Routledge Research in Sport, Culture and Society

SOCCER AND THE AMERICAN DREAM

Ian Lawrence

Soccer and the American Dream

The American Dream is founded upon the ideological belief that 'you can be anything you want to be', regardless of your current class position, and is one of the most emotive, pervasive and ideologically embedded concepts championed by American citizens. Providing contemporary insight into the American Dream via the critical lens of soccer – the world's pre-eminent sport but still a minority interest in the US – this book challenges the notion that America is different, exceptional or unique in the global order, either in real socio-economic-political terms or in perceived cultural terms.

Soccer and the American Dream offers an overview of soccer in the US and uses case studies to explore the motives of American university students in undertaking a soccer scholarship, considering the impact of family, social class and career development upon social mobility and upon the game itself.

Providing a fascinating new insight into the nexus of sport, education, culture and society, this is a topical resource for students, scholars and practitioners across the fields of soccer, higher education, youth sport, sports development, sports coaching and sport management.

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Preface

The American Dream is founded upon the ideological belief that 'you can be anything you want to be, regardless of your current class position'. This belief is contained within the dominant prevailing notion that the US is a meritocracy where power and success are associated with determination and failure with laziness. This book challenges whether the American Dream is a relevant, attainable and viable concept for higher education students via the avenue of a soccer scholarship. In so doing, the research presented challenges the rhetoric of 'American exceptionalism' from a critical theoretical perspective. The research question at the heart of this book is 'what are the motives of American millennial university students for undertaking a soccer scholarship?' The adoption of an interpretive research paradigm aims to provide an explanation of student decision making and in its final analysis reveal what soccer means to the lives of the millennial student-athletes.

The findings reveal that the family is a significant but complex agent in the socialising of their children to the cultural values of the American Dream. Families in essence engage in a dynamic form of interplay in which children socialised their parents and vice versa. The conclusions presented clearly reveal that the majority of students embarking on a soccer scholarship are motivated by the need to firstly finance their higher education and secondly to continue their involvement in a sport they have 'loved' since childhood. Students within this study were self-evidently acutely aware of the demands of the graduate employment market and crucially the expectations of their families as regards the value of a university degree. However, conversely, all students interviewed were also pragmatic as to the limited number of opportunities that exist for a career in professional sport. As such, student enthusiasm and commitment towards a sports scholarship could be considered to be both a 'labour of love' and commitment to the enduring spirit of the American Dream.

Acknowledgements

One of the first of the so-called literary modern classics I was encouraged to read at high school was *Visions of Cody* by Jack Kerouac. As a young man growing up in the north west of England, my curiosity was piqued by the dedication that Kerouac penned within his landmark text. It simply stated 'Dedicated to America, whatever that is'. As succinct and poetic as that may be, this book would not have been possible without the constant that is my family. I hope you enjoy reading the book as much I have in exploring the gap between America's promise and America's reality.

Abbreviations

AFCA	American Football Coaches Association
FAWSL	Football Association Women's Soccer League
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
MLB	Major League Baseball
MLS	Major League Soccer
NBA	National Basketball Association
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association
NFL	National Football League
NWSL	National Women's Soccer League
ODP	Olympic Development Program
SGMA	Sports Goods Manufacturers Association
USFF	United States Soccer Federation
USISL	United States Interregional Soccer League
WUSA	Women's United Soccer Association

Resource 1

Player questionnaire (part 1)

Ian Lawrence, PhD Student
"Soccer, Sport and the American Dream"
Player Questionnaire (part 1)

Date:

Personal details

- **Gender:**
  (Please identify): Male Female
- **Age:**
- **Ethnicity:**
- **Home Town Size (approx' population):**
  Large (100–500,000)
  Medium (50–100,000)
  Small (less than 50,000)
  Other:
- **Family Background:**
  Which category best defines your home living conditions (family circumstances)?
  I live with both parents?
  I live with Mother only?
  I live with Father only?
  I live with 'others'?
- **Family Income:**
  Please identify which category your $ family earnings fall into
  Above Average
  Average
  Below Average
- **Family Socio-Economic Background**
  Which category best describes your family?
  Lower Class
  Middle Class

Upper-Middle Class
Upper Class

- **Mother's Profession:**
  Highest Educational Achievement?
- **Father's Profession:**
  Highest Educational Achievement?
- **Name of former high school / home town / state:**
- **SAT score:**
- **Current playing position (soccer):**
- **Name of university:**
- **Current GPA:**
- **Current status** (identify)**:** Freshman
  Junior
  Sophomore
  Senior
- **Major course of study (if declared):**
- **Minor course of study (if declared):**
- **Date of graduation (predicted):**

Q1. Which sports did you take part in as a child (0–10 yrs)?

A. Name of the 1st or most important sport or activity at this age:
Why was this sport/activity of significance or insignificant to you at this age?

B. Name of 2nd most important sport or activity at this age:
Why was this sport/activity of significance or insignificant to you at this age?

C. Name of the 3rd or least important sport or activity at this age:
Why was this sport/activity of significance or insignificant to you at this age?

D. How important were your parents in shaping the above sports choices?

Q2. From 0–10 years of age, did you have any role models, either personal or from media/society/sport? If so who were they?

Q3. Which sports did you take part in as a 'youth' (11–17 yrs)?

A. Name of the 1st most important sport or activity at this age:
Why was this sport/activity of significance or insignificant to you?

B. Name of the 2nd most important sport or activity at this age:
Why was this sport/activity of significance or insignificant to you?

C. Name of the 3rd or least important sport or activity at this age:
Why was this sport/activity of significance or insignificant to you?

Q4. From 10–17 years of age, did you have any role models, either personal or from media/society/sport?
If so who were they?
How important were your parents in shaping the above sports choices?

Q5.
(i) How old were you when you first started playing organised/competitive/league soccer?
(ii) What were the reasons you began playing at this age?
(iii) Did you have a sporting ambition at that time?

If so, what was it?
(iv) Did you have a **career ambition** different from your **sporting ambition**?
If so what was it?
(v) Have you ever dreamed of playing soccer for the national team?

Q6. Identify if you have any of the following levels of playing experience:
Junior varsity team member
High school varsity team member
State representative
National team:
- Under 18s (number of appearances) ____
- Under 21s (number of appearances) ____
- Full team (number of appearances) ____

Q7. Why did you choose to attend this university?
(Identify most appropriate)
(i) Scholarship/financial incentives?
Explanation:

(ii) Academic/degree reputation?
Explanation:

(iii) Sporting reputation of the university?
Explanation:

(iv) Recruited?
if 'yes', how?
Explanation:

(v) Other reason for choosing to attend this university?
Explanation:

Q8.
(i) At this stage in your education, do you have any role model(s)?
if so:
Have these changed?
(ii) Have they had an impact on your career choices, if you have one?
Explanation:

Q9.
Are you currently in receipt of an athletic scholarship/financial subsidy towards your soccer participation?
Yes $ per semester:
No

Q10.
(i) How much does the financial support influence your decision to continue with soccer at university?
(ii) Would you have attended university regardless of having obtained a soccer scholarship?
(iii) Has your soccer scholarship impacted upon your academic performance?

Q11. What are your ambitions upon completion of your degree?
(i) Occupation:
(ii) Personal:

Q12.
(i) Have your career objectives changed since starting at university?
Yes No
Explanation:
(ii) What do you enjoy the most about being a soccer scholar at university?

Q13. Do you feel that university has prepared you/helped you to realise these ambitions?
Yes No
Explanation:

Thank you, for taking part in this questionnaire.
All information will remain strictly confidential.

Resource 2

Player questionnaire (part 2)

Please read each of the following 8 statements carefully. After each statement, rank your response for each statement according to the Likert Scale:

1 Strongly disagree
2 Disagree
3 Neither agree nor disagree
4 Agree
5 Strongly agree

Statements:

1 The American Dream is attainable. (Rank:)
2 Social mobility is a consequence of hard work. (Rank:)
3 The family is the most important factor in facilitating upward mobility. (Rank:)
4 One can live well in America today. (Rank:)
5 Talent always leads to success. (Rank:)
6 The American Dream is an open and fair contest. (Rank:)
7 I will achieve the American Dream. (Rank:)
8 University is the key to achieving my ambitions. (Rank:)

Resource 3

Player interviews (semi-structured)

Part One (biographical details: family, social class, perceptions of social mobility and educational goals). Part Two (wider notions of the American Dream and the specific reasons for undertaking a scholarship).

Interview Schedule

Date:
Place:
Student:

Background/preliminary questions

Can you tell me about your sporting background before starting university?
Probe
Can you explain the specific reasons/motives for selecting this university?
Probe

Family interaction

What kinds of things/activities do you do with your family?

Probes: Does that include your parents being involved with soccer?
How much time would you say you spend with your family over the course of a week?
How much time would you say you spend alone?
Do your parents play any sports or participate in any activities? Probe

Communication

How much time, on average, do you think you spend talking or communicating with your parents over the course of a week?

Probes: Are there times you find yourself talking to them more?
What type of things/subjects/issues do you talk about with your parents?
Does this include soccer?

Are there certain things (subjects) that you and your parents talk in more depth about? Probe

Do you talk with your parents about your soccer? What do you seem to talk about most in relation to your soccer?

Probe: e.g., how you are playing, if you are having fun?

Describe your parents' behaviour when they attend a soccer game. Probe

Do you talk openly with your parents about expectations in general and in relation to soccer?

Probe: If not, why not?

Expectations

What do you think your parents expect of you in general?

What do you expect of yourself in general?

What do you expect of yourself in relation to soccer?

What are your parents' expectations of you in relation to soccer?

Probe: Do you feel these expectations are the same or different than your parents' expectations?

Do you feel you have a choice about your involvement in soccer?

Describe your parents' investment/involvement in relation to your soccer. Probe

How do you see soccer as related to your future?

Probe: Conceptualisation of the American Dream concept

How do you think your parents see soccer as related to your future? Probe: Conceptualisation of the American Dream concept

Goals

Do you set goals? Probe

What kind of goals have you set?

Probe: Conceptualisation of the American Dream concept

What kind of goals do you think your parents have set for you? Probe

Have you and your parents established goals about your involvement in soccer? Probe

What kind of feedback do you receive about your goals and your parents' goals? Probe

Do you feel your parents play a part in whether you enjoy soccer or not? Why or why not? Probe

Do you talk openly with your parents about <u>your</u> expectations? Probe

Do you talk openly with your parents about <u>their</u> expectations? Probe

What can parents do or not do to increase or support enjoyment for you in your soccer experiences? Probe

What are your sporting ambitions at this point?

Probe: Conceptualisation of the American Dream concept

Why did you choose to attend this university?

Probes: Scholarship/financial incentives
Academic/degree reputation?
Conceptualisation of the American Dream concept
Sporting reputation of the university?
Recruited?
Other reason for choosing to attend this university?

At this stage in your education, do you have any role model(s)?

Probe: Have these changed?
Have they had an impact on your career choices?

Are you currently in receipt of an athletic scholarship/financial subsidy towards your soccer participation?

Probes: How much $ per semester?
Pragmatic view of scholarship or ambition to compete at a professional level?

How much does the financial support influence your decision to continue with soccer at university?

Probe: Would you continue to play soccer without the scholarship?

What are your ambitions upon completion of your degree?

Probes: Occupation:
Personal:
Sport:

Have your career objectives changed since starting at university? Probe

Do you feel that university has prepared you/helped you to realise these ambitions? Probe

What part does soccer have in your future career orientation/decision making? Probe

Is the American Dream attainable in your view? Probe

Is social mobility a consequence of hard work? Probe

Does talent lead to success? Probe

Is the American Dream a fair contest? Probe

Resource 4

Profession categories used for the player survey

Professionals
Architect
Astronaut
Attorney
Certified Public Accountant
Chemist
Dentist/Doctor
Engineer
Executive
Lawyer
Pharmacist
Professor

Professional/Technicians
Coach
Communication
Fireman
Forestry
Government
Insurance
Law Enforcement
Other Business Administration
Other Medical Related
Other Self-Employed
Professional Golfer
Real Estate
Religion Related
Sales (not retail)
Supervisor/Foreman
Surveyor
Technician

Management
Accounting
Advertising
Banking
Business Owner
Buyer
Computer Related
Counsellor
Editor
Educator
Financial Advisor
Librarian
Manager
Marketing
Nurse
President
Social Worker
Teacher
Writer

Craft & Operatives
Animal Trainer
Coal Miner
Construction
Entertainer
Farming
Heavy Equipment Operation
Landscaper
Mechanical/Machinist
Military
Operator

Service
Bank Teller
Beautician
Blacksmith
Clerical
Factory Worker
Janitor/Maintenance
Nurse's Aide
Restaurant Retail Sales
Teacher's Aide
Secretarial (Executive)
Service Related
Transportation
Travel Agent
Utility Employee

Homemaker/Retired
Disabled
Homemaker
Retired

Deceased

Resource 5

Major fields of study

Business is the most popular major among the student-athletes surveyed.

Almost one-third (33%) listed this as their field of study. The next most popular major is social sciences (17%), followed by arts and humanities (14%). Another 6% are undecided.

[Note: The figures in parentheses indicate the percentage of student-athletes in the particular major who have earned a 3.0 or better GPA.]

A Categorisation of Majors for the Player Survey

Business	Natural Sciences
Accounting	Animal Science
Administration	Astronomy
Advertising	Biology
Computer Science	Chemistry
Economics	Mortuary Science
Finance	Nutrition/Dietician
Hotel/Restaurant Management	Pharmaceutical
Human Resources	Physical Therapy
Industrial Relations	Physics
Management	Physiology
Marketing	Pre-Med
Mathematics	Rehabilitation Services
Travel/Tourism	Zoology
Social Sciences	Arts and Humanities
Anthropology	Architecture/Drafting
Criminal Justice	Commercial Arts
Government	Education
Human Development	English
Philosophy	Fine Arts
Political Science	History
Pre-Law	Industrial Arts
Psychology	Languages
Social Work	Music
Sociology	Photography
Urban Planning	Religion

Physical Education
Commercial Recreation

Communications
Broadcasting
Journalism
Public Relations
Radio
Television

Engineering
Drafting

Agriculture
Forestry

Undecided

Resource 6

Support and challenge dynamics questionnaire

(Adapted from Wedemeyer Moon, 2003)

Answer each question on how you generally feel about your family, with stating 'agree' **(A)** or 'disagree' **(D).**

1 (+ S) Others notice when I'm feeling down, even if I don't say anything.
2 (+ C) We enjoy playing competitive games.
3 (- S) It is difficult to relax and be myself.
4 (- C) We have few interests and hobbies outside of the home.
5 (+ S) I feel appreciated for who I am.
6 (+ C) We express our opinions about current events, even when they differ.
7 (- S) The only time I'm noticed is when there is a problem.
8 (+ S) If I have a problem, I get special attention and help.
9 (- C) Others lack ambition and self-discipline.
10 (- C) I don't care if others think I'm 'soft' or lazy.
11 (+ S) I do things I like to do without feeling embarrassed.
12 (- S) Day-to-day life is disorganised and unpredictable.
13 (+ C) We ask each other's ideas before making important decisions.
14 (- C) It's hard to find privacy when I need to concentrate and finish some work.
15 (+ C) I'm expected to use my time wisely.
16 (- S) Others can't be counted on.
17 (+ S) We try not to hurt each other's feelings.
18 (+ S) I am made to feel special on birthdays and holidays.
19 (- S) There are many fights and arguments.
20 (+ S) No matter what happens, I know I'll be loved and accepted.
21 (+ C) It's important to be self-confident and independent to earn respect.
22 (+ S) Our home is full of things that hold special memories.
23 (+ S) We are willing to help each other out when something needs to be done.
24 (+ S) We compromise when our schedules conflict.
25 (+ C) Individual accomplishments are noticed.
26 (+ S) We enjoy having dinner together and talking.

27 (+ C) Others expect me to be good at what I do.
28 (+ C) I'm expected to do my best.
29 (+ C) I'm given responsibility for making important decisions affecting my life.
30 (+ C) I try to make other family members proud.
31 (+ C) I'm encouraged to get involved in extra-curricular activity
32 (+ C) I'm respected for being a hard worker.

Resource 7

Athletic directors and coaches interviews (semi-structured)

Theme: the role of the family in the decision making of students

How often do you encounter parents as part of your role and responsibilities at the university? Probe

What is your impression of parental expectations for students who are soccer scholars? Probe

Are parents fully aware of the rules and regulations as they apply to athletic scholarships? Probe: NCAA regulations/eligibility

What role do the parent(s) have during the recruitment of players? Probe

What are parental views regarding the academic/sporting requirements of a scholarship? Probe

Who/Which is the most influential parent in terms of shaping the decision making of the child? Probe

Theme: the number of scholarship places available

Do parents fully understand the level of financial support available? and/or the number of positions available? Probe

Is there any relationship/correlation between parental expectations and the requirements of maintaining a scholarship? Probe

Do parents attempt to negotiate/coerce you during the scholarship? Probe: negotiate increase in $

Would you recommend that students pursue an athletic scholarship? Probe: why do students undertake a soccer scholarship?

What is your personal view regarding athletic scholarships and higher education? Probe

Does a soccer scholarship increase the likelihood of becoming a professional player/career? Probe

The Americanisation of soccer

Can you explain the level of popularity of soccer in the US? Probe: youth recreation to university scholarship positions

What is the role of the media in promoting the game? Probe: Is there an American Model?

What do you anticipate to be the future of the professional game in the US? Probe

Introduction

The loci for this book are a reflection of the two great formative influences in my life, i.e., my family and my experience as a 'soccer' coach in the USA.

As a child growing up in a family obsessed with Liverpool Football Club, it was inevitable that I would be 'assimilated into the borg' and with it the passion and contagious enthusiasm that surrounds the game and one club in particular. Indoctrination to the folklore of LFC and its players (past and present) was achieved before I had even begun high school. America, in comparison, represented everything to a naive young man that a life in the north west of England did not.

The seeds of my fascination for all things American were planted at an early age. I grew up in the pre-Internet era with a reluctance to visit the town library, which meant that the drivers of my dreams were the stories my father retold of his former life travelling the globe with the Merchant Navy. The stories of exotic locations, people and animals were great fun to listen to, but it was the images beamed into my parents' living room (via the three UK television channels) from Hollywood that had the greatest impact upon nurturing an insatiable appetite for US culture. The glamorous depiction of endless vistas and exotic characters doing incomprehensible things meant that the medium of TV for a young man from Bolton represented something powerful and hugely influential. The cornerstones of British popular culture appeared to be American in origin. Britain, in comparison, simply appeared to be absorbing US cultural influences and re-exporting them. Popular music and my love for English 'rock and roll' in particular appeared to have its foundations 'across the pond' with Howlin' Woolf, Muddy Waters, Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley, Little Richard and Bob Dylan cited as some of the key influences. The cornerstones of my formative years therefore had a distinctly American flavour. It was during my latter years as a high school student that I was introduced to the work of James Truslow Adams and his 1931 treatise 'The Epic of America'. As an aspiring teacher, the motif of the book was a powerful one. Adams talked of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. If further inspiration was needed to visit such a land of promise and dreams, it was provided by my older brother Paul and his experiences as a summer camp counsellor with British Universities North America Camps (BUNAC).

As camp counsellors, individuals typically work with groups of children aged 6–16 years old. From wake-ups to meal times, 'campers' (children) are coached in a wide variety of sports with the role of the counsellor to ensure that the children have as much enjoyment as possible. Paul returned from his summer in America, resplendent with a sun tan, a suitcase bulging with 'cool' new clothes and enthusiastic stories of life in America. I was sold.

My first experience of working in America took place in the summer of 1987 and was provided by one of the earliest pioneers of soccer-specific camps, North American Soccer Camps (NASC). Founded by Dr Gary Russell in Connecticut, the organisation grew quickly in response to a surge in the popularity of the game in the mid-1970s. Demand from the 'grassroots' and a new audience of engaged parents and their support of youth soccer can be partly attributed to the influence of Pelé and his three seasons with the New York Cosmos but also to the role that popular media played in simultaneously entertaining and educating their assumed audience of largely new or unconverted soccer fans. Moreover, the rhetorical strategies employed by these writers effectively challenged decades-old stereotypes and presented the sport in a way that was more appealing to the 'average American' (Satterlee, 2001). What was self-evident to sports business entrepreneurs was demand for a game that was currently being unmet with clear potential to expand and engage beyond mythical notions of the 'soccer mom' demographic that was subsequently co-opted by pop culture. The acceptance of soccer within mainstream US culture, particularly amongst girls and young women, is an important factor within any consideration of how soccer has established itself within the US psyche (Allison, 2018). The US Youth Soccer Association claims that there are over three million registered players (aged between 3 and 19) with the world's largest coaching and volunteer network of 900,000 people in 2018 (www.usyouthsoccer.org). Even more telling, the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association of America (SGMA) claims that as of 2002, 1.3 million more children played soccer than 'Little League Baseball' (Foer, 2004), provoking Collins to state that 'American youth are choosing soccer over the national pastime' (2006, p. 353). The number of people playing soccer in the United States is on the rise. In the spring of 2016, more people played soccer than ever since 2009 (Statista, 2018). This was also the same year that the US women's team won their most recent FIFA World Cup championship. While the US men's national soccer team had their best World Cup performance in 1930, the US women's team has won three world championships (more than any other country). It can also be observed that the number of boys (450, 354) and girls (388, 399) who played soccer in high school in the United States has steadily increased since 2009 (boys: 391,839; girls: 351,116) (ibid., 2018). The significant involvement of female participants within soccer challenges the theory of American reluctance towards embracing soccer and in doing so questions notions of American exceptionalism (Henry and Comeaux, 1999). Women's involvement in soccer is statistically impressive; it has been estimated that over half of the 18 million soccer players in America are female (FIFA Big Count, 2006).

The enthusiasm with which women have embraced the sport is central to the divergent opinions about whether soccer is a mainstream sport in contemporary US society. Analyses of American exceptionalism theorists, such as Markovits (1998), have previously stated that soccer has been appropriated by the middle class, which has ultimately led to its rejection by a nativistic culture. In agreement, Andrews (1999) has argued that the synergy between soccer, females and the middle class will leave it as perennially marginalised. This thesis aims to challenge the notion of soccer being perceived solely as a locus of gender equity by interviewing students as to their motives for undertaking a soccer scholarship.

The decision to adopt the term 'soccer' for this book rather than 'association football' (named after the regulatory body which codified and standardised the first 'rules' in 1863 – the 'Football Association') was a simple one given the context in which this study is positioned and its common usage within contemporary US society. The debate as to which term, 'soccer' or 'football', should have precedence is one which consumes etymologists and sports historians, leading some critics of the term 'soccer' to regard it as a semantically bizarre cheap American neologist invention (Hendricks, 2015; Szymanski and Weineck, 2018). However, the origins of its usage can ironically be traced to its popularity amongst English aristocrats and their children within the private schools of Victorian England. Indeed, it was not until the early versions of the game became popular at schools such as Eton, Rugby and Harrow that there was a need to differentiate it from rugby football and produce a standardised set of rules. There are, however, a variety of different hypotheses offered up by way of explanation as to how the term 'soccer' entered the vernacular. One such hypothesis is proffered by Peter Seddon in his book *Football Talk* (2004) in which he attempts to chronicle the language of the game. Within the book, Seddon postulates that soccer originates from the verb or slang for the action of players kicking (socking) the ball. This observation, although intuitive, given that the game is played mostly with the feet, appears to lack the necessary historical documentation that could support it. However, the enthusiasm that young men within England's private schools had for abbreviating cumbersome terms and converting them into slang with the fewest number of syllables may be at the root of any explanation for the eventual conversion of 'association football' to the more concise term – 'soccer'. The differentiation in part was required in order to establish it as a separate entity and remove any confusion with rugby football in England (the same rationale for differentiation can be seen in the US with the need to establish soccer as opposed to 'grid iron' football in the twentieth century).

The foundation for soccer to enter the consciousness of the American people was clearly demonstrated by its popularity amongst 'grassroots' participants of both genders. However, the increasing number of spectators and subsequent commercial interest in the professional game clearly allowed it to cautiously challenge for acceptance within the broader lexicon of American sporting culture. Organisations such as NASC expanded to create a nationwide network of summer camps across the length and breadth of the US. It was my initial experience

with NASC and latterly 'Major League Soccer Camps' over the next 15 years that fuelled an enthusiasm for exploring the growth of soccer in America from a 'firsthand' research perspective. Additional insight was gained by combining work as a soccer coach and master's student at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. What emerged from my formative experiences as a coach and subsequent PhD research is, I hope, a nuanced firsthand interpretation of soccer and its place within the lexicon of the American Dream.

The concept of the 'American Dream' has historically maintained a captivating hold over the psyche of the US public. Inspired by the popular storytelling of 19th-century American author Horatio Alger's 'rags to riches' books, the nation appears to have embraced the narrative that identifies perseverance and commitment as factors for financial success. Consequently, proponents of the 'dream' dispute theories that suggest genealogy and environment could shape one's social standing (Appleton, 2002; Huber, 1971). This book, however adopts an unconventional approach to testing the validity of such ideological claims in 21st-century contemporary America. The research presented challenges whether the American Dream is a relevant, attainable and viable concept for higher education students via the avenue of a soccer scholarship. In so doing, the investigation will challenge the perceived wisdom of 'American exceptionalism' from a critical theoretical perspective. American exceptionalism in this context refers to the popular view that the United States differs from other developed nations because of its historical development or distinctive political institutions. The distinction is frequently expressed as some uncompromising pre-eminence, to which is usually attached a degree of rationalisation, validation or explanation that may vary according to the historical period and the political context (Abowitz, 2005). In this precise context 'exceptionalists' would argue that soccer has failed to enter the psyche of America because of its association with ethnic minorities and latterly with the middle class strata of society. This book, however, aims to challenge what Asimov surmised as a 'cult of ignorance' that has always existed within the United States and in doing so present a counterargument to the received wisdom of soccer and its place within US society.

The departure from previous studies is provided by the context within which the research is focused: 'soccer' or association football as it is known more commonly in the UK. To date, no previous research has been conducted which presents the opinions of American higher education students undertaking a soccer scholarship and as such offers a unique lens through which the value of soccer to US society can be considered. The term 'soccer' will be adopted for this book in order to avoid confusing it with American football (grid iron). As such, soccer offers a valuable insight as to perceptions of how the American Dream is evolving in response to changes both from a 'macro' and 'micro' level.

From a macro perspective, the book will consider those societal forces which are the result of the complex interactions of individuals and groups, which, in turn, are the templates that shape the cultural dimensions of society (Stempel, 2005). One, therefore, cannot study the actions of individuals without some

consideration to the broader socio-cultural environments and their educational experiences and value structures which impact upon their social lives (Giardina and McCarthy, 2005). These factors are consistent and are inclined to be closely linked in presenting an overall 'feel' of the culture. From a micro perspective, the book seeks to analyse the potentially broad spectrum of individual needs for undertaking a scholarship. As the term suggests, 'micro' is the smallest, most intimate level of society and represents groupings that the majority of humans will automatically identify with first (Couldry and Markham, 2007). The micro level deals with the daily actions and interactions of people in society. The book therefore will examine the collective roles that the subjects take on within society and how such roles are interpreted. At this more intimate stage, the focus is on how participants reflect and act within the concept of the American Dream.

The basic tenets of the American Dream and thus the central drama of US culture appear to be the dynamics of status advancement (Gorn, 2004). This belief may have its roots within the motives of its immigrants in aspiring to realise the American Dream. Much of American ancestry can be traced to generations of impoverished workers seeking opportunity and entering the labour market at the base, forming a hierarchical or tiered layer cake. As each ethnic group mobilised up the social ladder, a new impoverished cohort filled the vacuum. This upward flow, expectation to climb and sense of mobility is central to American culture and the doctrine of the 'dream'. Universal public education within this creed was a revolutionary concept, according to Goldschmidt (1999), that gave migrants a 'highway to success' (p. 66), facilitating an opportunity to climb the economic ladder to status and thus achieve the dream. As a result, many sports sociologists have argued that there is an established and recognisable relationship between obtaining an elevated level of education and increasing one's own level of financial mobility (Appleton, 2002; Chenoweth, 1974; Riess, 1994, 1999).

The education system in the United States has consistently been identified as the most efficient, non-discriminatory and successful mechanism for all citizens to advance their financial status (Heyman et al., 2014; McMurrer and Sawhill, 1998; Stempel, 2005). By undertaking a degree, individuals with low socio-economic status are encouraged to believe that they can boost their income potential. The challenge of the American Dream is then to exceed the achievements of their parents and challenge those individuals who occupy the upper income echelons. Generally speaking, each supplementary stage of education any individual achieves is pre-supposed to add greatly to income levels (Barnett and Belfield, 2006). Education could therefore be regarded as a ritual affirmation of American social mobility and arguably a conduit for status advancement. It is supported by a salary and, in contemporary society, often by two salaries. A salary in simple terms could be considered a measure of social standing, a finely calibrated status ladder which facilitates the purchase of 'status markers' defining both cultural taste and social standing. Children who have internalised these values from their parents find they have high status in school; those who have not often become disillusioned and alienated (McMurrer and Sawhill, 1998). Parents in this context

can be clearly identified as the engine that drives and reinforces status dynamics within the United States (Sugden and Tomlinson, 2000).

Within the context of higher education, the subjects of this study were interviewed in order to discover the importance of a soccer scholarship in facilitating their dreams of social mobility. Previous discussions within this context frequently refer to the widespread belief that the financial support offered by universities is a valuable mobility vehicle for young adults (Abowitz, 2005; Coakley, 2007; Coontz, 2016; Cousens and Slack, 2003; Eitzen, 2000; Eitzen and Sage, 2003; Woolf, 1992). In order to contextualise the myriad of factors which may have a bearing upon student decision making or motives for undertaking an athletic scholarship, it is firstly necessary to present a broad synopsis of sport and status from a macro perspective within US society.

Sports in American society are commonly regarded as both the social glue, bonding the 50 states together, and a vehicle for the transmission of ideals and concepts, such as fair play, justice and sacrifice (Dyreson, 2001, 2005; Szymanski and Zimbalist, 2005). The concepts intrinsic to sport have consistently been argued to have made a positive contribution to social and racial integration and concomitantly to the development of language, as sports terms and expressions are integrated within everyday usage (Adams, 1931; Alba and Nee, 2003; Cornbleth, 2002) – evidently, however, not without its critics, as historians and cultural detractors have reiterated:

> [T]he mythology that sport provides the only kind of social capital which translates into social mobility for African Americans has been and continues to be a pernicious fiction.
>
> (Dyreson, 2001, p. 25)

It is important therefore to reflect upon the impact that professional sport has had in reinforcing the ideology of the American Dream. One mechanism historically has been by the creation of a 'sporting narrative'. The act of creating stories out of sport has led to a communal immersion in acceptance of athletic celebrity. The consequence of this narrativisation of sport is that it extends beyond any single athlete to collectively bind society in ideologies of status (Giardina and McCarthy, 2005). A detailed analysis of the concept of social mobility and its association with the American Dream will be provided in Chapter 1; however, it is appropriate at this point to touch upon the mainstream perspective within which sport is viewed. According to Gorn, sport has become 'a sort of idealized version of the American social structure, offering equality of opportunity purely on the basis of merit' (2004, p. 4). The cultural logic of such observations asserts that an athlete is the personification of the ordinary American citizen who uses hard work and talent to socially reposition himself or herself.

Soccer in this study provides a context within which a theoretical analysis of achieving social mobility can be developed. This, however, should come as no surprise given that historically it is located behind the established 'Big Four'

church of American football, basketball, baseball and ice hockey. Traditionally, American football and baseball are perceived as invoking an exacting embodiment of the American Dream, one that bestows collective adulation and devotion. Robert Frost, arguably one of America's most respected poets and social historians, reiterated the country's obsession with professional sports when he observed, 'Nothing flatters me more than to have it assumed that I could write prose – unless it be to have it assumed that I once pitched a baseball with distinction' (in Oriard, 1993, p. 57). Americans from all walks of life self-evidently share an enduring and emotional passion for sporting contests which extends across real or perceived socio-economic class and racial boundaries (Gorn, 2004; Kuper, 2006).

In America, since the beginning of the twentieth century, intercollegiate sports competition has been a fundamental element in perpetuating the supply of sporting narrative and has fuelled support for both public and private universities (Denison, 1996; Troutman and Dufur, 2007) and been simultaneously perpetuated by the media (Gerdy, 2006). The steady rise in intercollegiate athletics' popularity and subsequent revenue can be traced to the televising of college sporting contests, which facilitated the creation and expansion of fan bases beyond the geographical boundaries of any individual university (Sack, 2001). In the early 1950s, television stations began to broadcast a small number of elite university sporting contests to a national audience and in doing so established what became known as 'big-time' athletic programmes (Zimbalist, 1999). Consequently, the public and media enthusiasm for sports has made intercollegiate athletics a focus for the discussion of societal issues at large, such as gender, race and class along with philosophical concerns regarding values of morality and ethics (Boyle, 2004; Gerdy, 2006). As such, higher education is perceived as having a leadership role by establishing societal attitudes towards athletics (Coakley, 2007). Given this perception, it is appropriate that this study positions itself within higher education in order to reflect upon the ideological claims of the American Dream. Specifically, this study focuses upon two universities that are classified as 'Division One'. In order to better understand the nature of athletic scholarships and the environment in which student-athletes participate, it is necessary to provide an overview of the structure of the National College Athletic Association (NCAA).

Intercollegiate athletic programs have always operated within the framework of a sponsoring university (Gerdy, 2002). Throughout the previous century, the organisational structure continued to become more formalised (Eitzen and Sage, 2003). As national championship contests were expanded from grid-iron football to track and field, basketball, and soccer in the 1940s, the 'professional model' as it appears today began to emerge (Gerdy, 2002). Although research about Division One programs is extensive (Coakley, 2007; Chu et al., 1985; Jung, 2013), the literature which investigates the motivation of student-athletes to participate in such programs is limited and forms the focus of the book. The motivation for this investigation is partly based upon a personal interest; as a former post-graduate student and soccer coach in the United States, I have observed a groundswell of

enthusiasm for the game from both a spectator and participant basis, challenging the status quo of more traditional sports. Hosting the FIFA World Cup in 1994 proved to be a catalyst for the foundation of both women's (initially branded the 'WUSA') and men's (MLS) domestic professional leagues. Subsequently, spectator attendance within MLS has grown to the point where crowd size average is within the parameters of elite professional leagues in Europe and South America, where it is an integral part of the sporting culture (Brown, 2005, 2007; Collins, 2006; Lawrence, 2017). Given the extent of previous research highlighting the perceived American apathy towards soccer (Andrews, 1999; Markovits and Hellerman, 2001, 2003a; Mason, 1986; Sugden, 1994), this thesis analyses the views of soccer scholarship students and seeks to provide conclusions as to the viability of a soccer scholarship as a mechanism through which to pursue the American Dream. A detailed analysis of soccer and mainstream US culture is provided in Chapter 1.

Soccer, according to its critics, is considered traditionally as an afterthought amongst most US sports fans (Delgado, 1997; Markovits and Hellerman, 2001, 2003a). Within the financial indicators of success, i.e., television ratings and sponsorship income, it is clearly behind the established professional sports franchises of the NFL, NBA, and MLB. Furthermore, critics argue, in terms of culture, soccer lags behind these three sports. Proponents of the American exceptionalism thesis, as previously discussed, such as Markovits and Hellerman (2001, 2003a), critique the sporting culture of the United States, observing that 'a sporting culture revolves around what people follow as spectators rather than the sports they participate in as athletes' (2003b, p. 1535). Thus the argument predicts that the professional game of soccer has never gained and is unlikely to ever gain a foundation in the sporting culture of the United States (Brown, 2005). It is in essence not, in the opinion of its detractors, a sport that the majority of Americans would identify with (as sports fans, as they have historically demonstrated towards football, basketball and baseball). The development of both the men's and women's professional games will be considered in Chapter 2 and with it the viability of soccer as a potential career for students with the pre-requisite experience.

There is clearly an abundance of theories which attempt to explain or hypothesise the impact (real or perceived) of soccer in America. The interactionist research framework adopted for this study acknowledges the myriad of theories which contribute to an understanding of the American Dream. Therefore, in order to analyse student motives for undertaking a soccer scholarship, this study employed an interpretive research paradigm; details of the research design are provided in Chapter 3. The primary focus of the paradigm is to understand the human experience at a holistic level and facilitate an accurate interpretation of the complexities embedded in those subjective experiences. The research question central to this study is 'what are the motives of American university students for undertaking a soccer scholarship?' The book will therefore consider the macro dynamics of the student decision-making process from the context of how such decisions reflect the broader conceptual issues of the American Dream. As

a result, any conclusions will inevitably challenge notions of how soccer is perceived within contemporary society.

In order to investigate the reasons why individuals undertake a soccer scholarship, a sample of students from two separate universities were studied; a detailed discussion of the subjects involved in the study is presented in Chapter 3. However, an overview of the study is provided here in order to facilitate an appreciation of the research context.

The study is positioned within what is known as 'Division One' or the elite level of university athletic competition in the United States, which is overseen at the national level by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Founded in 1906, the NCAA has 1,103 member institutions which are categorised into three divisions of athletic competition. The highest level of athletic competition is Division One in which there are currently 347 participating universities. Division Two has 305, and Division Three has 451 competing universities. According to the most recent figures, this equates to over 491,000 student-athletes participating in sports for which the NCAA conducts championships. There are still more male student-athletes (56.2% of the total) than female student-athletes participating in championship sports. In 2016–17, the average NCAA member institution had approximately 445 student-athletes, 250 males and 195 females (NCAA, 2017, p. 5).

Division One is vastly different from the lower leagues of Division Two or Three. The university commitment to winning at the Division One level is considerable and predicated upon income generation (Eitzen, 2000; Jung, 2013). Previous research has clearly identified that there is a common perception amongst athletes that taking part in elite university competition acts as a springboard to a professional career or upward financial mobility (Sack, 1987; Sirin, 2005; Tucker, 2004). The implication of examining the experiences of soccer scholarship students from a Division One context is that they represent the elite pool of university athletic ability in the United States. By analysing their decision-making strategy, the study will inevitably challenge previous notions of soccer and American exceptionalism. The core premise of such criticism is that soccer has failed to gain a foothold in the American psyche and thus failed to be incorporated within the wider concepts of the Dream and perceptions of how upward mobility is facilitated.

Two separate universities were selected for the study. The names of the universities and the players and staff interviewed within the study have been changed in order to ensure their anonymity. This ethical obligation was deemed necessary in order to encourage participants to talk openly and frankly. For clarification, the universities selected are henceforth referred to as West University and East University. A detailed summary of the criteria used for selection of the two sample universities can be found in Chapter 3. However, both were selected because of their declared values and commitment towards athletic competition. In particular, both universities had achieved comparable state, regional and national success within their respective soccer programmes. Finally, both institutions offered

similar 'grant in aid' scholarship packages to their students, averaging at approximately $15,000 per recipient. This figure represents the average amount that all scholarship recipients are believed to receive nationally within soccer.

The sample group of 154 students represented the entire soccer scholarship cohort for both of the Division One universities. The subjects were selected on the basis that they represented a range of student experience within the context of the investigation. A combination of primary and secondary data collection methodological techniques was employed within the study in order to illuminate the main theme of participants' motives for undertaking a scholarship. In total, 160 students (80 from each university) received a questionnaire, which contained a selection of 'closed' questions (Resource 1). The aim of the questionnaire was to provide biographical detail regarding the students and the variety of factors which may have potentially impacted upon their decision making. The questions were designed to obtain quantitative data and were likely to require simple responses which were presented within a range of options (Denzin, 2001; Gratton and Jones, 2003). In addition to the questionnaire, a sample of students, coaches and administrators from each university were then interviewed in order to establish their perspective regarding students' motives for undertaking a scholarship at their university. The aim of the interviews was to provide qualitative data which would provide insight to the complex decision-making process at work in electing to undertake a scholarship. The use of the subjects' own words to illuminate decision making is key to providing an interpretive analysis. Details of the research design of this study are provided in Chapter 3.

The way in which sports have been perceived as a path to mobility has been recognised by numerous authors. What is not known is whether scholarship students have come to value soccer as a valid occupational path to pursue. Chapter 4 presents the study results, which are categorised into the themes of family, social class, social mobility and career development. The themes of the study were established via a combination of an extensive literature review of the context in the US and a pilot study. To facilitate 'thick' and 'rich' descriptions of their world, an interpretive approach was adopted to analyse the data produced. This approach examines meanings that have been socially constructed and consequently accepts that individual values and views may differ. The interpretive paradigm adopted aims to elicit interviewees' views of their world and the events they have experienced. Analysis of the responses was contextualised using the 'Support/Challenge Questionnaire' (SCQ) devised by Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider (2000). Originally formulated by Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993) to study talented teenagers, the thirty-two-item questionnaire is employed in this research to evaluate the player's perception of their family dynamics. The results of the study in Chapter 4 reveal how the students interpreted the meanings, identities and culture of the American class system—essentially, how they define the reality of their own lives. This chapter challenges the hypothesis that the family is a functional and unproblematic agent in socialising children to the cultural values of the American Dream. An alternative explanation proposed in this

study is that the process of transmission is actually a two-way phenomenon in which children socialised their parents and vice versa.

The discussion that follows in Chapter 5 links in to a critical theoretical placement of the themes from a micro and macro perspective. The chapter will provide an interpretive discussion of the results; in doing so, it will address the central research question of 'what are the motives of students for undertaking a soccer scholarship?' The adoption of an interpretive framework within this chapter provides an explanation and understanding of student decision making. The approach is primarily concerned with the way in which the social world is not just something to be confronted by individuals but is continually reinvented by its participants. To facilitate an understanding of the players' point of view, it was necessary to understand the subjects' definition of the situation and hang flesh upon the skeletons of the primary data generated. In the final analysis, interpretive sociology provides a framework for understanding what soccer means to the lives of the subjects.

Chapter 6 provides the conclusions of the study, detailing the cultural implications of inter-collegiate athletics and the social mobility of student-athletes. The economic reality of funding a four-year undergraduate degree in modern America is not lost on the students sampled in this study. Clear evidence is provided that success in higher education requires individual effort both on and off the field of play for the student-athletes. In closing, the study challenges the notion of American exceptionalism and with it presents arguments for a reconfiguration of the American Dream in contemporary US society.

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Chapter 1

What is the American Dream?

The aim of this chapter and the one that follows is to provide a review of previous literature which serves to frame the research question and prepare the way for subsequent theoretical analyses. In order to achieve this, it is first necessary to contextualise the origins of the iconic term 'American Dream' and how it subsequently entered into American cultural and social ideals. The origins and meanings of the term that emerged in the last century are controversial and subject to heated debates from social historians and politicians alike (Churchwell, 2018). In recent years, the term has been conflated within political slogans of entrepreneurial aspiration and notions of American exceptionalism. However, in order to address the broader contemporary interpretation of the term by the research actors within this book (undergraduate student-athletes), it is first necessary to consider the historical roots of the phrase and debunk any received wisdom regarding its usage. The first use of the term can be found surprisingly recently (given its impact upon the American psyche and vocabulary) within James Truslow Adams's 1931 bestseller and treatise *The Epic of America*. The book provides a sweeping and inevitably subjective historical review of his country's development from Columbus's landfall in to industrial prominence in the 20th century. Within his book, Adams either directly references or alludes to the American Dream over fifty times, but its use is arguably best encapsulated within the innocence and simplicity of the passage 'that American dream of a better, richer, and happier life for all our citizens of every rank' (2012, p. xx). The original meaning of the phrase is essentially egalitarian in nature and offered up by Adams to protect the notion of American democracy, truth, justice and equality. However, Adams adds that there would be 'nothing in the dream unless the new life for the common man was made uncommon' (p. 326). The influx of migrants to America in pursuit of religious freedom and happiness for every citizen is a powerful trope contained with Adams's dream construct and one that became popularised and embedded within the domestic population who were opposed to growing perceptions of rampant inequality in their country (Churchwell, 2018). Therefore, the original intentions of the dream within Adams's treatise were not in defence of free market capitalism and the wealthy elite of the 'gilded age' (approximately 1870–1900 – an 'age' in which America developed its mass

industrial mass production techniques and an era encapsulated within books such as the *Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald in 1925) but in pursuit of equality of opportunity and justice. As a result, traction for the ideology and promise of the dream was gained not just in the 'liberal' northeast and big cities of America but across the rural communities of the south and midwest of the country.

The notion of the American Dream is therefore something that has intrinsic ideological appeal for every citizen of the United States but is clearly subject to reinterpretation and adaptation. As a result, each new generation of US citizens are socialised to reconsider the original prerequisites of 'success' (and how it is quantitatively and qualitatively evaluated) both individually and collectively as a society. The traditional exemplars of success and upward mobility abound in US folklore and storytelling. The destitute immigrant who builds a financial empire and the boy from the ghetto who fights his way to fame and stardom exemplify the potential to achieve success in American culture. Such concepts are encapsulated in the work of popular authors such as Horatio Alger in the 19th century and extended by James Truslow Adams in the 20th. Each character within the 'rags to riches' stories (whether a 'captain of industry' or the derogatory 'robber baron') has achieved by their own hard work and initiative a level of financial upward mobility and personal security which further fuels the notion of a 'meritocracy' (Abowitz, 2005; Adams, 1931).

The delineation between America and other nations is reinforced through such tropes. The key emphasis from such authors is that America is a 'classless' society in which merit is understood to be the defining dynamic in dictating who gets what in American culture (Alba and Nee, 2003). Many commentators on socialisation agree that the dominant cultural values are learned initially in the context of family relations (Smart, 2000). A conclusion often reached in studies of socialisation has been that the family is the major vehicle for the transmission of the values of larger society (Rathunde, 2001; Sirin, 2005). Moreover, theoretical and conceptual work in the sociology of sport has attempted to place the family in a pivotal position in the study of societal values (Abowitz, 2005; Alba and Nee, 2003). Given the complexity of what defines the family in the context of these reports, the book will investigate the degree to which families nurture the optimal environment for inculcating the ethos of the American Dream.

It has been well documented that considerable modifications have occurred within contemporary American family life (Popenoe, 1993; Sirin, 2005). Changes include the increased rate of cohabitation, more single parents and the phenomenon of openly gay and lesbian households (Smart, 2000). The subsequent growth in new dynamic patterns of family practices are construed negatively rather than positively or neutrally (Morgan, 1995). How this impacts upon the career orientation of the students will be explored within the interviews and subsequent analysis made within this book.

A review of research indicates that families are constructed in a variety of ways but despite their dynamic composition remain a highly influential factor in establishing the merit of higher education (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider,

2000; Rathunde, 2001). The next section provides a summary of how parental challenge and support can influence a child's career aspirations.

According to research, the family has potentially a key role in guiding the career orientation and success of its members (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000; Frank and McPhail, 2005; Jamieson, 2005; Rathunde, 2001). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) has previously stated that

> there is ample evidence to suggest that how parents interact with a child will have a lasting effect on the kind of person that child grows up to be.
>
> (p. 88)

According to Csikszentmihayli and Schneider (2000), there are two concerns for parents when generating opportunities for their children: 'support' and 'challenge'. Challenge can be defined as high expectations and standards, as well as allowing the child autonomy (Wedemeyer Moon, 2003). Support is defined as follows: 'the child feels that the family as a whole is interested in every member's welfare' (Scherer, 2002, p. 16). This support protects the child from feelings of anxiety, which can accompany children when they are attempting new tasks. Ideally, when a family displays both of these key ingredients, in relation to education, children will choose more challenging subjects, earn superior grades and attend more prestigious colleges (Wedemeyer Moon, 2003). The clear implications of such research for this study are in analysing the impact that parents have upon the decision-making strategies of their children. In essence, do they influence their child's decision to undertake a soccer scholarship? This notion will be explored within both the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews of Chapters 3 and 4 by adopting the 'Support/Challenge' Questionnaire framework devised by Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider (2000). Details are provided in Chapter 3 of the study.

In America, hard work and self-sacrifice has consistently been viewed as a mechanism of socio-economic improvement and is incorporated within the wider ideological concepts of equality of opportunity that higher education presents. This would appear to reinforce the belief that all students have equity of educational opportunity (Devine-Eller, 2005). Educational researchers have investigated the perceived correlation of educational achievements and success and consistently found that socio-economic status is a key influence upon educational attainment (Carbonaro, 2005). The process of defining social class in America, as noted within the introduction, is highly disputed and complex; however, according to Cyrus (2000),

> [C]lass is a reality in the United States as are the related stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination that provide that basis for US 'classism'. Because of classism the wealthy and the financially better off are privileged and assigned high status, while poor and working-class people and their cultures are stigmatized and disadvantaged simply because of their relative wealth.
>
> (p. 315)

According to Emmison (2003), an American's individual social status is habitually recognised by income and occupation; inevitably, such indices are commonly used to determine individual's self-worth as well and that of others. The enduring belief that upward social mobility is the basic tenet of the American Dream, however, remains unquestionable. Collective discourse advocates that Americans live in a 'meritocracy' (Troutman and Dufur, 2007; Weber, 1976), in which individual success is calculated in terms of one's achievement. This philosophy encapsulates the demands of an athletic scholarship, where, according to Gerdy (2006), the student is required to produce results both on and off the field; as such, the essence of Division One athletics is 'pay for play' (p. 60). This may have in part been facilitated by the apparent increasing financial requirements associated with higher education and led to the consideration of a soccer scholarship as a viable alternative for upward mobility. Thus this study intends to challenge the idea that any single factor determines the individual. Weber (1961, 1976) regarded society as a complex set of social variables and interwoven relationships in which individuals can never completely explain society or predict its course. The proposition of this study is that the changing nature of university athletics and the financial implications of funding higher education are expected to affect a tendency towards unconventional routes of social mobility (Semyonov, 1981).

According to several key scholars, the American Dream initially developed from what has become known as the 'Protestant Ethic', an ideology of individualism and personal achievement (Frey and Eitzen, 1991; Guttmann, 1994; Nixon, 1984). They argue that the principles that underpin the ethic contain a set of values which tend to reinforce and promote behaviour that confers prestige and status upon self-discipline and hard work. Those individuals who develop such a behavioural profile will inevitably acquire the appropriate level of financial rewards (Tucker, 2004; Zimbalist, 1999). Conversely, those who fail have only themselves to blame because of a lack of initiative or failure to make the obligatory sacrifices that deferred gratification requires. Contained within the prevailing classification of values is the implication that equality of opportunity is transparent and that interpersonal differences, such as ethnicity and gender, are neutral in determining achievement outcomes (Barnett and Belfield, 2006). The previous point is explored within the earlier work of Chenoweth (1974) and his discussion of the American Dream. In his book, *The American Dream of Success*, Chenoweth makes reference to 'hope' as being the key element of the concept. He defines 'hope' as a 'willingness to confront problems in order to improve the condition of life for both oneself and one's own contemporaries' (p. 120). Thus to dream is to hope, and ultimately, this is reflected in the level of success that any individual achieves. Success therefore becomes the gauge by which individuals measure their realisation of the American Dream. Chenoweth maintains that 'the success ethic promotes elite interests under the guise of boasting that the average citizen can advance as far as he wishes' (p. 10). In addition, Chenoweth poses the question, 'Why do so many citizens fail to see the elitist orientation of success ideologies?' Within his research, he clearly states that the dream not

only provides a template for elevated mobility but facilitates an essential social control mechanism. Reinforcement of the mainstream cultural values and norms are in part perpetuated by high-profile athletes presented in the media. This pattern is then perpetuated from one generation to the next thus strengthening the veracity of the ideology. For persons who are unsuccessful, individual deficiencies rather than the structure are perceived as being responsible (Couldry and Markham, 2007). Accordingly, the apposite course of action for realising expectations of achievement becomes focused upon developing and enhancing personal agency rather than displaying dissention against perceived inequity. Moreover, even those adults who are unsuccessful evidently continue to believe in the meritocratic ethos at the core of the Dream (Churchwell, 2018; Smith, 1993). As a result, even the disenfranchised appear obligated to help their children to attain access to its mechanisms. The self-perpetuating cycle of the Dream is thereby created regardless of whether or not individuals are currently recipients of upward mobility and live in accordance with its basic tenets (Giardina and McCarthy, 2005).

Eitzen and Sage (2003) have previously identified that contemporary America is a nation with a diverse population and consequently, a significant level of diversity of ideals held by its varied sub-groups. Within this context, it is perceived as being inevitable that individuals do not behave in accordance with all of the central tenets of the American Dream (Dyreson, 2001, 2005; Sowell, 1981). Both authors assert that the levels of success experienced by racial groups are attributable to the degree of acculturation within the conventional cultural values and norms. A variety of authors have acknowledged that a range of discriminatory practices have contributed to inhibiting the upward mobility of ethnic groups (Alba and Nee, 2003; Churchwell, 2018; Dyreson, 2001; Segrave, 2000). Clearly for many individuals in contemporary society, America's fundamental egalitarian ideology of opportunity is either inaccurate or not accessible.

The political assurances heard within presidential addresses often eulogise a society in which equal opportunity prevails and rewards are based on merit rather than inherited attributes (Baker and Carroll, 1981; Chenoweth, 1974). Such pronouncements have established and historically provided the impetus for contemporary American society to redress exclusionary practices (Gorn, 2004; Obama, 2006). The explanations offered for failing to succeed in America can be complex and interdependent on a myriad of factors which expand beyond one's personal behaviour. Nevertheless, advocates of sport believe that it facilitates a unique forum for observing the ideology of how the American Dream can become operationalised in real life (Moor, 2007; Newman, 2007). In principle, sport reflects the same egalitarian values upon which America was founded. It is, according to its protagonists, an endeavour in which individuals participate to achieve a performance-based objective outcome (Coakley, 2007). Typically, success is reflective of the level of initiative, skill and effort displayed. Although far from overt, it is inferred by both players and spectators alike that factors such as race, gender and socio-economic status are of little significance to the result.

Loy et al. (1978) identify that the ideals characteristically associated with sport are 'not unlike the great success formula typified by Horatio Alger' (p. 381). But just as in wider society, personal attributes and characteristics have been decisive in shaping such decisions as opportunities to take part and develop either as a player or coach. Consequently, the reality is that discipline, hard work and perseverance may only go so far in facilitating upward mobility (Churchwell, 2018; Dubois, 1980; Eitzen and Sage, 2003). Such realities are at odds with the philosophies of Horatio Alger and Adams, whose storytelling encapsulated the heroic ideals of the American Dream and inspired innumerable millions of its citizens. Sport may therefore be a stronger, more tangible and more visible representation of the American Dream for many people as well as displaying the ambiguities inherent within it. In the context of this study, the meritocratic opportunities perceived within sport when combined with athletic scholarships offer possibilities for social mobility not found elsewhere in society. Therefore by investigating the use of soccer scholarships by university students, the study provides insight as to the veracity and currency of the American Dream in contemporary society.

Since the start of the 1800s, athletic scholarships and intercollegiate sports competition have been an essential element in perpetuating the supply of sporting narrative (Boorstin, 1962; Troutman and Dufur, 2007). However, it was not until the late 1800s that universities began to assume full control over the administration of athletic programmes specifically for enhanced institutional visibility. Prior to this period, university athletics were operated by student-run associations in which the students themselves were responsible for travel arrangements and the general administration of teams (Gerdy, 2006). Athletics, according to Troutman and Dufur (2007) was simply an institutional afterthought, an activity to keep students amused but not critical to the educational mission of the university. It was the ever-constant search for resources, coupled with the rapidly growing public interest in athletics and the resultant capability to generate revenue that enticed university presidents and boards of education to formally incorporate athletics into the structure of their institutions (Coakley, 2007). In the absence of a nationally agreed higher education policy towards income generation, many of America's most prestigious institutions turned to intercollegiate athletic competition as a requirement of establishing a sound financial foundation (Calder, 1999). With the exception of the universities defined as 'Ivy League', almost all American research institutions developed high-profile athletic programmes as a precondition for adequate institutional financial support (Heck and Takahashi, 2006; Troutman and Dufur, 2007). The general public's enthusiasm for sports has made intercollegiate athletics a forum of debate in which the social and moral issues of class, race and gender are highlighted (Boyle, 2004; Riess, 1999). As a result, higher education in the United States has traditionally been viewed as a mirror in which to reflect upon American ideological claims (Baker and Carroll, 1981; Coakley, 2007). At its most basic level, it bestows widespread adulation. According to Riess (1994), all Americans, regardless of whether they are a poet, politician, carpenter or cardiologist,

share an enduring interest in athletic contests. The opportunity to invent, adapt and create are regarded as fundamental to the American cultural ideals and are arguably an intrinsic part of the reason for the proliferation and popularity of sports in the United States (Oriard, 1993). Sport is where America most stridently argues to be a meritocracy, a society which rewards and appoints those who demonstrate talent and competence.

The narrative of the American dream

A recurring theme of this thesis is that sport as an American institution often attempts to represent narratives of equal opportunity for personal mobility. Yet frequently, sport reveals and, in some cases, reinforces the divided social composition of US society (Appleton, 2002; Baker and Carroll, 1981). Sport, despite the preceding contentions, manages to perpetuate the narrative of a meritocratic ideology whilst simultaneously suppressing its possible fulfilment – specifically, the overt spectator culture that developed around sport and the tendency to see it in terms of a story. According to Bale,

> [W]hether at local, regional or national level, sport is probably the principal means of collective identification in modern life. It provides one of the few occasions when large, complex, impersonal and functionally bonded units can unite as a whole.
>
> (in Cronin, 1999, p. 51)

The cultural activities of the American sports scene, to be precise the gathering at sports stadia and reading or listening to media, has helped to cultivate a community of spectatorship (Chenoweth, 1974). Such environments clearly facilitate the ethos of the American Dream and perpetuate the belief that certain people earn status and even wealth through their sporting ability (Davis and Duncan, 2006; Newman, 2007).

The second factor is the tendency to perceive sports in terms of the stories they present (Sparkes, 2002). The record of sporting activity in America is interdisciplinary and ranges from popular culture periodicals to personal accounts. The common denominator within the myriad of genres is the focus on narrative (Appleton, 2002, Oriard, 1993). Such themes are replicated within this thesis, namely, ambition, challenge, support, success and failure. Each aspect has a beginning, middle and end to the story. According to White (1987), this is an inevitable process. He observes that when looking back on past occurrences,

> The events must be not only registered within the chronological framework of their original occurrence but narrated as well, that is to say, revealed as possessing a structure, an ordering of meaning, that they do not possess as a mere sequence.
>
> (p. 54)

In other words, the act of 'narrativization' enforces an artificial structure upon events that operate within an overarching paradigm of belief (Davis and Duncan, 2006). Because the US nation continues to have a propensity for seeing sports in terms of stories, spectatorship becomes a storytelling activity in itself (Chenoweth, 1974; Cornbleth, 2002). Spectators thus endow sport not with any sense of reality but mythology (Huntington, 2004; Moor, 2007).

Spectator sports, according to Newman (2007), create a 'fantasy' in which each competitor possesses similar opportunities and similar environmental advantages – a metaphorical level playing field. Spectator culture thus often presumes that success in athletics is due to an individual's virtuous quality (Cheska, 1979). Hard work and physical skill appear to be prerequisites of those pursuing the Dream, the ability to articulate how one has overcome the environment or unfair circumstance in order to progress appear to be the foundations of iconic celebrity status (Couldry and Markham, 2007; Weiss, 1996; Stempel, 2005). A contemporary challenge to athletes is in how they use their media interviews and images in order to gain visibility and financial security and ultimately establish themselves in a position of control (Banister, 2017). A previous example of such a phenomenon could be argued to be the former NBA player Dennis Rodman. The success achieved by Rodman led many observers to argue that he had defied normative convention and redefined representations of gender, race and desire within the American cultural imagination (Coakley, 2007).

The more the stories are retold, the stronger and more credible the illusion becomes. The cultural impact of such notions is evaluated via the lived experience of the students within this research. Myths evidently have power and resonate within the subjects and do not necessarily lend themselves to an empirical paradigm. Generally speaking, the perception of sport as a narrative of social mobility finds its resonance not in the athletes themselves, but in the ways that others reinforce said narratives (Arbena, 2000; Burgos, 2005). The American public clearly embrace and eulogise those athletes who have achieved success on a national stage. However, state-wide success is not a pre-requisite for the promotion of career / social mobility of scholarship athletes. This point is insightfully made by H. G. Bissinger in *Friday Night Lights* (1991). The book explores the culture of high school football and its dominant impact upon a small community from a variety of perspectives including parents, teachers, coaches and students.

> Athletics lasts for such a short period of time. It ends for people. But while it lasts, it creates this make believe world where normal rules don't apply. We build this false sense atmosphere. When it's over and the harsh reality sets in, that's the real joke we play on people. . . . Everybody wants to experience that superlative moment and being an athlete can give you that. It's Camelot for them. But there's even life after it.
>
> (Bissinger, 1991, p. xiv)

The observations of Bissinger reinforce the earlier work of Durkheim, Marx and Bourdieu that involvement and participation in groups can have positive

consequences for the individual and the community. As such, the 'social capital' that results for the students taking part in athletics promotes upward mobility via the creation of networks that facilitate mutual benefit for both the athlete and the community.

Soccer and mainstream American culture

Soccer, post millennium, has been regarded as an 'afterthought' within American culture by its critics (Alba and Nee, 2003; Markovits and Hellerman, 2001; Satterlee, 2001). The narrative is that soccer is well behind the hegemonic 'Big Four' of American sporting culture: football, basketball, baseball and ice hockey (Brown, 2005, 2007; Collins, 2006). Moreover, in cultural terms, soccer is presented by contemporary research as lagging behind the historically dominant sports. Markovits and Hellerman (2001, 2003b) explore the concept of a nation's sporting culture, observing that a sporting culture revolves around what people follow as spectators rather than the sports they actively engage in as athletes. Thus, soccer, according to its detractors, has failed and will continue to fail to gain a foothold in the sporting culture of America (Szymanski and Zimbalist, 2005). It is not a sport that its critics would argue people traditionally followed or identified with as fans as they have traditionally connected with basketball, baseball and football (Mandelbaum, 2004).

If US 'culture' as with any other is to be recognised as a system of inherited conceptions, expressed in symbolic forms by which we communicate our attitudes (Geertz, 1973), the use of research surveys can provide critical insight on US attitudes and challenge existing labels (Collet, 2017). The data that surrounds and underpins analysis of the dynamic North American professional sports market is extensive. According to business analysts Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC), the overall US sports market is on track to exceed $70 billion by 2020 (PwC, October, 2016). The segments that are typically used to categorise growth within such sports business reports are merchandising, sponsorship, media rights and gate revenues. Statista estimate that in 2018 approximately $19.6 billion in revenue are expected to be generated through ticket sales alone in North America. As a result, one metric with which to measure the vibrancy of any sports culture is to analyse the spectator attendance and trends within each of the 'Big Four' professional US sports leagues. According to the same research conducted by Statista (2018), the National Football League (NFL) was the dominant professional sports league in North America during 2016–17 with an average of 69,487 people attending each game (total of 17.79 million spectators). Major League Baseball (MLB) drew the second highest average number of fans with 30,163 spectators per game (total of 73.16 million spectators). Major League Soccer (MLS) was third with an average of 21,692 attending professional games in the 2016/17 season. Of additional note was that the number of people who watched MLS on television had also increased from 20 million in 2013 to 30 million in 2015. The National Hockey League (NHL) was placed fifth in the list with an average of 17,548 spectators in 2015/16. One of the metrics which is used to anticipate future sport participation

trends by industry analysts is to research the number of adult spectators who identify with a specific sport as their 'favourite to watch'. According to a recent Gallup (2018) survey, soccer ranks in fourth place with 7%, which represents an increase of 3 percentage points from four years previously (American football has declined from 39% to its current 37%, basketball 12% to 11%, and baseball 13% to 9%; ice hockey has increased from 3% to 4%). The data consolidates previous research polls that approximately 25% of Americans identified themselves as either a 'fan' or 'somewhat of a fan'. As a result, the narrative of soccer's precarious position in American society seems questionable (Collet, 2017).

The importance of a soccer scholarship to this thesis is in measuring the impact that it has upon student-decision making at university. A review of the potential 'direct' and 'indirect' benefits of undertaking a soccer scholarship are detailed in Chapter 2 of the study. However, it is important to identify at this juncture that according to data revealed by the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP, 2017), during the last decade, the average cost of tuition within state higher education has increased by 44%. In contrast, the nation's median family income has only increased by 6%.

Despite concerns regarding the rising costs of education and the level of national media sports coverage for both males and females, soccer in 2018 appears to have successfully created a niche for itself within the American psyche. The significant problem that soccer faces in expanding beyond this niche, according to its detractors (for example, Markovits, 1998, 2007), is its lack of a historical narrative with which to bind itself to the concept of the American Dream. The level of cultural acceptance of soccer by the US and the level to which it has been incorporated into the ideology contained within 'the Dream' is presented within the results of Chapter 4.

Over the last century, however, a number of changes have altered the perceptions of soccer within the United States (Brown, 2007). Whilst a comprehensive undertaking of these changes would be a Sisyphean task, a narrower focus upon two particular alterations – one to the sport of soccer and one to the composition of the United States – will serve to illustrate the dynamics at play within contemporary US society. Soccer has changed dramatically over the course of the last 150 years. No longer simply a British export, soccer has truly become 'the world's game'. A cursory review of the number of nations who are members of FIFA will show that it rivals the list of the United Nations members. One need only look at the current rankings to note the diversity found in the sport. Within the top 20 teams in the world, the only continent not represented is Asia (Fifa.com, 2006). At the time of writing in February 2009, the United States men's team was ranked 31st and the women's in first place. However, the men's national team was found in the top ten for much of 2006–08. Clearly, soccer cannot be understood as simply a British export, or a European enclave within world sport. It *is* the world's sport. Its origins as a British invention appear to be now largely unimportant. Conversely, the composition of the United States has also changed dramatically over the last 150 years. Immigration, which reached a low in the

1930s, has now climbed back to levels not seen since the first decade of the 20th century (Brown, 2007).

Former US President Barack Obama undoubtedly attempted to sustain the rhetoric of the American Dream in several of the keynote speeches. In 2004 at the Democratic National Convention, he marked a significant moment in the revival of the rhetoric of the American Dream when he articulated the values of *the Civil Rights Act* (1964) and idioms of compromise and the possibility of racial reconciliation intended to bring his audience into rapprochement (Frank and McPhail, 2005). The post-civil rights rhetoric articulated by Obama in his presidential campaign clearly attempted to target the fundamental economic issues facing ethnic and racial minorities in contemporary society, a group he has referred to frequently as 'throw-away people'. The core value at the centre of Obama's acclaimed convention speech was and remains the essential equality of all individuals. In his subsequent book entitled *The Audacity of Hope*, published in 2007, Obama called for a different political philosophy embedded in the decency and faith of the American Dream, one which promotes inclusiveness:

> We'll need to remind ourselves, despite all our differences, just how much we share: common hopes, common dreams, a bond that will not break.
>
> (Obama, 2006, p. 157)

This view was echoed by the current President Donald Trump in his first 'State of the Union' address to the USA Congress on January 30, 2017:

> This, in fact, is our new American moment. There has never been a better time to start living the American dream. So to every citizen watching at home tonight, no matter where you have been or where you have come from, this is your time. If you work hard, if you believe in yourself, if you believe in America, then you can dream anything, be anything. And together, we can achieve absolutely anything.
>
> (Trump, 2017)

This speech lies in stark contrast to President Trump's earlier provocative and divisive pre-election campaign statements and subsequent acceptance speech in which he proclaimed that the American Dream was 'dead' but promised to revive it. But which interpretation of the American Dream? President Trump has portrayed immigrants, who stand at the heart of the American idea, as being equated with gangs, murderous criminals and 'horrible people'. As current president, Donald Trump is a powerful representation of American wealth and prosperity and for his supporters, an icon of a contemporary interpretation of the American Dream. However, immigration reform enacted during the current presidential office challenges the idea that any man, woman or child – regardless of where he or she was born – can create a new future for him- or herself and the notion of social democracy that Adams proffered within his American Dream in 1931.

The same values that have helped to define American society and generations of 'dreamers' may now be in danger of being co-opted by those antithetical to social democracy and the welfare state.

Chapter summary

The American Dream is founded upon the ideological belief that 'you can be anything you want to be, regardless of your current class position'. This belief is contained within the dominant prevailing notion that the US is a meritocracy where power and success are associated with determination and intelligence and failure with poor decision making and laziness. The traditional vehicle for many aspiring sports stars has been via the collegiate ranks and an athletic scholarship. The intrinsic qualities of sport are promoted by society and reinforced by universities to complement and underpin the ideology of the Dream. The themes of character building and physical and mental fitness are imagined to be integral to both US sport and being a patriot, both of which are reflected in the popularity and growth of university sporting competition. These characteristics arguably serve to reinforce a societal commitment to the ideology regardless of whether it is accurate or not. Further analysis of the American Dream within the specific context of this research has revealed that the family plays a crucial role in perpetuating the ideology of the Dream – the level of parental support being categorised according to the level of support or challenge offered to family members.

The foundations for soccer in the US to enter the psyche of the American people have been clearly demonstrated by its high levels of participation at the youth level for both males and females. The popularity of soccer at the 'grassroots' is felt by several authors to be a key component in helping the game become accepted into the lexicon of American sporting culture and with it the ideology of its values.

In summary, the review of literature has identified the key themes for this research, those of family (Frank and McPhail, 2005; Jamieson, 2005), social class (Eitzen and Sage, 2003; Heck and Takahashi, 2006), social mobility (Abowitz, 2005) and career development (Dubois, 1980). These themes are tested within the pilot study and subsequently integrated within the questionnaire and interviews conducted with the players, details of which are contained within Chapter 3. These themes will form the basis of subsequent analysis for the player interviews.

The next chapter, however, aims to provide a more focused discussion of the role and impact of soccer in contemporary American society.

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Chapter 2

Soccer and the USA

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of how soccer has evolved from being a recreational activity in which males and females could play alongside each other in the same team to its current position as a franchised professional enterprise. In order to position the sport in terms of its popularity in America from both a participant and spectator context, it is necessary to provide a synopsis of where enthusiasm for the game was first established in the American consciousness. The literature will present the argument for a soccer scholarship as a potential avenue for career advancement, thus demonstrating a reconfiguration or adaptation of the American Dream in which soccer has become an accepted and legitimised avenue with which to pursue the dream of upward mobility.

Soccer is commonly accepted to be the most popular sport played in the world in relation to the number of people of all ages who play, watch and coach the game (Dunning, 1999; Kuper, 2006; Nielsen Sports, 2018).

Football's extraordinary global 'reach' into audiences around the world is reinforced by a recent survey commissioned by Nielsen Sports (2018). The analysis of 18 major markets within the Americas, Middle East, Asia and Europe revealed that 40% (approximately 700 million people) were either 'interested' or 'very interested' in the sport. Indeed, football's power to reach audiences around the world is not confined to male audiences with nearly a third of women – 31% – interested across the 18 markets surveyed by Nielsen. The implications of the data produced by business analysts such as Nielsen and others points to major growth opportunities for football in terms of domestic leagues, media rights, sponsorship revenues and 'gaming'. The global 'virtual' games industry, according to several industry forecasts, is on course to exceed $100 billion in annual revenues and continues to grow faster than the broader entertainment sector (Lewis and Bradshaw, 2017). The Americas are not surprisingly a key region for eSports, representing 25% of the global eSports audience and 40% of the revenue generated (Newzoo, 2017). As a result, North America has inevitably seen large financial investments from venture capitalists, game publishers and sports teams. The challenge for sports rights holders is how to engage with an audience that now live in a 'digital culture'. Video games, and particularly the immersive EA Sports' 'FIFA' title and Sports Interactive 'Football Manager', have become the

primary touchpoints for many football fans and play a significant role in connecting millions of fans to the sport on a daily basis. The success of football-themed virtual games has created an audience who can now delve into the minutiae of football – from a database that contains assessments of individual player abilities that relate to over 250 different categories. As a result, football properties and their rights holders are responding quickly in an attempt to engage more fans via eSports, with the inevitable formal linkages and crossovers between professional football clubs, leagues and the gaming industry. In North America, the NBA team the 'Philadelphia 76ers' became the first professional sports team to own an eSports organisation when it acquired one of the most respected teams in eSports ('Dignitas'). More recently, Major League Soccer has announced a partnership with EA Sports to create an eSports organisation for Fifa 18's worldwide gaming competition. Known as 'eMLS', the league aims to replicate successful eSports models such as the 'NBA 2K' League in that its competitors will represent 'real-life' sports teams (Sarkar, 2018). The strategic opportunity to engage with fans who 'overlap' traditional and virtual consumption of sport with eSports represents a transparent commercial opportunity for sports teams to promote deeper engagement and connections with both 'traditional' fans and the new generation of digitally engaged 'non-traditional' fans.

Historically, the roots of soccer's popularity can be traced to its base support amongst the youth of America and in particular within recreational and coeducational soccer programmes. In 2004, the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association of America (SGMA) declared that soccer has become 'an integral part of America's sports landscape'. The statement was founded upon a detailed survey of participation rates, which identified that 1.3 million more children played soccer than 'Little League Baseball' (in Collins, 2006, p. 354). More recent research conducted by Statista (2018) (an organisation which cross-references statistics and studies from over 22,000 sources) has identified that there are now more teenagers playing soccer in the US than ever before with the number of participants in US high school soccer programmes achieving a record high in the 2016/17 season (over 800,000 boys and girls playing the sport across the country). In addition, the popularity of the professional game continues to grow with attendance at MLS games consistently achieving larger crowds than either the NBA or the NHL. Such statistics clearly represent a challenge to those who argue that soccer in the US is a 'game for the future' – one that will never arrive. The following is a discussion of the issues related to notions and biases that underpin soccer and 'American exceptionalism' and its perceived failure to integrate within the broader lexicon of US sporting culture.

American exceptionalism and sports space

In order to facilitate a detailed consideration of the term 'American exceptionalism', it is first necessary to conceptualise the origins of the phrase. The themes of insularity and exceptionalism have for over a century been positioned at the core

of previous explanations regarding the development of America (Dyreson, 2005) and relate to the view that America's history and its structure of government have given the nation a unique role to play in the world (Foer, 2004). Dyreson (2005) has persuasively argued that social historians and in particular, Turner's (1920) landmark thesis, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, have had a greater impact on views regarding American identity than any other written on the subject. In constructing his argument, Turner has convincingly hypothesized that American isolationism and insularity from European culture has facilitated a unique environment for growth to take place (Dyreson, 2005). The unique 'frontier' environment posited by Turner and others arguably defined a society that was attempting to differentiate itself from its colonial links with Europe and much of the rest of the world (Dyreson, 2005). This theme is continued by Markovits and Hellerman (2001) in their acclaimed book entitled *Offside: Soccer and American Exceptionalism*. According to Markovits and Hellerman, one can look back upon America's unique history and observe how it has affected the growth of soccer. The isolationism of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, combined with a pervading sense of detachment from all things British, was crucial to Americans embracing a different style of football than the rest of the world. Significantly, the decision to 'Americanize' versions of British games, such as 'rounders' and cricket into baseball occurred at a time when the commodification of sports was beginning to occur in the mid-1800s (Foer, 2004; Gorn, 2004). By this, it is meant that sports were transformed from leisure activities for the upper classes to games which were played and attended and embedded into the culture of the middle and lower classes (Markovits and Hellerman, 2001). It is during this time period that baseball, football, and eventually basketball emerged as 'traditional' American sports, while soccer was consigned to the lowly status of a game for foreigners. Markovits and Hellerman (2003b) compare the weakness of soccer in the United States to another example of American exceptionalism:

> the absence of a European-style socialism or social democracy as a systemically dominant political force in American politics throughout much of the twentieth century.
>
> (p. 14)

In speculating why this may have occurred, political sociologists have referred to America's unique past, such as the lack of a feudal order, the abundance of cheap land, a high degree of geographic mobility, an emphasis on individualism and the overall bourgeois nature of American politics and society. While this comparison is interesting to keep in mind, the implication is that there were historical reasons for soccer's obscurity in America.

The theory of 'sports space' presented latterly by Markovits and Hellerman (2001, 2003b) and previously by Mason (1986) and Sugden (1994) reveals how difficult it would be for soccer to enter into America's sports cultural consciousness. According to this perspective, each nation has a limited and finite 'sports space'

in which only a small number of sports can achieve prominence. The selection of which sports occupy the privileged 'space' is determined by a combination of timing, the ability of the sport to modernise and how this modernisation coordinated with the particular society's overall modernisation. Advocates of the thesis believe that the most critical time period for a sport to enter into the US nation's psyche was during the time period between 1870 and 1930, the period during which sport in the US, according to Markovits and Hellerman, became inextricably tied to modernisation, urbanisation and industrialisation. The premise being that once a sport is established within a nation's psyche, it becomes increasingly more difficult for any existing members to be displaced by new sporting entrants. Given that baseball established itself in the US in the period between 1870 and 1930, which was then followed by grid iron football, basketball and ice hockey, the American sports space was therefore already saturated before soccer (as an organised professional structure – North American Soccer League (NASL)) entered the US sporting landscape in 1967. Advocates of the 'exceptionalist' thesis argue that despite the impact of globalisation upon US culture, much of the American way of life is categorised by discrete elements that differentiate it from the norms that are established elsewhere (Collins, 2006). Accordingly, protagonists of the theory believe that globalisation has yet to impact upon or erase the atypical differences that characterise America as exceptional. It is this distinction that defines the American 'sports space' (Collins, 2006). This challenge to the perceived impact of global macro forces is contextualised by Collins (2006) as, 'America may be in the World, but the World is not in America' (p. 358). Exceptionalists would argue that the transmission of global culture may originate from the US, but seldom has it been receptive to absorbing the cultural practices of others (Brown, 2007; Collins, 2006). However, the fundamental weakness of the exceptionalism rhetoric and innate national bias at its core lies in the failure to critically appreciate that each nation is inclined to view itself as unique and attempt to differentiate itself from others. In essence, each nation is in search of a purpose. The rhetoric used by its protagonists helps to shape public perception by providing a framework for thought and, in doing so, helps to address questions of national identity, purpose and collective values.

The foremost component of its exceptionalism according to Kagan (2003) has been its geographically privileged position: the distance from Europe and Asia allows them to feel secure and uninvolved whilst at the same time strategically placed should they wish to expand. Secondly, its legislative institutions, according to Kagan, reflect the highest level of public participation of any world democracy. Finally, American principles have evolved from distaste of European colonialism and into guidelines for behaviour which are enshrined in the Constitution. This, according to Eitzen and Sage (2003), serves today as the 'glue' that amalgamates all the ingredients of the melting pot and differentiates America from the rest of the world. Sport within this ideological framework has been previously argued to be used as a vehicle to promote, reinforce and reflect said values, in essence, the American Dream (Riess, 1999). The promotion of the 'Big Four' sports within

the lexicon of US culture intended to reinforce two aspects of the political aims of exceptionalism: the need to defend and to project what made America in their eyes unique – its values and institutions.

A contemporary version of 'new exceptionalism' that Markovits amongst others refers to can be observed within presidential epithets. When George W. Bush became president in 2001, his administration adopted the political philosophy that could be defined as a 'relativistic' approach (Nye, 2007). By focusing on those conflicts that could significantly impact upon important global or regional balances of power, the Republican Party was attempting to redefine American politics as inclusionary rather than exceptionalist. However, self-evidently, this is not what transpired. Significantly following the events of September 11, 2001, Republican politics embodied suspiciousness and distrust of others. This approach led social commentator Michael Ignatieff to observe that 'exceptionalism meant exemptionism' (Ignatieff, 2005, p. 229). Moreover, theoretical perspectives regarding any philosophical isolationist beliefs changed after September 11. The tragic events of that day have shed considerable doubt over the notion of the United States' unchallenged multi-dimensional dominance of world affairs, raising question marks over whether the 21st century will be (at least) as American as the previous one, let alone more American (Ignatieff, 2005; Nye, 2007). This trend clearly challenges the notion of an American exceptionalism as defined by Markovits and Hellerman. Such sentiments are best encapsulated within Obama's presidential acceptance speech in which he stated, '[T]he world is changing and America must change with it'. In 2016, Donald Trump was elected to the highest office in the US with a campaign policy of 'America First'. Such slogans and hyperbole can appear to reassert a collective historical narrative which arcs towards freedom and justice. America First, in contrast, has little interest in history. Instead, it offers a national philosophy. It claims that all countries are essentially alike, including the United States, and all share the same fundamental goal: to win (Van Engen, 2018).

One particular dimension of US culture worth considering within the context of this discussion is the ideological and cultural appeal of America. This appeal is defined as its 'soft power' within Nye's (2007) typology of power and is summarised as its 'ability to get desired outcomes through attraction' (p. 41). 'Hard power' relies on 'economic carrots or the ability to coax or coerce' (p. 42). The impact of globalisation by Americans and upon American culture may be revealed by the changes in the appeal and power of soccer to influence US society. Using Nye's typology, soccer is an example of how its growth is based upon its intrinsic attraction rather than any attempt to coerce the American public. The dynamics of the game of soccer and its fluidity in contrast to football and basketball may be the intrinsic qualities that have led to its growing popularity. Given the receptiveness of the American public towards a 'foreign' sport, soccer clearly challenges the views of exceptionalists that America is immune to global trends.

A critical analysis of the foundations of American exceptionalism can be traced to before the events of September 11, 2001. Prior to that day, exceptionalism was

a doctrine defined by the defence and promotion of its own self-interest. Following September 11, it found its cause: the war on global terrorism and on those states that promoted it. This, according to many socio-political observers, served to justify and represent the rationale of the Bush presidency (Ignatieff, 2005). In summary, according to Nye (2007), the Bush political philosophy amounted to a policy of global domination, inspired by the assumption that America's norms and cultural values are universally accepted and acclaimed. Those who reject such principles are ideologically opposed to America and are legitimate targets of distrust and suspiciousness. The design may be, according to its critics, 'grandiose', but there is something jingoistic and naive about the promotion of America as an example of grand exceptionalism. Immediately following the events of 9/11, professional sport in America provided a structure for people to regularise and resume their normal lifestyles. However, it is, in Collins's (2006) view, too early to anticipate the long-term impact of the events for sport and specifically soccer. According to Collins, Americans are struggling to define their level of engagement with the global community and with it whether there will be a reaction to sports which have been defined as 'foreign'. However, the opportunity for soccer lies in the potential for the MLS to further promote its declared goal to reflect inclusiveness and diversity and address some of the racial and class stereotypes that are inherent within baseball, basketball and football.

I believe that Markovits and Hellerman's theory and its application to soccer in particular are challenged by two issues. One is the world itself and the other is the US public. Maier (2000) has previously observed that empires have always experienced difficulties with those excluded from its perceived benefits. This thesis demonstrates that the increasing and consistent growth of soccer in the USA (for both players and spectators) has undermined historical and contemporary perceptions of what defines American sport. Evidently, soccer participation, attendance and commercial opportunities in America have significantly increased, which fundamentally challenges previous views of a limited 'space'.

The rationalisation of the thesis presented by Markovits and fellow protagonist Sugden (1994) is founded on an implicit and therefore possibly flawed assumption regarding the extent of available 'space' within societies (Waddington and Roderick, 1996). A superficial analysis of the concept may appear, on the surface, attractive, but as soon as one begins to examine this implicit hypothesis more closely, its inadequacies become visible. The complications raised by employing inflexible concepts in this implicit way may be illustrated by reference to Sugden's work (Waddington and Roderick, 1996). In analysing the concepts of 'sport space' and of 'urban industrial recreational space', Sugden does so without differentiation and explanation. As Waddington and Roderick (1996) highlight, this creates some conceptual confusion as to whether the models refer to the same social processes or whether the 'space' available for recreation is greater than that available for sport. If one were to disregard the theoretical concerns and ambiguities related to the notion of a space or 'gap' for sport, there is clearly a gap of the same dimension in all contemporary societies (Waddington and Roderick, 1996).

The quantity of leisure time and the level of attachment which people attribute to sport are therefore not fixed but dynamic and fluctuate according to a complex array of variables (Coakley, 2007). Thus, according to Waddington and Roderick (1996), the fact that a sport may be well recognised in any specific society does not necessarily exclude the successful integration of other sports. This is evidently the scenario in America, where professional football, baseball, basketball and ice hockey are all popular spectator sports. The explanations of Markovits, Hellerman, Mason and Sugden are therefore not wholly appropriate frameworks within which to analyse the development of soccer in the US, as they fail to take into account the 'yuppiefication process' as a direct result of globalisation and its appeal to a receptive egalitarian, suburban, middle-class market. This research will therefore deconstruct previous arguments that soccer in America represents a distinct unique and exceptional identity in global terms, either in perceived cultural or intellectual terms (Collins, 2006). The reality posited in this work is that the USA in the 21st Century is evolving beyond its perceived inability to develop an affinity for the game of soccer. The purpose of integrating research within the wider context of American collegiate sport is to provide a background within which the primary data can be contextualised.

Arguably, the greatest driver of the increase in American soccer participation, as mentioned in Chapter 1, is the development of girls and young women taking part in organised soccer. Research conducted by Statista (2018) identifies that the number of female players in high school has increased from 350,000 in 2009/10 to over 388,000 in 2016/17. At the college level, soccer is the sport that has grown the most over recent history. In a longitudinal study (1977–2012), the report authors identified that in 1977, less than 3% of colleges had women's soccer teams. In comparison, by 2012, this number had risen to more than 90% (Acosta and Carpenter, 2012). Such figures are surprising given the demise of the women's professional soccer league known previously as the 'Women's United Soccer Association' (WUSA) in September 2003 (Ann-Hall, 2003). The popularity of the game has evidently not been adversely affected despite the absence of a professional women's league. The media's role as an agent of socialisation in the creation and promotion of role models cannot be underestimated (Boutilier and SanGiovanni, 1983; Duncan and Messner, 1998), despite such observations the game has increased in attraction. Within the context of contemporary intercollegiate sport, the student-athlete has become transformed into a nationally recognised figure with television coverage on both national and state-run cable operators.

Whilst it may appear that the sport has always enjoyed a high level of popularity, in reality, it has only been relatively recently that broad interest and participation in the game has been demonstrated.

The early beginnings: intercollegiate soccer

Intercollegiate sport and subsequently organised soccer for both men and women developed from an ethos of participation within physical education programmes

of the US in the late 1800s. However, it took until the late 20th century for social approval of female participation in organised athletics to take place and the focus to shift to an acceptance of competition and the formation of club teams (Ladda, 2000). The catalyst for this change was the introduction of Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972.

> No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.
>
> (Lopiano, 2006)

As a result of this legislation, male-dominated education programmes from business, medical and law schools to intercollegiate athletics were required to treat women as equals to men. In stark contrast, the first intercollegiate men's soccer game (based upon a hybrid of rules adopted from the London Football Association) was held on November 6, 1869, between Princeton University and Rutgers University (Leslie, 1992). Despite the early appearance of a version of men's intercollegiate soccer, the game was quickly eclipsed by grid iron football as it is recognised in contemporary US society. The demanding physical and combative format of grid iron football was a key element in its appeal to 19th-century Americans according to Waddington and Roderick (1996). The game, they believed, provided a higher level of congruence with the prevailing and dominant values regarding masculinity in American society. Reflective and responsive to wider cultural trends, American colleges then reacted by helping to codify the game and reinforced concepts of acceptable masculinity. As a result, the game incorporated levels of violence in sport which were not always acceptable within the wider society (Guttmann, 1994).

The swift rise and dominance of football for men left the game of soccer almost exclusively to women, for whom it was considered a much safer sport (Ladda, 2000). The continuing popularity of soccer for both males and females in contemporary American society, however, clearly demonstrates a development from grassroots participation into the adult ranks. According to the national governing body for intercollegiate athletics in the US (National Collegiate Athletics Association), women's outdoor track and field had more female student-athletes in the NCAA during the 1990s than any other women's sport (Zimbalist, 1999). But since the 1999–2000 academic year, women's soccer has replaced track and field as the sport with the most female student-athletes with an approximate increase of 200% in the number of female players since 1990–91 (United States General Accounting Office, 2001).

As regards male participation in sport, since 1981–82, American football has statistically demonstrated the highest number of participants in any men's activity; in 2006–07, that trend continued with football having over twice as many participants as baseball (NCAA, 2008). The next highest participation levels for men are in the sports of track and field, soccer, basketball and cross-country respectively

(ibid., 2008). This enthusiasm for taking part can be partly traced to the introduction of Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 (Delpy, 1998; Henry and Comeaux, 1999). The federal legislation was targeted at removing the discriminatory practice of institutions allocating lower funding for women's athletic programmes. The legislation resulted in a significant influx of young women into competitive collegiate athletics (Frey and Eitzen, 1991). Given the groundswell of participant enthusiasm for the game, it is important to provide an overview of how this has translated into momentum for the creation of a national professional competitive structure for both genders. The next section provides a summary of the indicators of interest and commercialisation over the past 30 years.

Overview of United States professional soccer

The catalyst to the establishment of both a male and female professional league can be arguably traced to their respective achievements on the international stage (see Table 2.1). In 2018, on the 22nd anniversary since the establishment

Table 2.1 Summary of men's and women's national achievements (FIFA World Cup)

	FIFA World Cup	*FIFA Ranking*
Women	National Governing Body (US Soccer Federation: founded 1913) 1991 (China): USA 'champions' (1st place) (*inaugural World Cup) 1995 (Sweden): USA finished 3rd place 1999 (USA): USA 'champions' (1st place) 2003 (USA) USA finished 3rd place 2007 (China) USA finished 3rd place 2011 (Germany) USA finished 2nd place 2015 (Canada) USA 'champions' (1st place) 2018 (USA) *to be decided	Average overall 'rank' position (since FIFA ranking creation for women in 2003): 1st
Men	National Governing Body (US Soccer Federation: founded 1913) 1930 (Uruguay) USA finished 3rd place 1934 (Italy) USA finished 16th place 1938 (France) *USA failed to qualify – withdrew 1950 (Brazil) USA finished 10th place 1954–86 *USA failed to qualify 1990 (Italy) USA finished 23rd place 1994 (USA) USA finished 14th place (* USA qualified as hosts) 1998 (France) USA finished 32nd place 2002 (Korea & Japan) USA finished 8th place 2006 (Germany) USA finished 25th place 2010 (South Africa) USA finished 12th place 2014 (Brazil) USA finished 12th place 2018 (Russia) *USA failed to qualify	Average overall 'rank' position (since FIFA ranking creation for men in 1993): 20th

of Major League Soccer in 1996, there are wide ranges of statistics that support the assertion that soccer has made significant in-roads towards establishing itself as part of the national sports landscape. Historically, the men's national team, although having never won the World Cup, did compete in the tournaments of 1930 (reaching the semi-final), 1934, and 1950 (defeating England 1–0). However, between 1950 and 1986, the USA failed to qualify for the World Cup finals. The impetus to the establishment of Major League Soccer can be traced to two significant events. Firstly, the US men's soccer team, unexpectedly in the view of many observers, qualified for the 1990 FIFA World Cup. Despite limited previous World Cup success, many proponents of the game felt this event established the United States as a viable participant on the world soccer stage (Collins, 2006). Not only did the US team advance beyond 'round robin play' (including a 1–0 loss to eventual champion Brazil), but average game attendance was 69,000 (ibid.). More significantly, the tournament recorded a then record $60 million profit (Foer, 2004), justifying the financial viability of the tournament upon American soil.

The second significant development in the creation of a professional league structure can be traced to FIFA's decision to hold the 1994 Men's World Cup in the United States. The decision was made in preference to bids from Morocco and Brazil and led to surprise due to the common observation that America had a relative lack of soccer fans (Soccer Times, 2005). FIFA clearly intended that by staging the event, it would lead to America's growth of interest in the sport (one condition FIFA imposed was the creation of a professional soccer league, as Major League Soccer started play in 1996) (ibid., 2005). Despite these misgivings, in terms of attendance, the event was a success from a variety of perspectives. The average attendance of nearly 69,000 broke a record that had stood since 1950. The total attendance for the entire tournament reached nearly 3.6 million and remains the highest recorded in World Cup history (Fifa.com, 2008). By 1995, MLS executives had obtained FIFA sanctioning as a Premier domestic league but lacked investors, players and team locations (Delgado, 1997). Despite these issues, preparations went ahead for the league's 1996 inaugural draft and opening season. While the MLS's foundation as a men's professional sports league was being laid in 1994–95, several concurrent developments reflected the growth of US women's soccer. The founding of the United States Interregional Soccer League (USISL) and the 1994 establishment of the W-League, a national amateur league that provided playing experience for many elite female players were important first steps (Collins, 2006). The league played a brief exhibition schedule in 1994 and launched a full schedule in 1995 with 19 teams positioned nationwide.

In 1995, the US Women's National Team achieved third place at the Women's World Cup in Sweden, falling to eventual champions Norway in the semi-finals 1–0. Reflecting the growing prowess of the women's national team, at the 1996

Atlanta Olympics, the US women captured the gold medal before a crowd of 76,000 (Delgado, 1997). However, the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) did not broadcast the game, an indication that women's soccer at this point was still not part of the US sport hierarchy (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2007). Subsequently, the US Soccer governing body declared its intent to host the 1999 Women's World Cup and successfully won the bid. Despite a lack of extensive media coverage by the traditional media outlets, the tournament was a resounding success, with significantly larger crowds than anticipated, peaking with over 90,000 at the Rose Bowl in California (Brown, 2007). The US's final victory over China (5–4 on penalties) coupled with unprecedented media coverage [most notably for Brandi Chastain's celebratory shirt removal] subsequently led to extensive coverage of what was previously considered a minority sport in non-traditional media outlets, such as *Time* and *Newsweek*. The media attention generated by the 1999 Women's World Cup appeared to signal the emergence of women's soccer as more than just a niche sport (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2007).

Success on the international stage is viewed by the national governing body for soccer in the US, the United States Soccer Federation (USSF), as a key factor in further developing the domestic profile of both men's and women's professional soccer (Langdon, 1999). The blueprint for developing world class talent, termed 'Project 2010', was implemented by the USSF in 1998. Created to ensure that the US Men's National Team would become a legitimate contender to win the World Cup by 2010, the $50 million development plan has initiated a full-time residency program for 120 boys under the age of 17 years old. In addition, by 2010, US Soccer intends to launch a player development opportunity program that will allow 1,000 players aged 12–20 years old a total of 100 days of training and matches under national coaches (Wahl, 2006). The lack of an equivalent program for the development of female professional players is rather surprising given the enthusiasm with which the game has been embraced by young women. The focus of player development in contrast appears to rest, in the absence of a professional women's league, with the coaching staff of the respective Division One universities.

Soccer as a viable career for US students

Sociological interest in careers and patterns of occupational attainment is well-established and the subject of extensive research (Roderick, 2006; Weber, 1976; Collin and Young, 2000). The American Dream concept, central to this study, posits that through dedication and hard work, upward mobility can be achieved. The purpose of this discussion is to frame how a soccer scholarship is conceptualised within career literature.

From a sociological perspective, Mannheim (1940) and Weber (1976) were arguably the first researchers to link the concept of 'career' to an occupation. In

essence, a career represented a formalised ladder of sequential and recognised positions. However, it is the work of Hall (1948) that is potentially the most useful in framing the context of scholarship students within this study. The model proposed by Hall presents a hypothetical developmental career pattern through which an individual progresses in order to ultimately achieve his or her chosen occupation. Hall's (1948) framework, although originally applied to the medical profession, can be adapted to provide insight to the series of sequential stages or *career structure* that each individual potentially moves through. According to Hall, each person initially formulates an ambition and then ultimately gains entry to the institution which will further develop and formalise his or her occupational commitment. Within this study, the impact of the family and university represent an adaptation of Hall's framework to explain the career pathway of students. The family is analysed as to its impact upon how the process of student decision making is formulated and negotiated. In essence, the study will review the networks of relationships which impact upon and bind individuals to the concept of the Dream. Secondly, the university as an institution and its scholarship regulations are analysed and interpreted by interviewing both players and key university personnel within the respective athletic departments.

The complexity that is self-evident in formulating a career pathway has been highlighted by a variety of sociologists (Goffman, 1959, 1967; Roderick, 2006). The subjective feelings of players are used within this study to attempt to understand the complexity of emotions which impacted upon their decision making to undertake a soccer scholarship. The work of Hughes (1958) is useful in providing insight towards the experiences of those individuals who have both an 'avocation as well as a vocation' (p. 64). Scholarship athletes potentially fulfil Hughes' criteria that careers can have both objective and subjective components. Student-athletes potentially fall into this category, as they are taking part in a sport which they enjoy and which also serves as a catalyst for their ultimate goal of upward mobility. Therefore, this study will attempt to explain the interaction and exchanges which take place between the individual and significant others from both the past and present. The research will also reveal the requirements of the American Dream, which both binds them to a scholarship and simultaneously constrains them to it. This study will therefore take a holistic perspective towards the factors which informed scholarship motives and goals. The interpretive methodology adopted will consider student decision making evidenced by athletes on an individual, athletic and academic/vocational level. In addition, the thesis will present the factors that account for the students' commitment to their scholarship. According to Becker (1960), this requires more than making a simple pledge or promise. The sensitivity that students have towards the expectations of others is discussed within references that the subjects make towards their families and coaching staff.

According to Arthur et al. (1989), a career is 'the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time' (p. 8). Savikas (2000) has previously noted the importance for career self-management given the many career transitions

individuals are likely to experience. Sullivan (1999) highlighted the difference between the traditional and 'boundaryless career'. Perhaps a playing career in soccer fits into the second category, as athletes in the modern game are likely to experience a sequence of job opportunities that go beyond the boundaries of a single employment setting (Roderick, 2006). This is due largely to the player transfer system that operates in the professional game and the relatively short duration of their playing careers. Many factors influence the professional player's life span, the most critical being injury. On average, a professional's playing career may last up to 15 years; however, there are those who, for one reason or another (being transfer listed, change in manager and so forth) decide to, or are required to, opt out at an early age (Bourke, 2003). Career development theories aim to explain such aspects of vocational behaviour as initial career choice, work adjustment or life span career progress and are grounded in psychology and sociology. Gothard et al. (2001) and later Syed (2008) provided a detailed review of career-development literature, starting with the person-environment fit theories (Holland, 1959); developmental (Gottfredson, 1996; Super, 1980), learning (Krumboltz, 1979), opportunity structure theory (Roberts, 1968); and community interaction theory (Law, 1981). They also include reference to Astin's (1984) socio-psychological model of career choice which focuses on career choices by women. A contextual explanation of career that emphasises action and pays special attention to the role of narrative, dream and myth is presented in Chapter 5.

Patton and McMahon (1999) classified the main contributions in the literature as being those of Herr and Cramer (1992) and Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996), although Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) claimed that trait theory, developmental stages to decision making (Super, 1980) and social learning theory (Krumboltz, 1979) are the dominant theories. Roberts (1968) cited by Gothard et al. (2001) argued that decisions are not fully determined by the individual but by the opportunity structures in the labour market; these include the nature of industrial organisation, government regulation and social class (Hodkinson, 1997). Maranda and Comeau (2000) examined career from a sociological perspective, identifying such theories as status attainment theory and human capital theory (Bourke, 2002). They asserted that the complementary nature of the various sociological viewpoints regarding career become evident when analysed from the perspective of the complexity of relationships between individuals and their specific context (Bourke, 2002). In their view, people's employment situations are the result of both constraints due to economic context and more or less strategic individual and collective behaviour. Auster (1996) asserted that individuals, when making occupational choices, are constrained by societal forces that have an effect on individual factors. So why are undergraduate students in the US pursuing a university degree via a soccer scholarship? Is it to exploit their talent and skills as a soccer player or to further their expectations of high earnings via a degree? Or are their career structure and goals dictated by socio-economic factors? According to Sporting Intelligence (2017), the best paid male professional soccer players in the world take part in the English Premier League (PL).

On average, each player in the PL currently earns on average £2.64 million per annum ($3,435,261). In comparison, athletes plying their trade in Spain, Germany, China and France all earn on average significantly above their MLS counterparts, who receive £251,730 ($327,249) per season. Within women's elite soccer, a similar pattern emerges with the top divisions of France (D1 feminine), Germany (Frauen-Bundesliga) and England (FAWSL) all providing annual salaries which are higher than their female US peers in the NWSL £20,805 ($27,054) per annum. The lure of a career for elite US players of both genders is therefore tangible and represents an opportunity for the small minority of elite individuals who are able to obtain one of the scarce positions within professional soccer. (*Note: currency exchange rates used within the preceding report by Sporting Intelligence are: £1 = $1.30).

Professional soccer is evidently a labour intensive industry in which employment is subject to increasingly mobile forms of labour, which increases the possibility of player movement between teams (McGovern, 2000). Employers, however, are fixed to specific geographical locations with the result that if individuals wish to pursue the highest salaries, they must be prepared to relocate to the elite leagues of Europe. Although some theorists assert that career decision making is a matter for the individual, Hodkinson (1997) has previously noted that career decisions can only be appreciated in terms of the life histories and narratives of those who create them. Previously, the choice of one's career may have been predictable on the basis of what was known of an individual's socio-economic background, gender and family (Bourke, 2002). Before the accessibility of career education in schools, nearly all individuals obtained advice from neighbourhood contacts (ibid., 2002). The main parties and factors that may influence scholarship decisions include family members, both nuclear and extended, teachers, career advisors and potentially sporting role models. Acknowledgement of the level of interdependence that both constrains and enables individuals' actions is explained within the concept of 'figuration' (Elias, 1956, 1978). Figuration is a generic term used by Elias to represent the

> web of interdependences formed among human beings and which connects them: that is to say, a structure of mutually oriented and dependent persons.
> (Elias, 1978, p. 249)

Elias's theory emphasises the relationships and processes of interdependence between individuals and societies, which are dynamic and constantly evolving and subject to knowledge and hierarchies of status. Therefore, this study acknowledges the impact of figurational theory in contributing to an interpretive explanation of the student decision-making process. The decision to take part or develop proficiency within a sport is not a question of freewill but is socially structured (Bourke, 2002; Jarvie and Maguire, 1994). It is also linked to one's educational experiences at school (especially at the high school level), where the board of education elect to offer specific sports to their students and thereby restrict or promote participation in certain leagues and competitions.

Hodkinson (1997) asserts that the reason why some young people reject career advice is that what is being said to them does not conform to their own personal schematic view or their perception of appropriate career opportunities. When questioned as to whether their high schools had a guidance officer, 100% of those surveyed answered yes. Less than half (48%) of the students actually used the personnel to discuss their options. In career development literature, the career dreams are correlated with the concept of aspirations and are often used synonymously (Carroll et al., 1999). Within this framework, the external pressures resulting from economic mobility and family or social factors combine to influence vocational decisions (Martin, 1997). This perspective will contribute to the interpretive research paradigm which underpins the study and help to conceptualise the findings (see Chapter 3 for a discussion of the paradigm). Given the groundswell of popularity for the game in America, it would appear inevitable that some individuals may consider utilising soccer within the broader ideology of the American Dream. Coakley (2007) has previously asserted that the opportunities for a satisfying and rewarding occupational career in sport do exist, adding, however, that the number of opportunities for the athletes is severely limited and they are short-term. The reality, according to the NCAA (2018), is that of the 480,000 students who compete within the three divisions, only a tiny minority will go on to compete at a professional level. According to most recent NCAA (2018) research, the reality for student-athletes is that professional opportunities are directly related to the sport selected at college. For example, only 9.5% (out of 34,980 NCAA baseball participants) will obtain professional contracts upon graduation, of Men's Basketball 1.2% (from 18,712 NCAA participants); Women's Basketball 0.9% (from 16,532 NCAA participants); Football 1.6% (from 73,063 NCAA participants); Men's Ice Hockey 6.4% (from 4,199 NCAA participants); and finally Men's Soccer 1.4% (from 24,986 NCAA participants).

For women the harsh reality for the majority is that the intercollegiate athletic experience will represent the zenith of their competitive sporting achievements. However, such statistical observations do not appear to discourage a significant number of aspiring professional athletes from pursuing their dream; the clear conclusion is that they are either apathetic or oblivious to the data (Mello and Swanson, 2007). A career in professional soccer is perceived by certain individuals to have many positive features, such as high financial rewards, status and so forth and very few barriers apart from innate talent, well-being and fate. Yet, in common with other professions, it is demanding and has an elevated failure rate, especially during the early years (Hardwick, 1999; O'Donoghue, 1999). For many individuals, pursuing a career in professional soccer involves relocation to distant lands to follow personal and career goals. The attraction of moving to play a league which offers the potential of a higher salary and status is one that many individuals clearly find appealing. However, the issue of how many male and female professional contracts are available is subject to conjecture. The scale of 'professionalism' for both genders is difficult to gauge because of a paucity of 'hard data' which has been independently verified. A review of 'official' soccer data sources and player audits provided by FIFA and their regional bodies, such as

CONCACAF, UEFA and even the players union (FIFPro), present a disjointed and confusing array of statistics regarding the number of professional players. The clearest summary is provided by the work of Sporting Intelligence (2017) with the caveats of only including 'full-time' players in professional leagues and therefore excluding those individuals who earn a percentage of their overall income from playing soccer (i.e., 'semi-professionals'). Despite this clarification, forensic analysis is further complicated by what appears to be a range of ambiguous definitions and reporting parameters used by the various national and regional soccer agencies in determining what 'professional' means. Taking into account the previous caveats and interpretation, 'best estimates' provided by Sporting Intelligence indicate that there are 137,021 male full-time professional players (43% of whom play in Europe, 20% in South America, 14% in Africa, 13% in Asia and approximately 10% in North America and Australasia) and 1,287 female players globally. In other words, women players represent less than 1% of the global professional soccer employment market. The salient point, according to the report authors, is that the gender inequality gap in soccer may in fact be greater than in politics or big business.

The dominant market for elite soccer players is self-evidently one for male players. Currently, the Premier League (England) has the highest percentage of foreign players of any of the elite European leagues. Transfermarkt (2018), corroborated by UEFA's various 'club licencing benchmarking' reports (2009–17), identifies approximately 64.6% (or 571) of players within the Premier League as 'foreigners'. Of the remaining elite divisions, Portugal (Liga NOS) has 57.2% (467) foreign players; Germany (Bundesliga) 51.7% (503 players); Italy (Serie A) 54.1% (527 players); France (League 1) 48% (548 players); Spain (La Liga) 43.3% (478 players); and Netherlands (Eredivisie) 37.8% (495 players).

Northcroft (2002) has previously noted the increase in the number of young overseas players in the first and reserve teams of leading European professional teams. Of these, players from the US comprise a small but significant minority. As of the start of the 2017/18 season, there were over 60 US male players registered across the various elite leagues of the European Union, of which six currently play in the English Premiership. However, this initial 'trickle' of male talent may be representative of a trend by which players of both genders increasingly consider work overseas in order to pursue soccer as a profession (Table 2.2). Success on an international stage has self-evidently helped to raise the profile of individuals within the US National Women's Team. As FIFA World Cup winners on three occasions and four-time Olympic gold medallists, there is a residual pool of high quality talent that is and continues to be produced within the US. As a result, the exposure that high-calibre individual talent achieves via national success cannot be underestimated in the world of elite talent identification and player recruitment. Current US players Carli Lloyd and Alex Morgan are two examples of player migration from the domestic competitive structures of US soccer to the recent growth of well-resourced women's teams at elite European clubs, such as Manchester City, Lyon, Barcelona and Paris St Germain. However, for

Table 2.2 Soccer career options

Soccer Career Options	*Description*
'Direct Benefit' 1 Playing Abroad: International Dreams	Individual with a high level of technical ability as a player (informed by objective feedback); An individual who simply possesses the strong desire to achieve a professional football career and envisions success and displays individual initiative; Ambitious: can also be considered as someone who has the desire to improve his or her career by moving to what is perceived as a 'better quality league'
'Direct Benefit' 2 Playing at Home: Domestic Dream	Individual with a moderate level of technical ability and competence in soccer; Seeks security/stability offered by a domestic playing career; Would potentially consider a career abroad should circumstances be favourable
'Indirect Benefit' 3 Status in the Community	Individual with an appreciation that athletic status leads to notoriety and prestige amongst the university community; Appreciates limitations of own ability and uses available networks to establish a career not necessarily linked with soccer
'Indirect Benefit' 4 Alternate Career (supported by scholarship)	Pragmatic approach towards career development and opportunities; Athletic status impacts upon occupational attainment; the belief that sports serves as a vehicle to occupational success and upward mobility

N.B. As noted by Magee and Sugden (2002), typologies have a shifting dimension dependent on the career stage of the individual player.

those US players not fortunate enough to translate their talent into a domestic or foreign professional career, their commitment towards soccer may open up a number of 'direct' and 'complimentary' benefits. The career options available can be categorised into four discrete headings.

The common denominator that each of these categories share is the potential financial/economic benefits that result from either the 'direct' or 'indirect' involvement in a soccer scholarship. Achieving a career as a professional player is clearly statistically unlikely; however, the indirect benefits of undertaking a university scholarship are tangible and within the reach of many individuals.

Many media commentators suggest that the allure of a career abroad is the key motivating factor for young players opting for a career in soccer (Bale, 1998; Bourke, 2003; Maguire and Pearton, 2000), leading to extensive labour migration as the characteristics of the global sports labour market evolve (Bale, 1998;

Maguire and Pearton, 2000). Despite the limited statistical chance of achieving the dream of a professional career abroad, other evidence (Gothard et al., 2001) reveals that the impact of myths and dreams cannot be underestimated in our lives. The powerful narratives inherent within American sport mean that numerous children (and adults) regularly fantasise that they are representing their country in the World Cup or that they scored the winning goal for their team in an elite professional competition (Bourke, 2003). Coakley (2007) and Bourke (2002) have observed that in contemporary society, many athletes now act in accordance with other professions (medical, academic and so forth) in appreciating that to advance one's career, it may be necessary to spend some time outside their home country in order to further develop their skills.

As mentioned earlier, this chapter shows that the professional soccer infrastructure in America is still in relative infancy in comparison to that of western European countries. Given the increased media exposure via soccer-specific television channels in the US, such as Fox Sports, the European elite leagues may convince many impressionable young athletes that to be successful, it is necessary to join a European club (Bourke, 2003; O'Brien, 2002). Despite the limitations of the existing professional structure for both genders in America, career potential can be arguably fulfilled within or indirectly via the domestic game. The conventional view of sports in America is that involvement in athletic participation may lead to occupational mobility and the acquisition of marketable skills, i.e., athletes may benefit from non-athletic jobs as a result of their sporting career with a prestigious and high-profile university (Dubois, 1980). Such views are echoed within the myriad of published autobiographical player accounts. *A View from the Bench* by George Mills (2007) is one such book which provides an account of the reality behind the glamour of college sport and the lived experiences of a 'benchwarmer' (Lawrence, 2007). George Mills was a player who clearly enjoyed the game but had only one opportunity in nearly five years at making the University of Nebraska's starting team. The book provides a glimpse into the hero status that is accorded to the players of university sport. The most striking feature of sport in many universities in the United States is its commercialisation and the degree to which student-athletes have been transformed into professional entertainers (Coakley, 2007). The giant stadiums, television contracts and other trappings of commercialism which are commonplace at many Division One schools in America are simply not found in European universities. The key message from books such as the one by Mills is that the ultimate measure of the rewards gained from participation in college sport is success in life after college and the prestige that is accorded to such individuals in their communities (Lawrence, 2007).

Men's potential salaries

The establishment of the men's professional elite league 'MLS' in 1996, founded after the demise of its predecessor (the North American Soccer League), began modestly with ten teams, and this conservative approach towards profitability

and survival continued until 2004. For many of those years, financial survival appeared to be more of an issue than any ambitious strategic plans for league expansion. Since then, however, the number of clubs has multiplied exponentially. MLS is currently at 23 teams and over 600 players, with plans ultimately to expand the competition to 28 teams. In 2018, Los Angeles FC became the 23rd team with agreements in place for FC Cincinnati in 2019 and the eventual addition of Nashville and Miami by 2020. Expansion of the league is predicated upon the business model of identifying prospective owners and their metropolitan community partners who have both the financial ability and the passion to invest in establishing a team. Simply identifying a key market with a passionate soccer fan base appears no longer enough; increasingly, owners are encouraged to have the vision to build a soccer-specific stadium. By doing this, clubs are able to control and thereby optimise revenue streams, such as parking and concessions.

The expansion of the number of clubs within the MLS has created additional opportunities for prospective players. However, all clubs within the MLS are required to operate within identified financial thresholds, or what is colloquially referred to as a 'salary cap' and a broader Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) (identified by the league as a 'senior roster salary budget'). MLS believe that the salary cap is integral to the long-term success of the competition by controlling player salaries (and potential escalation) and thereby maintaining homogeneity (permitted talent budget per club) with the inevitable impact on league competitiveness.

The 'cap' represents an attempt by the league and club owners to limit the salary and overall budget permissible for the 'key' senior players within each club squad. A salary threshold is established before each season within which clubs must operate or face sanctions from the league. Each club is permitted to have 30 players registered within their squad; however, the 'cap' is specifically targeted at the top 20 senior or elite players within each squad. In 2018, the cap was restricted to $4,035,000 for each team taking part in the 2018 season (MLS, 2018). The salary cap is not a 'hard' cap, as MLS allows its teams to 'buy down' contracts through the use of additional league-provided funds, called General Allocation Money (GAM) and Targeted Allocation Money (TAM), as well as pay above the salary threshold for up to three Designated Players. GAM was set at $200,000 and TAM was set at $1,200,000 per club to start the current season. The addition of a 'discretionary' TAM can be employed by teams who wish to self-finance and increase squad payroll. In 2018, each club can add up to $2,800,000 to the player salary pool but only on new signings to the league. This additional TAM will, for most teams, likely be a source of funds to enhance 'Designated Player' (DP) transactions for overseas talent.

The history of the DP rule can be traced back to the signing of David Beckham by Los Angeles Galaxy from Real Madrid in 2007. At that stage in MLS history, the salary cap was set at $2.1 million per team, and it is estimated that Beckham would cost more than twice that amount, which would have inevitably both broken the salary cap for his new club and given the team a talent advantage

and thereby potentially impacted upon the competitive nature of the league. Ultimately, the opportunity to sign David Beckham and his perceived marketing impact (both for the league and club) facilitated the creation of the DP rule in 2007. Sometimes referred to as the 'Beckham rule', it was and still is designed to allow clubs to expand their teams with high-profile players. Critics of the exemption to the salary cap argued that the change allowed franchises with larger markets and 'deeper pockets' to spend more on designated players and circumvent the restrictions of the salary cap (Coates et al., 2012).

The concern that is often voiced by critics of leagues with a high proportion of 'foreign stars' is the impact that this has upon the opportunities or lack for 'domestic' US-born players. According to research conducted by the Elias Sports Bureau (in Wiggins, 2018), the number of domestic players eligible to play for the US has fallen from 52% in 2012 to 38% in 2017. Soccer is a global game, and as such, the market for elite players and coaches is now strongly internationalised. It is one in which foreign talents are transferred on to wealthier teams within the framework of transnational value chains. Players and coaching staff are now recruited from all over the globe and largely fall into two categories: those who have had their soccer education 'internally' within their national association structures or, alternatively, those who have been educated 'outside' of their national association and can be termed 'expatriates'. According to research conducted by the CIES Football Observatory, as of 1 May 2018, 12,425 expatriate footballers were recorded in the 2,235 teams from the 142 leagues of 93 national associations surveyed. Expatriates represent 21.2% of players at the global level, which equates to approximately 6 players on average per team. Within the same research, 178 national associations had at least one representative playing abroad, with Brazil as the most represented country (1,236 expatriates), followed by France (821) and Argentina (760). *Note: The US has a total of 125 expatriates in 'foreign' leagues (approximately 1% of all expatriate players) (CIES, 2018). The debate as regards which domestic players have had the greatest impact upon identifying and reinforcing notions of a career 'abroad' is open to conjecture. However, the following domestic players represent a sample of those individuals in the last 25 years whose high-profile achievements are some of the most noteworthy: Jovan Kirovski (in the Bundesliga); Tony Sanneh (Germany); Geoff Cameron (England); Frankie Hedjuk (Germany); Jozy Altidore (Netherlands); Alexi Lalas (Italy); Carlos Bocanegra (England); John Harkes (England); Steve Cherundolo (Germany); Michael Bradley (Holland, Germany, Italy); Kasey Keller (Germany, Spain, England); Eric Wynalda (Germany, Mexico); Brian McBride (England); DaMarcus Beasley (Netherlands, Scotland); Tim Howard (England); Brad Friedel (England); Claudia Reyna (Germany, England); Landon Donovan (England); and Clint Dempsey (England). Amongst the elite American players listed here, Claudio Reyna, who returned to the United States after playing for more than a decade in Europe, had a base salary of $1 million in 2007 and guaranteed compensation of $1.25 million, making him the highest-paid American in the MLS at that point (Bell, 2007). A summary of the highest reported 'base' salaries (i.e.,

not including agreed financial rewards/incentives for achieving individual and team targets) for domestic US league players in 2018–19 can be seen in the following (MLSPA, 2018).

Michael Bradley: Toronto FC ($6m)
Jozy Altidore: Toronto FC ($5m)
Tim Howard: Colorado Rapids ($2m)

The median base pay for the men's professional league (MLS) is reported by Sporting Intelligence at $104,040 ($135,252) and is modest by comparison to the standards of 'median' earnings in other US professional team sports, for example, the NFL (£828,846 or $1,077,500); NBA (£2,934,149 or $3,814,394); NHL (£1,730,769 or $2,250,000); and MLB (£1,201,923 or $1,562,500).

Women's potential salaries

Research has historically indicated that career opportunities for women to play, coach and report as a profession within sports are limited (Acosta and Carpenter, 1996; Delpy, 1998). Although mechanisms that prevent or inhibit career advancement clearly continue to exist, the increased participation and profile of women in sport has self-evidently raised public awareness of the possibilities of a career both on and off the playing field. A landmark piece of gender equality legislation that many in the US hold responsible for expanding the number of opportunities for women to take part in sport (commonly referred to as 'Title IX') is now forty-six years old. Title IX legislation, enacted by President Richard Nixon (within the 1972 Education Amendments), stipulates that any educational program or activity that receives federal funding (a far-reaching implication given that the majority of US institutions receive some form of payment) cannot discriminate on the basis of sex. The legislation is limited to 'sex discrimination', but its reach extends to all parts of education programs, including interscholastic, intercollegiate and recreational sports activities. Its implications are many, including the use of Title IX to form the basis of complaints against schools charged with not properly responding to the issue of sexual assault. But its most significant impact has been observed upon school sports programs and concerns from administrators who need to comply with the legal responsibility to maintain gender equity in terms of sports opportunities if they wish to avoid having their federal funding removed as a result of any violation.

The amount that women earn in comparison to their male counterparts is robustly investigated by Sporting Intelligence (2017) within their report on 'global salaries'. The best paid sports league in the world (according to annual salary data) is the NBA, where male athletes received on average £5,497,859 ($7,147,217) per annum or approximately 96 times what their female WNBA basketball counterparts earnt per annum (£57,507 or $74,759). However, given the global popularity of soccer, for both males and females, it is interesting to note

whether the income disparity for the genders is replicated in that sport. In 2017, the number of female 'professional' players within the world was identified as approximately 1,287 females (in comparison to a reported 137,021 male 'professional' players). What is clear is that men outnumber women playing professional soccer by a factor of 100 to 1 but also outearn their counterparts. As Sporting Intelligence calculate, the average salary in the English Premier League (highest paid male soccer league globally) is £2.64 million per year or 68 times higher than the highest paid women's soccer league in France (D1 Feminine), which is recorded at £38,882 ($49,782). The second position for female players in elite soccer leagues' annual salaries is in the German Frauen-Bundesliga (£33,629 or $43,730), third in England's FAWSL (£26,752 or $35,355) and in fourth place the American NWSL (£20,085 or $27,054). In the USA, women's professional player salaries in the initial competition (WUSA) during the years of its existence (2001–04) were capped at an annual minimum of $27,000 and a maximum of $85,000 (Markovits and Hellerman, 2003b). The formation of the NWSL in 2012 and its inaugural season in 2013 in America is the latest incarnation of elite football for women in the USA. The 2018 season had ten teams operating within a 'salary cap' of £242,000 ($315,000) for each team. The precise payments that each player within a team receives is undisclosed by the league (unlike the MLS) because of sensitivities regarding player confidentiality and privacy. However, research conducted by Sporting Intelligence (2017) for the 2017 season reveals that players' annual average salary was within the range of £20,198 ($15,537) and £35,798 ($27,537). Significantly, however, those players who represent the national team are eligible for 'central contracts' and additional payments made by the national federation (USSF) – with the caveat that they must play for one of the teams within the NWSL. The precise salary of the elite players is therefore complicated further by individual circumstances, i.e., the number of national team appearances and tournament success in the World Cup and Olympics. The financial incentives that are therefore awarded by receipt of a central contract are perhaps mitigated by the barrier they create for any domestic players wishing to pursue a career within one of the higher paid leagues overseas; they would then become ineligible for representing their national team and the financial package associated with the number one ranked national team in world football. Such consideration is financially prudent given that according to the *New York Times*, the best paid female soccer players earnt approximately $1.2 million from 2008 to 2015 (Das, 2016). However, such pay appears to be contingent upon success within international tournaments, such as the FIFA World Cup. According to Nichols (general counsel for the United States Women's National Soccer Team Players Association), 75% of player compensation is directly related to winning championships. In other words, women have to perform at a world-beating level to keep pace financially with their peers within the USMNT (in Das, 2016).

The perception of what the men's and women's professional leagues and their associated national teams have to offer to the US public is clearly a significant factor in their respective business models and levels of compensation (Southall

et al., 2005; Das, 2016). The failure, to date, of the women's professional game in America to achieve financial parity with their male counterparts (both domestically and on an international stage) is inevitably complicated and should be viewed within a larger context and not necessarily upon a nativistic antagonism towards soccer (Eitzen and Sage, 2003; Southall et al., 2005). However, given the financial realities for both genders and the financial and opportunity inequalities that exist for women, the question remains why any individual would be interested in pursuing a career in soccer as a player. More precisely, has the enhanced profile of professional soccer in the US inspired individuals to pursue a career for intrinsic or extrinsic motives? Indeed, is the pursuit of a professional career part of a more pragmatic route to achieve the American Dream or a labour of love?

The context for the study that follows aims to combine the two pervasive narratives that exist within US culture: sport and a university education. The contention of this study is that soccer (via the conduit of a university athletic scholarship) offers a contemporary interpretation of the American Dream and alternative 'mobility escalator' for its participants. The narrative that hard work, determination and a university degree can help transform dreams into reality courtesy of direct access to its resources, peers, teachers and alumni networks is a powerful and appealing message for many. In essence, the direct mechanism by which upward mobility and an elevated 'quality of life' is achieved in America begins with one's education and is completed at university. Higher education in the USA has held a deserved reputation for being an 'elite activity' for much of its history, excluding individuals based on gender, religion, race and social class (Eckel and King, 2004). However, during the 20th century, economic and social changes transformed US higher education into a 'gateway' for the non-elite previously excluded. Americans increasingly came to view broad access to higher education as a necessary component of the nation's ideal as a 'land of opportunity' for individuals of all ages and incomes. Guided by these beliefs, US higher education can be regarded to broadly reflect the essential elements of the American character: independence, ambition, inclusiveness and competitiveness (ibid.). The use of soccer within this study is intended to provide a contemporary lens through which the observer can contextualise undergraduate student life and career ambition at American colleges and universities. Competitive sport is deeply interwoven within US culture, commerce and indeed its higher education institutions. The history of competitive sports as a vehicle to help promote institutional prestige and attract investment is well-established, as are the concerns regarding the expansion of competitive sports programs within its institutions and concerns regarding issues of academic integrity and the welfare of its student-athletes. The experiences of student-athletes (as individuals in receipt of financial support for their involvement in competitive university sport) offer a unique insight towards the subjective and objective career choices they have made.

A review of relevant labour market literature within this context reveals an increasingly pragmatic approach towards undergraduate student use of scholarships and a heightened awareness towards career development (Meggyesy, 2000;

Stieber, 2004). A contextual explanation of career that emphasises action and pays special attention to the role of narrative, dream and myth, along with the power relationship that exists when engaging in guidance and counselling, is a key part of this study and presented within Chapter 6. Patton and McMahon (1999) classified the main contributions in this context as being those of Herr and Cramer (1992) and Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996). Within this context, Roberts (1968) and Gothard et al. (2001) have both previously argued that decisions are not determined by the individual but by the opportunity structures in the labour market (Bourke, 2002); these include the nature of industrial organisation, government regulation and social class. The complementary nature of the various sociological viewpoints regarding career become obvious when observed from the perspective of attempting to understand the complexity of relations involved. Based on these observations, it is the pretext of the study therefore that people's career aspirations are the result of both constraints due to economic context and more or less strategic individual and collective behaviour. Auster (1996) asserted that individuals, when making occupational choices, are constrained by societal forces that have an effect on individual factors. In the context of this study, they will be studied within the themes of family, social class, social mobility and education. So why are undergraduate students in the US pursuing a soccer scholarship? Is it to use their talent and skills or their expectations of high earnings for direct benefits? Or is their career choice due to social and economic factors for indirect benefits? Gothard et al. (2001) referred to the role that myth and dream play in the lives of people, often manifest in individual attitudes towards the world of sport. The questionnaire designed for this study reflects the importance of the dream of playing for the US as a potential key influence in career choice and is detailed in Chapter 3 of the study. Similarly, all students interviewed in the pilot study declared that it was their childhood ambition to represent their country in soccer. Young et al. (1996) cited in Gothard et al. (2001) asserted that the role of emotion in career theories has been undervalued, as emotion energises, regulates and controls actions and provides the key to narratives of career. There was strong agreement among respondents in relation to emotive reasons (love of the game, dream of playing for the US, possibilities of winning trophies) for choosing soccer as a career. Conversely, certain interviewees in the pilot study stressed the practical reasons (i.e., the opportunities to make money, develop one's talent and gain experience and knowledge). Acknowledgement of the myriad factors which underpin student career decision making is factored into the design of both the questionnaire and subject interviews for this study (Schulenberg et al., 1991). The interview findings presented in Chapter 4 are organised according to Denzin's (2001) methodology of interpretive interactionism and subjected to inductive content analysis. The presentation of the student narrative involves the organisation of students' life histories and the life-shaping events they have experienced. The explanation and the stories presented by the students are done so in the language, feelings and emotions of those being studied in order to accurately reflect their decision-making process.

Chapter summary

This chapter has presented a critical review of what the concept of the American Dream has meant historically to the people of the US. The Dream is not an entity that operates outside of culture but rather a set of values and ideals that are dynamic and evolving according to the changing nature of US society. A key factor in the evolution of the concept has been the meanings applied to it by society. As American society has evolved, so have the pathways within which it is regarded as acceptable to pursue its goals. This chapter has argued that soccer has built and expanded from its traditional base of youth and ethnic participation to enter the lexicon of mainstream American sport and values.

Evidence presented so far in this thesis has proven that, to a large extent, national antipathy towards the sport has been altered. On a simplistic level, this could be credited to a pragmatic approach towards the business of 'supply and demand', or as American President Calvin Coolidge, speaking in 1924, stated, 'The business of America is business' (Wagg, 1995, p. 179). More precisely and elegantly, playwright Arthur Miller writes that the business of America is 'show business, symbolic display, the triumph at last of metaphor over reality' (Miller, 1988; in Wagg, 1995, p. 179). In the context of a business model, American soccer has been seen as a miniature reflection of the emerging aggressive, Darwinian capitalist environment (survival of the fittest financially) (Bar-On, 1997). Hobsbawm once observed about soccer, 'the imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people' (1990, p. 143). For cultural historian Hobsbawm, soccer has the ability to grasp the popular imagination and worryingly arouse both nationalistic and even chauvinistic tendencies more concretely than other realms of cultural and political construction (Bar-On, 1997). Furthermore, soccer is a sport with mass appeal and without the connotations of socio-economic class that identify and restrict sports such as rugby union, golf or tennis (Wilson, 2007). This sport clearly has appeal to US audiences beyond the traditional television diet of baseball, football and basketball. By what criteria do individuals designate some countries as 'soccer-playing countries'? In trying to define what exactly constitutes a national sports culture, Markovits and Hellerman (2001) used the concept of 'hegemonic sports culture'. By this, they mean that soccer has failed to dominate America and facilitate 'emotional attachments'. Based upon data assimilated over 8 years ago, their book fails to recognise that measuring comparative levels of emotional attachment to sport is extremely difficult. Should emotional attachment be measured relative to those who are self-reported sports fans? Or should we more properly consider what percentage of the total population is committed to, or at least interested in, a given sport? There is no clear answer to this question, nor do Markovits and Hellerman attempt to provide one. To suggest that the American public has tried and rejected soccer is founded upon historical notions of exceptionalism. Insight provided from a variety of empirical sources has revealed that soccer continues to grow and establish itself within the mainstream American psyche.

Soccer as a potential career pathway for students is a contentious issue, as it challenges traditional notions of what defines patriotic and appropriate sport. The growth and establishment of professional leagues and the continued expansion of scholarship opportunities at university challenge the perception of soccer as a 'foreign sport'. Consequently, the career possibilities available via a soccer scholarship to students can be summarised according to their 'direct' and 'indirect' options. Evidently, a professional career in soccer is feasible, if statistically improbable. The alternative explanation offered within this chapter and supported by 'career options' in Table 2.2 is that students could feasibly adopt a rather pragmatic approach towards the use of scholarship in their pursuit of the Dream. According to the literature presented in this chapter, sport and soccer specifically are used as a catalyst for career ambitions which are not necessarily related to their sport of choice.

The next step within this study is to provide details of the methods employed in order to establish the potentially complex motives for undertaking a soccer scholarship.

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Chapter 3

Research design

Theory and methodology: overview

The focus of this chapter is on providing an overview of the sociological theories *and* research methods employed within the study. Throughout this work, *theory* and *method* are not treated as distinct and unrelated aspects of the process. In fact, there is an important two-way relationship between the theoretical framework and methods employed within the book. In short, one informs the other throughout each stage of the research process. In addition to synthesising the extensive literature available on the subject of the American Dream and sport, provided in Chapters 1 and 2, the value of this research is in providing insight to the complex motivations of students for embarking upon a soccer scholarship. The opinions of students, coaches and athletic directors are sampled in order to generate primary data.

Interpretive research paradigm

Two of the most prominent research paradigms within sociological studies of this nature are regarded to be the 'scientific' and 'interpretive' (Andrews et al., 2005). In order to decide which paradigm had the most salience to the analysis of the subjects in question, an extensive review of existing literature was conducted. Ernest (1994, p. 22) identifies that the scientific research paradigm 'is concerned with objectivity, prediction, replicability, and the discovery of scientific generalisations or laws describing the phenomena in question'. Theoretically, by employing a scientific approach to potentially contentious issues, general laws which can be used to anticipate future outcomes can be identified (Barry, 1998). The scientific research paradigm is therefore based on a hypothetico-deductive approach (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). Simply stated, according to Barry (1998), it adopts a systematic enquiry into the considerations of knowledge. The paradigm evidently has the distinct advantages of clarity, precision and generalisability (Andrews et al., 2005; Barry, 1998). However, it is not without its critics. One of the foremost issues is that the paradigm fails to recognise individuals within their specific context. As a result, insight towards understanding human beings as individuals

is neglected, resulting in a partial, distorted picture of social reality (Barry, 1998; Gratton and Jones, 2003). The intention of this research was to comprehend the student learning experience whilst the students were in their university learning environment; the scientific research hypothesis was therefore not considered appropriate for the context of the thesis. As a result, attention was turned to considerations of the 'interpretive research paradigm' and its appropriateness for a study of career motives in sport.

Traditionally, sport has been eulogised within the work of former players, journalists and film makers (Bower, 2003; Giulianotti, 1999; Goffman, 1959, 1967; Roderick, 2006). As a consequence, the realities of a playing career leading to tangible rewards have been mythologised and are dominated by the views of 'quasi-insiders' (Wacquant, 1992, p. 222). In the spirit of attempting to obtain a participant's perspective, similar to Wacquant's (1992) study of boxers and Roderick's (2006) study of professional soccer players in England, this research critically analyses the interaction between the individual and society. By examining the perspective of scholarship students through face-to-face encounters, the study necessitates consideration of the micro and macro social contexts in which the subjects operate. Interactionism therefore constitutes

> an appealing approach in relation to a study of people, whose daily work is situated among a relatively small, tight-knit group that is all but 'closed' to non-group members.
>
> (Roderick, 2006, p. 5)

The fundamental concern of the interpretive paradigm is to understand individual human experiences at a 'holistic' level (Barry, 1998; Gratton and Jones, 2003). As a result, researchers adopting this approach aim to interpret the complexities embedded in such personal experiences in order to shed light on their significance. Ernest (1994, p. 24) states that 'the paradigm is primarily concerned with human understanding, interpretation, intersubjectivity, lived truth (i.e. truth in human terms)'. Interpretive research is therefore frequently undertaken in natural settings and is subsequently often referred to as a form of 'naturalistic inquiry' (Barry, 1998; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p. 45) state that 'the natural setting is the place where the researcher is most likely to discover, or uncover, what is to be known about the phenomenon of interest'. As highlighted in Chapter 1, the narrative of social mobility is at the core of the American Dream; however, the mechanisms by which it can be achieved are inherently complex and intricately woven (Goffman, 1959, 1967). The interpretive paradigm thus facilitates qualitative analysis of student decision making, which is central to this study. The paradigm is arguably closely linked to the concept of the American Dream whereby the individual has the power to change society rather than being manipulated by it.

Critiques of interpretive sociological approaches typically take issue with both the theoretical and methodological aspects of the approach. The most common

criticisms are that the approach assumes social meaning is unproblematic and may be understood directly or believes that it is possible to discover standard laws that govern human behaviour (Denzin, 1989; Flick, 2006). However, the defining characteristic of an interpretive approach is that any statement regarding the social world is relative to any other (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Donnelly, 2003). At the cultural level, a relative approach permits the researcher to understand and interpret the culture on its own terms and is a key rationale for the adoption of a paradigm that facilitates an understanding of human action. Interpretive perspectives have had a relatively restricted impact within the study of the sociology of sport since their rise in the 1970s (Giulianotti, 2005). This may be due to the time-consuming nature and expense required with the pre-requisite fieldwork. Before embarking on this approach, it was necessary to consider the commitment in terms of fieldwork in the US. The clear benefit of such an approach, however, is in terms of the 'thick descriptions' and fuller understandings that are presented (Andrews et al., 2005; Donnelly, 2003; Flick, 2006), facilitating analysis of career aspirations within soccer. A further potential danger of the interpretive approach is the relative neglect of the power of external-structural forces that shape behaviour and events (Cohen et al., 2007). There is a risk in interpretive approaches that they become 'hermetically sealed from the world outside and the participant's theatre of activity' (ibid., p. 25). Just as positivistic theories can be criticised for their macro-sociological bias, so interpretive theories can be criticised for their narrow or micro-sociological perspectives. In order to balance both perspectives, the discussion of the themes of the study in Chapter 5 will provide discussion of the interview results from both a micro and macro perspective.

One of the most authoritative views regarding the contribution of the interpretive paradigm to the study of sport was presented by Donnelly (2003). In his review, Donnelly offered a critical evaluation of the impact of the paradigm upon the study of the sociology of sport. He identifies a number of areas, such as athlete biographies and autobiographies, that have benefited significantly from this research approach. Significantly, this research paradigm facilitates comprehension of the extent to which students interviewed are conscious of their actions. Other areas include what socialisation experiences were involved in the process of becoming a student-athlete and, finally, to what extent student decision-making reflects upon broader issues of social mobility. In order to achieve this goal, it was necessary to understand their (undergraduate student) formative experiences in their natural setting – the university context – by conducting fieldwork in the US, both for the pilot and the final study itself. Having determined the research paradigm to use, the next step was to become familiar with the research methodology relevant to this particular approach (Barry, 1998). Hence, a scoping review of extant literature within an interpretative context was conducted. The findings clearly advocated use of a 'mixed methodology' that included the use of detailed questionnaires and focus groups to facilitate qualitative analysis (Gratton and Jones, 2003). In addition, several studies have emphasised the use of qualitative techniques, such as interviewing (Bower, 2003;

Lewko and Greendorfer, 1988; Roderick, 2006; Wedemeyer Moon, 2003). By employing a combination of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, the research aims to provide a deeper level of understanding as regards the experiences and context of scholarship athletes. Precise details of the instruments used are provided later in this chapter.

The importance of methodology in the research, as a whole and within the elements discussed so far, warrants its recognition as a crucial part of the interpretive framework. It could be argued that a methodological element is out of place within a theoretical framework. However, in a similar vein to Sugden and Tomlinson's (2000) elements of a critical interpretive framework, it is the packaging of the overlapping elements which constitutes the framework. The mixed methodological approach adopted in this research refers to a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques used to ensure a fully informed interpretation of the subculture of student-athletes within Division One programs. Due to the under-researched nature of soccer scholarship students, there is certain fundamental research data which needs to be gathered by other means. Included in these data are the essential socio-demographic characteristics, such as age, occupation, educational qualifications, family background, area of residence and so on. The construction of a socio-demographic profile lends itself to a more quantitative research technique. The profile makes a considerable contribution to this research on two levels. First, on an individual level, knowledge of such characteristics allows us to set the experiences of individuals within the wider context of their lives. Second, collectively, the data provides us with a comprehensive answer to who the student-athletes really are. Knowledge at both of these levels is an essential feature of making an accurate interpretation of student-athlete decision making. The use of questionnaires and interviews within this research represents an attempt to allow the research and a quest for truth to shape the methods used. It essentially avoids an adherence to a particular social theory. Rather, it fits into the interpretive paradigm in the ways in which it uses a combination of both quantitative and qualitative techniques to achieve a fully informed and educated interpretation as possible.

The interpretive approach adopted towards investigating the research questions of the thesis began with the question, what is going on here? According to Spradley (1980) and Barry (1998), this process prevents the researcher from attempting to verify a pre-determined idea. The research method therefore employed a 'bottom-up' approach, allowing exploration of details in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the complexities embedded within the student experience, interpret meanings and ultimately facilitate insights from their accounts (Barry, 1998). At the beginning of the enquiry, it was therefore important that the research adopted a broad focus, which was informed from both a review of literature and the personal experience of having lived and taught in the US. The deliberately broad focus was open-ended, allowing for important meanings to be discovered or uncovered and clarity to be obtained (Andrews et al., 2005; Barry, 1998; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). As identified in the introduction to this study, the American Dream is something that is inculcated

into each citizen and as such encompasses a myriad of complex issues. The initial broad focus of the research within a pilot study allowed the filtering of how social mobility as a core concept potentially relates to sports scholarship students. The ideology of the Dream is evidently fuelled and sustained by a societal belief that America is a meritocracy. Sport in the context of this credo is 'narratavised' to be the purest form of democracy. This research contributes to the wider body of sports sociology scholarship by asking whether such perceived notions of social mobility apply to the 'lived experience' of scholarship athletes. Research interest in career aspirations and patterns has traditionally referred to an organised sequence of upward movements (Goffman, 1967). The key for this study was to analyse decision making in an objective fashion and in doing so reflect upon the individual's own self-identity and dreams. As a result, the data obtained and the aspirations therein would inevitably contain both objective and subjective components (Roderick, 2006).

The research method selected to most effectively explore such complex and varied lived experience of scholarship athletes was the qualitative approach. Qualitative research (i.e., interpretive, naturalistic, ethnographic or hermeneutic) is that of description, thus providing the basis by which the reader can obtain insight as to how the students within the research make sense of their world (Gratton and Jones, 2003; Munroe-Chandler, 2005). The adoption of a qualitative methodology for this study facilitates a flexible means of considering the subjective experience of the individual participants, thereby offering a detailed description of how the students perceive, create and interpret their world (Munroe-Chandler, 2005). A variety of different research instruments were considered for the study which included case studies, focus groups and systematic observation. However, the instruments selected for the testing within the pilot study methodology were participant questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The use of questionnaires that contain 'closed' questions has been advocated by researchers in an attempt to gain an understanding of athletes' decision making where responses can be anticipated (Colman and Carron, 2001; Munroe-Chandler, 2005). This study recognises the advantage of adopting a closed questionnaire format to identify individual norms present. As research practitioners, if we can anticipate the evolution of these norms, then it potentially offers a challenge to generalised behavioural expectations (Flick, 2006; Munroe-Chandler, 2005). To complement and provide rich and meaningful data, the questionnaires were followed by a series of semi-structured interviews. The interpretive approach towards interviewing recognises that meaning emerges through interaction and is not standardised from place to place or person to person (Donnelly, 2003; Rubin and Rubin, 1995). The paradigm emphasises the importance of understanding the overall text of a conversation and its meaning within its context. This approach recognises the importance of culture and the necessity of a relativistic approach to the subject's culture. This form of qualitative interview, unlike tightly structured or totally amorphous interviews, enables researchers to address a range of issues in conjunction with the advantage of flexibility (Gratton

and Jones, 2003; Silverman, 1985). In other words, the format facilitated analysis of the complexities of people's thoughts and experiences precisely because of their flexibility. In the course of the encounter, the design allowed for adaptation of questions around a basic structure of themes in order to meet the personal circumstances of the respondents, re-order questions to coincide with the data revealed or insert additional questions to probe revelations or issues as they arose. Denscombe (1998) summarises this approach in the following manner:

> [T]he interviewer is prepared to be flexible in terms of the order in which the topics are considered, and, perhaps more significantly, to let the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher. The answers are open-ended, and there is more emphasis on the interviewee elaborating points of interest.
>
> (p. 113)

Thus semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to potentially tease out complex views and explore with the interviewees the wider networks of relationships in which they are embedded (Donnelly, 2003). In the course of interviewing, observing the interviewee face-to-face and reflecting upon their responses, sociological themes and patterns of behaviour were identified in the data and then subsequently cross-referenced during later interviews. Enduring patterns, themes and what Mason (1994) terms 'categories of meaning' emerged, details of which are provided later in this chapter within the pilot study findings. A key component in facilitating rich and meaningful data from the interviews revolved around establishing a degree of 'trust'. Roderick (2006) argues that trust is an issue of paramount importance in an interview context in which respondents may feel exploitable. Oakley (1981) suggests that in her experience trust is fostered in research contexts in which the creation of a hierarchical relationship between interviewer and interviewee is avoided. Similarly, Collinson (1992) states that people are more likely to reveal more when they are allowed to identify issues that are relevant to them. Collinson elaborates that a focus on, and sensitivity towards, the issue of trust is a means to reduce or minimise 'distance' between researcher and respondent. For the most part, therefore, interviewers must have faith that the respondents who volunteer to participate are telling the truth and that their data are sincere. A number of sociologists have noted the potential for respondents to selectively distort information provided to the interviewer. Trust therefore is of paramount importance to facilitating qualitative insight when respondents may feel vulnerable to exploitation (Roderick, 2006). As an individual who has coached soccer and studied as a post graduate in America, I clearly shared some of the participants' experiences, and this hopefully contributed to establishing a sense of trust during the interviews. Allowing the subjects to identify and raise issues relevant to their own circumstances resulted in the interview responses that followed being particularly candid regarding their career aspirations. This was facilitated by maintaining a structure to the interview that was flexible, iterative and continuous (Andrews

et al., 2005; Rubin and Rubin, 1995). The design and approach adopted for the interviews was intended to achieve the goal of obtaining meaningful and rich data regarding student career motivations. As a result, the research themes, identified in Chapter 1, were adapted in terms of how they were introduced into the interview according to the personality, interests and knowledge of the interviewees. Underlying the methodological approach therefore is sensitivity towards the assumptions that underpin interaction between the student and their environment. According to the interpretive approach, people, individually or collectively, operate on the basis of the meanings that objects (actual or perceived) have for them. That is, people do not respond instinctively or directly to objects but attach relevance and subsequently meaning to them and proceed on the basis of the meaning. Blumer (1969) suggests that such objects may be classified into physical, social and abstract objects. Within the context of this approach, the notion of the American Dream and its interpretation by the students can be unpacked and categorised. Fundamental to this hypothesis is the presupposition that students interpret their social world through the process of interaction. Meaning and motivation for one's actions arise in the process of interaction between individuals (Donnelly, 2003; Flick, 2006); accordingly, students and their career aspirations must be seen as social creations. Interpretive sociology has tended to incorporate symbolic interactionism as a basis for looking at core issues, such as meaning, status and cultural relativism (Jarvie and Maguire, 1994). Interactionists assume that individuals act in particular ways because they have consensual meanings regarding the attachments in their environment. Meanings are therefore vibrant and evolve and adapt through a process of interpretation that is dynamic and subject to redefinition (Blumer, 1969). The relevance of symbolic interactionism to this research is that it is incorporated within a wider interpretive paradigm that takes a non-deterministic view of people and assumes that there is a degree of freedom of choice in human behaviour. This view clearly challenges the orthodoxy of belief that is inherent within the doctrine of American exceptionalism by recognising that individuals have micro perspectives that impact upon wider macro perspectives of society. Sensitivity to the capacity of people for abstract and reflective thinking within this model allows for the development and redefining of traditional terms of reference, such as the Dream. The synthesis of symbolic interactionism within this research is to explain how people often come to perceive phenomena from their perspective and not the prescribed views of others. To test the validity of such premises, one must engage in a direct examination of actual human group life. The contribution of this research is that it takes two separate cohorts of scholarship students to analyse their motivations for undertaking a soccer scholarship and in doing so offers a potential revaluation of the American Dream.

The pilot study

In order to test the effectiveness and validity of the methodological instruments before beginning the research, it was necessary to conduct a 'pilot study' at an appropriate and comparable institution. The names of the university and the

players and staff interviewed within the pilot study have been changed in order to ensure their anonymity. This ethical obligation was deemed necessary in order to encourage participants to talk openly and frankly. For clarification, the university selected is henceforth referred to as Central University. 'Central' was selected from a range of potential higher education establishments in the US that were contacted prior to the start of the study. Athletic directors (as 'gatekeepers' to university sports programs) were e-mailed to establish their level of willingness to participate in the study; of the ten contacted, nine responded with additional questions and eventual agreement to participate. After a series of conversations with the athletic director at Central, it was felt that the college and athletic staff would be the most cooperative in helping to facilitate the pilot study interviews with their soccer scholarship athletes. The initial criterion was that the institution had both a men's and women's soccer team that competed in Division One or Two of the NCAA structure. According to the mission statement of the NCAA, such institutions

> seek to establish and maintain an environment in which a student-athlete's activities are conducted as an integral part of the student-athlete's educational experience.
>
> (NCAA.com, 2006)

This statement is important, as it recognises that undergraduate participation in sport is central to both the student experience and by inference also to the university itself. Students and personnel at such locations clearly value the role and impact that university sport has both on a personal and community level. The status of intercollegiate sport at Central therefore offered a potentially valuable insight to the career motivations and orientation of its athletes. The findings offered a valuable opportunity to narrow the research focus from its broad focus upon social mobility to the eventual categories detailed at the end of the pilot study.

The pilot study: interviewing

In total, five soccer scholarship students from Central were randomly selected from a potential pool of 20 players to test the intended protocols for the study (hence forward labelled as DC1, DC2, DC3, DC4 and DC5 to maintain anonymity). Each member of the group was selected for a one-to-one in-depth interview. This sample group, chosen at random, represented five different age groups, ranging from 18 to 22 years of age at the time of interview. Individuals were then invited to attend an interview at a location of their choice. This was designed to put the subject at ease and therefore facilitate an open dialogue regarding the themes of the research. The format of the interview involved asking the students deliberately open-ended questions and probing where necessary to acquire data categorised as useful by the researcher (Barry, 1998). The interviews began with broad or 'grand tour' (Miller and Kerr, 2002) questions, such as, 'Can you tell

me about your sporting experiences before starting university?' Participants were then encouraged to elaborate upon their thoughts regarding the question posed. The subjects were then asked to provide detailed reflection and analysis of specific topics as a consequence of 'elaboration probes' (Weiss, 1996). Such probes are used to gather additional information and probe a topic in greater depth (Miller and Kerr, 2002). Typical probes used during the interviews were similar to those adopted by Miller and Kerr (2002) for their study of inter-collegiate student-athletes. Questions typically began with, 'Can you explain to me why you decided to attend to this university?', 'Can you tell me if sport is important to you and if so has this changed since you enrolled at university?' The duration of each interview typically ranged between 45 and 75 minutes, during which participants' views were audio recorded and then fully transcribed to ensure the accuracy of subsequent interpretative analysis. The overall aim of the individual interviews was to ascertain the subjects' views regarding their career decision-making strategy for deciding to accept an offer of a soccer scholarship. The literature review produced in Chapters 1 and 2 revealed the clear and important themes of 'family' (Frank and McPhail, 2005; Jamieson, 2005), 'social class' (Eitzen and Sage, 2003; Heck and Takahashi, 2006), 'social mobility' (Abowitz, 2005; Bettie, 2003) and 'career development' (Bourke, 2003; Dubois, 1980). A sample of those findings as they relate to these themes is discussed in the following.

DC1 (18-yr-old female)
Theme: 'Family'

My parents are not at all interested in sports but have always tried to support me in whatever I take an interest in. In the past, they have driven me to games all over the state and in the process racked up a fortune in gas alone. They (parents) know how important soccer is to me, but they can't afford for me to stay at school without some (financial) help. The scholarship helps towards that.

DC2 (18-yr-old male)
Theme: 'Social Class'

A lot of the players in the squad drive their own cars; their parents have money. I guess I'm the exception to the rule here. I get the bus almost everywhere, as does my Mom. We can't afford not to. I suppose it makes me hungrier to do well. Many of the guys don't share my enthusiasm for the training you could say. In comparison, I listen more to the coach. I'm not sure that I'm really on the other guys' (scholarship players) wavelength. Nobody here seemed to understand or relate to me. I'm here to follow my passion for the game. I seem to have more in common with the foreign players in the squad.

DC3 (20-yr-old female)
Theme: 'Social Mobility'

My folks could afford to cover my tuition costs at school, but they won't. I guess they are trying to give me a kick up the butt, instil some backbone as Dad would like to see it. This means that without the scholarship, I would be working at McDonald's right now instead of being at school. I need the extra cash that the coach gives me. I think if I get cut (de-selected) from the team, they (parents) might help me.

DC4 (21-yr-old male)
Theme: 'Career Development'

My teammates' pretend to be trying hard during the drills. They joke around a lot, but sometimes too much. They don't seem to respect the coach; they think he is too demanding. I want to be liked and make friends on the team, but I'm also here to make my parents proud. Sometimes I feel as though they are only here to have their education subsidised. I thought that they would all love soccer as much as I did and that this would create a bond between us. I know that I'm no Pele, but would love to earn a living as a pro. Hey we all have dreams. If I don't make it at least my degree will get me a head-start doing something other than flippin' burgers.

DC5 (21-yr-old female)
Theme: 'Career Development'

Girls outside of the soccer squad are just friends. I guess that is kind of inevitable. I say 'hello' to them if and when we bump into each other. When we talk though, it's mostly about class. I thought my teammates would be different when we talked about soccer on the bus to away games; however they didn't really seem to care whether we won or lost on those trips. I know that this could sound big-headed, but I could make it into the pro's. But I also know that I've probably got a better chance of being a civil engineer. I'll keep on trying though to keep my coach and folks pleased and see what happens in the next year or so.

In discussing the context of the research with the athletic director at Central, it became clear that he surmised that scholarship students were highly influenced in their decision making by their parents, a factor reinforced by the first round of pilot study player interviews. To further probe this potential dimension of student decision making, I conducted a second round of pilot study interviews with four female players ranging in age from 18 to 20 years. There appeared to be a sense of guilt presented by the participants which related to perceived sacrifices their parents had made to support them in playing competitive soccer. This response is typical of what interactionists such as Goffman (1959) and Wedemeyer Moon (2003) would describe as the 'presentation of self in everyday life'. According to this view, how individuals appear before others is influenced and defined by the context they appear within.

> Sometimes the individual will act in a thoroughly calculating manner, expressing himself in a given way solely in order to give the kind of

> impression to others that is likely to evoke from them a specific response he is concerned to obtain.
>
> (Goffman, 1959, p. 5)

The preceding student responses would appear to be intentionally and consciously constructed to reassure their parents (Wedemeyer Moon, 2003).

The role and significance of parents within this study is therefore a key aspect of the research and subsequently explored by the semi-structured interviews, details of which are provided in Chapter 4. This approach aimed to facilitate insight towards the qualitative experience and accounts of the subjects and in particular the role of their parents from the context of 'support and challenge' in facilitating their decision making (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000).

Interview: framework of analysis

The framework employed to analyse player interview responses was the 'Support/Challenge Questionnaire' (SCQ) (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000). Initially developed for use in the study of talented teenagers by Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993) and later expanded for use in a longitudinal study of American adolescents (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000), the thirty-two item questionnaire (Resource 6) measures the supportive and challenging aspects of a subject's family environment separately on an 'agree' or 'disagree' scale (Wedemeyer Moon, 2003). Items were intended to assess family dynamics from a holistic perspective (including both positive and negative aspects of challenge and support). Examples of the four types of statements include 'I get pleasure from playing competitive games' (positive challenge); 'I have a small number of interests outside of the home' (negative challenge); 'Despite the consequences of my actions or decisions, I know I'll be respected' (positive support); and 'My family only seem to care about my performance' (classroom or soccer field) (negative support). Responses on the SCQ were divided at the mean to create four family typologies: (a) High Support / High Challenge, (b) High Support / Low Challenge, (c) Low Support / High Challenge, (d) Low Support / Low Challenge.

The SCQ was used in this study to specifically ascertain the soccer player's perception of their family dynamics relating to the support and challenges they experienced. Their confirmatory responses to the positive support items and to the negative support items were summed to produce a total family support score which was computed by subtracting the sum of the negative items from the sum of the positive support items (Wedemeyer Moon, 2003). Accordingly, this study adopted the protocols and rankings advocated in Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider's (2000) study with scores on the support scale of 5.5 or higher classified as 'High Support' and scores of 5.4 and lower classified as 'Low Support'.

A key finding from the pilot study was the students' emphasis upon career development and upward economic mobility being facilitated via their soccer scholarship. A detailed discussion of student views and associated university

personnel is presented in Chapter 5; however, the pilot study clearly hinted at the importance of an athletic scholarship as a pragmatic and deliberate avenue of pursuing the American Dream in contemporary society. As a result of an extensive period of reflection upon the findings produced by the pilot study, the two universities selected for the thesis were contacted. The selection process followed the decision to establish a clear series of guidelines regarding which institutions would be appropriate for the context of the research. The professionalisation of sport within higher education has been established within the introduction to this book. It has also been established that it is typically the players at Division One institutions who are most likely to have sports scholarships made available to them as an incentive to study at and play for the university. As a consequence, only the elite talent pool of high school students is recruited by university coaches. In order to research the motivations of students for undertaking a soccer scholarship, it was therefore necessary to limit the parameters of the research to those students who have the highest likelihood of utilising their sports scholarship towards becoming a professional athlete (Division One). In order to facilitate an equitable comparison of teams, it was necessary to find university teams which had comparable achievements over an extended period of time.

Selection of universities

The two institutions of West University and East University were selected on the basis that they fulfilled the criteria required of the study which would allow meaningful analysis of student experience and the career decision-making process.

1 Both universities have consistently finished in the top five of their respective Division One NCAA soccer conferences (as voted upon by a committee of Division One coaches) (NCAAsports.com).
2 Both universities shared the same reputation of being locations from which players are recruited by the MLS and offered professional contracts to play soccer (based on a review of NCAA data and reputable industry monitors such as the highly regarded 'Peterson's Guides').
3 Both universities offer comparable financial scholarship packages as inducements to students. The financial packages provided by the NCAA are categorised as

   (a) the 'Academic Enhancement Fund': distributes financial aid to colleges to spend on improving the academic experience of athletes;
   (b) the 'Special Assistance Fund', distributes financial aid to colleges based on the number of athletes receiving grants that can be used to meet the players' needs above financial support offered by the scholarship (family circumstances, and so on);
   (c) the 'Student-Athlete Opportunity Fund', which is allocated to conferences based on the success of their members' sports programs.

Questionnaire

The first data collection method employed for this study was obtained from a questionnaire administered to scholarship students during the summers of 2015 at both universities (Resource 1). Subjects selected for inclusion in the study were first contacted via e-mail to obtain notes of interest and then formally invited to participate in the study following their reply and confirmation of consent. In exchange for student participation within the study, they were then eligible to be entered into a lottery for several campus bookstore gift certificates. This incentive was used after research of the methodological issues relating to previous studies of undergraduate participation (Abowitz, 2005). The soccer coaches for both men's and women's university teams acted as liaison assistants within the study and actively encouraged students to complete the questionnaire. There were 160 players who were contacted by e-mail in the first instance in relation to the study (80 players per university; 40 women and 40 men). The questionnaire contained closed questions and was administered to players at both universities. The questions were designed to gain insights on the factors that influenced their decisions to pursue an athletic scholarship in soccer. One hundred fifty-four fully useable questionnaires were returned, producing a response rate of 96%. The advantages of using a self-administered questionnaire for studies of this type are that it ensured confidentiality and encouraged players (particularly the reserve players) who were not comfortable in discussing their career ambitions to participate in the study (Bourke, 2002).

Semi-structured interviews

To supplement the research data from the player questionnaires, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of 12 players and key personnel at the university (coaches and athletic directors who had a professional interest in the development of the players) (Resource 3). The interviews were semi-structured and were conducted as follows:

In person:

- 12 players in total (3 women, 3 men from each of the universities), selected on the basis that they formed a sample of gender, race and social class
- 4 head coaches in total (2 from each university – male and female head coaches)

By telephone:

- 2 athletic directors (1 from each university)

In general, the interviews lasted approximately between one and one and a half hours and were designed to broaden the research perspective. Personal interviews added to the quality of the data, as it was possible to probe further on many

issues. The aim was to obtain the subjective experience of the individual, thereby offering a detailed description of how one perceives, creates and interprets one's world (Munroe-Chandler, 2005). The researcher was mindful of the need to be reflective of his emotional and intellectual reactions to the interviews (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Trauth, 1997) and in light of such maintained a diary as a rigorous documentary tool of the process. The journal amounted to a personal documentation of the research process, specifically the recording of emergent ideas and results, reflections on personal and participant experiences and an ongoing examination of personal attitude that proved invaluable when analysing the interview data.

The 154 undergraduates selected for the questionnaire were composed of 40% males and 60% females. In total, 20% of the subjects were first-year students ('freshman'), 25% equally came from the second year ('sophomore') and third years ('junior'), whilst 30% were in their final fourth year of study ('seniors'). This final sample represents a balanced distribution of 'fraternity' members (51%) and those classed as 'independents' (49%). The sample was predominately white (90%), a figure that reflected the overall student racial composition at both respective institutions.

Data analysis

The data was analysed following procedures suggested by Miller and Kerr (2002). An overview of the recommendations provided by studies of a similar context is briefly outlined here. According to Miller and Kerr (2002), the first stage within the process of inductive analysis requires the creation of 'units of meaning' or 'tags'. Such tags represent elements of text containing a single idea or thought. Following this procedure, meaning units were then identified and separated from the remaining text. An inventory of tags was then created and cross-checked to ensure 'like meaning units' were assigned the same descriptive tag (Miller and Kerr, 2002), facilitating the development of 'raw' to 'higher order' themes.

A central principle advocated by Elias (1956) within the preceding process regards the development of a two-way interplay between what is currently labelled 'theory' and 'research'. In other words, he suggests that the 'empirical' and 'rational' dimensions of sociology should be constantly and consciously interwoven (Hughes, 1958). Figurational sociologist Dunning (1999) argues similarly that sociologists should always relate their observations to a body of theory and their theory to a body of observations. This two-way traffic proposed by Elias (1956) incorporates this philosophy in advocating a departure from abstract discussions of theory per se towards considering theory in relation to research. During the process of research for this study, this idea was at the forefront. Thus, from one interview to the next, reflection upon what had been said and whether modification to the interview format was required in order to develop additional questions was undertaken.

During the transcription of interviews, it was essential to consider the questions and responses in relation to orienting concepts, including 'career', 'self-image', 'networks of interdependency', 'power' and 'control' (Becker, 1960). It was necessary at each point to reflect on whether the turning-points discussed had similar meanings for players and if they interpreted fateful moments in similar terms. During the interviews and then on reviewing the transcripts throughout the course of the research process, it was necessary to constantly attempt to identify emerging patterns of behaviour among the students. This process was cross-referenced with a colleague to help facilitate the accuracy of interpretation.

Careful consideration was given to whether it was possible to identify 'categories of meaning' based on a number of core interview themes (Gratton and Jones, 2003; Mason, 1994; Silverman, 1985). Certain themes emerged and were then cross-examined thoroughly to reach what might be termed a saturation point. In other words, patterns of enduring behaviour were identified. At this point, new ideas and questions were incorporated or new themes were probed to an extent not previously undertaken. Underpinning the totality of this research process, however, was the constant and conscious thought that was given to the changing balance between levels of involvement and detachment (Elias, 1956). The problem encountered, then, concerns how to maintain an effective balance between involvement and detachment such that insight towards the research question was facilitated. Bryman (2001) argues that 'there is a growing recognition that it is not feasible to keep the values that a researcher holds totally in check' (p. 22). Figurational sociologists, however, argue that whilst researchers cannot be completely detached in their work, this does not mean that it is desirable, or possible, for them to be completely involved. Elias (1978) observed that:

> anyone who, under the pretext of saying what science is, is really saying what he (sic) thinks it should be, is deceiving both himself and other people.
>
> (p. 52)

Therefore, this study adopted the approach advocated by Maguire (1998) that encourages the researcher to self-consciously distance himself or herself from the object of study. Being aware of the need to strive to remain as detached as possible is, in Maguire's view, su fficient to sensitise the researcher. In referring to the players from the 'they' rather than 'we' perspective, the aim was to show how 'the intentions and actions of the various groups are interlocked' (Maguire, 1998, p. 191) and retain objectivity during subsequent analysis.

Chapter summary

The adoption of an interpretive paradigm for this study is an attempt to provide an explanation and understanding of student decision making. The approach is primarily concerned with the way in which the social world is not just something to be confronted by individuals but is continually reinvented by its participants. The

major criticisms that have been directed at interpretive sociological approaches have previously identified the time-consuming implications of such research, coupled with a lack of objectivity that occurs when researchers potentially over-identify with their subjects and lose their research objectivity. The establishment of 'trust' and rapport with the subjects is defended in this study as of paramount importance in facilitating the necessary 'rich' data. To facilitate an understanding of the player's point of view, it was necessary to understand the subject's definition of the situation. All social reality is, according to the paradigm, the result of beliefs and interpretations. Thus, it ought to be a truism that no form of sociological research can proceed without a preliminary grasp of the subject's meanings. People, in essence, will act meaningfully in relation to *their* definition of reality.

The major contribution of the interpretive research paradigm adopted for this study is the way in which it hangs flesh on the skeletons of the primary data generated. In the final analysis, interpretive sociology is about what soccer means to the lives of the subjects.

The themes of the study were established via a combination of an extensive literature review of scholarship athletes in the US and a pilot study at a comparable institution to the selected experimental locations. The themes that emerged were categorised according to family, social class, social mobility and career development. Questionnaires were completed by 154 students from the two selected universities in order to obtain supplemental biographical data regarding the acknowledged themes of the study (Resources 1 and 2). To facilitate 'thick' and 'rich' descriptions of their world, an interpretive approach was adopted to the study. This approach examines meanings that have been socially constructed and consequently accepts that individual values and views may differ. The interpretive paradigm adopted aims to elicit interviewees' views of their world and the events they have experienced. Twelve students were interviewed using a semi-structured format (Resource 3). Analysis of the responses was contextualised using the framework provided by Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider's (2000) 'Support/Challenge Questionnaire' (Resource 6). The framework was originally developed for use in the study of talented teenagers by Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993) and later expanded for use in a national longitudinal study of adolescents (Wedemeyer Moon, 2003). The developers of the questionnaire report that although they found a strong correlation between the support and challenge indices, the analyses of their findings indicated that the indices appeared to measure different family characteristics (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000; Wedemeyer Moon, 2003). Responses on the SCQ were divided at the mean to create four family typologies: (a) High Support / High Challenge, (b) High Support / Low Challenge, (c) Low Support / High Challenge, (d) Low Support / Low Challenge.

The SCQ was used in this study to ascertain the soccer players' perceptions of their family dynamics of support and challenges. A total family support score was computed by subtracting the sum of the negative items from the sum of the positive items (Wedemeyer Moon, 2003).

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Chapter 4

Results

The focus of this chapter is to detail and discuss the responses of subjects towards the research question: 'What are the motives of American university students for undertaking a soccer scholarship?' Gender differences within the results are identified where they are distinct and significant. As identified in the previous chapter, the results will be categorised into the themes of family, social class, social mobility and education/career development. A discussion of the results in Chapter 5 will then provide an interpretive analysis of the American Dream and its meritocratic ideology.

The hypothesis tested within this study is that soccer scholarship students are a site for a cultural expression of the American Dream in which success and social advancement are crucial aspects (Maguire et al., 2002). By following an athletic scholarship, they are adopting what has been culturally regarded as an acceptable avenue of social mobility. The value of this study is in revealing the opinions of students undertaking a soccer scholarship, a previously neglected area of investigation. The views that are documented provide a valuable contribution towards reflecting upon notions of soccer and American exceptionalism (Markovits and Hellerman, 2001).

The data gathered for this study were obtained from a combination of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews administered to soccer scholarship students from 2010 to 2015. The subjects represent an illustration of undergraduate views from two institutions on the western and eastern seaboards of the US. The first instrument used for data gathering was a questionnaire.

Player questionnaires

All of the students at the time of the study were enrolled as full-time and registered as being in receipt of a soccer scholarship. Initially, students were contacted by e-mail and then subsequently invited to participate in the research. Questionnaires were then distributed by e-mail with the request that subjects should complete them on their own without contact with their teammates or families. Following the recommendations of Abowitz (2005) and Gratton and Jones (2003), students were rewarded for their participation in the study by being

entered into a lottery for a gift certificate. The soccer coaches for each of the men's and women's teams at both universities were asked to encourage players to complete the questionnaires by an agreed deadline.

The data was collated during a period of three months with a response rate of 96%. The respondents were then organised into groups according to their gender and year of study. The 154 undergraduates who returned useable questionnaires were composed of 40% males and 60% females.

The questionnaire was designed to obtain a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data from the participants. The aim of linking qualitative and quantitative research within the same project was to facilitate a detailed understanding of the issue, which is broader than a single mechanism could potentially provide. According to Kelle and Erzberger (2004), such an approach has the benefit of allowing qualitative and quantitative results to converge and mutually confirm the same conclusions. The questionnaire was divided into two parts.

Part one was designed to provide a player profile of each subject (Resource 1). Information ranging from biographic details to their views on the central themes of the study – family, social class, social mobility and career development were sought. The aim of part one of the questionnaire was to provide a player profile which would facilitate a context within which their views on motives for undertaking a soccer scholarship could be contextualised.

Part two of the questionnaire was designed to discover student views regarding the concept of the American Dream (Resource 2). In order to achieve this goal, it was necessary to obtain their response to eight statements. The aim was to discover whether they believed that social mobility is possible to achieve. Secondly, did students perceive their current and future socio-economic position as the result of their own individual endeavour or initiative, or was family background seen as the main driver to success and upward mobility in American society?

An example of the final questionnaire distributed to the students can be found in Resources 1 and 2. The results of the questionnaires are presented in the following sections.

Player questionnaire (part 1) (Resource 1)

'Social class and family background'

The questionnaire revealed that 53% of the 154 respondents identified themselves as being 'upper-middle' class, 29% as 'middle class', 12% as 'working class' and only 6% as 'upper class'. This categorisation of social class appears to broadly correlate with how the students perceived their family income. The majority of students (51%) stated that their family income was 'above average', 28% 'about average', and 15% 'far above average' and finally, 6% categorised their family as having 'below average' income. The majority of students (71%) declared that both parents were full-time employed. This figure, according to Abowitz (2005), is higher than the national average but is beneficial in explaining the relatively

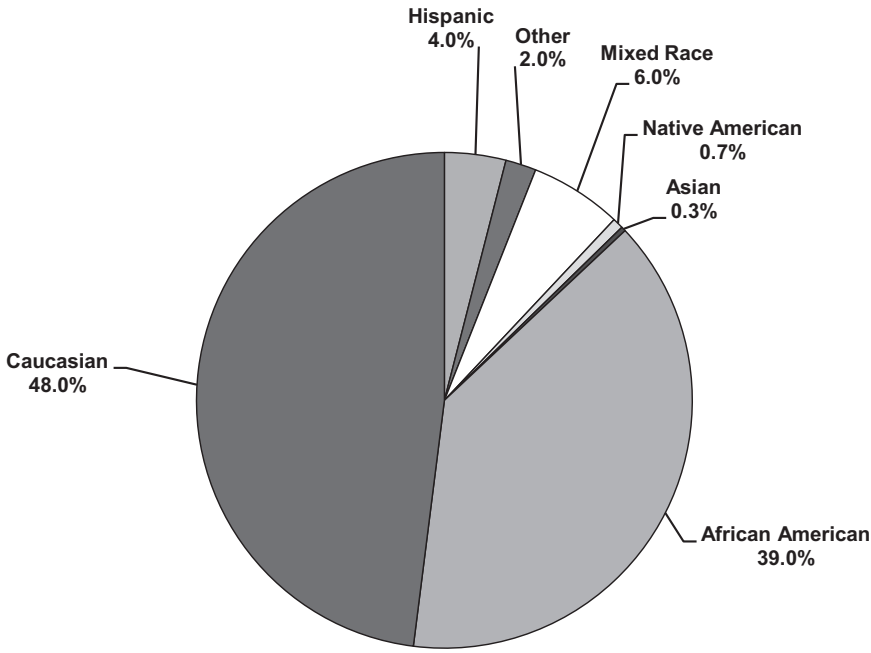

Figure 4.1 Player ethnicity

high family income levels of the families. According to the questionnaire results, parents represent a highly educated cohort of American society, 26% of all mothers within the study having completed a post graduate degree and 63% with a bachelor's degree. In comparison, 70% of fathers had gained a post graduate degree and 26% had a bachelor's degree. According to Sirin's (2005) meta-analysis of current literature regarding socio-economic status (SES) and scholastic attainment, such results should not be surprising. Within his review, he clearly identifies a medium to strong SES-achievement correlation between the educational level of attainment of parents and those of their children.

Ethnicity

According to the results of the questionnaire, 48% of respondents defined their ethnicity as Caucasian (56% women, 44% men); 39% as African-American (21% women, 79% men); 3% mixed race (11% women, 89% men); 3% Asian, Native American or other (2% women, 98% men); and finally, 2% as Hispanic (24% women, 76% men). Interestingly, students largely fell into distinct categories of playing position according to their defined ethnicity. Of Caucasian men and women, 72% identified themselves as 'offensive or attacking midfielders', and 66% of African-Americans for both genders identified their position as 'defensive midfield'.

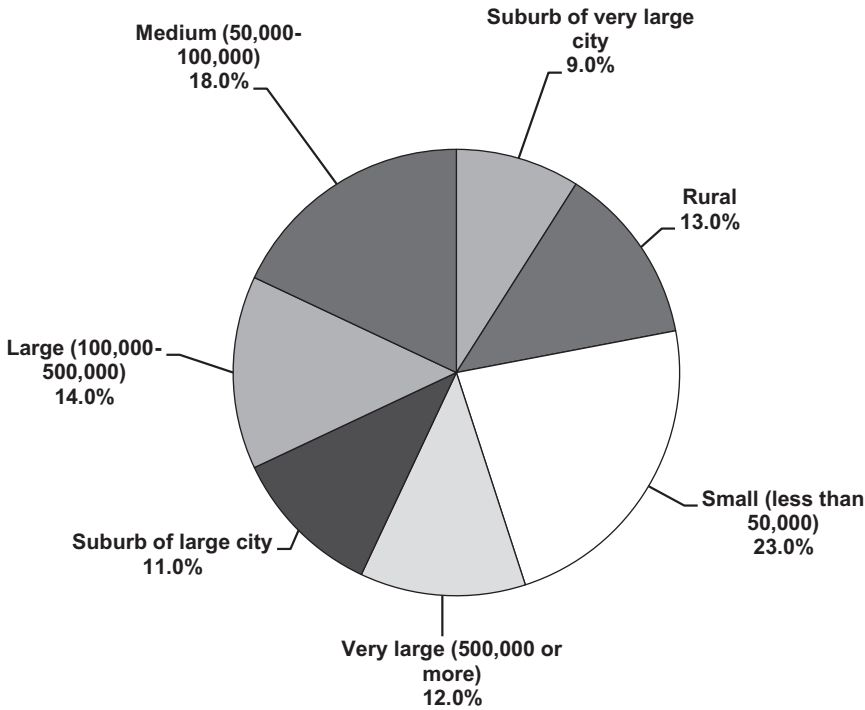

Figure 4.2 Player home town and size

Place of upbringing

A clear conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that participation in high school soccer is not reflective of a stereotypical middle-class urban *habitus* but occurs in a range of communities which vary in size from rural to large metropolises. This survey deliberately incorporated the categories 'rural', 'small city' and 'medium-size city' to question the notion that soccer remains the domain of the suburbs. The objective was to discover the environment in which players received their formative soccer experiences. Only 20% of all subjects identified that they were raised in a suburb. The stereotype that soccer has found a home in the American suburb is argued here to be a dated perception. Historically, it is accurate to present the view that soccer did initially find a sympathetic environment within the American upper-middle class. However, this was possibly due to the belief that upper-middle class parents find soccer to be preferable, especially when compared to the perceived values and behaviour in other sports. The claim that organised youth soccer has the 'right type of corporeal aesthetic for the upper-middle class' (Andrews, 1999, p. 48) clearly has substance. However, soccer's expansion into a wide range of communities is evident within this study.

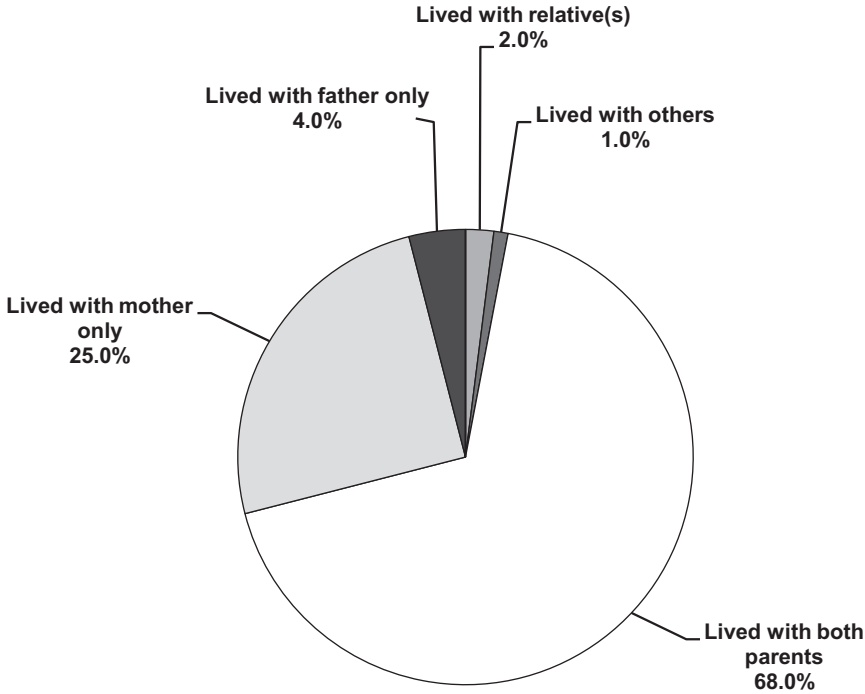

Figure 4.3 Player family background

Family background

The questionnaire posed the question 'What category most accurately defines your family circumstances?' Twenty-five percent lived with their mother only, and 4% lived with their father only; however, the majority (68%) were living with both parents. The study, however, revealed a significant difference in family structure between African-Americans and Caucasian students.

The majority (68%) of Caucasian students resided with both parents; only 29% lived with either their mother or father.

As regards African-Americans, the majority (50%) lived with both parents, 6% resided with relatives or others, and 39% lived with their mother and 5% their father. The relevance of such findings will be addressed in Chapter 5.

Person of greatest influence

The questionnaire posed the question of which individual had the most influence regarding their decision to attend university. The results of this question present similar findings to those carried out previously amongst 'grid iron' players

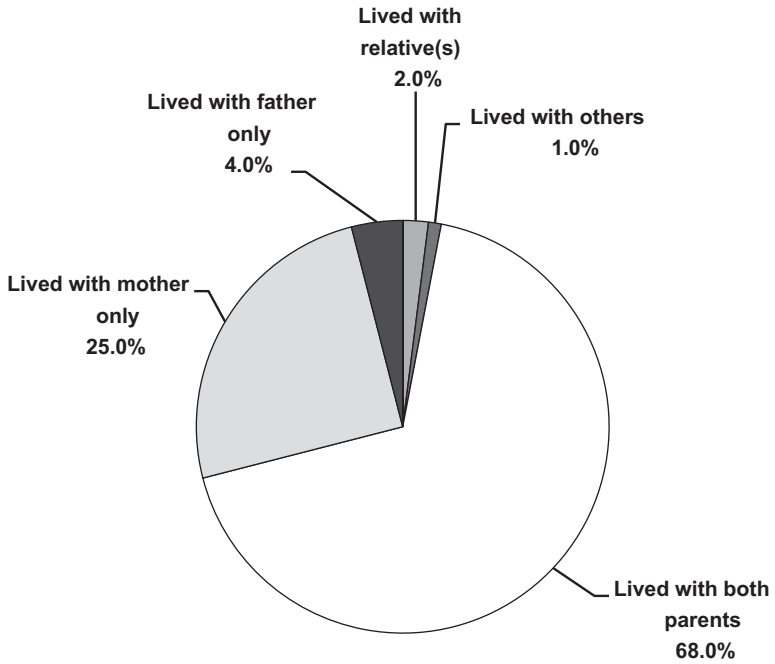

Figure 4.4 Family background (Caucasian)

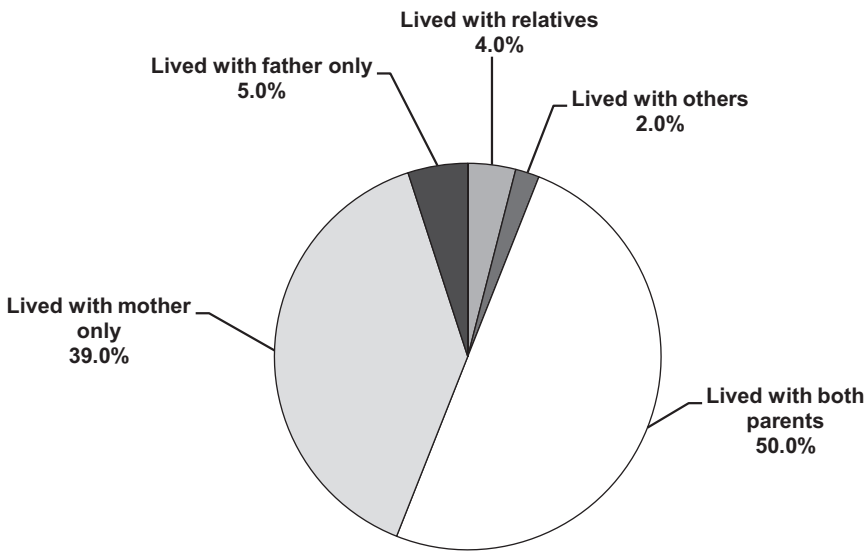

Figure 4.5 Family background (African-American)

(American Football Coaches Association, 2003; Destache, 2009). Amongst Caucasian soccer players, 43% claimed that it was their father who had the greatest influence; this compares to 48% in the AFCA study. A similar correlation between soccer and grid iron is observed with regards to African-American player views; 63% of all African-American soccer players stated that it was their mother who had the greatest influence, compared to 69% of grid iron players.

Parents' occupation

Employment within 'management' represents the most popular occupation amongst the players' mothers (42%). The category incorporates professions such as marketing, banking and advertising. The 'service' category is the next most common occupational category (15%). Within this section are retail sales advisors, beauticians and factory workers. The most dominant among respondents' father's occupations were those roles that fall within 'management' (28%). In addition, 25% categorised their father's occupation as 'technical'. These typically comprise local government and law enforcement roles (Resource 4).

(The impact of the profession of the parents upon student decision making is discussed in Chapter 5.)

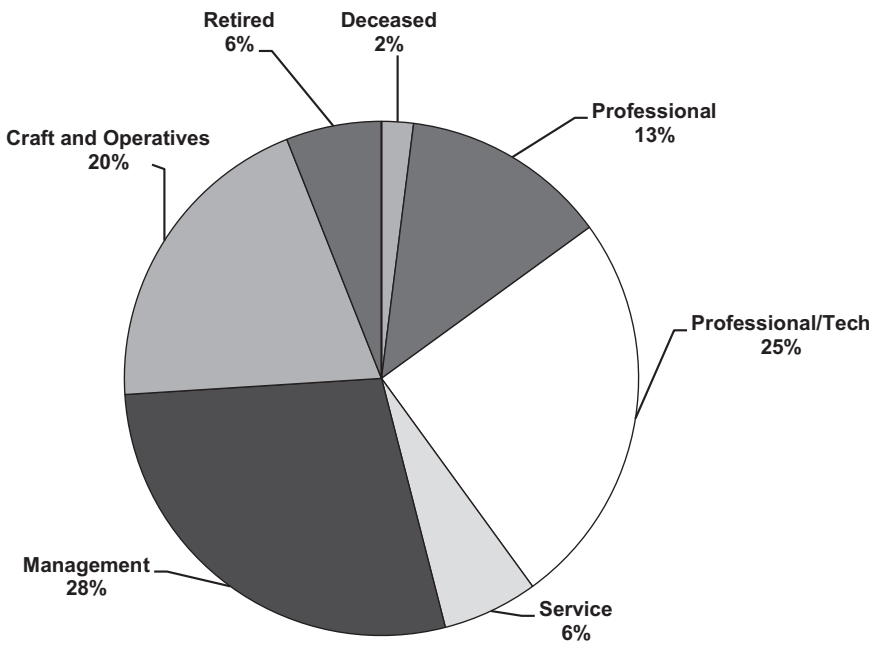

Figure 4.6 Father's profession

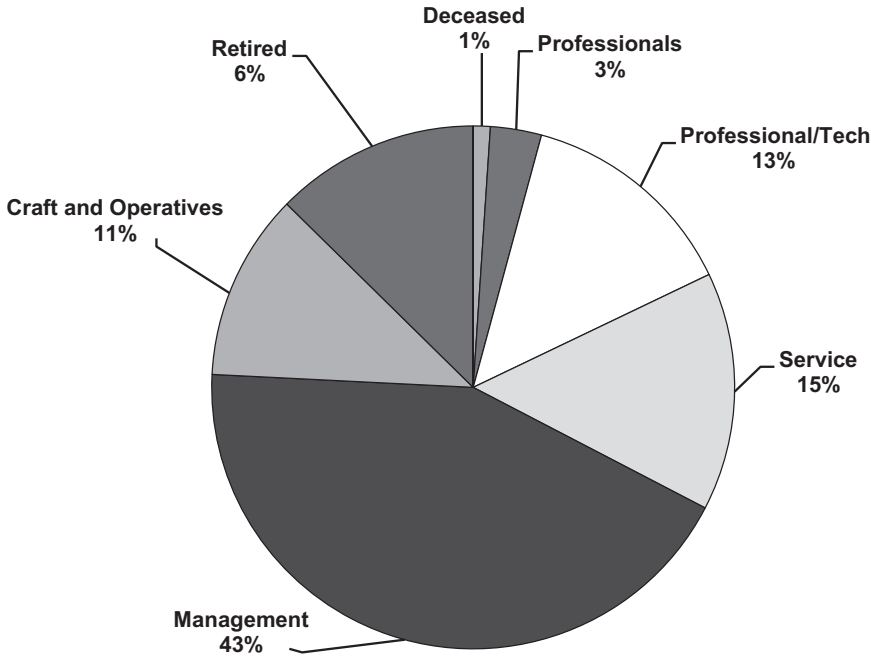

Figure 4.7 Mother's profession

Family and social class: summary

Almost 80% of respondents reported that their fathers held positions in 'prestigious' 'white collar' occupations, such as corporate executives, lawyers and doctors. In contrast, 'blue collar' occupations comprised only 17%, the majority of which were involved in agriculture. Clearly, the students in this sample were not dissimilar to those scholarship students identified in comparable studies (Abowitz, 2005; Delpy, 1998; Dubois, 1980; Heck and Takahashi, 2006; Sack, 1987). This cohort firmly identified themselves as being from an 'upper-middle' class family background (54%) as opposed to those who categorised their family unit as 'working class' (13%), 'middle class' (31%) and finally 'upper class' (7%).

As regards family earnings, 52% defined their family income as 'above average', 33% reported 'average' family income and 16% categorised their family earnings as 'far above average'. Only 5% declared that their family income was in their view 'below average'.

The parents of student-athletes in this research also resemble those in comparable studies and appear to be well educated (Abowitz, 2005). Seventy-three percent of fathers, according to the students, had obtained an undergraduate degree with 38% of all fathers having then completed a post-graduate qualification. In

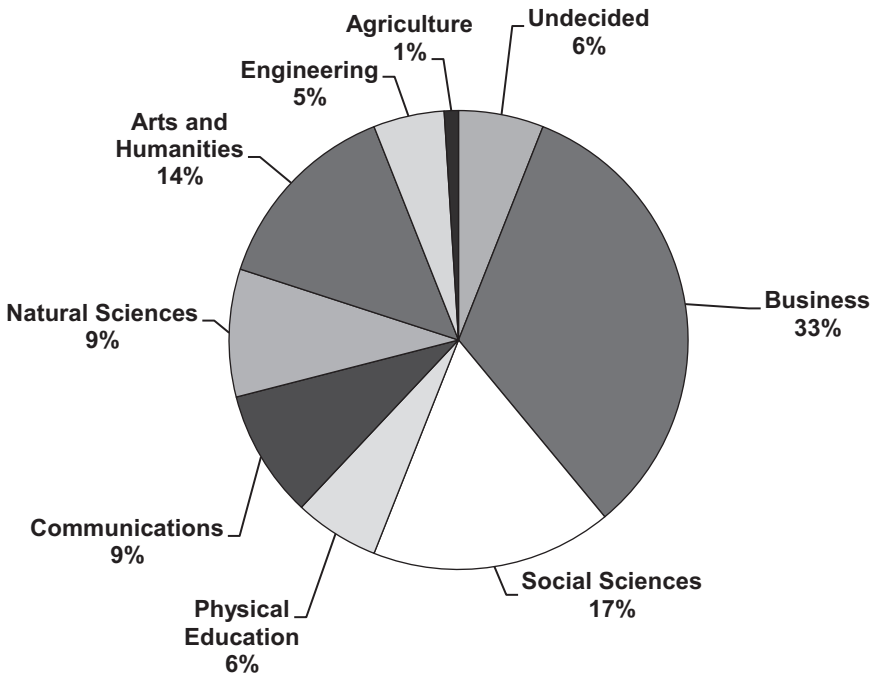

Figure 4.8 Major fields of study

addition, mothers were also considered by their children to be 'well educated', with 64% having completed an undergraduate degree and 30% having a post-graduate qualification (see resource for the 'professional categories' used within the player survey).

The most popular declared 'major' course of study for subjects was 'Business' (33%) amongst both genders surveyed, followed by 'Social Sciences' (17%) and 'Arts and Humanities' (14%).

In Resource 5, there is a 'Categorization of majors for the players survey'.

Social mobility and education / career development

According to previous studies, there is a widespread perception that a large number of student-athletes consider higher education as a platform for professional sport (Abowitz, 2005, AFCA, 2003; Coakley, 2007; Sack, 1987). The evidence, however, is arguably conflictual because of the lack of longitudinal studies comparing university athletes with non-athletes in the same cohort. According to research, any upward social mobility that takes place can be the result of either

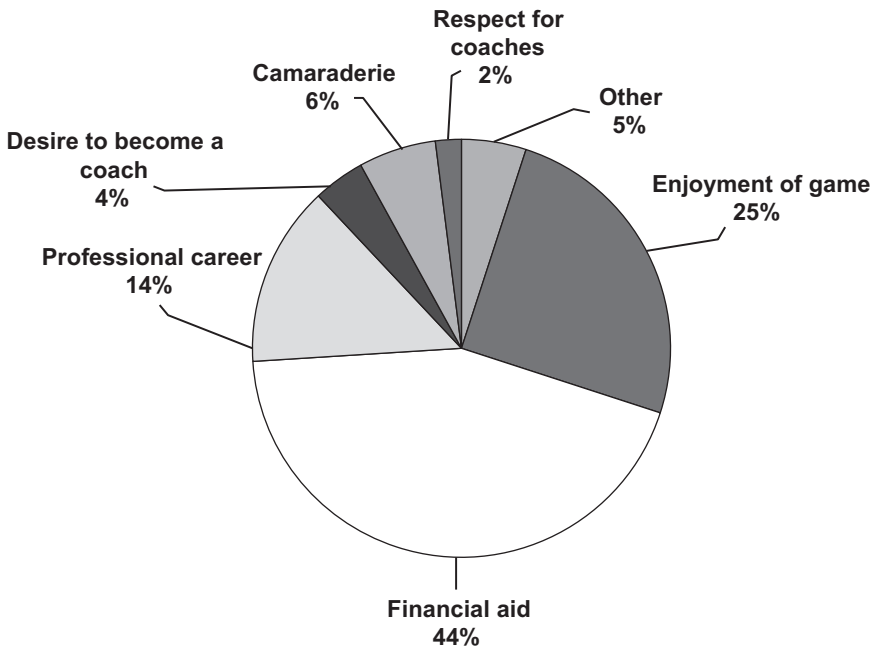

Figure 4.9 Reason for selection of soccer scholarship

'contest' or 'sponsored' mobility (Turner, 1975). Contest mobility is argued by many to be egalitarian and indicative of the American Dream ethos (Coakley, 2007; Gorn, 2004; Turner, 1975). The concept declares that individuals can earn higher status and income through personal motivation and ability. Under sponsored mobility, the alternatives are minimal and typically controlled by the elite. Turner, who proposed the distinction in the early 1960s, made the contentious claim that, in the US, contest mobility predominates, in comparison to western European societies, where there is a greater emphasis on sponsorship pathways of mobility. This thesis sought to establish if such distinct and visible upward mobility pathways were being reflected within a soccer scholarship.

Reasons for selecting a soccer scholarship

Players within the questionnaire were asked why they take part in college soccer. Enjoyment and/or camaraderie was referenced by 31% (55% of women, 45% of men), 44% (52% of women, 48% of men) reported that a soccer scholarship allowed them to fund their education and finally only 14% (53% of women, 47% of men) played college soccer as a platform to pursue a professional career within the game. No significant differences were observed for the genders in terms of

these views. These responses were potentially highly significant for the conclusions of the study and were later raised within the context of the player interviews. The purpose of the subsequent interviews was to provide the interviewees with as much scope as possible to unfold their views as to their motives for undertaking a soccer scholarship. At the same time, they were provided a structure for what to focus upon in their answers, the purpose being to cross-reference the preceding responses as accurately as possible.

Attending college regardless of soccer scholarship

Eighty-three percent of the players declared that they would attend college regardless of whether they had received a scholarship or not. Caucasians were significantly higher (92%) in this declaration than their African-American counterparts (77%).

Student-athlete decision making (college selection)

The preceding results have clearly identified that there are a variety of factors that may inform and interact to facilitate the student decision-making process. The Player Questionnaire provided a range of results regarding what were the most significant variables in determining their selection of a college. Ninety-five percent of all students stated that the 'soccer programme' was either very important or important (58% women, 42% men). Typically, the 'soccer programme' would refer to the 'win-loss' record that a team has recorded in recent seasons. This figure is commonly referred to as the number of games won compared to those lost and is frequently used as a point of reference within American sports for evaluating the level of achievement for any team. Clearly, a major theme of the American Dream and sport is the idea of winning (Maguire et al., 2002). The players, however, as is revealed within the interviews, did not appear to be obsessed with winning but the balance of team performance alongside other non-soccer related variables. Of similar importance to the impression players had of the soccer program was the academic reputation of the prospective institution. Ninety-two percent of players regarded this factor as very important or important (96% women, 88% men). A further significant factor was the coach. According to 90% of players, they regarded him or her as very important or important. Characteristics that players found influential in their decision making included the personality of the coach and whether the coach displayed enthusiasm and persistence towards their recruitment. The final core component of student decision making related to the level of financial aid that they were likely to receive as a scholarship athlete. Ninety-three percent of all students considered the level of financial aid and any specific academic offerings as either important or very important within the overall process of decision making.

Academic experience

The efforts of universities and the NCAA to ensure the academic integrity of intercollegiate athletics are well documented (Cornbleth, 2002; Heck and Takahashi, 2006; IHEP, 2017; Miller and Kerr, 2002). The players were asked a sequence of questions which were intended to facilitate personal reflection upon their formative experiences during high school and currently within college. The following details provide a summary of the players' responses.

The importance of graduation

The significance of obtaining a degree is the foremost consideration according to the players. When questioned regarding the importance of graduating from college, 98% held the view that it was either very important or important. The 2% who did not value graduation could be categorised as those who anticipated failing their degree, were preparing to withdraw or defer for financial reasons or anticipated being offered a position in professional sport regardless of their academic record. No difference was observed regardless of the subjects' ethnicity or gender. This conclusion supports earlier research that has followed college athletes upon graduation (Sack and Thiel, 1979). Such studies show that involvement in college athletics may not have an immediate impact upon earnings or social mobility but may ultimately lead to higher occupational prestige and earnings in mid-life.

Academic interest

According to the results of the questionnaire, scholarship students recorded a positive correlation between their participation as an athlete and this stimulating their academic interest. Seventy-five percent of the players believed their interest in academia had been stimulated since starting at college. Twenty-five percent, however, had maintained the same level of interest in their academic studies. Such views appear to present a positive correlation between participation as a student-athlete and increased enthusiasm towards academic requirements. Lapchick (2006), however, has recently observed that graduation rates for both male and female athletes lag behind those of their non-athlete peers at Division One institutions. The principal concern being that the physical demands of practice placed upon student-athletes by their coaching staff negatively impact upon their academic commitments.

Socio-economic background

Each player within the questionnaire was assigned a socio-economic description based on their parents' occupation and level of education. The resultant categories revealed that students felt their families could be defined as middle (26%), lower-middle (22%), lower (20%), upper-middle (18%) and upper (14%) class.

Table 4.1 College GPA by socio-economic background

College GPA by Socio-economic Background				
Socio-economic Background	*3.0 >*	*2.5–3.0*	*2.0–2.5*	*>2.0*
Upper	37%	34%	25%	4%
Upper-Middle	33%	31%	32%	4%
Middle	30%	37%	30%	3%
Lower-Middle	28%	32%	35%	5%
Lower	22%	37%	36%	5%

Interestingly, the questionnaire reveals that there is a correlation between the individual's defined socio-economic circumstances and their grade point average (GPA) scores.[1] According to these results, students from an upper class background had the highest consistent grades at college. Over a third of this socio-economic group typically recorded 70% or above for their academic modules. Conversely, less than a quarter of all 'lower class' students were able to achieve this level of performance.

Previous research has demonstrated that social class is strongly associated with an individual's level of formal schooling (Lapchick, 2006). The studies of Lapchick and others have indicated that upper-class students generally have higher career aspirations that make attendance at college imperative to the goal of realising their career ambitions. The explanation hypothesised for this finding is that there is a correlation between occupational mobility and academic performance. Grades subsequently become very important for students with high career ambitions since they indicate the ability to perform at a high level. The implication of such views is that social class provides both the motivation and the resources to pursue high grades within college. As a consequence, students with high occupational aspirations would associate low grades with 'failure'. The impact should be that students from high social class backgrounds should perceive low grades as failure and 'drop out' of college. Conversely, students from lower-class families should have a low drop-out rate. However, what has been identified by this study is that there appears to be no direct correlation between students' social class origins and their chances of graduation.

In this study, all categories of social class appear to value their academic grades and put in place strategies to maintain and improve them. This finding supports the 'contest mobility' pathway of the American Dream as contended by Coakley (2007). The notion that the Dream is an egalitarian concept which is attained through hard work and dedication is evidenced within this study.

Academic standards

Many social commentators have noted the increasing commercialisation of college sports has made it even more difficult for universities to reconcile the

widening gap between sport and the fundamental mission of higher education. According to Sack (2001, p. B7),

> [L]onger seasons, significantly lower admission standards for athletes, and the growing power of coaches over all aspects of an athlete's life are just a few of the changes spawned by the unprecedented commercialism that has invaded athletics departments.

Research has frequently documented the basic incompatibility of elite college athletics and what is termed their philosophical goal of 'educational primacy' (Duderstadt, 2000; Lapchick, 2006; Zimbalist, 1999). Eitzen (2000) has previously stated that coaches within this structure are under the intense pressure to win and as a result tend to ameliorate the academic responsibilities of their players by advising them to take less problematic modules. In October 1989, the Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics was formed by John S. and James L. Knight in response to more than a decade of highly visible scandals in college sports (Coakley, 2007). The goal of the commission was to study and report on reform efforts that recognise and emphasise academic values in a climate in which commercialisation of college sports often overshadowed the underlying goals of higher education. The common perception of Division One athletics, according to its critics, is that they appear to exist in different worlds from their athletics programmes, particularly at institutions where some sports attract broad outside interest. As a result of these issues, there appeared to be a degree of cynicism attached to student views regarding their prospective coaches and the objectivity of their guidance. The conclusion that student-athletes present is that their high school coaches are regarded as the most reliable source of objective feedback concerning NCAA academic and scholarship requirements. Forty-eight percent of the players surveyed stated that their high school coach was the most objective and trustworthy source of information. This finding correlates with similar previous studies conducted with American football scholars (AFCA, 2003; Destache, 2009). Secondly, 29% of students used their high school career counsellors whilst 15% were informed about the NCAA regulations via their parents. The conclusion to be drawn from these statistics is that students appear to be aware yet cautious of the professional sports model that operates within higher education institutions. The implication being that students are wary of coaches delivering visions of grandeur combined with promises of a professional contract upon graduation. The issue that emerges is one of concern from students as to whether universities are providing a safe haven for participation and academic support. This anxiety is arguably compounded by the increasing role of agents within Division One sports. Although the NCAA is explicit in the stipulation that student-athletes may lose their eligibility by dealing directly with an agent, it does not preclude them from receiving advice or guidance in proposals. Sport can be a vehicle which significantly raises the educational attainment of many student-athletes from lower socio-economic conditions. The commercialisation

of sport within higher education at the Division One level has clearly influenced the minds of the athletes within this study. Educators, parents, coaches and administrators need to confront many of the broader societal issues concerning exploitation and manipulation of young athletes. The conclusions presented in this section raise concern over the moral conscience and ethical principles that exist within university sport at the highest level.

Financial issues of the student-athlete

Amateurism, as it is promoted and marketed by the NCAA, may, according to its critics, be 'one of the most illusory corporate veils ever conceived' (Slack, 2003, p. 147). As represented by the NCAA, amateurism contradicts the very essence of what a corporation is and does. Consider the principle of amateurism (Article 2.9) as enshrined in the 1998–1999 NCAA Manual:

> Student-athletes shall be amateur in an intercollegiate sport, and their participation should be motivated primarily by education . . . student participation in intercollegiate athletics is an avocation, and student-athletes should be protected from exploitation by professional and commercial enterprises. (p. 9)

Despite these sentiments, the reality is that scholarships offer financial compensation for playing sport at college. Financial transparency and integrity is self-evidently a significant issue facing collegiate athletics in contemporary US society. Given the commercial environment in which the student-athlete must operate, the question was posed as to the influence of financial implications of participating within college soccer. The following information provides a summary of the 154 questionnaire returns.

Type of financial aid

In order to contextualise the student results, it is necessary to provide an overview of the types of financial aid available potentially to student-athletes. The precise dollar amount that any scholarship athlete receives is dependent upon a number of factors with some athletes likely to receive 'full' awards from their institutions, some partial awards and many no financial support whatsoever via their faculty athletic scholarship budget. The financial picture for athletes is further complicated by the fact that players within the same team may receive dramatically different levels of financial support. In 2015, Division One schools on average awarded $14,270 for men (range from $5,809 to $31,062) and $15,162 for women (range from $6,220 to $31,363) in 2015 per academic year (scholarshipstats.com). Within men's soccer, students on average in 2016 received $15,008 and their female counterparts $17,776 (NCAA, 2018). Athletic scholarships, however, do not necessarily compensate the student for the full cost of

maintenance and tuition fees incurred. Scholarships are typically offered on a percentage basis (for example, a 50% scholarship will cover 50% of the total cost for one year) (NCAA, 2018). Therefore, a university will frequently divide their scholarship budget into a number of lesser-value awards. For example, a university that has four 100% scholarships to offer per year may split them up to award eight 50% individual scholarships. Scholarships are provided on a yearly basis, generally renewable for four years – the normal time required to complete a US undergraduate degree. Within this study, 55% of the players were in receipt of a full athletic scholarship (tuition, books and accommodation) (88% women, 60% men), and 45% were in receipt of partial scholarships. An analysis of ethnic origin reveals that 85% of African-Americans and 64% of Caucasian players received a full athletic grant.

Player perspectives: what players enjoyed most about being a soccer scholar

Players were asked to state on the questionnaire what they enjoyed the most regarding college soccer and any perceived benefits they may have obtained. Seventy-three percent indicated that playing soccer was the most enjoyable aspect of their university life. Typically players cited the excitement associated with being part of a Division One team. The importance of how university sport was perceived by the wider community was not lost on the players. A frequently identified feature of home games was the 'carnivalesque' atmosphere. Sixty-three percent of students acknowledged that financial aid was imperative for education and represented the greatest advantage from playing college soccer. A further 35% observed that soccer at university had led to increased maturity on and off the field, reinforcing self-discipline and a work ethic.

In drawing together how the results presented have contributed to the student decision-making process, it is necessary to return to the narrative of the American Dream. Gothard et al. (2001) referred to the role that myth and dream play in American children's lives, often manifesting themselves in the child's attitude towards the world of sport. The popular narrative is that children and adults often dream of scoring the winning goal in an important game. However, despite such fantasies, the questionnaire data in this study reinforces the view that students have adopted a rather pragmatic approach to their scholarship and the realities of funding what is an increasingly expensive higher education. The dream of playing for the US national team is clearly not a key influence in their decision to undertake a soccer scholarship. The student responses reveal that pursuing a career in soccer post-graduation is recognised as being statistically unlikely. The factors which were cited as mitigating against pursuing a career in soccer upon graduation were as follows: desire to obtain a higher salary than was perceived available as either a player, coach, administrator or official (66%); preference for a non-athletic occupation (55%); lack of enthusiasm or fatigue from participating in soccer scholarship (31%); and poor relationship with a college coach (19%).

There was strong agreement among respondents, however, in relation to emotive reasons (love of the game and the possibilities of winning trophies) for influencing their initial scholarship decision. Conversely, interviewees also stressed the practical reasons (i.e., the opportunities to make money, develop one's talent and gain experience and knowledge).

Schulenberg et al. (1991) has previously referred to parental influence in prompting and facilitating career planning. The fact that a significant proportion (65%) of the subjects in this study joined a community-based soccer club in childhood is evidence of parental guidance with respect to the respondent's choice of sport. The players' views on this issue (drawing on questionnaire data) are less clear. For example, 53% of questionnaire responses acknowledged that there was a correlation between their choice of career and their fathers' enduring level of enthusiasm and support. In comparison, the majority of respondents noted that their mothers were less of an influence (17%) in guiding their career strategy. These figures appear to be reflective of previous studies that have clearly identified the importance of the primary care provider within families (Bourke, 2002).

Caplow (1954), cited in Osipow (1968), has suggested that the crystallisation of a career choice may occur at any stage. The particular timing that is observed usually reflects one's culture. This crystallisation of a career strategy occurred for the participants within this study at an early age as questionnaire data (and confirmed during interviews with students) reveal that 50% of respondents decided on soccer as a mechanism of career development when aged 15 years or younger (mean age = 13.6 years), some when they were just 7 years old. According to Auster (1996), precise and specific occupational images are held by the majority of youth in the process of decision making regarding their future careers. For example, adolescents may aim for a career in sport upon graduation to attain status and ultimately pursue the American Dream. Alternatively, they may use sport as a means of funding their higher education, which in turn promotes contest mobility. Holland's (1959) theory of career selection and decision making is based on the premise that occupation is an expression of one's personality and thus members of the same occupation have similar personalities and similar histories. In this instance, it might be argued that the majority of students surveyed have similar socio-economic backgrounds, but any similarities in their family circumstances do not necessarily explain their motives for undertaking a soccer scholarship. The decision-making process which informed such actions is considered within both the second part of the questionnaire and the subsequent player interviews.

Player questionnaire (part 2) (Resource 2)

In order to discover student views regarding the concept of the American Dream, it was necessary to obtain their response to eight statements organised within a supplementary questionnaire (distributed one month after completion of the

first questionnaire and to the same students as in part one). The aim was to discover whether they believed that the American Dream is attainable. Secondly, did they perceive social class as a consequence of hard work and talent, or did they perceive their family as the principal factor in achieving upward mobility in contemporary America?

The questionnaire was distributed via e-mail and required students to record their views upon each of the eight statements by referring to the Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) attached. The data reveals the following views. Firstly, college students do have confidence in the veracity of the American Dream. Player support for this statement is demonstrated by agreement with the statement that 'one can live well in America' (85%). Secondly, there appears to be an enduring confidence in the statement that success is no longer founded on family and social class origins but on individual endeavour. An individual's eventual social position is therefore a product of educational achievements and individual skill, not family background.

Finally, students reported a level of uncertainty regarding how social class was defined and within that a perception of 'success' and 'failure'. Students clearly identified that social differences in America are justified if individuals have not taken advantage of the opportunities available to them. This could be as a result of a lack of initiative or hard work. In addition, they appear uncertain whether there was a correlation between 'high' social class and someone having outstanding talent. What is apparent, however, is that family background is not viewed by college students to be the critical factor in determining upward mobility.

In summary, the questionnaire reveals that student-athletes do fundamentally believe in the American Dream. Secondly, there is considerable support for the idea that individual hard work and initiative, not family circumstances and socio-economic position, matter most in the process. Analysis of beliefs according to gender reveals that men were more likely than women to support the idea of the American Dream. This finding supports previous research which identifies that gender dynamics in the US have historically supported superior occupational and economic rewards for men (Abowitz, 2005).

The research presented reveals a picture of student confidence in upward mobility founded on an open system of contest (Abowitz, 2005). This may be partly explained by examination of the concept of class as presented by Marx. According to Marx, class was the most important principle of social organisation and the chief motor of social development (Sugden and Tomlinson, 2000). As regards the context of modern sport, Guttmann (1994) argues that sport was used in American society to sustain the status quo and the ethos that drove it. This rationale can be observed conceptually as the idea of 'living well in America' being directly related to the means of production. The data gathered clearly identify that student-athletes do believe in the American Dream and the credo of achievement ideology that pervades it. As discussed earlier in the chapter, the achievement philosophy of the credo is fuelled by ambition. This view is succinctly summarised by Abowitz (2005) in stating that 'those who work hard earn

their advantages. They deserve to live well' (p. 729). The corollary suggested by Gorn (2004) and others is that those who have failed are evidently those who did not work hard enough and are therefore not entitled to the equivalent results. Student-athletes in this study embody the values of Dream narrators such as Alger and Adams; they believe in striving to succeed (Gorn, 2004). However, students also represent the conceptual tension that surrounds Generation Y notions of equity and 'fair shares'. As a consequence, students do not present themselves as being fully at ease with the ramifications of the American Dream.

> All in all, they evince a modern version of the 19th century Protestant work ethic combined with a 'postmodern' discomfort at its logical consequences.
> (Abowitz, 2005, p. 729)

Player semi-structured interview: results

Player interviews were used to obtain detailed qualitative insight towards the participants' opinions and motivations for undertaking a soccer scholarship. Each of the 12 players interviewed was selected from the 154 subjects who participated in the questionnaire. The players interviewed were students currently in receipt of a scholarship (full or partial), and as such, all their experiences were considered valid for the purposes of analysis. Contact with some of the players had been made using information obtained from the head coaches at both of the selected universities, who acted as 'gatekeepers'. The involvement of the four head coaches was very important in a small number of cases, as without their reassurance, it is unlikely that the players would have given up their time. A number of players were sent letters speculatively; in many of these cases, as was anticipated, the players did not reply. However, a number of players did respond. All players who were sent letters were asked whether they would be willing to be interviewed on a range of issues related to their scholarship. The players were told minimally about the likely areas of discussion. At the outset of the data collection period, it was considered that had players known in detail of the likely questions to be posed, they may have attempted mentally to construct 'appropriate' answers, or they may have discussed them with other players. This may have presented a risk of contamination. However, one consequence of this style of interview is that a number of players from time to time had difficulty when probed recalling specific details of their experiences. The sample therefore was constructed on a 'snowball' basis. The players who were interviewed first were asked to recommend others who they thought may be prepared also to discuss their playing and career experiences. Attempting to be selective with a group who do not give extended interviews readily would have been a mistake. At the outset of each interview, the players were given an assurance of confidentiality. Part of the 'access' problem involves a residual fear for players that they may be viewed either as openly criticising their teammates or team coaches or more simply as complainers. It was important to reassure them that their comments, whether positive or negative,

would not be traceable to them. If they had not received this type of assurance, they may not have responded to questions openly or freely. The use of player interviews as a data collection method was designed to allow them to interpret meaning from their experiences as they form identities and interact with others.

The player interviews were divided into two parts. Part one asked respondents to provide biographical details of their personal values as they related to family, social class, perceptions of social mobility and educational goals. These responses were then used to cross-reference the opinions stated within the questionnaire. Part two of the interview required subjects to reflect upon their wider notions of the American Dream and the specific reasons for undertaking a scholarship. To supplement the players' opinions, interviews were also held with the coaches and athletic directors of both universities, details of which follow the results of the player interviews. The objective of surveying support staff was to check for congruency between players and staff. The interviews were semi-structured and were conducted as follows:

In person:

- 12 players in total (3 women, 3 men from each of the two universities)
- 4 head coaches in total (2 from each university – male and female head coaches)

By telephone:

- 2 athletic directors (1 from each university)

In general, the interviews lasted approximately one to two hours and were designed to address the core questions of the study and broaden the research perspective. In order to facilitate thick, rich and nuanced descriptions, no time limit was necessarily imposed upon each interview but was negotiated with each subject according to his or her personal circumstances and external constraints outside of the research process. Personal interviews added to the quality of the data, as it was possible to probe further on many issues. The aim was to obtain the subjective experience of the individual, thereby offering a detailed description of how he or she perceives, creates and interprets his or her world. The key element to this interpretive approach was allowing the subjects to express how they viewed their experiences both before and since joining their college. A profile of each subject is provided in order to allow the reader to obtain a sense of the background and thereby potentially contextualise the responses of each participant. The names of both the participants and the universities within the study have been changed in order to ensure their anonymity. This ethical obligation was deemed necessary in order to encourage participants to talk openly and frankly.

The following section intends to provide an overview of each player interviewed within the study according to the research themes (family, social class, social mobility, education/career development). A brief biography of each participant is given in the following section. It should be noted that each participant has been given a pseudonym in order to maintain his or her anonymity.

Overview of players

'Melanie' (19-year-old Caucasian female)

At the time of the interview, Melanie was in her first year of a Social Sciences degree at West University. She was in receipt of an athletic scholarship worth $5,600. Her preferred playing position on the women's team was that of centre half; however, she was frequently required to play in her less favoured role of midfield. Melanie described herself as being from a middle-class background, due to her parents both being involved as mid-level executives in sales. Her father was regarded by Melanie as a key figure in her life, taking an active interest in her playing career. This typically meant an extended telephone conversation after each game in which he would analyse Melanie's performance from her perspective. This she found to be rather tiresome on occasions because of the embarrassment that she felt in front of her fellow teammates who were aware of her father's involvement. She said, 'Dad's heart is in the right place, but he just doesn't know how stupid he makes me look when he starts to holler his half-baked ideas from the side line'.

'Erica' (20-year-old African-American female)

Erica was in her second year as a student at West University, studying Social Sciences, whilst receiving an annual $2,500 scholarship as a goalkeeper. She believed that there was less competition for this position at the university and therefore felt confident of being able to comfortably sustain her status as the best goalkeeper and thereby maintain her scholarship. Erica described herself as being from a middle-class background, both parents having been to university and now working in law enforcement. This she felt placed a great deal of pressure upon her to perform both on and off the field at university. She felt partly intimidated by the athletic achievements of her father, who had previously played football at a high-profile university. 'Dad achieved so much as an athlete that I find it difficult to please him; he was a star player at university, and I'm not in comparison'. As a result, the parent of greatest influence in her family was her father with whom she often had a 'stormy relationship'. Erica felt that it was difficult to replicate the achievements of her father either as a student or athlete. Erica elaborated that possibly because of the demands placed upon her by both parents, she was in a state of confusion regarding future career goals upon graduation.

'Karin' (20-year-old Latin-American female)

Karin was in her third year of studying Business at West University. Her preferred playing position was as a left wing. Karin judged that her main physical attribute was her speed. She said, 'It's probably the only reason why I was recruited by the university (soccer coach). . . . I think coach hoped that I would blossom into a more technically proficient player'. As a child from what she described as a

traditional Mexican family, she emphasised the role that her extended family provided in her upbringing. She expressed pride when reflecting upon the fact that she was the first person in her family ever to have attended university. This in her opinion was due to her parents' impoverished background. In particular, Karin referred to the discrimination that typically existed within Hispanic traditional families. As a woman, she was particularly proud of her parents' liberal attitude towards allowing her to attend university. However, without the $3,500 per year scholarship, she firmly believed that she would be unable to afford the eventual repayment of her tuition fees. In addition to the role that her parents played in being supportive, Karin also mentioned the importance of her former high school coach, who acted as a mentor during the process of applying to university. 'My parents are not like the other parents from my neighbourhood; they are cool. It was Coach Perelli though at high school who gave me the idea that I could make it at university. . . . Without him, I don't think I would have even made it past high school never mind university'.

'Byrony' (20-year-old Caucasian female)

As a first-year student at East University studying Business, Byrony was the most enthusiastic female subject interviewed with regard to her desire to pursue a career in professional soccer. Byrony's preferred position was as a right full-back. However, she was often required by the coach to play in the 'sweeper' position. She explained that she understood the strategy which underpinned her coach's decision but resented the fact that it prevented her from demonstrating any potential to a prospective professional talent scout. 'I have some ability, that's not boasting, but I find it hard to keep my temper under check when coach consistently plays me out of position'. Despite this, Byrony was confident that she could potentially increase her scholarship from its current $5,000 per year to the maximum of $8,000 with some 'careful negotiation skills'. Byrony categorised her family as being 'upper-middle class'. Her entrepreneur father was self-employed, and she cited him as the main influence in her life. Despite Byrony's ambitions to progress her career in soccer, she had a pragmatic attitude towards her studies, emphasising the importance of achieving high grades in all of her business modules. The most probable outcome in her words was to 'follow in her father's footsteps'.

'Bridgit' (21-year-old Caucasian female)

Bridgit was in her third year of studying Physical Education at East University. She echoed the views of some of the other players interviewed when she expressed concerns regarding the defensive role that she was forced to play on the team. Her preferred position was in fact as an attacking midfield player. Despite this, she was confident that her scholarship of $4,000 was amongst the highest on the women's squad. This she felt was a 'fair return for her contribution to the squad, on and off the field. . . . I know that the coach expects me to act as

a leader'. Bridgit described her family as being in the 'upper-middle class' category. This she seemed rather self-conscious about, due to the fact that her housemate was present in the room during the interview. Bridgit appeared reluctant to divulge specific details regarding her parents' occupation, describing them both as involved in education. However, this in her view created its own set of problems, due to their 'inside' knowledge of how higher education is assessed; she felt that they placed a great deal of pressure and responsibility on her to achieve the highest grades possible. 'My parents are focused on me achieving my potential, which I respect, but at the same time, they know the system and set the bar very high for me in terms of grades'. Despite Bridgit's efforts, she felt that she would inevitably disappoint her parents because of comparisons with her elder sister (an Ivy League graduate).

'Tracey' (18-year-old Caucasian female)

As a second-year Engineering student at East University, Tracey described herself as 'hardworking', particularly off the field. She firmly believed that her academic grades were of far greater importance than any athletic success that she may gain as a soccer player. Tracey defined her playing position as centre-forward, the role she believed was possibly the most demanding in the entire squad, leading to pressure from the coach to 'produce' in each performance. 'I feel that as soon as you accept a scholarship, the coach feels that they own you. . . . For $3,000 per year, they don't. I know that I'm not on the best scholarship package here, but if I complain, nothing will happen'. As the youngest of three daughters, Tracey categorised her family as being 'firmly middle class', where the expectation was that each child needed to obtain a scholarship if she intended to study at university. Tracey accepted the pragmatic approach of her family and felt that it was unfortunately symptomatic of the economic reality for most middle-class families in America.

'Christopher' (21-year-old Caucasian male)

As a third-year student at East University, Christopher was recruited from his home town in Pennsylvania to study and play soccer in New York on a $3,250 scholarship. A key factor in making the decision to relocate was Christopher's high school coach, who highly recommended the Liberal Arts and Engineering degree programmes at the university. As a former graduate of East University himself, the high school coach actively encouraged Christopher to attend his former institution. Christopher eventually opted to study Engineering whilst accepting a scholarship, which over the course of his degree had ranged from $3,000 to $3,500 per academic year. In addition to receiving a scholarship, Christopher partly financed any student debt by working as a part-time personal fitness trainer. The abiding concern that Christopher had for his studies at East University was that his parents would not be left with responsibility for any debt that may accrue.

> My parents don't need to remind me about how important it is to graduate. I will in any case because I'm doing ok academically. They also don't need to stress over having to pick-up any debt. I work whenever I'm either not playing or studying in order to take some of the stress off them.

This fear was in part due to the experience of his elder sister, who had completed her law degree with debts in advance of $120,000.

'Paul' (19-year-old African-American male)

Paul was a first-year student at East University. He described himself as one of the most enthusiastic players on the men's squad and enjoyed the reputation as being the 'midfield general'. He labelled himself as the 'engine of the team'. Despite Paul's evident enthusiasm for playing soccer, he was undecided regarding any future career ambitions within the sport. Paul was possibly the most enthusiastic and animated male participant in this study. 'I love the game, but I'm realistic. The main goal is to graduate; what happens after that is up to God'. Paul described his family as being from a lower-middle class background, with his father in particular having experienced long periods of unemployment. The consequence, however, was that his father was then able to attend almost every game he took part in whilst at high school, a contribution he appreciated. Paul was quite candid regarding his parents' financial circumstances and repeatedly emphasised that his $3,500 scholarship was essential to completing the degree. He reinforced throughout the interview that at no stage could he approach his parents for any financial support. Paul was also cognisant of the reality of maintaining his place on the soccer team. Failure to do so would inevitably lead to having his scholarship reduced or potentially removed entirely. As a result, he stressed that both parents emphasised to him the need to maintain his academic performance and not solely focus upon his athletic achievements. The need to focus upon the academic demands at university, however, did not prevent Paul from considering the possibility of a career in soccer.

> It's a dream, yes . . . but a distant one at the moment. My parents have always emphasised to do my best. Even when at elementary school, I can remember them saying it to me . . . do your best; that's all you can do. If that means that I turn pro then so be it.

'Mikael' (20-year-old African-American male)

As a second-year student at West University, Mikael was the only subject interviewed who confidently described his ambition as that of aspiring to becoming a professional soccer player in the US elite domestic league. Mikael was evidently a talented forward, claiming that he was actively pursued by eleven different universities before deciding to study and play in California for $7,000 per year. The

most significant factor he cited was the reputation of the head coach at the university and the network of contacts this individual had within the professional structure. This, he believed, offered him a distinct advantage over friends from high school who had opted for a rival university.

Mikael identified his family as being categorised as 'lower class'. This, he felt, was the primary reason why he would succeed in achieving his dreams of playing professionally either in the US or abroad. He believed that this gave him the 'hunger' to persevere when others on the team did not. Inspiration for his ambition was partly fuelled by both the need to financially assist his mother and three younger siblings and also by the US international Freddy Adu. As a fellow African-American, Mikael cited Adu as a role model for aspiring players. 'Freddy has given a lot of black Americans the inspiration that we could be a pro. His contract with Nike when he was 13 years old was fantastic'. Mikael, however, did have a pragmatic attitude towards his academic responsibilities. As a Social Science major, he was prepared to consider the possibility of working within either health care or social work that completion of the degree would potentially offer. 'I think that my mother would be proud of me regardless of the career that I have upon graduation. As long as I'm happy and give my all, then she'll be happy also'.

'Pat' (19-year-old Caucasian male)

As a second-year Social Sciences student at West University, Pat described himself as a 'stopper' or defender. Pat's attitude towards his $2,750 scholarship was interesting in that he clearly stated that no financial inducement was considered when considering where to study. The fact that he obtained a scholarship was significant in terms of the status that it afforded both 'on-campus' with fellow students and to a lesser extent with his family.

Pat described himself as coming from what is frequently regarded as one of the most affluent communities in California (Palo Alto); as such, Pat represented the least socially mobile member of either team within the study. Pat clearly identified an unusual attitude towards his soccer scholarship by identifying the prestige and status that soccer had within his parents' community. This, he felt, was more of a factor in encouraging him to retain his place than any distal career goals.

> I think being a soccer player is much more impressive to my old friends from high school than it is for my parents. They won't admit to it, but they are snobs. I think they would much rather preferred that I was on an academic scholarship.

'Ian' (18-year-old Caucasian male)

As a first-year Business studies student at West University, Ian clearly identified himself and his family as 'born again Christian'. Despite this statement, Ian was dressed in what appeared to be military paraphernalia and presented himself as a

rather reluctant interviewee. 'I find it awkward to talk about my beliefs and values at university; it's not the kind of thing that goes down well in the locker room. So, I tend to keep my values to myself'. Ian categorised his family as being 'upper class' but was unprepared to identify either of his parents' occupations, simply referring to them as 'working within our church'. The advantage of this was in Ian's view, that it allowed both parents the flexibility to attend all of his home games. In relation to soccer, Ian highlighted the conflict between the demands of both his scholarship versus his academic requirements. Despite the pressure that Ian felt to perform academically, he maintained an ambition to potentially pursue soccer as a career at some stage in the future but also considered a potential career as a 'lay-preacher'. The possibility of combining both was something that Ian had clearly considered, and he cited several high-profile players whom he considered role models.

> I have a lot of respect for Kaka from Brazil, not that too many of the guys on the team are aware of his values. From what I understand and have read about him he shares my family's Evangelical outlook. Everyone in my family just wants each other to achieve their own personal goals.

'Samuel' (19-year-old Caucasian male)

As a third-year student at West University, Samuel had not at the point of the interview declared his major course of study and was clearly uncertain as to future career orientation. Samuel was conscious of the need to be as financially independent as possible during his career at university; the $3,750 scholarship he received was a significant factor in assisting this goal. The eldest of three brothers, Samuel described his family as being 'firmly middle class'. As a result of his father's early retirement due to illness, Samuel was sensitive to the need to try to obtain a high-income occupation upon graduation. As a member of a religious family, Samuel stated that his parents had impressed upon him from childhood the need to do well but within what he described as a 'Christian ethos of fair play'. As a result, Samuel recognised his limitations as a player but enjoyed the ethos of training and dedication that the coach instilled within the team.

> I love the game (soccer), don't get me wrong, but I recognise the importance of graduating with a good degree and for me that means maintaining a GPA between 3.5 and 4.0. If I can do that then I'm confident that all the hours training will have paid off.

These summaries are designed to introduce the players selected before more detail and analysis are provided subsequently in this chapter.

The key elements revealed from these summaries can be categorised as follows. Firstly, each player recognised the importance of a scholarship in order to finance

his or her university education. As a consequence, each player emphasised the pressure he or she felt under to sustain the required academic grades. The pressure was for the majority directed from parents and to a lesser extent due to sibling rivalry. However, the main source of expectations and resultant player anxiety was the father of the family. The father was noted by players as having the key role in both determining and shaping his child's academic and sporting objectives. The players for the most part recognised that their fathers wanted them to achieve their potential but were uncomfortable with the manner in which this was articulated. Finally, all players emphasised the importance of balancing their academic responsibilities with their sporting requirements. The ability to graduate was fundamental to their career strategy. A minority of the players declared an ambition to further their career in soccer, but this was conditional upon first and foremost obtaining their degree.

Table 4.2 provides a synopsis of the players interviewed and is intended to offer insight towards the core question of this thesis and reinforce the key themes for the interviews.

In order to provide detailed analysis of the subject interviews, consideration was given to an appropriate analytical framework. As identified in the previous chapter, the contextualisation of interview results was based upon the 'SCQ' model (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000). The 'Support/Challenge Questionnaire' (SCQ), originally developed for use in the study of talented teenagers, allows the reader to ascertain the soccer players' perceptions of their family dynamics of support and challenges. This is achieved by grouping player responses into a series of four discrete quadrants.

Family typology

Similar to Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider's (2000) study, this research generated several shared themes which emerged across all subjects. For example, all the participants stated that their parents wanted them to achieve their potential, expressed simply as 'be the best that they could be in school, in soccer and in life'. The players also indicated that they believed their parents wanted them 'to decide for themselves what their career should be based upon what they excel within'.

Although there are clear similarities across subject family backgrounds, there are also differences that are apparent around four central themes: (a) family interaction, (b) communication, (c) expectations, and (d) goals. The procedure for relating the experiences of the participants and their family dynamics will be summarised using the framework initially offered by Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider (2000) and later employed by Wedemeyer Moon (2003) into the four quadrants: High Challenge / High Support, High Challenge / Low Support, Low Challenge / High Support and Low Challenge / Low Support.

According to how subjects responded within the interview, they were then grouped according to these categories (sample provided here).

Table 4.2 Synopsis of player details

Student Name	*Age*	*Ethnicity*	*Gender*	*University*	*Playing Position*	*Family/Social Class*	*Career Goal*
Melanie	19	Caucasian	Female	West University (1st year)	Defender	Middle	Social Sciences
Erica	20	African-American	Female	West University (2nd year)	Goalkeeper	Middle	Social Sciences
Karin	20	Latin-American (Mexican)	Female	West University (3rd year)	Forward	Lower	Business
Byrony	20	Caucasian	Female	East University (1st year)	Defender	Upper-Middle	Business / Professional Soccer Player
Bridgit	21	Caucasian	Female	East University (3rd year)	Defender	Upper-Middle	Physical Education
Tracey	18	Caucasian	Female	East University (2nd year)	Forward	Middle	Engineering
Christopher	21	Caucasian	Male	East University (3rd year)	Midfield	Lower-middle	Engineering
Paul	19	African-American	Male	East University (1st year)	Midfield	Lower-middle	Undecided/ Professional Soccer Player
Mikael	20	African-American	Male	West University (2nd year)	Forward	Lower	Professional Soccer Player
Pat	19	Caucasian	Male	West University (2nd year)	Defender	Upper	Social Sciences
Ian	18	Caucasian	Male	West University (1st year)	Forward	Upper-middle	Business
Samuel	19	Caucasian	Male	West University (3rd year)	Midfield	Middle	Undecided

Table 4.3 Summary of players' experiences: family typology

	HC/HS	*HC/LS*	*LC/HS*	*LC/LS*
Family Interaction	– Parents involved in outside activities (volunteer) – Mutual involvement in a variety of activities, e.g., church	– Parents less involved with soccer (parents do not go to all home games) – Student has less understanding of what their parents' outside activities are	– Students are with their family frequently – Student often lives at home	– Limited interaction with their parents – parents come to a limited number of games
Communication	– Bi-directional – Talk daily on either the telephone or via e-mail – Discuss current events – Opinions validated	– Parent frequently informs the student what they can do better – Both genders talk to their father more about soccer – Talk to mother more about school and friends – Parent questions what they want	– Family appear to be concerned about one another – Positive/open communication – Talk daily	– Very limited / no in-depth conversations – No communication about expectations – No set times to talk
Goals	– Parents stress the importance of practice – Future-oriented goals – Care about each other's goals	– Parents stress the importance of making a commitment – Friends are important to soccer	– Parent doesn't 'push' – Student feels that parent 'knows their limits'	– Parents do not set goals – Parent does not influence enjoyment of soccer or future career goals
Expectations	– Student and parent agree on what is expected – Choice whether to play – Desire to do well	– Parent emphasises 'not give up/to try hard . . . do well in school' – Finance is discussed	– Parents have high expectations, but not pushed – Student has a choice to play or not at university	– Parents emphasise 'play hard' – Student not sure if he or she has a choice to play or not at university (soccer scholarship)

'High Challenge / High Support' (Ian, Tracey and Samuel)

Ian is an 18-year-old white male who reported both High Challenge and Support. He was formally dressed in a suit and tie. He was courteous throughout the interview, often replying, 'Yes, sir'. Families within this category appear to be usually involved with each other, as well as with other community groups, such as the church. Both of Ian's parents also volunteered extensively in the local community. As far as family experiences and soccer, Ian's mother was previously the team manager of a local junior soccer team and also assisted as an administrator on the Olympic Development Program (ODP).[2]

Communication in High Support / High Challenging families is typically more open and occurs more frequently (Wedemeyer Moon, 2003). For example, Samuel stated, '[A]s a family our main time to talk is in either the morning [if I'm sitting at the breakfast table] or over dinner in the evening'. This interaction can be summarised as a 'two-way open dialogue, where Samuel felt able to talk to them, and they could talk to him'. In relation to soccer, Ian stated that he knows and respects the importance of their expectations. 'My folks expect me to always give my best and take it [university academic and sport commitments] seriously'.

With reference to goal setting, Ian, Tracey and Samuel highlighted the conflicting demands and time requirements between their university studies and soccer. Tracey stated,

> I would like to stay on the scholarship programme, but the sessions are so intense. My grades are suffering and I'm starting to think is it all worth the effort. I'm letting everybody down at the moment, my folks, my professors and me.

As can be seen from these interview excerpts with the players, several elements appear important in the category of High Challenge and High Support family dynamics. Some of these include the significant amount of time spent together, specifically around soccer, the openness and frequency of communication, which allows for the opportunity to discuss expectations, and the goals that are set, which reflect future orientation (Wedemeyer Moon, 2003).

'Communication'

With communication, the key points to reflect upon are the frequency, breadth and substance of the information that is shared between parents and children (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000; Wedemeyer Moon, 2003). The following section presents examples from the interviews with Ian and Samuel, which are indicative of 'positive communication'. Ian reported that he and his family frequently discuss issues such as soccer, school and current events. He had this to say regarding the range of information he consults with his parents about, 'I'm

always raising soccer as a subject in our conversations. Probably a lot more than I should or they really want to hear'.

'Family interaction'

This dimension involves considering the level of involvement among family members. The category includes being conscious of common interests and the level of joint activities (Wedemeyer Moon, 2003). Ian and Tracey both discussed how their mother was still involved with their local community soccer team even though they had left to attend university. Both Samuel's parents and Ian's parents are highly involved in church-related activities. One particular activity that involved Tracey directly interacting with her family was 'working out' with her father at the local athletic track.

'Expectations'

Samuel stated that his parents constantly remind him of their expectations.

> They want me to be the best I can be and help me set goals. They expect me to have core values and handle my money wisely. I think a big part of this is fear on the behalf of my father. As you know, he had to take early retirement because of illness, and he's worried that if I ever came and asked him for more support than I already receive, then he'll be placed in an awkward situation. Bottom line he won't be able to help me.

'Goals'

Tracey emphasised the importance of setting 'reasonable goals', both academically and in terms of her soccer ambitions. She gave this example to summarise her philosophy towards university:

> I drive myself, probably too much for my own good, both on and off the field of play. Knowing when to stop would be good. I kind of have the same approach towards my academic responsibilities. I keep on pushing myself to go further and faster. I will push myself and get every last ounce of ability out of my studies.

Tracey demonstrated a pragmatic view of her employment options following university.

> I'm an engineering major, which opens up a few options for me down the line. I think after four years of playing soccer every day, I will have had enough of running around a field. My intention is to use my degree to get a 9–5 job.

High Challenge / Low Support (Paul, Melanie, Bridgit)

Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider (2000) defined this family typology as putting success above everything else. Inordinately high expectations, goals and competitiveness are conveyed to individuals in an external, non-communicative manner.

Paul (19-year-old African-American male) described family interaction as being dependent upon sport (either taking part in or watching on television). Both he and his younger brother, age 16, concentrated on playing soccer, to the exclusion of other sports throughout their latter high school years. Although Paul reported spending a lot of time around sports-related activities with his family during his formative years, he stated,

> Both of my parents work long hours. I think they've always worked long hours, so I guess it was my dad, his love for it [sport], rather than doing stuff together which has kept the fire burning. He's cool though and appreciates that I may get cut from the team. As long as I work hard, he'll support me whatever job I end up doing.

This represents what appears to be a common-reference point for the subjects, that of ambitions potentially fuelled by a fear of occupations which in their view would represent 'failure'. When asked about future goals, Paul highlighted the possibility of coaching soccer after college but was more concerned with obtaining a degree which would offer him career possibilities currently in his view unattainable. 'Soccer is fun, and I enjoy the camaraderie, but I'm no Pele. If it helps me to pay my way through college and get out of town, I'm happy'. Finally, Melanie had this to comment regarding expectations:

> The more they [my parents] talk to me, the more I'm forced to consider their expectations and not my own. Maybe that's a good thing, I don't know. Am I selfish? I usually try and fulfil my expectations independently, by myself without talking a lot about it.

'Communication'

All three students within this category presented the view that soccer seemed to be the only in-depth subject they were able to raise with their parents. However, each student felt a degree of anxiety when the conversation turned to a discussion of future goals related to both their academic work and athletic responsibilities.

'Family interaction'

Bridgit highlighted that her parents are highly involved in her soccer at university, almost to the point of 'suffocation'. When I asked how much time she spends away from the family during the week, she reported, 'only when we travel to away

games . . . 48 hours, it allows me time to decompress away from them, which is probably a necessity'.

'Expectations'

The interview with Bridgit raised an interesting point with regards to her impression of parental expectations for her career following the scholarship. For example, Bridgit commented that her parents frequently predicted that she 'would make a wonderful waitress or something'. This, she thinks, although said in jest, reveals that her mother in particular believes that she is not a highly motivated student.

> I'm constantly asked by dad to consider my playing position. Things such as whether I should consider playing offense. But I like my current position [defence]. Sometimes he thinks he knows more than my coach; it's embarrassing.

'Goals'

Paul discussed throughout his concerns of 'not wanting to be the best soccer player, but above average'. However, this, he believes, has caused a great deal of conflict in his family and in particular with his father. Paul noted that 'dad has tried to get me to try harder in games and catch the eye of the coach and make sure that I'm starting each game'. This is clearly an example of the student perceiving that his parents have expectations or goals that may not fit with his motivation for playing soccer.

Low Challenge / High Support (Byrony)

'Communication'

The interview revealed that Byrony has a great deal of respect for her parents, and this, she believed, was reciprocated. The importance of the well-being of all family members was expressed in her interview. There also seemed to be a significant level of interaction, including the father attending a high percentage of games and tournaments.

'Family interaction'

A consistent theme that emerged from the interviews is the mutual interest in spending time in one another's company. 'I respect what dad has achieved in business, and I think that possibly some of those work hard/play hard traits have rubbed off on me'. Byrony evidently enjoyed the company of her father, and this appeared to be reciprocated.

> He is pretty much my best friend. I know that doesn't sound cool for a 20-year-old woman to reveal that, but he is. He usually knows when to stop pressurising me. Although, I'm only in my first year and maybe that will change if my grades start to suffer!

'Expectations'

Byrony commented that her father's expectations reveal that 'Dad has ridiculously high expectations of me, but he does not push them on me all the time; he kind of goes in peaks and troughs'. She also reported that 'he never tells me he expects more because he knows I am always trying my best'. In addition, Byrony reflected that her father is not like some of her teammates' parents whom she describes as 'driving'. 'It feels like they [parents] allow me to choose my own course kind of . . . with some prodding!' Both of Byrony's parents appear to have an active role in shaping her expectations, current and future. However, it is clearly her father whom she has the most admiration for and who has the dominant role in guiding and shaping her expectations for university. 'Dad was a good athlete at university, probably better than I am, but he didn't become successful in business because of any passion he had for playing sport; it was through good grades'.

'Goals'

It was difficult to determine from the interview with Byrony as to what extent her parents influenced her goals and aspirations before she decided to undertake a soccer scholarship. This appeared to be a topic which she felt reluctant to elaborate upon. She regarded her parents as having a 'laissez-faire' attitude towards specific goals. This, she felt, reflected their 'laid-back, hippy approach towards life in general'. However, a supportive environment in which Byrony was allowed to take responsibility for her own actions was clearly evident in the interview. It was clear that Byrony was highly influenced by the recommendations that her father had given her before selecting to study business at East University. As a successful businessman, he had influenced her decision to study in New York.

> Dad knows the reputation of East University and its Business School from when he was an undergrad. He fully appreciates what it could do for me if I choose to obtain a job within business. To say he was pleased when I took the soccer scholarship here would be an understatement.

Low Challenge / Low Support (Erica)

'Communication'

There appeared to be a limited degree of communication among Erica's family members. Overall, Erica reported that she spent approximately 1–2 hours talking to her father on average per week, including weekends. She also reported that

there is very little that she talks to him in depth about. She had this to say about their communication style: 'When he talks. . . . I don't and vice versa . . . it's like being in school'. As regards her mother, Erica revealed that her biological mother had died over ten years ago and that her father had re-married three years earlier. As a result, Erica was raised in what she descried as a 'blended' family in which she felt increasingly distant from her father's wife.

'Family interaction'

> We as a family are a little dysfunctional [laughs]. I'm not sure that we necessarily fall into the bracket of white picket fences and apple pie. There is certainly respect between us, but I'm not sure that anyone particularly gets on with their step mom. She (step mother) is very bright, but we are certainly not on the same wave length.

'Expectations'

Erica described that when she does try to talk to her father regarding expectations and aspirations, 'they are stormy talks'. She also reported, 'I am not sure what he expects of me'. This sense of confusion was apparent throughout the interview and in her view partly complicated by the views of her step mother. 'I think Dad is trying to be sensitive to her views and at the same time maintain his. . . . As a result, I kind of make my own mind up as regards life'.

'Goals'

Erica expressed an issue regarding goal setting in that they, as a family, try to establish goals, such as purchasing a new laptop computer and how she would achieve this goal. She also raised the point that 'I just kind of do whatever I want'. This evidently has created some issues with both her current and previous soccer coach. Erica observed that 'sometimes I can appear a little dreamy and spaced out. I am actually thinking about what I'm doing, but the coach doesn't often see it that way'.

Family conclusions

The player interviews revealed a subsidiary question within the study: 'How do the players experience family dynamics of support and challenge, and does this influence their decision making?' The participants were organised into the four family typology groups: HC/HS, HC/LS, LC/HS, and LC/LS. Interview data were used to assess this question. The researcher's bias needs to be made overt, in that there was the possibility of looking for particular themes once the participants were categorised. Another point to mention is that support and challenge sometimes seemed to go hand in hand, and it was hard to distinguish between the two complex terms.

Most males reported high levels of support and challenge from their families. For the females, the level of support and challenge offered varied greatly. Support seemed to be expressed in various forms ranging from, 'they [parents] help me with my studies' to 'they [parents] come to all of my games'. In relation to soccer and macro issues and regardless of category, most subjects reflected that their parents were supportive (Wedemeyer Moon, 2003). Particularly with soccer, this would seem to be a given, based on the level of soccer their children are playing. As a general rule, it appears that the most effective families appear to be those that provide their teenagers with a belief in their overall self-worth whilst establishing clear and unambiguous expectations.

These interview results reveal that students' scholarship decisions appear to represent a flexible vehicle through which ideological associations with the Dream are reinforced. The scholarship, therefore, becomes a cultural symbol and metaphor both for the parents and recipients of the athletic stipends. The findings reveal a common hypothesis derived from various theoretical standpoints in sociology which states that the family is a significant agent in socialising their children to the cultural values of the American Dream. The next section of the interview results will focus upon the themes of social class and social mobility.

Social class and social mobility

It is clear from the preceding section that students are inevitably products of particular family environments. As Bettie (2003) argues in her ethnographic study of students and social-class identities, families are crucial sites for the accumulation of cultural capital, and schools are sites for their display. In this context, the interviews aimed to discover whether students' own perception of social class was a factor in motivating them to undertake a scholarship.

For the women interviewed, it seems their academic and athletic endeavours represent refusals of pre-existing race, class and gender classifications. In fact, although none of the women interviewed here articulated a particular racial-ethnic location in talking about families, several alluded to the influence of racial-ethnic heritage on their current location as collegiate athletes. In all cases, social class is a mediating factor in the extent to which they articulate a particular kind of identity. For example, 20-year-old Karin alludes to her privilege as the daughter of an 'Americanized' father:

> My dad comes from a traditional Mexican family, you know, the wife does the cooking, the house, takes care of the kids, and the husband goes and works. But my dad does stuff too. He's a really good cook, so if he knows my mom's been doing a lot of running around, he does the cooking. But mom does the majority of it. I think she's the most amazing woman I know. She was always running around taking us to practices when I was at high school, working and then coming home. My dad helps her out also, but sometimes

> he forgets. I think that's the traditional side of him. But he's more Americanized than traditional, so that helps.

Karin who grew up with her extended Mexican family, discussed her academic and athletic choices. Ironically, in the same passage, she spoke very eloquently about the impact her achievements may have had on her Mexican family members and by extension, other young Mexican women:

> I'd say my biggest fans besides my parents are my grandma and my aunt, my mom's sister. They travelled to see me. I loved playing for them. They get a kick out seeing [*sic*] their granddaughter or niece play soccer. None of my mom's sisters' or brothers' lives were like that at all. I think my life is different because my mom married a 'white' guy. Really, he's the one that pushed me to get here. My mom, she's been a supporter. With all her daughters, whatever we want to do [is] fine with her, as long as we're doing better than they did, as long as I stay in school. If we didn't play soccer, I don't think it would've been a big deal, but because she married a 'white' guy, that's why my sisters and I play sports. But I think it's good. Not many girls with my social class get a chance to do that, just because of tradition and stuff like that.

Karin reflected on the limited role of higher education in the lives of her parents as it influenced her knowledge of and strategies for gaining entry to collegiate soccer.

> I played on my high school team, and I had no clue about college ball. I didn't know anything. My mom went to 2 years of business school, and my dad went to JC [junior college] for a year or two. But no, they weren't familiar with the whole college thing, and I wasn't either. It was just friends that said hey, there's a good coach at this college. So I moved and played on the JC team for a year. That was my first experience with travel ball too. . . . That's when people started saying you know, you're pretty good, and maybe you could get a scholarship. My parents were real supportive, but they weren't familiar, and I wasn't familiar, so I did it on my own with the help of my coach. I think that getting the scholarship was like a miracle for my folks. Nobody in the family has ever been to university. In my house I'm a star.

In direct comparison to the experience of a student from a lower socio-economic background and associated social class category, 19-year-old Caucasian Pat offered a different perspective as to why he and other similar students decided to undertake a soccer scholarship. As a Caucasian male from what is commonly regarded as one of the most affluent communities in southern California, Pat represented the least socially mobile and most elite class member of either team within the study. Pat was first asked why he decided to undertake a soccer scholarship.

> I was never really pushed by either Mom or Dad when I was at high school. Both my parents have done well in terms of their own careers and I guess

> their work ethic has rubbed off on me and my older brother. I can't ever remember being that enthused about playing any other sport than soccer. Nothing came close. Dad made it very clear to me that either I got an academic scholarship (laughs) . . . which was never going to happen, or I tried out for an athletic scholarship. It just so happens that I'm above average I guess at soccer. Any other sport and I'd be flippin' burgers at McDonald's (laughs).

When probed as to whether a career in soccer is a realistic goal for the future, Pat answered in a similar manner to others within the study.

> Listen, I'm a realist. Would I like to be the next big thing? Sure. Will I be? I think it's unlikely. In the States, everyone needs a degree; by doing soccer, I get a small scholarship and keep my Dad off my back. He kind of likes coming to watch me play. Soccer has been the coolest sport for kids like me for as long as I can remember. Maybe, we're snobs. I couldn't see Mom and Dad wanting to hang out with anyone who doesn't have an SUV (laughs). I think Dad is in danger of turning into a soccer Mom (laughs).

These extracts reveal what appears to be indicative of the transfer of social mobility values from parents to their children. According to Bourdieu (1978), sports cannot be distributed among the social classes based on the activities' 'nature'; instead, any sport can be practiced within any social class as long as it fits within that class's 'body schema' (p. 831). Bourdieu noted that as part of the working class habitus, it is expected that sports require high energy, physical contact and even pain. While soccer is energy demanding and therefore suits working-class expectations of the body in sport, it is not an inherently dangerous sport in comparison to traditional recreational pastimes (American Sports Data, 2002, 2018). Self-evidently, injuries have been and always will always be an inherent part of sport. However, the fact that soccer is able to fit into class expectations of appropriate bodily practices demonstrates that it has now become successfully interwoven into the lives of all subjects within this study and reflects an effective sublimation of social class relations.

Education / career development

An alternative theoretical paradigm which attempts to explain the mechanisms by which social mobility is achieved is 'career development theory'. This section of the study aimed to discover the extent of self-management given the many career transitions individuals are likely to experience. Sullivan (1999) has previously highlighted the difference between the traditional and 'boundaryless career'. Perhaps a career in soccer fits into the second category, as players in the modern game are likely to experience a sequence of job opportunities that go beyond the boundaries of a single employment setting. This is due largely to the player

transfer system that operates in the game and the short duration of their playing career. Many factors influence the professional player's life span. At best, a professional's playing career, according to Bourke (2002) may last up to 15 years; however, there are those who, for one reason or another (injury, being transfer listed and so forth) are forced to terminate their career at an early age (Roderick, 2006).

The results presented so far clearly indicate that students are highly influenced by their families in terms of their decision to undertake a soccer scholarship. The following section of the interview results provides an overview of whether the students had an educational goal or career objective to be achieved via their scholarship.

Christopher (a 21-year-old male from Pennsylvania) summarised his career strategy for taking part in soccer with the following quote.

> When the coach contacted my parents in Philadelphia and offered me a scholarship, I screamed 'show me the money'. I'm not that obsessed with money nor are my buddies, but I was really worried that I wouldn't be able to make it to college at all without that financial help. It does make a difference. I'm fortunate in that a few schools were chasing me, but I'm glad that I decided upon East University. It's the right school for me; they have a good team and they have a great academic reputation.

When asked to elaborate upon whether he considered a career in professional sport, Christopher responded,

> I'm no Gerrard [Steven Gerrard], I love Liverpool [Liverpool FC] I went to see them when I was on a soccer tour with my high school team four or five years ago. After watching those guys play up close you realise what it takes to reach the top. I know that I don't have that level of dedication or skill. My best bet is to use what little God-given talent I have and milk it to give me a head start when I graduate. A lot of the old businesses have closed down in recent years back home. I don't want to be claiming Social Security anytime soon.

This extract provides an insight towards the global appeal of soccer set against the backdrop of localised economic issues of career formulation for scholarship students. As has been previously noted (Maguire, 1994, 2004), the inclusive popularity of sport has helped to achieve a process of 'homogenisation' within national cultures. Soccer in this context has been absorbed within the concept of the American Dream as a somewhat pragmatic avenue of social mobility. When asked about the guidance and counselling as regarded his decision making, Christopher commented,

> We used to get challenged whilst at high school by our teachers all the time. My favourite Mathematics teacher was always encouraging me to get my head out of the clouds. Maybe some of what he said has paid off. I think he

> was concerned that I'd end up like some meat head dumb jock. I always knew the importance of paying attention in class and not thinking that ESPN would be seeing me anytime soon. College is expensive; even with my scholarship it's a struggle. My sister graduated from law school with debts that are scary. I know that by taking Liberal Arts and playing soccer I can leave with pretty good prospects. For that, I can thank my coach, family and the Lord. I can clearly remember talking about the soccer scholarship that was offered by the coach before I came here with my family. We discussed the offer for a long time. I don't think at first my family could quite appreciate how important soccer was to me and my future goals, but they came round in the end [laughs].

This extract represents a 'fear of failure' and the student perceptions of which occupations are indicative of 'failure'. Previously in this chapter, students have labelled 'flippin-burgers' as symptomatic of a wasted scholarship outcome.

The final student used within the interviews for the study was Mikeal, a 20-year-old African-American attending West University. Mikeal potentially represented similar views to those documented from Karin, in that they both described themselves as being from a lower socio-economic class background. In addition, both had parents of mixed ethnicity. Mikeal was first asked his views regarding opportunities within professional sport.

> My aim is to make my Mother proud. She has done so much for all of us in the family [three brothers and one sister]. I'm the oldest, so it's my responsibility to help out at home and help raise my siblings. By obtaining a scholarship at West University I can do that. Not by much, but at least my mother doesn't have to work 24/7 to make ends meet. I know that my chances of playing for the LA Galaxy are slim to nothing, but I'll give it my best shot.

When asked to elaborate on how he intended to achieve the dream of a professional career, Mikeal stated,

> Coach says that I have a gift [smiles]. He's a good guy, and I'm sure that he's just trying to keep my spirits up, but I'm the leading scorer in my conference. The last guy who did that was given a contract out in Kansas. Hey, you never know. If you don't give it your best then you will never know. I'm realistic to appreciate that if I get injured or if my grades drop, then I have a problem. Worst-case scenario, I graduate with a degree in business and open-up my own soccer franchise [laughs]. My main issue really though is with those guys [fellow scholarship recipients] . . . what my counsellor calls 'scholarship envy'. I sometimes hear it when someone has had a bad game. On a couple of occasions, I've heard someone criticising a teammate who is on a big percentage scholarship. Usually though the coach steps in and tells them to be quiet.

Ian, an established member of the West University men's soccer team, agreed with the observation that scholarships can often lead to resentment if the individual amounts are ever revealed:

> You have to be careful who you tell about the amounts you receive. I trust only my roommate. Even so I wish I hadn't told him. It's not good for the morale of the team. After all it's a team game and finding out about another player's scholarship leads to resentment.

These comments from Ian offer insight towards the dual dimensions of the American Dream and its core concept of a meritocratic society. The 'materialistic version' of the Dream, according to Fisher (1973), is a simple deployment of the Puritan work ethic that sanctions competition as a means of determining personal worth. In addition, the ethic asserts that one's rewards are directly proportional to the effort put forth. The harder one works, the greater the achievement and the larger the returns. According to Fisher, 'it promises that if one employs his energies and talents to the fullest, he will reap the rewards of status, wealth and power' (p. 161). As a soccer player, however, Ian is part of a collective unit where all members of that team must cooperate in order to optimise their performance. However, the differentiation of payments within any squad challenges notions presented by any 'moralistic' version of the American Dream. According to Fisher, this version is embodied in the ethos of the Declaration of Independence of 1776. The 'inalienable rights' of which refer to the presumption of equality. Fisher observes that these tenets 'involve the values of tolerance, charity, compassion, and true regard for the dignity and worth of each and every individual'(p. 161). The materialistic nature of US students and universities within this study has meant that any moralistic notion of the Dream is susceptible to subversion.

Melanie, a freshman player at West University, added,

> Cliques inevitably form within university, but in soccer we have to stay together as a team. You can't allow money to effect the team performance. I haven't personally seen it happen with my team, but at a friend's college the women would not pass the ball to a girl who they were jealous of. I think the coaches here are on top of the issue though and remind us in meetings that we should keep our financial details private.

Melanie added that players were discouraged from discussing their scholarship totals for a variety of reasons.

> The coach does not want us to see ourselves or our teammates in terms of their scholarship amount. He says that we define our worth on the field of play. My parents are the only people I ever tell about my scholarship amount. It took a fair bit of persuasion to allow me to choose soccer over

> other [scholarship] opportunities I had, so it's important that I maintain my scholarship each year.

When interviewing the participants regarding their career or academic goals, most of the answers were discussed in general terms. For example, the majority of participants reported that their parents wanted them to initially obtain a college place with the expectation that graduation would ultimately lead to a 'better life'. Most of the participants had some indistinct proposal of career goals. The majority of subjects mentioned that they had short-term goals and some outlined their long-term goals also. A minority of subjects declared a dream of becoming a professional player either in the US or abroad. Long-term goals typically included working within a specific degree-related occupation and thereby increasing their earning potential. Short-term goals for the students included doing well in school and maintaining their soccer scholarship. Some players were clearly uncertain as to what their parents' career goals were for them but knew that their parents wanted them to 'do their best' and 'be successful'. A potential issue with such statements is what do those statements mean exactly? This sense of ambiguity was clearly related within the interviews. A positive outcome of, in some instances, a rather laissez-faire parenting approach was that students were acutely aware of their responsibility to obtain and ultimately maintain the scholarship for their own intrinsic upward mobility motives. Csikszentmihalyi (2002) mentions the importance of individuals being able to set their own goals too as important for them to reduce anxiety and reduce any 'fear of failure'. This palpable sense of anxiety regarding their career was, in part, a result of pressure from their father to emulate their sibling's achievements or to avoid the financial consequences of not graduating from college.

Interviews with coaches and athletic directors (Resource 7)

The following section reveals the views of both coaches and athletic directors regarding student decision making in undertaking a soccer scholarship at their respective universities. The results of the interviews are organised into three themes.

Themes

1 The role of the family in decision making

In interviews with all four soccer coaches and both athletic directors at the two representative NCAA Division One universities, the coaches said they encountered parents on a regular basis with an almost ridiculous aspiration to negotiate an athletic scholarship, regardless of their son's or daughter's ability level.

> I regularly encounter parents who, although I have sympathy for their financial circumstances, almost beg on behalf of their kid. I constantly have to

> repeat how little money there is within the program and the fact that it has to be distributed throughout the team. However, I'm sure that the parents think that I'm lying to them. The families have clearly invested a lot of time and energy into their child's ambitions and want some kind of return for that investment.
>
> (Men's Coach, West University)

The East University men's coach said,

> Every meeting with a prospective athlete and their parent is interesting. Part of the problem is the attachment these kids form with their old high school coach. They have their egos massaged and believe that they are the next sure thing. Bottom line the vast majority of parents will try and negotiate the size of the scholarship.

Both of the women's coaches agreed that parents were often 'devious' during the negotiation of scholarships.

> A frequent tactic is that a father will tell me that his daughter is wanted by a whole host of Division One programmes. What the family don't know is that the coaching community is a fairly small, tight knit group. I pretty much know how much each coach can offer and in some cases I'll call a colleague and find out. Having said that, it is a business as well and I'm starting to notice a lack of cooperation. Maybe it's a generational thing (laughs).
>
> (Women's Coach, West University)

The women's coach at East University added that parents sometimes are often misled and can be confused by the number of recruitment advisers and the different messages that are sent.

> The first thing that both the player and the parent both need to understand is that balancing a life as a student and an athlete is tough. They are unlikely, even with a 'full-ride' to graduate without a chunk of student debt. Certainly obtaining a scholarship is helpful, but it is not the answer. Parents have a responsibility to help their children make sense of what is realistic and attainable and what isn't. I've personally encountered a full range of expectations from parents. Everything from 'my daughter is the next Mia, according to her high school coach' to 'I'm amazed that you are considering recruiting my kid.' The varsity coach at their high school has a lot to answer for [laughs]. They build these kids' expectations up and with that the parents' hopes and dreams as well. It's no wonder that they are so confused . . . as a result I'm seen as the grim reaper when I tell them the reality of what soccer here is all about.
>
> (Women's Coach, West University)

> I sometimes meet with a family who clearly don't need the financial assistance, but for them it's a matter of status. I understand that if you are a parent and value hard work you also want your kids to appreciate that value. But not if it's just something to wear as a badge at the barbecue. My bigger concern regards the lack of emphasis upon fair play, team work and ethics in the game. It's not just about winning. Sport can be a great vehicle for personal and spiritual development, and not at the expense of their overall education. I sometimes see what is fundamentally a philosophical difference in approach between two parents. The father clearly has professional aspirations for their daughter while their mother is on a different wavelength.
>
> (Women's Coach, East University)

These extracts reflect a concern that is echoed by the majority of the students within the study that the father is frequently a significant factor in the decision-making process of the children. The transmission of values and orientation towards career expectations upon graduation appears in many cases to be a two-way process, whereby the parents influence the child and vice versa. Soccer, in this context, appears to present a scenario whereby the child informs the parent as to the merits of a scholarship as opposed to taking part in other more established sports. The athletic directors, however, appeared concerned with the financially driven expectations of parents. The concerns reflect wider philosophical issues that surround the marriage of college sport and academia (Abowitz, 2005; Howard-Hamilton and Sina, 2001). Current trends in intercollegiate athletics clearly indicate that there are conflicting philosophical aims that deviate from the educational and financial nature of intercollegiate athletics and the educational mission of universities (Lapchick, 2006). The dominant model of sport within American collegiate sport has been defined as 'professional' (Maguire et al., 2002). This model represents an infusion of profit maximisation and commercial objectives which are indicative of a shift from athletics as a diverse educational entity towards a professional enterprise.

According to these interviewees, all student-athletes are likely to experience some conflict between the demands of their sport and the responsibility of the classroom. However, it can be argued that corporate college sport is structured in such a manner that student-athletes are especially pressed to reconcile their student and athletic roles (Eitzen and Sage, 2003; Sack, 1987). Furthermore, the fact that coaches control financial aid gives them power to make demands on the time and energy of athletes (Lawrence, 2007). This responsibility is clearly acknowledged by the coaches and is apparent to parents, who, according to the interviewees, place pressure upon staff to prioritise their children and petition for financial support.

> I take the time to explain to any prospective scholarship player how important it is that they choose the best fit university. Parents naturally have a big

> say in where their child goes. In the last 12 months I've spoken to parents who cover the entire spectrum of expectations . . . from the father who lives vicariously through his kids' soccer achievements through to the mother who doesn't even return my phone calls. Often the students have a more realistic appraisal of what they can achieve via their playing career than their folks do. The ideal scenario for me is if the parent allows me to explain how the system works and what the likely outcomes are for their kid. Sometimes however I'm talking but there is no light on upstairs if you know what I mean? Strangely enough it seems like the kids have a more realistic appraisal of what a soccer scholarship can do for them. In some cases I've had the son telling their parents in my office what soccer can do for them.
>
> (Men's Coach, West University)

Coaches at both universities stated that players should select their college regardless of any financial inducements as first years. However, the financial reality and pragmatism attached to studying within the state and possibly living at home is attractive to many players and their parents.

The number of scholarship opportunities ('the myth of a full-ride')

2 'The myth of a full-ride'

Statistically, the opportunities for both men and women to play soccer and receive a scholarship are limited. Scholarship athletes within this study are categorised as those individuals receiving financial aid based solely on their playing ability rather than upon other factors, such as financial need or academic qualifications. There are 721 separate college programmes in the US with an average of six scholarship places available per institution per year. This equates to a total of 4,416 total player openings. On average, 8% of players who apply for a scholarship are awarded one. All subjects within the study agreed that there is a myth of the 'full ride' (100% scholarship financial package) amongst student applicants at both universities. However, all coaches recognised that they were in a highly competitive environment for a relatively small talent pool of players.

> A lot of people are delusional. Parents and students seem to believe that they will all receive a 100% scholarship. Having to tell kids that in some cases we can't even offer them a partial scholarship is tough. Some even think that they can negotiate with us. It makes me laugh. I understand that a university education is a serious investment and at East University we place our academic value on the same level as our athletic achievements.
>
> (Women's Coach, East University)

All four of the Division One coaches agreed that there is a widespread misunderstanding as regards the level of financial aid that is available to student-athletes and try to communicate this fact to prospective athletes.

> Some kids [student athletes] think that I'm on the same income as the Division One basketball and football coaches. They watch ESPN and receive conflicting images. They have an expectation that they will come into a very grand office. The reality surprises them [laughs]. On occasions I will have $500 remaining in my budget before the season starts with key positions still needing to be filled. The process of recruitment is crazy. I have close links with all of the high school coaches in my area and often liaise with them regarding prospects. This means going to games and on occasions speaking to the kids and their parents. They also recognise me and seek me out on the side-line. I have everyone from parents who are CEOs to parents who are probably unemployed trying to push their child or negotiate with me. Inevitably, the talented kids are the ones that you target and try to sell your program to. The average cost to attend West University is around $40–45,000 a year. After you tell parents that they inevitably ask how much their scholarship will be. When I mention that they are unlikely to receive a full scholarship they often don't believe me. The wealthier parents are particularly adamant about how much their child should receive. In the past I don't think that such parents would have even approached me. I think soccer clearly has a different resonance with kids in the US to say what it may have had when I was growing up. Once upon a time it [soccer] resonated or was stereotyped as a game played by ethnic minorities and then latterly as a 'yuppie' sport . . . you know the whole 'soccer mom' phenomenon. But that has changed. I meet with parents and kids across the entire spectrum of society. There are not too many sports that can claim that. Take for instance basketball and baseball. They both clearly have identities linked in with either the Hispanic or the African American cultural identity. Soccer does not have that label; it's something it can be proud of in my view.
>
> (Men's Coach, West University)

In opposition to the college coaches' pragmatic view of the athletic financial aid is the common perception that scholarship money is abundant. Online recruiting services and private counsellors have as a result flourished within this vacuum of uncertainty to promote the notion that some athletic scholarships go unclaimed (Pennington, 2008). To recruit athletes, university representatives in the United States are permitted, depending on the sport, two or three visits to an athlete's home; the athlete is permitted only one expense-paid visit to each campus and no more than five expense-paid visits in total (Loy et al., 1978). Only full-time employees of the university may contact athletes. According to research, recruitment violations have included, however, having alumni (boosters) entertain prospects and offer financial inducements.

> I'm concerned by the lack of realistic expectations which I hear from parents and their children from all financial backgrounds. Soccer is growing in popularity as a sport and with it I'm seeing more and more talented players, but the number of scholarship places is not expanding at the same rate. Currently at our school we potentially have three, sometimes four (new) scholarship spots open a year. According to the NCAA data however there are 9.9 scholarships (the NCAA limit) for 25 players . . . the numbers simply don't add up.
>
> (Women's Coach, East University)

The possibility of being awarded a scholarship, according to the athletic directors, appears to reflect the main themes of the American Dream, that of success, individualism and achievement orientation. University personnel clearly believe that the basic tenets of the Dream can be achieved via their scholarship program if allowances are made for the role and importance of a student's academic responsibilities.

The growing popularity of soccer in the US has been reflected by an increase in the number of universities taking part in intercollegiate competitions and subsequently an increase in scholarship places. However, the task of selecting appropriate applicants has become increasingly difficult for both coaches and administrators. This is due largely, in their view, to the cultural symbolism and economic importance that soccer and a scholarship represent to both students and their parents. It seems inevitable that the sports adopted by people in society articulate something about them. In this context, soccer scholarship students reflect a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds but unity in terms of their optimism that soccer can provide the platform for future upward mobility.

The unifying feature of all players and their parents according to the athletic directors is that the Dream via the financial support afforded by an athletic scholarship is problematic. On a deeper level, soccer appears to reflect a shift in how the sport has been viewed by the various socio-economic class divisions within society. According to the views of the directors, soccer does not appear to be the stereotypical domain of either ethnic minorities or the middle class. It now represents a reflection of the evolving nature of US cultural values and the pragmatics of funding higher education in contemporary society that typically the upper echelons of society have not been forced to consider. For the majority of the students interviewed, it was apparent that they had convinced their parents that by obtaining a soccer scholarship, they could partly fund their education and continue to take part in a sport that they enjoyed. As such, the dialogue represents an unconventional dynamic where the child socialises the parent and not vice versa.

> The reality is that few of the players that I recruit receive full scholarships for the entire duration of their degree. To obtain a full scholarship as a freshman, you would need to be considered of national team standard. Currently, all of the players on both the men and women's programmes are on 'partial'

> scholarships. That can mean approximately $400–600 per year. We don't have anyone near a full-scholarship that would equate to around $25,000 per year.
>
> (Men's Coach, West University)

> Here at East University we on average have around ten men who receive no financial aid as freshmen.
>
> (Men's Coach, East University)

> Each year we receive more applications and videos in the mail from high school coaches and recruitment agencies trying to sell their players. The reality is that competition for available places increases each year. I guess what each coach is looking for is the next Adu or Mia Hamm, in other words players who can make a difference to the team. I think prospective students recognise that our soccer program is highly competitive and that sells us an attractive proposition. We can compete with and beat most schools that are twice our size.
>
> (Athletic Director, West University)

> The competition for scholarship places at university really is becoming difficult, in particular for girls. I recently attended a conference where the NCAA stated that there are 1,800 competitive players aged between 17–18 years old. Bearing in mind that there are 301 women's teams in Division One, the mathematical chances of receiving a scholarship are small. Inevitably, most freshmen will be non-scholarship players.
>
> (Women's Coach, East University)

Statistically, the scenario of obtaining a scholarship for men is even more difficult than their female counterparts. According to the men's team coach at East University,

> At the same conference just mentioned the presenter stated that there are approximately 100,000 prospective players leaving high school each year all vying for around 1,500 scholarships.
>
> (Athletic Director, East University)

Despite the difficulties in obtaining an athletic scholarship, there is self-evidently no shortage of applicants for the small number of available places. The upward trend for applications is fuelled by what are growing concerns regarding the 'affordability' of attending a university in the US. In a 2017 report, the non-profit Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) addressed such concerns declaring that 'would-be college students' are increasingly delimited by their socio-economic status before they have even taken the SAT. Whilst students

from the highest income quintile (earning approximately $160,000 or above) can afford about 90% of the more than 2,000 colleges studied, low- and moderate-income students (earning $69,000 or less) can only afford 1 to 5% of those colleges. The conclusions presented illustrated that the cost of a student attending college had surpassed the growth of family income. In part, the report authors believe that is a reflection of financial aid, which now represents a smaller portion of tuition than it has previously. Put simply, the combined cost of living and steep rise in tuition fees has led many individuals to reconsider whether higher education is a viable option for them. The same report by IHEP estimates that during the last decade, the average cost of tuition within state higher education has increased by 44%. In contrast, the nation's median family income has only increased by 6%. This disparity has been particularly felt by those families that fall into the middle-to-low-income bracket. Somewhat inevitably, therefore, the report authors predict that in the future universities will increasingly reflect a socio-economic disparity between families of affluent and poor students. The role of the family in facilitating and funding the higher education has arguably never been more important.

3 The Americanisation of soccer

There was a clear perception amongst all coaches and athletic directors interviewed that soccer had traditionally failed to capture the attention of the media due to the widespread belief that a low-scoring game is a boring game. In addition, they all felt that structurally the game was not 'television friendly' to a media which was familiar with financing their sponsorship of sport via strategically placed television time-outs.

> In soccer, there are no natural commercial breaks for advertisers; and it does not translate well to television because the close-up shots that lend drama to other competition[s] don't work. Kids who have grown up playing soccer watch soccer on TV with a different set of expectations. They don't want to see numerous time-outs and commercial breaks. The problem for the national broadcasters is in re-educating the American public to the idea that a zero-zero score can actually reflect a great game.
>
> (East University, Men's Coach)

This view is contrasted by the opinion of the Men's coach at West University.

> I think the traditionalists have a challenge on their hands. People in 21st century America are a little more sophisticated then we can give them credit for. Soccer clearly has a traditional appeal to immigrants from Latin America and Europe, but that's now expanding. You only have to look at a snapshot of popular culture over here to see how cosmopolitan we are. We have

> sushi bars, European beer, Mexican take-aways and Italian clothing lines in our stores in every city. The list is endless. America is changing and with it I think a lot of people are looking at 'non-traditional' sports in a different way . . . have a look at the marketing of SUVs on television. On almost every commercial they have a Golden Retriever jump out of the back with two or three kids in soccer uniforms. I think soccer has played a role in making the American public a little more aware of world culture. In many ways the kids of today's generation are educating their parents as to global fashions and cultural movements. I think that soccer in contemporary society has really benefited from the expansion of the Internet. Its proliferation has meant that you don't have to rely upon the national TV stations in order to watch domestic and foreign games. Having said that Fox Sports now has a nationally syndicated programme that is devoted to domestic and international soccer.
>
> (Men's Coach, West University)

The implications for this study of this comment are that what defines popular culture in contemporary society is dynamic and evolving. Clearly in his view soccer has transcended previous notions of a dual middle class and 'soccer mom' label and embraced a wider more inclusive identity. In order to try to overcome residual traditional preconceptions of what defines American sport, the athletic director at West University suggested that methods need to be developed which would help to 'Americanise' the game, to encourage fans and the media to take soccer seriously as an American sport. He continued,

> It's a positive to make it like other [American] sports, because you don't want to alienate the American fans, make them feel like they're in another country watching a game. You want to make them feel like they're home . . . and comfortable. . . . It's not the pitch; it's the field. It's not nil – nil; it's zero – zero. You don't want to give them [the spectators] the sense that they don't know what's going on and confuse them with jargon that they are unfamiliar with. Soccer . . . has enough to overcome with historical and media prejudices towards it. Look at the English game, with pitches and nil – nils, basically who cares? Give me the facts. It's a field, it's a ball, it's one-nothing. . . . And just make it as American as possible.

At both East University and West University games, there was a concerted and observable effort on their respective marketing departments to 'Americanise' the game. When both athletic directors were asked about the rationale behind this atmosphere, they explained that it simply reflected the nature of modern American sports.

> No longer is 'the game . . . it', this is what the kids are used to over here. To the average fan . . . zero – zero [means] we didn't see any goals . . . Well . . .

> if you have the in-game promotions going on and 'Ho, look at that! That's pretty funny going on up there!' and you hear some music . . . in the background, it [music] generates that exciting atmosphere. I think . . . for the entire fan-base . . . it's a better experience. If there was nothing going on, it would be *bor-ING!*. . . . But if there's something going on, something for you to tap your feet to, or laugh at, chances are you're going to come back. Here in the States we rely heavily upon our alumni and their financial support. It's an expectation not just of them but of the wider community that support our athletic programmes that we provide entertainment. I know for the purists in Europe it may not sit very easily, but it's how we do it over here.
>
> (Athletic Director, East University)

Surprisingly, the female coaches at both universities were in agreement when observing that soccer in the USA needs to be presented in what one coach defined as the 'American model' (East University, Women's Coach).

> We knew our demographic wasn't going to be able to sit and just watch soccer games for two hours. I don't think they [the WUSA] know if the game can stand alone [She recounted how shocked her family had been that the game they had attended had been punctuated by music and announcements]. I just think that that's their culture – you know, keep the fans involved as much as possible. . . . The fans [just] need to be entertained. They don't know how NOT to be.
>
> (East University, Women's Coach)

> A lot of the blame I guess can be aimed at the MTV generation. Everything has to be done at break-neck speed, explosions, music. I blame the parents [laughs]. I'm still hopeful of a women's professional game that will establish itself over here. It has the foundation of players. We just need to sell it to our media and potentially 'Americanize' it somewhat [laughs]. If you don't have the oxygen of television coverage, the candle dies.
>
> (West University, Women's Coach)

The 'American Model' that both coaches and athletic directors refer to touches upon a variety of ideas and strategies that could be employed to further develop the game beyond its current support base. Such methods in the past have included an experimentation with 'shoot-outs' in order to resolve goal-less draws during the inaugural MLS season. However, the problem from a European perspective is the use of the term 'Americanize' when associated with soccer. According to Markovits (2007) this is an example of 'schimpfwort', or a swear word used by its detractors to discredit or stigmatise. An example can be identified in the comments of Michel Platini in 1994. According to Markovits, Platini [former UEFA president] commented that the 1994 World Cup hosted by the USA 'was outstanding, but it was like Coca Cola. Ours [France 1998] will be like champagne'

(cited in Markovits, 2007, p. 97). What is clear about Platini's comments are that regardless of actual success and achievements, soccer in the US is subject to pejorative observations both within and outside of America. To its detractors, soccer is perceived as unauthentic and crude whereas established sports by definition are refined (like champagne).

Institutions from these interviews appear to have the constant dilemma of attempting to reconcile their values with increasing revenue needs. In fact, given the evolving funding landscape, it is not always clear what American values in higher education are. Both academic and athletic officials appear to recognise that they call their legitimacy into question when they do not balance traditional academic values with commercial and professional impulses, but identifying the line between the two can be particularly challenging. It is especially so given the assumption by outsiders that the professional sports business model is naturally the most appropriate in higher education.

Just as sport within the setting of higher education is a peculiarly American phenomenon, American cultural expectations have proven an undeniable influence on intercollegiate athletics (Abowitz, 2005). Social and cultural factors have intensified the philosophical conflicts in athletics. As demonstrated, there is little doubt that athletic directors place pressure on their coaches to become concerned about spectators and the 'win-loss record' (Eitzen and Sage, 2003; Giardina and McCarthy, 2005). A concern of the findings within this study is the perception that the success or failure of spectator appeal should be the measure of the success or the standard by which excellence is to be measured in evaluating intercollegiate athletic programmes (Gorn, 2004). Conversely, as suggested by the soccer coaches, the measure of success must be the value of the learning experience and the joy of participation for the athlete.

Achievement, success and upward mobility are the basic tenets of the American Dream. For the individual players within this study, it basically states that with hard work both on and off the field the rewards will be forthcoming. The use of a scholarship in soccer appears to be indicative of the main themes of the American Dream, that of success, individualism and achievement orientation (Maguire et al., 2002). By pursuing a scholarship, students are intrinsically linked with the cultural values of mainstream US society that are in turn closely related to the American Dream. An athletic scholarship in this context appears to represent a flexible vehicle through which ideological associations with the Dream are reinforced (Guttmann, 1994; Maguire et al., 2002). Scholarship therefore becomes a cultural symbol and metaphor both for the parents and recipients of the athletic stipends. It seems inevitable that the sports adopted by people in society articulate something about them. In this context, soccer scholarship students reflect a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. However, the unifying feature of all players interviewed is a continuing belief in the veracity of the Dream. The students, however, are differentiated in terms of how they understand soccer and scholarship as contributing to career aspirations. The pursuit of the Dream via the financial support afforded by an athletic scholarship appears to

be at its most basic level a pragmatic decision on the behalf of its recipients. On a deeper level, soccer appears to reflect a shift in how the sport has been viewed by the wider American society. No longer does it appear to be the stereotypical domain of either ethnic minorities or the middle class. It now represents a reflection of the evolving nature of US cultural values and the forces of globalisation from which it cannot remain immune. A discussion of the cultural implications is presented in the next chapter.

Chapter summary

The purpose of this study was to analyse the motives for students pursuing a scholarship in soccer. The socialisation influences of female and male intercollegiate players were assessed in order to determine the sport socialisation process at work. The data from this study indicated that parents of both male and female student-athletes are likely to be actively involved in sport themselves. Parents of students appear to be supportive of their child's soccer scholarship decision. However, fathers were perceived by their children as being more challenging, enthusiastic and supportive of their sons than of their daughters. In contrast, mothers were perceived by the student-athlete as being largely neutral in terms of challenge or support. The research identified a relatively tentative positive correlation between parental expectations and socio-economic status (SES). The findings support a common hypothesis derived from various theoretical standpoints in sociology which reinforce that the family is a significant agent in socialising their children within the cultural values of the American Dream (Eitzen and Sage, 2003). The way in which sports historically have been perceived as a path to mobility has been recognised in a number of contexts. What is not known is whether scholarship students have come to value soccer as an important, valuable, and meaningful occupational path to pursue. The findings reveal support for the notion that families are important influences on their child's sport mobility orientations but are also highly influenced by their child's aspirations.

Although this study aims to address the current lack of understanding of soccer and its meaning to scholarship students, there are limitations to the generalisability of the findings. Firstly, there is the lack of variability among the participants. By restricting the study to those athletes who participate at the elite university level of competition (rather than recreational players), the study has inevitably focused on those individuals who have already invested significantly in the sport of soccer. Ideally this study would include a greater range of participants from diverse socio-economic categories.

The next chapter will provide an interpretive discussion of the results findings. In doing so, it will answer the fundamental research question of what are the motives of students for undertaking a soccer scholarship? The central themes of family, social class, social mobility and career will frame the discussion. Chapter 6 will then provide a critical analysis of student decision making from both micro and macro perspectives.

Notes

1 The GPA is the average of all the grades in classes that the student has taken in college ranging from 0–4.0.
'A+/A= 4.0 (outstanding); 'B'=3.0 (good); 'C'= 2.0 (average); 'D'=1.0 (poor); 'F' = 0.0 (failing).
An average percentage of 90–100% corresponds to a maximum GPA score of '4.0' on the student transcript.
A minimum GPA of 2.0 is required for a student to maintain his or her eligibility for scholarship according to NCAA regulations. This figure can be raised at the discretion of an institution.

2 The US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program, or ODP as it is more commonly called, is a national identification and development program for high-level players. The program identifies and develops youth players throughout the country to represent their state association, region and the United States in soccer competition. ODP teams are formed at the state association and regional levels and made up of the best players in various age groups. At the state association level, pools of players are identified in each eligible age group and brought together as a team to develop their skill through training and competition (source: www.wiyouthsoccer.com).

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Chapter 5

Discussion

This chapter aims to provide a discussion of the results according to the themes of family, social class, social mobility and education/career development. In doing so, it will address the central research question within this thesis: 'What are the motives of student-athletes for undertaking a soccer scholarship? This section will also address how scholarship athletes reflected on the role that their socialising agents played in shaping their experiences and career orientation. Blumer (1969) suggests that such objects may be classified into physical, social and abstract objects. Within the context of this approach, the veracity of the American Dream to students can then be unpacked and categorised.

Family and social class

Prior research regarding the capacity that parents provide in socialising children into and within sports served as a significant portion of the foundation for this research (Shakib and Dunbar, 2004). With regard to socialising children into sports, parents appeared to occupy a primary role for research participants (Lewko and Greendorfer, 1988; Storm and Jenkins, 2002). Frequent communication about sports with parents and a high degree of parents' visibility in a sports setting contributed to participants wanting to become involved in sports. Often, watching or playing sports with older siblings created a desire for participants to join sports teams as well. Communication and visibility have been listed as important determinants in children becoming initially interested in sports (Shakib and Dunbar, 2004; Storm and Jenkins, 2002) and are associated with social learning theory. Social learning theory suggests children are more or less socialised into sports participation. If children view their parents or family members engaging in sports in some capacity (playing, coaching, discussing, watching, and so on), then they are more likely to become involved with sports (Lewko and Greendorfer, 1988). As Shakib and Dunbar (2004) revealed in their study with male and female high school students, 'the strongest prompt to children learning about parental sports involvement was parents' athletic visibility, especially seeing parents play sports' (p. 283). This was a common theme for the participants in this study.

The results of the player questionnaire and interviews revealed that in general, most of the subjects reported that soccer feels like *both work and play*, one

reporting that it feels like *work*, one reporting it feels like *neither work nor play*, and one female participant failing to answer. Every participant reported that he or she wanted to be doing this activity (playing soccer at university), except one, who stated that she 'had no option if she wanted to attend university'. The role of the family in conceptualising a soccer scholarship as 'work' rather than 'play' appears to be a common denominator for all students within this study.

The questionnaire and interviews aimed to establish 'how players experience family dynamics of support and challenge in their scholarship and to what extent their family influenced their decision making'. The Support /Challenge Questionnaire (SCQ) model (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000) adopted for this study helped to contextualise players' views as well as group the participants into the four family typology: HC/HS, HC/LS, LC/HS, LC/LS. Interview data was used also to assess this question. The researchers' bias needs to be made overt, in that there was the possibility of looking for particular themes once the participants were categorised.

Within this study, soccer support seemed to be expressed or internalised as the time commitment and financial help parents provided for their children (Wedemeyer Moon, 2003). These forms of support came in the way of attendance as spectators at games and tournaments and even in some cases parents acting as unpaid assistants on the university soccer teams. Financial support came in the form of paying travelling and equipment expense. Communication could be seen as supportive and challenging, depending on the type of communication interaction perceived by the player. For example, if a mother were to cheer for her daughter on the soccer field, then the player perceived it as supportive. If a parent attempted to discuss the type or intensity of training, then it was viewed more as challenging. The impression from the interviews was that none of the subjects 'felt pressure' to play soccer at university. Pressure was interpreted by players more in terms of academic performance and grade point average in university. Not only are complex perceptions of challenge and support problematic to classify and understand, but it is also difficult to find a consensus in the views of the players. The subjects appeared to be sensitive to the balance of their parents being supportive and challenging without this becoming excessive and stressful. The implication from the findings is that the student-athletes assimilate either partially or completely the identity of their parent(s). According to research, 'identity formation' is a life-long process, which occurs as individuals take note of and internalise the appraisals of people whose opinions they value, and is seen as integral to healthy and adaptive development. Self-concept or self-identity is seen as multi-dimensional and is represented as a diverse set of images and conceptions about the self (Cantor et al., 1986). The many and varied self-dimensions that an individual possesses all have the potential to motivate and direct behaviour. Webb et al. (1998) proposed that the formation of a strong athletic identity is problematic because it differs from other role identities in significant ways:

> [I]t [athletic identity] is formed and internalised early in life; it is likely to dominate and subsume all other identities; it often has a public dimension due to the high profile of many sportspeople; it is defined by performance

> pressure; and it provides a high level of status and esteem which is unlikely to be achieved through other means.
>
> (p. 181)

According to the results of this study, the most effective mode of parenting appears to be found in those parents who provide their children with the reassurance that they are loved, together with the sense that a great deal is expected from them (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000).

'Communication'

Overall, parents, according to the students, tended to spend more time trying to communicate with their child, versus the child trying to communicate with the parent(s), an observation which may be indicative of the communication patterns in most families (Wedemeyer Moon, 2003). One observation that can be concluded from such results is that players perceived that 'constructive criticism' was crucial not only to their development as players but also in support of any career orientation they may wish to articulate.

'Family interaction'

Most of the subjects within this study appear to have parents who are relatively supportive and committed to their scholarship decision. Support for their scholarship decision was evidenced in the players' view by their interaction as a family unit, whether it is a discussion of soccer practice or family attendance at tournaments. Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider (2000) and Wedemeyer Moon (2003) suggest a difference between interacting with one another and having *mutually* involving activities. With the families in the study, soccer could be identified as being a mutually involved activity. According to Csikszentmihalyi (2002), it is important for individuals to act in a self-deterministic manner, in essence, to be able to choose the activity, the level and the goals associated with involvement. For example, if an individual enjoys participation in soccer simply because of the social dimensions, such as being with teammates, and parents then fail to appreciate this locus of their involvement, it creates potential issues. One potential problem is that self-motivation from the individual will probably not be comparatively and adequately high, thus the potential for impacting upon the team. Coaches may sense the lack of motivation, and problems may arise with the individual's interactions with the coach. Eventually, the player may become anxious, his or her enjoyment decreases with the demand of participating at a competitive level, and ultimately, he or she leaves soccer altogether. However, if there is open communication between the parents and child starting at a young age, then the knowledge of their child's interest would lead to a more appropriate option. In the context of this study, the result may be that the parents advise their child either not to undertake a scholarship or alternatively to opt for one at a lower-ranked university where there is less perceived pressure.

'Parental issues'

According to Sevier (2016), there are five trends that can be identified in American higher education. Firstly, there are demographic changes within the student cohort. Statistically, it is anticipated that there will be minimal growth in the Caucasian population. Simultaneously, there is continued and advanced growth among Asian and Hispanic communities. The consequence of such statistical changes is that the future consumers of higher education will be persons of colour. This observation is reinforced by the sample provided in this study. According to Howe and Strauss (2000, 2003), contemporary students are jointly funding the costs of higher education with their parents. It is evident from the results of the player survey that the 'millennial generation' have different characteristics than previous generations (Chenevert, 2004). The implication for universities, athletic directors and coaches is that they should therefore distinguish parents as an important audience. The results of both the coaches and athletic directors' interviews support this observation. At both universities, the personnel responsible for player recruitment identified the parents as being the most significant factor in guiding their child's decision making. As a consequence, parents were invited to attend all meetings between the prospective student and coach. At the meetings, the coach was acutely aware of the need to 'sell' the merits of his or her organisation. The frustration for each coach interviewed, however, lay in the need to correct what were seen as 'misguided notions' regarding the financial implications of what a scholarship offer entailed. All coaches reiterated that they 'sold' their team as part of the wider educational package that their university offered. Education and the career mobility that a degree at their institution presented were emphasised as the priorities for any student player.

Previous work by Garcia and Bayer (2005) has established that 'family variables' play a crucial role in shaping the level and perception of educational accomplishment. Similar findings are replicated within this study. Parents' occupation and education are key factors affecting the career aspirations of the student-athletes. Additionally for students, the issue of the father's level of cultural assimilation or 'Americanisation' was reinforced. In this section, a discussion of the family characteristics (educational achievements), family structure (single- or two-parent household) and occupation (socio-economic indicators) of the players will be presented.

'Parental expectations'

'Prior research on educational attainment has shown that parental education is a strong predictor of children's education' (Wojtkiewicz and Donato,1995, p. 560). The pattern that emerges reveals that parents who themselves are highly educated recognise the importance of education and reinforce the goals of higher education within a philosophy of deferred gratification. As role models of educational success, they aim to establish a context in which educational attainment

is encouraged. This view is supported by Teachman (1987), who stated that 'parents with a higher level of education and income probably have more ability and motivation to create educational resources . . . which facilitate the academic development of a child' (p. 549). In their study of Latino groups, Wojtkiewicz and Donato (1995) identified that

> Almost all respondents with college-educated parents graduated from high school . . . [While] less than two-thirds of those with high school dropout parents completed high school.
>
> (p. 565)

This study provides persuasive data to support the belief that parental educational attainment has a profound influence upon that of the child. However, the study also reveals that members of certain Hispanic subdivisions (Puerto Ricans and Mexicans) were more likely to have parents with educational levels of achievement 'considerably less than whites' (Wojtkiewicz and Donato, 1995, p. 565).

'Family structure'

An additional variable that is worthy of discussion is the composition of the family unit. Although this typically includes the number of siblings and the impact that has on educational attainment, for the intention of this thesis, the impact of whether or not both parents are present is discussed. Previous research, most notably, the Moynihan Report (1965) stated that the

> The absence of a father is destructive to children, particularly boys because it means that children will lack the economic resources, role model, discipline, structure and guidance that a father provides.
>
> (cited in Biblarz and Raftery, 1999, p. 321)

Critics of the generalisability of the Moynihan Report identify that its analysis is restricted simply to considering the context of female matriarchal African-American households. However, Biblarz and Raftery (1999) claim that it can apply to wider society due to the impact of the divorce rate in the late 20th and 21st century. There are strong similarities here with the work of Beck (1992). He argues, 'The need for a shared inner life, as expressed in the ideal of marriage and bonding, is not a primaeval need. It grows with the losses that individualisation brings as the obverse of its opportunities' (p. 105). He goes on to argue that conflict within the modern family reflects those inherent within modern society at large. Structural change has led to intensive individualisation in all spheres of western culture, including career aspirations. Giddens (1992) defines this idea as the 'project of the self' in which modern individuals require constantly to improve or remake themselves. Within such a system, Smart (1997, 2000) hypothesises that relationships need to be constantly reappraised, remade

or remaindered. Evidence of the dynamic nature of evolving relationships can be seen in the majority of the subjects' interviews. Of particular note is the dynamic nature of debate that exists both between family members and the children regarding career aspirations.

Typically, what defines a conventional family background has changed to include single and blended family hierarchies. At issue, though, is whether educational attainment is affected by which parent is the head of the household. This variable is further complicated when consideration is given to parental occupation and perceptions of poverty. According to Garcia and Bayer (2005), children are frequently exposed to a dynamic range of cultural and socio-economic factors within any household. The impact of which according to Biblarz and Raftery (1999) is that children in families with incomes defined as being 'below the poverty level' are nearly twice as likely as their more advantaged classmates to be held back a grade level. The problem is particularly of concern when families are headed by parents 'who are non-white and Hispanic' (García, 2001, p. 27). García adds that 'poor students are three times more likely to become dropouts than students from more economically advantaged homes' (2001, p. 27).

A number of researchers have theorised that female-headed household are stereotyped as dysfunctional. As a result of this label, a self-fulfilling prophecy of low educational accomplishment is inevitable (Chenevert, 2004). Battle and Scott (2000) within this context posit,

> educational achievement levels of African American males living in single parent families differ depending on the gender of the parent with whom they live.
>
> (p. 95)

Battle and Scott (2000) argue that there are a host of factors working against the educational attainment of young black males, only one of which is parenting. In evaluating the educational attainment of black males, they argue that one must also consider the discriminatory impact of policies and procedures within the school system. For those students who choose to engage the system, discrimination in access to education is evident (Garcia and Bayer, 2005). In addition, self-esteem and self-concept appear to be affected by discrimination, and this too can impact educational attainment. Battle and Scott (2000) make a valid point in considering the many factors leading to low educational attainment for children from single-parent households. What is revealing from this section is the emphasis that students placed upon the relationships with their parents and not simply upon their family structures. There is also an interesting focus on the way in which the students adapt and change rather than their parents or their family. Many of the changes are portrayed by the students as positive (i.e., exercising choice and their independence), although the students interviewed also recognised the potential to feel 'trapped' by being sensitive to parental feelings.

'Education'

Since 1983, when the NCAA first set minimum standards for first-year students to be eligible to play on Division One college teams, there have been many attempts to make intercollegiate programmes more academically responsible (Coakley, 2007). All three NCAA divisions have claimed that education is a primary rationale for their existence. However, graduation rates traditionally amongst student-athletes have consistently failed to match those of their non-scholarship peers (Carpenter et al., 2018). The most recent rules for eligibility went into effect in 2003, and according to critics of the NCAA, they can be interpreted in any number of ways therefore opening the door to abuse and corruption. Advocates of the current ambiguous structure argue that the university experience allows student-athletes to fund their higher education and creates opportunities for future employment. A related issue is whether involvement as a student-athlete facilitates desirable character attributes that are recognised by future employers. This idea has its origins in ancient Greece and the belief that health and well-being was a function of both a sound mind and a sound body (i.e., mens sana in corpore sano). This view is reinforced by the athletic directors at both institutions, who emphasised the role that their sports programmes played in facilitating character development through high standards of sportsmanship. Both universities had in the last three seasons been awarded 'fair play' awards by their soccer conference. Coaches at both universities stressed that their strict codes of conduct ensured that players wanted to win but not at any cost to the values of fair play. The athletic director at East University was clearly proud of the graduates and the role that they had in the local community and spoke in positive terms of how several former players had gone on to become high-profile members within the local chamber of commerce. Both programmes emphasised that a degree from their university afforded graduates a platform for future success in whatever their chosen field was.

'Goals'

When interviewing the participants regarding their career goals, most of the answers were discussed in general terms (Wedemeyer Moon, 2003). The majority of the participants had a vague idea of goals but not concretely. Most participants mentioned that they have short-term goals, and some talked about long-term goals too. Long-term goals included maintaining their scholarship and ultimately obtaining a 'good job' and making money. Short-term goals included doing well academically at university and working hard to improve their personal performance levels in soccer. This not only demonstrates future-oriented goal setting, but it helps establish personal responsibility and individuation. Evidently, if players only strive for goals that their parents set for them, then there is the potential for disappointment to follow and possibly resentment to set in.

Csikszentmihalyi (2002) identifies the importance of individuals being able to set their own goals independently of their significant others. If this is facilitated by sensitive interaction between the parent(s) and the player, a state of 'flow' may be achieved in which intrinsic motivation for the player is promoted. The observations of this study suggest that the subjects were not in most cases the sole goal makers but rather that there was evidence of mutual goal setting, as well as individual goal setting. The interaction between parents and their child in terms of their motivation for selecting a soccer scholarship is evidently an important factor. Communication between the player and his or her significant others clearly impacts upon goal setting for the scholarship. Within the context of 'significant others', players discussed the role of their parents, siblings and previous high school coach as significant in helping to shape their aspirations. Feedback from those individuals who are respected was a critical component in student goal setting. The role of such 'informative feedback' is important according to research, so goals can be adjusted and readjusted to fit skills and challenges of experiences (Colman and Carron, 2001). All players commented that from an early age, their performance in games was compared to others' in the team. This form of personal comparison by their parents and coaches allowed them to set goals and in most cases was seen as a key reason why they had been offered a scholarship in later life. The setting of personal goals at a young age was seen by the subjects as facilitating their drive or intrinsic motivation to succeed. According to research, this technique allows the child to feel more in control of his or her actions and goals and facilitates an internal locus of control (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000; Davis and Duncan, 2006). This locus of control was inadvertently promoted by all the coaches when organising their team and individual goals for the season. Each coach emphasised that players should not compare themselves to other teams and outside sources that they had no control over. This, they believed, de-motivated individuals and often led to player frustration and in some cases acquiescence from the team and their degree. To avoid a sense of 'powerlessness', coaches discussed at length the mechanisms by which they negotiated and agreed upon personal performance goals with each player. This, they felt, ultimately empowered the player and in doing so helped him or her to formulate realistic goals on and off the field.

'Expectations'

Expectations as regards student career aspirations fit closely with goal setting. The impression from the results is that many players assimilated their parents' expectations. Family interaction, goals and expectations can be traced back to the importance of communication between the subjects and their families. The discussion presented so far has revealed the impact of family and perceptions of social class upon student motives for undertaking a soccer scholarship. The different forms and compositions of family represented by the subjects within this study demonstrate that the family is not necessarily 'functional' to the social

well-being of the student. As such, the family may in fact be a problematic variable with the decision-making strategies of the student. The next section provides a treatise of the diverse range of opinions regarding social mobility and notions of student career development.

'Social mobility and career development'

A number of case studies over the years have examined the occupational attainment of former college athletes (Eitzen and Sage, 2003; Loy, 1969; Sack and Thiel, 1979). Schrupp (1952) compared lettermen and non-athletes at the University of Minnesota and found that lettermen entered careers that paid higher incomes. Husband (1957) found the same to be true of Dartmouth graduates. Litchfield and Cope (1962) studied members of the University of Pittsburgh's 1963 football team and found that, as a group, they had been very successful after graduation. Not surprisingly, Crawford (1962) found Yale football lettermen over the years to have pursued a wide variety of lucrative and influential careers.

Detailed studies of the effects of college sport on social mobility are few in number, and there are no studies which are based on a representative sample of athletes from a wide variety of athletic programmes. Loy's (1969) study of 845 UCLA athletes is one of the few that considered occupational attainment while controlling the socio-economic background of the athletes' parents. Loy found that athletes in all sports had moved well beyond their fathers in occupational prestige and educational attainment. Loy's study provides convincing evidence that star athletes at UCLA have experienced significant occupational mobility. Loy's study, however, does not make comparisons to other schools, nor does it compare star athletes with 'journeymen', or athletes with non-athletes at UCLA.

Sack and Thiel (1979) compared football players with non-athletes who graduated from Notre Dame between 1946 and 1965. They found that there was little difference between athletes and the general student population in terms of occupational mobility. In other words, there was no evidence that playing football was either a help or a hindrance to subsequent occupational success. There were a number of differences however. Among athletes and non-athletes who came from similar SES backgrounds, the non-athletes had earned far more advanced degrees. It was also found that first team athletes had experienced far more income mobility than second team members and reserves. The major implication of the Loy study, as well as the Sack and Thiel study, is that if athletes can graduate from a school with a reasonably good reputation, they are likely to experience considerable social mobility. There is little doubt that college sport (in some universities) has served as an avenue of social mobility for large numbers of Americans from lower social class backgrounds.

With the forecast of fame and fortune, it is no surprise that the dream of many adolescents in the United States is to become a professional athlete. The route for many aspiring to this goal is via intercollegiate athletics. Seemingly, such a career path fulfils the ideal of uniting a vocation with an avocation. To play

the sport that one loves, to be paid an extraordinary salary, and to be treated as a celebrity certainly has its appeal. The narrative of the American Dream, presented in Chapter 1, detailed the fascination of the US public with stories of athletes turning defeat into victory and in doing so securing upward social mobility. The question arises, however, whether the subjects within the study regard a career within soccer as a viable and realistic mechanism by which to pursue the American Dream. The results of the study clearly demonstrated that students have adopted a pragmatic approach to their scholarship. This view was possibly best summarised by Tracey who said that

> I don't think that being enrolled as a student-athlete as opposed to simply being a student is problematic. In theory, I get the best of both worlds. My family are firm believers in the value of sport and how it can help to teach you things about yourself, such as toughness and determination. I like to think that I'm a well-rounded individual who can balance the priorities of when to focus on my studies and when I can target soccer. I think when I graduate my efforts here will be appreciated by any employer.

However, students also acknowledged that by accepting a scholarship, they would be potentially making sacrifices in other areas of their academic life. Many educators and observers of Division One college athletics have expressed concerns that the time and energy spent on athletics prevents student-athletes from having a balanced college experience (Abowitz, 2005; Dubois, 1980). The literature surrounding the scholarship commitment often refers to students being asked to make a decision whether to take part in curricular or extra-curricular commitments. The surveyed student-athletes in this study, however, perceived their experience differently. The majority of respondents estimated their college experience as 'excellent' or 'good'. In addition, the majority of student-athletes stated that their college experience was balanced even though, as is evident from responses to other parts of the questionnaire, they recognise that they are precluded from having all the experiences they would like while in college.

The commitment to a university education was emphasised by all subjects within the study, as evidenced by Paul when he stated, 'I only have one priority; my degree is the reason why I'm here'. Athletic scholarships have frequently been cited as key inducements that attract students to higher education (Eitzen and Sage, 2003; Giardina and McCarthy, 2005). Three-quarters of the students in this study stated that they would attend college even if they were not awarded a scholarship. A majority also stated that they would participate in soccer without a scholarship if that were financially possible. Such responses undermine but help to integrate education and sport towards social mobility and simultaneously reinforce the claimed importance of athletics in attracting to college individuals who otherwise would not attend.

When the student-athletes were asked during their interview to evaluate the importance of graduation to them, 92.5% responded that it is very important

(99.3% if the comparison includes important and somewhat important responses). Students within the study believed that their scholarship provided them with a broader view of life which would be recognised by future employers.

> The scholarship has allowed me to travel extensively. Playing soccer at university has certainly taught me some 'life lessons' that cannot be picked-up in a tutorial. I think I'm more confident as a person. My folks certainly think I've come out of my shell. I think they appreciate my commitment to the scholarship. It's been hard work, but I feel they respect me for persevering with it.
>
> (Christopher)

> I'm someone who has had to struggle for everything that I have achieved. When I put on my curriculum vitae what I have achieved to date, I'm sure any employer will recognise my accomplishments, especially if they are familiar with the neighbourhood that I came from. The scholarship has been tough balancing my studies and playing requirements. If you aren't committed to both, then the coach and your professors will give you a rough ride. My ideal boss would be someone who has been through a sports scholarship themselves and that way they will appreciate my commitment on and off the field.
>
> (Mikael)

Another matter much discussed within the interviews was whether being enrolled as a student-athlete in a Division One program was perceived as an asset or liability in terms of their personal development (Heck and Takahashi, 2006). The study results show that over 60% of the players identify themselves more as athletes than as students. This result is not surprising given the limited interaction that scholarship students potentially have with their peers outside of athletic environments. According to the student-athletes, a 'typical day' would require soccer practice from 8:00 a.m. to approximately 10:30 a.m. Academic classes would then run from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Strength and conditioning sessions would be scheduled from 3:00 p.m. until 4:30 p.m. Following the completion of the gym session, students would then return to the classroom from 6:00 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. The majority of the soccer games were played on a Friday evening or Sunday afternoon with the occasional game taking place on a Wednesday. If the games on a Sunday took place away from campus, then the team would normally leave on a Thursday morning and return after the game on a Sunday evening. Players expressed concerns on how this timetable impacted not only upon their available time to complete their academic assignments but also on the time available in which they could obtain a part-time job to supplement their scholarship.

Student-athletes, according to the NCAA, are subject to the '20-hour rule'. This means that they are only supposed to practice for a maximum of 20 hours, excluding the time spent during games. However, what became apparent from

interviewing the players was that after they had allowed for 'optional' or 'voluntary' weight-lifting and practice sessions, then their commitments both on and off the field clearly became demanding. Players felt obliged to take part in all of the 'voluntary' sessions in order to avoid being criticised by their coach. According to Mikael,

> We were not about to complain, because we knew we would be yelled at by our coaches and also we were sure that the other teams were doing this as well. So, to stay on the same level of everyone else, we felt like we had to comply with this.

The 'stigma' associated with being a student-athlete was noted by Tracey when she observed that:

> The seclusion of the athletic culture was something that I had to face. It is often hard to meet other students and/or join other organizations because of the reputation/stigma that athletes have amongst the student population as well as amongst professors. I only faced one anti-athlete professor once, and I immediately dropped his class. I knew that regardless of the quality of the material that I handed in, I was going to be graded unfairly. There would be no exceptions if I had to miss a class/quiz or exam due to a travelling date and or a game.

The pattern that emerges from the majority of those studied, however, is a generally positive picture of college life as experienced by a large majority of student-athletes. The responses obtained for this research project clearly contradict the often-stated claims of commentators that student-athletes are exploited or denied the opportunity to be 'real' students. It may be, of course, that student-athletes misrepresent or inaccurately perceive their college experience and that their responses belie the reality of that experience. Equally, it may be that their responses reflect what educators and others see as false values or as a failure to attach the appropriate importance to various aspects of college life. These claims, however, are predicated upon the rationale that there are clear components of an undergraduate education that should be imposed on all students without regard to particular predilections or career goals. The concern that involvement on a scholarship had a negative impact on their career potential was also raised. As noted with Tracey and Mikael, the commitments necessary to maintain a soccer scholarship were highlighted as an issue. The requirement to attend training sessions every day meant that student-athletes were prevented from taking part in programmes such as internships and foreign study exchanges and from joining other social/recreational groups. In the view of two players who have declared aspirations to pursue a career in professional soccer, this requirement was rationalised as a necessary sacrifice if they were to achieve their dream. The data examined here looked at the American Dream from the perspective of students on

a soccer scholarship. As a group, college students in this study believe in the American Dream. Like their parents and grandparents before them, they believe that people can 'live well' in America.

Chapter summary

One key implication to be drawn from this research is the magnitude of parents' impact upon moulding the career aspirations of their child. The parent was recognised by all interviewees as a highly significant and potentially problematic influence in moulding their decision making and motivation for embarking upon a soccer scholarship. This process appears to be established at a young age and evolves throughout their life. The majority of the students had a great deal of enthusiasm for taking part in soccer at university, many of whom declaring that they would play soccer regardless of any potential financial incentives that they may or may not be offered.

Families within the study were categorised according to the specific themes of (a) Family interaction, (b) Communication, (c) Expectations, and (d) Goals (Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000). The dynamics that emerged revealed that students fell into the typology of High Challenge / High Support, High Challenge / Low Support, Low Challenge / High Support, and Low Challenge / Low Support.

The results of the study clearly reveal that the majority of students embarking on a soccer scholarship are motivated by the need firstly to finance their higher education and secondly to take part in a sport they have played since childhood. The students clearly identified that their career orientation was established by parents who were both highly challenging and highly supportive. The research has also revealed a varied relationship between family, individual agency, sport, education and some sense of aspiration for the players, all of which are underpinned by a desire to facilitate upward mobility. The concept of the 'American Dream' is arguably reflected within the students sampled for this research. Student-athletes have embraced the narrative that identifies hard work and dedication as factors for both social and monetary success. From a macro perspective, the study recognised the broader socio-cultural environments, their educational structures, family processes and value systems which impact upon their social lives. The complex interplay and transmission presented an overall 'feel' of the culture in which the players operated. From a micro perspective, the study presented a broad spectrum of individual needs for undertaking a scholarship. At this more intimate level, the participants generally were in agreement that the concept of the American Dream was for them real, tangible and achievable via the vehicle of their scholarship. The foundation for soccer to enter the consciousness of the American people has been clearly demonstrated by its traditional popularity amongst 'grassroots' participants of both genders. However, the increasing number of spectators and subsequent commercial interest in the professional game now allows it to 'challenge for acceptance' within the broader lexicon of American sporting and educational culture. The Dream and thus the

central drama of US culture appear to be the dynamics of status advancement. Soccer scholarship students seem to reinforce such philosophical traditions.

The education system in the United States has been consistently identified as the most effective, efficient and non-discriminatory mechanism for all citizens to improve their economic standing (McMurrer and Sawhill, 1998; Sack, 1987, 2001; Stempel, 2005). By undertaking a degree, individuals with low socio-economic status are encouraged to believe that they can increase their income potential and therefore earn more than their parents. The challenge of the American Dream is then to exceed the achievements of their parents and challenge those in the upper income quintiles. Generally speaking, each supplementary level of education an individual achieves, whether it is as a college graduate or ultimately via an advanced post-graduate professional degree, is presupposed to add greatly to income levels (Barnett and Belfield, 2006). Education could therefore be regarded as a ritual affirmation of American social mobility and arguably a conduit for status advancement. The subjects within this study appeared to have internalised such values and status markers from their parents. However, what is also apparent is that the process of socialisation within the concept of the Dream appears to have become a two-way transmission process in which the children have socialised their parents into recognition of the role that soccer can play in the goal of upward mobility. The concept of 'commitment' to both academic and playing responsibilities was a common feature of the students interviewed in the study. As identified by Grey (1994) new careers such as in this study, those facilitated by athletic scholarships, are defined by individuals taking responsibility for their own careers. As such, the soccer scholarship was potentially what Grey would refer to as 'a project of the self' (p. 479). Within this context, students frequently referred to the role of their parents in providing the necessary supportive environment and where necessary the challenge to maintain the commitment to and energy for their scholarship. Students within the concept of commitment also referred to their playing position within their team, roles and functions they had. This sense of 'loyalty' both to their teammates and families was evident in their commitment to what was evidently a highly time-consuming and demanding role of both student and athlete. The family was crucial in maintaining the dedication of the individual to his or her scholarship and as such represents a distinctive dimension to their occupational identity. Soccer within this context represented a frame of reference and distinctive self-image that was clearly acquired during childhood.

Soccer, in this study, enabled students to both maintain a definitive self-image and fund their education. This finding somewhat contradicts the earlier research of Veblen (1914), who has previously observed that one's training and socialisation into a distinctive role may lead to 'trained incapacity' or the likelihood that possibilities in other occupations are neglected. In fact, the results of this thesis reveal the opposite; students are acutely aware of the upward mobility possibilities that can emerge from their athletic scholarship. A more adequate explanation, sociologically, is that students are aware of the enabling and constraining

features of the network of relationships that emerge from successful completion of their degree and the role that a scholarship plays in facilitating that goal. The students appeared to be fully aware of the uncertainty of a career in soccer after graduation from university. The highly competitive labour market in which both domestic and international professional soccer operates had resulted in the subjects presenting a pragmatic perspective towards ambitions of pursuing a professional career in soccer upon graduation. Students were aware of the uncertainty of the marketplace and the limitations of their own technical ability. As such, their participation in the scholarship could be considered to be a pragmatic adaptation of a 'labour of love' (Roderick, 2006). Typically, this adapted definition would explain the subject's clear enthusiasm for the game mixed with its use as a vehicle of upward mobility. The next and final chapter will provide an analysis of the cultural implications of the study from both a micro and macro level.

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Chapter 6

Conclusions

The data examined in this study considered the American Dream from the perspective of student-athletes undertaking a soccer scholarship at two liberal arts universities. As a cohort, the athletes sampled within the research broadly reflected the traditional view of their relatives that 'success' in life is a reflection of one's determination, hard work and initiative. 'Failure' to achieve in life is therefore not a reflection of family circumstances but of a lack of endeavour on the behalf of the individual. The implications of this study potentially touch upon a few contentious issues relating to contemporary interpretations of the American Dream as a vehicle of upward mobility. The students represented within this study fall into what GQRR (2005) regards as the vanguard of a new generation.

> Generation Y is the most diverse generation in the nation – only 61 percent call themselves white compared to 84 percent among Americans older than 65 years. Fueled by waves of new immigration and birthrates in immigrant communities, this generation is on the vanguard of transforming the nation, which will be majority non-white by mid-century.
>
> (p. 8)

The millennial cohort of young adults *a.k.a.* 'Generation Y' or 'Millennials' (typically born between1981–96 surveyed within this study) are caught between the values and ideals of the more politically contentious 'Baby Boomers' (born 1946–64) and the more disenfranchised 'Generation Xers' (born 1965–1980) (Abowitz, 2005; GQRR, 2005). The 'Generation Y' sampled arguably represent a departure from their predecessors in terms of their scholarship decision making and attitudes towards what higher education represents. By opting to pursue an athletic scholarship in soccer, they are displaying that the sport has gained traction and widespread acceptance within mainstream US society. GQRR's earlier study clearly reflects that many young Americans are faced with the dilemma of reconciling their own individualistic personal goals and values within a global perspective that may challenge a pervasive historical narrative. As young Americans mature, therefore, they are being forced to confront that conflict and negotiate their principles.

A sport that statistically offers few opportunities to progress on to a career as a professional athlete (both domestically and overseas) appears to be more of a 'labour of love', one that started in childhood and continues into adulthood. The cohort, however, do represent a degree of continuity with regards to a continued belief in the ideology of achievement which is at the core of James Truslow Adams's interpretation of the American Dream. As a result, the students appear determined to keep faith in the vehicle of higher education as a mobility escalator upon which they can achieve their personal and career ambitions.

For the college personnel interviewed in the study, the conclusions reinforce that this is not a cohort of apathetic individuals who have an expectation of success founded on privilege and family background. The student-athletes evidently aspire to live the American Dream and have the expectation of achieving it. The economic reality of funding a four-year undergraduate degree in modern America is not lost on the students sampled in this study. Clear evidence is provided that maintenance of an athletic scholarship whilst balancing a commitment towards academic studies is challenging and requires significant dedication, commitment and personal sacrifice for student-athletes.

Social class and class relations are clearly integral to the shape and content of US sport in the 21st century. The meritocratic ideology that underpins the Dream drives a combination of individual achievement and consumption. But do students always 'get what they deserve and always deserve what they get' via the current system? This rhetorical question represents the concerns highlighted in Chapters 4 and 5 and highlights a number of issues, which may help to contextualise how universities operate the sports enterprises they created.

Intercollegiate sports began in the United States during the mid-19th century, a time of rapid industrialisation as well as rapid growth in higher education. However, its development into a business enterprise and part of the entertainment industry did not take part until the first part of the 20th century. During this period, intercollegiate sport, especially basketball and football, attracted thousands of spectators to newly built stadiums. Aggressive marketing and television coverage have all combined to incorporate 'big-time' collegiate sport into one of the most popular components of the national sports industry. Contemporary college sport is a business enterprise and also part of the entertainment industry. But the official ideology of the universities and their controlling organisation, the NCAA, is that college sport is amateur sport. Within this structure, students are awarded a scholarship as compensation for their athletic endeavours. In college sport, the ideology of amateurism constructs a 'surface reality' that denies the existence of corporate influence while at the same time serving as one. As a consequence, elite Division One athletics has been protected by the media and its marketplace. As a result, critics of the NCAA (Slack, 2003) argue that it has presented itself as a hybrid education / amateur sport association rather than an athletic corporation. The 'veil of amateurism' that Slack and others refer to serves to obscure the corporate functions at the core of college sport while simultaneously presenting the image that college sport is about students and education. The gap

between the principles of what Sperber (2000) has called 'College Sport Inc.' and the primacy of education has led to a consensus of belief that reform is necessary in order to protect the integrity of higher education. The challenge for such institutions however is in the financial sacrifices that separating from a professional sports model will have upon higher education.

The philosophical debate surrounding collegiate sport and its relationships with commercial forces can be traced to a landmark court ruling in 1953. The challenge surrounded confusion regarding the definition of employee-employer relationships that had been established when athletic scholarships were first awarded to college athletes for their services on the field of play (Gorn, 2004; Slack, 2003). Until 1953, a college athlete was eligible for financial assistance on the basis of academic performance and financial need. The court ruling led to a change in the criteria used from one based on academic performance to one based on athletic performance. As a consequence, the relationship between college athletics and educational institutions was reshaped.

Elite athletic ability can be regarded as a rare and finite commodity; therefore, to succeed, colleges have, since 1953, competed aggressively for those individuals who as student-athletes can win games (Coakley, 2007; Slack, 2003). The relationship between education and athletics in contemporary America has become so deeply entwined that it is logical to assume this relationship is entirely appropriate and harmonious. Inevitably cultural observers have tended to consider establishments as being part of the cultural fabric of society if they have been in existence for an established period of time. Rather inevitably therefore, intercollegiate sports have become accepted as a feature of contemporary American society and higher education because of their formation approximately 150 years ago (Cousens and Slack, 2002). Collegiate athletics therefore appears to have become an intrinsic element of what takes place in higher educational institutions. Furthermore, some of the most high status and prestigious Ivy League institutions of the United States, including Yale, Harvard, Brown, Princeton, Cornell, Columbia and University of Pennsylvania, are at the forefront of promoting and developing collegiate athletic programmes (Garcia and Bayer, 2005). This approbation by highly prestigious institutions has served to further reinforce the bond between athletics and academics and arguably lends legitimacy to the view that collegiate sport is a central component of American higher education (Lapchick, 2006). Inevitably, there have been fervent and impassioned criticisms of the marriage between sport and higher education:

> Student athletes are now an integral part of their university and its cartel (the NCAA) highly lucrative commercial entertainment enterprise. Concerns regarding the financial remuneration that student athletes receive has led to calls for wide scale college sport reform.
>
> (Singer et al., 2016)

The term 'slave wages' is clearly an emotive one but is used advisedly by Singer et al. and others to underline the perceived 'exploitation' by universities and

their regulator (the NCAA) of student-athletes. Founded in 1906 to 'protect young people from the dangerous and exploitive athletics practices' of universities at the time, the NCAA recently declared revenues of over $1.1 billion for the fiscal year ending 2017 (Axon, 2018). The financial details revealed within their report identify what appears to be a growing dependence upon the commercial appeal and revenue generated by the men's Division One football and in particular the men's basketball competition. There appears to be mounting concern that the NCAA and its member institutions treat their student-athletes as 'commodities' whose athletic abilities are exploited by their parent universities in return for stadium ticket sales, endorsements and donations (Patterson, 2015). The media's role in the commodification and glamorisation of the lives of black athletes is key, according to Patterson.

> However, the black male student-athletes are not a part of this reality perpetuated by the media. The pressure and desire for these athletes to succeed negatively impacts their ability to fully experience college, immerse themselves in their studies, and prepare for careers and life beyond professional sports. On the contrary, they often feel like outsiders on their college campuses.
>
> (Patterson, 2015, p. 3)

Many educational institutions have elevated their level of national and international recognition via the talent, achievements and commercial appeal of their student-athletes. For instance, Notre Dame University, Ohio State University and University of Pennsylvania enthusiastically promote their achievements on the American football field whilst the universities of Duke, North Carolina and Tennessee take pride in the national success of their student-athlete basketball teams. The benefits of high-profile sporting success for institutions focus upon boosted name recognition, commercial opportunities and connotations of excellence that athletic prowess conveys in terms of student recruitment and business opportunities. Television ratings and commercial revenue for the NCAAA and its member institutions are consistently high, owing largely to the popularity of two major revenue sports and their elite male student-athlete teams who compete in football and basketball (Sanderson and Siegfried, 2015). The attention paid to one of those sports (men's basketball) peaks each year with the start of the tournament often referred to as 'March Madness'. The championship game in 2017 for example had a TV viewership of 23 million (Statista, 2017). To put this in perspective, the college sports industry is estimated to generate revenue for the NCAA of approximately $12–16 billion dollars per year (LeRoy, 2015; Lonick, 2015) of which over 50 (of the 351 Division One institutions) generate close to $70 million per year in athletic revenues and 28 institutions generated annual athletic revenues that exceed $100 million (ibid.).

The popularity of NCAA tournaments in terms of generating revenue via the sale of associated tournament television and marketing rights is predicated upon the talent of its student-athletes. Conversely, some researchers now believe that the NCAA is becoming increasingly exposed and vulnerable with regard

to its reliance on both the characterisation of its talent (i.e., college athletes as 'amateurs' who are first and foremost 'student-athletes') and with limits imposed upon the level of remuneration any student-athlete can receive (Sanderson and Siegfried, 2015). Several high-profile student-athletes, head coaches and indeed entire athletic programs have been embarrassed and ultimately sanctioned following allegations of gross impropriety involving faculty and university administrators in what appears to be an attempt to circumvent limits on permissible financial payments (i.e., athletic scholarships in the form of tuition fees and associated student expenses) to student-athletes (Edelman, 2017).

In recent years, numerous commentators have called for the NCAA to 'relax' its rules prohibiting athlete pay (Bush, 2017; Edelman, 2017; Hawkins, 2017). This movement to allow athletes to share in the revenues of college sports arises from the belief that college athletes sacrifice too much time, personal autonomy and physical health to justify their lack of pay. Critics of the NCAA further criticise their 'no pay' rules for restricting the revenues derived from college sports 'in the hands' of a select few administrators, athletic directors and coaches. Nevertheless, opponents of 'pay for play' contend that several problems will emerge from lifting the NCAA's 'no pay' rules. One problem, opponents argue, is that granting college athletes the legal status of 'employees' would convert the athletes' tax-exempt scholarships into taxable income – a result that may offset any economic benefits of 'pay for play'. Their argument, however, according to Edelman (2017) is regarded as 'fallacious', disingenuous and dubious by explaining that appropriate tax planning could feasibly allow colleges to pay their athletes without requiring the athletes to pay taxes on their educational scholarships. Edelman concludes his analysis of a potential student-athlete pay model by observing that it is understandable why some universities and politicians have expressed trepidation regarding such a revolutionary new approach. For those Division One institutions with large athletics programs to share their revenues with their student-athletes, it would inevitably challenge and force them to reconsider their institutional investment strategy and priorities (i.e., whether to reinvest into other programs or to allocate to athletics). In addition, Edelman notes that for those colleges that do not substantially profit from their athletic programs, the 'pay for play' model forces them to choose between forgoing the recruitment of elite athletes, cutting expenses in other ways or potentially increasing operating losses. In either scenario, the NCAA and their institutional partners have a joint responsibility to create a compensation model for their athletes which is both fair, reasonable and reflective of the athletes' role in helping to create a multibillion-dollar business that thrives upon athlete skill, dedication and performance.

'Soccer and American Exceptionalism'

In 1998, the social scientist Andrei Markovits first published his scholarly narrative that soccer in the United States has to date failed and will continue to

fail in establishing more than a 'marginal' presence in American sports culture. His thesis considers a number of interrelated factors, labelled as 'cultural-anthropological' and 'organizational-institutional', but the focus of the narrative is predicated upon the instrumental 'historical-sociological' 'crowding out' of the game by the prior emergence, success and monopolisation of the country's emotional attachments (baseball as a sport for the American masses in spring and summer and American football as a sport for the middle and upper-middle classes in autumn). As a result, soccer encounters an 'exceptional' experience in America by being denied access to all but a marginal audience. The deterministic model proffered by Markovits, however, clearly fails to acknowledge what is a contemporary trend towards 'cultural convergence' or globalisation that the US is neither 'exceptional' to nor immune from its effects. Soccer and its global popularity represent a challenge to historical and outdated notions of it being an 'outsider' that cannot penetrate affinities to a provincial hegemonic sports culture in the US (Collet, 2016).

It is undeniable that the development of American sport has followed the contours laid down by developments in American society (Bairner, 2001). In particular, the possibility that professional sport franchises could be uprooted and reconstituted in a different metropolis would be unthinkable were it not for the level of urbanisation in the United States and incentives for sports entrepreneurs to move to exploit the new population centres. Proponents of the franchise model argue that the net result has been to integrate even more Americans into a national sports system while simultaneously providing them with greater opportunities to celebrate the uniqueness of their own city identities. If one were to equate globalisation with Americanisation, it would be meaningless to ask how successfully American sport has resisted the former. Conversely, if globalisation derives from a multiplicity of sources and travels in many directions, it is reasonable to examine its impact on the United States. The evidence displayed in this study reveals that soccer from both a participant and spectator perspective is growing at a faster rate than any of the more established sports of the 'Big Four'. The question 'why?' challenges existing notions that soccer has been 'crowded out' of the American sporting landscape as a consequence of the development of indigenous sports. According to Markovits (1998), 'Bourgeois America created a new identity which prided itself on being explicitly different from that found anywhere in aristocratic Europe' (pp. 128–129). As a result, American football and baseball established themselves as sports and occupied the sports space that might otherwise have been occupied by soccer. According to Markovits, '[I]t is particularly America's bourgeois hegemony and legacy of the "first new nation"' (p. 125) which contributed significantly to the continued absence of the world's most popular team sport as a major presence in American popular culture. Yet, according to Sugden (1994), in terms of longevity and international competition soccer is the 'elder statesman of American sport' (p. 219). For example, the US men's national team played a series of games against Canada in 1885 and 1886 (Bairner, 2001). In addition the ruling body of American soccer, the United

States Football Federation (USFF) was founded in 1913 and became affiliated to FIFA in the same year. Despite the long history of achievements from both genders on the world stage, there appears to be a determined effort on the behalf of 'American exceptionalists' to favour the view that America is different; according to Mangan (2005), this represents a rather myopic view that he summarises as an 'empire in denial' (p. 1194). According to Mangan, many nations adopt this view but none so successfully as the United States. American exceptionalism can be arguably traced to the latter part of the 19th century. A combination of insularity and political imperialism have, according to Dyreson (2001, 2005), created an ironic symmetry which is bound by a national devotion to sport. The paradox created is reflected within the central premise of Markovits and Hellerman's (2001) work and later within Szymanski and Zimbalist's (2005) work entitled *National Pastime: How Americans Play Baseball and the Rest of the World Plays Soccer*. Such commentaries position themselves within the irrefutable stance that most Americans perceive soccer as a foreign game and by deduction inferior to the home-grown national trinity of American football, basketball and baseball (Cousens and Slack, 2002). However, this fails to recognise the acceptance of ice hockey as a cultural import from Canada. Arguably, the traditional view of what constitutes American sport has expanded with the inclusion of the National Hockey League (NHL) into the 'Big Four'. The problem with soccer being absorbed within mainstream culture may therefore simply be its perceived national identity. According to Giulianotti (2005), nationalistic perceptions within the game of soccer encapsulates the strength of national identification of specific peoples, so that particular kinds of identity are celebrated while others are excluded. Yet national identities are never static nor mononuclear (Maguire et al., 2002). Within the views of American exceptionalists, there is theoretically a perception of intellectual disdain for sports which have connotations of global and mass identities. Americans self-evidently play exceptional soccer but a perception of American exceptionalism arguably creates a barrier against including soccer in the American stable of national pastimes – a paradox indeed (Dyreson, 2005).

The research contained within this book has demonstrated that the American Dream has at its very core the pursuit of upward mobility. Students within this study who embark on a soccer scholarship clearly demonstrate that their decision is based upon the economic incentives that derive from this higher education career option. Financial pragmatism is evidently the motive and driving force behind their decision making and in most cases not a belief that their experience at university will serve as a springboard to a professional soccer career. However, this trend may change if for no other reason than the economic model upon which America is founded. The exceptionalist rhetoric has come back into American politics, according to Rodgers, as a reaction to the war against terrorism. But the reality arguably is that America is simply a nation which operates within complex, dynamic and conflicting and shifting domestic and foreign political agendas as any other. Nations exceed their own borders, with archipelagos of presence,

power and vulnerability scattered across the globe. The global reach of popular culture, of which soccer is an element, is now pervasive and recognisable within virtually every nation in the form of media and in the activities of its populace. America traditionally is a country constituted of dreams (Gorn, 2004). Arguably, its validation rests on it being a place where one can, for better or worse, pursue distant goals. The problem with pursuing dreams, even shared ones, is that not everyone sees them in quite the same way. And, as is often the case in America, the gap between what is and what should be is often large. Therefore, the American Dream often exists on the boundary or margin where reality ends and illusion begins. Just as the illusion of Hollywood films melts away into the parting credits, so the American Dream has a tendency to dissolve, to break up into half-truths or untruths. This study has helped in part to de-mythologise the notion of the Dream and the evolving notions of how it can be pursued. Previous research conducted into the impact of soccer upon the American nation has typically focused on the dramatic increase in participation numbers for both males and especially females. However, this reveals very little of what is happening with regards to the cultural significance of sports participation changes and their influence upon career processes. Nevertheless, past research has indicated that *if* playing sport is connected to career aspirations, it may operate in a variety of ways.

This study has revealed that students undertaking a soccer scholarship are motivated to do so in the belief that playing sport at university is positively related to upward mobility and future occupational success for the following reasons.

- It creates in some cases and facilitates for the majority the opportunity to undertake an academic degree and develop job-related skills.
- It provides opportunities to make friends and develop social contacts with people outside of sporting organisations.
- It expands experiences in ways that foster the development of identities and abilities unrelated to soccer.

Americans identified within the research clearly believe that sport is a conduit to upward social mobility. This conviction is based on the narrative that is introduced at birth and sustained via its agents of socialisation. But while the possibility of status and wealth through sport is possible, the reality is that the American Dream of upward mobility through sport is highly improbable. The fascination with sport, however, remains firmly established, and this has at least two negative consequences according to Dyreson (2005). Firstly, socially excluded adolescents who devote their lives to the pursuit of athletic stardom are, except for the fortunate few, doomed to failure. Secondly, sport clearly contributes to the philosophy that legitimises societal inequalities and promotes the myth that all it takes is hard work to succeed. Eitzen and Sage (2003) make this point convincingly by identifying that sport, by its meritocratic ethos, facilitates status and rewards and thus provides convincing symbolic support for the hegemonic and dominant ideology that pervades the US. Ambitious, hardworking and dedicated

individuals, regardless of social origin, can achieve success while those who don't move upward simply didn't work hard enough. Because the rags-to-riches athletes are so visible in American society, the social mobility theme is perpetuated. The success of a few reproduces the belief in social mobility among the many (Dyreson, 2005).

When examining the question of whether an individual can experience the American Dream of acquiring fame and fortune through the vehicle of a soccer scholarship, this study reveals that the potential certainly exists. The best-paid athletes are among US society's most highly compensated individuals. Even average performers in American professional sports are paid salaries well beyond what highly trained professionals earn in more mundane fields. Furthermore, although the length of a professional athletic career is normally short, individuals can easily earn enough money in a few years to allow themselves to live comfortably for the rest of their lives. Consequently, one would probably conclude that for those strong and talented enough, professional sport provides incredible opportunities for individuals to succeed beyond their dreams. Yet, there are a number of caveats that need to be considered before advocating this pathway as a course of achieving the American Dream. Certainly, it needs to be acknowledged that while the rewards are great, the opportunities are few. Computing the number of positions in professional athletics and the number of people vying for them, unless an individual is extraordinarily talented, and lucky, he or she will not depart from athletics as a success story (Carroll et al., 1999). As previously discussed, dreams, which are not realistic can be devastating. Even if an individual were to secure one of the few positions in professional sport, the chances of having a long career are small. There is the obvious requirement of not only having potential but also improving or maintaining one's level of expertise as new competitors constantly vie for the limited number of existing positions. There is also the potential for being injured and having to struggle with both the psychological and physical pain of playing hurt, or not being able to play at all (Waddington and Roderick, 1996). Furthermore, there are the constant pressures of performing well enough to stay in favour with management, the fans and the media. The pressures of adapting to a lifestyle which demands large amounts of travel, living in the public's eye and having large amounts of discretionary income all seem to provide challenges to an athlete's psychological health. Such factors have often been identified as contributing to the various types of self-destructive behaviours observed in athletes, ranging from using illegal drugs to terminating one's life. Clearly, pursuing and experiencing the dream of becoming a professional athlete is a two-edged sword. The carrot of fame and fortune exists for those possessing the talent and strength of character to embrace it, but for those less worthy, or less lucky, the penalties for seeking this dream and failing can be quite tragic. The American Dream that US children are inculcated with is a simple but dominant one: 'If you work hard and play by the rules, you should be given a chance to go as far as your God-given ability will take you' (President 'Bill' W. J. Clinton, 1993). The American Dream appears to have maintained its currency in contemporary society and is a

frequently used metaphor in which politicians have eulogised American exceptionalism. Most recently, former President Barack Obama has cited the poetry of Tennyson's 'Ulysses' in embracing a spirit of hope. On November 4, 2008, the American people unambiguously chose to embrace that hope. Throughout his campaign, Obama used Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' speech of 1963 as a template to parallel his own progress. In his own biography, Obama charts his journey as the son of a Kenyan goat herder who rose to the most powerful office in the world. The election of Obama as the 44th president was anticipated as affirmation of America as a land of absolute possibility. However, the use of emotional tropes should not be necessarily scorned as a device of those seeking power. When Obama spoke of 'unyielding hope' in his victory address to the American nation, he arguably encapsulated the nation's faith in the capacity for society to improve and reinvigorate itself. The American public meanwhile has proved to its supporters that by electing Obama it is truly the 'land of opportunity'. Yet whilst it may be feasible to argue that the Dream is not dead, the concept of the Dream as tangible is disputable. For those who believe in the values of America's much vaunted cultural egalitarianism, there is an inherent rationalisation that those at the bottom of the social scale are by virtue of their position intrinsically inferior. It is worth keeping in mind, however, that a great deal of inequality is present in America. Consider the frequently observed socialist belief that there is a correlation between the more highly educated society and the tendency to be more unequal. Sport appears to be perceived as a major avenue by which low socio-economic categories of Americans seek to escape poverty. Despite the weight of evidence, the myth is alive. Many protagonists who embrace the Dream would argue that its ethos encourages and provides a reassuring faith for Americans, and there appears to be a widespread desire for it to continue.

Soccer within this project provides a metaphor for the American Dream and within that a representation of the belief that hard work and perseverance make it possible for any person to surmount any obstacles. 'New age' students in contemporary American society have adapted to their environment and clearly made pragmatic decisions that challenge intellectual narratives of 'old world' prosaic societies. This thesis has shown that soccer, for some, has emerged as a vehicle with which to pursue the Dream, but fundamentally there needs to be change in the economic and political framework for the Dream to become a reality for each American. The iconic phrase that was popularised by James Truslow Adams in his 'Epic of America' (1931) is synonymous with optimism and a belief in a future of limitless possibilities. Indeed, the fabric of the Dream promoted by Adams is founded upon 'unalienable rights' of 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' identified with the US Congress's 'Declaration of Independence' in 1776. It is the powerful imagery that such 'unalienable rights' create in the minds of those who hear them that inspires so many to believe in the Dream. There is a growing fear, however, amongst many Americans that the promises offered by the original motif of the Dream may be over. Such concerns were articulated within President Obama's inaugural address in 2009 as a 'nagging fear that America's

decline is inevitable, and that the next generation must lower its sights'. The concern for the current generation of high school 'senior' students appears to lay with the perceived 'value' or worth of a college education in helping them to achieve their personal, social and economic ambitions (Hartocollis, 2016). In the most recent Economic Policy Institute (EPI) (2018) study, the organisation analysed data on recent young college graduates (ages 21–24) to learn about their economic prospects. The key findings of the research identified that the 'Class of 2018' still faces real economic challenges, as demonstrated by elevated levels of underemployment as well as worsened wage gaps, particularly for women and black workers. The reality of whether higher education acts as a 'gateway' to upward mobility may be more nuanced than initial inspection reveals. According to the Pew Research Center, in 2017, graduates aged 25 to 32 who are working full-time earn about $17,500 more annually than their peers who have only a high school diploma. But not all degrees are equally useful. For example, an engineering graduate from the University of California can expect to be nearly $1.1 million better off after 20 years than someone who never went to college (PayScales, 2018). Arts and humanities courses are much more varied. For example, an arts degree graduate from Murray State University in Kentucky can expect to make $147,000 less over 20 years than a high school graduate, after paying for his education. Of the 153 arts degrees in the PayScale (2018) study, 46 generated a return on investment, but worryingly, 18 offered no financial return on their higher educational investment. Caveats aside regarding the rigour of such surveys in terms of their sampling and methodological techniques implemented, such headline-grabbing surveys do support growing concern regarding the financial worth of a university degree, the consensus being that student debt has grown so large that it now prevents many graduates from buying houses, starting businesses or having children. In 2017, the size of the national student debt had grown to $1.3 trillion, which is more than double the amount they owed a decade ago (Pew Research Center, 2017). Given that the number of students going to university has increased as have the costs of education, this number, although startling, is not necessarily surprising to economists. The 'median borrower', according to the same research, has a student loan debt for his or her own education estimated at $17,000 in 2016 with a quarter of borrowers with outstanding debt of $7,000 or less, while another quarter owed $43,000 or more.

In closing, this study clearly demonstrates that scholarship students are by virtue of their athletic commitments, faster and stronger than the 'average' undergraduate and constitute a discrete student identity. However, in common with their peers, students clearly identify that education is the locus upon which all of their aspirations of upward mobility are founded. Scholarship athletes represented within this study are a salient reminder that the US still offers the latitude to select how individuals go about pursuing their ambitions. As such, student-athletes and in particular recipients of a soccer scholarship challenge many of the orthodox and prosaic assumptions that are held to define contemporary culture in the US.

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