting with others. According to neo-racism theory, explicit racism based on skin color appears to have diminished, but only retrenched to a new form of discrimination based on culture and national order. Whereas traditional racism subordinates others because of biological factors, neo-racism subordinates others through culture, but with the same purpose of maintaining a racial hierarchy of oppression. The rhetoric of neo-racism is applicable whenever a pundit defends a “way of life” or gives new energy to principles of exclusion and nationalism. Neo-racism masks traditional racism by “encouraging exclusion based on the cultural attributes or national origin of the oppressed” (Lee & Rice, 2007, p. 390).

Various forms of mistreatment accorded to Middle Eastern persons as a result of the National Patriot Act would be classified as examples of neo-racism. In the academic context, neo-racism emerges institutionally through admission rejections, subjective or prejudicial academic evaluations, discontinuation of financial aid, and negative remarks from faculty. Their interviews with international students led researchers Lee and Rice (2007) to conclude that most problems have neo-racism as a cause. This conclusion was based on evidence that although international students from Europe, Canada, and Australia reported few problems with the process of entering and matriculating at the subject university, students from Asia, India, Latin America (which may have included
CARICOM), and the Middle East reported problems with the same processes. These students reported various levels of disrespect and denigration of their culture, even as institutions and associations espoused non-racist attitudes. Mexican students reported feeling treated as inferiors, with neo-racism mixing with classism to make them uncomfortable. Women of color from Latin America and the Middle East reported being treated with a mixture of appeal and exclusion and as exotic and ethnic. One woman reported that her treatment was informed, she later realized, by stereotypes (Lee & Rice, 2007).

Lee and Rice (2007) asserted that international students often reported feeling ignored or excluded. Professorial impatience with lack of English skills was another way in which students felt inferior. Negative comments about their home country by other students as well as faculty were disclosed. Others indicated that Americans seemed to marginalize anything not American. Lee and Rice concluded, “Such apathy and unwillingness to attempt understanding translates to the rejection of international students’ cultural identities” (p. 400). Students also reported that institutional policy, such as limiting international student work to 20 hours per week, seemed discriminatory; as did the circumstance that no help was offered in learning how to perform campus jobs by faculty or others.

In sum, Lee and Rice (2007) found that many international students of color reported various forms of discrimination in Arizona; and in most cases, students identified the source of the problem as not in the acculturation process itself, but in the host country response to international students in discriminatory and prejudicial ways. Neo-racism posits that host countries present more problems to international students
than the acculturation process itself, and that it is in the attitudes and beliefs of the host country and not in the process of adjustment that most acculturative stress can be located.

**Education migration.** The context related to why international athletes migrate to the U.S must be taken into consideration, because understanding the context will shine some light on the motivations of the students athletes (Bonnett, 2006; Gillborn, 2005; Lee, 2007; Lee & Rice, 2007; Liu & Mills, 2006; Silvestri & Richardson, 2001; Williams, 2006). Student foreign exchanges at the university level are not a new phenomenon. Early and medieval history records various accounts of academic exchanges and education migration to renowned higher education institutions in different parts of the world. “From the beginning, universities represented global institutions in that they functioned in a common language…and served an international clientele of students” (Altbach, 2004, p. 4).

The United States is the world’s top destination for international students, receiving 22% of all such global migrants yearly (*Education at a Glance 2007, 2007*). In the past 25 years, universities have become much more active in trying to make money from marketing their research, sport, and educational activities (Bok, 2003). As early as 1915, the growth of college athletics was seen at Yale (which earned more than $1 million from its football team) (Bok, 2003). The idea is that the prospects of migrating to a country where skills are rewarded more generously can lead to not only more investment in skills in the home country but also a more highly educated domestic population (Bok, 2003).

International education offers the United States the opportunity to continue in its envisioned duty to educate foreigners in the tradition of American values, such as
individualism and capitalism, in hopes of maintaining trade and political relationships. This demand to supply higher education has increased international education migration as a new phenomenon. The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), an organization that compiles comprehensive statistical data monitoring tertiary education migration, together with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics, reported in 2007 that the number of international students enrolled in universities worldwide increased four-fold since 1975 and doubled from 2000 to 2005 (Education at a Glance 2007, 2007, p. 302).

Data has shown that the migration of international students generally occurs from developing economies to developed nations of the West, making the international university experience almost synonymous with a Western university experience. The OECD showed that about 2.7 million university students are estimated to be currently enrolled in tertiary-level institutions beyond their national borders (Education at a Glance 2007, 2007).

International education is considered an economic opportunity, bringing significant revenue for the countries that receive international students:

The export of education services (by an “import” of foreign students) has become a money machine…merely to provide for the service demand of the foreign students, [in the USA alone] hundreds of thousands of jobs are created…as many of the successful students, and especially the very successful, stay [in the host country] after their studies have ended. (Straubhaar, 2000, p. 8)

Popp, Hums, and Greenwell (2009) explored the various reasons student athletes give for participating in sports at the NCAA Division I level. Whereas some seek to gain entry into professional sports, others participate in sports to earn a scholarship and a degree. Popp et al. studied whether or not international student athletes viewed sports...
participation as having a different purpose, compared with domestic U.S. athletes. They argued that national sport policies, first of all, might influence student-athlete perceptions of the purpose of sport. Popp et al. reported studies have found that many international athletes may seek entry into U.S. sports to obtain access to better coaching and facilities, and because they are attracted by the publicity garnered by intercollegiate athletes. These athletes will hope to become elite athletes and want only to compete on the world stage.

Research has shown that 40% of international athletes in recent Olympics competed at one time or another for an NCAA team (Popp et al., 2009). International student athletes generally have more confidence in themselves as athletes and, because of that, require less mental preparation for competition than their American counterparts.

**Racism in sports culture.** In the United States, a sport as a social institution has been called a “contested terrain” where racial stratification is enacted (Primm, DuBois, & Regoli, 2007, p. 239). To determine the degree to which the changing racial nature of sports competitors in all U.S. sports was represented in major media, Primm et al. (2007) examined covers of *Sports Illustrated* magazine over the course of 30 years to see if racial bias persisted. Their study was theoretically based in critical race theory (CRT), a theory created by legal scholars to understand the implications of race within the judicial system and legislation (Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). The researchers argued that racism remains widespread, though veiled, behind the rhetoric of color-blindness, individualism, and merit. This covert racism is also called neo-racism insofar as “rather than focusing on biological inferiority, emphasizes cultural inferiorityism” and may even seem like racism of the past (Primm et al., 2007, p. 243). Primm et al. noted that participation of African Americans in intercollegiate sports has
declined in recent years, and that African Americans remain underrepresented in managerial and coaching positions. Most collegiate teams also practice what is called stacking: selective placement of players based on presumed intelligence level, often resulting in underrepresentation of African American athletes in key functionary or skill positions, such as quarterback on football teams. Whereas Whites become pitcher, quarterback, middle linebacker, and point guard, Blacks are more likely to occupy positions, such as running back, receiver, and outfield positions (Primm et al., 2007).

According to Pimm et al. (2007), African American athletes are also pushed more often into sports conceived of as more violent, undoubtedly due to lingering stereotypes that African Americans are more physically powerful. African Americans have also been commoditized in similar ways in the media that covers sports, providing the rationale for these researchers’ analysis of 802 covers of *Sports Illustrated* in terms of their racial content. Accordingly, they looked at which sports were depicted, how they were represented, and if factors changed during particular time periods. Their expectation was that as African American athletes participated more in professional and collegiate sports, the proportion of covers with African American athletes on them would increase. This did not materialize in the findings: The rate of representation of African American athletes remained the same. This was interpreted by Primm et al. as a sign of neo-racism. Also, when football players appeared on the cover, there was a lower probability that the representative athlete would be Black. Primm et al. related this to the stacking problem in that African American athletes are less likely to be given such status jobs as quarterback that come to represent the franchise.
That many international student athletes are of color inevitably overlays their experience on the previous and current status of racial politics in the United States. It may be of some significance that *Black Issues in Higher Education* (“Young College Athletes,” 2003) reported almost over a decade ago that Black and White student athletes at U.S. universities now hold more or less equal views on the degree to which racial discrimination persists and manifests barriers to African American athletes. Rather than declaring the end to race based on these results, the findings were interpreted as indicating the degree to which athletes, in particular, are trained to ignore race on the field, and also that athletes as such live and enjoy separate, elite lives, which “elevates them from their racial and ethnic groups” (p. 1). These findings suggested that even with African American athletes, the athlete identity supersedes the racial identity of the student “because athletic teams train, travel, compete and win or lose together, which can lead to feelings of racial distinctiveness and a downplaying of racial division” (p. 2). Characterizing their status as “faceless,” the researchers found that participation in athletics blurs or even erases the color line. Whether or not it is a good thing for an African American athlete to develop a notion of *racelessness* in a world still marked by race remains a question. These findings also indicated that athletic competition is a form of what might be called hyper acculturation whereby admission into an elite in-group allows for changes in social and cultural values not reflected in “the real world.”

Bourdieu highlighted the degree to which U.S. based anti-racists are fostering initiatives while exporting their own cultural and political assumptions “under the banners of human rights and respect for diversity” to all cultures (Bonnett, 2006, p. 1088). This often entails these activists’ trying to clarify issues abroad by imposing on
local discourses a notion of Black versus White that is derived solely from U.S. history. For many, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean Community, also known as CARICOM, neo-liberal globalization espousing human rights values appears to be yet another stage of colonialism. A “triumphalist zeitgeist” (Bonnett, 2006, p. 1098) has emerged about U.S.-Americanization and neo-liberal globalization based on the belief that these values have won the ideological war for world domination and that “people everywhere see them as forces of enrichment and counter-authority: They offer freedom, wealth and a better way of life” (Bonnett, 2006, p. 1098). Bonnett (2006) noted that, insofar as this attack on ethnicity and racism is carried out in a world dominated by the United States, the degree to which the particular articulation of counter-authoritarian values will lead to freedom remains a question. Clearly, the discourse of neo-racism emerged in the interstices of the tensions and paradoxes of the globalized world order dominated by American neo-liberal values.

**Discrimination.** With regard to integrating into campus life, studies have shown that many international students experience troubles in the United States (Lee & Rice, 2007). Looking at more subtle institutional-level discrimination, research on West African women studying science in the United States found professors questioning the ability of the women to do the work, and the students’ reporting “feelings of exclusion and a lack of support emanating directly from prejudicial attitudes” (Lee & Rice, 2007, p. 388). The main problem that Lee and Rice (2007) had with most of the studies on the acculturative problems of international students was that these studies assumed that the students bore the responsibility to adapt to the host society, and no call was made for the host society to overcome prejudicial attitudes.
Discrimination is the most difficult social issue with which an international student must deal (Lee & Rice, 2007). Lee and Rice (2007) studied the perceptions of 24 students from 15 countries attending a university in the U.S. Southwest to determine the degree of discrimination they experienced. The researchers used neo-racism as their framework to guide and ground the study. The importance of utilizing neo-racism theory is that there is in the literature on international students a tendency to ascribe discrimination to acculturation problems. There is the assumption that the sense of discrimination will go away once those problems are dealt with. Neo-racist perspective posits that there remain problems in the host society that may preclude the eventual assimilation of some international students. Lee and Rice (2007) made use of neo-racist theory because they found divergent stories between White international students and students of color. From this perspective, the same forces that explain the persistence of the achievement gap between White and Black, the overrepresentation of African Americans in special education, and the underrepresentation of African Americans in higher education but an overrepresentation of African Americans in intercollegiate sports would explain the recent interest to recruit students from all over the world (Gillborn, 2005).

In writing sports history and studying the influence of American sports around the world, Pope (2007) argued that the legacy of American exceptionalism persists while failing to see the imperial program behind much exportation of sport or the purported American quest for dominance. Pope agreed with revisionist so-called “transnationality” scholars that any history of the United States must also be framed by histories of other countries and the world. In this context, he found that current values implicit in
American sport could be traced to origins in the struggle against Great Britain (and have some fundamentally similar applications to CARICOM international student athletes). From the original exceptionalism of Puritans to the efforts throughout the 19\textsuperscript{th} century to remove British control of various fields, U.S. exceptionalism characterized the rise of sports (Pope, 2007). Thus, “the development of an American sporting tradition was…incubated within a wider struggle against European colonialism as well as within a messianic sense of national destiny” (Pope, 2007, p. 97). Sports were subsequently made use of by Americans, as by the English before them, as a force that could assimilate and civilize, for example, Native Americans. The Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), for example, adopted British muscular Christianity as an ethos, imbuing sport with middle-class, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant ideology.

**Internal Factors: Sports Identity and Acculturation**

In order to assimilate to a new group as quickly and easily as possible, the international student athlete must make a concerted effort to overcome the discrimination he or she may encounter and focus on his or her own attitudes and behaviors. In particular, research shows that time management is a crucial factor in a student athlete’s level of success or failure. Further, how a student athlete perceives his/her own race in relation to the student’s chosen sport team is also important as the student athlete attempts to identify and understand his/her own self in the mix. Lastly, the degree to which an individual student athlete feels optimistic or pessimistic and/or is competitive will also affect performance and the ability and ease at which acculturation can happen. Also relevant is how international students desiring to practice psychology in the United
States must acculturate more profoundly and more quickly than international students in other fields.

McLachan and Justice (2009) interviewed a sample of international students about particulars of the international student experience. The students interviewed originated from Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America; all were undergraduates with a wide range of majors. Analysis of themes from the interviews indicated that most of the students experienced change overload, that is, pressures and disorientation resulting from having to deal with too many changes all at once, and that these changes entailed differences in weather, food, academic expectations, and lack of familial support. Ninety-five percent of interviewed students reported feeling homesick and discomfort at being alone. Many respondents reported experiencing loneliness for the first time in their lives, and 75% believed that isolation and loneliness exacerbated the negative impact of a pressure to perform athletically and academically.

Chabaud, Ferrand, and Maury (2010) studied instances of procrastination in student athletes, both in sports and academic endeavors, in relation to the fact that college life demands meeting many deadlines, and a problem in academics could result in failure in sports. Chabaud et al. asserted that student athletes have time management problems. The degree to which procrastination behavior by student athletes was related to perfectionism was studied, making use of the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale entailing both intrapersonal and interpersonal perfectionism. The overall results helped frame student athlete culture at the college level as a highly pressurized zone that, in turn, may lead to maladaptive behavior by student athletes. Although self-oriented perfectionism can help an athlete reach goals, harshly critical self-appraisal can also
result in procrastination through self-handicapping (i.e., drinking alcohol and other self-harming behaviors) (Chabaud et al., 2010).

Possibly contributing to the degree to which international athletes gain a sense of belonging from participation sports would be the degree to which their larger ethnic group has developed identification with their particular sport (Harolle & Trail, 2007). Harolle and Trail (2007) examined the degree to which ethnic identity, acculturation, and identification with sports in general improved the self-identity of Latinos living in the United States. The study was based on social identity theory and identity formation theory. Social identity theory argues that a person’s self-image is formed by social group membership, and that one identifies with the group based on whether or not such identification satisfies one’s self-image in a positive way. Identity formation theory argues that identity formation leads to positive outcomes. Ethnic identity is defined as “a referent to an individual’s ethnic origin, the perceived relationship with their ethnic group, and their perception of others in and out of that group” (Harolle & Trail, 2007, p. 236). This can entail a sense of belonging, positive evaluation of the group, preference for the group, and ethnic interest. Acculturation was measured bi-dimensionally, which involved connecting to one’s ethnic group and developing relationship with a larger group or society (Harolle & Trail, 2007). Sports team identification is one way in which a person not only develops an identity but also can negotiate acculturation, either linking or decoupling sports teams and ethnic identity. Sports team identification at the college level can also extend to the college and college life as a whole. In general, Harolle and Trail found little association between acculturation and identification with sports or with any sport specifically. Latinos do not necessarily associate with one sport as opposed to
another, and do not appear to value sports more than most Americans. With regard to international student athletes, the implications of these findings would be that those athletes’ sports identities might decouple from ethnic identity as part of the acculturation process.

Additionally, Czech, Burke, Joyner, and Hardy (2002) explored the degree to which college student athletes have levels of optimism or pessimism as well as a sport orientation expressed through competitiveness and a win- and goal-orientation to determine why they are successful or not. Student athletes from 15 teams were surveyed making use of the Life Orientation Test-Revised and the Sport Orientation Questionnaire. Previous research has found sport success to be linked to an optimistic attitude, with Caucasian men being more optimistic than women and Asian American students. Another study in New Mexico found that Anglo boys were more optimistic than Navajo boys and girls (Czech et al., 2002). Results demonstrated that whereas all athletes had more-or-less similar levels of optimism and pessimism, all had a higher level of optimism than their peers who did not participate in sports. This higher level of optimism is likely based on confidence in their skills and achievement level (Czech et al., 2002). Czech et al. interpreted these results to mean that for persons who are highly competitive and have a strong work ethic, whether or not they are optimistic or pessimistic may not mean much. Even so, men had a stronger win-orientation, and African American men in particular had the strongest win-orientation. Czech et al. ascribed the more positive goal orientation of boys to the fact that boys are more positively socialized into sports culture, meaning that their competitiveness and win-orientation develop more positively.

Athletes competing in team sports also had much higher win-orientation levels than those
competing in individual sports. It may be that “team sport athletes are more likely to conform to the normative behavior of a cohesive team” and are more influenced and protected by group norms (Czech et al., 2002, p. 144). Czech et al. cited socialization (a process somewhat comparable to acculturation) and team norm cohesion as the cause, suggesting that teams develop strong cultures, with sports teams again emerging as protective, separate cultures for international student athletes at the college level.

Academically, different areas of study require different levels and speeds of acculturation. Few departments have developed a rubric of training needs in terms of field professionalism, or determined the degree to which international students can measure up. Nilsson and Anderson (2004) studied this issue in the area of psychology, where about 5% of students who receive a degree are nonresident aliens. To determine if a sample psychology department had overcome language and cultural barriers to provide international students with a sense of counseling self-efficacy and supervisory experience, a sample of international psychology students was surveyed regarding the extent to which the program of study met their needs. Previous studies have found that psychology students in particular must be fluent in English and have a solid understanding of U.S. culture to practice in the United States, if that is their goal (Nilsson & Anderson, 2004). Thus, according to standard acculturation models, it would seem that psychology students in particular must have developed far along the acculturation continuum in order to succeed in the program. In the same way, every department would appear to have different acculturative demands on international students and different degrees of helping with the adjustment problem.
The 2004 Nilsson and Anderson study was based on the theory that counseling self-efficacy beliefs lead to the optimal practice of psychology. A sample of international students from 20 countries, 19% of whom came from Latin America, were surveyed using the Counseling Self-Estimate Inventory that focused on micro-skills, counseling process, ability to deal with difficult clients, cultural competence, and awareness of values, as well as the Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Inventory. The American-International Relations Scale was also utilized in addition to the International Student Supervision Scale, which measured the degree to which multicultural issues are discussed and how they influence relationships with one’s supervisors. Results showed a significant relationship between low levels of acculturation and less supervisory working alliance, less counseling efficacy, more role ambiguity, and more discussion of cultural issues in supervision for international students (Nilsson & Anderson, 2004). This means that students who are poorly acculturated will struggle to succeed in psychology, and therefore need additional intervention to ensure that cultural issues can be addressed to make supervision clear to them. A review of the literature failed to reveal any empirical study of CARICOM international student athletes’ problems with institutional issues.

McLachan and Justice (2009), on the basis of their findings, outlined a transition shock-survival strategy, which entailed creating a surrogate family, developing positive relationships with faculty members, and developing friends among other international students and with U.S. students, all of which could serve as protective factors with which individuals could develop confidence and adjust to university life. McLachan and Justice concluded that most universities still need to explore nontraditional approaches to offering university transition shock-management services. They also recommended that
informal workshops and arranged occasions to encourage interaction between international and domestic students would further improve the experience of international students.

Frey and Roysircar (2006) concluded that generalizations should be made with caution when it comes to international student acculturation. Insofar as a number of Caribbean athletes also come from countries formerly under British rule and have a command of English, these results differentiated international students per nationality. A search of the literature did not reveal any empirical studies of CARICOM international student athletes in the United States and the incidence of help-seeking behavior.

**Social issues.** The degree to which international student athletes mix sufficiently with other students in U.S. universities remains a concern (Bluestone, 2009). Bluestone (2009) reported this issue has become more pressing with the emergence of a more sociocultural perspective on learning, emphasizing the need for a student to become part of a community of learning to learn optimally. To examine the degree to which social relationships and acculturation met to improve learning, Bluestone examined the degree to which the social relationships formed by acculturating foreign students improved their acquisition of a second language. The issue was studied using an ecological model, which entailed a consideration of macro, micro, and internal levels of interaction influencing language acquisition. According to this model, the macro level involves a foreign student’s response to the host society at large and his/her overall willingness to acculturate; a micro level encompasses actual interpersonal social networks created by the student, whereas the internal level entails the self-identity the student develops as a result of the above.
The four-strategy acculturation model was utilized, entailing assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization, which respectively involves accepting or rejecting the host culture, mixing them up, or refusing to identify with either culture (Bluestone, 2009). A number of variables can determine why an individual international student would adopt any of these strategies. The acculturation model has also been applied, more simplistically, to language learning, with acculturating students developing social contracts with L2 speakers, that is, assimilating through social contact, while others maintained a social distance from the host culture, inhibiting their language development. Whether or not one acculturates or retreats to social distance has been conceptualized as entailing a few stages, including first excitement upon exposure to a new culture, culture shock, gradual recovery, and assimilation or adaptation (Bluestone, 2009).

According to this theory, language mastery would only happen in the recovery phase where social distance pressures lessen but, to a certain extent, remain (Bluestone, 2009). This process was evidenced in a study of Hong Kong speakers of Chinese who failed to learn Cantonese because every time they tried to use it (assimilate), the local speakers would switch to English. Thus, lack of willingness of local speakers to speak in their native tongue with Hong Kongers led to lack of an expectation of assimilation, inhibiting language learning. Social distance as a concept, however, was actualized by Bluestone (2009) by incorporating a model derived from social network theory according to which one establishes a network of first-order and second-order zones, consisting of either exchange networks or interactive networks. There are also clusters, where first-order zone persons all know each other, creating dense networks and reinforcing group
norms and those less connected. Moreover, persons can also have uniplex and multiplex contacts (Bluestone, 2009).

In studies of American women in Norway, Chinese men in New York City, and Hispanic females in New York City, these dynamics have also been found to influence the degree to which an immigrant learns a second language (Bluestone, 2009). With regard to self-identity, the theory of identity slippage as well as the concept of investment have clarified the internal dynamics of the acculturation process. These theories account for power relationships and their influence on learning too, either inhibiting or promoting assimilation. In this line of research, some studies have found that immigrants establishing for themselves an identity as an athlete made them “more acceptable” to White classmates, accelerating their language learning process (Bluestone, 2009). In another case study of a student from the Dominican Republic, the development of a bicultural identity—developing new contacts and maintaining old ties—improved language learning. Thus, from this line of research, athletics is anecdotally mentioned as one pathway by which immigrant students can not only become more socialized in the host culture, but also develop a particular athletic identity in a way that apparently transcends race and accelerates the process of assimilation (Bluestone, 2009).

Insofar as political issues can be construed as social issues, it could be said that they have accounted for declining enrollment in U.S. universities by international students since 9/11 (Lee & Rice, 2007). Reports have indicated that enrollment of international students dropped by 2.4% in 2005 and have continued to drop since then. Many reasons have been given for this decline, ranging from greater national security concerns making it more difficult for international students to enter the United States, and
for the same reason, student reluctance to enroll in a U.S. university, to the reported increase in hostility and discrimination of foreign students (Lee & Rice, 2007). A typical example of the latter dynamic is that in the years after 9/11, hundreds of Middle Eastern international students withdrew from schools “rather than live in fear of reprisal after September 11” (Lee & Rice, 2007, p. 383). A search of the literature failed to reveal any study of the social issues faced by CARICOM international student athletes studying in U.S. universities.

**Sport motivation.** An important area of study in sports derives from the fields of personality and social psychology: studying the topic of achievement motivation and how it influences sports participation and performance (Ryska, 2001). According to social cognitive theory, achievement-related behavior is linked to a motivational orientation. Goal perspective theory has linked this insight to sports, finding that athletes have either task or ego involvement in construal of personal success or failure. That is, task-oriented athletes define success in terms of task mastery, fulfillment of potential, and skill improvement, whereas ego-oriented athletes focus on other-referenced standards, including outperforming opponents and demonstrating superior ability (Ryska, 2001). Motivational orientation has been found to influence the way one assesses skill performance, perceived competence, and sportspersonship (Ryska, 2001). More recently, researchers have indicated that these orientations can differ according to culture, meaning that cultural identity determines goal perspectives (Ryska, 2001). Thus, studies of Navajo athletes found that their culturally different view of time and competition influenced the development of their motivational goals in sport. Asians have been found to have developed mainly a task-oriented approach to sports, emphasizing affiliation with
others and in-group harmony, whereas Western athletes tend to strive for demonstrations of high personal ability and individuality (Ryska, 2001).

Studies of Latin American athletes have also found discrepancies between their goal perspectives and those in Anglo society (Ryska, 2001). Mexican American athletes have been found to place more emphasis on fulfilling collective needs and interests related to community than on worrying over individual interests. Sports in Mexico are meant to foster cooperation and mutual dependence within interpersonal relations and not to develop individuality. The cooperative social motives of Mexican athletes run counter to the American focus on competition and outcomes. Mexican-American culture also places more emphasis on current experience as opposed to future actions, meaning that Mexican athletes are less willing to work for long-term goals. Thus whereas Mexican American athletes and students are more likely to measure success based on personal improvement or one’s capacity to help the group, Anglo athletes attribute athletic success to ability, and failure to lack of effort (Ryska, 2001).

Mexican American athletes become acculturated when they begin to perceive the more competitive climate of American sports and exhibit more independent and assertive attitudes about their participation in sports. Although Ryska (2001) examined this issue in a sample of 163 public-school, Mexican American students using the Task and Ego Orientation in Sport Questionnaire and the Acculturation Scale for Hispanics, it was concluded that the ability to speak English and having more Anglo friends contributed to a higher degree of acculturation, resulting in adjustment of collective values to competitive, individualist ones. The results nonetheless indicated that the phenomenon of international athletes dealing with acculturation was also linked to their very
achievement motivation in sports. Ryska also found that male athletes placed more emphasis on ego and competition than female athletes. This finding appeared to Ryska to reflect the Latino culture focus on *machismo*—the need for men to demonstrate interpersonal superiority and aggression.

A model was developed to determine the different reasons that one goes into sport, dividing motivational tendencies into task-oriented and ego-oriented motivation. Individuals who enter sports for task-oriented reasons seek to develop positive attributes and skills, to maintain good health, and to learn teamwork (Popp et al., 2009). By contrast, ego-oriented participants view the purpose of sport as enhancing one’s social position and winning.

Seven reasons were determined as to why persons enter sports: (a) mastery/cooperation, (b) physically active lifestyle, (c) good citizen persona, (d) competitiveness, (e) high-status career, (f) enhanced self-esteem, and (g) social status (Popp et al., 2009). From these reasons, athletes respectively felt that sports should teach them teamwork, improve their physical fitness, teach them loyalty and sacrifice, teach them competition and aggression, lead to a good career, make them feel more confident in themselves, make them feel like a winner, and improve their popularity and standing with peers. On the basis of this research, the Purpose of Sport Questionnaire was developed, which Popp et al. (2009) then administered to a sample of international and domestic athletes at a Division I university. Only one of the approximately 90 athletes surveyed was from a Caribbean country. Results indicated that domestic athletes felt that the purpose of sport was more about competition than did international athletes (Popp et al., 2009).

International athletes viewed sports at the NCAA level as just another sporting endeavor,
“which could cause them to de-emphasize the athletic component while emphasizing other aspects of the university experience” (Popp et al., 2009, p. 93). Whereas domestic athletes defined their success based on sports, international student athletes were more interested in the broader academic experience. In exploring this difference, Popp et al. surmised that because international athletes were raised in and would continue to be supported by club systems through their professional careers, they were more likely to participate at the professional level, whereas most American collegiate athletes end their playing career in college, because it is far more difficult to enter professional sports in the United States.

American athletes put much more emphasis on gaining results now in competition and place much more pressure on defining themselves through sports now (Popp et al., 2009). Whereas American athletes appeared to be obsessed with the competitive aspect of sport, international student athletes only wanted to demonstrate their abilities regardless of competitive success. International athletes reported that they felt that U.S. coaches overemphasized the killer instinct and winning-is-everything ethos, whereas their homeland coaches emphasized the importance of participation and the health benefits. Both international and American athletes, however, highly ranked enhancing career status as one of the purposes of sports. Athletes from Latin America, in particular, emphasized the importance of sports’ teaching good citizenship, suggesting to Popp et al. (2009) that sports culture there may place more emphasis on discipline, sacrifice, and loyalty. Although Popp et al. interpreted the results as providing U.S. recruitment efforts and coaches with insight into how to attract and treat international athletes, it is also true that the difference in perception of the purpose of sport, primarily differentiated along the
lines of competition, could be a negative factor in the assimilation of international student athletes into competitive NCAA sports. No study was found in a review of the literature linking any of the aforementioned factors with the acculturation of CARICOM international student athletes studying in the United States.

Trendafilova et al. (2010) found that NCAA-level international student athletes playing for Division 1 football teams who completed the Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire were more or less satisfied with their experiences, including social support, team integration, and personal treatment by personnel. They were also satisfied with their academic experience. Results showed that male athletes were more satisfied with the local university community than female athletes. The finding that international students were especially satisfied with their academic support services strongly suggested that they had broader motives in coming to play sports in the United States. Trendafilova et al. recommended that to improve the experience of international athletes at U.S. universities, coaches should develop programming that addresses university-wide issues of student satisfaction, beyond sports.

**Career beliefs.** Mahavedan (2010) studied the degree to which acculturation issues affected the career beliefs of Indian, Chinese, and Korean international students in U.S. universities. Mahavedan determined the degree to which cultural values influenced career choices, and whether or not the acculturation process expanded or limited those choices. In addition to filling out a demographic questionnaire, respondents also answered questions on the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale and the Career Beliefs Inventory. The acculturation scale measures the degree to which the respondent has moved along an ethnic-identity continuum, from attached to traditional or
at-home culture to responding to the host culture and thus entering a more assimilative acculturative state. Previous studies using the scale have found that level of acculturation influences everything from mental to physical health as well as work values, career orientation, and career choice (Mahavedan, 2010). The results of Mahavedan’s study were inconclusive, most likely, the researcher explained, because an acculturation scale related to career choice also needs to measure financial concerns, respect for authority figures, and other factors linked to Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs. Mahavedan could only conclude that acculturation degree does not influence career choice. A search of the literature showed no studies of the degree to which career beliefs affect CARICOM international athletes and concomitant acculturation stress.

**Depression.** Sumer, Poyrazli, and Grahame (2008) examined the degree to which acculturative stress led to depression among international students. Previous studies found that social support was negatively associated with depression, especially among female students, and that students with higher emotional response to the experience of acculturation were more likely to experience homesickness. A collectivist cultural identity was also found to be more closely associated with greater sensitivity to social experiences, resulting in depression.

A sample of international students, including both Asian and Latino students, were examined using the Goldberg Depression Scale, the State Anxiety Scale of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, and the Social Provisions Scale. Sumer et al. (2008) included the variables of gender, age, race, length of stay, social support, and English language proficiency. The results showed that social support was a significant predictor of depression among international students, with those students experiencing less social
support being more susceptible to depression. Age and English language proficiency provided some variance. Younger students appeared to be more flexible and open to new experiences and cultures than were older students. Latino international students experienced far more depression than Asian students.

These results appear to have some relevance to the case of international students, who would be more likely to experience social support in a team and yet generally be older than traditional college students. Dao, Donghyuck, and Chang (2007) also studied the issue of depression in international students, but focused on one group of students, those from Taiwan. Some 112 graduate-level international students were surveyed, using the Self-Reported Fluency of English Scale, the Social Support Questionnaire-Short Form, the Siunn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale, and the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale, for the relationship between acculturation, perceived English proficiency, social support, and depression. Females who were poorly acculturated and perceived themselves to have a low proficiency in English were found to be more at risk for depression.

Tochkov, Levine, and Sanaka (2010) explored the incidence of depression in a particular group of international students, Asian-Indian students, and measured the onset of homesickness. The study was a comparison of a sample of Indian students with a control group of American students, all freshmen. The research was grounded in previous models of homesickness that have related it to a grief-like response to separation from loved ones, and thus conceptualized as a form of separation anxiety. Students with strong connections with family members are likely to experience the worst cases of homesickness (Tochkov et al., 2010). Tochkov et al. concluded that if students were
unable to replace social support provided by family with a circle of friends, depression was more likely from homesickness. In effect, the ability of freshmen students to create a home away from home at college was key to their mental health.

Tochkov et al. (2010) also studied 75 students from India for their demographic variables, and with the Homesickness Questionnaire, the Beck Anxiety Questionnaire, and the Beck Depression Inventory. Results showed that the Indian student sample was more likely to suffer from depression and homesickness, but that some avoided the problem if they had financial aid, accumulated more credit hours, had a moderate course load, or were interested in looking for a job in the United States after graduation. Length of stay also predicted homesickness. Additionally, Tochkov et al. conjectured that the distance from home of international students would increase homesickness, preventing visits back home during the course of the year. The literature search failed to reveal any studies of the occurrence of depression among CARICOM international athletes attending U.S. institutions of higher education.

**Social distance.** In describing the acculturation process of international students at a British university, Burnapp (2006) enlisted ideas from phenomenological geography to better understand the nuances of the process. According to phenomenological geography, one comes to understand a space by first knowing it as a space, and then in time, knowing it as a place. This entails a movement from perceiving a space as new and undifferentiated to imposing values on it through the experience of it (Burnapp, 2006). The emotional states linked to stages of this progression can be classified in terms of moving from existential to objective or incidental outsideness, and then moving from vicarious insideness to behavioral, empathetic, and existential insideness, with the last
being the knowledge that “this place is where you belong” (Burnapp, 2006, p. 85). Most immigrants generally come to create what Burnapp called a third space in this continuum, somewhere in between. The distinction between difference, with the subaltern marginalized fragmentation, where a multiplicity of identities prevails, and hybridity, where a third space emerges, is characterized by fluidity and internationality of identity (Burnapp, 2006).

Burnapp (2006) discussed how a seminar class at a university can become a place, metaphorically, for international students, abiding by the theory that a place is more a matter of cultural definition than of actual location, with one scholar in the field noting that “a ship constantly changing its location is nonetheless a self-contained place, and so is a gypsy camp, and Indian camp or a circus camp” (Burnapp, 2006, p. 86). When interviewing international students in the seminar, Burnapp found a number of different u-curve or learning curve profiles in terms of moving from space to place, developing a third space, possibly with some sense of existential insideness. Burnapp concluded that most international students live in a state of constantly changing hybridity that never results in complete acculturation and that interventions should work to help international students exploit all of their advantages to find some space in the hybrid world, which becomes a place. Whereas Burnapp primarily addressed the degree to which a particular seminar could become such a place, the implications for sports teams are clear: It may well be that the context of a sports team affords international students a different kind or degree of acculturation. A search of the literature found no studies of the causes or effects of social distance on CARICOM international student athlete studying in U.S. institutions of higher education.
Help-seeking behavior. Frey and Roysircar (2006) studied acculturative problems experienced by international students at U.S. universities and any correlation between international students’ acculturated experiences and help-seeking behavior. Noting that most international students adjust to the demands of college life, Frey and Roysircar acknowledged that some students succumb to problems linked to acculturation, the experience of racism, and lack of access to a support system. Expectations were that if international students sought help more effectively, acculturative stress would be reduced. The research was based on defining international students as sojourners, that is, persons taking up temporary residence in the United States for the purpose of receiving an education, a situation that distinguished them from immigrants. One factor the researchers discovered that contributes to problems with acculturation was that the international student may not seek help.

Frey and Roysircar (2006) noted other studies have shown that a great many of these students experience racism and have trouble with acculturation, with most Asian students reporting alienation from others. Researchers found that increased contact with locals improved the acculturation process, even as many international students report having few American friends. Underutilization of health services by international students has been linked to lack of trust, lack of knowledge of services, and a cultural stigma linked to seeking formal help for mental health problems. Cultural identity factors also influence whether or not help will be sought. For example, Asian students are typically raised to take responsibility for their own health, and if situated in a communal context, they only exhibit seeking help if they need it from family (Frey & Roysircar, 2006).
Institutional issues. One issue that represents both an institutional and cultural issue that negatively impacts the lives of international student athletes is the issue of amateurism (Abbey-Pinegar, 2010). Abbey-Pinegar (2010) argued that differences between the American definition of amateurism and global notions of the concept have created some complicated legal situations with regard to international student athlete eligibility. Abbey-Pinegar contended that at present, international student athletes are more likely to have had some kind of professionalized support in their past, and as such, their inclusion in U.S. college sports has helped to “push the limits of amateurism standards” (p. 345).

Amateurism as a concept emerged as a distinction between being paid for an activity and therefore becoming a professional, and participating in an activity as a pastime, unpaid (Abbey-Pinegar, 2010). This concept was then applied to sports, separating unpaid from paid competitors. International Olympic Committee Rule 26 states that for a global athlete to be considered an amateur, he or she must have participated in sports “as an avocation without material gain of any kind” (as cited in Abbey-Pinegar, 2010, p. 345); though recently, it has relaxed this rule by allowing different governing bodies in different parts of the world to interpret this rule on their own. As it became apparent that more and more so-called amateur athletes were subsequently profiting from their success, or were able to train through funding that could be construed as a violation of amateurism, the Olympics finally invited professionals to be part of the games, mainly to rid themselves of what they termed the hypocrisy of the distinction between amateur and professional in today’s global sporting culture (Abbey-Pinegar, 2010).
The reason why the more classical notion of amateurism remains in the United States is that the United States is the only country in the world with a robust competitive sports system linked to universities (Abbey-Pinegar, 2010). In the NCAA, an athlete must still be an amateur, and must also be a student. The rules of the NCAA state that all student athletes must be amateurs and that “their participation should be motivated primarily by education and by the physical, mental and social benefits that can be derived” (Abbey-Pinegar, 2010, p. 348). Even in the face of increased commercialization of NCAA sports, the NCAA has held firm to the position that sports is an avocation practiced by students, and not a professional pursuit (Abbey-Pinegar, 2010).

Wolverton (2008) contended the degree to which the drive to assemble a winning team has so overwhelmed regulations in the college sports climate of today that when the NCAA took control of the eligibility process in 2008, taking decision-making power away from individual universities, its first round of decisions, seeking to reinforce the notion of amateurism, was met by a storm of protest. Such “pushback” of protest from athletic departments not only surprised the NCAA, but indicated the degree to which the ethos of winning at all costs has become the norm at most universities (Wolverton, 2008).

The process by which international students could apply to and attend American universities was lengthened and made more complicated by the Immigration and Naturalization regulations in the years after 9/11 (Gardiner & O’Toole, 2002). As Gardiner and O’Toole (2002) summarized their problem: “The wait is longer, and the scrutiny more severe” (p. 1), a process described by experts as laborious and lengthy (though this problem appeared to abate some after about 2008). Generally, the number of international athletes competing in Division 1 men’s basketball increased from 135 in
1993 to 366 in 2003. The new rules mandated a 3-week minimum waiting period on non-immigrant visa applications to give the State Department time to cross-check applicants’ names with FBI terrorism databases. Coaches reported losing team players because of complications in the new regulations. The number of international students coming to the United States also began to decline out of fear of the travel and going through the immigration process. A number of international students interpreted the “war on terror” to mean that there was a war going on in America, making them reluctant to come over (Gardiner & O’Toole, 2002). Players from some countries, such as Pakistan, seemed unlikely to be granted access to the United States. In any event, these anecdotal remarks recorded the fact that in addition to the acculturation process and the eligibility problem, international athletes must today deal with an added layer of stress related to the current geopolitical situation (Gardiner & O’Toole, 2002).

The NCAA has also reversed its ruling on eligibility, finally granting some foreign athletes formerly considered ineligible the right to play (DeCourcy, 2004). DeCourcy (2004) called it only “common sense” that a player who had played for a professional club in Argentina when in junior college be cleared to play. Evidence that these decisions have impacted foreign players was provided by one athlete’s response, “I’m so happy, I can’t explain it” (as cited in DeCourcy, 2004, p. 8).

By contrast, the European model of sport is based on a club system, governed by a national sport federation, where there is no distinct concept of amateurism (Abbey-Pinegar, 2010). All clubs are financed through various types of fees and sponsorships and do not operate within the bounds of a “stark demarcation” between amateur and professional. This has meant that young athletes may receive some form of remuneration
for their competition and may turn professional as early as age 16. This situation creates problems when such an athlete would then decide he or she wanted to attend a university in the United States.

European-model players lose their amateur status by playing for a professional team well before entering college (Abbey-Pinegar, 2010). It is also common for club athletes, even as children, to be paid stipends and receive free gear. Abbey-Pinegar (2010) concluded that although it would appear that this clash of cultural values prohibits many of these students from pursuing education in the United States, “these rules are not as hindering as one would imagine” (p. 350). In most legal cases to the present, insofar as the right to compete intercollegially is not a constitutionally protected right, the NCAA has been able to uphold its amateur status eligibility requirements. Nonetheless, many European athletes earn eligibility because it is difficult to research into their past, and many of the vague or grey areas on their application must remain so.

Determining whether or not a young applicant is an amateur or a professional is notoriously difficult, especially with athletes from Eastern Europe (Abbey-Pinegar, 2010). Understaffed compliance departments have exacerbated the problem. Swamped with international student athlete applications and pressured by coaches, many departments are reluctant to make a strict interpretation of status (Abbey-Pinegar, 2010). Since 2009, 472 international student athlete applicants to the NCAA were declared ineligible. The NCAA has established a mechanism by which an ineligible athlete can regain amateur status and be reinstated with a reinstatement commitment, investigating the case further to determine any mitigating circumstances and the seriousness of the violation (Abbey-Pinegar, 2010).
In 45% of the cases in a recent study of this process, some form of prohibited payment was the problem, whereas in 50% of the cases, previous professional competition was the issue (Abbey-Pinegar, 2010). In any case, 94 of the 472 applicants were reinstated based on the determination of the committee that their violations had not been intentional or serious. Abbey-Pinegar (2010) noted that international student athletes tended to be reinstated more often than U.S. students who violated the standard, with some observers complaining that in the eagerness to bring international student athletes to the United States, a leniency has developed in decisions.

The main problem with this situation, according to Abbey-Pinegar (2010), is that this then allows into U.S. amateur sports international student athletes who have, through previous professional experience, accumulated competitive advantages based on experience in sports. One coach complained that too many universities are taking on essentially professional athletes who have chosen to return to amateur status and then “beat up on younger, less experienced players” (Abbey-Pinegar, 2010, p. 360). Others complained that the rules on eligibility were constantly being broken. Abbey-Pinegar quoted a case where of 33 ineligible ISA tennis players, 28 were granted eligibility. It has also been argued that admission of international student athletes took away from the competitive rights of state athletes at state schools, and even worried that too many international student athletes would reduce local interest in intercollegiate sports (Abbey-Pinegar, 2010).

Abbey-Pinegar (2010) blamed the problem of leniency in interpreting the rules on the win-at-all-cost mentality that has come to dominate Division 1 intercollegiate sports, where international student athletes help teams win championships and schools earn
revenue. Between the lines of Abbey-Pinegar’s analysis of the problem of international student athlete eligibility, one can also detect a gap between these students and the homegrown U.S. athlete, between a former professional and a purely amateur athlete, as well as some friction between the presence of international student athletes and local expectations in terms of college team membership eligibility. Finally, there is little question that the process of navigating the eligibility system, going through eligibility trials, and then having to live with the decision, whether favorable or not, places the international student athlete in a conflicted and stressful situation that may continue throughout his or her NCAA career. Thus, in the gap between the United States and global notions of amateurism, sports cultures clash, creating transitional problems for international student athletes (Abbey-Pinegar, 2010). To date, no study has been done of institutional problems associated with CARICOM athlete’s attendance at U.S. universities.

Weston (2006) examined issues surrounding international student athletes and what their inclusion in sport was doing to change intercollegiate sports. The complexities of both academic and amateur status eligibility were reviewed. Weston expressed concern that an “arms race” in college sports has distorted the process by which state athletes compete at taxpayer-funded state universities, often putting American athletes at a disadvantage compared to international student athletes. Weston argued that not only are eligibility requirements inadequately monitored by the NCAA, but also colleges do not give international student athletes adequate support to adjust to American culture once they arrive and begin competing for the team. He concluded that in general, the
current system is exploitative and counterproductive to the development of athletic talent, both internationally and domestically.

**Implications**

The Caribbean student athlete perspective can be expanded through research. To further understand the subgroups that incorporate Caribbean culture would be beneficial. By examining each specific culture in each country, it would be easier to examine each country’s unique history. Another area of interest lies in the actual educational migration of Caribbean students for tertiary education. More information about Caribbean student athletes’ experiences post-college and their decisions to stay in the United States and/or other host country is also needed. Finally, research is needed in further understanding Caribbean student athlete experiences in college. Having more information on Caribbean student athletes will aid coaches, athletic administrators, university staff, and professional sport organizations to create a more inclusive environment for all students. The first step that ought to be taken is to fill in the gaps in higher education literature about the Caribbean student and student athlete. Doing so will bring awareness and give a voice to the experiences of Caribbean students in academic discourse. The knowledge gained through this body of literature will enable other sport scholars and collegiate officials to build awareness of the needs of international student athletes on college campuses.

**Author’s Note**

An elite athlete knows the feeling: the feeling of taking flight, your head clear of all thought, hair blowing in the wind, lungs aching for air, and the final, bursting excitement of knowing you have run faster than your competitor. My first reaction to winning a race is to close my eyes and listen to my racing heartbeat. That is when I take
a moment to swallow the glory of a win. That is when I know all my training has been worth it. Although this feeling never lasts more than 60 seconds for me, this feeling is the reason for all the hard work. I have been involved in athletics since I was very young, and have participated in football, basketball, swimming, lacrosse, and track and field. The pride I feel running is what separates the sports I merely like from the sports I love.

I was born and raised in Kingston, Jamaica. Every 4 years, I remember the profound silence overtaking the atmosphere before each race in the Olympics. That silence disappears with the crack of the starting gun, as the spectators rush to fill the auditory void with screaming, snapping fingers, and clapping pots. For my fellow Jamaicans and me, the Olympics are the most anticipated event to come around every 4 years. I do not remember when or how I learned of the journey these athletes had to take, in many cases to U.S. colleges and universities. Nor did I have any knowledge of how my fellow Jamaicans viewed their experiences as international student athletes. It seems that I have always known that if I wanted to be an Olympic athlete, I should compete in the U.S. college sport circuit.

Attending the Penn Relays (the oldest and largest track and field event in the United States), I witnessed the young athleticism of Jamaican high school students. It was there that I learned about the athletes: their names and high schools, their events and their best performances. It seemed to be the natural order of things: Jamaica’s high school’s elite athletes would eventually take the places prepared for them by other Jamaican athletes in the NCAA who dominated the Penn Relay meets.

Practices at any and all NCAA institutions are held at the same time every day of the week and are supplemented by weight room workouts three times a week. To be an
elite athlete at the collegiate level takes an amazing amount of hard work and dedication beyond the studies that most of the rest of the student body must do. Although I attended institutions of higher education to earn an advanced degree, I must admit that part of me believed that earning a place in NCAA competition meant something more to me that just earning a Bachelor’s degree, and part of me did not.

Looking back, I can see how my resolve to know the intimate details and histories of student athletes has shaped me. Being part of athletics, that is, being an athlete is an integral part of my identity. I embodied the ideals of strength and physical competence to add value and visibility to the awards in track and field. The fact that I am from Jamaica reaffirmed my “Jamaican-ness” and distinguished me from the population norm in the United States. My own social, historical, and practical experiences, for me as a student athlete, revolved around that very fact: I am Jamaican.

Although this project is focused on the experiences of Caribbean student athletes and this research is inspired by my own experiences and observations from working in collegiate athletics, this dissertation represented neither biography nor memoir. Instead, it was a starting point moving toward an understanding of what it means to be an international student athlete in a U.S. university. As my own narrative has revealed in this prologue, the NCAA athletic identity is neither static nor universal. The experience of leaving one’s homeland to come to the United States to study and compete is reconstructed and reenacted as each individual journey commences and develops. The experience of being a Jamaican student athlete has profoundly affected how I understand myself as an athlete, an athletic administrator, and a scholar. When I look at student athletes now (particularly those from the Caribbean), I often compare the similarities in
my own journey. I am aware, of course, that my experience in a U.S. high school was different than for the Jamaican students migrating to the United States for athletic and educational opportunities. Their experiences remind me of former Jamaican athletes who have competed at the NCAA level. This study, therefore, essentially asked “What meaning does U.S. athletic scholarship hold for Caribbean student athletes?” The thorough and careful examination of the experiences of Jamaican student athletes in the NCAA will be helpful in directing the actions and policies of those who wish to improve the experiences overall for international student athletes in the U.S. collegiate athletic system. This research may serve as a touchstone for future student athletes as they navigate the system.
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This study attempts to identify and understand the experiences of Jamaican student athletes in higher education institutions in the United States that contributed to their acculturation, their level of satisfaction with their experiences, and how valuable their experiences were in relation to their plans, including whether or not they made decisions to stay or leave their respective institutions.

The data gathered and analyzed addressed the study’s primary research question:

• What academic acculturation challenges face Jamaican student athletes studying in U.S. postsecondary educational institutions?

Supporting this question, the data and accompanying analysis reflected participant responses to the following two sub-research questions:

• SQ1: How does a neo-racist theoretical framework explain academic acculturation challenges of Jamaican student athletes in U.S. higher education institutions?

• SQ2: What are salient factors that influence the academic success or failure of Jamaican student athletes of color studying in U.S. higher education institutions?
Chapter 3 provides the rationale for the research methodology used to explore contributing factors in the overall experience of these Jamaican student athletes. More specifically, this chapter discusses the appropriateness of the qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological method as the study’s chosen research approach, the population selected, data collection procedures, internal and external validity, and the manner in which the resulting data was analyzed.

Rationale

The expansion of U.S. intercollegiate athletics has provided international student athletes with opportunities to attend higher education institutions in the United States. Comprising approximately 15% of the overall student populations at U.S. institutions of higher education (Bok, 2003; Sato & Burge-Hall, 2008), international student athletes, however, are among one of the most isolated populations on college campuses (Kimball, 2007). Jamaican student athletes who study and participate in sports in U.S. colleges have varied experiences depending on the level of acculturation of the learner and issues of acculturation, academic success, language, and neo-racism (Lee & Rice, 2007). The main purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the phenomenon of acculturation as it was experienced by Jamaican track and field student athletes who had been enrolled in higher education institutions in the United States. The selection of in-person and Skype interviews, using open-ended questions, provided the opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge about the perspectives of the issue being studied and the factors perceived by participants that affected acculturation and overall experience.

The study site and the selection of participants were crucial to an understanding of the phenomenon, knowledge of which might contribute to understanding the decision
such athletes made to leave or stay at their respective institutions. Husserl (1917) stated that “phenomenologists believe that understanding comes best through lived experience and that it is the cognitive inner experience that we, as researchers, should strive to understand and bring to light” (p. 2). The sample and the environment where the interviews took place helped generate a deep level of understanding of the phenomenon of attrition and resulted in a presentation of the findings at the conscious level (Patton, 2002). Having the participants return to a college campus helped in gathering rich data and memories from the participants as they recalled their own personal experiences.

**Research Approach**

High quality research has a number of essential components. It addresses issues of real importance that advance the body of knowledge on a particular subject, has defined constituency, and generalized findings for use by a wider audience (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Lio, 2004). Quality research focuses upon solutions to important issues affecting individuals, organizations or larger audiences (Huberman & Miles, 2002). This study sought to identify and understand the experiences of Jamaican track and field student athletes in higher education institutions in the United States that may have contributed to their acculturation, their level of satisfaction with their experiences, and how valuable their experiences were in relation to their future plans, including whether or not they made decisions to stay or leave their respective institutions.

Selection of a research methodology, whether quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method, results from insight into the features of each method as it pertains to the research problem, and in the case of this study, the attitudes and perceptions of Jamaican student athletes formerly attending U.S. institutions of higher education. Creswell (2003)
asserted that in qualitative research, “claims of knowledge are based upon constructed perspectives from multiple social and historical meanings of individual experiences” (p. 18). Accordingly, a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for this study because the attitudes and perceptions of former student athletes were to be widely explored.

**Qualitative Versus Quantitative Research**

Alternative research methods, such as quantitative research, would not completely address the size and scope of the study’s research questions. Conversely, other methods would not offer a comprehensive review of the issues or offer the level of understanding of Jamaican student athletes’ experiences regarding the current practice as it affects former school achievement. A quantitative design resulting in exact numerical measurements (Cooper & Schindler, 2006) was deemed inappropriate for the study of the lived experience of student athletes. Questions that would result in precise numerical data to be sorted statistically offering numerical explanations were not contemplated (Creswell, 2013) because the study’s intent was to explore attitudes and perceptions. Moreover, according to Trochim and Donnelly (2008), “Quantitative research is confirmatory and deductive in nature, while qualitative research is exploratory and inductive in nature” (p. 146). Furthermore, the problem in this study represented a phenomenon where the variables and patterns were unknown (Creswell, 2007); thus, a quantitative approach would not have met the needs of data collection and analysis. The value of the selected qualitative method is that the issues and phenomenon are viewed in context, whereas a quantitative study is viewed through a narrow hypothesis employing closed-ended questions while verifying theories. For these reasons, it is evident that a qualitative study is best suited for this research.
Hermeneutic Phenomenology

The selection of a hermeneutic phenomenological approach was deemed appropriate because the method is an inquiry approach useful for understanding a central phenomenon of acculturation from the perspective of the participants, taking into consideration the history and cultural background of the participants and the interaction within the new cultural environment (Laverty, 2003). Moreover, this approach provides a fitting strategy for qualitative inquiry by positioning the researcher within the study to collect data on participant meaning, focusing upon a phenomenon, and bringing personal value to the study (Laverty, 2003).

According to Laverty (2003), hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on bringing to light rich details about the life and experiences of individuals with which to create meaning and understanding of the phenomenon under study. In the same vein, Smith (1997) explained that hermeneutic phenomenology is a research methodology that aims at “producing rich textual descriptions of the experience of selected phenomena in the life world of individuals that are able to connect with the experience of all of us collectively” (p. 80). Based on the notion that hermeneutics allows for the researcher to apply interpretative elements to further explicate assumptions and meanings that stem from the narrations of the participants (Laverty, 2003), the study’s use of this approach facilitated the exploring of participants’ experiences from a personal, social, and cultural perspective that led to further abstraction and interpretation by the researcher.

Phenomenology versus hermeneutic phenomenology. Although phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology are often times used interchangeably, there are fundamental differences between these research philosophies. In this section,
the difference between these research philosophies is discussed, along with an explanation as to why the hermeneutic phenomenology approach works best for this study in depicting and explicating the experiences of Jamaican athletes in higher education institutions in the United States.

Simply explained, phenomenology is the study of lived experience in the world as the individual lives it (van Manen, 1997). Essentially, the emphasis of phenomenology is to explain the world as it is lived by an individual, without the distinction of this world or reality as being separate from the individual (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989). In other words, phenomenology attempts to answer the question “What is this experience like?” and seeks to unfold meanings of the experiences that are lived in daily existence.

Similarly, Polkinghorne (1989) asserted that the focus of phenomenology is to try to understand the meaning of human experience as it is lived. In phenomenology, the “life world” referred to by Husserl, the father of this philosophy, is understood as what individuals experience “pre-reflectively, without resorting to categorization or conceptualization, and quite often includes what is taken for granted or those things that are common sense” (Laverty, 2003, p. 2). Therefore, the study of phenomena intends to recall and reexamine taken-for-granted past experiences and unveil new and/or unrecalled meanings.

Similar to phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology looks at the life world and human experience the way individuals have lived it. Also, like phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on shedding light on details and what seem to be trivial aspects of the human experience that may have been taken for granted so that meaning and understanding can be achieved (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). However,
phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology explore the lived experience in different ways. Phenomenology focuses on understanding the phenomenon, whereas hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on the “mode of human being” or the “situated meaning of the human in the world” (Laverty, 2003, p. 24). And whereas phenomenology seeks to understand the perceptions of what individuals recall and think about the world and humans as “knowers,” hermeneutic phenomenology views humans as concerned creatures and focuses on their experiences and fate in an alien world (Laverty, 2003).

This differentiation between phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology is essential to understand why hermeneutic phenomenology is the most suitable research approach for this study. In hermeneutic phenomenology, consciousness does not exist apart from the world; but rather, it is a formation of all lived experience throughout time (Laverty, 2003). Therefore, the emphasis of hermeneutic phenomenology is on the “historicality of understanding one’s background or situatedness in the world” (Laverty, 2003, p. 4). In other words, a person’s history or background (historicality) incorporates the legacy of the person’s culture and how culture affects the way the person sees and understands the world. Therefore, pre-understanding the world based on one’s culture is something that happens automatically and that has to be taken into consideration when attempting to make sense of someone’s experiences in a cultural context.

Heidegger, the father of hermeneutic phenomenology, asserted that an individual cannot have any experience without referring to his or her background, and understanding the world from that perspective (Laverty, 2003). Therefore, according to Laverty (2003), there is an inseparable relationship between an individual and the world,
and we all construct the world and make meaning of it from our own backgrounds and experiences. Furthermore, there is a transactional relationship between the individual and the world, which stems from what the individual has constructed from his/her historicality and the constitution of the world in which that person has his/her experiences (Munhall, 1989).

Laverty (2003) further clarified the distinction between phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology. Whereas Creswell (2007) defined phenomenology as “a research strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants” (p. 13). Adding to this definition, Laverty explained that hermeneutic phenomenology is best suited to depict experiences in which the transactional value of the cultural and historic backgrounds of the participants is taken into account. Grounded on the premise that hermeneutic phenomenology views people and the world as indissolubly related in the context of culture, society, and history (Munhall, 1989), the focus of this phenomenological research study was to understand the attitudes and perceptions of Jamaican student athletes pertinent to their acculturation experiences in U.S. colleges and universities and the extent to which those experiences limited or enhanced their academic or athletic success in the new cultural setting.

In sum, the hermeneutical phenomenological approach was utilized to elicit rich and descriptive data. This led to identification of the phenomenon of the acculturation experiences of Jamaican athletes in U.S. higher education institutions in the cultural context and descriptions that stemmed from the historicality of the participants (i.e., the subjective, lived experience of being a Jamaican student athlete in the United States).
Hermeneutic phenomenology in past studies. Thuraisingam and Singh (2010) used a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to study the academic adjustment experiences of international students in Malaysia. The researchers used this approach because the objective of the study was to describe important aspects of the adjustment experiences of these immigrant students and understand them in the essence of the phenomenon of acculturation. Similar to the study by Thuraisingam and Singh, the present study attempted to make sense of the acculturation experiences of student athletes from Jamaica in higher education institutions in the United States.

Kozoll and Osborne (2003) studied the public education experiences of minority children, especially those of migrant workers. The study used a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to understand the personal and social development of these migrant students and how they constructed a personal identity in the educational context. The researchers used the hermeneutic phenomenological sense of the life world as it emerges as a system that defines choices and ways of acting within previously constructed values and present experiences. These interpretations of the life world stem from how the individual sees it and how these experiences and values are interconnected to formulate identities, personalities, and social roles. Therefore, Kozoll and Osborne turned to an exploration of the identity of these students in their experiences of teaching and learning science through hermeneutic phenomenology. In a similar way, the present study benefited from hermeneutic phenomenology in analyzing the acculturation experiences of Jamaican athletes in American higher education institutions.

Ruddock and Turner (2007) conducted a study about nursing students’ experiences in a study-abroad program. The study used a hermeneutic phenomenology
approach to explore whether the international learning experiences of nursing students promoted cultural sensitivity among these students. Hermeneutic phenomenology allowed the researchers to explore the cultural experiences of the international nursing students. Likewise, for the present study, hermeneutic phenomenology facilitated the depiction of the cultural experiences of Jamaican athletes in higher education institutions in the United States.

**Role of the Researcher**

Qualitative research procedures assist researchers in collecting data from individuals who are experiencing a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The object of qualitative research is exploratory; consequently, the researcher’s role is investigative. The researcher must be one with a tolerance for ambiguity, must possess an investigative nature, have sensitivity to personal prejudices, must be a good communicator, and have some knowledge of the subject matter under study (Merriam, 1998). The researcher for the present study was involved with athletics, hailing from Jamaica and completed all the coursework for a doctorate in higher education; she holds a Master's degree in Sports Management and a Bachelor’s degree in Kinesiology. Her academic background, together with 6 years of higher education and athletic administration experience, qualified her for the interview process that was part of this study.

**Data Collection**

In exploring Jamaican student athletes’ experiences and perceptions towards the current practices for international student athletics, the data collection for this study gathered information regarding participants’ acculturation experiences and the contexts or situations in which they experienced them. The rationale behind the choice of
hermeneutical phenomenological research is that it could help identify how Jamaican student athletes perceived their experiences and the effectiveness of current practice on successful completion of academic and athletic requirements. This information was identified through the inductive qualitative method of the interview, guided by an interview protocol.

In brief, the process of data collection proceeded in the following manner:

Permission to use human subjects was obtained from the University of Denver Institutional Review Board. After generating a list of potential candidates for the study, a letter of invitation and consent form were distributed to these prospective participants (Appendix B), followed by the purposeful selection of 11 participants. Interview appointments were made with each participant, and the procedure and conditions of the study were reviewed with them prior to the interview. Each participant received a gift card to a local coffee shop for participating in the study. More details on this data collection process are provided below.

The Interview

Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003), Hatch (2007), and Polit and Beck (2004) asserted that a qualitative interview approach to the collection of data is a common research method in the social sciences. Marshall and Rossman (2006) suggested, “Interviews allow the researcher to understand the meanings that everyday activities hold for people” (p. 102). Kahn and Cannel (1957) described interviews as “a conversation with a purpose” (p. 149).

Phenomenological hermeneutic interviews served as the main data collection method. At the root of hermeneutic phenomenology, “the intent is to understand the
phenomena in their own terms to provide a description of human experience as it is experienced by the person allowing the essence to emerge” (Cameron, Schaffer, & Hyeon-Ae, 2001, p. 34). Accordingly, use of the in-depth, personal interview as the study’s inductive qualitative method of inquiry helped identify how Jamaican student athletes perceived their experiences and the effectiveness of current practice on successful completion of academic and athletic requirement.

In a phenomenological study, “the participants...must be individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon being explored and can articulate their lived experiences” (Creswell, 2007, p. 119). Meeting this basic criterion, the purpose of the interview was to obtain raw data from candid individuals willing to share their lived experiences of the phenomenon under study. Qualitative data gathered from the interviews consisted of participants’ experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. The researcher took detailed notes to collect the participants’ responses and wrote reflective memos at the conclusion of each participant interview.

The length of each interview varied, lasting approximately 1 to 1½ hours. The tone of the interviews was conversational and casual to allow for the participants to relax and narrate their experiences without the restrictions of closed-ended questions and quantitative measurements that could prevent the collection of rich descriptions of their acculturation experiences. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy of participant responses.

The interviews took place in Kingston, Jamaica, at the University of the West Indies Library, in a private study room. I chose to conduct interviews in Jamaica, because out of the many islands in the Caribbean, Jamaica has a robust history of sending
student athletes to the United States, and most recently has achieved great success in the sport of sprinting. For those participants who were not in Jamaica at the time of the study, audio-recorded Skype calls were used to accommodate them. In Jamaica, in-person interviews were the primary source of data collection.

**Interview protocol.** The study was designed in such a way as to be implemented with an interview protocol, the answers of which served as a guide in the search for emerging themes. The study’s interview protocol contained a set of predetermined, open-ended questions to ensure consistency across all interviews. To develop this protocol, the researcher used preliminary data from a survey conducted from a previous class (Survey/Research & Design), the questions of which were directed to the participants’ experiences and feelings. Guided by the results of this survey, the researcher developed a semi-structured interview protocol. This protocol and a structured debriefing protocol process were subsequently used in the present study to identify perceptions and explore the insights and beliefs of the participants. Appendix A identifies the 21 semi-structured interview questions contained in the interview protocol.

**Sample and Participants**

Suzuki, Ahluwalia, Kwong-Ahora, and Mattis (2007) observed that the decision regarding the number of participants in a study is a reflection of the purpose of the study as well as access to reliable sources. Creswell (2007) contended a successful purposeful sample in a qualitative study could range from 1 to 40, and Polkinghorne (1989) noted from 5 to 25 participants in a qualitative study were sufficient. However, Creswell et al. (2007) suggested that 10 to 12 participants may be sufficient in qualitative studies involving the understanding of experiences and perceptions of participants. The
purposeful sample included 11 former Jamaican international student athletes from U.S. institutions of higher learning.

This selected group of participants attended the same institution for a total of 2 academic years so that they would have had ample time at the institution to adjust and acculturate. Selecting participants who had had a chance to experience the university for 2 years helped further explain their relationships over that time period, and why such relationships were successful or unsuccessful. Creswell (2013) asserted that the selection of individuals can “help the researcher to generate or discover a theory of specific concepts with the theory” (p. 205). The participants, located on and off the island of Jamaica, were gathered through Jamaican sporting agencies, social networks (facebook), referrals from other participants, and professional sporting contacts. In addition, a list of potential participants was drawn from the Jamaican Amateur Athletic Association (JAAA), as well as the Inter Secondary School Association (ISSA) database.

**Description of the sample.** The study population consisted of former Jamaican sprint student athletes in the United States postsecondary system between 21 and 30 years of age. They were chosen because of their shared experience of being in a NCAA track program and holding an F-1 Visa status, while working toward achieving their undergraduate degree. The students selected for the study represented a diverse sample of student athletes in terms of location, setting, size, and racial/ethnic makeup of the student population of school.

The student themselves hailed from multiple socioeconomic backgrounds and diverse locations around the island of Jamaica. A total of 11 student athletes were interviewed, the sample of which consisted of five (5) males and six (6) females. These
participants were drawn from varying schools around the United States, with participants coming from Southern states (5), Northern states (1), and from the Mid-West (5).

The majors of the participants represented multiple disciplines, and can be placed into three main categories of liberal arts (7), management (3), and sciences (1). All participating student athletes had studied at least two years in the same U.S. institution. The selected student athletes met the criterion of having left their institutions no longer than 10 years ago, so that the research would be recent and relevant. Table 1 shows the basic demographic breakdown of the sample.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assigned Number</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>School Location</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Student Status</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Education</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>Graduated</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>Graduated</td>
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<td>Graduated</td>
</tr>
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<td>Economics</td>
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<td>Graduated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Informed Consent and Confidentiality

Informed consent was achieved through the email distribution of a letter of invitation (see Appendix C) and a consent form (required by the University of Denver) (see Appendix B), which was explained and subsequently signed prior to the beginning of
each participant interview. The informed consent form and all data relevant to the study—both raw and computer data—were kept in a secure, locked/password-protected location by the researcher, to be destroyed in no more than 3 years post-study. The study design presented minimal risk to participants, involving no experiential treatment of the subjects, either physically or mentally, pursuant to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2009) regulation 45 CFR § 46.10, which states that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research should not be greater in and of themselves than any ordinarily encountered in daily life, or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

Because data could be sensitive regarding each individual’s experiences and relationships with other institutional staff members, participant responses were kept anonymous. To this end, a numeric identifier was assigned to participants to ensure the anonymity of responses throughout the research process. The initial contact email containing the letter of invitation and consent form indicated that the researcher would maintain participant anonymity indefinitely. Care was taken to ensure that all participants, both those in the pilot study group and those in the main study group, fully understood the nature of the study and that participation was voluntary. Thus, confidentiality of data was maintained, and identification of participants and the schools they attended were not made available during the study, nor would such be made available afterwards. As with all research with human subjects, the University of Denver Institutional Review Board approval was obtained before the study was conducted.

Data Analysis
Data analysis was comprised of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). As proposed by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), interpretative phenomenological analysis is founded on phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography. Therefore, interpretative phenomenological analysis is ideal for its congruence with the epistemological position of the research question. Accordingly, each interview was analyzed in detail using the principles of interpretative phenomenological analysis. These principles include (a) reading and re-reading, (b) initial noting, (c) developing emergent themes, (d) searching for connections across emergent themes, (e) moving to the next case, and (f) looking for patterns across cases.

More specifically, the data analysis method consisted of theme analysis, which is appropriate for answering the questions “who says what, to whom, why, how, and with what effect” (Babbie, 2003, p. 309). The data analysis method allowed for the identification and analysis of themes that emerged from the study. A critical step in analyzing themes and contents is to determine the unit of analysis (Babbie, 2003). The study unit of analysis was the individual participant. Theme analysis was instrumental in understanding the factors that contributed to the challenges/successes of Jamaican student athletes. Because the participants responded to open-ended questions in a natural setting, an understanding and interpretation of participants’ lived experiences ensured that appropriate strategies could be applied and understood. The researcher therefore decided to utilize a more detailed scheme similar to that of van Manen (1997), known as the modified van Kaam method (1994). Both methods and approaches consist of finding the "what" and "how" of the persons who have experienced the phenomena and develop essences from those experiences shared (Creswell, 2006).
The interviews were evaluated for content analysis using NVivo© qualitative software to identify salient elements, manifested themes, and explore any emergent attributes of the central phenomenon. The objective was to identify the manifest content for the elements that were physically present and countable from the interviews.

Farber (2006) stated that the major task in analyzing phenomenological data requires interpretation and organization of the data into categories to construct a picture by using open coding, where themes, patterns, concepts, jokes, or similar features are identified. In this study, all of the responses were appropriately coded. Coding and incorporating data from each participant ensured that the sample population perspectives were well represented. Though the responses were qualitative, a classification coding system was developed that represented themes for the responses, thus offering the ability to create a coding table that allowed for data aggregation and analysis. Following Babbie’s (2003) advice that it is important to capture and code conversations using tables and categories, this study has presented various tables to help clarify the findings.

Finally, Patton (2002) suggested that data collection leads to the process of inductive reasoning. For the present study, this involved the process of developing conclusions and generalizations related to the major themes that emerged during the data analysis.

**Internal and External Validity**

The criteria of validity measure how effective the design is in employing measurement methods that capture the data being sought to address the purpose of the study (Salkind, 2003). There are two types of validity: internal and external. Internal validity is the measure of certainty that study results were produced by the research
process and not by other factors. Salkind, (2003) viewed internal validity as a confirmation of the correctness of the study design. A goal of a good interview protocol is to be both representative of the conversation and valid (Creswell, 2013). The questions in the Interview Protocol (see Appendix A) were based on the primary and sub-research questions. In addition, questions about legal and ethical considerations were included in the interview questions. Internal validity was further assured with pilot testing of the Interview Protocol to assure the instrument was clear and unambiguous. Pilot testing of instruments is a procedure to enable the researcher to make modifications to an instrument based on feedback from a small set of individuals prior to its administration in the field study (Creswell, 2013).

The sample population reflected the target population with regard to distribution among the many international track and field athletes in the NCAA system. The study was conducted in a natural setting, one that could be applied easily to other settings (Salkind, 2003). Given these reasons, the study design was deemed appropriate and demonstrated validity.

**Summary**

The purpose of the present qualitative phenomenological research study was to explore factors experienced by Jamaican student athletes in U.S. postsecondary institutions. Data collection was comprised of open-ended questions to search for emerging themes in the data. The interviews served as a means of data collection, one of the major elements in qualitative research study (Neill, 2009). Chapter 3 described the methodology of the research study and addressed the importance of the qualitative phenomenological method, which is suitable for the study as opposed to the quantitative
method, which serves to test a hypothesis (Creswell, 2003). In general, a phenomenological method draws rich, descriptive, authentic, and honest perceptions of the phenomenon in the study from the participants. A primary object for gathering phenomenological data is implementation of a good interview protocol, both reliable and valid (Creswell, 2013).

A qualitative phenomenological study was deemed the most appropriate method to inquire into the research problem because such studies are designed to examine the lived experiences of the participants and give researchers a tool to understand a phenomenon and report the results (Byrne & Yang, 2008). Chapter 3 also described the role of the researcher, the population sample, data collection and instrumentation, and analysis procedures, followed by a discussion of reliability and validity of the findings. Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the data derived from the interviews.
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the attitudes and perceptions of Jamaican student athletes pertinent to their experiences in higher education institutions in the United States and the extent to which those experiences limited or enhanced their academic and/or athletic success. In turn, this research illustrated both the understanding and experiences the athletes had with current academic and athletic structures and policies and how these experiences affected international student athletic outcomes. This was achieved by conducting in-person interviews and Skype interviews with 11 former Jamaican student athletes in the U.S. postsecondary system. For valid and reliable results to emerge, this method focused on the exploration of the lived experiences of the participants. In Chapter 4, the researcher uses the modified van Kaam method by Moustakas (1994), composed of seven extensive steps, to report the data analysis and findings of the study. And essentially, the reported results are based on the following central research question and two sub-research questions:
• Central Research Question: What academic acculturation challenges face Jamaican student athletes studying at U.S. postsecondary educational institutions?
  
  o Sub-Research Question 1. How does a neo-racist theoretical framework explain academic acculturation challenges of Jamaican student athletes at U.S. higher education institutions?
  
  o Sub-Research Question 2. What are salient factors that influence the academic success or failure of Jamaican student athletes of color studying at U.S. higher education institutions?

Presentation of Findings

The study’s findings utilized the framework provided by the modified van Kaam method outlined by Moustakas (1994). The seven steps consist of (a) listing and preliminary grouping the participants’ responses, also known as horizontalization, (b) reductions and elimination, (c) clustering and thematizing, (d) final identifying of the invariant constituents, (e) individual structural and textural descriptions, (f) individual composite descriptions, and (g) composite textural-structural descriptions. In this chapter, the findings are presented in terms of their relevancy to these steps.

Horizontalization

In this step, the researcher took notes of the participants' experiences essential to the phenomenon under study. This involved the listing and preliminary grouping of the participants’ responses.

Reductions and Elimination
The second process that followed was "reductions and eliminations," composed of two questions to distinguish whether the responses of the participants should be included or eliminated early on (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). Moustakas (1994) explained the questions as follows:

- Does it contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding?
- Is it possible to abstract and label it? If so, it is a horizon of the experience. Expression not meeting the above requirements is eliminated. Overlapping, repetitive, and vague expressions are also eliminated or presented in more descriptive terms. The horizons that remain are the invariant constituents of the experience. (pp. 102-103)

These two questions paved the way for the researcher to analyze the extensive interview transcripts of the participants thoroughly. In addition, in this reductions and eliminations phase, the researcher decided which segments of the interviews were to be incorporated into the next stages. The researcher made sure that they were important and meaningful enough to be conveyed to the next stages of the study's data analysis. Those experiences deemed irrelevant of meanings were then singled out and eliminated. This stage also established the “invariant constituents” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121) of the study, or simply the essential experiences shared by the participants in relation to the research questions.

**Clustering and Thematizing: Emergence of Three Major Themes**

The most important experiences, or invariant constituents, established from the second stage of the method (reductions and elimination) were clustered and thematized together to form thematic labels. The grouped and labeled constituents were then coined.
as the “core themes of the experiences” (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 120-121) of the research study.

This third step of the modified van Kaam method by Moustakas (1994) allowed the researcher to uncover three major themes and several other minor themes or invariant constituents, all of which were crucial to addressing the central research question and sub-research questions of the study. The three major themes implied that the participants (a) followed acculturation with the accent, food, and other basics for easier adjustment (Major Theme 1); (b) achieved academic success with the guidance and support from other Jamaicans in the United States (Major Theme 2); and (c) experienced failure and difficulties due to racial acts/discrimination still encountered (Major Theme 3).

**Theme of acculturation adjustment.** The first major theme that emerged from interview responses related to the primary research question showed that participants followed acculturation with the accent, food, and other basics for easier adjustment. Deduced from four invariant constituents (see Table 2), this first major theme—following acculturation in many ways to adjust upon their transition easily and smoothly—received the highest number of responses, with 6 responses out of 11 of the total sample. It must be noted that only the invariant constituents that received two responses and above are discussed thoroughly in this section; those invariant constituents that received only one response can be found in the following tables.

**Table 2**

*Invariant Constituents for Major Theme 1*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invariant Constituents</th>
<th># of Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acculturation followed with the accent, food, and other basics for easier adjustment</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturation not needed because the culture was familiar already</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturation not needed because the community is primarily Black</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturation not needed because each one is different</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No acculturation experience could be specified</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, Major Theme 1 was considered by the researcher as one of the three most significant findings of the study. This theme indicates the acculturation adjustment that the participants had to make to adjust easily and smoothly. Participant #2 shared a story on why and how she had to acculturate because of the individuals around her:

I had the whole mentality that Oh! I’m not changing my accent or anything, you know? I’m just gonna speak the same way. There is no way these people are gonna make me speak like them. The problem that I had was like I was speaking English. Like what is the problem, why do you guys keep, why do you have to ask like, what am I saying, like I’m speaking English. And then there was this one point where I felt that I needed to speak like them. In order to fit in and in order for them to, because I remember this one particular girl, I think that she was
rude. Like she was on the team as well, she’s White and like the sophomore year. She came and she was like, “Ahm, you’re speaking better English now.” “Ahm, like excuse me?” And she’s like, “Yeah, you’re speaking better now,” and I’m like, ok then. Like I’ve been speaking English all this time, but I guess she, I don’t know. I feel like they’re set in their ways and in their culture, and they feel like their way is the way. But so I basically when it comes to speaking to them, I just speak like them.

So that’s one thing I did. With the food, mean I always complained, like every time we go to the dining hall, I be like, aww, this that, like my teammates got used to it. Like I’m like, “What is this?” And they’re like, “no, you just have to get used to it and try to acquire the taste and all of that.” So I started like, just, like blocking the whole thing of it not tasting good, just have it in my head that it’s not gonna taste good, but I just need to eat something. So like with the food, I just made up my mind to just change, and eat what they have.

Participant #4 stated that he has always had an open mind with racial issues and discrimination, thus he was able to adjust easily:

I went with an open mind. I didn’t shoot down idea; I just went in with an open mind. I made friends; I didn’t stay in my room or anything like that. My teammates helped me out really well. ’Cause I was, I was fresh from Jamaica. So they take me places; they showed me places. At first, I didn’t know where I was going. I was just socializing and enjoying, so that, I think that helped. Then after a while, I just catch up.
Participant #5 stated that the process of acculturation was not much of a change, thus he had no problems adjusting and following it:

> I feel like that’s, that is true, like somewhat true. And I mean they have rules and norms and stuff like that they live by, and I guess that that creates harmony. So I mean, might as well not fight it, just go along with it; it’s not like anything that...that like I find wrong with, or feel like I have to change my entire lifestyle 360 to fit in here.

Participant #6 stated that she had to measure the people she encountered to adjust and acculturate: “So it would be good to measure as Jamaicans because I experienced the Americans that I met.” Participant #8 admitted that she used acculturation during her first year in a negative way:

> During my first year, I kinda strayed from that, kinda started fitting into the athletic stereotype where if you’re going to ***, and you’re Black—you’re either here on an athletic scholarship, you may think, or from the Affirmative Action; that was the stereotype, those were the stereotypes that people had. You did not really work hard to get in here; they probably just picked you because of whatever. So as athletes, we all started falling into a /**/ I am an athlete, that is my path.

Participant #9 simply addressed acculturation with her adjustment on the basics, such as food: “In that, yes, I am accepting more American food; but you know, I still keep like the same, in terms of religion, it’s the same.”

The second invariant constituent or minor theme that emerged, drawn from 2 responses out of the 11, was that acculturation was not needed, because the culture was
familiar already. Participant #10 stated that she was used to the American culture before her move, which is why she did not have to acculturate when she transferred from Jamaica: “I don’t have much that’s kinda different, because I used to come here a lot. So I’m kinda used to it from before. So I really didn’t have much to change or get accustomed to.” Participant #11 related a similar experience where he was already used to the culture in the United States even before transitioning and moving for academic and athletic purposes:

It wasn’t hard for me, because, you know I’ve been travelling to the US from ever since, so I, it wasn’t really hard for me. I know the culture, I’m used to it, I mean, the South is somewhat different, but kinda the same.

**Theme of success from guidance and support of other Jamaicans.** The second major theme or invariant constituent, which addressed the first part of the second sub-research question, showed that the success of the students came from guidance and support from other Jamaicans in the United States (see Table 3). This theme received the highest number of responses, with 6 responses out of the 11 of the total sample. Along with this major theme, the minor themes or invariant constituents that received lesser responses are captured in Table 3.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invariant Constituents</th>
<th># of Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guidance and support from other Jamaicans in the United States</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Concerning this second major theme related to the success of the students as the result of guidance and support from other Jamaicans in the United States, Participant #1 stated that another factor that helped was the community in which she lived, composed of individuals from the same ethnicity and race:

I guess, E** was easy, because it was all Caribbean people in the house that I was in. Like I wasn’t really on campus at E**, I was in an apartment. And all of us were from the Caribbean, like Bahamas, Trinidad, and so forth; so like it wasn’t a big deal, because I was already around people that we are kinda from the same ethnic.

Participant #2 shared a story on how meeting other Jamaicans and individuals from her country of origin helped her to adjust: “There’s this girl beside me and she’s like, “Hi! You’re from Jamaica?” I’m like, “Yes.” Participant #4 shared that the help of another Jamaican friend lifted and guided him upon his transition:

There was a Jamaican there, he is actually a senior; and he showed me all the stuff, and there was like a Jamaican restaurant close. I was there most of the time. ’Cause that’s the food I’m used to. And I had a chance to cook; I had a kitchen.

“Give me your number.” I found that strange; and I’m like, why is this girl asking for my number. I gave her, and she texted me same time, and I’m like
awkward….That was just new to me—why is she doing that? So like after, after the whole meeting, she told me that her parents are Jamaican.

We became friends, and then she lived close by to school as well. So one weekend, she took me home and introduced me to her parents. And she showed me around. So she played a major role in me, like you know, apart from being on campus, like I know how to take the train, like she showed me everything. So luckily, I met that one girl.

Participant #5 stated that the other Jamaicans helped him adjust and transition into his new life:

Having other Jamaicans here before, so when I was a freshman, we had a senior on the team at the time. From Jamaica, and I feel like there’s kinda of a community where once you’re international people, like all of the internationals who were here before you, they like look out for you. Make sure everything is going well, and I mean, for me at least, it really was not hard making friends.

Participant #10 stated that there were other Jamaicans on her team who helped her get through the difficult stages of transition:

There were Jamaican people before that were on the team. And they would take me around and show me the ropes; and basically, that’s what made me...get into the college, the American college frame of mind and stuff like that, because they would help me for like a whole week, bring me everywhere, tell me what I should do and what I shouldn’t do.

Participant #11 simply answered that other Jamaicans were the ones who helped him in his transition: “Other Jamaicans there.”
The second invariant constituent, or minor theme, that emerged regarding the support from parents, family members, teachers, and coaches received five occurrences out of the 11 participants. Participant #3 stated that the support of his parents made the transition easier and smoother: “My parents were almost like my rock—my foundation, whatever. Now that that was being challenged or, or compromised.” Participant #4 related that his coach was a big help in his decision to stay and succeed amidst the difficulties of transition:

My coach. My coach, he was really helpful. When I was, when I went to *WU*, I was jumping like 23 feet, and right off the bat, my freshman year I was jumping 24 high right there. I, I improved; I ended up, I end up getting rookie of the year for my conference.

Participant #6 recalled that the tutors made available to the students helped her succeed academically, but also noted the help of her family members: “I had tutors for specific classes that I, that I was doing in the spring. Well, my family...I have my mentor and my aunties in Florida.” Participant #7 shared who the main people were that helped him and guided him upon transition: “Choosing classes and all that, there was also of course support from the coaches, the coaching staff that helps along the way. Apart from the athletic part, there were also minority student-help groups.” Participant #10 shared who her main supports were:

Alright, my boyfriend and my dad. My boyfriend, he does go to school in North East, so he helps me out with everything when I call. We talk about it, and he helps in whatever way he can. He is my main support.
The third and last invariant constituent—another minor theme—that emerged was the acceptance of foreign culture by the host country and the locals, which received three occurrences out of the 11 participants. Participant #1 observed that one factor for her success was the acceptance of Jamaica’s culture in the host country and from the locals with whom she interacted:

’Cause they loved your accent; they loved to listen to you speak and so forth. So no, like they want you to speak Jamaican, it doesn’t make sense for me to try and even speak as how I’m speaking. Like they love when you speak the patois; they come to you and ask you what, how do you say what’s going on and whenever, if you teach them one thing. So they love the accent, they love the dialect, and I don’t know, they love our food and all that stuff.

Participant #5 shared a similar experience, wherein his fellow students took sincere interest and acceptance of Jamaica’s culture:

Once you’re from Jamaica, it’s like, “Oh cool! Tell me more about it,” or “I would love to go,” or “I’ve just been there.” And they just wanna share their experience. They wanna, they wanna talk to you about something. It’s just, it’s never like, “Oh you’re from Jamaica. What you doing here?” It is never like that; I’ve never had a negative experience with being from the islands.

Participant #6 shared the same experience and that the locals always seemed interested about her and her culture:

People are really drawn to you when they hear your accent. They’re like, “Where are you from?” “Can you say this?” And you meet people that way, ’cause, “I have a friend from the Caribbean; she is Jamaican, and you should hear her
speak.” It is really fun. I have never had a negative, negative experience where that is concerned. Like I don’t understand what you’re talking and the stuff you saying. It is always like, “Can I try to say what you’re saying?” And it is always fun.

**Theme of failure/difficulty due to racial acts/discrimination.** The third major theme that emerged was failure or difficulty due to the racial acts or discrimination still encountered by the participants. As with the second major theme, there were 6 participants who shared the experience. Along with this theme, the other invariant constituents, or minor themes, that emerged are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

*Invariant Constituents for Major Theme 3*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invariant Constituents</th>
<th># of Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racial acts/discrimination still encountered</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in expressing themselves because of their strong accent</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in adjusting to the culture of the host country</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of proper funding and resources for basic school and athletic needs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference in the lesson plans and school curriculum between Jamaica and the United States</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Major Theme 3 was considered by the researcher as one of the three most significant findings of the study. Participant #1 stated that although it was easy for her to adjust to the new culture, there were still times when she felt racially discriminated against:

I think at A***, it would be mostly racial. Still, sometimes it’s like the people there and they would just look at you a certain way or not smile, like look down on you, like you’re less than them. Or even if they stopped him, stopped the person, once they saw that it was a White person, I don’t think they would have asked for ID, but they still went ahead and asked me for my ID. So that was one incident that I thought was racist.

Participant #2 stated that there were times when she felt racially discriminated against because of her color:

I would say, like for example, it’s a White, and I’m Black. A lot of the times that I’m in class, it’s like. Like I’m the only Black person in the class. So that’s weird. You know? So I feel like….Ah mean. It doesn’t happen all the time, but sometimes, okay a question is asked and I raise my hand. And I’m like... okay...she, she picks on everybody except me or wait for me to even respond last.

Participant #6 recalled a story where she experienced discrimination from her coach firsthand:

I sat there, and for most of the Jamaicans, ’cause he treated most of us, when we’re injured, it’s like you don’t exist. He’ll know so he can give us points, or you just don’t exist you’re a ghost. So we’re there, and I’m like, the assistant
coach left and he went to a different university, so less Jamaicans are going there now.

Participant #7 related a short story where he experienced racism firsthand and how it shocked him:

’Cause we had to present in class, and he was telling me how racist his family was and how racist he himself was, until he came to M** and kinda experienced that Black aren’t so bad now. And I was kinda just wowed I guess in that moment, you know; and you know, and I had to kind maintain.

Yes, having that in your face and all it, although you can never tell what is going on in a persons’ mind. But sometimes you would get like certain looks, you know, and I also found out that it’s very, I don’t like to suggest or postulate anything in terms of what people might be thinking when they might look at you in a certain way, but I have been in many classes where it was just kinda like people were turning around looking to see who is talking, because here it is where they are ignoring your answer or your comment when you make it.

Participant #9 shared a story about when she had to experience racial discrimination from her teacher firsthand:

So yeah, it was from every angle. But yeah, some of the ad… some of the tutors would treat you like, “Oh, you come from a third world country.” I remember I had a math advisor and math tutor, and she was like, *chuckles*, almost trying to tell me 3+3=6! *chuckles*. And I just went back to my athletic advisor, and I was like, “Don’t you ever send, send that lady back to me. She’s insulting, she’s
rude. I guess her son came to Jamaica and they build churches. “Oh you know, we come to Jamaica, and Jamaica has the most churches per square feet.”

Participant #11 stated that he also experienced racial discrimination from his coach:

Let me give you a good example. I think the coach discriminated against me because I was from Jamaica and the girls were from America. ‘Cause at the end of the day, I worth more to the team than them girls.

The second invariant constituent— minor theme—that followed the third major theme was related to participants’ difficulty in expressing themselves because of their strong accent. This minor theme received 4 out of the 11 responses of the total sample.

Participant #2 admitted that she had a difficult time adjusting to the new language of the host country:

Like in my first semester, I didn’t really speak in class or anything. Because I didn’t want anybody to be like, “Can you please repeat that?” I just didn’t want to talk, like it was just a new environment for me, like I live in Jamaica and it’s like majority Black; then I went into just a sea of White people. You know, so I just didn’t speak; so that first semester, I remember, we had to like go to our professors’ office hours; they’d always say you have to participate—20% of the grade is participation. I just did not speak, so … it did, ’cause that’s my lowest GPA ever.

Participant #4 explained that his accent affected his social interactions with other people:

No… my accent didn’t affect my athletic experience. It affected my social experience. Most of the times, like Jamaicans normally talk fast, like pretty fast, compared to Americans; and I got frustrated at one point, ’cause I was kept
asking, “What are you saying?” you know, all of that. So I had to keep on repeating myself. Then I figured that I needed to slow down, I need to formulate my words, need to all of that.

Participant #7 added that he also felt discriminated against because he had difficulty speaking American English, given his accent: “Whenever I open my mouth and spoke in class, you know, because I guess they have a negative stigma towards stereotype, towards, I don’t know, Black people, or maybe athletes, it could be.” Participant #8 also remarked that when people seemed like they could barely understand her, her accent was difficult to change at first:

My accent was way stronger; and of course, when I’m talking to my mom, everybody’s head goes back. When I first came back, it was like super strong, it was like, “We can’t understand you. Can you use, can you speak English?” and I’m like, “I am speaking English.”

The third invariant constituent or minor theme that followed the third major theme was the difficulty in adjusting to the culture of the host country. This minor theme received just 2 out of 11 responses of the total sample. Participant #2 shared that she had difficulty in adjusting because she always missed her home in Jamaica:

When I just got there, I wasn’t eating at all, because I was like, I cannot, it’s not the same. They don’t cook with love and whatever. I remember my coach saying, “You have to try to eat something, you have to eat.” Yah, but I just missed home. Yah, but it wasn’t like that bad, obviously you have the internet, Facebook, you can talk to people, you have the phone.
Participant #4 also admitted that he struggled with adjusting to the norms and practices in the United States:

The food. The food was challenging. Like I didn’t like most of the food that was there at first. Because I not used to all that, all of that stuff, so I had, get some cultural food, some Jamaican food in there. Ah, the weather.

**Final Identification of Invariant Constituents**

This stage of the modified van Kaam method associated the examination of major themes and invariant constituents or minor themes with the transcript records of all 11 participants. For the researcher to reinforce the extracted meanings and significance of the three major themes and invariant constituents, the following questions and observations, suggested by Moustakas (1994), were considered:

- Are they expressed explicitly in the complete transcription?
- Are they compatible if not explicitly expressed?
- If they are not explicit or compatible, they are not relevant to the participant's experience and should be deleted. (pp. 120-121)

**Individual Structural and Textural Descriptions**

In this step of the modified van Kaam method, the researcher employed the major themes and invariant constituents from the previous step to establish the individual structural and textual descriptions of the 11 participants, as suggested by Moustakas (1994). The researcher presents the initial structural descriptor of the participant, then follows this with a textual description. The researcher also utilized the computer software program NVivo 10® by QSR to formulate the summarized individual textural
descriptions. Applicable to this study, Moustakas (1994) explained that the individual textural descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants combined the themes and invariant constituents established by the researcher chiefly to address the “what of the appearing phenomenon” (p. 78). The formed individual structural descriptions contribute a critical account to the research study of the participants’ lived experiences as Jamaican student athletes in U.S. higher education. In this study, verbatim examples were included in the development of these individual structural/textural descriptions.

**Summarized structural and textural description for Participant #1.**

Participant #1 believed that because her school was primarily Black, she did not have to acculturate that much. In her words, “Not really. Especially at A*** though, because E** was primarily a Black.” She felt that being in a community with individuals from the Caribbean helped her greatly:

- E** was easy, because it was all Caribbean people in the house that I was in. Like I wasn’t really on campus at E**; I was in an apartment. And all of us were from the Caribbean, like Bahamas, Trinidad, and so forth. So like it wasn’t a big deal, because I was already around people that we are kinda from the same ethnic. So I had a Jamaican roommate. So I didn’t really have any of those, I guess, issues with like living on campus and worrying about the food or anything, because right off the bat, I was just in apartments.

  For them to understand me, but not to fit in, because as I said, I was surrounded around Caribbean people. Them as a Jamaican, or as a Caribbean person, they had to change their accent, but the only time I change mine, or speak properly is when I want them to understand me or stuff, but otherwise from that.
Participant #1 also related that with their acceptance of her culture and norms, the locals and host country made it easier for her to adjust:

’Cause they loved your accent, they loved to listen to you speak, and so forth.

Like they love when you speak the patois; they come to you and ask you what, how do you say what’s going on and whenever, if you teach them one thing. So they love the accent, they love the dialect, and I don’t know, they love our food.

But like, they loved me, I don’t know, I guess I’m loveable, but ah, I can’t really describe, I can’t really find anything.

She also added how she had been “enlightened” upon her stay in the United States, because the atmosphere and customs were just much lighter as compared to her country of origin:

I guess enlightened, and I guess I become more knowledgeable as well, because I read the bible for myself, yes. But, I don’t know, *chuckles* I guess *chuckles* I don’t know. I guess, it just over here, because people don’t watch you that much, as in Jamaica; because you know that in Jamaica, if you say you are Christian and you’re in a pants, in some denomination, you “backslide” all of a sudden. But over here, you wear your pants, and you’re still a Christian.

However, she also talked about experiencing racism:

I think at A***, it would be mostly racial. Still it’s, sometimes it’s like the people there, and they would just look at you a certain way or not smile, like look down on you, like you’re less than them. Or even if they stopped him, stopped the person, once they saw that it was a White person, I don’t think they would have asked for ID, but they still went ahead and asked me for my ID.
Another story Participant #1 shared was her arrival in the United States wherein she had to adjust to the difference of speaking and writing the English language:

It wasn’t that bad, I believe. But I only had one incident where the professor, I wrote a paper, and so I wrote “learnt” in it, because that’s how I grew up speaking it, and like he marked up my paper, and that helped me to realize I can’t write “learnt”; I have to write “learned” and keep it simple.

Ahm, I guess E** kinda helped me a lot with my fine tuning, because like I said, that helped me to transition from “our” to just “or,” and stuff, just to learn, like how American English is. It didn’t affect my, my athletics at all. I was able to maintain a 3.9 or a 4.0 all throughout, college and university.

Participant #1 pointed out that one main difficulty or issue for her was the lack of resources for her basic school and athletic needs:

So like, so they weren’t giving me books, so like what they did there was the athletes that were there before, they would save their books, and so we had a …. So what I had to do when the book weren’t there, like you had one Bahamian guy that was kinda wealthy….And whenever we needed gears, cause at E**, they didn’t provide every gear, so at E**, I had to ask the pass students from *Prominent Track school* to send me shoes.

I had to spend a lot of hours in the library. I remember one time I was taking this English 215 class, and it was on Oedipus or whatever his name was, and I had to spend a lot of time in the library because I didn’t have the book, and I couldn’t afford the book; at E** as well, they didn’t give us. At A***, they give
us like money for food at A***; at E** they did not. So from time to time, my parents had to send money to me.

Meanwhile, in terms of other challenges and issues faced, Participant #1 felt lucky and blessed to have a supportive set of professors and coaches who helped her in many aspects:

I think it was very good. Like the professors there, they were very supportive; they were very supportive of athletes at A***. They are very supportive of the athletes. You know, as an athlete, you have to travel a lot, so I missed a few classes. And so, whenever I told them I was missing classes, they either give me more time to do the work or allow me to turn it via different means or so forth.

I remember, my, my senior year, I had to do student teach. No, not my senior year…I think my last year of my senior year on the track. I had to do like various student teaching. And so, they, my professors, were more than happy to adjust the schedule for me; and even one class I had to take was at 3:30, and that was when my practice started. So they let me take a grad class as a undergrad class that I did online, so I could meet my practice time. So, they are very, yeah, very good.

Summarized structural and textual description for Participant #2.

Participant #2 believed she had to acculturate to adjust easily and be one with her new community. She stated,

Like I’ve been speaking English all this time, but I guess she, I don’t know. I feel like they’re set in their ways and in their culture, and they feel like their way is the
way. But so I basically, when it comes to speaking to them, I just speak like them. So that’s one thing I did.

So I started like just, like blocking the whole thing of it not tasting good; just have it in my head that it’s not gonna taste good, but I just need to eat something. So, like with the food, I just made up my mind to just change and eat what they have.

This participant felt that being with other Jamaicans made her move more bearable. She stated,

There was this girl; her parents were Jamaican; she was on the team, so I gravitated to her. You know, like she was just cool; so I mean after practice, we would go to eat after. Like I would just wait on her, and then we would go to eat, and that’s where it started. I think after we started practicing, that’s when things, you know, kinda of like, I’m meeting more people. They’re always saying, let’s go here as a team, you know, just like get this bond, you know, a bond going or whatever.

We became friends, and then she lived close by to school as well. So one weekend, she took me home and introduced me to her parents. And she showed me around. So she played a major role in me, like, you know, apart from being on campus like, I know how to take the train, like she showed me everything. So luckily I met that one girl….Ah mean, they have this like Caribbean group, but that was just for my freshman year. After, it became African-Caribbean V**, or something like that.
A few years after this friend moved, Participant #2’s coach introduced her to another Jamaican who also helped her adjust and not feel very far away from home:

Yea, there’s this girl that graduated. She came up on a scholarship, just like me, but she graduated from 2007. She graduated in 2007. Ahm and my coach introduced me to her. So she, ah mean, I go to church with her on a Sunday, a Baptist church; so she would just pick me up. So that, that made that easy. Ya, so I met her. She is very nice too, like she is someone I can speak to, ’cause she went through it all.

Participant #2 shared that there were times when she was discriminated against because of her color:

I would say, like for example, it’s a White, and I’m Black. So like a lot of the times that I’m in class, it’s like I’m the only Black person in the class. So that’s weird. So I feel like…Ah mean. And I’m like…okay... she, she picks on everybody except me or wait for me to even respond last.

Another instance she shared was,

I’ve not really like experienced it, like outright, but I’m sure there were instances where it has happened. ’Cause they always have this diversity skit at the beginning of the year for the incoming freshmen. And they, they always use like real life things that happened throughout campus in the year, in that skit; and it, it does happen. Like some crazy stuff had been said about like Black people: White people be like, “Oh I can’t stand these niggas,” and stuff like that.

She related that one major difficulty she encountered was the lack of confidence in speaking the host country’s language, giving this example:
Ahm mean, like in terms of track, the accent, it didn’t like stop me from doing anything. I would say, it was more in the classroom.

Like in my first semester, I didn’t really speak in class or anything. Because I didn’t want anybody to be like, “Can you please repeat that?” and blah, blah, blah. I just didn’t want to talk; like it was just a new environment for me. Like I live in Jamaica, and it’s like majority Black, then I went into just a sea of White people. You know, so I just didn’t speak; so that first semester, I remember we had to like go to our professors’ office hours; they’d always say you have to participate—20% of the grade is participation. I just did not speak, so…it did, ’cause that’s my lowest GPA ever.

Participant #2 also talked about missing home, especially in her early days of transfer:

I didn’t really speak to people “Oh hey, I’m Samantha.” I was not like assertive in introducing myself, none of that, because of my accent. They’re just all different; they’re like “Where are you from?” Like all that, and I’m like, “Mhm.” It was just, it was just like that transitioning phase. It was just a little bit weird for me at first. Especially with like the food

When I just got there, I wasn’t eating at all, because I was like, I cannot, it’s not the same. They don’t cook with love and whatever. I remember my coach saying, “You have to try to eat something, you have to eat.” Yah. But I just missed home.

**Summarized structural and textural description for Participant #3.**

Participant #3 remarked that he did not really try to acculturate, but always viewed himself as different from the others. He stated,
I kinda got to understand how Americans think, sort of. You know, I would try to act like them.

I always tried to a little bit not to…’cause in the back of my mind, ’cause I always viewed myself as different from them.

[My accent] It didn’t affect it at all; because ahm I was, I guess, I was a bit more introverted. I didn’t speak with my accent. I had, I was fully “twanged” out, right, and I had no accent at as far as they knew.

In addition, Participant #3 explained that he had friends who accepted him, thus did not need to fully assimilate with the new culture he was in:

I would have to say that I had some friends, I had three really close friends, Dwayne, Kyle, Ahmad, and we had lived together for a year or two. They probably were my avenue to kinda acculturation, they were, you know, to, to not sound too politically incorrect, they were as black as you could get.

He also remarked how different the culture was in which he grew up compared to the one in the States:

For example, they would say things like…“Gosh,” if you did something—if you did someone a favor. Instead of saying, “Thank you,” they would say, “Oh my gosh.” That used to annoy me so much, and it’s just not there. What is “Oh gosh”? I can’t; there were just…cultural stuff that would stand out. And I felt like in Jamaica, we are a little bit more formal. You know, you more, here you go, here you go.

They don’t necessarily look you in the eye, head nods, or, or see that you’re there. They look down, walk away from you. There’s no “Good
morning”; no, “Good evening”; no, “Good afternoon”—none of those, you know, regular pleasantries or whatever.

He believed that his friends, track team, and parents were his rock during the challenging days of his move. In his words,

To develop that relationship with my friends from track. So I had that, but it was the blood, sweat, and tears of training, and training and laughing and crying and what have you.

If I finish school and I stay in LA, how am I going to say, navigate myself through this place; and I say, well, you know I need to tryout this, this frat thing or whatever, that might open up some more opportunities or something; and I was just curious too. Oh and it was around the same time that my parents got separated, and I think because of that. My parents were almost like my rock—my foundation, whatever. Now that that was being challenged or, or compromised.

**Summarized structural and textural description for Participant #4.**

Participant #4 at first had a difficult time but later on, concluded that having an open mind helped him with acculturation. He provided this explanation:

I went with an open mind. I didn’t shoot down idea; I just went in with an open mind. I made friends; I didn’t stay in my room or anything like that, so basically I just. My teammates helped me out really well. ’Cause I was, I was fresh from Jamaica. So they take me places; they showed me places. I was just socializing and enjoying, so that I think that helped. Then after a while, I just catch up.

Participant #4 also had no problems adjusting, mainly because the people and the environment were very welcoming, inclusive, and diverse:
So no one was looking at you, looking down at you, if you wore a scarf, if you wore a socks, if you wore no shoes. No one was looking at you funny. Everyone embraced and appreciate who you are and where you come from.

Yea, it was, it was. Funny thing is if you go into the cafeteria, at one table you can pick out at least three different races. Sitting, at every table.

This participant felt that having a person or people from Jamaica helped him to adjust and guided the transition. He shared this experience:

I think, there was a Jamaican there, he is actually a senior, and he showed me all the stuff; and there was like a Jamaican restaurant close. I was there most of the time 'cause that’s the food I’m used to. And I had a chance to cook; I had a kitchen.

Participant #4 believed that the guidance and mentorship of his coach helped him greatly. He commented,

My coach. My coach, he was really helpful. When I was, when I went to *WU*, I was jumping like 23 feet, and right off the bat my freshman year, I was jumping 24 high right there. I improved; I ended up getting rookie of the year for my conference.

He recalled that his accent represented a difficulty and an issue in the early period of his transition:

It affected my social experience. Most of the times, like Jamaicans normally talk fast, like pretty fast compared to Americans; and I got frustrated at one point, 'cause I was kept asking, “What are you saying?” So I had to keep on repeating
myself. Then I figured that I needed to slow down, I need to formulate my words, need to all of that.

Participant #4 observed that although he did not encounter major difficulties, the most notable factors would be the cultural norms. He gave the following example:

The food was challenging. Like I didn’t like most of the food that was there at first. ’Cause I not used to all at that, all of that stuff, so I had, get some cultural food, some Jamaican food in there. Ah, the weather.

Ah the food. The food is really different, ahm the weather, I hated it. I hated the cold, ahm I had one jacket. I had to wear that one jacket all semester, until I could get some more jackets and coats and stuff like that. But ahm, the weather and the food and ahm, yah. Those are the main ones.

Lastly, this participant felt that the differences in the school and lesson plans between Jamaica and the United States were a big challenge for him. He talked about one experience that illustrated this difference:

I think that to pinpoint this one time, I quote something; I didn’t cite it, ’cause in Jamaica, we don’t really cite stuff as such in high school—APA, MLA, all of that format. I actually didn’t do that, so I actually got in trouble with that class for that.

**Summarized structural and textural description for Participant #5.**

Participant #5 believed that acculturation would help one adjust easily and smoothly. He provided the following rationale:

I feel like that is true, like somewhat true; and I mean, they have rules and norms and stuff like that that they live by; and I guess that that creates harmony. So I
mean, might as well not fight it, just go along with it; it’s not like anything that I find wrong with, or feel like I have to change my entire lifestyle 360 to fit in here.

He also perceived that although his way of speaking the English language was a bit different, it was fine, because once you know English, things will fall into place afterwards. He added how he used his unique accent to his advantage:

They have, they have a much more difficult time settling in, but I feel like, I feel like it’s not that huge of a burden, my accent or my English. Just sometimes, they say I talk a bit too fast, and I just gotta slow down; but apart from that, it’s, ah mean, once you know English [you know English].

No, if anything, it affected it in a positive way, ’cause if I like talk in class—if it’s a huge class, you know, professors don’t really remember kids names and stuff—but once I talk with a Jamaican accent, I feel like I’m more easily singled out, out of a, as a minority in that class, which it has never been negative for me. It’s been more positive or yeah.

He felt that the other Jamaicans were of great guidance and help to him. He talked about having other Jamaicans here before. So when I was a freshman, we had a senior on the team at the time, from Jamaica. And I feel like there’s kinda of a community where once you’re international people, like all of the internationals who were here before you, they like look out for you. Make sure everything is going well; and for me at least, it really was not hard making friends.

Participant #5 observed that with the diversity of the school, he had always felt accepted by the other students:
Once you’re from Jamaica, it’s like, “Oh cool! Tell me more about it,” or “I would love to go,” or “I’ve just been there.” And they just wanna share their experience. They wanna talk to you about something. It’s just, it’s never like, “Oh, you’re from Jamaica; what you doing here? “It’s never like that. I’ve never had a negative experience with being from the islands.

Just saying a sentence and they hear that accent, they instantly want to strike a conversation with you, whatever it is, just to hear the accent. Or they are like generally interested….So, people here are just generally friendly; they wanna see you do good and they help make sure that that happens. They’ll call and check up on you when you’re new, and stuff like that.

Lastly, Participant #5 also received strong support from his coach, other members of the track team, and the other Jamaicans who came before him:

Oh, ok ahm, definitely my coach that recruited me. Ahm, whenever we’re out and need something, I could always call on him; or if I feel like something financially isn’t well, my scholarship or whatever, I could always go to him and he’ll, he’ll call the necessary people to help get things sorted out, and stuff like that. So, the coach that recruited me is definitely, definitely was a big support for me in terms of any problems that I might have. When I just came here, he helped me got set up with ah, school, and getting somewhere to live, furniture, and all them type of stuff.

Like the Jamaican who were like here before me, and we, our, our chief track and field, our chief track and field, ahm, hold up, the guy who was in charge of the track and field officials. He’s, he’s Jamaican; he’s a lawyer, and he lives
here, so he will always look out for us. Also, if we need anything, like for Thanksgiving and stuff like that, when most people get to go home and stuff, he know that we can’t; so he will like do like a booster type thing for us and stuff like that for all the international people who were still around.

**Summarized structural and textural description for Participant #6.**

Participant #6 believed that measuring and observing for acculturation helped her in adjusting. She stated, “So it would be good to measure as Jamaicans, because I experienced the Americans that I met.” She pointed out that the tutors available were of great help, as well as the presence of her family members in the United States.

Participant #6 gave this example of culture shock:

And I’m like, that’s how I had been taught back home they’re like, you need to stop it, it just don’t make any sense; and then, they would be like it’s an effort every day, and I didn’t not curse, so it was like a culture shock. I was like, “Oh my God.” I know they curse back home, but it was just, just weird.

Regarding helpful support, Participant #6 remarked, “I had tutors for specific classes that I was doing in the spring. Well, my family...I have my mentor and my aunties in Florida.” She also perceived that she was accepted easily despite the differences in culture, and there was nothing negative at all regarding the interest shown by the locals about her culture. She gave this example:

People are really drawn to you when they hear your accent; they’re like, “Where are you from?” “Can you say this?” And you meet people that way, ’cause, “I have a friend from the Caribbean; she is Jamaican, and you should hear her speak!” It is really fun.
Well *chuckles*, I don’t really know how explain it really. Like back at both schools, they didn’t really single out the Jamaicans, they just had like the Caribbean—not even the Caribbean; they had an international association, all international students.

However, this participant believed that racial discrimination is still present and is still being experienced by many Jamaican athletes. She shared the following experiences:

But then they were always, like this specific girl in there, she was like, “Professor, she is not pronouncing her ‘he’s,’ and she, she has ahm, I don’t understand her word style.” So, I’m like, “Excuse me, could you listen. I speak aloud, I read aloud.”

But I’m like, I sat there, and for most of the Jamaicans, ’cause he treated most of us, when we’re injured, it’s like you don’t exist. He’ll know so he can give us points or you just don’t exist; you’re a ghost.

**Summarized structural and textural description for Participant #7.**

Participant #7 concluded that there was no acculturation experience, because he could not specify anything. In his words, “I can’t pinpoint any one thing; yeah, I can’t think of anything right now.” He believed that the coaches played a major role in guiding him. He stated, “Choosing classes and all that, there was also, of course, support from the coaches, the coaching staff that helps along the way. Apart from the athletic part, there were also minority student help groups.”

Participant #7 also described how he faced the differences he encountered upon transition:
You know about certain things if you will, and you understand certain things, you
know certain different things in terms of culture, you know and socializing and all
that. What I think ahm, for the, for the greater part of it, people are people. It’s
just kinda like, you have to just be yourself wherever you go, you know, and I
just, it whether somebody is gonna accept that or not.

He also found certain norms and traditions to be quite difficult to adjust to at first:

The whole formality thing, you know. Ahm I also, I realized also that compared
to in Jamaica, people will come in and say, “Good morning” and “Good evening,”
and “Good night,” and stuff like that. It was just that, that thing, that was just not
present in….You know, everybody would just say, “Hey,” or something, or they
would not say anything at all, you know.

He then added that he perceived his uniqueness as a Jamaican positively; and if
anything, it only helped him in general:

No, if anything, I think, well it affected it positively in that people were always
curious whenever they heard, ahm a different sound. You know, to get to know,
you know, what is really going on, who are you, you know, where are you from,
and all of that. So, I think that it affected it in a positive light. I never really got
any negative feedback, you know, from having an accent. Or anything like that;
it’s always positive.

However, despite his open-mindedness, this participant believed that racism was
still present and that it could affect one’s overall outlook and personality. He provided
the following illustration:
’Cause we had to present in class, and he was telling me how racist his family was and how racist he himself was, until he came to M** and kinda experienced that Black aren’t so bad now. And I was kinda just wowed, I guess, in that moment, you know. I had to kind of maintain.

There were also times when Participant #7 experienced that his accent got in the way, as well as other unexpected reactions from individuals:

Whenever I open my mouth and spoke in class, you know, I guess they have a negative stigma towards stereotype, towards Black people, or maybe athletes, it could be.

Yes, having that in your face and all it, although you can never tell what is going on in a person’s mind. But sometimes, you would get like certain looks, you know, and I also found out that it’s very—I don’t like to suggest or postulate anything in terms of what people might be thinking when they might look at you in a certain way—but I have been in many classes where it was just kinda like people were turning around looking to see who is talking, because here it is where they are ignoring your answer or your comment when you make it…But when you make a comment that makes sense, you know, like I guess they kinda expect, they don’t expect much of you, if you look a certain way or you’re from a certain class or whatever. I don’t know what it is, what they expect. I always found that people always, they look at me differently.

**Summarized structural and textural description for Participant #8.**

Participant #8 believed that her acculturation experience had negative results and outcomes. She explained,
During my first year, I kinda strayed from that, kinda started fitting into the athletic stereotype where if you’re going to ***, and your Black, you’re either here on an athletic scholarship, you may think, or from the Affirmative Action—that was the stereotype, those were the stereotypes that people had. You didn’t really work hard to get in here; they probably just picked you because of whatever. So as athletes, we really all started falling into a /**/ I’m an athlete, that’s my path.

Participant #8 believed that there were people who still judged her and made it difficult for her because of her strong Jamaican accent. She gave the following explanation:

My accent was way stronger. And of course, when I’m talking to my mom, everybody’s head goes back. When I first came back, it was like super strong; it was like, “We can’t understand you. Can you use, can you speak English?” And I’m like, “I am speaking English.”

The following experience describes when she felt that she had to modify and adjust in order for the host community to understand her better or to fit in:

So, though I wouldn’t say the fluency in English really affected my experience, it was more about my accent, that was kind of, I felt like I had to modify how I had to, talking to people…in order for them to understand me, slow down, that type of thing; my patois, I used it less. My best friend also went to ***. So we said it to each other, but other than that, I’d try to go around it and conform and try to speak like everyone else.

With the adjustment, Participant #8 then felt like she “lost a part” of herself:
So it’s like I’d rather hear, like, I come across other Caribbean people and I hear how strong their accent, I’m always like, where is my accent. So for my personal, social experience, I would say, decrease, because I felt like I lost a part of me.

Despite the issues and challenges she faced with adjusting to her new life, Participant #8 had her support network who helped her get through whatever she was facing along the way:

Ahm...well, my coach. He, my coach, was integral in my whole college experience in terms of adjusting. He always ensured that we were okay, but he didn’t try to like treat us differently from everybody else.

Ah, my best friend for the 2 years that...she was still my support machine in some way, my teammates, my coach, ahm, my mom, and at the latter part, my now fiancé.

Another challenge that Participant #8 encountered was getting used to the food being served in the host country, because it was very different from what she grew up with: “I missed home food. I spoke about it all the time, because food here is not as great as the food back home. Ahm...*chuckles”.

More significantly, Participant #8 missed her family and friends the most, which made her distressed with her transition:

Even being away from my family would. I was a little sad, but I wasn’t like, you know, overwhelmingly sad….I really, the only challenge that I would say that I really had was keeping in contact with my friends from back home.

**Summarized structural and textural description for Participant #9.**

Participant #9 related that even though she followed acculturation by adjusting with
American food, she also kept some of her Jamaican ways in the process. She stated, "In that, yes I am accepting more American food; but you know, I still keep like the same; in terms of religion, it’s the same.” Meanwhile, she admitted that she had to adjust her accent for people to understand her better:

How to speak. Like me, so it really didn’t, ahm I really didn’t think that my accent did affect it. You know, we kinda, what they say “twang” a lot.

Sometimes, but ahm, but sometimes, I can’t be bothered to repeat myself. So I try to sound like American.

Participant #9 believed that racial discrimination made it more difficult for her as a Jamaican in a foreign country, explaining,

Some of the tutors would treat you like, “Oh you come from a third world country.” I remember I had a math advisor and math tutor, and she was like *chuckles*, almost trying to tell me 3+3 = 6! *chuckles*. And I just went back to my athletic advisor, and I was like, “Don’t you ever send, send that lady back to me; she’s insulting, she’s rude.”

With the barriers and challenges she faced, she had to learn the hard way and toughen herself up to survive:

I was a calm, kind, very kind person. You know, I was not a mean person; but it kinda roughed me up a little bit, like to the point where I don’t tolerate certain things, now. Like stand up for myself, like get that. I guess, I, I, that’s the experience, that’s the change that I had—I had to make to, to survive here.

I [now] know how to go and look up things for myself, I know how to file, I know how to prepare myself for certain things. So in that sense, it made you, it made
stronger. I’ve had a lot of experiences, my mother say like I have experiences and I just brush them under the rug, like it is just not nothing. Like she would be like, “Yeah man, tell people that you’re All American.” And I’m like, “Okay..”* chuckles*. I’m not that type of person, tell people that you got a scholarship, yow, you got an assitanceship. I’m like, “Okay.” It’s just...I’m, I’m, I don’t know, I just like challenges, and when I get them, I just move on to the next stage. Despite the difficulties, Participant #9’s first coach in the United States was like a father figure to her: “Ahm our coach was actually, the coach there was actually Jamaican; he went to *prominent boys school*. Oh my gosh, I loved him so much, like a father figure to me.”

**Summarized structural and textural description for Participant #10.**

Participant #10 believed that she was well prepared and adjusted, and therefore did not need to acculturate. She pointed out:

What else? I don’t have much that’s kinda different, because I used to come here a lot. So I’m kinda used to it from before. So I really didn’t have much to change or get accustomed to.

Ahm it didn’t affect me as much, because, like most people think that I’m American. They think my accent is not as strong as everyone else. So unless I tell somebody I’m Jamaican, they really don’t know; so it didn’t really affect me. Ahm, no, only with like spelling words, like I would get marked down, but I would go to them afterwards, and be like “I’m not American, I don’t know American English, that well. I guess I do, but I don’t spell like how you guys spell.” Like words, “learnt”—like that’s not a word for them, and I would just put
it, and I would get marked down for that, but that’s the only thing. So it’s like essays and stuff. But I didn’t get marked down for anything else. I didn’t have an issue.

She pointed out simple norms that were different in Jamaica that she had to get used to upon her arrival:

Ahm, yeah, in terms of like the driving on the opposite side. It kinda shocked me a couple times, and then sometimes I would go to the wrong side of the door when I’m trying to get into the car. And so, yeah, you guys drive on the opposite side.

Participant #10 felt that the other Jamaicans on the team uplifted and guided her way through the transition. She gave this example:

There were Jamaican people before that were on the team. And they would take me around and show me the ropes; and basically, that’s what made me... get into the college, the American college frame of mind and stuff like that, because they would help me for like a whole week, bring me everywhere, tell me what I should do and what I shouldn’t do. So yes, and help from my friends, who were here before.

This participant talked about her having people who supported her academic and athletic transition into the United States:

Alright, my boyfriend and my dad. My boyfriend, he does go to school in North Carolina, so he helps me out with everything when I call; we talk about it, and he helps in whatever way he can. He is basically my main support.
Summarized structural and textural description for Participant #11.

Participant #11 felt that he had to adjust upon his transition given that his accent was so thick and strong. He gave this explanation:

Major. I always have to repeat myself, especially with my accent being so thick and strong—my accent so deep and so strong, yeah. I tried to talk slow and clear, yeah. I always have to repeat myself; I still do.

This even affected his performance academically, as illustrated in his comment: “Maybe that in class experience, ’cause I wouldn’t participate much. Just because I will always have to repeat myself.” Later on, Participant #11 learned to use his uniqueness to his advantage: “Yeah, so I got a lot of friends, just because of that. Just because of the accent, people want to know me; people want to be around me.”

Other than his accent, factors such as norms, tradition, and culture did not affect him much. He shared the following: “It wasn’t hard for me, because, you know, I’ve been travelling to the US from ever since. So I, it wasn’t really hard for me.”

Participant #11 believed that the other Jamaicans represented the major factor that aided him in adjusting. He remarked, “Ahm, there were other Jamaicans there before me.” He also did not feel the need to acculturate, explaining, “And is...just based on my experience. Because I had other Jamaicans around, I didn’t really need to. So as far as acculturation, the most I’ll adopt to would be school wise, where you know... the American English.”

He then related a certain experience where he perceived that he was discriminated against by his coach because he was from Jamaica and up against Americans. In his words, “I think the coach discriminated against me because I was from
Jamaica and the girls were from America. "Cause at the end of the day, I worth more to the team than them girls." He also pointed out other discrimination he had experienced:

I guess it was because—it was because I was from a different country. I feel more discriminated again Black Americans than White people….And it isn’t like that. It’s not only at the school, it’s just over the years; I just never, Black Americans just. I always feel some sort of discrimination from Black Americans.

**Individual Composite Descriptions**

This stage incorporates the individual textural and structural descriptions. Moustakas (1994) described this process as “an integration of individual structural into a group or universal description” (pp. 180-181). The researcher performed this stage by “incorporating the formed invariant constituents and themes” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121), while meaningful descriptions and actual experiences from the findings were also constituted. The resultant individual composite descriptions are presented below in relation to the study’s two sub-research questions.

**Sub-Research Question 1.** The following composite descriptions address the first sub-research question, How does a neo-racist theoretical framework explain academic acculturation challenges of international student athletes in U.S. higher education institutions? The participants followed acculturation with the accent, food, and other basics for easier adjustment. The main acculturation method identified on the matter of accents is as follows, “When it comes to speaking to them, I just speak like them.” This proactive, open approach to acculturation was also mirrored by another student who took the stance “that I went with an open mind, and I [didn’t] discriminate
anything. I didn’t shoot down idea; I just went in with an open mind. I made friends; I didn’t stay in my room or anything like that.” Regarding food, one participant explained, 

[T]he food, I always complained, like every time we go to the dining hall, I be like, aww, this, that, like my teammates got used to it. Like I’m like, “What is this?” And they’re like, “No, you just have to get used to it and try to acquire the taste and all of that.” So I started like just, like blocking the whole thing of it not tasting good, just have it in my head that it’s not gonna taste good, but I just need to eat something. So like with the food, I just made up my mind to just change, and eat what they have.

Some participants were in support of the acculturation process. In the words of one participant, 

I feel like, they have rules and norms and stuff like that that they live by, and I guess that that creates harmony. So I mean, might as well not fight it; just go along with it. It’s not like anything that...that like I find wrong with, or feel like I have to change my entire lifestyle 360 to fit in here.

Mirroring this sentiment, another participant chose to “keep the same, in terms of religion.” On the negative end of acculturation, one participant “started fitting into the athletic stereotype where if you’re going to ***, and you’re Black, you’re either here on an athletic scholarship, you may think, or from the Affirmative Action.”

The second minor theme on acculturation was that some participants felt that acculturation was not needed, because the culture was already familiar. Participant #10 felt well prepared before coming to the United States: “What else? I don’t have much that’s kinda different, because I used to come here a lot. So I’m kinda used to it from
before. So I really didn’t have much to change or get accustomed to.” Participant #11 echoed that he had always been used to the culture of the United States, and therefore acculturation was not needed upon transition:

It wasn’t hard for me, because, you know, I’ve been travelling to the US from ever since, so I, it wasn’t really hard for me. I know the culture; I’m used to it, I mean, Texas is somewhat different, but kinda the same.

Sub-Research Question 2. The following composite descriptions address the second sub-research question, What are salient factors that influence the academic success or failure of international student athletes of color studying in U.S. higher education institutions? In regards to academic success, the participants mainly believed that guidance and support from other Jamaicans in the United States helped them greatly. Supporting this, Participant #1 asserted that one major factor that helped her transition was the support of the other students from the Caribbean:

[It] was easy, because it was all Caribbean people in the house that I was in. Like I wasn’t really on campus at E**; I was in an apartment. And all of us were from the Caribbean, like Bahamas, Trinidad, and so forth. So like it wasn’t a big deal, because I was already around people that we are kinda from the same ethnic. Participant #2 added that being with other Jamaicans made her move more bearable:

“There’s this girl beside me, and she’s like, ‘Hi! You’re from Jamaica?’ I’m like, ‘Yes.’” Participant #4 strengthened the theme by sharing,

So then after that, we became friends, and then she lived close by to school as well. So one weekend, she took me home and introduced me to her parents. And she showed me around. So she played a major role in me like, you know, apart
from being on campus, like I know how to take the train, like she showed me everything.

Participant #5 had a similar experience. He talked about having other Jamaicans here before. So when I was a freshman, we had a senior on the team at the time from Jamaica. And I feel like there’s kinda of a community where once you’re international people, like all of the internationals who were here before you, they like look out for you, make sure everything is going well. And I mean for me at least, it really was not hard making friends.

Participant #10 also said that the presence of other Jamaicans made the transition much easier:

There were Jamaican people before that were on the team. And they would take me around and show me the ropes. And basically, that’s what made me... get into the college, the American college frame of mind and stuff like that, because they would help me for like a whole week, bring me everywhere, tell me what I should do and what I shouldn’t do.

Participant #11 also pointed to the help of “other Jamaicans there.”

For factors influencing the academic failure of the Jamaican student athletes of color studying at U.S. higher education institutions, the participants mainly cited that racial discrimination was still encountered. Participant #1 shared that she experienced racism as follows:

The people there, and they would just look at you a certain way or not smile, like look down on you, like you’re less than them. Or even if they stopped him,
stopped the person, once they saw that it was a White person, I don’t think they would have asked for ID; but they still went ahead and asked me for my ID. Participant #2 explained that there were times when she felt racially discriminated against because of her color: “But sometimes, okay, a question is asked, and I raise my hand. And I’m like... okay... she picks on everybody except me or wait for me to even respond last.” Participant #6 also shared how she was treated differently:

But I’m like, I sat there and for most of the Jamaicans, ’cause he treated most of us when we’re injured, it’s like you don’t exist. He’ll know so he can give us points, or you just don’t exist, you’re a ghost.

Participant #7 shared a story about when he felt different from the others: “’Cause we had to present in class, and he was telling me how racist his family was and how racist he himself was, until he came to M** and kinda experienced that Black aren’t so bad now.”

Participant #9 had the notion that “some of the tutors would treat you like, ‘Oh, you come from a third world country.’” Participant #11 gave an example wherein the coach discriminated against him “because I was from Jamaica and the girls were from America. ’Cause at the end of the day, I worth more to the team than them girls.”

**Composite Textural-Structural Descriptions**

The final step of the modified van Kaam method by Moustakas (1994) was where the researcher combined both the composite textural and composite structural descriptions formed earlier in the previous steps of the study. Moustakas (1994) described this seventh process as the “composite description of the meanings and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole” (p. 108). Developing the composite textural-structural descriptions represents the final step of the modified van
Kaam method by Moustakas (1994). The resultant composite textural-structural descriptions are presented below in relation to the study’s two sub-research questions.

**Sub-Research Question 1.** Addressing the central research question but more specifically, the first sub-research question, the participants provided the following five essential experiences on how a neo-racist theoretical framework explained academic acculturation challenges of Jamaican student athletes in U.S. higher education institutions: (a) Participants followed acculturation in terms of their accent, food, and other basics for easier adjustment (six responses); (b) acculturation was not needed, because the culture was familiar already (one response); (c) there was no need to acculturate, because the community was primarily Black (one response); (d) each person is different, and therefore acculturation is not needed (one response); and (e) there was no acculturation experience specified (one response).

**Sub-Research Question 2.** The participants provided three important experiences constituting the salient factors that influence the academic success of Jamaican student athletes of color studying at U.S. higher education institutions. These major experiences related to (a) guidance and support from other Jamaicans in the United States; (b) support from parents, family members, teachers, and coaches; and (c) acceptance of foreign culture by the host country and the locals.

The participants provided three important experiences on the salient factors influencing the academic failure of Jamaican student athletes of color studying at U.S. higher education institutions. Of these, the major experience shared was that racial acts/discrimination were still encountered. The other salient factors provided by the participants included difficulty in expressing themselves because of their strong accents,
and difficulty in adjusting to the culture of the host country. Factors of less saliency (because they only received one response each) included lack of proper funding and resources for basic school and athletic needs, and differences in the lesson plans and school curriculum between Jamaica and the United States.

Summary

The purpose of Chapter 4 was to report an in-depth investigation of the topic, based on qualitative interviews with the 11 participants. The data findings established new meanings and answers from the interviews of the participants by using the seven steps of the modified van Kaam method by Moustakas (1994). The researcher formed three main themes that addressed the central research question and two sub-research questions. Chapter 5 interprets the results and presents recommendations for future study and the conclusion.
CHAPTER 5. INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The current qualitative phenomenological study examined the attitudes, perceptions, and views of Jamaican student athletes regarding their experiences in institutions of higher learning in the United States and the influence of these experiences on their academic and/or athletic achievement. More specifically, this study investigated the phenomenon of acculturation as experienced by Jamaican track and field student athletes who had enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions. This chapter presents an overview of the study, a summary of the results, and discussion of the results in relation to the literature and the research questions, as well as the study’s limitations, implications for practice and for positive social change, recommendations for future research, and the conclusion.

**Overview of the Study**

"Nearly 820,000 international students were enrolled at U.S. colleges and universities in the 2012-13 year...according to a new report from the Institute of International Education, a New York-based nonprofit that manages dozens of study-abroad programs” (DeSilver, 2013, p. 1). Due to this phenomenon, more and more international athletes were given the chance to study in different higher learning institutions in the country. In spite of this seemingly large portion of international
student athletes, relatively speaking, Kimball (2007) observed that they constitute one of the most isolated groups on university or college campuses.

The globalization of the 21st century can help explain the population increase of international students in higher learning institutions in the United States. Parallel to this increase is the increase of challenges brought about by the demand for cultural diversity. As early as 2003, Tuitt observed that the provision to increase cultural diversity in colleges and universities across the states in the country was confronted by several issues, such as reduced funding and recruitment of international students in order to be globally competitive. As a result of these and similar challenges, higher learning institutions in the United States have devised means for encouraging international students with academic and athletic talents to study in their college or university, the compensation of which is a scholarship package designed to maintain students’ improvement in sports and cultural diversity in the student body.

Whereas the findings of the aforementioned literature contributed to the social knowledge on international athletes, studies that deal with international college or university student athletes considered as ethnic minorities are lacking. This is particularly true with Jamaican student athletes. As they compete in sports, Jamaican student athletes enrolled in higher education institutions in the United States have faced multiple challenges, such as academic performance, discrimination, language, neo-racism, and other similar issues that are society-related. Some studies have shown that when a particular international student athlete is considered an elite player, this serves as a panoply against the issues and challenges thus identified (Bluestone, 2009; Burnapp, 2006; DeCourcy, 2004; Frey & Roysircar, 2006; Gardiner & O’Toole, 2002; Harolle &
Trail, 2007; Koyama, 2005; Mahavedan, 2010; McLachan & Justice, 2009; Nilsson & Anderson, 2004; Rahman & Rollock, 2004; Ryska, 2001; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006; Weston, 2006; Yeh & Inose, 2003). However, the focus of these studies is on international student athletes in general, which implies that very few existing studies, or none at all, examine the issues and challenges that have confronted Jamaican student athletes as they endeavor in any higher learning institution in the United States. In fact, as early as 1991, Bale observed that studies regarding Jamaican student athletes in the United States were hardly visible, despite the fact that the involvement of racial or ethnic minorities in sports at that time increased, relatively speaking.

Because of this gap in the existing literature, this study explored the experiences of Jamaican student athletes in the United States and their influence on their academic failure or success. By employing a qualitative phenomenological study approach, this work gathered data regarding the topic and analyzed the data accordingly. The information and data that were gathered through in-person and Skype interviews with the participants were used to address the following central research question and two sub-research questions:

- **Central Research Question**: What academic acculturation challenges face Jamaican student athletes studying in U.S. postsecondary educational institutions?

- **Sub-Research Question 1**: How does a neo-racist theoretical framework explain academic acculturation challenges of Jamaican student athletes in U.S. higher education institutions?
• Sub-Research Question 2: What are salient factors that influence the academic success or failure of Jamaican student athletes of color studying in U.S. higher education institution?

The study employed a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological approach, which is deemed appropriate, according to Laverty (2003), when the data or information deal with the participants’ lived experiences. In other words, the experiences that the participants authentically experienced were subject to examination, after which meaning and understanding about the topic were revealed. In the context of the present study, this approach was used in order to explore the process of acculturation as experienced by Jamaican student athletes in colleges or universities in the United States. More importantly, the utilization of this approach was justified because it allowed for the exploration of the experiences of the participants from a personal, social, and cultural perspective, which enabled the researcher to come up with a more comprehensive abstraction and interpretation.

The sample was comprised of 11 former Jamaican student athletes who attended postsecondary education in the United States. These participants, located on and off the island of Jamaica, were gathered through Jamaican sporting agencies, social networks (facebook), referrals from participants, and professional sporting contacts. Six participants were female and 5 were male, with ages ranging from 21 to 30. They were chosen because of their shared experience of being in a NCAA track program and having stayed in the same institution for at least two years, in addition to holding a F-1 Visa status, while working toward achieving their undergraduate degree. These 11 former
Jamaican student athletes met the criterion of having left their institutions not longer than 10 years ago, so that the research would be recent and relevant.

The study was conducted via in-person and Skype interviews with the participants (guided by a piloted interview protocol containing semi-structured questions). The study utilized the modified van Kaam method by Moustakas (1994). This methodology, which consists of seven comprehensive and extensive steps aimed at producing valid and reliable results, served as a guide to an analysis and presentation of the data collected from the 11 former Jamaican student athletes who attended postsecondary education in the United States.

Two assumptions were made to improve the credibility of the participants and the results. First, the 11 former Jamaican students were assumed to be authentic student athletes enrolled in a U.S. university or college in the past 10 years who experienced acculturation as they participated in sports. This ensured that the participants were truly knowledgeable of the experience of acculturation and its effect on their stay in their respective campus settings. Because the data relied on the memory of the participants, it was further assumed that the respondents were able to correctly recall their experiences. The second assumption pertained to the methodology used in understanding the experiences of the 11 selected former Jamaican student athletes related to acculturation. It was assumed that the modified van Kaam method by Moustakas (1994) was the most appropriate methodology to use for the study.

**Summary of the Results**

An analysis of the interviews with the 11 former Jamaican student athletes in the United States generated three major themes important in comprehending the main
research question. The first theme, created from five invariant constituents, was related to the central research question—the acculturation challenges that confront Jamaican student athletes—and more specifically, to the first sub-research question regarding how a neo-racist framework explains these challenges. Six of the 11 participants said that they followed acculturation with the accent, food, and other basics for easier adjustment, which constituted the first invariant constituent. The second invariant constituent, receiving two responses of the entire sample, reflected the notion that acculturation is not needed because the culture was already familiar. The three remaining invariant constituents, each of which received one response of the entire sample, reflected the perceptions, respectively, that it was not necessary to acculturate because the community was primarily Black, each person is different and thus acculturation is not needed, and there was no acculturation experience because none could be specified.

The second major theme that emerged, derived from the responses of 6 participants of the entire sample, was related to the first part of the second sub-research question, which dealt with the factors that contributed to participants’ academic or athletic success. Constituting this major theme, the participants responded that guidance and support from other Jamaicans in the United States helped them in the acculturation experience. The second invariant constituent, derived from the responses of 5 participants of the total sample, reflected the perception that support from parents, family members, teachers, and coaches helped them in the acculturation process. The third and last invariant constituent, emerging from the responses of 3 participants of the total sample, reflected the view that acceptance of foreign culture by the host country and the locals represented the factor that really made their acculturation experience easier.
The second part of the second sub-research question was answered by the third major theme. This theme is relevant to the acculturation experiences that contributed to the participants’ academic or athletic failure. Derived from the responses of 6 participants of the total sample, this primary theme conveyed that racial acts and/discrimination are still encountered. The second invariant constituent, based on the responses of 4 participants of the total sample, revealed the salient factor that participants were having difficulty expressing themselves because of their strong accent, which made their acculturation experience harder, thereby contributing to their academic or athletic failure. Two of the 11 participants responded that difficulty in adjusting to the culture of the host country was one of the factors that contributed to their academic or athletic failure. The last two invariant constituents, each of which captured 1 participant’s response of the total sample, pointed to the factors regarding lack of proper funding and resources for basic school and athletic needs, and the differences in the lesson plans and curriculum between Jamaica and the United States.

Therefore, the answer to the main research question can be explicitly described as the need for Jamaican student athletes studying in higher learning institutions in the United States to adjust with food, accent, and other basics so that acculturation will not be relatively difficult. With regards to academic or athletic success, guidance and support from other Jamaicans in the United States must be fostered so that the adjustment can be easier and smoother. Finally, the factors that contribute to the participants’ academic or athletic failure can be best addressed by finding ways to decrease the racial acts or discrimination that are encountered on campus or in the society at large.
Discussion of the Results in Relation to Literature

The study’s results are discussed below in relation to the literature. Concurrently, they are discussed in terms of their relevancy to the two sub-research questions, which in turn address the central research question.

Relevancy to Sub-Research Question 1

The central research question addressed the academic acculturation challenges faced by Jamaican student athletes studying in U.S. postsecondary educational institutions. More specifically, the first sub-research question asked how a neo-racist framework explains these acculturation challenges. Applicable to both questions, the major theme that emerged was that the participants who were former Jamaican student athletes in the United States followed acculturation with the accent, food, and other basics in order for them to adjust easily with the host community. This is congruent with the findings of a study of international students about particulars of the international student experience by McLachan and Justice (2009), which found that these international students often experience change overload, that is, pressures and disorientation resulting from having to deal with too many changes all at once. Such changes include differences in weather, food, academic expectations, and lack of familial support. In other words, because of the many adjustments required of international students, or in the case of this study, Jamaican student athletes, pressures and even worse, disorientation ensue. However, the participants of the current study illustrated how acculturation with food, accent, and other basics of the culture made their adjustment much easier.

The study’s finding regarding acculturation with accent is very much related to that of a study by Bluestone (2009), who examined the degree to which the social
relationships formed by acculturating foreign students improved their acquisition of a second language. The issue was studied using an ecological model entailing a consideration of macro, micro, and internal levels of interaction influencing language acquisition. Whereas the present study refers only to accent and not the entirety of the language, the difficulty in terms of self-expression due to language barrier unifies the two studies. In fact, Bluestone observed that language mastery would only happen in the recovery phase where social distance pressures lessen but, to a certain extent, still remain. Bluestone also found that immigrants’ establishing for themselves an identity as an athlete made them “more acceptable” to White classmates, accelerating their language learning process. Because language acquisition is basic when considering the acculturation process, its main aim, which is self-expression, is held more important than the other basics.

The neo-racism framework woven through this sub-research question explains the academic acculturation challenges of Jamaican student athletes in higher education institutions. The overall result regarding this sub-research question is supported by the idea behind the neo-racism framework. According to Quaye and Harper (2015), “Past studies have demonstrated that many international students have had innumerable negative encounters and experiences with their university hosts, particularly those from non-Western and developing nations” (p. 113). Balibar (2007) also credited this new kind of racism as “a racism whose dominant theme is not about biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences” (p. 84) and in addition, does not talk about the “superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to others but ‘only’ the
harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of lifestyles and traditions” (p. 84).

These few definitions of neo-racism framework strengthen the fact that indeed, neo-racism is experienced by the Jamaican student athletes in the U.S., especially through the first major theme that Jamaican students undergo acculturation by changing and adjusting with their accent, food, and other basics. This indicates that Jamaican students feel the need to change their ways in order to be accepted by the host community or the individuals they encounter in the United States. In particular, Jamaican student athletes, as termed by Balibar (2007), “abolish their frontiers, their lifestyles and traditions” (p. 83) from their country of origin, because they fear that by not doing so, they will continue to be discriminated against, looked down upon, or remain unnoticed, as some of the participants shared in the interviews based on their firsthand experiences.

Participant #1 shared that she did not have to acculturate fully but still talked about experiencing racism wherein “sometimes it’s like the people there and they would just look at you a certain way or not smile, like look down on you, like you’re less than them.” Meanwhile, Participant #2 believed she had to acculturate in order to adjust easily and be one with new host community. She gave a typical example wherein “basically, when it comes to speaking to them, I just speak like them….Like with the food, I just made up my mind to just change, and eat what they have.” Participant #3 was another student who remarked that he did not try to acculturate, but has still always viewed himself as different from the others. He also showed an example of acculturation by, “I kinda got to understand how Americans think…Sort of, you know, I would try to act like them.” Participant #4 described how acculturation aided him with his transition: “I went
with an open mind. I didn’t shoot down idea; I just went in with an open mind. I made friends; I didn’t stay in my room or anything like that, so basically I just. My teammates helped me out really well.” Participant #5 echoed Participant #4 and indicated that acculturation would help one adjust easily and effortlessly: “So I mean, might as well not fight it, just go along with it; it’s not like anything that I find wrong with, or feel like I have to change my entire lifestyle 360 to fit in here.” Participant #6 also acculturated by measuring and observing: “So it would be good to measure as Jamaicans, because I experienced the Americans that I met.” However, Participant #7 concluded that there was no acculturation experience needed, because he could not specify anything. Despite her efforts, Participant #8 still believed that there were people who still judged her; thus she had to adjust: “My accent was way stronger.” Participant #9 associated that even though she pursued acculturation by adjusting with American food, she also made sure that she kept some of her Jamaican ways and culture intact. Participant #10 was an outlier because she was well adjusted already and thus did not need to acculturate: “I don’t have much that’s kinda different, because I used to come here a lot. So I’m kinda used to it from before. So I really didn’t have much to change or get accustomed to.” Lastly, Participant #11 was another Jamaican student who felt that he had to adjust upon his transition, given that his accent was very solid: “My accent so deep and so strong, yeah—I tried to talk slow and clear. Yeah, I always have to repeat myself; I still do.” These statements prove that indeed, foreign students, in one way or another, still acculturate themselves in the process in order to feel accepted and one with the new host community.
Relevancy to First Part of Sub-Research Question 2

The first part of the second sub-research question asked what salient factors influenced the academic success of Jamaican student athletes in U.S. higher education institutions. Addressing this question, the main theme generated was that guidance and support from other Jamaicans in the United States helped the Jamaican student athletes in their academic and athletic success. This means that despite the difficulty in the acculturation process, the participants experienced relief from other Jamaican in their community also residing in the United States. This is parallel with the findings of the study by Tochkov et al. (2010), who concluded that if students were unable to replace social support provided by family with a circle of friends, depression was more likely from homesickness. In effect, for the international students to be able to experience better working and studying conditions in the United States, the support they had way back home must be compensated in their present condition. The participants found this support in the guidance of other Jamaicans in the United States. Related to this finding, Trendafilova et al., using the Athlete Satisfaction Questionnaire, found that international student athletes at the NCAA level who played for Division 1 football teams were more or less satisfied with their experiences, including social support, team integration, and personal treatment by personnel, which made them more satisfied with their academic achievement. In this finding, the support whether from teammates or from the coach played a major role in making the international student athletes feel that they belonged to the community, which positively affected their academic and athletic performance.
Relevancy to the Second Part of Sub-Research Question 2

The second part of the second sub-research question asked what salient factors influenced the academic failure of Jamaican student athletes of color studying in U.S. higher education institution. This question regarding failure generated the third major theme, which reflected participants’ lived experience that racial acts and discrimination were still encountered by them, negatively influencing their academic and athletic achievement. This major theme in the study’s findings closely coincides with evidence in the research literature showing that incidents of ethnic and racial discrimination continue to be prevalent at American universities (Chang, 2000; Pettigrew, 1998). These types of incidents include differential treatment and stereotyping by fellow students, faculty members, campus police, teaching assistants, administrators, and staff (Suarez-Balcazar, Orellana-Damacela, Portillo, Rowan, & Andrew-Guillen, 2003). Such incidents were confirmed by participants via their lived experiences in the present study. And similar to the participants in this study, other research studies have documented perceived discrimination in residence halls (Piedmont, 1976), in interactions with campus police (Heussenstamm, 1971; Leitner & Sedlacek, 1976), and in campus life in general (Fleming, 1984; Littleton, 2003; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Moses, 1999; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003).

It was implied from the participants’ reports that the more discriminating experiences they had, the more they experienced failure in terms of their academic and athletic performance. This is related to the findings of a study conducted by Daley (2010), who enumerated the reasons that international students have for dropping out of school. One of these reasons was that students never become part of the group. This is
somehow relevant to racial discrimination in that international student athletes have this feeling of non-belongingness when the community they are living in considers them part of another race. This study found such experiences to have negatively influenced their academic and athletic performance.

When the discriminating acts are committed by the school, Lewis (2010) has called it a “tragedy” (p. 12). Lewis indicated that the NCAA was not upholding its academic requirement rules and was allowing universities to exploit these student athletes, whose graduation rates indicate a lack of academic achievement. This simply means that when international student athletes experience isolation, discrimination, or racial acts, their academic and athletic improvement and performance are relatively hampered.

**Study Limitations**

This study has two main limitations. The first one has something to do with the participants. As observed, this study included only 11 former Jamaican student athletes studying in U.S. higher education institutions as the participants, which represents too small a sample for a generalization to be made. Whereas this study can boast in terms of focused data or information, the applicability of the results is weak due to this very minimal number of participants. The next limitation refers to the research design itself. Although it has been claimed by the researcher that a hermeneutic phenomenological approach is the most appropriate for this study, the context within which the study was conducted may perhaps defeat that claim. Whereas their lived experiences are easy to interpret, the differences of the participants, especially demographically, might put the interpretation into question. Studying the participants based on location will give aid in
Implications for Practice

Having obtained the aforementioned results, the study’s main implication is for universities and colleges in the United States to devise programs and services for Jamaican student athletes that help them with their acculturation process. This will not only help them individually but socially as well. For example, if more support from coaches, teachers, and fellow students on campus is provided for them, their adjustment would be easier. Concerning their academic and athletic success or failure, decreasing the racial acts and discriminations that they encounter, in both the school and community, would increase the former and decrease the latter.

Given this implication, policy makers, especially in the education enterprise, should come up with a more in-depth and comprehensive consideration of the issues that Jamaican student athletes experience in the United States and create programs that will ensure those issues are less likely to happen, because issues of discrimination are found to negatively influence their academic and athletic achievement.

Implications for Positive Social Change

By addressing these issues that confront Jamaican student athletes, after examining their acculturation experience, it is not only the entire educational system that would be benefited but society at large, because the demand for cultural diversity, both in the educational and social context, becomes increasingly higher. Discrimination, which is also taken as the root of disorder in society, could also be partially, if not entirely solved. From a short-term perspective, this study will help Jamaican student athletes
with their academic and athletic achievement. When the support they receive from their coaches, teachers, and fellow students increases and the racial acts they experience decrease, there will most certainly be a dramatic change in their academic and athletic performance. From a long-term perspective, the programs and policies that could be generated from the results of this study can give way to an orderly society, with less discrimination and more moral support for Jamaican student athletes.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Because of the limitations thus identified, it would be insightful for future researchers to consider the following recommendations:

1. Consider expanding the topic discussed in this study. In this study, only the acculturation experience of Jamaican student athletes was explored in relation to their academic and athletic success or failure. Considering other contexts of their lived experiences might be of great help in examining more deeply the phenomenon in question. One effect of acculturation can be the stress from the changes and adjustments; thus future studies might also explore the said factor.

2. Change the age criterion to widen the scope of the sample studied. In this study, only 11 former Jamaican student athletes in the United States were considered and asked to participate. Whereas an increase in the sample size would contribute largely in the exploration of the acculturation phenomenon, changing the age bracket of the participants might also yield positive effects on the study.
3. Finally, consider the other demographic information of the participants. Besides altering their age bracket, the sample could, for example, be changed to represent present Jamaican student athletes in the United States, so that the researcher would not need to rely heavily on their memories, implying that the data would be fresh and firsthand.

**Conclusion**

Jamaican student athletes in the United States were found to be following acculturation with the accent, food, and other basics in order for them to adjust easier. Whereas some felt that acculturation was no longer necessary because the culture was already familiar, it was also perceived that acculturation was not needed based on the belief that everyone is different. On the other hand, participants found it very helpful that other Jamaicans in the United States guided and supported them. This helped them in terms of their academic and athletic success. However, the persistence of racial acts or discrimination contributed greatly to their academic and athletic failure.

The researcher first set out to identify the participants for the study, and once these individuals were identified, the researcher built trust through assuring the participants that all things said during the interview would be held confidential. In assuring confidentiality, participants were more forthcoming with the answers they gave the researcher. These reassurances contributed to the participants’ being receptive and open to answering questions truthfully.

This dissertation focused on the analytic goal of building understanding of the lived experiences of the Jamaican student athlete in U.S. higher educational institutions. Through the interview process, the researcher found that standing by the ontological
method of focusing on the material conditions of people's lives, including their textual and other practices, could prove challenging. Researchers have found that when interviewees are not allowed to get off track occasionally, diverging from the particular interview question at hand, valuable opportunities to explore connections between the personal, social, and political worlds we inhabit can be overlooked (Lock & Nguyen, 2010). In this study, the researcher found that allowing such segues often provided deeper insight into the topic being covered. In turn, the knowledge gained from these segues was used to enhance the knowledge procured from the experience, and this was used to inform other interviews, serving also as a well spring for other areas of inquiry to be explored in future research. Through the framing of participants’ responses within the original research design, the researcher ensured that there was no undue influence by revelations in the interviews.

Participants were identified as expert knowers of the material conditions and events of their lives, because “only the experiencer can speak of his/her experience” (Smith, 2005, p. 224). Knowledge—what people know—is a composite of what they know personally and what they know from the collective experiences of others. The participant is the best person to give an account of his or her personal experiences. Up until now, the stories of this specific subset within the population of college student athletes have not been told; as such, these students are often misunderstood in their new environment. More documentation of these stories and the dispensing of it to coaches and other persons relevant to the college experience will aid in the students’ adjustment process.
In the final analysis, considering the fact that there are no studies on the topic, this study fulfilled its purpose of providing an initial knowledge base regarding the issues and challenges that confront Jamaican student athletes of color studying at U.S. postsecondary educational institutions. And within the scope of this overarching purpose, preliminary knowledge was gained regarding the study’s focus on exploring acculturation challenges and other factors influencing student athletes’ successes and failures while studying in the United States. Somewhat unexpected results were revealed. Acculturation issues were not the core problem for participants; rather, it was racial discrimination that exerted the greatest negative impact on the Jamaican student athletes. Participants did experience acculturation challenges, which they seemed able to navigate in their efforts to achieve a successful overall experience. However, it was the factor of discrimination, which they experienced in the attitudes and beliefs of the host country, that negatively influenced their academic and athletic experience, a result similar to Lee and Rice’s (2007) study of international students of color.

Because nowhere in the literature was information found regarding the existence of discrimination toward Jamaican student athletes studying in the United States, I was not able to make relevant comparisons. Similarly, there were no studies in the literature review that allowed me to present evidence for this target population in such areas as (a) academic success or failure (e.g., a lower GPA for Jamaican student athletes), (b) psychological factors as a consequence of discrimination (e.g., depression or self-esteem), and (c) whether acculturation was considered a problem among Jamaican student athletes studying in the United States in institutions of higher learning. The findings of this study can therefore be considered as laying the groundwork for further
research—research that expands the topic and the participants, for a deeper comprehension of the phenomenon being studied.
REFERENCES


Straubhaar, T. (2000). International mobility of the highly skilled: Brain gain, brain drain or brain exchange (HWWA Discussion Paper, No. 88), Hamburg, Germany, ISSN 1432-4458


Appendix A. Interview Protocol

The purpose of my study is to learn about the experiences of Jamaican student athletes. I’m really interested in hearing your story and experiences of when you were a student athlete in the United States. Let me assure you that everything you share with me will be confidential, and a unique ID will be used instead of your name. If it is OK with you, I would like to audio record our interview so that I can transcribe our conversation. If you need to stop the interview, take a break, or do not feel comfortable answering a particular question, please let me know. Do you have any questions for me or concerns before we get started?

1. Before we get started, I’d like to learn more about you. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself; about your story of becoming an athlete?
2. Now, I’d like to learn more about how you came to the US as a Jamaican student athlete.

Now I’d like to ask more specific questions about your experiences here in the US:

1. How did your fluency in English affect your athletic experience in the US?
2. How did your fluency in English affect your academic experience in the US?
3. How did your fluency in English affect your social experience?
4. What factors helped you transition to the campus community?
5. Describe your acculturation experience in the US.
6. What were some of the challenges of your acculturation experiences on campus?
7. How did your acculturation experience affect your overall academic performance?
8. How did your acculturation experience impact your decision to stay or leave the campus?
10. How would you describe the racial climate of the campus?
11. How would you describe your overall athlete experience?
12. How would you describe your overall academic experience?
13. How would you describe your overall college experience?
14. What campus support services were available for you?
15. Which, if any, support services were helpful for your success?
16. What motivated you to attend college in the United States?
17. Who was your support network at school?
18. How was your cultural identity affirmed by the campus community?
19. How pleased were you with your decision to attend college in the United States?
20. How difficult was being away from home?
21. Is there anything else that you would want me to know about your experiences as an international student athlete?
22. What advice might you give other international student athletes?
23. What services or support systems would have helped you while you were an international student athlete in US?
24. Was there anything that I should have asked you about that I didn’t?

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me and share your story.
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK: THE EXPERIENCES OF CARIBBEAN STUDENT ATHLETES IN U.S HIGHER EDUCATION

You are invited to participate in a study that will examine the experience of Jamaican student athletes in U.S. postsecondary institutions in the United States. In addition, this study is being conducted to fulfill the requirements of doctoral dissertation research conducted by Michelle A. Rankine. Results will be used to complete doctoral dissertation requirements. Michelle A. Rankine can be reached at (305) 321-5807 or marankine@gmail.com. This project is supervised by the course instructor, Dr. William Cross, Coordinator for Higher Education Programs in the Morgridge College of Education, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208, 303-871-4592, William.cross@du.edu.

Participation in this study should take about 1 to 1½ hours of your time. Participation will involve responding to questions about the acculturation process, and related academic and athletic experiences. Participation in this project is strictly voluntary. The risks associated with this project are minimal. If, however, you experience discomfort, you may discontinue the interview at any time. We respect your right to choose not to answer any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. Refusal to participate or withdrawal from participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your responses will be identified by pseudonym only and will be kept separate from information that could identify you. This is done to protect the confidentiality of your responses. Only the researcher will have access to your individual data, and any reports generated as a result of this study will use only group averages and paraphrased wording. However, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena. Although no questions in this interview address it, we are required by law to tell you that if information is revealed concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse and neglect, it is required by law that this be reported to the proper authorities.

If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the interview, please contact Susan Sadler, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at 303-871-3454, or Sylk Sotto-Santiago, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 303-871-4052, or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.

You may keep this page for your records. Please sign the next page if you understand and agree to the above. If you do not understand any part of the above statement, please ask the researcher any questions you have. I have read and understood the foregoing descriptions of the study called (name). I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to
participate in this study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature _____________________ Date __________________

(If appropriate, the following must be added.)

___ I agree to be audiotaped.

___ I do not agree to be audiotaped.

Signature _____________________ Date __________________

___ I would like a summary of the results of this study to be mailed to me at the following postal or e-mail address:
Appendix C. Recruitment Email

Dear Jamaican Student Athlete,

You have been identified as a person who can provide useful information regarding the experience for Jamaican student athletes in the United States. I am hoping that you are interested and willing to participate in an interview about these topics.

My name is Michelle A. Rankine, and as a Ph.D. student at the University of Denver, I am working on completing a dissertation, which explores the experiences of Jamaican student athletes’ acculturation to the United States and their academic and athletic experiences. It is my hope that, through this research, I will be able to assist and educate current leaders in the NCAA, coaches, and future athletes regarding these said experiences.

Would you be willing to meet me for an interview? The interview will last for approximately 60 minutes each session, for three to four sessions, and can be conducted at the University of the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica, or via Skype. I will ask questions regarding your perceptions of your college experience as a student athlete, resources, and the experience at your institution. If able to participate, please reply answering the following questions:

• Please indicate your major at school.
• What sport and what division did you play?
• What academic and/or athletic awards did you receive in college? (How is this relevant?)
• What years did you attend the university?
• Did you graduate?

I appreciate your consideration in helping me move forward with my research. I know that your time is valuable. If you have any questions, please let me know.

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