

The Mis-Education of the African American Student-Athlete

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The African American male student-athlete occupies one of the most peculiar positions in American society. While lauded for their sport performance, they are often viewed as problematic in the broader society. While their performance generates millions of dollars for universities and the NCAA, for most, their labor often produces comparatively little personal gain. While they are recruited as student-athletes, they soon realize that the demands of their athletic commitment renders them athlete-students. Many outside of sport would argue that this is a choice and an informed decision. But we argue much of this is a consequence of the mis-education of the African American student-athlete. We examine this phenomenon through the lens of Critical Race Theory to provide an alternative view of the issues faced by African American student-athletes and suggest an alternative pedagogy that might be investigated to meet their needs.

Keywords: African American, student-athletes, critical race theory, race

“If you can control a man’s thinking you do not have to worry about his action. When you determine what a man shall think you do not have to concern yourself about what he will do.” (Woodson, 1933, p. 48).

In 1933, noted author and historian, Carter G. Woodson, penned the book, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*. This book chronicles the author’s observations of the psycho-social condition of African Americans of that day. A close examination of the book’s content reveals that many of the author’s contentions are still evident today. But in observing the condition of the landscape of intercollegiate revenue-producing sport, many of the observations made by Woodson seem to have present day application to African American student-athletes.

The African American male student-athlete occupies one of the most peculiar positions in American society. Their sport performance generates millions of dollars for universities and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), yet for all but a few superstars who go on to professional sport, their revenue-generating capacity often fails to translate to personal gain. They are recruited to attend some of the most prestigious institutions of higher learning, yet they often are not afforded the benefit of the vast intellectual resources available in these institutions. They are afforded “scholarships” to attend these universities but are often not privy to the abundant scholarly resources available at these universities due to athletic responsibilities. Ironically their “scholarships” in many

instances result in a preponderance of athletic activities as opposed to “scholarly” activities. In fact, it is their athletic activities that pose the most severe limitations on their opportunities to engage in scholarly pursuits.

Most observers tend to lay the blame for this academic hypocrisy on the athletes themselves. After all they are “grown men” who should be able to make decisions for themselves, and their decisions to minimize their academic efforts in favor of athletic pursuits is their choice. In fact, many student-athletes, particularly African American student-athletes, accept scholarships with the intent of using it as a pathway to professional sport. Some would argue that a large proportion of African American student-athletes in revenue-producing sports have no serious interest in education, but see the university scholarship as a stepping stone to their ultimate goal of becoming a professional athlete. However, we argue here that this perspective is more of a consequence of mis-education rather than poor choices and anti-educational attitudes.

We will endeavor to explicate this idea of the mis-education of the African American athlete through an examination of the present prevailing education that most students receive in this country. This mis-education is analyzed through the dominant discourse in the realm of education, be it implicit or explicit. We follow with an explanation of why we refer to it as mis-education with regard to African American student-athletes.

Theoretical Framework

We underpin this work on the frame of Critical Race Theory (CRT). This theoretical perspective seeks to critique and dismantle injustice in society by

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investigating and diagnosing the persistence of inequality in society based on race (Tate, 1997). Put another way, CRT is a theoretical orientation "... that challenges the universality of the White experience/judgment as the authoritative standard that binds people of color and normatively measures, directs, controls, and regulates the terms of proper thought, expression, presentment, and behavior" (Calmore, 1992, p. 2160). The framework of CRT is based on five basic tenets: (a) counter-storytelling; (b) the endurance of racism; (c) whiteness as property; (d) interest convergence; and (e) the critique of liberalism (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004).

DeCuir and Dixon (2004) describe counter-storytelling as a way of disrupting the dominant discourse that leads to essentializing people of color. It serves to challenge "normalized" thinking and provides a voice for marginalized individuals. It also provides a means to allow the majority to see life through the lens of the minority.

The second tenet, the endurance of racism, is explained by Ladson-Billings and Tate (2009) as they note the enduring influence of race in the determination of inequity as documented in almost any demographic data.

Whiteness as property, the third tenet of CRT, is thoroughly described in Harris' (1993) paper. While a thorough explanation is beyond the scope of this manuscript, the author succinctly describes this construct as:

Possession - the act necessary to lay the basis for rights in property - was defined to include only the cultural practices of whites. This definition laid the foundation for the idea that whiteness - that which whites alone possess - is valuable and is property. (p. 1721)

The concept of interest convergence, the fourth tenet of CRT is described by Bell (1980) as the procurement of basic rights by people of color only developed as they aligned with the self-interest of Whites. This author convincingly argues that the Brown v. Board case provided very little in improving the human condition of African Americans overall but the interests of Whites were often appeased in the integration process.

The final tenet of CRT, the critique of liberalism is focused on the notion of colorblindness, neutrality of law, and incremental change that has often been embraced by liberal ideology. DeCuir and Dixon (2004) note that CRT scholars provide robust critique of all of these notions, citing colorblindness and law neutrality run counter to the persistence of racism in the United States. Furthermore, the authors note that "Interestingly, those most satisfied with incremental change are those less likely to be directly affected by oppressive and marginalizing conditions" (p. 29).

This theoretical framework is used for its value in analyzing injustice and demonstrating how societal inequity's robustness in spite of the perception by some of a post-racial society. In this paper, CRT, particularly

the tenet of storytelling is used to examine the overt and covert educational and normalizing societal patterns that mis-educate African American athletes.

The Education of African American Athletes

The so-called education of Negro college graduates leads them to throw away opportunities which they have and to go in quest of those which they do not find. (Woodson, 1933, p. 27)

This preceding quote from Woodson's book is from his fourth chapter, titled "The Failure to Learn to Make a Living." Indeed, the research on African American student-athletes does indicate that they often overlook educational opportunities in their quest for professional sport careers which often do not materialize or are very short lived. In many ways the chapter embodies the sad narrative of the lives of many African American student-athletes, largely due to the education they receive regarding the role, place, and priority they give to sport. Here we examine two important constructs that emanate from the African American student-athlete's early and implicit education.

Sport Socialization

Coakley (2004, p. 100) suggests that sport socialization is based on one's abilities, the impact of other people, and the opportunities that are readily available to the individual. Coakley indicates that these provide snapshots of the sport socialization process while evolving narratives of this process are ongoing. Greendorfer and Ewing (1981) indicated that there were differences in the way Black and White children were socialized into sport. There is also more recent evidence that African American boys are socialized into sport differently from their White counterparts (Beamon & Bell 2006; Harris, 1994; Smith, 2015). These sources also cite the enormous influences that originate outside of the family, such as coaches, friends, and teachers. Harris and Smith also note that, unlike stereotypical depictions of African American parents pushing their boys into athletics, the parents in their studies were virtually the only source of academic encouragement in their children's lives. Other individuals who influenced their lives all cheered and motivated further involvement in sport. Thus this potent and pointed socialization process for African American boys in particular is likely to move and guide them to view sports as a valuable, attainable, high status endeavor in which they are best suited.

Sage and Eitzen (2013) state, "Interscholastic sports are an extracurricular program that is inexorable intertwined in the high schools of the United States, and increasingly in Canadian secondary schools" (p. 94). Teaching sport may be a recognized feature of the physical education program, but the obvious presence of interscholastic sport in most secondary schools makes the novice level of sport

in physical education classes pale in comparison. Much of the unofficial education about sport can be traced to the interscholastic sport presence. Even those who don't participate are educated in its intricacies. Thus, the overwhelming presence of sport in the youth environment provide ample opportunity for the socialization of African American boys into the sport domain.

Beamon (2009) attests to both the covert and overt pressure to be athletically successful in African American collegiate athletes. This research proposes that influences such as peers, media, community, and family pressure encourages an attitude in athletes to prioritize athletics over academics. While this runs contrary to the overt message of college athletic departments, the African American student-athlete perceives that the label they wear, "student-athlete", does not coincide with the reality of their existence (Singer, 2008). Though this implicit message is not a part of the formal curriculum, the message is very clear that they are athlete-students.

Athletic Identity

The potent sport socialization process through which African American athletes undergo leads to the development of a robust athletic identity. Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder (1993) define athletic identity as how strongly one identifies with the athletic role. This concept has also been linked with racial identity (Adair, & Rowe, 2010; Bimper & Harrison, 2011; Harrison, Harrison, & Moore, 2002). Harrison, Sailes, Rotich, and Bimper (2011) indicate that African American student-athletes display a more compelling athletic identity than their White peers on the same sport team, suggesting a racial component of athletic identity development.

Heightened athletic identity does come with advantages that may be of benefit to African American student-athletes. Elevated levels of athletic identity have been linked to positive affect and improved performance (Horton & Mack, 2000). This development of athletic identity manifests itself in the education of African American student-athletes in that it narrows their focus for learning almost exclusively on their sport. While some may not perceive sport participation as education, one need only spend time with a student-athlete to observe the intense learning and split-second decision-making necessary to be a successful collegiate athlete. The physical and intellectual requirements are so robust that Adler and Adler (1991) coined the phrase 'role engulfment.' After their 5-year study of collegiate basketball athletes, the authors concluded that the participants were engulfed in the athlete role to the point where they nearly excluded all other roles to become progressively more committed to the sport role. While this process was not a formal aspect of the college curriculum, it was certainly a powerful expectation that was learned by the student-athletes. The education of the African American student-athlete is far different from the education received by other students on many college campuses.

The Mis-education of African American Athletes

The thirteenth chapter of Woodson's work, titled "Understanding the Negro", begins with an interesting exchange that is similar to one that may be overheard today.

"We do not offer here any courses in Negro history, Negro literature, or race relations," recently said a professor of a Negro college. "We study the Negro along with other people."

"An excellent idea," the interviewer replied. "No one should expect you to do any more than this, but how do you do it when the Negro is not mentioned in your text books except to be condemned? Do you, a teacher in a Negro school, also condemn the race in the same fashion as the writers of your textbooks of history and literature?"

"No," said he, "we bring the Negro in here and there."

"How often does 'here and there' connote?"

"Well you know," said he, "Negros have not done much; and what they have accomplished may be briefly covered by referring to the achievements of a few men and women." (Woodson, 1933, p. 71)

This exchange obviously reflects the thinking of a mis-educated person. Since Woodson describes this person as a professor of a Negro college, the assumption is that the professor is African American. But earlier in chapter 4, "Education Under Outside Control," Woodson also cites that most of the Negro colleges had White presidents who often would not allow Negroes in their home or relegated them to entering through the service entrance. Woodson states, "Negros trained under such conditions without protest become downright cowards, and in life will continue as slaves in spite of their nominal emancipation" (1933, p. 21). These extreme examples of the impact of mis-education appear to have parallels in the realm of sport. We cite here a few aspects of this mis-education that are described below. This is by no means an exhaustive listing of mis-educative influences, but included to provide evidence the ideology of the mis-education of the African American athlete.

The History of the African American Athlete

History shows that it does not matter who is in power or what revolutionary forces take over the government, those who have not learned to do for themselves and have to depend solely on others never obtain any more rights or privileges in the end than they had in the beginning. (Woodson, 1933, p. 97)

African American athletes have been mis-educated or uneducated regarding their history. Though there is a significant body of research on this topic, unfortunately

few, save sport historians, are aware of the rich and storied history of African American athletes. While a historic narrative is beyond the scope of this writing it is important to know that there is a wealth of historical evidence on a significant number of African American athletes whose stories would likely be inspirational to today's student-athletes. Works such as those that provide the intellectual abilities, courage in the face of Jim Crow laws, and bravery during the civil rights era have potential to instill pride, stimulate interest, and provide positive role models for today's student-athletes.

Wiggins (2006) provides a series of biographies of African American athletes that displays the range of their abilities and accomplishments while situating them in the context of the periods in which they lived. These biographies also provide depictions of these individuals as more than mere athletes by citing their contributions to the racial struggles of African Americans outside the realm of sport. For example, Wiggins' work brings into focus that at the beginning of the twentieth century, there were African American athletes who were among the best in the world in sports such as jockeying, cycling, and boxing. Other works by authors such as Hunter (1998), Miller (1998), and Wiggins (1997) severely trouble the once-popular notion that African Americans were genetically predisposed to superior sport performance. This ideology persists and has been linked to prejudice and stereotyping and suggests inferiority of African American intellectual ability (Edwards, 1984; Sheldon, Jayaratne, & Petty, 2007). This historic prevalent ideology about naturally superior athletic abilities may aid in the mis-education of African American athletes through self-stereotyping (Sinclair, Hardin & Lowery, 2006). The findings of Hodge, Kozub, Dixon, Moore, and Kambo (2008) indicate that stereotypes about the athletic and intellectual abilities of African American student-athletes remain pervasive even in young people.

Ironically, in the early 1900s, there was an elite cohort of athletes who thrived academically and athletically, but their stories have been omitted from the American athletic and educational canon. Scholar athletes such as William Henry Lewis, Duke Slater, Jerome Holland, and Paul Robeson are beacons who exemplify academic and athletic brilliance. Although several of the aforementioned men were extremely successful collegiate and professional athletes, their extraordinary academic endeavors superseded their athletic feats, and yet they remain largely unknown (Smith, Clark, & Harrison, 2014). For this generation of African American scholar athletes, their history has not only been excluded from most history books but forgotten entirely. These athletes attended college for academic purposes and paid their own tuition. Others received academic scholarships and their participation in sport was ancillary (Smith et al., 2014). Interestingly, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, African Americans were less well off than they are today, but traditionally did not see athletics as an opportunity for upward mobility,

nor were they overrepresented in professional and collegiate sports. They faced harsh racial discrimination and in many cases were barred from athletic participation with and against their White counterparts (Shropshire, 1997). Many would assume this resolves the issue and that African American athletes' tenacious pursuit of professional athletics is to blame for the academic quandary these athletes find themselves in, but the situation is more nuanced. Although African American athletes are pursuing the professional ranks with more fervor than in the past, many people fail to take into account that not only have the players changed but so has the collegiate system. For example, we argue that although many people blame the student-athletes for their academic shortcomings, they fail to analyze the macro-level issues of how the athletic complex functions creating athletic juggernauts and expediting academic ineptness. Exorbitant amounts of time and pressure are devoted to athletics at the college level (Singer, 2008) contributing to Division I African American collegiate athletes having an inflated athletic identity and depressed academic identity (Harrison et al., 2011; Singer, 2008). Yet, what occurs at the middle-school level illuminates how mismatched identities and "mis-education" is facilitated at the college level because the groundwork has already been laid.

The Hidden Curriculum

...the Negro had no place in this curriculum. He was pictured as a human being of the lower order, unable to subject passion to reason, and therefore useful only when made the hewer of wood and the drawer of water for others. (Woodson, 1933, p. 14)

Kirk (1992, pp. 35–36) describes the hidden curriculum as "the invisible or opaque forces that, together with the official and visible programs of teaching and learning, create the dynamic of educational activity." While Kirk's focus is on physical education, the collegiate athletic terrain is ripe for examining the application of the hidden curriculum. To broaden the understanding of this concept Kirk further explains that the hidden curriculum is differentiated from the formal curriculum in that the hidden curriculum includes "attitudes and values [that] are communicated unintentionally, unconsciously, and unavoidably" (Kirk, 1992, p. 37).

The agenda for the African American student-athlete is ominously obvious to those involved and engaged in collegiate sport. While it is not communicated as a part of the formal curriculum in universities, the purpose of their presence is clear. Singer (2008) reports that student-athletes in his study indicated that the term 'student-athlete' was inappropriate, considering the time and effort required by their athletic endeavors. The participants in Singer's study insisted on using the term "athlete-student" as it more accurately portrayed the position athletics occupied in their existence. In fact, Singer quoted one of his participants who says:

...we are here to play a sport, but we also go to school so they try to collaborate those two and try to say student-athlete; we want to be students first, but more, we're athletes first because time is so demanding and what not. (2008, p. 403)

This comment is a rebuttal of the role athletic departments communicate to the public, however this athlete's perception of his responsibility calls for a reversal of the terms. Also hidden in plain view is the percentage difference in the African American males' representation in the undergraduate student population as compared with their representation in revenue-generating sport team members. The University of Mississippi exhibited the most striking difference in NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) schools with a 73% difference in the percentage of African American students versus the percentage of African American student-athletes in revenue-generating sports (Harper, Williams & Blackman, 2013). When African American men comprise 5% of the undergraduates, but 78% of the football and basketball team members, there is an obvious implicit message present that communicates African American men's "place" and expected role in the university.

Again, the message from these figures is clear even though the athletic departments and the NCAA communicate a colorblind message. These statistics are glaring evidence of a racial imbalance in both the academic and athletic realm, yet there is little effort to address the "elephant in the room." The NCAA, universities, and athletic departments routinely develop strategic plans, assess programs, refine and review policies and procedures, and project these through a colorblind lens that neglects to address the racial discourse and respond to the needs of the majority of participants in collegiate revenue-producing sports (Bimper & Harrison, 2015; Singer, 2009). Bonilla-Silva (2010) suggests that the dominant culture's racial perspectives are often concealed in a subversive discourse to avoid the confrontation of the realities of marginalized others and deny the lasting effects of systemic racism in U.S. society. While Kirk's (1992) notion of the hidden curriculum focused on the physical education context, it is very easy to see its application to the athletic context. Coaches, administrators, and athletes are impacted by "these attitudes and values (that) are communicated unintentionally, unconsciously, and unavoidably" (Kirk, 1992, p. 37).

Influence of Media Depictions

The conditions of today have been determined by what has taken place in the past, and in a careful study of this history we may see more clearly the great theatre of events in which the Negro has played a part. We may understand better what his role has been and how well he has functioned in it. (Woodson, 1933, p. 9)

It has been said that perception is reality, especially with the assistance of the nearly omnipresent media in today's culture. The increase of media options and outlets over the years has run concurrently with the demand for it to be consumed. In today's reality, physical interaction seems to have plateaued in exchange for the proxy of the digital dimension. Thus, the portrayal of people has exponentially accumulated importance, especially for African American athletes. African American athletes garner immense amounts of attention leading to their herofication (Loewen, 2008) and often fictitiously depicting the promise of stardom to young African American boys and girls. The depictions become problematic when coupled with the hegemonic standards of dichotomy between an embraceable or unembraceable (Page, 1997) African American athlete. Thereby, the influences of the media depictions of African American athletes are deeply calcified in the mis-education of American society and most importantly the African American community.

To understand the motive of media outlets today one must understand their interdependence with American capitalism. From Twitter to household cable, money changes hands to blast content to consumers with hopes of inciting an emotional response. Once an emotional response is sparked, an idea or a product is usually solicited to build toward a connection based in need (Hall, 1980). One of the main reasons scholars suggest many African American youth strive to be professional athletes is due to their mis-education acquired through the consumption of the American dream through athletic success (Edwards, 1984, 1988; Harris, 1997). American people are inundated with images of African Americans athletes poised as paragons of financial success and fame. On the contrary, there are far more African Americans who are successful lawyers and doctors than professional athletes (Sage, 2005).

To many youth watching, the athletes they idolize are often the same athletes that hegemonic society has deemed embraceable. Embraceable athletes are generally silent on societal issues, athletically successful, media friendly, and a household name for "positive" reasons. Some prime examples of embraceable athletes are: Kevin Durant, Sanya Richards-Ross, Michael Jordan, Russell Wilson, and Tiger Woods. These athletes have all experienced tremendous athletic success and have in some way or another remained fairly neutral on current or previous social injustice. The message that hegemonic society expresses to socially-malleable African American youth is that if you are going to be a successful professional athlete you must be silent, ignorant, or passive about injustices that affect the African American community. The intention here is not to insinuate that every African American athlete must be politically active and a champion for racial equality, however the point is to highlight the imbalance or portrayal of athletes who are embraceable in American society. For example, when asked about Colin Kaepernick protesting the national anthem in light of the killings of unarmed African American people, Russell Wilson stated, "For me, I love the flag. I love the

National Anthem because it's an emotional time for me because I'm so grateful I get to play on the football field" (quoted in Q13Foxnews, 2016, np). Wilson's statement was antithetical while giving off the guise of neutrality. As a result, Wilson is not chastised by the media because his sentiments are in line with the hegemonic status quo. Wilson in turn is seen as one-dimensional by adhering to his athletic endeavors solely. On the contrary, athletes who are targeted as unembraceable are often chastised and receive little to no positive media attention unless to operatively condition the youth to avoid their examples.

Unembraceable African American athletes have created a villain to help dissuade youth seeking to attain athletic success. The unembraceable African American athletes are conscious, multidimensional, athletically successful, and socially active. Athletes of this stock produce fear and unrest in the White hegemonic narrative of post-racial sports culture. The unembraceable African American athlete infuses their socially-conscious agenda with the platform afforded by their athletic performance. Colin Kaepernick, Marshawn Lynch, LeBron James, Arian Foster, Brandon Marshall, Muhammad Ali, Kareem Abdul Jabbar, Jim Brown, Tamika Catchings, and Serena Williams all exemplify the critical cognizance and athletic prowess to stimulate social change. The only issue with these athletes is that they provide a different narrative than the one hegemonic society would like for African American youth to believe. Thus, the mis-education of African American youth stems from the removal of these athletes from the positive guidance and depiction afforded to embraceable athletes.

The recent vilification of Colin Kaepernick is typical of the attitude many in society have toward African American athletes who voice their opinion on injustice. Kaepernick has received death threats, has been referred to by various racial epithets in comments on social media, and the police have threatened not to provide security for football games (Lee, 2016). The extreme hostility toward Kaepernick marks him as unembraceable by many media outlets. His ability to be more than an athlete alludes to his multidimensionality while simultaneously antagonizing hegemonic society's script for neutrality outside of athletics. The youth who view the negative portrayals of these multidimensional African American athletes are pressured to choose a path of least resistance to chase their professional dreams. The professional dream that many African American youth were promised begins as early as 5 or 6 years old. They are mis-educated through inundation with one-dimensional portrayals of athletes who look like them and thus the sequence of chasing the athletic American dream is lined with the dichotomy of embraceability.

The result of the inundation of embraceable African American athletes is to coax African American youth into the promise of professional athletic stardom. Not only are they primed to chase a professional dream with almost impossible odds, but they are also being inured to follow the example of the hegemonic status quo. The status quo values African American athlete's physical prowess

while ignoring their academic and social development. Henceforth, African American athletes experience mis-education since they only focus on sport because that is all they see as role models and the societal pressure to "focus on their sport". The result of focusing on one's sport solely creates African American youth who have little to no experience after completing their athletic tenure. Ultimately, larger American society's limited contact with African Americans continues to allow the influence of the media's depictions to dictate their treatment. This is problematic because it creates a one-dimensional ontic scripting of African American athletes that is deleterious to their culture, heritage, and history. In essence, the media's mis-education of consumers begets a controlled environment by hegemonic society.

Conclusion: The Need for (Re) Education

When a Negro has finished his education in our schools, then, he has been equipped to begin the life of an Americanized or Europeanized white man, but before he steps from the threshold of his alma mater he is told by his teachers that he must go back to his own people from whom he has been estranged by a vision of ideals which in his disillusionment he will realize that he cannot attain. He goes forth to play his part in life, but he must be both social and bi-social at the same time. While he is a part of the body politic, he is in addition to this a member of a particular race to which he must restrict himself in all matters social. While serving his country he must serve within a special group. While being a good American, he must above all things be a "good Negro"; and to perform this definite function he must learn to stay in a "Negro's place." (Woodson, 1933, p. 7)

The aim of this paper, thus far, has been to highlight the linkages between Woodson's conceptualization of the practices and implications of the mis-education of African American populations and the present day realities of African American student-athletes. Any compelling argument for educational reform concerning African American athletes at institutions of higher education begins with foundational, yet critical questions that enable a meaningful reimaging process. This line of questioning arguably begins with deep consideration of the role of athletics as part of the educational mission of the broader institution. Athletic departments, in part, reflect the larger philosophical perception of the role that sport plays in the targeted experience for both internal and external stakeholders of the institution. This alone is not an indictment of the presses of intercollegiate athletics. However, these same departments are quite void of a cadre of faculty members with expertise in facilitating student learning within the confines of traditional classroom settings. As consequence, can athletic departments promote an

education akin to the vision of Woodson, or are they relegated only to a limited schooling process that moves African American athletes along systematic assembly lines littered with checks and balances that distract from Woodson's sense of education? In simpler terms, are the vast number of athletic departments vested in schooling African American student-athletes or educating them?

The need for (re)education calls upon a deeper read of the sociocultural contexts and climates for which African American student-athletes pursue higher education. By sociocultural climate, we refer to the intersections of social, cultural, political, economic, and historical influences on the function and operations of collegiate sport and campus life at universities and colleges. Bimper (2016) argues the role that race plays in manufacturing the lived experiences and educational development of African American student-athletes deserves further investigation. In particular, Bimper investigates how race intersects and influences African Americans athletes' accrual and development of social capital that assists in extending their holistic education beyond the commonplace of schooling processes. In this vein, holistic development constitutes the academic, personal, and social development of these African American student-athletes. Broadly stated, social capital is characterized by the potential of means, assets, and resources gained and leveraged through the materialization and maturation of social ties. Bimper also contends that a combination of institutional investments and the proper design and implementation of programming aimed at developing social relations in forms of capital for which student-athletes can acquire and leverage may authorize a consciousness of education, beyond schooling.

Morris (2004) argues that social capital is a historic cornerstone in the shared experience of African Americans in American society. Similarly, African American student-athletes, too, must develop stocks of capital as an essential endeavor geared toward yielding returns on investment across their academic and personal growth. Yosso (2005) maintains that communities of color, similar to the collective community of African American student-athletes, possess a sociocultural wealth derived from a collection of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts controlled and used within and by communities of color to persist and contest macro and microforms of oppression. Yosso goes on to argue how race is appropriated in a coded vocabulary of "cultural difference" in schooling settings. Such cultural difference channels a rationale and justification for the omissions of one's culture and rich history that showcases the significant contributions, achievements, and endured struggles by the many African American athletes for which modern African American athletes and all athletes alike are indebted.

In an effort to examine the concept of social capital relevant to African American athletes, Bimper (2015) used a CRT lens while investigating how a case of student-athlete development programs structurally developed social capital for African American student-athletes at historically White institutions of education.

Findings from this study showcase how the intersecting societal institutions of sport and higher education embody a sociocultural matrix for which African American student-athletes must navigate. All the while, the social capital accrued by African American student-athletes is influenced by the ways in which they navigate through and about overt and covert racial discourses, ideologies, and inequities that abound. The student development programs of the respective athletic departments observed and examined in this research reflected cellular forms of intentionally organized communities apt for facilitating compelling forms of social capital for African American student-athlete participants that elevated social networks and one's sociocultural consciousness. The findings also signal that social capital developed among participants in these programs were not monolithic. In fact, Bimper posits the different programs were conduits to differing forms of social capital such as bridging and bonding forms of capital (Putnam, 2000).

Bonding social capital is based on networks that present a similarity among actors and social structures with regard to such demographic factors. In this case study, race was a core element contributing to the deeper unions and connectivity cultivated among individuals in the program. The element of bonding as a dimension of social capital is captured within the connecting of predominantly homogenous social ties leading to a strengthening or reinforcement of values and characteristics upheld within and by such networks (Putnam, 2000). In contrast, bridging capital refers to the cross-cutting ties (Paxton, 1999) that develop useful channels for information and create a sense of access that extend beyond the homogeneity of networks and social structures. The cross-cultural emphasis to broaden the scope of student-athletes' social relations furnished in one of the studied programs underscores the bridging between heterogeneous social ties.

Based on this research, Bimper (2016) contends that properly designed student-athlete development programs are profoundly suited as practical sites to advance the pedagogical possibilities that can promote a broader, more critical, and conscious elevating education for African American athletes. The pedagogical possibilities of current student-athletes' development initiatives should exemplify the positions of culturally-relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014; CRP). CRP is a pedagogical frame that weaves together three key purviews: (a) academic success through facilitated instruction and learning experiences, (b) cultural competence for appreciation and celebration of one's own culture and others, and (c) sociopolitical consciousness for solving real-world problems (Ladson-Billings, 2014). A CRP frame consists of engaging in the interrogation of the self and others, intentionally creating a community of learners and a climate that promotes a reciprocity of learning, and building conceptions of knowledge. Paris (2012) introduces the concept of culturally-sustaining pedagogy as "more than responsive of, or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people to preserve and cultivate

cultural pluralism as essential to one's education afford students the capacity to thoughtfully inquire of the solutions that attend to the needs of a pluralistic society" (p. 95). Paris maintains the vibrancy of a pluralistic society requires nimble consideration of "both the many and the one" (2012, p. 95).

Furthermore, the pedagogical possibilities of an athletic department committed to the education over schooling can inspire and generate a sustaining capital for African American student-athletes to thrive. Bimper (2016) argues athletic departments must consider the adoption of pedagogical approaches as a backbone to student-athlete development programming to effectively preserve an appreciation and celebration of one's own culture and facilitates the sociopolitical, sociocultural consciousness of African American student-athletes to find their agency in an ever-changing society. Bimper (2016) conceptualizes that these reimagined student-athlete development programming efforts should be grounded by three propositions: (a) social ties enable one to find community that strengthens one during times of perceived challenge; (b) social ties cultivate a social-cultural consciousness that authors a critical understanding of influential systems, the impacts of social order, and the complexities of how whiteness and privilege avail themselves to shape the lived experiences of racialized persons; and (c) social ties facilitate an acquisition of culturally relevant and responsive competencies and faculties to position oneself as a meaningful change agent in a pluralistic society.

Colleges, universities, and the NCAA would do well to embrace these ideals through the development of programs that foster development of both bonding and bridging social capital. The (re)education of African American student-athletes should be incubated in the relative safety of bonding groups that reinforce and value the athlete's culture. These must be led by facilitators with the cultural competence, knowledge, and capital to foster accrual of academic knowledge and skill in a "culturally safe" environment. This homogenous bonding provides an environment that can facilitate improved educational outcomes and social capital can be developed and nurtured in culturally- and socially-sustaining networks.

Subsequent to the acquisition of adequate bonding capital, the introduction of bridging capital can be initiated to facilitate the inclusion of African American student-athletes into heterogeneous groups. This serves to broaden the scope of available capital and social networks and allows student-athletes to build confidence while functioning in multicultural contexts. These student-athletes should be encouraged to develop relationships within social structures that can facilitate future career success.

The design and development of programs based on these principles, in connection with existing programs with African American cultural foci, have the potential to meet the unique educational needs of African American student-athletes in predominantly White colleges and universities. Culturally-conceived programs staffed

by culturally-competent leaders can conceivably assist African American student-athletes in progressing from mis-education to expedient and meaningful education.

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