According to the most recent report on diversity in the NCAA's Division-I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) from The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport, college sport has seen a gradual increase in the hiring of racial minorities (Lapchick et al., 2018). However, college sport continues to receive the lowest grades for racial hiring practices among all sports. This is particularly true for key decision-making positions such as Division I athletic director positions (Lapchick et al., 2018). During the 2017-2018 year, 84.3% of athletic directors were White. African Americans accounted for 8.7%, Latinos 3%, and Asian/Pacific Islanders accounted for 0.6% (Lapchick et al., 2018).

Considering this underrepresentation in important decision-making positions, it is necessary to apply a critical analysis to the policies and procedures, which take place in these major Division-I FBS athletic departments.

The present study looks to perform a content analysis of the policies, procedures, and practices which athletic departments institute for implementing diversity and inclusion. These policies establish the culture and hiring procedures taking place in FBS programs.

This study will analyze both athletic departments’ mission statements and university mission statements, and any statements regarding diversity and inclusion. The purpose of this study is twofold: 1.) to investigate the application of diversity to these hiring practices and 2.) to suggest changes to these policies and practices in order to address the dramatic underrepresentation which exists within the Division-I FBS landscape.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and institutional theory are the two theoretical frameworks incorporated in this study. Utilizing CRT allows researchers to examine hegemonic powers such as higher education institutions and collegiate athletic departments who perpetuate a contentment with the White dominant power structures. These structures have historically produced the inequity which exists in college athletics. The specific CRT tenets utilized in this study are the ordinaryness of race and racism, interest convergence, differential racialization, intersectionality, and voice of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Centering college athletics and higher education as institutions of study, institutional theory will allow the authors to seek a better understanding of how and why organizations behave and the consequences of that behavior (Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin, & Suddaby, 2008). The ability of institutional theory to answer these questions has established institutional theory as one of the leading analytical tools to study organizations (Washington & Patterson, 2011). As such, institutional theory is well-established in sport management literature as well (e.g., Agyemang, Berg, & Fuller, 2018; Edwards & Washington, 2015). To that end, dovetailing these two theories will allow the authors to consider how leadership operates in these contexts (see Washington, Boal, & Davis, 2008) and way forward for leaders in college athletics. This is important to consider because important decisions in college athletics are not made in isolation, but rather with a variety of stakeholders who all have differing interests and motives.