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Ethics Matter: Ethical Orientations and Disparate Racial Outcomes in Elite Collegiate Athletic Programs

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One issue facing the NCAA is the racial disparity in academic persistence (graduation rates). Previous research suggests that student perceptions of institutional fairness have an impact on academic persistence. Further, racial and cultural differences in the socialization processes of moral development influence perceptions of institutional fairness. Students who feel they are treated fairly are more likely to remain at an institution. Using both managerial responses to an initial positive drug test as a proxy for institutional ethical orientation and NCAA graduation success rate data for 87 Universities across three years, we examine the association between management practices and racial disparities in the graduation rates of scholarship athletes. Specifically, we advanced and tested the following hypothesis: athletic departments employing policies and management practices which reflect amoral orientation and combine an ethic of justice and an ethic of care (an orientation that is more typical of black community youth sports) will be more successful with black athletes than those whose management practices reflect more mainstream ethical reasoning. Performance outcomes based on a two-way ANOVA testing for the moderating effect of race on the relationship between policy and graduation rates found support for the hypothesis. The findings indicate that management practices contribute to racial disparity in graduation rates of scholarship athletes. Departments with an ethical orientation that combines justice and care reduce the racial disparity by one third, from those schools whose orientation is driven primarily by a concern for justice (rule driven) or care (nurturing with absence of accountability).

Introduction

The NCAA has a long history of enacting recruiting and eligibility rules to ensure that scholarship athletes have a reasonable chance of academic success. For example, since 1986 athletes that failed to meet a minimum academic threshold (indications that they are unprepared

to be successful academically) are given a year of remedial coursework without the stress of competition to improve their academic standing.

Despite the NCAA's reforms, the disparity in the graduation success rates between black and white Division I scholarship athletes is around 20% (NCAA, 2009). This disparity is a concern for the NCAA and its member institutions. Former NCAA president Myles Brand said in 2006 "we clearly have work to do so that black student-athletes' graduation rates are fully comparable to their white counterparts, there is no question that there is genuine improvement over the past two decades" (Brown, 2006) The common explanations for the disparity between white and black graduation rates center around the lack of academic preparation for urban blacks, economic pressures and/or an admissions process that accepts academically unprepared students. These explanations deflect responsibility from NCAA member institutions and place the blame more broadly. Recent comments from the NCCA on March 17, 2010 in response to criticism from Secretary of Education Arne Duncan are typical:

Are graduation rates of minority students acceptable? Absolutely not. However, the real issue that needs to be addressed in many cases is adequate education opportunity at the elementary and secondary levels. Only when there is a level playing field in college preparation will there be graduation rates of which we can all be proud (NCAA, 2010).

Less common is the acknowledgement that a wide variance in graduation rates between white and black scholarship athletes exists between institutions¹. This variation between schools suggests that variations in institutional practices or environments are impacting the racial disparity in graduation rates. The NCAA seems poised to examine academic persistence on an institutional level. In 2004 the NCAA adopted the Academic Progress Rate (APR) that holds schools and teams accountable for failing to graduate a majority of their students. Teams with an Academic Progress Rate (APR) score under 925, which equates roughly to a 60 percent graduation rate, are at risk for penalties (e.g. reducing scholarships or suspending teams from post season play). The APR represents a shift in the approach of the NCAA to academic issues. Previous rules focused on broad systemic solutions. The focused accountability of the APR encourages sport managers to examine management practices within institutions.

This paper explores the possibility that the ethical orientation which undergirds policy formation and managerial practices within an athletic department impacts the disparity in graduation rates. That is, some athletic departments may unknowingly have an ethical orientation that benefits whites at the expense of blacks. This paper is divided into the following sections. First, we review literature that details the relationship between individual moral development, organizational ethical orientations and academic persistence. Next, we explore the social political context of a highly segregated youth sport and moral development theory. We place the "youth sport to collegiate sport transition" within the context of moral orientation and academic persistence and hypothesize that some schools will have less racial disparate outcomes because their organizational practices and policies better mirror the ethical orientation of segregated black communities. Thirdly, we test our hypothesis with a small (and admittedly nascent and imperfect) empirical test. The results are highlighted and interpreted. Finally, implications for sport managers are outlined, along with recommendations for future investigation.

Literature Review

Two definitional issues shape this research and the literature review: “Student Athlete” and “Graduation Success Rate”. There is a healthy academic debate regarding the definition and nature of the scholarship athlete. In this paper we set that debate aside for the moment, and simply acknowledge that Division I scholarship athletes are neither typical employees nor are they typical students. As such, literature from two fields, management and education, is informative.

In this research we use NCAA graduation success rates (GSR). GSR data is hardly an index of successful graduations. Athletes that leave school in good academic standing are not counted against the school’s overall graduation success rate. Most athletic departments will work with scholarship athletes opting out (or forced out) of an institution to make sure the athlete leaves the institution in “good standing”. There is far more turnover of student athletes year to year than the NCAA GSR suggests. While hardly a measure of success, the GSR is useful as a measure of voluntary exodus, abrupt dismissals and/or academic failure.

Anomie, Personal-Organization Fit, Academic Persistence

If one were to take the position that student athletes are a type of employee, the relevant line of research within management focuses on the “ethical work climate” and the moral development of employees. Researchers attempt to assess the impact of ethical congruence (or lack thereof) between individuals and organizational culture on a number of performance outcomes. (Victor & Cullen 1988). Within education, if we view the student athletes as a type of student, then the research on academic persistence in higher education, which has its roots in the pioneer work by Vincent Tinto (1975), is most relevant. While these two research threads have developed independently, they share a theoretical foundation: the sociological concept anomie.

Anomie is the personal feeling of the lack of social norms. Social scientists have long understood that shifts in, lack of agreement with, or degradations of moral orders result in anomie (Cohen, 1995; Merton, 1938). Individuals experiencing anomie have difficulty assessing their status in a community, feel detached or disillusioned and lose commitment to the group. They have difficulty determining socially acceptable actions, and may experience the world as normless (Cohen, 1995)

The management literature, often called “Personal-Organizational fit” or “P-O fit”, finds that employees are more committed and less likely to transition out of a company if an organization’s ethical work climate is congruent with their own level of moral development (Ambrose, Arnaud & Schminke, 2008; Cullen, Parboteeah & Victor, 2003; Schminke, Ambrose & Neubaum, 2005; Sims & Kroeck, 1994). When applied to college athletics, we can assume if there is a lack of personal-organizational ethical congruence between athletes and a collegiate athletic department, then the athletes are likely to experience anomie and thus less committed to the institutional goals. They are more likely to engage in practices that violate institutional norms and team rules, as well as more likely to lose their way academically, fall behind and/or choose not to return to campus. Therefore, these athletes are more likely to exit an institution without good academic standing (which is captured in GSR data).

Vincint Tinto’s (1975) pioneering work on academic persistence is the conceptual foundation for most studies on collegiate persistence and retention (Berger & Lyon, 2005) and

has even been called “near-paradigmatic” within this extensive body of scholarship (Braxton, Milem & Sullivan 2000). In his seminal work, Tinto (1975; 1993) argued that academic success was related to how quickly a student adopted the norms and values of the institution. Moreover, he asserted that integration and the patterns of interaction between students and faculty and staff are critical to student success. This integration is particularly important during the first year of school. Otherwise students may experience anomie and drop out.

Tinto’s early work has been quite influential, both in the management of higher education and in research. The results from hundreds of studies over forty years of research suggest two major modifications to Tinto’s original constructs. First, the backgrounds from which students enter an institution matters; and second, organizational practices matter. Tinto (2006) contends, “where it was once argued that retention required students to break away from past communities, we now know that for some, if not many students, the ability to remain connected to their past communities is essential to their persistence” (p. 4).

Of course many high school students struggle adjusting to college. But for students of color, particularly those coming from hyper or highly segregated communities moving into predominantly white institutions, the issues have been documented to be more pronounced. Specific to the concerns of this study, this critical transition may involve an adjustment to organizational values arising from a distinctly different moral orientation (Berger, 2000; Rendon, 2002). Non-white students have a much more difficult challenge in adjusting to college than do their white peers unless the campus implements strategies to validate rather than marginalize the cultural values of students who come from predominantly non-white families and communities (Rendon, 2002; Rendon, Jalamo & Nora, 2000). Or, the practices of an institution may never be adopted by students of color. Indeed, these students may persist academically because they resist adopting the practices and values of the institution (Tinto, 2006).

The work of Berger and Braxton, working separately and together, explores the impact of organizational practices on student retention. Of particular interest is their research into organizational fairness. In surveys of freshman, two studies (Berger & Braxton, 1998; Braxton & Brier, 1989) found that perceptions of organizational fairness had a statistically significant direct effect on social integration. More specifically, white students were more likely than non-white students to perceive the institution as being fair in policy and rule enforcement (Berger & Braxton, 1998). Further work by Berger (2000) suggests that traditional students (defined as white, middle- to upper-class residential students) are more likely to persist because the dominant value systems that they bring with them to college are more aligned with the dominant values of the campus culture. This is in contrast to the dominant values of groups of students that have been traditionally under-served and under-represented in higher education (e.g. African American students).

In the current research project, “engagement in the critical first year” is less salient. Scholarship student athletes are engaged. They are on teams. As such we are able to examine other factors that contribute to persistence and retention. Given the findings from existing research (Berger 2000; Berger & Braxton, 1998; Braxton & Brier, 1989), it seems reasonable that African American athletes at Historically White Institutions (HWI) might suffer from anomie due to shifts in moral orders and are more likely to perceive institutions as unfair than their white peers. Indeed, research by Melendez (2008) finds that black football players at a predominantly white institution struggle to decode what they call “unwritten rules”.

It is too simplistic and inaccurate to suggest that whites are treated differently than blacks at HWI. Nor is it accurate to imply that racial disparity can be explained by discriminatory

practices. The argument here is that most white students are entering institutions whose operations “feel” familiar. Systems of adjudication and reward “make sense” to them. For many black students and other students of color, the movement to college may represent a shift in moral orders, resulting in anomie and the feeling that there are “unwritten rules” that need to be discovered and decoded.

Moral Development, Gender and Race

Perceptions of fairness are shaped by individuals’ moral development in relation to organizations’ ethical climate. Scholars of management have employed moral development theory to examine management issues in various areas including sales (Ingram, LaForge & Schwepker, 2007), accounting practices (Reiter, 1996), crisis management (Simola, 2003) and developing typologies of the ethical work climates of organizations (Victor & Cullen, 1988). This scholarship usually adopts Kohlberg’s levels of Cognitive Moral Development as a framework of analysis. However, increasingly, management scholars are contrasting Kohlberg’s “ethic of justice” with the “ethic of care” (Donleavy, 2007; 2008; Reiter 1996; Simola, 2003). The “ethic of care” is usually associated with the research by Carol Gilligan (1982), and the philosophic writings of Nel Noddings (1984).

Kohlberg (1981) developed his moral development theory through empirical, longitudinal research of the moral reasoning of boys. Based on his research, he argued that an individual’s moral development is tied to a sequence of cognitive abilities. People develop from thinking about the consequences of action upon themselves (avoid punishment), to respect for community (obey the law and communal norms), to the highest stage of moral development, which reflects a concern for principles of fairness. For people operating from the highest level of moral reasoning, decision making is informed by universal principles, such as equality or an understanding of life being more valuable than property. The ethic of justice is oriented toward fairness via abstract rational thinking. Emphasis is placed on the use of absolute standards of judgment, based on impartial consideration of situations in the abstract. For example, generally speaking, everyone is expected to respect private property, regardless of the relationship between actors. However, this rule is conditional. We may violate the principle in order to adhere to a higher principle, like the protection of life. We admire those who trespass into a private home to rescue the residence if the house is on fire. Those employing a justice orientation to shape management policies favor the clarity and certainty it provides (Simola, 2003).

Carol Gilligan (1982), a student of Kohlberg, shifted the study of moral development with her research on the moral development of girls. Her findings challenged Kohlberg’s notion of a universal path to moral maturity. The moral development of girls, Gilligan argued, took a different, but equally legitimate, path. Following from her research, many argued that women and men take different approaches to decision making. Rather than relying on concepts of justice or fairness among equally worthy individuals, women tend to consider the situational and interpersonal aspects of the questions presented. However, not unlike Kohlberg, Gilligan presents moral development in stages: the first stage reflects concern for self; the second stage is concern for others; and the final stage reveals a concern for others and for self in relation to others.

Noddings (1984), in her philosophical treatment of the “ethic of care,” argues that women tend to “care for” others rather than “care about” individuals in the abstract. For those operating from an “ethic of care,” “the emphasis is not on an impartial application of universal principles

by autonomous people that characterizes justice approaches. Rather, sensitivity and responsiveness to the feelings, concerns and particular circumstances of individuals is critical” (Simola, 2003, p 355). Indeed, Noddings (1984) suggests that “one of the greatest dangers to caring is the premature switching to a rational-objective mode.” This is not to say abstract universal principles can never be employed in the service of care, but they must “continually be reestablished . . . from a fresh base of commitment” (p. 26). To do otherwise is to risk prioritizing procedures and policies, detached from the situation and interpersonal needs.

The Kohlbergian Justice –Gilliganesque Caring debate frames a number of management ethics discussions (Reiter, 1996; Simola, 2003). Research suggests division between the orientations has as much to do with the ethical situation as it does with gender (Donleavy, 2007; 2008). Gilligan’s contribution to the discussion of moral reasoning has less to do with the discovery of a female epistemology than opening up the possibility that paths to moral development are varied and context dependent. This notion of situationally influenced moral development has been extended to the African American community.

Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) argue that the moral development of black youth growing up in segregated communities is distinct from white youth. For African Americans in segregated communities, neither the ethic of care nor justice hold primacy. The ethic of care in the African American community is far more communal (as opposed to interpersonal), and a concern for fairness arises out of a struggle to identify and address racism in everyday life. The realization that broader systems may not be fair requires that a communal support network be in place to nurture and protect members of the black community. At the same time, because racism is so salient in the lives of the black community, the notion of fairness/justice is embedded in everyday actions (e.g. the prices and variety of food in Urban centers compared to suburban areas, or racial bias by white teachers in Urban schools). In the best situations, (e.g. high achieving segregated schools) a concern for fair treatment develops simultaneously with a sense of caring for self and others.

Siddle Walker and Snarey argue that “African Americans have brought our attention to the equivalent of a third paradigm, for the interweaving of [the ethic of justice and the ethic of care] represents something new” (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004, p. 145). For the purposes of this research, the moral development arising out of, and associated with, the black community as documented by Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) is labeled the “Third Paradigm”.

If the “ethic of care” is understood in contrast to the “ethic of justice,” the distinguishing aspects of the “Third Paradigm” are illuminated in black feminist criticisms of the “ethic of care.” For example, Thompson (2004) writes, “Many mainstream theorists of care hold that, in order to flourish, children and adolescents must be buffered from the alienating social order.... Caregivers must set aside his or her own needs and interest, so as to enter as fully as possible the point of view of the individual child” (p. 29)... “[A]ttending to the whole child means affirming and expanding the child’s authentic, innocent stance toward the world, while refraining from imposing adult knowledge on the child” (p. 36).

The mainstream tendency of protecting the child from adult concerns stands in contrast to conceptions of caring found in segregated black communities. A child-centered/colorblind approach to child rearing is not practiced in the black community nor would it be particularly helpful. Black children need to be prepared to cope in a racist world. And shielding or buffering them from the realities of racism is a disservice (Collins, 1991; Thompson, 2004). In black feminist literature, caregiving does not involve a retreat from conventional society back to some prior, more authentic and innocent set of relations. It means promoting cultural integrity,

communal and individual survival, as well as spiritual growth, while encouraging political change under oppressive conditions (Thompson, 2004).

Those oriented toward moral development arising out of the African American community will not be hesitant to take punitive measures for the violation of social norms or organizational rules. However, the punishment will be situation specific, designed to enlighten AND to hold violators accountable for their actions (see for example Obidah, Jackson-Minot, Monroe, & Williams, 2004). This notion of expecting young people to be both cared for and held accountable – reprimanded and redeemed -- reflects an integration of the ethic of justice and care into something different (Siddle Walker & Tompkins, 2004).

Orientations to cognitive moral development are not essentialist framings (i.e., women's way of thinking, or a white organizational culture). Moral formation may develop in relation to a particular social context but is not the exclusive domain of any one group. Numerous studies have suggested that individuals "cross over" from one orientation to another depending on the issue at hand (see Donleavy, 2008 for a review). Research suggests, for example, that people are far more likely to reflect the ethic of justice orientation when confronting a moral dilemma involving a stranger and a violation, while reflecting the "ethic of care" when advising a friend or family member about an ethic choice. Further studies suggest that new employees, regardless of their pre-employment socialization, adapt to an organizations' moral culture and adopt practices consistent with an organizations' moral culture after a period of time (Donleavy, 2008).

Application of Ethical Orientations in Athletic Departments

Moral development theories are useful conceptual tools for describing organizational ethical orientations and management practices (Simola, 2003, Victor & Cullen 1988). We offer two vignettes to illustrate the application of these conceptual tools to the practices within athletic departments.

In October 2002, *Loren Wade, a red shirt freshman running back*, sent his Arizona State roommate, a walk-on kicker, to the emergency room with a *concussion*. The coach, Dirk Koetter, asked the student athlete not to press charges, preferring instead to handle the matter internally. Later when women, mostly athletes, called their coaches telling them about violent threats made by Loren Wade, the coaches called the football coach Dirk Koetter to report the matter. Koetter tried to counsel his athlete. Shortly thereafter, in 2005, Wade shot and killed a former teammate Brandon Faulkner for talking to his ex-girlfriend.

A University committee formed to investigate the athletic department's handling of issues following the shooting of Faulkner, and found that Koetter was in no way responsible for the murder of Faulkner. Perhaps the coach had made "errors in judgment," but that was the result of taking on too much responsibility. Koetter's practices reflect a commitment to an ethic of care. But, critics wonder if would things have been different had Koetter been a bit more Kolbergian in his approach to Wade when he violated rules or committed crimes within the athletic department.

Other departments are more Kolbergian – emphasizing universal rules. For example, the lead author of this article teaches a large lecture course. Occasionally athletic department academic tutors will pop their heads into lecture hall to make sure scholarship athletes are in attendance. We understand these intrusions as the athletic department's attempt to make sure the athletes "do the right thing", and that they are following departmental rules regarding attendance in class. But we can't help but wonder if the athletic staff cares. Do they care about the athletes as a people, as thinkers, as scholars? Departments with a third paradigm orientation might

encourage tutors to stay for a while and listen to the lecture, so they might engage the student athlete in real conversations about the material presented.

African American Youth Sports and Moral Development

Three clusters of assumptions and/or observations guide our understanding of African American scholarship athletes and their moral orientation. The first cluster recognizes that high school aged athletes, particularly high caliber athletes who dedicate considerable time and energy to training, are socialized through sport. One aspect of socialization is moral development. The practice of sport promotes an understanding of morality. Young athletes are continually presented with ethical and moral dilemmas (i.e., fouling, cheating, doping, “psyching out” an opponent). We are not suggesting that athletes necessarily have a higher level of moral development than non-athletes. Rather, we advance that young athletes are steeped in an environment in which participants, peers and mentors are confronted with repeated ethical and moral lessons (Kremer-Sadlik & Kim, 2007).

Second, within much of the United States, schools are resegregating (Orfield & Lee 2006) and for many African Americans residential segregation persists (Massey & Denton 1989; Massey 2004). This is particularly the case in larger metropolitan areas. In 2000, nearly half of all urban African-Americans lived under conditions of hyper-segregation and another 20% of urban blacks live in highly segregated conditions (Massey, 2004). Youth sports, at least from casual observations, tend to be highly segregated also. No doubt part of the explanation can be attributed to community and school segregation. But youth sports tend to be more segregated than schools and neighborhoods (e.g., Messner, 2009a).

While Harry Edwards (2010) traces and laments the demise of middle class institutions in the Black Community, for better or worse, youth sport and the church remain as primary institutions in the black community through which men engage in trans-generational care. According to sport sociologist Michael Messner, “youth sports in inner cities has a different texture and different meaning” than mainstream youth sport (Messner, 2009b). The African American youth sport system tends to be a network -- made up of committed community leaders, deacons, pastors, and the occasional teacher from the community – that looks after and nurture young athletes afterschool and on weekends. Churches are often central in this network. The organization center of African American teams and youth sport leagues are often tied to parishioners. Deacons are (or are in contact with) coaches and referees.

This system (of what might be called *otherfathers*) is distinct from mainstream youth sport. Suburban white sport is generally coached by an athlete’s parent (usually a “plug in” male) and administered by another parent (usually an “uber” female) (Messner, 2009a). African American coaches seem less likely to be parents of a child on the team they coach. Further, youth sport in the white community is far more likely to embrace a child centered approach and to maintain the illusion that sport should be “pure”. The work of black *otherfathers* mirrors the work of black women in the community who “see their work as both contributing to children’s survival and instilling values that will encourage their children to reject their proscribed place as blacks and strive for more” (Collins 1991, p. 125). Rueben Buford May (2001), for example, captures this work by black male coaches and third paradigm moral development in his participatory action research of a high school basketball team. Youth sport in the black community is an integral part (along with church, family, and community) of many young people’s moral formation.

In contrast, mainstream sport/physical education literature reveals considerable ideological activism to make (or keep) youth sport child-centered focused (Marsden & Weston, 2007; Mercier, 1993). For some there is a particular righteousness in keeping the “world” out of sport (See for example “Through a Child’s Eyes: a Parent’s Guide to Improving Youth Sport, produced by Citizenship through Sport Alliance Sportsmanship). This notion demands that coaches and parents put their own adult knowledge aside so as to adopt the point of view of the child as fully as possible. Sport, from this perspective, is no place for religion, confronting racism, or parental intervention. This represents an effort to maintain the illusion that the game is innocent and childlike, pure, and authentic. This approach to youth sport also demands the promotion of a colorblind perspective. And when racism does become visible on a sport team, mainstream youth coaches are likely to deflect any discussion with pat phrases like “we are all the same color on this team” or “I don’t care if he’s purple,” discounting the reality of racism.

The third cluster of assumptions begins with the recognition that most Division I institutions are “Historically White Institutions” (HWI). The migration of black athletes from segregated youth sport to collegiate sport is far more than advancing to the next level – this change can represent a break from the black community, culture, practices and expectations. Scholars have long documented that black athletes experience social isolation, alienation and a sense that they are losing control of their lives (Adler & Adler, 1991; Hawkins, 2001; Melendez 2008). Black athletes, in other words, experience anomie. The experience of anomie we suspect is the result of a shift in moral order.

Hypothesis

In sum, given the research on moral development in hyper or highly segregated African American communities and observations on youth sports, we assume the following:

- All Athletes entering college on athletic scholarship do so with a complex understanding of morality.
- However, the socialization process by which black athletes and white athletes come to their understanding of morality might differ in significant ways.
- The migration of the black athlete from youth sport in the black community to HWI can represent a shift in moral orders.

Thus, we hypothesize the following; *athletic departments employing policies and management practices which reflect amoral orientation and combine an ethic of justice and an ethic of care (an orientation that is more typical of black community youth sports) will be more successful with black athletes than those whose management practices reflect more mainstream ethical reasoning.*

What is new here is the attempt to identify the specific management practices associated with the mitigation of anomie among black scholarship athletes. The method undertaken to make this attempt, and address the above hypothesis, is detailed next.

Method

In this exploratory research we use one managerial practice- athletic department responses to an initial positive drug test- as a proxy for a Department’s ethical orientation.

Meanwhile, graduation success rates^{II} of scholarship athletes are used as a proxy for performance outcomes. If our assumptions regarding racial segregation and the racial context of moral development are correct, we might see some evidence that variations in organizational policies that reflect a particular ethical orientation will result in racially disparate outcomes. To evaluate this notion, the relationship between management practices of athletic departments and the disparity between white and black student athletes GSR can be examined.

In collegiate athletics, many of the policies that would be reflective of ethical orientation are established outside of the athletic department by the governing body (the NCAA). However, within the structure of the NCAA, athletic departments have some autonomy. In areas of gender equity, diversity and drug policy, the NCAA offers member institutions guidelines but not proscriptions. In these management areas, policy development will reflect a particular ethical orientation. In this study we “reverse engineer” departmental policies responding to an initial positive drug test to assess a department’s ethical orientation. We selected this data as an indication of ethical orientation for two reasons; first and foremost the data is quantifiable and thus comparable. Second, the data is accessible.

Drug testing policies from 87 collegiate Division I athletic programs were reviewed. The information regarding the drug testing policies were collected through two methods. The first was by emailing university athletic officials with questions about their policies. An official was either interviewed directly, or the department sent their policy via email. If a school failed to respond, the researchers examined departmental websites for policies. Only explicit drug testing policies were included in this study. Some schools did not report graduation rates for all categories examined in this research (i.e., Alabama A&M did not have any white athletes, Holy Cross University did not have any black athletes).

The graduation rate data is from NCAA data for three years, 2006-2008. Data was collected from the same schools for each of the three years. Each year at each school was counted as a separate case as these cases represent a separate incidence of the specified management approach to an initial positive drug test. This created a total sample size of $N = 235$. Data was entered by an undergraduate research assistant, and then reviewed by two additional research assistants as well as the research team to ensure reliability.

The study requires the reader to make a couple of logical leaps. First, one policy (drug testing policy) can stand in as a proxy for a management orientation reflective of organizational values. Second, that a stated policy (responses to positive drug tests) is an indication of practices. Practices and organizational culture can deviate from the stated policy and values of an organization. Third, that an association between racial disparity in graduation rates and policy is indicative of value incongruence. Many factors contribute to academic persistence. Admittedly this is a simple test of a complex issue. While these leaps in logic are a bit disconcerting, they are nonetheless fairly reasonable assumptions supported by academic literature. Policies are reflective (albeit not identical) of an organizational ethical climate, practices follow (albeit not perfectly) from policy, and the failure to persist in college is often (but not always) related to value incongruence between institutions of higher learning and students.

Data Analysis and Findings

The schools’ policy was categorized according to the departments’ expressed policy towards an initial positive drug test of a student athlete. Our analysis of drug policy data found six types of policies. These six are divided into two groups – mainstream and third paradigm.

Institutions whose policies are reflective of Kolbergian ethic of justice and a Gilliganeque ethic of care were categorized as mainstream notions of moral development, while those associated with a combination of the ethic of justice and the ethic of care were categorized as third paradigm.

We based our categorization of an athletic department upon the athletic departments’ purported response to a student athlete’s first positive drug test. We placed schools within this typology based on three factors: the extent of a school’s punitive action, the extent of their counseling, and if a school offered a Safe Harbor program. Safe Harbor is an opportunity for students to self -report an issue with drug use prior to the notification of testing, and to receive support without the consequences of an initial positive test. When we incorporated “Safe Harbor” policies into our analysis, six distinct categories of policy surfaced, each associated with a moral framework.

Schools that purported to respond to a student athlete’s first positive test with strong punitive measures (loss of playing time) without counseling are illustrative of Kohlberg’s ethic of justice. We placed them within the mainstream group. Similarly, if a school that responded to a first offense with counseling and without punitive measures suggests an ethic of care undergirds the policy. We categorized these schools as Mainstream as well. Third Paradigm schools were institutions responding with both punitive measures and counseling, exhibiting both an ethic of care and justice. See Table 1 for a list of each category and corresponding framework.

Table 1 - *Management Practice and Moral Development Typology*

Policy	<u>Mainstream</u>	<u>Third Paradigm</u>	<u>Third Paradigm</u>	<u>Third Paradigm</u>	<u>Mainstream</u>	<u>Mainstream</u>
Reflective Ethic	Ethic of justice	Ethic of Justice and care	Ethic of Justice and care	Ethic of Justice and care	Ethic of Care	Ethic of care
Action	punitive	Punitive w Safe harbor	Mix	Mix w/ safe harbor	Support	Support w/ safe harbor

Based upon these categorizations, data was entered by an undergrad research assistant, and then reviewed by an additional research assistant as well as the research team to ensure reliability. From there, three variables were created. Policy (0 = Mainstream, 1 = Third Paradigm) and Race (0 = White, 1 = Black) represented the independent variables. Meanwhile, Graduation Rate represented the dependant variable. For policy, a total of N=228 incidents reflected Mainstream policy, while N=238 reflected Third Paradigm policy. With regard to race, there were N = 226 incidents for white athletes and N = 214 incidents for black athletes. Within the Mainstream policy, there were N = 107 cases involving white athletes, and N = 100 cases involving black athletes. Within the Third Paradigm policy, there were N = 119 cases for white athletes, and N = 114 for black athletes. The mean scores for graduation rates for black and white athletes by policy can be found in Table 2.

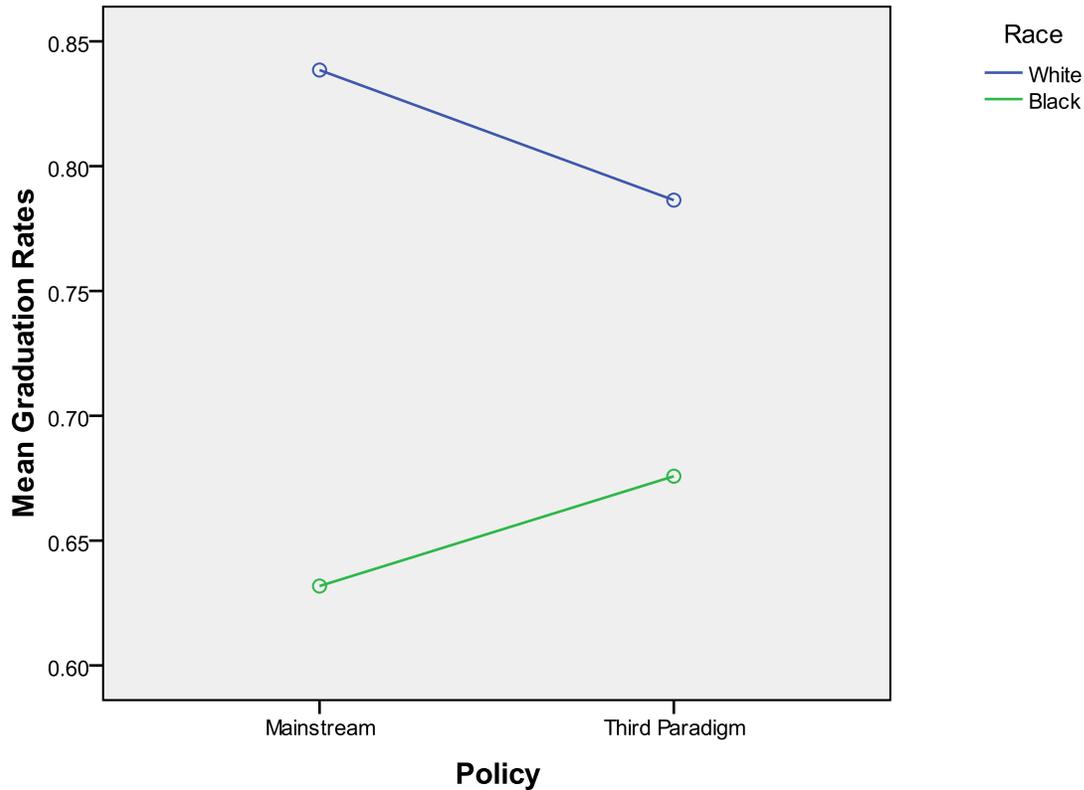
Table 2 - Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Graduation Rates of Black and White Athletes by Policy

Policy	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
<i>Mainstream</i>			
White Athletes	107	.84	.12
Black Athletes	100	.63	.15
<i>Third Paradigm</i>			
White Athletes	119	.79	.13
Black Athletes	114	.67	.15

Drug testing policy may impact graduation rates, but that impact might differ by race. To address the hypothesis, a two-way ANOVA testing for the moderating effect of race was conducted. This two-way analysis of variance tested the graduation rates for Universities employing the Mainstream policy and Third Paradigm policy among black and white athletes. A significant difference in graduation rates did not exist between the Mainstream and Third Paradigm policies overall ($F(1, 439) = .095, p > .05$). However, a significant difference in graduation rates did exist for black athletes and white athletes ($F(1, 439) = 144.29, p < .01$). The interaction of policy and race was also significant ($F(1, 439) = 13.237, p < .01$).

As depicted in Figure 1, graduation rates for white athletes were significantly different than graduation rates for black athletes within both the Mainstream and Third Paradigm policy. Furthermore, Figure 1 shows that the discrepancy in graduation rates across Mainstream and Third Paradigm policies were significantly different for both black athletes and white athletes. This demonstrates that the Third Paradigm drug testing policy was more effective for black athletes.

Figure 1 - Policy X Race Interaction for Graduation Rates



Discussion

Although we were confident in the observations, assumptions, and theoretical concepts that undergird this research, we embarked on this study with an understanding that academic persistence is a complex issue. Admittedly this is a simple test. As such we anticipated equivocal results. Nonetheless, we embarked on the not so obvious comparison of drug testing policy and graduation rate based on sociological theory, our observations and understandings about race, and sport in America, with the hope of illuminating subjugated knowledge (Collins, 1991).

The findings support our hypothesis: *athletic departments employing policies and management practices which reflect amoral orientation that combines an ethic of justice and an ethic of care (an orientation that is more typical of black community youth sports) will be more successful with black athletes than those whose management practices reflect more mainstream ethical reasoning.* Departments with an ethical orientation that combine justice and care have less racial disparity in their graduation success rate than those schools whose orientation is driven by a concern for justice (rule driven) or care (nurturing absent of accountability).

That black athletes at HWI have more difficulty making a transition to campus life than white students is not new. Scholars have documented that black athletes experience social isolation, alienation and a sense that they are losing control of their lives (Adler & Adler, 1991; Hawkins, 2001; Melendez, 2008). But this issue needs to be understood with some complexity. It isn't simply that student athletes of color feel isolated within the larger, predominantly white community. Some HWI are doing better at reducing racial disparate outcomes than others. Nor can we explain the variation between departments as a lack integrity or commitment to black athletes. Our contention is that departmental organizational values and management practices matter. Seemingly race neutral organizational values and management approaches can have disparate racial impacts. The findings suggest that organizational practices, developed to be and presented as fair and just, may be contributing to the alienation of black athletes that other scholars have documented.

The findings suggest that the experience of anomie of Black athletes may be partially mitigated through enlightened management policies and practices. Management interventions that hold athletes accountable to the group or community in a manner that demonstrates care for them as individuals may help black athletes make the transition to collegiate sport and reduce racial disparity in retaining athletes in academic good standing. Employing an "ethic of justice and care" may reduce the racial disparity because it better reflects the moral order of the black youth sport community. To state this in the parlance of management scholars, the ethical climate of schools rooted in mainstream ethical assumptions are less likely to "fit" with the personal ethical orientations of black athletes whose ethical orientation is rooted in the Third Paradigm.

Conclusion and Future Research

Contributions and Implications

A number of sport management scholars have explored the relationship between management practices and diversity (Cunningham & Sagas 2005; Doherty & Chelladuri, 1999; Fink, Pastore & Riemer, 2001). Most of these projects focus on diversity of the workforce. At the base of this research is the acknowledgement that sport, particularly within the US collegiate sport system, remains a predominantly white profession (Cunningham & Sagas, 2005; DeHass, 2007). Social networks, institutional practices, hiring practices, and less overt, seemingly race neutral practices contribute to racial inequalities in Collegiate hiring practices (Cunningham, in press). Sport organizations committed to diversity need to make conscious and overt efforts to promote diversity.

Recently, similar to the research on academic retention, sport management researchers suggest that the focus should be on managing diversity, not simply the recruitment and hiring of a diverse workforce (Cunningham, 2008; 2009; Doherty & Chelladuri 1999; Fink et al. 2001; Long, Robinson & Spraklen 2005). Diversity, in and of itself, will not result in the organizational benefits (i.e. increased productivity, creativity, employee retention) that some scholars profess to be the outcome of a diverse workforce (Cunningham 2008; 2009; Doherty & Chelladuri, 1999). Reaping the potential benefits of diversity depends on the dynamics of social interaction in the workplace. Post-hire processes generate different turnover rates (Sørensen, 2004) and facilitate varying levels of creativity (Cunningham, 2008).

To understand the benefits and/or challenges of a diverse organization, along with the causes of racial segregation across organizations, researchers should focus a critical eye on

“post-hire processes” (Sørensen, 2004), or in this case what happens after an athlete moves on to campus. Understanding the racially disparate outcomes of seemingly race neutral management practices is far more difficult than documenting the outcomes (diversity of an organization) associated with recruitment or graduation. In the latter it is simply a matter of counting heads. Despite calls for more complex analysis (Birrell, 1989; Hartmann, 2000), the bulk of research on institutional racism in sport is limited to the rather dull matter of “counting heads”.

Adding to the difficulty of examining institutional racism may be the epistemology limits within the management field (Singer, 2005a). Singer’s critical analysis of sport management scholarship suggests current research practices and assumptions may be ill-equipped to capture the impact of managerial practices or organizational culture across race. Mainstream research tends to “subjugate” the knowledge of African Americans (Collins, 1991). “Investigating the subjugated knowledge ... requires more ingenuity than that needed to examine the standpoints and thought of dominant groups” (Collins, 1991, p. 202).

There are a couple of examples within the sport management literature that attempt to escape epistemological biases. Singer’s research (2005b; 2009), for example, incorporates the “voices” of African American Football in ways that challenge the notion that the management of sport is experienced similarly by all athletes, while broadening our understanding of the athletic experience. Melendez’ (2008) qualitative research uses the voices of six black football players to illuminate subjugated knowledge. Crosset’s (2007) analysis of court documents and public statements associated with the University of Colorado’s response to a sexual assault complaint contrasts the testimony of white managers, which tended to deflect institutional culpability, with the testimony of black employees and athletes, which suggested institutional responsibility and a suspect ethical work climate.

The research presented here is a modest, yet unconventional, approach to examining institutional racism within intercollegiate athletics to enable alternative understandings to come to the forefront. It builds on previous research, yet pulls knowledge from across disciplines (management, education, sociology, moral development) and, thus, cuts new ground in the field of sport management. What is new here is the attempt to identify the seemingly race neutral practices that contribute to racial disparities in athletic departments.

The research is premised on the following assumptions. First, young people are socialized through sport. One aspect of socialization is moral development. Second, within much of the United States, schools and neighborhoods are resegregating and youth sports are extremely segregated. The African American youth sport system is distinct from mainstream youth sport culture. A distinguishing feature of the African American youth sport system is the concern for fairness and a corresponding communal concern for the young people, or an “ethic of justice and care” orientation. Many of the black athletes recruited to play in Division I collegiate sports come out of a segregated youth sport system. Third, most Division I institutions are HWI. The transition for black athletes into HWI may require an adjustment to a distinctly different moral order reflected in management practices, and the black athlete may experience anomie. Anomie can result in a lack of strong commitment to organizational goals, and might increase the difficulty of transitioning into Division I collegiate sports and decrease retention (reflected in the GSR).

This study tests the broad proposition that different seemingly race neutral management practices (we treat everyone the same) within elite athletic programs results in racially disparate outcomes. We hypothesized that athletic departments professing an “ethic of justice and care” (Third Paradigm) in one management practice (drug testing) would have less disparity between

whites and blacks in one measurable outcome (NCAA graduation rates) than those schools whose orientation is driven by a concern for justice (rule driven) *or* care (nurturing absent of accountability). We found support for our hypothesis. The findings are statistically significant for comparisons between blacks and whites overall. Because the third paradigm is associated with communities born out of systemic racism, it may be a better “fit” for many African American athletes transitioning into Division I Collegiate Athletics resulting in less anomie.

Our findings support previous research suggesting that sport organizations need to manage diversity, not simply add diversity to an organization (Cunningham & Sagas 2005; Doherty & Chelladuri, 1999; Fink et al., 2001). However, our research suggests managers need to take into account the racial impact of policies not overtly related to diversity. Seemingly “race neutral” policies can have racially disparate impacts.

This research contributes to a line of findings suggesting incongruity between employee ethical orientation and the ethical work climate of an organization can impact commitment and retention (Ambrose et al., 2008; Cullen et al., 2003; Schminke et al., 2005; Sims & Kroeck, 1994). What is new is the extension of this line of research to collegiate scholarship athletes and the unique aspects of these “employees”. Most management research downplays incongruence arising from situational ethical orientations. The management research notes that employees adjust to an organization’s orientation, and any differences arising from pre-hire social context are mediated by strong corporate cultures (Donleavy, 2008).

However, ethical orientations of intercollegiate sport organizations may have heightened significance because student-athletes have limited time to adjust to the new organizational culture and because performance outcomes have high stakes (i.e. earning a starting position, academic eligibility). Further, athletes’ experiences of their position in an organization may be different than traditional employees studied as athletes are generally younger and are engaged in a “voluntary” pursuit, not traditional employment. Jobs are often tied into extra-work responsibilities (i.e. family, housing) which encourage workers to adjust. So while not your typical student, scholarship student athletes cannot be understood as typical employees either.

Within the field of education, this research lends support for the research on academic persistence that contends organizational practices impact retention as well as the research which suggests minority students are more likely to succeed when they stay connected to their roots (community, family, etc.). More specifically, these findings emphasize the importance of understanding retention as a socialization process (Tinto, 1975) that is most likely to succeed when campus policies and structures are designed to validate rather than alienate the students they serve (Berger, 2000; Rendon, 2002). In particular, this study supports research that suggests student’s perception of fairness impact social integration (Berger & Braxton, 1989; Braxton & Brier, 1989).

However, researchers of persistence/retention in higher education have paid little attention to the congruence between personal moral development and organizational ethical climate (P-O fit). The main focus of this research has been engagement, the primary predictor of academic retention. In our research on student athletes, “engagement in the critical first year” is less salient. Scholarship student athletes are engaged by the very nature of their position on teams. As such we are able to see other factors that contribute to anomie.

These findings have policy and management implications. “African Americans” Snarey and Siddle Walker (2004) argue “do not have a monopoly on this third paradigm” (p.145) Indeed about half the departments in our study adopt something similar to the third paradigm when it comes to dealing with positive drug tests. The third paradigm “is a conceptual tool, not a reified

entity, for thinking about moral formations and designing multicultural moral education” (Snarey & Siddle Walker, 2004, p.145). Sport managers concerned with the retention of African American athletes have the opportunity to shape management practices to better reflect an “ethic of care and justice” orientation. Employing this conceptual tool can lead to the development of policies that could reduce feelings that the department is treating student athletes unfairly or could mitigate the sense that there are “unwritten rules” black athletes have to discover and decode.

Student athlete perceptions of fairness is not solely a matter of the clarity with which organizations communicate rules and enforces those rules, but is likely defined in relation to a student’s precollege socialization process. This is not to suggest that the issue is a lack of integrity on the part of athletes or athletic departments -- but rather people may be defining and understanding integrity differently. “Doing the right thing” is not plain and simple. Collegiate sport managers with knowledge and understanding of the moral reasoning fostered within the black community can assist in shaping policies and practices of athletic departments that may be less alienating to Black Athletes. At the very least, these findings lend support to Singer’s (2009) call for a broader platform for African American athletes to voice their concerns regarding institutional integrity. Creating room for discourse might lead to better understandings for all involved.

Future Research

We recognize that we reached our conclusions with a rather simple test of a complex issue and it is far from the final word. Nonetheless the clarity is provocative and should serve as a catalyst for more research. Ideally, this study will be followed up with rigorous multi-site qualitative research. Researchers would examine and compare a number of athletic departments, taking into account a wide variety of factors, management practices and school policies that might enable or constrain academic progress, athletic success, and social behavior of scholarship athletes.

Future research should be more complex. Researchers exploring academic retention of scholarship athletes should take into account an athletes’ home community. Are athletes of color in a sample entering the institution from hyper or highly segregated communities? What values and ethical orientation do they bring with them? Are their ethical orientations in conflict with organizational practices? Further research will need to improve on our methodology by assessing departmental responses, not the expressed departmental policies that suggest practices and test students perception of departmental fairness directly.

One of the benefits of this research is the control of “engagement” or social integration. Scholarship student athletes are engaged by the very nature of their position on teams. Of course there are circumstances that might lead an athlete to disengage from a team or an institution other than P-O fit, such as injury, perceived lack of future playing time, loss of a starting position, economic stress, lack of campus diversity, or academic probation. Future research should take into account these variables that contribute to student athlete retention.

Future researchers will need to take into account gender. In the current sample, when we controlled for gender, the findings were not significant. Ethical orientation does not appear to explain the racial disparity between black and white women scholarship athletes. Further examination is needed. Our initial speculation is that female athletes of color may be less likely to come from highly segregated communities and sport systems. We do know that black female

athletes are more likely to participate in “minor” or Olympic sports than black men. Black male athletes are concentrated in the sports of football and basketball (Vicente, 2007). Following from Goldsmith’s (2003) research on school segregation and racial segregation, the wider distribution of black female athletes across the sport spectrum suggests less segregated schooling. In addition, it might suggest access to the suburban club youth sport system. If both or either is the case, then the results might be mediated by a larger percentage of black female athletes’ familiarity with mainstream moral reasoning than black male athletes.

Finally, to date, sport management research has focused on recruitment, hiring and post-hiring management practices that take diversity into account (e.g., Cunningham & Sagas 2005; Doherty & Chelladuri, 1999; Fink et al., 2001). The contribution of this study is the exploration of management practices that appear to be race neutral. It is our hope this research will open the doors for sport researchers to examine race neutral policies when exploring racial disparities.

Notes:

¹An exception is Derrick Jackson, columnist for the Boston Globe. In 2009 Jackson wrote a piece entitled “foul play on black athletes graduation rates in which he identified 6 of the top 16 NCAA tournament men’s basketball teams that graduated over 70% of their black athletes and another eight that average graduation rate is 32% (Jackson, 2009).

²NCAA graduation success rate (GSR) data is hardly an index of graduations. Athletes that leave school in good academic standing are not counted against the school’s overall graduation success rate. Most athletic departments work with scholarship athletes opting out of an institution so the athletes leaves an institution in “good standing”. There is far more turnover than the NCAA graduation rate suggest. A recent study found that 22% of the expected returning players to top basketball teams did not return the following season. Stated slightly differently, if seniors, drafted players and missing players are included, a full 50% of the participants in NCAA collegiate basketball’s top programs will be new to a team (NCPA 2009). NCAA graduation rates, however, when used as a comparison between schools, are useful as a measure of racial and gender disparities with regard to voluntary exodus, abrupt dismissals and academic failure.

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