The topic of mentoring of minority and female student-athletes has received limited attention. Weaver and Chelladurai (1999) defined mentoring as “a process in which a more experienced person (i.e., the mentor) serves as a role model, provides guidance and support to a developing novice (i.e., the protégé), and sponsors that individual’s career progress” (Weaver & Chelladurai, 1999, p. 25). The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of mentoring relationships on minority and female student-athletes.

Examining the outcomes of mentoring relationships within athletics is a worthwhile venture due to observances that athletes are more likely than nonathletes to engage in mentoring relationships (Perna, Zaichkowsky, & Bockneck, 1996). Mentors may include coaches, academic advisors, professors, and alumni (Perna et al., 1996). Beyond athletic mentors, student-athletes have benefitted from faculty mentors. In a longitudinal study, Harrison, Comeaux, and Plecha (2006) observed that mentees developed increased desires to further their education due to faculty mentoring relationships. Clearly, student-athletes pursue mentorship from a variety of sources.

Few studies have addressed the distinct nature of mentoring relationships for minority student-athletes. This research has demonstrated that minority student-athletes pursue mentors to assist with academic/career support, psychosocial support, and athletic support (Carter & Hart, 2010). Person, Benson-Qauziena, and Rogers (2001) urged that mentors of minority student-athletes must demonstrate cultural competence by acknowledging and appreciating cultural differences, understanding the meaning of behavior within a cultural context, and seeking cultural information. Person and LeNoir (1997) found that the presence of mentors, both peer and experienced, enhanced the social integration of minority student-athletes.

Within the population of financially disadvantaged youth females, sport-related mentoring relationships have forged accountability, sense of community, acquisition of health and life skills, and awareness of social responsibility (Bruening, Dover, & Clark, 1999). A study conducted by Ryan and Olasov (2000) revealed that youth females that had previously led unhealthy lives more commonly avoided school absences, detentions, and suspensions following mentoring relationships that focused on physical activity and personal growth.

Numerous research questions regarding this topic merit further exploration. These include: 1a) What influence do formal mentoring programs have on female student-athletes?, 1b) What influence do formal mentoring programs have on minority student-athletes?, 2a) What influence do formal mentors have on female student-athletes?, 2b) What influence do formal mentors have on minority student-athletes?, 3a) What influence do informal mentors have on female student-athletes?, 3b) What influence do informal mentors have on minority student-athletes?, 4a) What is the relationship between formal mentors and student-athletes?, and 4b) What is the relationship between informal mentors and student-athletes?

In an attempt to address these research questions, the authors have developed a research instrument. This survey is designated into sections of Formal Mentoring Programs, Formal Mentors, Informal Mentors, and Demographic Information. The progression of this study will begin with instrument validation through a Panel of Experts. Five experts have been identified due to their knowledge of research methodology and/or intercollegiate athletics. Following consideration of their feedback, the proposed study will be submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Upon IRB approval, the survey will be distributed to a sample of minority and female student-athletes. This presentation will discuss the purpose of the study, the rationale of conducting this study, the research questions
to be addressed, and the proposed research instrument. The proposed study will investigate mentoring of minority and female student-athletes.

Conclusions generated toward this topic will provide practical recommendations to athletes and mentors. With knowledge of the essential elements of mentoring relationships, individuals can engage in and receive the benefits of mentoring bonds. Student-athletes can identify mentors that will provide them with athletic, academic, and social support. Furthermore, mentors will be better prepared to offer a variety of support services to their student-athlete mentees. This study will also provide direction for future studies regarding mentoring in an athletic context.