ANTI-RACISM IN SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

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Chapter 5
The Fire This Time:
Prioritizing Critical Research on Racism and Antiblackness in Athletics

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Abstract

This chapter challenges racism-neutral and racism-evasive approaches in athletics scholarship by highlighting critical research that explicitly examines how racism and antiblackness operate within the intercollegiate athletic enterprise. The authors review publications from the past two decades that center on race, racism, and antiblackness and employ critical race-based and antiblackness frameworks. Finally, the chapter includes recommendations for how future scholarship on the interplay of higher education and athletics can acknowledge racism and antiblackness and its residual impacts on Black athletes, coaches, administrators, athletic staff, and their families.

Keywords: Black athletes, racism, antiblackness, campus racial climate, critical race theory, intersectionality, athletics

Over the past year, critical race theory (CRT) has become a political buzzword and rallying cry across the United States for conservative-leaning politicians and many dominant group members. Several Republican-led states are working to ban CRT in K–12 classrooms, including teaching about racial history, systemic racism, White privilege, and intersectionality (Ray & Gibbons, 2021). CRT opponents argue—with a well-organized effort—that teaching CRT creates division and indoctrinates White students to hate themselves and their country (Meckler & Natanson, 2021). This is not a new narrative and is widely considered a manufactured myth, arguing instead that there should be a commitment and willingness to discuss race, racism, and other forms of oppression. Such a discussion is essential because the United States was built upon colonization—the material theft of land and labor—and federal law and public policy have preserved the unequal protection and treatment, exclusion, and elimination of people based on race (Blackmon, 2009; Crenshaw, 2019). Social institutions, in particular, have been proficient at producing and reproducing Whiteness, which protects the interests, well-being, lifestyles, and property of primarily White people—members of the dominant race—and disadvantages Black people (Bonilla-Silva, 2015; Harris, 1995).

Racism operates at many levels, stretching from the individual to the structural. Structural racism includes policies, practices, and norms embedded in established institutions that result in the production and reproduction of inequitable outcomes for racially minoritized groups, especially Black people and vulnerable people of Color, such as Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American people (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). For example, the inhumanity of slavery and racist Jim Crow laws and policies resulted in social and economic inequality for Black people, and these effects continue today. Racially disparate outcomes occur in areas of education, health, housing, and criminal justice (to name a few)

and lead to greater rates of concentrated poverty, preexisting conditions and health risks, criminalization, premature death, and higher mortality rates (Johnson & Louis, 2020; Kahn & Martin, 2016; Pager & Shepherd, 2008). On average, household income for Blacks in 2018 was $41,361, while it was $70,642 for their White counterparts (United States Census Bureau, 2019). Income is a significant factor in a family's ability to access quality health care. Moreover, Black people have the highest death rate of any racial group in the United States, largely attributable to structural inequalities (National Center for Health Statistics, 2021).

In his essay entitled "The Fire Next Time," Baldwin (1963) reminded us that the freedom of Black people requires "the most radical and far-reaching changes in the American political and social structure" (p. 335). Baldwin interprets the title, "The Fire Next Time," to mean that the fire will bring much-needed change, including resolution and racial justice. Baldwin, critically aware of the structural positionality of Blackness, believed that changes in our social structures would happen when we address inhumane policies and practices of state-sanctioned violence and social exclusion rather than simply integrating into White society or what he called "a burning house." He also understood that acknowledging Black people's humanity would be central to the change process. Indeed, although outcome differences are sometimes ascribed to alleged internal deficiencies of individuals or groups (e.g., low cognitive ability or a lack of motivation), a structural lens remains the most reliable approach to understanding the conditions of racially minoritized groups.

In 21st century America, the intellectual discussion and hotly debated public discourse on how race and racism can be taught in K–12 public schools should be a constant reminder of the need for more race-centered approaches and perspectives from higher education scholars and higher education scholars researchers particularly those who study intercollegiate athletics. Indeed, if we accept that racism and racial inequities are a real and destructive force in our society, as Bell (1991) suggested, patterns of racism and antiblackness remain at the center of ongoing practices in athletics (Comeaux & Grummert, 2020; Grummert, 2021), we must prioritize research that makes visible these ongoing systems of oppression. Unfortunately, however, critical scholarship on racism and antiblackness in athletics is limited and has not garnered the proper attention of scholars studying the interplay between higher education and athletics.

More than 15 years ago, Singer (2005) called for sport management scholars and practitioners to include critical race-based frameworks and epistemologies to stretch our understanding of the role of race, racism, and power in sport. Additionally, Harper (2012)—in a systematic review of 255 higher education articles focused on campus racial climate and minoritized students, among other race-related topics—found that researchers failed to name and critically discuss racism in their empirical studies. A racism-evasive approach—that is, a failure to acknowledge and examine racism—when engaging in race-related studies perpetuates and maintains systems of oppression, including racial inequality in higher education.

With this context in mind, this chapter aims to challenge racism-neutral and racism-evasive approaches in studies on intercollegiate athletics by prioritizing research that clarifies how racism and antiblackness operate within the athletic enterprise. The following literature review is limited to peer-reviewed journal articles and dissertations that employed critical race-based and antiblackness frameworks published over the past two decades. By situating this body of work within its proper societal context, we reveal knowledge gaps on the juxtaposition of race, antiblackness, athletics, and higher education. In the next section, we provide an overview of the experiences of Black students who participate in intercollegiate athletics.

Black College Athletes' Sporting Experiences

As we high-step into the 21st century, narratives touting the declining significance of race and anti-black racism are at odds with the lived realities of Black college athletes. These athletes routinely face

mistreatment of all kinds in the disproportionally White space of college athletics. One case study after another illuminated the painful realities Black athletes encounter while in college (e.g., Beamon, 2014; Bimper, 2015; Bimper et al., 2013; Carter-Francique et al., 2017; Comeaux, 2010; Singer, 2019). For example, Black college athletes in football and men's basketball are undeniably profitable. Yet, they are not fairly compensated—educationally or financially—for their athletic labor, even as athletic departments have morphed into multi-million dollar businesses (Nocera & Strauss, 2016). Huma and Staurowsky (2012) examined the market value of football and men's basketball players at Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) schools. They found that, between 2011 and 2015, football and men's basketball players in big-time sports programs were being denied at least $6.2 billion under National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) rules that prohibited them from receiving endorsement deals from sponsors. They also reported that if big-time college athletes had access to the same fair market as professional athletes, the average player in these programs would be worth $137,357 per year.

In contrast, the average basketball player at that level would be worth $289,031. These projected numbers are likely higher today, considering the NCAA's revenue increase through their ongoing multimedia rights contract with CBS Sports and Turner (NCAA, 2016). To a significant degree, the racialized bodies of Black college athletes are alluring commodities that align with material structures of profitability for NCAA institutions and disproportionately White stakeholders in athletics (Comeaux, 2019). This capitalist underpinning of college athletics positions Black athletic bodies as exploitable, disposable, and undervalued laborers (Comeaux, 2018, Hawkins, 2010).

Measures of this racially based system of privilege and inequality—one created by and maintained by athletic stakeholders—remain evident. Division I Black college athletes experience more hostile campus racial climates than their White counterparts (Comeaux, 2018). Black athletes are surveilled and controlled through various mechanisms, such as major clustering and class checkers, more often than their non-Black counterparts (Comeaux, 2018; Grummert, 2021). Since athletic personnel seek to control Black athletes for their athletic prowess rather than supporting their academic goals and obligations, only 59 percent graduate within six years, compared to 69% of athletes in 2019 (NCAA, 2020).

Another example of racial inequality in college athletics is the gross underrepresentation of Black head coaches in the high-profile sports of football and men's basketball at Power 5 NCAA schools—the sports with the highest percentages of Black athletes (Lapchick, 2019). When Black football coaches are not adequately represented in these sports, it likely gives Black athletes the impression the campus racial climate is hostile and not welcoming, supportive, or inclusive of them (Francique, 2018). Relatedly, between the 2014–2015 and 2017–2018 academic years, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) accounted for the vast majority of schools penalized for low Academic Progress Rates (APRs) despite only constituting roughly 6 percent of all NCAA Division I institutions (Marot, 2019). The APR essentially provides an instant snapshot of a school's academic culture—particularly the eligibility, retention, and graduation of its athletes in team sports. It tends to penalize low-resource Division I schools, such as HBCUs because these institutions do not have the financial resources that big-time Division I schools do to support athletes to meet APR standards (Cooper & Comeaux, 2017).

Black athletes generally are poised to use (and are capable of using) their collective agency to serve as agents of change rather than as spectators on the sidelines to contribute to the creation of new sustainable campus environments. However, particularly in recent years during the Black Lives Matter era, sport administrators who advocate for their well-being face heightened pressure to respond to hostile campus racial climates. The quality of the educational experiences for Black athletes will be shaped by those who are racially literate and commit themselves to become better allies and providing equity-driven leadership in this athletic enterprise. Keen advocates of Black college athletes must commit to racial justice education and structural changes, which aim to build a culture of resistance to racism and antiblackness.

Critical Race Theory and Race Consciousness in Athletics

CRT is an analytical lens that emerged in the mid-1970s, primarily from criticisms that the critical legal studies movement insufficiently accounted for and addressed race, racism, and White supremacy in legal scholarship. Progressive legal scholars, such as Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, Jean Stefancic, and Kimberlé Crenshaw, have argued that race is a social construct and the law and public policy perpetuate racism and racial hierarchies within social institutions, including education (Crenshaw, 1997; Delgado, 1984; Matsuda, 1995). As such, CRT has utility for anti-racism—an active process of disrupting and dismantling race-based systems of advantages (Deepak & Biggs, 2011)—in intercollegiate athletics. Over the past two decades, scholars have used CRT and intersectionality as analytic frameworks in athletics research to understand the experiences of college athletes across race, gender, and institutional type. As discussed in the following sections, this work has revealed how students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds who participate in athletics tend to view intergroup relations on campus and instances of racism differently (Comeaux & Grummert, 2020).

Black Male Athletes

Black male athletes, in particular, may perceive the campus climate as quite racially hostile (Agyemang et al., 2010; Armstrong & Jennings, 2018; Beamon, 2014; Bimper, 2015; Bimper et al., 2013; Bimper & Harrison, 2017; Comeaux, 2010; Comeaux et al., 2017; Cooper & Hawkins, 2016; Donnor, 2005; Singer, 2005, 2016). Singer (2005), for example, employed CRT as an analytical lens and examined four Division I Black male football players at a predominantly non-Black institution. His goal was to understand their views on racism, and the potential impact racism might have on the quality of their college experiences. Through focus groups and in-depth interviews, Singer found participants expressed that they were treated differently than their White counterparts in the scheduling of classes, random drug tests, and consequences for behavior off the field that could be detrimental to the team. These findings suggest that stakeholders within NCAA schools have become, at times, complicit and have failed to identify and understand the material impact of their inhumane policies and practices on Black male athletes' quality of experience in college.

Likewise, through a qualitative case study of seven Black male athletes attending a Division I predominantly non-Black institution, Bimper and colleagues (2013) explored the self-perceptions and behaviors that contributed to participants' success in managing their dual roles as students and athletes. The authors found race played a key role in the experiences of Black college athletes, including lowered academic expectations from faculty and peers. This supports Comeaux's (2010) finding that faculty view Black athletes' accomplishments less favorably than the accomplishments of their White counterparts. And consistent with Bimper et al. (2013) and Singer (2005), Agyemang and colleagues (2010) employed CRT as an analytical lens in their interviews with six Black male athletes who reported race remains a critical issue in American society.

When Beamon (2014) examined the perceptions of racism among 20 former college athletes at Division I universities, she found their high-profile status did not protect them from experiencing racism. She found when acts of racism occurred on campus; Black athletes faced additional struggles compared to Black students who are not athletes. While other Black students can collectivize to respond to racial conflict, athletes in Beamon's study described restrictions on their ability to speak out about racism from their coaches and athletic staff (e.g., fear and threat of scholarship revocation), furthering the disconnect between themselves and their non-athlete peers.

Additional studies have revealed athletic departments fail to address racial inequality in their mission statements and strategic plans, perpetuating the normalcy of racism in college athletics and reproducing the inequitable conditions experienced by Black athletes (Bimper & Harrison, 2017; Rockhill et al., 2021). For example, Rockhill and colleagues (2021) analyzed the mission, vision, diversity, equity, and

inclusion statements of Power 5 athletic departments and their affiliated universities. They found these institutions normalized a lack of racial diversity by omitting diverse values from their statements, focusing on symbolic statements, and publishing statements that lacked meaning in creating a racially just reality.

While athletic departments produce detailed policy statements designed to establish accountability, their omission of race-specific discourse suggests matters of race are of little concern to their programs (Bimper & Harrison, 2017). This is consistent with Donnor's (2005) assertion that the interests of athletic stakeholders are purely financial and not in alignment with those of the athletes themselves. Utilizing Bell's (1992) theory of interest convergence, Donnor (2005) identified that predominantly White universities' primary interest in admitting Black male athletes is generating revenue and visibility through successful athletic programs. Unfortunately, the educational or social justice interests of Black male athletes are not aligned with the profit interest of the athletic stakeholders and are therefore not prioritized.

Black Female Athletes

Black female athletes face unique difficulties due to intersecting forms of oppression related to their race and gender. They have reported unwelcoming, unsupportive, alienating, and racially hostile campus environments (Bernhard, 2014; Bruening et al., 2005; Carter-Francique, 2013; Carter-Francique et al., 2013, 2017; Cooper & Jackson, 2019; Hextrum, 2019; Simien et al., 2019). For example, through document analysis and interviews, Bruening and colleagues (2005) examined the collective experiences of 12 Division I Black female athletes at a large Midwestern university. Using CRT and intersectionality as interpretive frameworks, they found that mass media, coaches, athletic administrators, and other athletes played a role in virtually ignoring their experiences and concerns. The authors revealed how Black female athletes encounter challenges that differ from those of non-Black women, and their Black male counterparts must overcome. For example, Black women in this study had to deal with racist and sexist remarks made by men in spaces such as the weight room with inadequate and inconsistent support on these matters from coaches and administrators, rendering their experiences invisible. Thus, they demonstrated the need to consider intersectionality and how multiple marginalized Black student experiences are shaped by their various social positions (Crenshaw, 1991).

Similarly, Simien and colleagues (2019) examined the existing literature. They found that, despite increases in athletic opportunities for women, Black female athletes remain largely invisible and marginalized in educational and sports contexts. They noted Black female athletes consistently graduate at lower rates than White female athletes; in fact, the only subgroup that Black female athletes outperform academically is Black male athletes. Likewise, Cooper and Jackson (2019) utilized a semi-structured focus group and in-depth interviews to examine the perceptions and experiences of four Division I Black female athletes at a predominantly non-Black college. Their participants experienced role conflict due to athletic department pressures, whereby their athletic roles dominated their lives and resulted in an abandonment of academic roles.

Additionally, Black female athletes have been described as being hyper-sexualized or hyper-feminized by coaches, administrators, and male athletes (Bruening et al., 2005; Ferguson & Satterfield, 2017; Foster, 2003; Withycombe, 2011). Foster (2003) found that they experience control and hyper-surveillance specific to their race and gender. Through ethnographic research at a Midwestern university, Foster found that staff believed Black female athletes needed considerable guidance to avoid being sexually promiscuous. Foster described counselors calling athletes' dorm rooms at 1:30 am to ensure they were not, as one counselor put it, "out sleeping around" (p. 314). Other scholars have found that Black female athletes find it difficult to assert their individuality because they are often thought of as either being women or being Black, but not at the intersection of their race and gender (Carter & Hart, 2010; Simien et al., 2019).

Black queer women, particularly, have reported hostile team and campus climates (Rankin et al., 2011).

Melton and Cunningham (2012), through interviews with 12 female athletes of Color, explored how multiple identities (e.g., gender, race, and sexual orientation) shaped their academic and athletic experiences during college. Their participants' marginalized identities, both racial and sexual, uniquely influenced their college experiences. Specifically, coaches and staff members displayed overt forms of sexual prejudice, compelling many participants to conceal their sexuality. While participants described experiencing racism in classroom and community settings, sexual prejudice persisted across all contexts. Melton and Cunningham (2012) found that female athletes of Color were more resilient when managing racial conflict but found it more difficult to cope with sexual prejudice. These negative experiences related to sexual identity prejudice contributed to participants' feelings of social isolation and shame.

Race and Senior Leadership Positions

Some researchers have explored the role of race in senior sport leadership, such as coaching and athletic director positions (Agyemang & DeLorme, 2010; Cooper et al., 2017; Singer et al., 2010). For example, utilizing CRT and social dominance theory, Agyemang and Delorme (2010) explored the dearth of Black head coaches at the NCAA FBS level. Through examinations of data from the Black Coaches and Administrators (BCA) Hiring Report Card and 2008 Racial and Gender Report Card, they found Black head coaches were grossly underrepresented, particularly in comparison to the representation of Black collegiate athletes. They pointed to this discrepancy as evidence that racism is still deeply embedded in collegiate athletics.

Similarly, Singer and colleagues (2010), using a CRT framework, examined the five criteria used in the BCA Hiring Report Card to assess the openness and fairness of the hiring process and to illuminate issues of race and racism. They found that schools failed to engage with the BCA—theorizing that hiring committees would rather communicate with their own well-established or "good old boy" networks—and did not feel responsible for consulting race-conscious social justice organizations (p. 280). They also noted the lack of racially minoritized candidates on these committees. Without representation on hiring committees, candidates are much more vulnerable to racial stereotypes and discrimination (Singer et al., 2010). Citing Bell's (1991) theory of interest convergence, Singer et al. concluded that Black athletes are seen as financially valuable to athletic stakeholders, but Black leadership candidates are not.

Scholars have also examined the intersection of race and gender in athletic leadership positions (Borland & Bruening, 2010; McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017; Pointer, 2018; Price et al., 2017). For example, Borland and Bruening (2010) interviewed 10 Black female assistant basketball coaches working at Division I institutions. Through a lens of intersectionality, they identified barriers contributing to the lack of representation of Black women in head coaching positions in women's basketball. Their participants reported stereotyping and discrimination based on gender, race, and sexuality, a lack of institutional support, and limited access to necessary social networks. They concluded the barriers facing Black women made them invisible and isolated. Further, using intersectionality theory as a lens, McDowell and Carter-Francique (2017) found that African American women athletic directors across different divisional classifications faced constant challenges to their authority, misperceptions concerning their roles, and perceptions that their hiring was related more to their demographics than their qualifications.

The low representation of Black men and women in senior leadership positions is evident in college athletics. Racist and sexist hiring practices limit their presence in sport leadership, such as head coaching and athletic director positions. The responsibility for real change will require champions who continue to organize, lead, resist, and actively disrupt business-as-usual hiring practices.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Studies have revealed how HBCUs suffer from systemic racism in college athletics (Cheeks & Carter-Francique, 2015; Cooper, 2018; Cooper & Cooper, 2015; Cooper et al., 2014). For example, Cooper and

colleagues (2014), using CRT as an analytic tool, found that HBCUs face numerous challenges because of decisions made by the NCAA and state and federal government, including loss of talent to major Division I predominantly non-Black colleges and universities, loss of accreditation, and subsequent loss of federal financial aid. Moreover, they found that HBCU budgets have been impacted by a loss of athletic talent resulting from racial integration in college sports. Rather than collaborating with HBCU athletic programs, larger, well-funded, predominantly non-Black institutions have extracted talented Black athletes from Black-operated entities and shut HBCUs out of the revenue streams produced by said athletes. Cooper and colleagues (2014) concluded: that "structural arrangements such as post-season tournament formats, bowl games, and multi-million dollar television contracts primarily benefited HWCUs and either excluded and/or significantly disadvantaged limited-resource institutions (LRIs) such as HBCUs" (p. 310).

Cheeks and Carter-Francique (2015) employed CRT to identify how institutional racism and systemic oppression have perpetuated the institutional distancing of HBCUs, resulting in loss of athletic revenue. Through conference eligibility and policies specific to each conference, HBCUs are restrained from full participation in the revenue streams afforded to universities in the FBS, the NCAA's most financially lucrative and visible sub-division (Cheeks & Carter-Francique, 2015). For example, institutions in the FBS are allowed 85 scholarship athletes, while Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) schools, including all Division I HBCUs, are only allotted 63 scholarship athletes (Cheeks & Carter-Francique, 2015). Thus, the social stratification between Division I institutions and conferences significantly disadvantages HBCUs and predominantly favors non-Black colleges and universities (Cheeks & Carter-Francique, 2015; Cooper et al., 2014). In the next section, we provide an overview of research on Black athletes using an anti-deficit perspective.

Anti-Deficit Framing of Black Athletes

Some scholars have employed an anti-deficit framework—broadly defined here as an asset-based approach aimed at identifying characteristics related to the academic success of Black college athletes (see Harper, 2010)—to understand the academic achievements and experiences of Black colleges athletes (Cooper et al., 2016; Cooper & Cooper, 2015; Cooper & Hawkins, 2016; Martin et al., 2010; Oseguera, 2010). For instance, Cooper and Hawkins (2016) utilized an anti-deficit achievement framework to identify key institutional characteristics and practices that contributed to a positive educational experience for Black male athletes at an HBCU. Their study included 57 Black male football and basketball players, and they derived their data from a 79-item questionnaire, three focus group interviews, and four individual interviews. Their findings revealed that the HBCU created a nurturing familial campus climate that enhanced Black male athletes' sense of belonging. Participants expressed their ability to depend on their coaches for support on and off the court or field, and they described their professors as approachable and affirming. Athletes also found support in culturally relevant events and organizations, like a homecoming, step shows, and band performances.

Cooper and colleagues (2016) also employed this anti-deficit approach to explore the experiences of Black female athletes at Division I predominantly non-Black institutions. Interviews with five Black female athletes identified key factors contributing to academic achievement and positive transitional experiences. In addition, several external elements influenced the Black female athletes' success, including family members centered on educational achievement, athletic departments with structures designed to cultivate productive academic behaviors, positive relationships with professors, and pre-college academic preparation.

An anti-deficit achievement framework can disrupt deficit-oriented discourse and narratives. The highlighted research studies elucidate how Black male and female athletes develop and cultivate meaningful and value-added relationships contributing to academic success across different institutional types. In the next section, we provide an overview of research on the experiences of Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander,

and Native American athletes and athletic staff of Color in senior leadership positions.

Experiences of Latinx, Asian, and Pacific Islander Athletes and Athletic Staff

Extant research has rarely used critical theoretical frameworks to examine the experiences of athletes who identify as Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American students (Grafnetterova & Banda, 2021; Kukahiko, 2017; Ortega, 2021; Shim et al., 2020). Ortega (2021) analyzed how Latino male athletes' college experiences are shaped by the intersection of their racial and athletic identities. Questionnaires and interviews with three Latino male athletes revealed they experienced hostile racial environments in athletics, including teammates engaging in racial jokes about their immigration status. Moreover, Ortega found these Latino college athletes experienced negative perceptions from their non-athlete peers due to their status as athletes.

Grafnetterova and Banda (2021) identified similar themes in their case study of 16 first-generation Latinx students participating in Division I non-revenue-generating sports. Utilizing LatCrit, they sought to identify how cultural capital impacts persistence to degree attainment for Latinx college athletes. Like Ortega's (2021) participants, their participants viewed college athletics as an opportunity to combat negative perceptions of Latinx people in the United States because they could excel in academics and athletics. Their participants also described a sense of inspiration stemming from their families' immigration status and the sacrifices their families made to provide them with new opportunities.

Kukahiko (2017) employed Pacific Islander cultural racism theory to explore how college football players experience culture and race and how this may inhibit their transitions and persistence. He used surveys and interviews to gather data from 40 Pacific Islander college football players. Participants experienced mental and physical trauma through football participation, and most believed they were exploited for profit by their institutions. Moreover, these athletes experienced stereotypes and expressed feelings of cultural dissonance because they were separated from their families and communities.

There is a scarcity of research that uses a critical theoretical framework to investigate the role of race for Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American people in senior leadership positions. One such study by Shim et al. (2020) utilized Asian critical theory to investigate the underrepresentation of people of Asian descent in intercollegiate athletic administration positions, ranging from athletic trainer to athletic director. Through in-depth semi-structured interviews of five self-identified Asian employees who had worked at or were currently working at Division I institutions, Shim and colleagues (2020) found that Asian personnel tended to be underrepresented because of language barriers and because Asian culture placed more value on education than on participation in sports. The authors concluded that "people of Asian descent have been marginalized in hiring practices in intercollegiate athletics, and this has been omitted from diversity discussions" (p. 87). Given these findings, racist stereotypes and discriminatory hiring practices have likely contributed to the underrepresentation of people of Asian descent in intercollegiate athletic administrations. The NCAA and members schools should find ways to disrupt racist stereotypes commonly placed on people of Asian descent and work to address the gross underrepresentation of Asians in athletic leadership positions.

CRT has provided researchers with the tools necessary to illuminate the reality of racism in college athletics. Scholars using CRT have identified how race and racism impact the lived experiences of Black college athletes and administrators. Both face racially hostile climates, negative assumptions about their abilities, and overall mistreatment. Black women endure interlocking forms of oppression related to their race and gender while participating in intercollegiate athletics (Carter-Francique et al., 2013, 2017; Cooper & Jackson, 2019; Simien et al., 2019). Though research is limited on Latinx, Asian, and Pacific Islander athletes, coaches, and administrators, scholars have noted that Latinx and Pacific Islander athletes and Asian administrative staff encounter racist and discriminatory practices in college athletics (Kukahiko, 2017; Ortega, 2021; Shim et al., 2020). Through a CRT lens, researchers can explore the

subtleties and salience of race and racism and the challenges encountered by athletes and administrators who experience racial and intersectional marginalization. Doing so exposes inequitable structures, policies, and practices that reinforce White supremacy on college campuses and amplifies the unique life experiences of these campus stakeholders.

Centering Antiblackness: Black Athletes as Disposable Property

Much of the critical research on the structure of the athletic enterprise and vulnerable athlete experiences have been explored through the theoretical lens of neoliberalism (e.g., Comeaux, 2018; Tompkins, 2017), capitalism, and colonialism (e.g., Gayles et al., 2018; Hawkins, 2010; Harrison et al., 2021; Sack, 2009; Southall & Weiler, 2014; Thacker, 2017), racism (e.g., Beamon, 2014; Bimper, 2015; Cooper et al.,2017; Donnor, 2005; Singer, 2016), Whiteness and White supremacy (e.g., Haslerig, et al., 2020; Hextrum, 2018, 2020, 2021), and antiblackness (e.g., Comeaux & Grummert, 2020; Dancy et al., 2018; Grummert, 2021). In this section, we focus on antiblackness and antiblackness scholarship. Antiblackness remains woefully undertheorized and understudied within the context of athletics. Often, there is a tendency to conflate the concept of racism with the concept of antiblackness. Such a distinction is necessary and beneficial to the understanding of this section. Jung and Vargas (2021) explain:

> The incongruity, the conceptual crisis, bespeaks the incommensurability of antiblackness and the need to distinguish antiblackness from racism. The analytical and political imperative of establishing a break from the social concept of racism emanates from the recognition of antiblackness as an ontological condition of possibility of modern world sociality, whereas racism is an aspect of that sociality. A world without racism requires deep transformations in social practices and structures. A world without antiblackness necessitates an entirely new conception of the social, which is to say a radically different world altogether. (p. 7)

Importantly, the social concept of racism is not suitable for capturing antiblackness. Antiblackness is "not simply racism against Black people," but instead a "broader antagonistic relationship between Blackness and (the possibility of) humanity" (Dumas & Ross, 2016, p. 429). Theories of antiblackness, informed by Saidiya Hartman, Hortense Spillers, João H. Costa Vargas, Jared Sexton, Joy James, and Frank Wilderson III, to name a few, suggest that Black people do not experience the same ongoing coordinated and relentless attacks on their humanity as non-Blacks. Moreover, Dumas (2016) argues that "the very technologies and imaginations that allow a social recognition of the humanness of others systematically exclude this possibility for the Black" (p. 13). By this logic, there is a fundamental and strong opposition to Black people, and they do not have much human value through the White gaze (Yancy, 2008). Similar to the enslavement of Black people, Blackness, as Patterson (1982) suggests, is a social death, signifying an intentional erasure from humanity or social life. As such, "to investigate antiblackness then, is to call into question the very notion of the "human" as an unethical formation" (Gummert, 2021, p. 29).

Following Vargas (2018), the intent of theorizing antiblackness, unlike multiracial frameworks, is not to offer possibilities of redemption to our current system or to provide restorative solutions to racial inequality. Rather, to engage antiblackness requires a deeper understanding of the Black condition and a movement beyond normative expectations and cultural acceptability within a context of reckless disregard, marginalization, dehumanization, and fungibility of Black people (Hartman, 1997). Vargas (2018) insist that antiblackness is "inescapable unless and until the very structures of our cognitive and sociability are deeply transfigured, removed, destroyed. To get to the desired and necessary transformative moment, however, we must first figure out what exactly needs to be replaced.... such is the imperative of freedom" (p. 28). As such, it is important and necessary to connect Blackness and the Black body to historical and ongoing projects rooted in antiblackness.

In athletics, there is a scarcity of research that centers on antiblackness as a separate logic from racism to understand and explain the recurring failure to recognize Black humanity. Too often, multiracial frameworks ignore, decenter, or deny structural forms of antiblackness (see Shange, 2019; Vargas, 2018). However, a handful of scholars have used a theoretical framework of antiblackness to engage in a more robust analysis and interpretation of Black college athletes' dehumanization (e.g., Comeaux & Grummert, 2020; Dancy et al., 2018; Grummert, 2021). Their work interrogates the violence and suffering of Black athletes and how they navigate the "afterlife of slavery" —an ontological and social condition of Black life (Hartman, 2008, p. 8). For example, Dancy et al. (2018) analyzed the relationship between predominantly non-Black institutions and Black people using settler colonialism and antiblackness as theoretical lenses. They explained that higher education institutions, developed under settler colonialism, function under slave-owner labor techniques, with administrators at the helm. Due to a lack of access to sufficient academic resources and opportunities, Black people—unlike most of their White and nonBlack counterparts—tend to pursue sport labor as an avenue for social mobility. Dancy and colleagues argued that the Black male athlete narrative, under the settler colonialism arrangement, is consistently pushed onto Black boys starting at a young age and throughout their adolescent years as a way to escape poverty. They concluded that labor coercion is reinforced through police power, patrolling/hyper-surveillance, and the settler colonial perspective of the Black body and Blackness as property.

Hawkins (2010) likewise compared the current intercollegiate athletic model to the structure of slavery. Dancy et al. (2018) identified it as an exploitative system in which Black men are used to generating revenue, evolving from the association of Blackness with property, with universities shifting from enslaved Black labor as a source of revenue to a system in which predominantly Black athletes generate revenue without being eligible for compensation. And Grummert (2021) used antiblackness and carcerality as an analytic to examine 20 current and former college athletes' experiences with individuals—teammates, coaches, administration, and medical staff—and with surveillance mechanisms. She found that the structural arrangement of college athletics across Division I FBS, FCS, and non-football Division I institutions resembled other antiblack state projects and structural forms of antiblackness. In particular, Black female athlete participants, to a greater extent than their non-Black counterparts, were subjected to surveillance and disciplining mechanisms and, at times, bodily and psychological harm designed to maintain antiblack structures and practices.

Although there is little extant research on Black college athlete purposeful engagement activities—and few direct studies focused on antiblackness—we do know that revenue-generating athletes, who are majority Black, interact within the campus community less frequently than their non-Black counterparts (Comeaux & Grummert, 2020). Furthermore, the subculture of low academic expectations and the overemphasis on athletic obligations significantly decreases the chances of Black athletes reaching their maximum learning potential. This is evidenced by their lack of quality campus experiences, limited preparation for postgraduate careers, and dismal graduation rates (Comeaux, 2018; Comeaux & Grummert, 2020; Harper, 2018). Comeaux and Grummert (2020) concluded that excessive athletic time commitments are a structural impediment within a problematic system driven by antiblack logics of fungibility and disposability.

In sum, although the available work on antiblackness in college athletics is scarce, researchers have detailed the ways that antiblack settler colonial practices of enslavement and the construction of the Black body as subhuman, inferior, and property have influenced the current model of college athletics (Comeaux & Grummert, 2020; Dancy et al., 2018; Grummert, 2021). Framed as an opportunity for social mobility through the structure of college athletics, the Black athlete (mind and body) continues to be exploited, devalued, and dehumanized and serves as "a site of contestation for the White imaginary between the inferior intellectual and the elite athlete" (Comeaux & Grummert, 2020, p. 61). The evidence is clear that scholars must explore Black students who participate in athletics, independent of non-Black students who face marginalization, to better understand how antiblackness, including structural conditions that perpetuate Black suffering, might be produced and reproduced at predominately

non-Black colleges and universities. We are not opposed to multiracial frameworks, but they tend to ignore, gloss over, or deny structural forms of antiblackness (Sexton, 2010; Vargas, 2018). Multiracial frameworks, moreover, tend to work against Black people (see Shange, 2019). Only a theoretical framework of antiblackness or critical theorization of Blackness addresses the specificity of antiblackness in the construction of human/nonhuman (see Sexton, 2010; Walcott, 2018; Wilderson, 2010). Thus, before focusing on multiracial struggles, experiences, and possibilities, it is instructive, timely, and necessary to use a theoretical framework of antiblackness to engage in a more comprehensive analysis and interpretation of antiblackness in college athletics.

Directions for Future Research

Over the past two decades of higher education and athletics research, a steadily growing body of work centers on racism and, to a lesser extent, antiblackness in analyzing inequities and injustices in athletics. The literature reviewed in this chapter sheds light on the role of racism in maintaining racial inequities in the athletic enterprise. For example, there are racial injustices in the experiences of Black men and women who participate in athletics at predominantly non-Black institutions, there is an underrepresentation of people of Color in administrative positions, and there is hostile racism and discrimination directed at Latinx, Asian, and Pacific Islander students and administrators in athletics. In addition, our review provides insight into the antiblackness patterns at the center of ongoing policies and practices in athletics.

While some insights have been gained about the nature and influence of race, racism, and antiblackness, this area of inquiry has significant room for further exploration. Future efforts should examine a wider spectrum of stakeholders, including current and former athletes, coaches, administrators, fans, and advocates of athletes. In addition, future studies should use CRT as an interpretive framework and consider vulnerable athletes of various racial/ethnic groups, such as Latinx, Native American, Indigenous, Asian, and Pacific Islander athletes at predominantly non-Black colleges and universities other institutional types. CRT will help explain and operationalize the role of race and racism in discourses on racialized bodies and help us understand lived experiences in different institutional contexts. Questions should include:

- Do vulnerable athletes of Color feel a sense of belonging at predominantly non-Black institutions?
- Do athletes of Color have more positive campus experiences when there are more administrators and head coaches of color?

Employing a theoretical framework of antiblackness, future studies might ask:
- What impact does antiblackness have on Black players and coaches in higher education athletic settings?
- What are Black athletes' perceptions of structural forms of antiblackness such as unfair compensation (educationally and financially)?

Future research should employ critical theoretical perspectives that resist oppressive social constructions to explore the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, non-binary, and transgender college athletes, particularly students of color. Future studies should also consider critical perspectives such as Black feminist thought, Womanist theory, intersectionality, African American Male Theory, critical studies of Whiteness, BlackCrit, LatCrit, TribCrit, and AsianCrit to demonstrate the complexities of identities and lived experiences within minoritized groups. Little attention has been devoted to critical issues such as the racialized and gendered violence and antiblackness that women of Color experience on their teams. A multidimensional understanding of the experiences of vulnerable athletes and athletic stakeholders offers an important opportunity to assess the climate and culture of colleges and universities.

Conclusion

This chapter's consolidation of knowledge about racism and antiblackness offers a solid foundation for future work to examine the interplay of higher education and athletics and its impact on athletes and athletic staff from diverse racial backgrounds. It is imperative that higher education leaders, including sport administrators, policymakers, education researchers, practitioners, and activists, make deep commitments to name, analyze, and adequately respond to structural racism and various forms of antiblackness in athletics. By building on existing research and pursuing the avenues of inquiry identified above, we can help ensure that we move toward a more racially just, equitable, and inclusive athletic model.

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