

Decision to Enter the Sports and Leisure Industry: Differences among Students Attending HBCUs and Those Attending Primarily White Institutions

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There is growing research related to the academic and career choices of sport and leisure students (Cunningham, Sagas, Dixon, Kent, & Turner, 2005; Everhart & Chelladurai, 1998; Steel, Chelladurai, & Brown, 1987). However, a review of this literature demonstrates that most, if not all, of the participants in these studies are from similar academic environments-Primarily White Institutions (PWIs). Such commonality among participants is perhaps implicitly overlooked or taken for-granted by the field's academicians and professionals. The result of this pattern, however, is a potentially incomplete picture of factors that shape students' career choice attitudes and behaviors. Students in others settings, such as those who attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), might have very different factors that influence their ideas about sport and leisure, that shape their attitudes about the profession, and ultimately that shape their career-related behaviors. After all, HBCUs, in comparison to PWIs, have been concerned with: a) the provision of psychosocial support and cultural congruency for Black students; b) the provision of a second or third chance for low income, "academically marginal", and "high risk" students to obtain a higher education; c) the retention and more timely matriculation of Black students; d) the production of Black degree recipients in major fields and careers where Blacks are least represented; and e) the overall production of Black degree recipients throughout higher education (Allen, 1987; Thomas & Hill, 1987).

Given these potential differences between PWIs and HBCUs, it is also possible that student attitudes and behaviors concerning the sport and leisure profession may also differ. The purpose of this study was to examine these possibilities. Specifically, we drew from social cognitive career theory to examine potential differences between HBCU and PWI students in environmental and psychological factors thought to influence career attitudes and behaviors. The specific theoretical framework and research questions are described next.

Social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 1994) focuses on three cognitive-person constructs-self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and choice goals-and how these constructs interact with environmental factors to predict the choices people make concerning their academic and vocational choices. Self-efficacy refers to "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). People with high self-efficacy express aspirations for managerial positions, have high levels of performance, and are likely to remain in an activity, even when obstacles are present (Robertson & Sadri, 1993; Van Vianen, 1999). Outcome expectations are related to the perceived consequences of a behavioral choice (Lent et al., 1994). Theoretically, people are more likely to choose a given profession if they perceive positive outcomes associated with such a decision. Finally, choice goals are synonymous with behavioral intentions and are seen as the most proximal antecedent of actual behavior. In its most basic form, social cognitive career theory holds that self-efficacy is positively related to outcome expectations, and that these two constructs are both positively associated with interest in an activity. Interest is then expected to predict choice goals, which predict behavior (Lent et al., 1994).

More recently, environmental factors, in the way of supports (i.e. facilitators) and barriers, have also been considered. According to Bandura (1999, 2000) the effects of environmental influences are indirect in that they influence choice goals and behavior through self-efficacy. Thus, from this perspective, supports and barriers are thought to directly influence self-efficacy, which, in turn, influences subsequent interests, choice goals, and actions (Lent et al., 2003).

In drawing from this framework, we posed the following research questions: (a) are there differences between PWI students and HBCU students in self-efficacy, outcome expectations, supports, barriers, and interest and intentions to enter the sport and leisure profession; and (b) are there differences in the relationships among the social cognitive career theory variables between HBCU and PWI students?

To examine these questions, data were collected from 237 (130 HBCU and 137 PWI) sport and leisure students. Participants completed questionnaires which requested them to provide their basic demographic information and to respond to items related to their self-efficacy (alpha = .84), outcome expectations (alpha = .89), supports (alpha = .87), barriers (alpha = .73), interest (alpha = .91), and intentions (alpha = .94) to enter the sport and leisure profession. Previous research (Cunningham, Bruening,

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Sartore, Sagas, & Fink, 2005) had demonstrated the validity evidence of the measures.

The first research question was concerned with score mean differences between HBCU students and PWI students. Results of a multivariate analysis of variance demonstrated a significant multivariate effect, $F(6, 260) = 10.93, p < .001, \text{Wilks' Lambda} = .79$. Univariate analyses indicated that although HBCU students perceived fewer supports and greater barriers to entering the sport and leisure profession, they had greater outcome expectations associated with such behavior and greater entry intentions.

The second research question, which was concerned with differences in the relationships among the variables, was examined through simultaneous estimation of observed path analysis using AMOS 5.0 (see Byrne, 2004). The constrained model was a significantly poorer fit to the data than was the baseline model: chi-square change (4) = 12.30, $p < .05$. Results indicated that barriers more negatively influenced HBCU students' self-efficacy, while supports more positively influenced PWI students' self-efficacy. In addition, the link from self-efficacy to interest in entering the profession was stronger for HBCU students than it was for PWI students.

The findings in this research have several implications. From a research perspective, the results point to the need to examine all types of students and institutions of higher learning when conducting research. A research stream that focuses on PWI students only tells half of the story. From a practical perspective, it is important to continue to make the sport and leisure profession one in which all students, irrespective of their background, are afforded opportunities that are congruent with their performance. That barriers are still more likely to be perceived by HBCU students suggest that much work is still needed.