

UMSAEP REPORT

Study Title

Post Apartheid, Post Mandela: A Study of Black Male Student-Athletes at the University
of
Western Cape

UMSAEP Scholar

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Home Institution

Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis, University of Missouri—Columbia

Host

Mandla Gagayi (Director of Sports Administration/Athletic Director at UWC)
Prof. Rouaan Maarman (Educational Studies Head of Department at UWC)
Prof. Andre Travill (Department of Sport, Recreation, & Exercise Science Head of
Department)

Host Institution

University of Western Cape

Dates: May 25- June 8

OBJECTIVE OF VISIT

During my first visit to South Africa in August 2015, I was reminded of the intersections between politics, sport, race, identity, education, and the continued healing of the country. I learned that sport is central to the lives of many South Africans. It is no secret that former President Mandela sought to use sport to help unify the country. Notably, the image of Nelson Mandela delivering the 1995 Rugby World Cup trophy to former captain Francois Pienaar is seen by some as the most significant image in South African sporting history (Smith, 2013). Similarly, hosting the 2010 FIFA World Cup was a significant event for South Africa and then President Mandela.

But what does this all mean in a post-Mandela South Africa? And, more specifically, what are the implications and perspectives of Black male South African athletes who must form identities and define success in this context? This was an objective of the study I commenced during the summer of 2017 at the University of Western Cape. I also wanted to explore the persistence of racialized complexities, sport, and politics in South Africa—even as the South African rugby team prepares for the 2015 World Cup, and discussions of racial representation and the absence of Black or colored players on this year's team persist.

As a Black male faculty member at the University of Missouri (MU), I was eager to collaborate with my colleagues at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) to better understand what these absences (e.g. the absence of Black players on the national rugby team; the absence of Mandela's physical presence) mean to current Black male

athletes at UWC. Specifically, we sought to learn about their aspirations, and how their life stories impact how they see themselves and their experiences on campus.

Scholars have examined important variables related to the identities of Black male student athletes (Adler & Adler, 1991; Beamon & Bell, 2006; Edwards, 2000; Harrison, Harrison, & Moore, 2002). Building on this scholarship, this qualitative study sought to better understand UWC Black male student-athletes, their aspirations and the roles UWC Athletics can play in leading them toward healthy identity development while at UWC and beyond. Our research questions were as follows:

- 1) How do Black male student-athletes at UWC Athletics form identities and define success? and
- 2) How do the life histories of Black male student-athletes at UWC contribute to their identities, decisions, and leadership while at UWC? 3) How do the life histories, identities, and definitions of success of Black male student-athletes at UWC compare with that of Black male student athletes at MU?

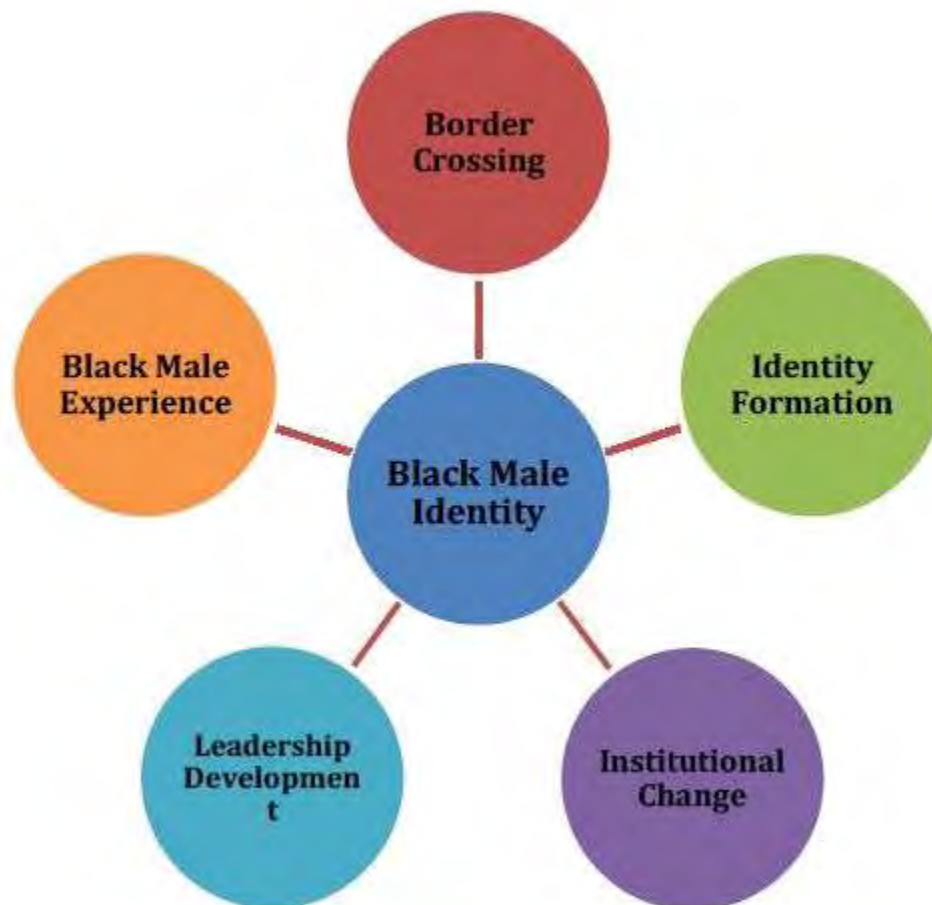
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: BLACK MALES CROSSING OVER

This research was informed by border theory as the conceptual framework to better understand Black male student-athlete identity at UWC. Border theory was chosen for its flexibility; it provides scholars with language and tools to navigate the edges and territory of complex terrain and identities. In general, identity construction is a complex and contested process (Gause, 2008; Giroux, 2005) that includes, but is not limited to, an amalgamation of difference across and within a continuum of races, genders, social classes, sexual orientations, religions, (dis)abilities, Douglas, University of Missouri 3 languages, political allegiances, and other culturally and historically contextualized markers (Butler, 1999; Gause, 2008). At times, identity markers can function somewhat separately from and in concert (or conflict) with other identity markers (e.g. student-athlete), as borders are encroached, pushed, redefined, and reestablished individually, ideologically, and institutionally (Douglas, 2012). This was one of the most significant benefits of using border crossing theory to study how Black male student-athletes at UWC form identity and define success: border theory encompasses multifaceted approaches that can use hybrid positionalities (e.g. student-athlete, black male, African-American) to problematize and reconfigure how identities are formed and power is distributed within and across difference (Douglas, 2012).

Black males—like males of other racial backgrounds—are charged with crossing over many borders as they transition to manhood (Douglas, 2012). However, prior research on Black male student-athlete identity development suggests that negotiating the transition to manhood as a Black male while simultaneously managing the expectations of college athletics can be a complex crossing (Beamon & Bell, 2006; Beasley, Miller, & Cokley, 2014; Harrison, Harrison, & Moore, 2002). Border theory allows researchers to recognize and rupture the “epistemological, political, cultural, and social margins that structure the language of history, power, and difference” (Giroux, 2005, p. 20). Border theory helped us account for the “entangled web of contradiction” (Edwards, 2000) while

also creating space for our participants to name how their identities, histories, and experiences inform how they see themselves, success, and their futures.

Fig. 1. Identity, Leadership, & Success of Black Male Athletes



DATA AND METHODOLOGY

INTERVIEWS

As part of this qualitative study, the principal investigator used a semi-structured interview protocol to conduct individual interviews with 45 Black male student-athletes at the University of Western Cape (Glesne, 2006). An interview protocol explored their personal and educational journeys, their cultural and racial identities, and their perceptions of success and leadership. To recruit these athletes, the principal investigator worked through his partnerships in the athletic department, who assisted in recruiting students directly and via coaches and support staff. The principal investigator collected 60 hours of interview data, with each interview running for approximately 60-90 minutes.

OBSERVATIONS

The principal investigator informally observed participants in spaces in and around the athletic department and practice fields, as context for the oral histories they constructed and shared during our interviews or interactions. Observations were primarily used as context to better interpret and inform the information shared in the interviews. Observation field notes were recorded in a journal.

DATA ANALYSIS

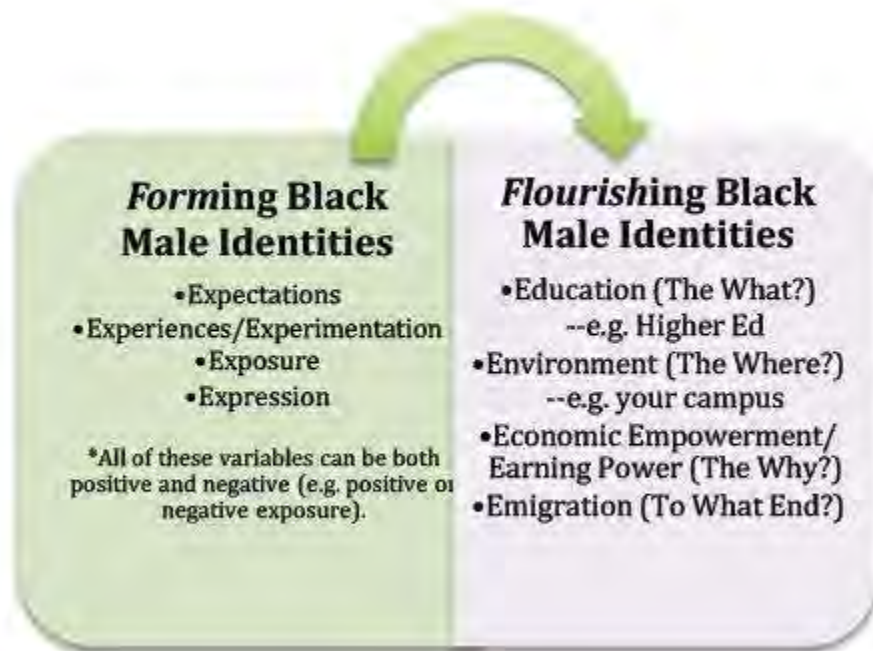
Thematic analysis as outlined by Glesne (2006) is being used to analyze the data. The steps of the thematic analysis process are (1) collect data; (2) coding and categorizing the data; (3) searching and synthesizing for patterns; (4) and interpret the data. Specifically, data from the interviews was audio taped, transcribed, analyzed, and coded through attentiveness to the participant's selectivity, slippage, repetition, and "the pattern[s] of their own priorities" (Casey, 1993, p. 19). Participants' narratives are being assessed based on the topics, ideas, people, recollections, and stories that were privileged during the interviews. The principal investigator is being attentive to the dynamics that are omitted by the participants. Data analysis is proceeding inductively to find commonalities among the participants. In pursuit of validity in this study, the principal investigator is allowing for and examining "competing explanations and discrepant data," so that the study affirmed the knowledge, perspectives and experiences of the Black males who participated rather than being a reflection of the researcher's own biases. The researcher utilized a U.S.-based graduate assistant to transcribe the interviews verbatim. This process has taken longer than the researcher and graduate assistant expected due to difficulties in understanding the accents of the interviewees for the transcriber, even though he is also from the continent of Africa. The diversity of dialects and languages are an important contextual variable that we are navigating and respecting. The delay in the transcription process has obviously impacted the researcher's timeline for data analysis. The researcher typed up the observation field notes; each is being coded inductively for themes and patterns. Data analysis and representation trustworthiness will be attended to through member checks and peer review (Hatch, 2002).

ACCOMPLISHED WORK (As of December 2017)

RESEARCH: EMERGING THEMES & PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Emergent themes suggest that Black male student athletes at the University of Western Cape encounter a broad array of experiences, obstacles, and challenges as they engage their personal and academic journeys. Building on previous research by the principal investigator (Douglas, 2014, 2012; Douglas & Arnold, 2017), the emergent findings reinforce ten themes found in the researchers studies of Black males in Bermuda and Missouri, namely: expectations, experiences/experimentation, exposure, expression, education, environment, economics/ economic empowerment, and emigration.

Preliminary review of the data collected in Cape Town this summer affirm the findings from my previous studies (see chart to the below).



Fresh and emergent themes. Beyond the affirmation of previous findings, study data are revealing fresh ideas and contextually relevant variables related to the masculinities, family dynamics, tribal and athletic identities of black male student athletes at UWC, and unique administrative approaches of campus athletics leaders. I share three of them below:

Flourishing Black Male Identities. In my study of black Bermudian males, I learned about the nuances of how black males form identities. My NCAA funded study at the University of Missouri revealed key variables in how to help black males flourish in their identities. The Cape Town study, in conjunction with my previous and ongoing studies, has pushed me to consider how we can support black males as they “finish” in their personal and identity development processes; by “finish,” I am not suggesting that there is a literal ‘end’ that a person reaches and then they cease to continue to grow; instead, I am considering ‘finishing’ as an ongoing maturation, refining, and completion process—again, in the sense of ‘wholeness,’ rather than an end in and of itself. The data is giving me new content and context for understanding the obstacles and opportunities that black males—particularly black male athletes—must navigate. Some of these obstacles include complex family dynamics—for example, many of the Forming Black Male Identities •Expectations •Experiences/Experimentation •Exposure •Expression *All of these variables can be both positive and negative (e.g. positive or negative exposure). Flourishing Black Male Identities •Education (The What?) --e.g. Higher Ed •Environment (The Where?) --e.g. your campus •Economic Empowerment/

Earning Power (The Why?) •Emigration (To What End?) Douglas, University of Missouri
6 participants noted complex relationships with their fathers, men who typically had/have multiple wives/families. This reality is quite common in a context where polygamy is quite common and modeled by the current President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma. Notably, many of the participants expressed frustration about the leadership of their current president. Additionally, tribal realities are emerging as significant in the data, including the role of “going to the bush” to become a man in the Xhosa tribe, and the perception of this process by Zulu’s and other non-Xhosa men. Data is suggesting that perceptions of the roles players choose and are selected for on some sports team (e.g. soccer) are related to tribal affiliations/ temperaments. For example, participants note that most strikers (forwards) on the soccer team are from one tribe, and the best defenders are typically from another tribe. Further understanding, explication and consideration of the intersections between tribal affiliations and team roles could be a great value add for coaches in South Africa. I look forward to sharing these findings in the future.

#FeesMustFall. The *#FeesMustFall* movement/ campus uprisings in the fall of 2016 is a theme that is emerging in the data. In fact, this campus uprising impacted my travel plans to South Africa, as the UWC campus was closed at times in 2016. Many participants speak to the tensions on the campus, share their experiences with law enforcement who shot rubber bullets at students who were on campus, and highlight their understanding that while free tuition would be a great option (as promised by the government), it may not be realistic financially for the country. Some participants also note that financial need should be a factor in who gets funding support.

Men are Trash. The abuse and mistreatment of women in South Africa has been a major topic of concern. News reports of a woman who was burned to death by a man were reverberating around Cape Town during my time collecting data. The Men are Trash movement speaks to the disgust and frustration of women in South Africa who will no longer remain quiet about the problematic masculinities that infringe upon their health and wellbeing. Many black male study participants discuss the prevalence of rape and abuse of women, and the associated tensions that exist in discussing and dismantling these and other gendered issues.

ACCOMPLISHED WORK: LECTURES, BRIDGE BUILDING & COMMUNITYBASED PEDAGOGICAL SPACES

In addition to interviewing 45 men in less than two weeks, I also engage in the following professional activities:

- I spoke at a local elementary school (Montevideo Primary School), where I arranged and transported UWC student athletes to join me in speaking and building relationships with the children and staff. Consistent with the ethos and programming of my Border Crossing Brothas work, I was intentional about helping the student-athletes cross borders and consider partnerships that would allow them to use their influence for good with the youth of the school and city. Notably, I was introduced the Montevideo Primary School and Principal Timmet

during my 2015 visit to Cape Town, when I served as a leader of a College of Education teach abroad summer program. It was great to experience the convergence of two MU program experiences and reconnect with the teachers and leaders there who remembered me and my Mizzou student-teachers fondly—individuals who were grateful for my willingness to come back to again pour into the school, this time Douglas, University of Missouri 7 with their own Capetownian students and athletes with me.

- I delivered an invited lecture at the University of Cape Town.
- I spoke at Heidelberg College and took University of Western Cape Student Athletes with me
- I spoke for a Next Level Living, Inc community event in which I took and introduced University of Western Cape and Heidelberg students to participate and collaborate together.
- I gave an invited talk to students, faculty and staff at the University of Western Cape in their Sports Administration department
- I met with senior campus administrators at UWC to discuss partnerships and my participation in a potential institute that is being developed.
- I created voiceover/ commercial demos for two student athletes, including a female Olympic prospect who sought me out after learning of the work I was doing with the male athletes. I continue to mentor UWC athletes. This has included connecting UWC students with top international speakers like Dr. Eric Thomas who sent a personal video message to some of my study participants who have follow his work and mentioned his name during their interviews with me; one athlete shed a tear after receiving a personal video from Eric “ET” Thomas shortly after our interview session ended. These were connections I facilitated as I sought to attend the flourishing and finishing of the identities of the black males and females I encountered on campus and in the community.
- This project has already yielded a scholarly publication: In the fall of 2017, I published an article in collaboration with Mandla Gagayi. This article was included as a special feature of a special issue I lead edited with Dr. Kmt Shockley in the Journal of Negro Education, entitled: When Voices Rise: Race, Resistance, and Campus Uprisings in the Information Age. The article is entitled: Rubber-bullets, resistance, and the rise of a young athletic director: A conversation with Mandla Gagayi about #FeesMustFall, #RhodesMustFall, and campus uprisings in South Africa. The citation and article link is below:
 - Douglas, T. M. O., Green, C., Faloughi, R, Rome, S., Shuck, J., Zanders, M., Walton, T., Harris, T. (2017). Rubber-bullets, resistance, and the rise of a young athletic director: A conversation with Mandla Gagayi about #FeesMustFall, #RhodesMustFall, and campus uprisings in South Africa. Journal of Negro Education. 86(3): 356-367.
 - Link to Special Issue/Article:
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7709/jnegroeducation.86.issue-3>

VALUE OF THE UM/ UWC EXCHANGE PROGRAM

The UM/ UWC Exchange Program is a brilliant and vital partnership. Having the opportunity to interface with and build research and relational partnerships with colleagues at UWC is a tremendous privilege and an important initiative. There are synergistic connections between the two institutions that must continue to be developed and leveraged as we seek to find solutions to global dilemmas. Having the opportunity to learn about the experiences of black student-athletes at UWC has been an invaluable and rare experience to study, connect and consider black diasporic realities in unprecedented ways. I have now been able to research the experiences of black males in Bermuda, the United States, and South Africa, and the third phase of this longitudinal study of black male identities would not have been a reality without the UM/UWC Exchange Program.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and thank Dr. Rod Uphoff and the leaders and supporters of the UMSAEP program. Dr. Uphoff's leadership and assistance in facilitating my visit was exemplary. Kind host and wise travel advisor, Professor Uphoff ensured that my visit was a success. I am particularly grateful for the support and assistance of Mandla Gagayi (Director of Sports Administration/Athletic Director at UWC) and the leaders, faculty, students and staff of UWC. Mr. Gagayi and his team were gracious and thoughtful host. They even covered the cost of my rental car and ensured that I was comfortable and safe. I am also grateful for the support of other campus units and leaders, including but not limited to Prof. Rouaan Maarman (Educational Studies Head of Department at UWC) and Prof. Andre Travill (Department of Sport, Recreation, & Exercise Science Head of Department). Thank you to all who helped make this project, partnership and visit an overwhelming success. The best is yet to come!

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