“GET THAT SON OF A BITCH OFF THE FIELD!” SPORT IN UNIVERSITY CLASSROOMS

By

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of BRUCE LEE HAZELWOOD find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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“GET THAT SON OF A BITCH OFF THE FIELD!”: SPORT IN UNIVERSITY CLASSROOMS

Abstract

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Discussions about sports continue to permeate the news and political realms and may prove to be a useful but underutilized tool to teach difficult subjects like race, gender, and sexuality. However, most scholarly work on sport focuses on a specific systemic inequality within a sport and/or how an issue affects sport and thus are sociological in nature, rather than providing educators strategies so that they can utilize sport as a pedagogical vehicle to teach systemic inequalities. Through semi-structured interviews with university educators, this dissertation examines how and why these participants employ sport to educate students on systemic social issues (racism, classism, sexism, homo/transphobia) in their classrooms. Theoretical constructs from Critical Race Theory and Critical Masculinity Studies aided in understanding how discussions of race/White supremacy, gender/sex/patriarchy, and heteronormativity/homo/transphobia operated in a curriculum that draws from sports. Findings include the assumptions of participants in utilizing sport as critical pedagogy, particularly around sport being an access point both as content and as a humanizing factor for the educator. An important finding is participants utilized critical sport pedagogies in both sport-centered and non-
sport-centered courses, highlighting an aspect of accessibility. Further, the study revealed how the identities of participants (which included disciplinary training as well as their race, gender, and sexual orientation) shaped their focus in teaching a critical sport pedagogy. Another finding focused on the varied strategies participants employed when utilizing a critical sport pedagogy, including the use of media and providing student choice for assignments and projects. Findings will prove valuable to educators, both in K-12 schools and higher educations (as well as informal schooling) as they ponder how and why to develop their own critical sport pedagogies.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTERS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background of the Problem</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Research Purpose and Research Questions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Significant Terms and Acronyms</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Chapters</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Sport Sociology Literature</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Race and Sport Literature</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Gender, Sex, and Sport Literature</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Sexuality and Sport Literature</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Physical Education/Athletics and Education Literature</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .............................................................................. 36
   Critical Race Theory (CRT) .............................................................................. 37
   Critical Masculinity Studies (CMS) ................................................................. 38
   CRT and CMS in Sport ...................................................................................... 40
   Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 56
4. METHODOLOGY, POSITIONALITY, AND REFLEXIVITY ............................ 58
   Positionality ........................................................................................................ 58
   Methodology ....................................................................................................... 61
   Qualitative Inquiry: Overview .......................................................................... 61
   Data Collection Method: Qualitative Interview .............................................. 63
   Data Analysis ...................................................................................................... 69
   Credibility and Trustworthiness ....................................................................... 73
   Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 76
5. DATA ANALYSIS .............................................................................................. 78
   From Trayvon Martin to Colin Kaepernick .................................................... 78
   Analysis of Themes ............................................................................................ 89
   Sport as the Access Point .................................................................................. 90
   How Identity Shapes Pedagogy ......................................................................... 99
   What is Missing? ............................................................................................... 106
   Pedagogical Strategies of Participants ........................................................... 111
   The Reception of Students to Critical Sport Pedagogies ................................ 120
   Conclusion ......................................................................................................... 129
6. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION .............................................................. 132
LIST OF TABLES

1. Table 4.1: Participants of Study................................................................. 67
LIST OF FIGURES

1. Figure 3.1: Knight’s Serena Williams Cartoon…………………………………….. 46
2. Figure 5.1: “What’s Offensive?”……………………………………………………. 124
3. Figure 5.2: “Gender Stereotypes and Sports”……………………………………. 125
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The 45th President of the United States uttered the titular quote of this study at a rally in Huntsville, Alabama on September 22nd, 2017 (Bradner, 2017). This was in response to the activism of National Football League (NFL) athletes started by former quarterback Colin Kaepernick. Since Kaepernick started his protest against racial injustice targeting African Americans specifically (Biderman, 2016; Chan, 2016), the explicit mixing of sports and politics has affected people in their everyday lives, as demonstrated through people burning or cutting their Nike products after Nike named Kaepernick to their 30th anniversary campaign (Carissimo, 2018; Novy-Williams, 2018). During the 2018 midterm election campaign season, Republican legislators across the country ran political advertisements lambasting NFL players for kneeling during the playing of the national anthem prior to games (Strauss, 2018).

World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) faced scrutiny, including consecutive weeks of lambasting from John Oliver (Oliver, 2018a; Oliver, 2018b), over their ten-year contract with Saudi Arabia and refusal to hold their November 2nd “Crown Jewel” event in a location other than Saudi Arabia (Gelston, 2018; Keller, 2018b). Oliver’s critique of the WWE’s decision is due to the disappearance and murder of journalist and U.S. resident Jamal Khashoggi, allegedly orchestrated by Prince Mohammad bin Salman (Al Jazeera, 2018; Chulov, 2018; Chulov & McKernan, 2018; Linton, 2018; Lister, 2018). The female athletes of WWE could not travel and participate due to Saudi law, and with WWE holding their first all-female “Evolution” pay-per-view event only five days prior, on October 28th (Bixenspan, 2018; Duggan, 2018; Keller, 2018a; Konuwa, 2018), some commentators think the “optics” of this made “Evolution” seem like a concession to their female athletes by WWE (admin, 2018; DeAngelo, 2018; Feinberg & Gelston, 2018; Needleman, 2018).
On February 23rd, 2019, six Black college basketball players for the University of Mississippi (“Ole Miss”) kneeled during the playing of the national anthem prior to their game (Morgan, 2019; Zhao, 2019). This was in response to a pro-Confederacy march held earlier on campus (Cleveland, 2019; Morgan, 2019). Player Devontae Shuler said, “I felt like I needed to stand up for my rights for righteousness sakes…I couldn’t pass that moment without making a difference” (Witz, 2019). Although seemingly channeling Kaepernick’s activism, Shuler, his teammates, and coach Kermit Davis all argued this was in response only to the events on campus, with Governor Phil Bryant responding he “hasn’t given much thought” to the event (Associated Press, 2019; Witz, 2019); this comment is complicated by Bryant having declared April as “Confederate Heritage Month” in Mississippi (Associated Press, 2019). Though Suss (2019) noted the athletes did not kneel for their next game on the 27th, the assertion that their kneeling somehow only acts a response to the Confederate march fails to account for several issues.

The argument that the actions of the players was in response to the Confederate march and nothing more belies the fact that Cleveland (2019) noted the players were still booed by some fans, indicating that the gesture of kneeling during the playing of the national anthem prior to sporting events still holds negative connotations even when not directly associated with Kaepernick’s stated activist goals. Further, the assertion by the players, Davis, and athletic director Ross Bjork that, “It had nothing to do with the anthem. It had nothing to do with anything beyond, ‘We don’t want those people here,’” (ESPN News Services, 2019) avoids the fact that the players chose the anthem as the site of their activism. They could have chosen to make statements to media or chosen to worn shirts with a statement, but they instead chose the playing of the anthem like Kaepernick indicating they
understood the power of the moment. In a system that treats collegiate athletes as commodities, Witz (2019) quoted Brian Foster, an assistant professor of sociology and Southern studies at Ole Miss, who claimed this also was about, “Agency. It signifies the capacity for anyone, but especially black folks, to make a personal claim, to take a stance about an injustice that they think should be different or is unfair.” This is complicated by Ole Miss’ longstanding connection to Confederate imagery and narratives; their now-retired mascot used to be a Confederate rebel. These recent examples of how politics are infused in sports, athletes’ actions, and/or sports corporations’ decisions demonstrate the pedagogical potential that this arena of American culture could provide for educators. However, there is very little research that examines these relationships in terms of their pedagogical possibilities.

**Background of the Research Problem**

Scholarly research on sports/athletics and systemic inequalities, meaning how issues of race/class/gender/sexuality manifest in sports and athletics, in education include Gems, Borish, and Pfister (2017); Mechikhoff (2014); and Welch (2004), all of whom trace the history and evolution of physical education. The field of education also includes those who examine physical education (PE) and K-12 and intercollegiate athletics (Beyer & Hannah, 2000; Mansfield, Caudwell, Wheaton, & Watson, 2018). The field of sport sociology analyzes sport through sociocultural analyses (Coakley, 2017; Edwards, 1973; Yiannakis & Greendorfer, 1992). There is also research that specifically analyzes sports through race (Edwards, 2018; Rhoden, 2006; Runstedtler, 2012; Ward, 2006; Zirin, 2008); gender, particularly Title IX (Paule-Koba, Harris, & Freysinger, 2013; Pauline, 2013; Sorenson, 2012); sexuality, homophobia, and queer theory (Ayvazo & Sutherland, 2009; Caudwell, 2006; Eng, 2006; Morrow & Gill, 2003; O’Brien,
Shovelton, & Latner, 2013); masculinity (Chen & Curtner-Smith, 2013; Messner, 1992); and ability (Wilkinson, Littlefair, & Barlow-Meade 2013). However, little research exists on how educators can and do employ critical sport pedagogies (CSP), a term I have coined during this research, in the university classroom.

The events presented in the introduction, and the lack of scholarly literature on critical sports pedagogy, provide pedagogical opportunities. Particularly for educators focusing on systemic social inequities (race, gender, sexuality, etc.), sport may hold the most potential to teach students about systems of power and oppression because of the relatability of sports and athletics to many students and its continuous presence in U.S. culture. The challenge is to have educators and students conceive of sport as more than just a field of play or entertainment, but as a space where narratives of race, gender, sexuality, ability, culture, class, etc. “compete” and find home.

**Statement of the Research Purpose and Research Questions**

Because the research literature on how educators pedagogically employ sport to teach the operations of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia is scant, this study is exploratory in nature. Further, with the growing recognition and intersection of sport in multiple facets of society, particularly news and politics, the saliency of sport to discuss issues of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia arguably has never been more apparent. As such, the guiding research question for this study are:

1. How and why do university educators employ sport to teach the operations of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia?
2. What strategies do university educators develop to teach the operations of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia through sport?
3. How do students respond to a critical sport pedagogy (CSP)?

4. What pedagogical practices do educators employ when student responses to CSP are negative?

5. What kinds of critical incidents in sport do educators utilize to engage students in systemic social issues such as racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia?

**Theoretical Framework**

I utilized the frameworks of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Masculinity Studies (CMS), a reframing of men’s studies by scholars like Anderson (2009) and Simpson (2017). Anderson writes on “inclusive masculinities” while Simpson utilizes CMS to bridge gender studies. I utilize both because of the prevailing systems of White supremacy, patriarchy, and heteronormativity in society. I also am a cisgender, heterosexual male of color who faces issues of racism, masculinity, misogyny, and homophobia. In conjunction, I believe these two frameworks hold potential for emancipatory and progressive pedagogies through employing critical reflexivity (Mayan, 2009) and “reflexivities of discomfort” (Pillow, 2003).

CRT asserts racism is normal to the point where most Whites do not recognize White supremacy, and uses the concepts of counter-narrative; interest-convergence; and intersectionality (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Interest-convergence, according to Bell (1980), occurs when the oppressor gives concessions to the oppressed only when it aids the oppressor, such as racial integration. Crenshaw’s intersectionality is a key CRT concept, and though she originally discussed intersectionality as examining the experiences of Black women as being both women and Black, this concept has gained wide acceptance in scholarship, and is applied to various intersectional identities (Dávila, 2008; Ferguson, 2016).
CMS asserts that there is a difference between biologically sexed males and socially constructed men (Kimmel, 2011); that patriarchy exists (Johnson, 2014), and that males receive patriarchal dividend (invisible privileges). Further, CMS argues that hegemonic masculinities take on different forms, though there is an idealized hegemonic masculinity in society which is dominant (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Finally, CMS notes the reality of the mind/body split (Messner, 1992) where the mind pushes the body beyond its physical limits and the presence of alternative masculinities (Boyd, 2002; Collins, 2005; Pascoe, 2012), which are similar to CRT’s use of counter-narrative and intersectionality. These frameworks are useful in examining the relationships between sport, society, and power.

**Methodology**

Because I move forward with a qualitative research study, the methodology and methods I chose must be consistent with the goals and aims of qualitative inquiry (QI): seeking to understand how participants experience a phenomenon/event rather than generalize findings to a larger group. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) argued scholars conducting QI are attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena through the “meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). QI scholars also recognize the problematic history of qualitative research, but have developed strategies to account for these issues and the subjectivity of researchers.

As I sought educator’s reasonings for employing sport to teach the operations of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia, I conducted qualitative interviews (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Seidman, 2006; Spradley, 1979). “At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (Seidman, p. 9). I developed an interview protocol, contacted
educators whom I had preexisting relationships, and then utilized snowball recruiting by asking these known participants of any other potential participants. I conducted interviews in-person and through Skype, transcribing the audio for later data analysis.

**Significance of the Study**

In this study, I examined the efficacy of utilizing a critical sport pedagogy (CSP) through the experiences of educators who utilize sport to teach the operations of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia. Research shows there is an abundance of scholarly literature of sociocultural critiques of sport, but little on how to utilize sport as critical pedagogy. The analysis portion of this study (Chapter 5) highlights the strategies my participants employed in utilizing a CSP, including how CSP is implemented in non-sports-centered courses. My findings should provide educators both a level of comfortability in developing and implementing a CSP, as well as various examples that different participants have employed in their courses.

**Overview of Significant Terms and Acronyms**

Throughout this study, I employ terms and acronyms that may need more context, have multiple or different meanings, and/or may be unfamiliar to readers. In this section, I highlight these terms and acronyms, including how I define them, throughout this study.

- *Critical Sport Pedagogy/Pedagogies (CSP)*: I define this as how educators employ sport in the classroom to teach the operations of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia. This includes various strategies of teaching and learning, including utilizing media, group projects, and/or creative projects.

- *Racism*: a *systemic* force of power and oppression that favors those classified as “White” over those classified as “of color” (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Housing
discrimination, disparities in education, the income and wealth gap, and mass incarceration are examples of the systemic nature of racism. Very few individuals are actually racist in the systemic definition as it takes power to implement policy (de facto and de jure) that favors White people.

- **Classism**: as with racism, a systemic force that favors those of higher economic classes (rather than race) over those who are lower-class (Carraway, 2013). Notions of hard work, meritocracy, and laziness help reinforce classist notions of higher classes being inherently more hard-working and deserving than those of lower classes (Gamble, 2018).

- **Sexism**: a systemic force favoring males and men while oppressing females and women (Messner, 2009). This includes hiring men who are less qualified than women and promoting them to more managerial positions, the pay gap, or believing women lack the “leadership” qualities to be President or sports coaches. A more insidious form of sexism is the perpetuation of women needing the protection of men, which seemingly indicates women are incapable of living their lives without men.

- **Patriarchy**: Johnson (2014) argued patriarchal societies are those that “promotes male privilege by being male dominated, male identified, and male centered. It is also organized around an obsession with control and involves as one of its key aspects the oppression of women” (p.5-6, original emphasis). Patriarchy reinforces sexism through the obsessive control of women and the reification of men. A subtle operation of patriarchy is boys/men believing they can occupy any position in society as opposed to girls/women being told they can only occupy certain places, particularly the home.
• **Homo/transphobia**: an extreme fear of people who identify as LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer/questioning). This includes the narrative that gay men (specifically) are sexual predators, particularly child predators (Kimmel, 1994); John Oliver thoroughly critiqued this narrative by citing LGBTIQ people are *less* likely to commit sexual violence than heterosexual men (2015). The unfortunate end of the homo/transphobia spectrum is the violent assaults and murders suffered by LGBTIQ individuals at far higher rates than heterosexual people (Oliver, 2015).

• **Heteronormativity**: an assumption that there are only two genders (men and women) that match the sex assigned at birth, and that people are “naturally” attracted to the opposite gender (Kitzinger, 2005). This includes most media focusing on heterosexual relationships and issues, as well as legislation passed with the belief that everyone is heterosexual and non-hetero people are abnormal.

• **Systemic Social Issues/Inequalities**: an umbrella concept I use to group White supremacy, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and other systemic forces as they operate through racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia.

**Overview of Chapters**

In Chapter 2, I review the scholarly literature of five different intersections of sport and society. These intersections include the literature in sports sociology, race and sport, sex/gender and sport, sexuality and sport, and PE/K-12 and intercollegiate athletics. Sport sociology, as the foundational field in the sociocultural analyses of sport, shaped *how* future scholarly research on sport would be conducted: scholarly critique, with little attention to pedagogy. This is seen in the literature on sport and race, gender and sex, and sexuality. There is a slight shift in the literature on PE and athletics in education as *some* of the works
discuss pedagogy. However, much of these works focus on how physical educators should think about how they perpetuate issues of racism, classism, sexism, homo/transphobia, and meritocracy. However, there is no discussion on how to use sport or PE as sites of critical pedagogy.

Chapter 3 is an expanded discussion of the theoretical frameworks, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Masculinity Studies (CMS). I provide an in-depth discussion on generally accepted tenets of each framework. I then connect some tenets to examples in the sporting arena. This serves to illuminate the saliency of utilizing sport to teach systemic social issues, as well as the connection between how sport reflects society and sociocultural issues (Coakley, 2017).

Chapter 4 is a detailed discussion of the methodology I employed for this study, qualitative interviews. After examining the problematic history of qualitative inquiry (QI), I define QI and turn to a discussion on interviewing. This includes the process of determining the type of interview and selection of participants; the development of an interview protocol; and “best practices” in conducting qualitative interviews. An in-depth discussion about participants follows, including method of recruiting, how the interview was conducted, and their personal and academic identities. Next, I discuss the process of analyzing the data, including coding and categorizing the data (Saldaña, 2017). I conclude with a discussion on the strategies I employ for credibility and trustworthiness, including how qualitative researchers have reconceptualized quantitative terms to fit the goals of QI.

Chapter 5 is the analysis of the data. I begin by laying the recent contextual foundation of sport intersecting with news and politics, particularly the murder of Trayvon Martin and the activism of Colin Kaepernick. This contextual understanding should further
strengthen my arguments that there is a powerful relationship between sport and society. I present the main themes from an analysis of the interview data. One theme is the prevailing view of my participants that sport is the most accessible point to teach systemic inequalities to students. This belief translated to some participants utilizing sport as an access point to teach systemic inequalities about other institutions, such as the military. The second theme is how the personal and academic identities of each participant shaped and continues to reshape their pedagogies. The third theme includes the strategies utilized by participants in utilizing CSP; media and meaningful classroom discussions were the most popular. The last theme is the perception of participants on student responses to CSP. Most participants commented they think students respond positively. These themes provide a hopeful outlook for implementing CSP – however, these themes also came with some cautions from participants. While sport seems increasingly ubiquitous and pervasive, it also may prove ineffective pedagogically with certain populations and/or with certain conversations. I include examples from participants and my own pedagogical experiences, both positive and negative, including experiences with student-athletes. The chapter concludes with a reassertion of my argument that CSP may be the most effective tool to educate students on systemic social issues.

Chapter 6 focuses on the implications for future pedagogy and research, particularly the lack of CSP to teach issues of sex, heteronormativity, homo/transphobia, and disability by participants, and the lack of literature on CSP. With the ubiquitous accessibility of sports, educators could increase the critical engagement of students who identify as LGBTIQ and could increase students’ critical consciousness of the operations of ableism, as well as educating all students on the issues of sex (including sex testing), heteronormativity, homo/transphobia, and ableism. I include some strategies educators might employ to teach
the operations of these issues, including media and open-ended projects. The latter may assist in establishing CSP as both a viable pedagogical option and site of critical scholarly research. This would also address the lack of literature on CSP. I conclude with a summary of the study and the future implications.

Conclusion

Even as many continue to argue for athletes to “shut up and dribble” (Sullivan, 2018) or to “stick to sports” (Huber, 2017; Salguero, 2017), the tumultuous sociocultural and political climate since the murder of Martin in 2011 proves sport is not separate from society but linked with society. This has only been exacerbated by the election of the 45th President; “Get that son of a bitch off the field!” were his words, after all. As I tell my students, “Issues in sport are endemic to society, and issues in society are endemic to sport.” White supremacy, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and other systemic forces are as powerful and oppressive in sport as they are in every facet of society.

For educators, particularly those who teach the operations of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia, sport represents a site of critical pedagogy that holds immense saliency in educating students on these issues. Many have experiences and relationships to sport, and many on college campuses are engaged with their university’s athletics to different degrees. However, scholarly research tends to focus on sport as critique rather than pedagogy. The increasing presence of sport in news and politics necessitates examining the efficacy of CSP in the classroom, particularly as it relates to the strategies employed by educators to teach systemic social issues.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter gives a selective overview of scholarly and popular literature on sport and physical education. The foundational field in the study of sport and society in academia is sports sociology. The field laid the groundwork via conceptual and empirical work for researchers in different academic areas to conduct critical work in their disciplines that examined the relationship between sports and society, often employing critical theoretical frameworks such as Critical Race Theory or various strands of Feminism. Next, I present empirical studies on sport with a focus on race, followed by gender and sex, and lastly sexuality. These reviews highlight the diversity in approaches to researching the role of sport in perpetuating and/or challenging systemic social issues. I will end the review with an analysis of how scholars have written about and conducted research on physical education and the role of athletics at educational institutions. The concluding section will briefly summarize the existing literature as well as lay the foundation for the next chapter.

Overview of sport sociology literature

Much of the existing scholarly literature on sports/athletics takes a sociocultural approach in an analysis of how race, gender, sexuality, class, economics, and culture manifest in the sports arena. This approach can be found in academic fields like Sociology of Sport and American Studies (Delaney & Madigan, 2015; Giulianatti, 2015; Leonard, 2017; Vanderwerken, 1990; Yiannakis & Greendorfer, 1992). The only research that examines the use of sport analysis pedagogically is that found in physical education (Kohe, 2015; Ozoliņš & Stolz, 2013; van Benthem, Pacuit, & Roy, 2011), but this research focuses on how to teach physical education rather than on how to utilize sport as critical pedagogy. There are, however, findings from the
sociocultural studies of sport, society, and power that would be helpful in classrooms, specifically discussing race, White supremacy, gender, sex, patriarchy, and homo/transphobia.

Edwards’ *Sociology of Sport* (1973) is the first fundamental text in sports sociology and represents a critical shift in academic research from studying sport as just physical education to studying sport as illuminating societal dynamics. This is likely due to the culture-shifting events of the previous two decades: integration, the Civil Rights Acts, and Title IX. Rather than focus on physical education’s role in “training” and instilling “discipline” in young men (Gems, Borish, & Pfister, 2017), scholarly literature in the proceeding decades took a decided turn to focus on how race and gender, specifically, with growing research in sexuality and homophobia, play out in sports and athletics.

Coakley (2017) wrote that the sociology of sport, “tells us about the organization and dynamics of relationships in society, and about how people see themselves and others in relation to the world at large” (p. 11). For Coakley, one of the main goals of the sociology of sport is to undo what he calls the “great sports myth”: sports are inherently good, and those who participate in sport become good people through their participation; and that heinous acts by sports figures are explained as anomalies. As such, he argued sports are a site of contested power where narratives, experiences, and ideas about race, gender, social class, and sexuality compete. “In fact, they are sites where ideas and beliefs about gender and other important aspects of our lives are created, reproduced, and challenged. Therefore, sports constitute a significant social world to study” (p. 41-42). While it is a significant site to study, Coakley’s focus is on the study of sport rather than on how to utilize a critical sport pedagogy (CSP).

Turning to the practice of sociology of sport in the classroom, McElroy (1990) shared her experiences teaching sociology of sport courses. McElroy argued, “I have found one of the best
ways to make students ‘live’ sociology of sports is to make them defend certain controversial positions through structured role-playing” (p. 190), achieved through structured debates. She also included topics not covered by traditional texts (such as superstition and sport) that forced students to seek non-traditional sources. Birrell (1990) wrote about teaching a “Women in Sport” class from a feminist perspective. For Birrell, teaching the course from this perspective “means not only uncovering missing data on women in sport and presenting it within a sensible theoretical framework, but also acknowledging that I must keep my role as ‘an authority’ in proper perspective” (p. 291-292). She asked her students, “If women defined sports, what would it look like?” (p. 297-298) and evaluated the success of her course on how their responses changed over the academic term. Prebish (1990) discussed teaching the relationship between religion and sport. While he lamented the lack of a text that adequately addressed the relationship between religion and sports, he tried to provide a new vocabulary and a new way for people to look at themselves and their religious world. He argued sports and religion are not parallel phenomena, but rather a complete identity that sport is religion.

Yiannakis and Greendorfer’s (1992) edited collection focused on the “applications” of the sociology of sport rather than only the study. Yiannakis argued, “Thus applied work concerns itself with what ought to be rather than with discovery, explanation, and prediction of what is” (p. 11). In their critique of Yiannakis, Ingham and Donnelly (1992) analyzed the production of knowledge in sports sociology and the issues this presents for the field. They argued there are implicit connections between knowledge production, knowledge application, and the political formulation of social policy. They argued there is a difference between applied and practical sociology of sport. “The former can be linked to managerialism while the latter may lead to emancipation” (p. 253). In another critique, Melnick (1992) argued that by taking a humanist
approach, “The humanistic sports sociologist’s highest commitment would not be to a worship of the majesty of science but rather, to a concern for human beings and the self-actualizing potential of the institutional structures they create” (p. 47).

Roberts (1992) applied sociology of sport to create recommended practices for children’s sports. His recommendations included having adult figures who are sensitive to the competitive process, particularly in how the child perceives the process; adults who understand that children are not miniature adults, with each child having different perceptions and psychological reactions to competition; and adults who treat each child individually and equally regardless of development and skill level.

Snyder (1997) utilized comic strips for sociology of sport classes, specifically the comic strip *Gil Thorp*, as parts of “units covering material on sport and social values (including socialization), education, stratification, gender, and minorities” (p. 240). He argued, “Students become interested in the content of the strip,” (p. 242) because of their relatability to sports or because of the differences in their high school athletic experiences. With the rebirth in popularity of comics, comic books, graphic novels, and manga, utilizing these media represents a unique opportunity for creative pedagogy. There are comics and strips with episodes on sports, like *The Boondocks*, or a multitude of manga centered on sports, like *Slam Dunk* and *Kuroko no Basket*, (basketball), *Major* and *Major 2nd* (baseball), *Eyeshield 21* (American football), and *Hajime no Ippo* and *Her Impact!* (boxing) that open discussions on race, gender, masculinity, femininity, and culture. These are pedagogical discussions, but seemingly relegated to sports sociology.

Lastly, though not a scholar, Thomas’ (2018) collection of mini-essays with accompanying interviews examined the role of athletes and activism. Subjects covered in his interviews included speaking out for social justice during the tenure of the 45th President.
Highlighting a conversation he had with his 11-year-old son, Thomas (who is Black) maintained that Black people “have survived much worse than Trump in this country” (p. 184). Another subject included having “the talk” with young Black female athletes. Unlike White households, where “the talk” is generally about sex, for many Black families in this country, “the talk” is about how they will be treated by police, and how best to respond. “I have seen white women cuss the police out, tell them they will have their badge – but we simply cannot do that. The main objective, again, is for them to get home safely” (p. 247). Thomas admitted, “Coming from a [Black] man, it probably would have been offensive. I can say that to young [Black] men, but I’m not so sure I can convey that same message to young [Black] women” (p. 247). This chapter includes interviews with Chamique Holdsclaw (former professional basketball player), and Jemele Hill and Michael Smith (sports broadcasting/journalism personalities). The last subject to highlight from Thomas is the important role of education. As a coach for his son’s basketball team, Thomas informed them “that people are going to have low academic expectations for them as athletes,” (p. 285) but also that “they need to have the courage to never let anyone in life defeat them” (p. 286), channeling the discourse of athletics so embedded in Thomas through his decades in sport.

Thomas, himself a former player in the National Basketball Association (NBA), interviewed current and former professional athletes such as Laila Ali, John Carlos, Tommie Smith, and Bill Russell; team and/or league management including Mark Cuban, Steve Kerr, and Adam Silver; sports media personalities such as Hill, Smith, and Bomani Jones; but also Valerie and Allysza Castile, Tiffany Crutcher, Jahvaris Fulton, and Emerald Snipes, all surviving family members of unarmed Black men killed by police. This collection not only served to highlight the intersections of sport and society, particularly around racism within sports, but the recognition
that those words and actions within and outside of sport have larger societal impacts than acknowledged.

**Overview of race and sport literature**

Moving to studies on sports and race (seemingly the largest intersection of scholarship in sport), Rhoden (2006) named three constructs, “the jockey syndrome,” “the dilemma of neutrality,” and “the conveyor belt,” that are applicable for use in university courses, particularly sport management or sport sociology courses to critically interrogate the role of race, politics, and power in sport. The jockey syndrome refers to racist policies and legislation that target access and styles of play of Black athletes to prevent their success and eventually, participation. Black jockeys won most horse races in the early 1900s, with the domination attributed to their forced caretaking of horses during slavery. Legislation was implemented barring Black jockeys from competing. The dilemma of neutrality, a coining in response to Michael Jordan never taking a partisan political stance during his prime professional years, refers to the thin line Black athletes must navigate to appease the majority (White) viewers and media. Those who stay neutral reap monetary benefits like Jordan, and those who deny neutrality face the fate of Kaepernick, whose athletic career is on hold due to his continued activism. Lastly, the conveyor belt refers to the system of “producing” athletic talent in big-time football and basketball. This begins in youth sports and targets athletes of color who, if there is some kind of “defection” (injury, interests outside of sport), are replaceable by the conveyor belt – the deliverance of more talented athletes of color (in the eyes of the majority White sports decision-makers).

Newman and Rosen (2014) analyzed the intersection of business and race with an examination of the critical role of the Negro Leagues to Black businesses overall during segregation. Negro League games were one of few money-making endeavors for Black
communities during Jim Crow segregation. Not only would most of the Black community attend the games, the employees, players, and coaches were all Black (though some management was Jewish). Seeing their revenue stream dwindle from the absence of Black fans, Major League Baseball (MLB) “poached” the best Negro League talent to boost the level of play and attendance of MLB games, effectively ending the Negro Leagues and the positive economic impact on Black communities. Newman and Rosen cited the Atlanta Daily World in December 1948, “The advent of Jackie Robinson, Larry Doby and Leroy ‘Satchel’ Paige into organized baseball has proven fatal to the financially insecure Negro National League and continuing revenue losses have led to the dissolution of the league” (p. 149).

By masking the integration of baseball as “progress” with Black and White players competing with and against each other, MLB was able to gain economic and public relations gains at the expense of Black baseball and Black economies. As more Negro League talent were highlighted, their skills and style of play led to higher attendance and profits for the White league. It took less than a decade after Robinson signed with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1946 for the last remnants of the Negro Leagues to fold in the early 1950s (Newman & Rosen, 2014). Yet, MLB continued to and still profits from the skills and style of players of color, though the decline of African-American athletes led MLB to engage in the same practices with players in Central and Southern America. This is also applicable to other sporting leagues in the US; the NBA gained a cultural foothold only after merging with the American Basketball Association (ABA), where more Black players (and their styles) created a more entertaining atmosphere. In every case, such as with the integration of universities in the South (Wills, 2017), integration was driven by competition and economics (usually intertwined in capitalism), not by altruism. This is an example of a key tenet of Critical Race Theory (CRT): interest-convergence (Bell, 1980),
which maintains that dominant society only allows seemingly progressive movements and changes when the interests of dominant ideology and capitalism converge.

Hartmann (2016) argued that the creation of midnight basketball leagues (and sport leagues broadly) operate as neoliberal social policy in communities of color. This is due more to the missions of these leagues, which seeks to keep young men of color away from crime through sport. These leagues do nothing to address the systemic issues of poverty in the communities they operate. As Hartmann and other scholars have argued (Coakley, 2017; Rhoden, 2006), most people believe in what Coakley terms the “great sport myth” (GSM): sport is inherently pure and good, turning those who participate into pure and good people, therefore, there is no need to study sport any further (Coakley, p. 11). The notion of sport as a “character-builder” or as the “great equalizer” are inherent to the GSM. As Hartmann argued,

Midnight basketball, the CHA’s [Chicago Housing Authority] original proposal noted,

“takes an old concept – sport as a constructive character-building activity – and gives it a new twist – the organization of an organized, ‘after-hours’ program.” In this view, young black men needed to be supervised and controlled directly (p. 60).

Again, the goals of the CHA (in Hartmann’s study) and similar organizations that employ sport for some “social good” are more focused on “keeping (Black) kids out of trouble” rather than providing opportunities for Black children and families. This also serves to reinforce the narratives to Black families that sport is the way out of poverty, rather than a potential path forward.

Mohamed (2017) analyzed the racial politics of pickup basketball and the reclaiming of a Black masculine identity (though fleeting). “It is my contention that basketball expressionism, especially that which takes place on the blacktop…has become a vehicle for self-identity and a
focal point of community strength, structure, and everyday resistance among black Americans” (p. 55). He observed that the basketball court operates as the one arena where Black men can (re)claim power, particularly over White men, due to stereotypes about basketball and Black men, namely that basketball is the “Black man’s game.” “Perhaps the most interesting dynamic of this phenomenon was the numerous instances where black American males seemed to embrace these stereotypes themselves and use them to their personal advantage in the negotiation of day-to-day politics” (p. 125).

However, Mohamed argued not only does the employment of “cool pose” (Majors & Billson, 1992) create a social posture and values incompatible with conventional means of success, but that, “The mobilization of bias as constructed around black athleticism and participation in sports simultaneously devalues intellectual contributions of African Americans and deemphasizes the images most likely to lead to self-empowerment and economic achievement” (p. 141). He argued this is in part due to the “Mandingo Syndrome,” or how White people view Black men through historical stereotypes of the Mandingo tribe in Africa, which was the African tribe most coveted by slave traders because of the belief in their physical superiority. Mohamed translated the stereotypes of the Mandingo to Black men on the blacktop. This stereotype, specifically, paints Black men as physically gifted and sexually aggressive, similar stereotypes still parroted about Black athletes today. As it pertains to the relationships between athletics, sexuality, and Black men, Mohamed argued these types of stereotypes affect no other group to such an extreme extent (p. 123).

Other scholarly literature analyzing sport and systemic social issues through race include Bloom and Willard (2002), whose edited collection included essays on the colonization of surfing; how St. Louis public school children “subsidized” the then-St. Louis Rams of the
National Football League; and the appropriation of Native American warrior motifs as team mascots and imagery. Alpert (2011) examined the role of Jewish businessmen and an all-Black Jewish team in the Negro Leagues. Alpert noted the bond between the businessmen and players as they faced anti-Semitism and racism, respectively. Khan (2012) argued the demise of the activist-athlete began with the media and Major League Baseball’s (MLB) treatment and descriptions of Curt Flood, the first athlete to challenge for free agency. Flood (who was Black) claimed MLB’s “reserve clause,” which gave teams control of players until the team saw fit, was akin to slavery. Even though he was one of the better outfielders in MLB, he was barred from the league with reasons similar to those lobbed at Kaepernick. Free agency was granted a few years after Flood’s barring in a case brought by two White players using his very arguments.

Turning to mascots/imagery in sports, King (2016) bluntly asked why, even with many other epithets now anathema in social settings, is “redskins” still acceptable. The Washington football team of the NFL refuses to change their name, even as K-12 schools and colleges/universities adapt and change their mascots/imagery in response to growing calls for change. Williams (2018) explained why common defenses of Native imagery and mascots have little standing due to the history of genocide, as well as the denigration of Native people through imagery. Images into the second half of the 1900s depicted Natives as cartoonish savages, seemingly stuck in history only wearing animal skins and feathers. Schools like Florida State University, which does have an agreement with the Seminole tribe, still depict this local tribe as historical artifacts rather than as contemporary people.

**Overview of gender, sex, and sport literature**

Turning to issues of gender and sex, it is important to note that most scholarly studies on women in sport examines the impact of Title IX since 1972. This is understandable, as I would
argue just as Title IX “allowed” girls and women to participate in sports and athletics, it may have also “allowed” for scholarly research on girls/women in sport, particularly conducted by women scholars; there should not have been a need to pass legislation like Title IX for girls and women to participate in every facet of sports and athletics. However, I will take a chronological journey through the literature in this section, only ending with the effects of Title IX as there has been a spike in scholarly research since the fortieth anniversary of the passing of Title IX in 2012.

First, as Hoffman, Iverson, Allan, and Ropers-Huilman (2010) noted, the language of Title IX is devoid of athletics and/or sport. Rather, the authors cite the 37 words of the act that stated, “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (Hoffman, Iverson, Allan, & Ropers-Huilman, 2010). However, because athletics fall under the purview of K-12 and higher education institutions that receive federal funding, many educational institutions feared Title IX would mean folding men’s athletic programs to create women’s programs. Hoffman, Iverson, Allan, & Ropers-Huilman argued women’s athletics only began receiving more equal funding after multiple court cases through the 1970s, but still faced arguments about subsidizing women’s programs through men’s programs.

Hoffman, Iverson, Allan, and Ropers-Huilman (2010) employed feminist poststructuralism to critique Title IX policy almost 40 years after its passing. Although originally passed to ensure women equity in medical and law school admissions, the authors argued that by removing barriers to women’s participation in athletics, Title IX is largely viewed as a policy that takes athletic opportunities away from men to “make room” for women’s sports. However,
they argued the merging of women’s athletics under the auspices of the overarching men’s athletics model and the loss of women leaders as men gradually took over those roles had a similar effect as racial integration: participation without power. While participation in athletics for girls and women grew, the authors note by 2004, only 44 percent of women’s college teams were led by women coaches, and only 18 percent of athletic directors for women’s programs were women. The authors argued that women’s programs took on the characteristics of their men’s counterpart, catering to the interests of power, profitability, and spectatorship.

Other scholarly literature analyzing the intersection of gender, sex, and sport through Title IX include Pickett, Dawkins, and Braddock (2012) who questioned if African American and White females equally benefited from Title IX. While White females benefited greatly, the authors argued that African American women only benefited in certain sports, namely basketball and track, due to a lack of available sports in their K-12 districts. Paule-Koba, Harris, and Freysinger (2013) gathered responses from university members (athletic director, coaches, student-athletes, non-student-athletes) on their opinion of Title IX. They found there was a predominant association of sport with Title IX even though Title IX says nothing directly about sports or athletics. Pauline (2013) examined the improvements of women in athletics and the existing barriers since the passing of Title IX. While Pauline praised the growing participation of females in athletics, she lamented the lack of females in power positions (coaches, athletic directors), as well as the lack of funding in comparison to male athletic programs.

Even with the passing of Title IX, Luther (2016) found universities are more likely to cover-up sexual assault and domestic abuse committed by student-athletes (particularly football players) to reap the benefits of a successful athletics program. She calls this a playbook – “the one coaches, teams, universities, police, communities, the media, and fans seem to follow
whenever a college football player is accused, charged, and/or convicted of sexual assault” (p. 26). She quoted Louis Moore, who said, “When we talk about the college athlete, we have to remember this is a source of free labor…[Universities] are reluctant to do anything about [problems involving their athletes]. Their position is more the color green” (p. 75). However, as Lavigne (2018) found, student-athletes are three times more likely to be accused of sexual assault and/or rape, which should force colleges and universities to reassess the relationship to intercollegiate athletics, student-athletes, and students.

Shifting to scholarly work on gender, sex, and sport beyond Title IX, masculinities scholars have analyzed sport to understand the social construction of dominant masculinity. Specifically, Messner (1992) focused his study on masculinity and the detrimental effect on men. In his most salient finding, Messner posited his “mind/body split.” The mind fractures from the body, using willpower to push the body beyond its physical limits (“No pain, no gain!” or, “Are you hurt, or are you injured?”). This also leads to a fracturing of the individual from their spirit and emotions, affecting their relationships with other men, women, and themselves because they cannot truly communicate with or express their emotions. Messner found the split lingered with his participants even after their playing days concluded, whether those last days happened in youth sports or professional leagues.

As a result, Messner (1992) argued “men tend to distance themselves from each other by organizing their time around an activity that is ‘external’ to themselves” (p. 91). As one participant in Messner’s study said, “It was never a real deep relationship [with other men]” (p. 87). Further, the mind/body split is one factor in men viewing women as “objects of sexual conquest” (p. 97), which Messner attributed to the growing recognition at the time of rape culture. “Robin Warshaw concluded from her research on date and acquaintance rape that
‘athletic teams are breeding grounds for rape [because they] are often populated by men who are steeped in sexist, rape-supportive beliefs’” (p. 101). Even if there is no sexual assault, as with the earlier statement from a participant, “It was never a deep relationship.” One solution for Messner is, “I am suggesting that we move away from examining men’s friendships with each other from a ‘feminine’ standpoint (Rubin) or from a ‘masculine’ standpoint (Swain), and instead ask feminist questions” (p. 93, original emphasis).

Utilizing a sociohistorical approach to sport, Zirin (2008) traced the history and evolution of sport and the intersections with society and power. While mostly focused on the racial politics of sport, Zirin wrote on the role that gender played, such as historical athletic feats of women. He highlighted the accomplishments of Gertrude Ederle and Mildred Ella “Babe” Didrickson, though he also discussed the unflattering descriptions of both women due to their “audacity” to participate in athletics. Ederle was the first woman to swim the English Channel, and Didrickson is considered one of the best female athletes as a former Olympic medalist and ten-time golf champion. Both were described as “mannish” (and worse) for their athletic endeavors.

Turning to youth sports and gender, while Messner (2009) intended to study the youth participating in sports, instead “it’s also about the adults, and about how volunteering in youth sports defines their identities and shapes their families, workplaces, and communities” (p. xvi). This shift in research was spurred, “When I noticed that these tasks were largely divided by gender – the coaches were almost all men, while team parents (often called ‘team moms’) were all women” (p. xiv). He categorized the coaches he observed in Little League Baseball/Softball (LLB/S) and American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) into four categories: the “teddy bear” coach (ages 5-7), the “crossing guard” (ages 8-9), the “drill sergeant” (ages 11-12), and the “CEO” (ages 13-14), with each stage having different characteristics associated with the
coaching style (p. 106-123). He found the few women who did coach had a “glass ceiling” where few advanced beyond the “teddy bear” coach stage, and even fewer beyond the “crossing guard” stage. Messner attributed this to the feminine traits stereotypically associated with working with children: having patience, and being caring and understanding, characteristics traditionally incompatible with masculinity. Further, he argued women coaches not only had to “dress the part” by hiding their femininity on the field (p. 81), but they seemed to face more outright scrutiny and challenges from men, fellow coaches and parents of athletes alike, because “while parents might assume that men coaches know what they are doing, women coaches are often assumed not to know what they are doing. Instead, they have to prove themselves as knowledgeable and capable” (p. 69).

**Overview of sexuality and sport literature**

Looking into research on sexuality and sports, there are two works of note. First is Smith’s (2014) examination of masculinity in a small professional wrestling organization in the Northeast. His most pertinent finding was the delicate balance of homoeroticism and homophobia among the male wrestlers. Professional wrestling is considered by most a homoerotic sport, with barely-clothed athletes that incorporates intimate touching and positions. It is also a sport where athletes must “take care” of each other in the ring to prevent injury, only giving the *appearance* of violence. “In pro wrestling light, soft touches are valued – both inside and outside the ring – inverting the hard norm of masculinity” (p. 103), and, “Often what’s more frightening than being pained or injured is the omnipresent threat of hurting someone else” (p. 141). In a society where males gain “respect” and “status” through violence, professional wrestlers work to invert these norms (mostly subconsciously) through their goal of “taking care” of each other in the ring.
However, violence and pain do play integral roles for these men. As Smith (2014) argued, “Importantly, most medical research fails to explain how pain is socially experienced; moreover, it is ill equipped to account for the potentially seductive aspects of this phenomenon” (p. 120). He found that while wrestlers “took care” of each other, they also relished, thrived, and invited the pain of professional wrestling. Mirroring the mind/body split of Messner (1992) Smith argued the efforts to endure pain reflect the “larger zeitgeist” that perpetuates notions of experiencing pain as a necessary passage to achieving strength and success (for men). Particularly in professional wrestling, Smith argued, “As participants’ responses to hurt are policed, potential confessions of suffering are silenced, and higher-status guys maintain a greater say about the intensity of distress and possible need for resources” (p. 128).

Turning to the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, and queer/questioning (LGBTIQ) identities in sport, Zeigler (2016), longtime editor of OutSports (a website dedicated to LGBTIQ athletes and causes), wrote on the successes of and challenges for LGBTIQ athletes. While he admitted there were successes, he also criticized the rampant transphobia in society and sports, including the LGB community. He critiqued the lack of LGBTIQ representation in decision-making positions in sport and sport media. Further, he lambasted the double-standards and multiple chances applied to athletes who commit domestic violence/sexual abuse, DUI, or other violent offenses, whereas the discrimination of LGBTIQ athletes is justified through arguments over their sexuality being a “distraction” or against someone’s religious beliefs.

Another notable work is Eng’s (2006), who wrote on “doing” sexuality in sports (how sexuality becomes “visible”), and how sport as a symbolic and social arena shapes and constructs discourses and practices of sex, gender, and sexuality. This is through who is/is not allowed to
participate, attire, and language (“You throw like a girl!”). While there are other works for discussion, many of these employ Queer Theory and/or analyze issues related to sexuality and power in physical education. These works are explored later.

**Overview of physical education/athletics and education literature**

Much of the literature which examines physical education (PE) and athletics in formal schooling is a *critique* of PE/athletics, with suggestions for improvement. However, there is literature examining different applications of theoretical perspectives to PE/athletics, including feminist and queered lenses as cited previously. Generally, however, there is a lack of literature on PE and/or athletics as sites of critical pedagogy, similar to the literature on sports sociology and the intersections of race, gender and sex, and sexuality in sports.

There are three comprehensive texts of note focused on physical education and athletics at educational institutions. Welch (2004), laid a historical foundation of the early presence and role of sport in society and the implementation of sports/athletics as tools in education, beginning with Native American communities. She then examined the impact of the Turner movement and the introduction of gymnastics. Turners (shortened from the German word *turnvaters*), students of the first *turnvaters* who taught gymnastics, immigrated from Germany, bringing their systems of physical education to the US in the mid to late 1800s. The first gymnasiuims were built by Turners in the Northeast, and this helped spur the introduction of PE to K-12 education, and gymnastics served as the main form of PE.

Further, Welch analyzed the influence of warfare on PE. Particularly after World War I, dominant narratives lamented the lack of physically capable men ready for war and called for PE to serve as the “training grounds” for future soldiers. Football, especially after the reformations mandated by then-President Theodore Roosevelt to avoid on-field deaths and maiming, became
the ideal “training ground” for future soldiers. Welch then discussed how Title IX led to separate men’s and women’s athletic programs, which in turn helped create the current multi-billion-dollar sports industry through sports media and athletic apparel, specifically. Welch then turned to a discussion on the Olympic Games. She began with the ancient games to provide a model for the modern iteration, reformed in 1896.

Mechikoff (2014) took a comprehensive look at sports and athletics by first, tracing them back to ancient civilizations like Egypt, China, and Mesopotamia; and second, through their evolutions from Greece/Rome, the Middle Ages, Renaissance, Enlightenment, and into the colonial period. Mechikoff particularly focused on the late 1800s and the 1900s due to the formalization of physical education as a field. He highlighted the contributions of educators such as G. Stanley Hall, John Dewey, and the triumvirate of Hetherington, Wood, and Cassidy, the former important contributors to the development of play theory between 1900-1915, and the latter the “architects of the new physical education” (p. 270) between 1916-1930. Play theory accepted “play, games, dance, and sport as methods for imparting educational goals” (p. 265). Hall was a leader in the child study movement, arguing games and sport were the ideal mechanisms for development because it is a “unity of body and soul” (p. 266). Dewey, known for his belief in experiential education, “believed play to be a purposeful activity that directed interest through physical means…it was an activity that integrated mind and body” (p. 267).

Hetherington, Wood, and Cassidy led the charge in creating a new PE, with Hetherington at the forefront. A student of Hall, Hetherington believed in five objectives of PE, from the development of social adjustment skills “based on the customs of society” to the development of character, “and this objective remains one of the justifications for the inclusion of physical education in school curricula” (Mechikoff, 2014, p. 270). Wood and Cassidy
expanded upon Heatherington’s views, publishing *The New Physical Education: A Program of Naturalized Activities of Education Toward Citizenship* in 1927, which became one of the leading training texts in PE programs (p. 272).

Mechikoff (2014) also noted the dire place of physical education up to the Conant Report in 1963, which attacked physical educators as having an “academic inferiority complex,” and argued degrees in physical education should hold less value than other “credible” programs (p. 284).

High school teachers and college professors in academic areas such as the sciences and the liberal arts did not view physical education favorably and frequently questioned the academic quality of its degree programs. To make matters worse, the public and academia saw physical educators, especially men, as teachers of games and sports who merely “played” (p. 283).

In response, Mechikoff wrote, “Over time, many physical education departments in both high schools and colleges started to identify more with exercise, health, and fitness than traditional physical education activities tied to games and sports” (p. 285). Mechikoff mirrored Welch’s text by spending a minimal amount of time on sport and physical education post-World War II, and instead spending considerable time on the modern Olympic Games (1896-2012), seemingly due to his optimistic view that, “Americans seem to be more comfortable with their bodies with respect to sport and play than at any time since the 1500s” (p. 306).

Gems, Borish, and Pfister (2017), with their focus on the U.S., began their analysis with Native American sporting activities prior to colonization, and how these were colonized and assimilated by White people. They highlight various ways ethnic groups and women participated in athletic events throughout history, including how women turned to bicycling in the early
1900s as a form of independence, freedom, and physical activity (p. 208). Gems, Borish, and Pfister discussed how sport and physical education has always perpetuated existing systems of power, but simultaneously provided a space of resistance, such as the women bicycling example. Their shift in focus did change from physical education to the growing issues in athletics, including the advancements in science and medicine; the corporatization of sporting cultures; issues regarding interscholastic and intercollegiate sports, such as Title IX and the lack of women coaches and administrators; and current and future crises (traumatic brain injury, homophobia, violence).

Another notable work is Mansfield, Caudwell, Wheaton, and Watson’s (2018) collection, which took a feminist perspective on physical education, sport, and leisure. Scraton asked if gender still matters and if feminism is still needed in physical education, asserting that though feminist theories have gained acceptance, the practice of PE has not changed much (p. 25). She concluded gender still matters, and PE should be a “continuing focus” of feminist research. Queer theorist lisahunter argued PE is a conservative space needing reconceptualization through a queered lens. One issue includes how LGB people tie negative experiences in PE to their disinterest in sport, and how traditionally marginalized forms of activity such as dance, ancient movements, and health education can offer alternative perspectives on relationships, identities, and sexualities (p. 438). Other chapters include feminist issues in PE, sport, and leisure; the role of faith, religion, and feminist thought in PE, sport, and leisure; and feminist praxis, PE, and girls.

Other works analyzing the role of physical education and athletics at educational institutions include Beyer and Hannah (2000); Mixon, Jr. and Treviño (2005); Morrow and Gill (2003); O’Brien, Shovelton, and Latner (2013); Ayvazo and Sutherland (2009); and McRuer and
Wilkinson (2003). Beyer and Hannah utilized a “cultural perspective” to explore both the positive and negative consequences of college athletics. In arguing that athletics function as cultural forms that reflect the larger society, Beyer and Hannah highlighted the many “rituals” performed for sports, including how athletic events function as cultural rites (p. 108). Beyer and Hannah argued the Protestant Ethic, capitalism, a bureaucratic mentality, and collectivism are the dominant ideologies expressed through college athletics. A more critical analysis would argue the ideologies of White supremacy, patriarchy, and homophobia are also expressed. They also discussed the supposed “character-building” narrative of sport, though they argued, “Unfortunately, all of these desirable traits have their negative side, especially if carried to an extreme” (p. 120). They concluded they are pessimistic about reforming collegiate athletics because, “Without the involvement of all levels, any effort to alter this pervasive ideology will surely fail” (p. 127).

Mixon, Jr. and Treviño’s (2005) study, unlike seemingly most research on intercollegiate sport, held a positive perspective on intercollegiate athletics, particularly football, and the relationship to retention and graduation rates. They argued research suggested a positive statistical relationship between athletic success and the “enhancement of educational missions in higher education” (p. 97). The authors argued their analysis provided support that football success is positively related to higher first-year retention and subsequent graduation rates. However, what the authors ignored is if football has a positive or negative relationship to the retention of first-year football players and their subsequent graduation rates. Because African-American players are disproportionately represented in collegiate football, Critical Race theorists might specifically analyze the retention rates of Black players and the relationship to Bell’s

Though ten years apart, Morrow and Gill (2003) and O’Brien, Shovelton, and Latner (2013) examine homophobia in physical education, including the perception of students and the instruction/messages from physical educators. The former found heteronormative and homophobic behaviors common in physical education from educators and students. The latter examined “authoritarian aggression” and prejudice against LGBTIQ individuals, but found that physical education students had lower rates of anti-gay prejudices than non-physical education students. This may be partially due to the “authoritarian aggression” that strictly disciplined students for prejudicial actions against LGBTIQ individuals.

Ayvazo and Sutherland (2009) examined physical education as an environment where heterosexism, heteronormativity, and homophobia dominate. They argued that physical educators must be cognizant of these issues, and work for a more progressive space. McRuer and Wilkerson, though not discussing PE specifically, (2003) employ queer theory to analyze disability studies to “deconstruct social ideologies of perversion, victimization, and protection, because such ideologies are tied also to the ableist norm of perfect bodies and minds” (p. 8). PE is explicitly an able-bodied space, with little space for discussion and presence of disabled bodies. By utilizing Queer Theory to “deconstruct” dominant knowledges of disabled bodies, there is potential for physical educators to embody and create a space accessible to able-bodied and disabled bodies.

**Conclusion**

Most of these works show the lack of scholarly literature on using sport as a pedagogical tool to discuss systemic social issues like race, class, gender, sex, and sexuality. When discussing
physical education, these works coalesce on how educators can be more aware and conscious of these issues in their classes. There are some classes focusing on sport and systemic social issues (like a “Cultural Politics of Sport”), sociology of sport, and even a course in a field like Sport Management, but I argue critical sport discussions are appropriate for classes and fields traditionally unassociated with sports and athletics, or with a different focus than sports.

However, what the literature shows is that most research on sport and/or physical education in academia is critical of the institution and its perpetuation of systemic social issues like racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia. Studies in sports sociology adeptly navigate the relationship between sport and society, as well as certain applications in the classroom, but tend to focus more on critique rather than pedagogy. This is similar for scholarly work on sport through the lenses of race, gender and sex, and sexuality as these works focus on the perpetuation of and challenges to racism, sexism, and homo/transphobia. Scholarly works in physical education take slightly more of a focus on pedagogy, though this tends to be on how educators can embody certain theoretical constructs like Queer Theory rather than using their classroom space to conduct critical sports pedagogy (CSP). The following chapter presents the use of critical theories in understanding how power is infused in sports.
CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Because I am a critical scholar who is studying sport as critical pedagogy, I have chosen to employ Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Masculinity Studies (CMS) as the theories driving my research. Combined, these two theories provide helpful understandings on how the intersections of White supremacy, patriarchy, and heteronormativity present in sports as reflective of society. I will first begin by explaining these theoretical frameworks I utilize and why I use them. I will briefly list and explain the generally agreed-upon tenets for each framework. Next, I will analyze sport through the intersections with chosen tenets from each framework. These examples will highlight the capacity of sport to examine systemic social issues like White supremacy and patriarchy. I will then conclude this chapter with a brief summary of the forthcoming chapter.

I utilize the frameworks of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Masculinity Studies (CMS), a reframing of men’s studies by scholars like Anderson (2009) and Simpson (2017). Anderson writes on “inclusive masculinities” while Simpson utilizes CMS to bridge gender studies. I utilize both because of the prevailing systems of White supremacy, patriarchy, and heteronormativity in society. I will briefly describe each, followed by an explanation of a few key tenets. Though these are not universally agreed-upon tenets, many scholars in each field employ some combination of these tenets.

While I focus on critical pedagogy, I am wary of employing the theoretical foundations of critical pedagogy for two main reasons. First, like many scholarly fields, critical pedagogy takes a mostly White and male position in its research. Second, I believe that inherent in CRT and CMS is being critical, including as an educator and researcher. This embedded criticality is evident when researching the manifestations of normalized White supremacy in society in CRT,
for example. To quote a participant in this study, “If you’re not a critical educator, then you’re just a propagandist.”

**Critical Race Theory**

Growing out of critical legal scholarship, CRT criticized the field for its failure to account for race and racism in their critique of meritocratic legal ideology. According to Bell (2009, p. 40), Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a body of legal scholarship whose scholars are typically people of color and ideologically committed to the struggle against racism. Bell, credited as one of the founders of CRT, writes that White CRT scholars usually are cognizant of and committed to the overthrow of their own racial privilege (Feagin & Ducey, 2018; Kozol, 2006).

Ladson-Billings (2009, p. 21-22) claimed that some of the tenets of CRT are the acknowledgement that racism is normal in everyday society to the point Whites do not realize its existence or take it for granted; the employment of storytelling as counter-narrative; and that Whites have been the main beneficiaries of civil rights legislation. Bell’s (1980, p. 523) “interest-convergence,” where the oppressor gives concessions to the oppressed only when it benefits the former, accounts for this phenomenon. Lastly, Crenshaw (1991; 1997) introduced “intersectionality” as a critique of both CRT and feminism; intersectionality argues for the critique of social issues through multiple lenses, rather than a single issue (race, gender, sexuality, etc.) because people constitute various social categories simultaneously. Crenshaw focused her analyses on being Black and a woman. Beyoncé’s performance at halftime of Super Bowl 50, and resulting controversy thereafter due to the attire, message, and dances of her and her backup dancers (France, 2016); or the lack of vitriol for Tim Tebow (a White athlete) when
he used to kneel during the playing of the national anthem in prayer (Peter, 2018) are indicative of intersectional issues in sports.

CRT asserts racism is normal and endemic to American society (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Concessions for people of color only occur if there is some benefit to the White majority. To combat negative perceptions and stereotypes, storytelling operates as a form of resistance to White supremacy. Because individuals are a confluence of identities, we cannot simply critique or analyze social issues through a singular lens like race, gender, or sexuality, but all of them (plus others) concurrently. We do not live in a “post-racial” society, and White supremacy as a system of oppression remains.

Critical Masculinity Studies

Critical Masculinity Studies (CMS) is a reframing of men’s/masculinity studies. The American Men’s Studies Association claimed that men’s studies included, “Scholarly, critical, and activist endeavors engaging men and masculinities as social-historical-cultural constructors reflexively embedded in the material and bodily realities of men’s and women’s lives” (AMSA). If masculinity/men’s studies only focused on men as biological entities, or as socially constructed individuals yet devoid of the above intersectional analyses, this would render it uncritical, much like the field of “male studies” (Holmes, 2010). Furthermore, what seems to be lacking in the AMSA goals are the presence of non-hetero identities, and CMS includes non-hetero identities and other intersectional analyses. However, O’Neill (2015) does caution that inclusive masculinity theory and CMS tend to deemphasize key issues of sex and gender with an optimistic view of men, masculinity, and social change as a subtle reinforcement of patriarchy.

There are a few theorizations/tenets of CMS. First, as Kimmel (2011) and others have argued, there is a difference between biologically sexed males and socially constructed men;
second is the system of patriarchy and the (usually) unseen benefits males receive, or patriarchal dividend (Johnson, 2014); third, as articulated (and rearticulated) by Connell (1987) and Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), is the concept hegemonic masculinity, with a look at the ideal masculinity of society; fourth, as articulated by Connell (1987) and Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), is the concept hegemonic masculinity, with a look at the ideal masculinity of society; fourth, as Messner (1992) argues, is the mind/body split. Fifth, as argued by scholars such as Bucholz (1999), Fejes (2000), Boyd (2002), Collins (2005), Neal (2006), and Pascoe (2012) is the concept of alternative masculinities.

Male and female genetics and anatomies differ. However, CMS asserts that equating gender social differences to biology is false as gender is socially constructed. Conflating gender and sex allows for the maintaining of patriarchy by categorizing these differences as inherent in biology. Patriarchy gives males and men (and heterosexuals) unseen privileges, such as instant credibility or perceived inherent leadership ability (only considering men for coaching positions) while rendering females and women as less than for simply not being males and/or men (failing to interview women candidates for coaching positions). Hegemonic masculinity theorizes there is a reified masculinity (unattainable to most everyone) to strive for, yet simultaneously policed by dominant society. It is also an archetype that takes multiple forms in different settings; the masculine ideal for upper-class White men differs from that of lower-class White men, for example. Alternative masculinities through race, class, gender, and sexuality present different masculine identities aside from hegemonic ideals. Whether it is someone like Brittney Griner (ESPN.com news services, 2013) or Michael Sam announcing they are gay (Connolly, 2014), or the first-openly gay Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) fighter Liz Carmouche (Buzinski, 2013), the sporting and athletic world are filled with those redefining masculinity. Whether individual or culturally, these masculinities can help to reconceptualize what it means to be
“masculine” or “a man,” particularly through the highlighting of feminine and non-hetero masculinities.

**CRT and CMS in Sport**

In this section, I will employ some of the tenets of CRT and CMS and apply them to examples in sport. First, by examining the disparate reaction and commentary to White and Black athletes who fail to “stick to sports,” I will show how racism is present to the point White people do not recognize it due to their privilege, particularly using color-blind language (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). CRT’s tenets may also help in understanding how Beyoncé’s Super Bowl halftime performance and the events of the 2018 U.S. Open Women’s Tennis Final is indicative of the need to approach issues through an intersectional lens. Intersectionality reveals how the identities of Beyoncé, Serena Williams, and Naomi Osaka as a both Black and a woman (Osaka being biracial) affected the reception of and reaction to their actions.

For CMS, the difference between biological sex and gender socialization is best examined through the experiences of Fallon Fox, a transgender mixed martial artist. The current fight by the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) to renegotiate their collective bargaining agreement (CBA) for more basketball-related revenue is a timely example of patriarchy in sports. Lastly, I will turn to World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) superstar Bianca Belair, WNBA player Sue Bird and US Women’s National Team member Megan Rapinoe, and Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) champion Amanda Nunes to discuss alternative masculinities in sport, particularly through different gender and sexual identities.

*Everyday racism through “stick to sports” and color-blind language*

Black athletes (in particular) receive criticism to “shut up and dribble” (Sullivan, 2018) or “stick to sports” (Huber, 2017; Salguero, 2017) by mostly White media and fans. As Ringel
(2017) writes, the idea of “sticking to sports” is a century-old marketing strategy casting athletics as an escape from, rather than a part of, US corporate and consumer culture. As an “escape,” commentators like Salguero are telling athletes the purpose of their existence is to entertain and provide relief for the fans. Any action other than bettering individual skills or teamwork becomes a “distraction.” Further, language like “stick to sports” is laced with the assumption that (Black) athletes should be “grateful” for being a professional athlete. These notions are due to historical and contemporary stereotypes labeling Black communities as impoverished and lacking opportunity. However, when White athletes such as J.J. Watt or Tebow fail to “stick to sports,” they do not receive the level of vitriol for their actions that Colin Kaepernick and other Black athletes receive.

Much of the criticism of Kaepernick and other National Football League (NFL) athletes is due to their kneeling during the playing of the national anthem prior to games, with many White spectators deeming it disrespectful to the military and flag (Larter, 2016; Thiessen, 2017). As Keenan (2017) wrote, “You kneel before a monarch to show deference, before your beloved to request marriage, before a figure of authority or torment or judgment to plead for mercy,” with kneeling generally being an act of deference. Tim Tebow stated he kneeled during his playing days as a display of his personal faith. “[Kneeling] was just something I did with a personal relationship with my God…I think that’s just sometimes disappointing when things get taken away from the truth and then it’s just created into whatever somebody wants it to be” (Peter, 2018). While he did receive some ridicule about his devout Christianity, he did not face barring from the league, nor did he face the kind of vitriol lobbed at Kaepernick and other Black athletes for the same act with different reasons.
After Hurricane Harvey hit Houston in August 2017, the people were in dire need of aid. J.J. Watt of the NFL’s Houston Texans took to social media, urging people to donate money to his fundraiser for the area. This led to over 200,000 donations of more than 37 million dollars, leading Rapaport (2017) to writes, “J.J. Watt is a superhuman.” While Watt did not raise the funds himself, his status as one of the best players in the NFL arguably fueled people to make donations. Like Kaepernick, he used his status, position, and power to create change for those in the local community. Unlike Kaepernick, Watt was praised as “superhuman” for soliciting donations to a (worthwhile) cause. If the “stick to sports” crowd meant these words, then they should have criticized Watt for failing to focus his attention on game preparation rather than praise him.

Bonilla-Silva (2014) argued in lieu of overt racism, since the Civil Rights Movement society now engages in covert racism through color-blind rhetoric. Whereas Watt is a “superhuman,” Kaepernick is “unpatriotic.” Tebow became a caricature (parodied in a 2012 South Park episode), but Kaepernick remains vilified. Laura Ingraham (2018) preceded her infamous “shut up and dribble” quote by discussing how LeBron James should be grateful for the position and success he has achieved, with the underlying notion being that as a Black man, the situation could be worse (attributable to the stereotypes earlier). In this way, many White people do not recognize they are perpetuating White supremacy through the hypocrisy of disciplining Black athletes and praising or excusing White athletes for similar actions.

Intersectionality through Beyoncé’s Super Bowl 50 halftime performance reactions

A day after dropping a new single and video that heavily referenced Hurricane Katrina, police brutality, and natural hair (Grinberg, 2016), Beyoncé took the stage at halftime of Super Bowl 50 alongside Coldplay, Bruno Mars, and her “virtual battalion of beret-clad dancers”
Howard, 2016). Beyoncé and her dancers were unmistakably dressed in homage to the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, particularly their (in)famous look from the Civil Rights Movement, including large afros for her dancers and two “sashes” of assault rifle bullets draped around both shoulders of Beyoncé (CBS News, 2016; Howard, 2016; Roberts, 2016). This was also in support of the #BlackLivesMatter movement, which seeks to end police brutality and racial injustices in the legal system (Cobb, 2016). Her performance and direct messages of Black Power and fighting racial injustice drew the ire of many, including former Mayor and Presidential lawyer Rudy Giuliani, who claimed her performance was an attack on police (Cutler, 2016; Zaru, 2017). Protests were even planned as part of #BoycottBeyonce (France, 2016). Aside from the attire, the performance included forming a large “X” in salute to Civil Rights leader Malcolm X, and the “Black Power” salute made (in)famous by Tommie Smith and John Carlos.

Intersectionality is present in various ways. First, Beyoncé is a Black woman in a White supremacist and patriarchal society. She is also performing during halftime of the championship game in arguably the most hypermasculine sport to the largest television audience of the year. Though she performed alongside two male artists (one White), she was the central act, even in the post-event discussions. Beyond Beyoncé being a Black woman, all the backup dancers were also Black women, presenting a salient example of “Black Girl Magic,” a saying that celebrates the accomplishments of Black girls and women (Ali, 2016). Their performance and attire contradict patriarchal notions of being “ladylike.” Their embodying the Black Panther Party is a direct attack on White supremacy, particularly as most White people conceive of the party as militant and violent. Though the “Black Power” salute is a salute to communal and self-empowerment, most White people think of “Black Power” as equivalent to “White Power,” that
is, a violent and separatist belief in racial superiority. These intersectional factors through race, gender, White supremacy, and patriarchy help explain the negative reaction to her performance, though her counterparts received little to no negativity for participating alongside Beyoncé.

Black male entertainers have faced scrutiny for donning similar garb and militant stances in the past. N.W.A. (which stood for “Niggaz Wit Attitudes”) was ridiculed for their garb in relation to the song “Fuck tha Police,” but there was more vitriol over their song than their attire (Chang, 2005). Not only does Beyoncé have to deal with the politics of Blackness in a White supremacist society, but she also must navigate notions of gender that disciplines women to be passive and deferential rather than active. “Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 140). This includes how a Black woman should act, particularly in the presence of White people.

Patriarchal stereotypes about women include deferring to men, taking up as little space as possible, being quiet, and always maintaining a level of visible femininity (Allan, Iverson, & Ropers-Huilman, 2009; Johnson, 2014). Stereotypes about Black women (in particular) include that they are hypersexual, loud, and irresponsible (Collins, 2005). Responses like Giuliani’s, who misconstrued the empowering “Black Power” messages to fit an ideological bent, served to reinforce White supremacy by redirecting the target of her performance (White supremacy) to a facet of her critique (police). Reminiscent of Ingraham’s remarks, those in the #BoycottBeyoncé camp instructed her to basically “shut up and sing” as she should only live to entertain people, particularly White people. To analyze the responses to her performance only through the lens of race or gender would ignore the influences of the other on how people received her performance.
While this example represents intersectionality as Crenshaw first envisioned, sport is rife with areas for intersectional research through race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability, research which can be aided through CMS.

“I’m tan”: Intersectionality through the depiction of Williams and Osaka

The events of the 2018 U.S. Open Women’s Tennis Final require further analysis as they are reflective of the CRT tenets of racism as normal to the point Whites do not recognize its existence; the use of storytelling as counter-narrative (and how sometimes counter-narrative is silenced); and intersectionality, particularly in Crenshaw’s (1991; 1997) original conception of the experiences of Black women. During her match with Osaka, Williams was penalized a game after calling the chair umpire “a thief” for his accusation that Williams received coaching during the match, though she vehemently denied the foul (ESPN News Services, 2018b; O’Neal, 2018). She was also penalized for smashing her racket on the ground in frustration, and was fined a total of 17 thousand dollars. Williams lost to Osaka, who was awarded her championship through tears of sadness (rather than joy) as many in the crowd “jeered repeatedly,” even though Williams wrapped her arm around Osaka and congratulated her on the victory. Osaka apologized to the crowd because, “I know that everyone was cheering for her, and I’m sorry it had to end like this” (ESPN News Services).

Like the fans in attendance, many criticized Williams for her actions. However, a cartoon illustrated by Mark Knight for Australia’s Herald Sun which depicted Williams as an overexaggerated ape with big red lips, a smashed racket, and a baby pacifier beneath her became a media flashpoint. Her opponent (presumably Osaka), is in the background looking up at the chair judge, who asks her, “Can you just let her win?” Osaka is whitewashed into a light-skinned blonde woman even though she is darker-skinned and brunette. Many criticized the cartoon as a
racist caricature of Williams (Glock, 2018; O’Neal, 2018), while the Herald Sun defended both Knight and the cartoon, labelling criticisms of the latter as those of “The PC [politically correct] brigade” (Staff writer, 2018).

Figure 3.1 – Mark Knight’s cartoon of the 2018 U.S. Open Women’s Championship.

Retrieved from the Herald Sun

There are two main issues with the cartoon, and one main issue with the response by Knight and the Herald Sun. The first issue with the cartoon is the ape-like and infantile portrayal of Williams. The oversized red lips, enlarged posture, and childlike behavior all harken to minstrelsy during Jim Crow segregation. Much like Spike Lee’s controversial but poignant film Bamboozled (2000), many find humor and fail to see any issue with these portrayals, but rather a reinforcement of their beliefs about Black women. As O’Neal (2018) argued, “The cartoon is part of a long line of caricatures reducing black bodies to grotesquerie to make a point about
their unworthiness and threat. Especially their threat to white women.” The second issue with the
cartoon is the whitewashing of Osaka.

Osaka is Haitian and Japanese, and represents Japan in competitions (Suk, 2018). By
depicting her as a blonde White woman, Blay (2018) argued Osaka was robbed of “her agency,
her identity, her story, and her blackness. In interviews, Osaka has been adamant about
embracing both her Asian and black heritages.” Blay also argued, “Osaka is reduced to a silent
and silenced victim; tearful; not quite white, but not black either,” and that the questions by
reporters to Osaka about Williams’ “behavior” serve to reinforce colorism, the model minority
myth, and “culture’s implicit hatred of black women like Serena Williams.” Osaka’s
whitewashing even crossed national borders. Japanese noodle company Nissin pulled an
animated ad after many criticized their portrayal of Osaka with lighter skin (Hope, 2019),
prompting Osaka to say, “I’m tan, it’s pretty obvious” (NewsOne Staff, 2019). These myriad
events prompted McDonald (2019) to argue,

To an ugly part of tennis fandom, part of Osaka’s appeal is that she’s black without
constantly reminding everyone of her blackness. She does not wear beads at the end of
her cornrows that crackle every time she hits a ball. She does not write Facebook posts
about being terrified when a member of her family is pulled over by the police. She does
not Crip Walk in celebration of her victories, and her father doesn’t talk about his
memories of lynching and Jim Crow.

If Serena is the bogeywoman who won’t let anyone forget about race at large and
American blackness in particular, then Osaka has been branded, without her consent, as
the angel who will deliver us from such sordid unpleasantries (p. 49-50).
That may be the most insidious aspect of the entire discourse surrounding Osaka: all of this is without her consent (as with Williams). Dominant discourses about race and gender proscribe identities and narratives to certain high-ranking members such as Osaka and Williams. No matter how many times Osaka maintained that she is both Haitian and Japanese, she is at times White, at times Japanese, and at times just Black enough to be a counterpoint to Williams’ overt Blackness. She is never Naomi Osaka to those outside of her sphere; she is what dominant ideology wants Naomi Osaka to be. “Make no mistake, though. Osaka sees herself as an agent of change” (McDonald, 2019, p. 50).

One of the most problematic issues with Knight’s cartoon is that many failed to see any racism or sexism in the image and argued that it was only a depiction of Williams’ actions that day. These arguments are indicative of Bell’s (2009) assertion of Whites generally being unaware of the operations of racism, an argument applicable to males being unaware of the operations of sexism and patriarchy. Those who decry the criticism as “politically correct” argued people misunderstood the role of satire and media cartoons and that the cartoon was about petulant, bad behavior. Another argument was that it is “a default position of a lot of people to be triggered into being offended” (Staff writer, 2018). They fail to see the stereotypes embedded in the portrayal of Williams and the fact that Knight made a Haitian-Japanese woman into a blonde White woman. There is nothing “politically correct” about critiquing racist and sexist portrayals. However, the inability of many to see issues of race and gender in the cartoon may not necessarily indicate they are racist, but rather that they may not even understand the operations of racism and sexism. An example is that Australia’s Press Council ruled the cartoon “non-racist” and accepted “the publisher’s claim that it does not depict Ms. Williams as an ape” (Held, 2019).
“That is a lying, sick, sociopathic, disgusting freak”: Being trans in sports

To examine the differences between biological sex and gender identity, I turn to combat sports to analyze what happens when a fighter decides to have a sex and gender identity other than what they were biologically and socially assigned. The above quote was uttered by mixed martial artist Matt Mitrione (whose nickname is suitably “Meathead”) in 2013 in reference to trans fighter Fallon Fox, the first trans-identifying fighter (publicly) in MMA (MMA Fighting Newswire, 2013; Wetzel, 2013; Zeigler, 2013). Fox successfully underwent sex confirmation surgery in 2006, continually taking female hormones through her MMA debut six years later (Felt, 2014; MacDonald, 2013a; Popper, 2013). MacDonald notes that most experts in “the relevant field of gender reassignment” state that years of hormone therapy will have mitigated any perceived advantage Fox may have had (or any trans person), yet this did not stop people acting as “experts” who gave their opinion on Fox, even though they may be fighters or podcast hosts.

Joe Rogan, in line with Mitrione, used his podcast platform (which consistently rates as one of the most listened/viewed) to lambast Fox by saying,

She wants to be able to fight women in MMA; I say no fucking way. I say if you had a dick at one point in time, you also have all the bone structure that comes with having a dick. You have bigger hands, you have bigger shoulder joints. You’re a fucking man. That’s a man, OK? (Felt, 2014; MacDonald, 2013b; Popper, 2013).

The commentary also placed Fox’s opponents in difficult circumstances. Current Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) fighter Ashlee Evans-Smith was competing for Championship Fighting Alliance (CFA) in 2013 when she faced Fox in a tournament final to declare a featherweight (145-pound) champion. She said that in the time leading up to the fight, people on
social media were sending her messages to “Fuck him up” (Fowlkes, 2013). To her credit, she said she did not appreciate those comments because Fox’s transition was a private matter and if that’s how Fox wants to live, “I respect that.” Evans-Smith said she had a “love-hate” relationship with the fight because of the attention the fight (and Evans-Smith) was receiving, yet people only wanted to ask about her opinions on trans athletes. Evans-Smith found success (at the expense of Fox), winning the championship and having a private moment with Fox in the locker room. Fox has yet to receive an offer from any of the “major” promotions (UFC, Bellator, ONE, Rizin, or Invicta, an all-women’s promotion).

Through all the controversy, Fox remained visible. She was the focus of the documentary Game Face (Thomas, 2015), following her journey as her identity became known to the world and through her fight with Evans-Smith. Fox openly discussed her upbringing as a devout Christian, her time in the military, her struggle with gender identity, having a child as a then-heterosexual male, her transition, and her decision to pursue MMA. Her interview with Zeigler (2013) was brutally honest in her portrayal of being “born in the wrong body,” and the detrimental emotional and psychological effects she lived. Her saga shows sex determination and gender identity are far more complicated and encompassing than perceived.

“Get back into the kitchen”: WNBA players’ fight for equal distribution in a patriarchal society

On November 1st, 2018, the players of the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) exercised their right to end and renegotiate their collective bargaining agreement (CBA) as they enter the 2019 season, slated to begin in the summer (Ellentuck, 2018; Ogwumike, 2018; Voepel, 2018a; Zirin, 2018). In explaining their reasoning, WNBA Player’s Association (WNBPA) President Nneka Ogwumike wrote that the primary objective is full transparency, “You probably don’t know this, but as players, we never get to see the numbers.
We don’t know how the league is doing. As the kids say nowadays, we just want to see the receipts.” Las Vegas Aces player Carolyn Swords focused on travel, noting the opt-out was not just about getting chartered flights, “It’s traveling multiple time zones in a day” (Gordon, 2018). The WNBA released a statement stating that the organization was committed to an open and good-faith negotiation process “rooted in the financial realities of our business” (WNBA, 2018). NBA Commissioner Adam Silver indicated he was not disappointed by the players’ decision, and the NBA’s support of the WNBA “remains firm” (Voepel, 2018c).

However, his words were belied by the fact that shortly before the decision, Forbes had removed the final article (advocating for WNBA players to receive more pay) and cut ties with the author (a contributing columnist) seemingly at the behest of the NBA. Dr. David Berri, an economist, focused much of his analysis on the WNBA, arguing the players should make more money particularly in light of the NBA announcing that select players in their minor league system (G League) would receive salaries of 125 thousand dollars per season; the highest-paid WNBA player (Diana Taurasi) made just over 115 thousand dollars in 2018 (Luther, 2018; Bogage, 2018). While the magazine stated the article was “misleading” and “sloppy,” Berri argued, “There was no evidence in the NBA’s material that contradicted any thesis I had” (Bogage, 2018). His main arguments (as well as others) have been the WNBA should pay the players more while promoting them as superstars alongside their NBA counterparts as a path to long-term growth (Berri, Leeds, & von Allmen, 2015; Berri, 2018; Phillips, 2018).

Reaction was a mix between outright misogyny and arguments based on the economics of the league. Ogwumike (2018) foresaw these criticisms, writing, “This is not purely about salaries. This is about small changes the league can make that will impact the players,” particularly having “six-foot-nine” athletes sitting economy class on a red-eye flight. Voepel
(2018b) echoed these sentiments, adding, “And they want the players to have more of a seat at the table in decision-making for the league, including with branding and growth initiatives.”

Still, many criticized the players for asking for more money when the league operates at a deficit (Feinberg, 2018; Smallwood, 2018). Feinberg wrote though the league just saw its best television ratings in four years this past season, it also lost 12 million dollars, with Commissioner Silver adding the average loss per year for the league is about 10 million dollars. Smallwood minimized their arguments to, “They’re simply looking for higher salaries.” However, in support of Ogwumike’s statements, Kelsey Plum of the Las Vegas Aces tweeted that the WNBAPA is not asking for higher salaries, but a higher percentage of shared revenue (basketball-related revenue) since the NBA players receive 50 percent to the 20 percent for WNBA players (Ellentuck, 2018). Although these reactions to the WNBA players were not vitriolic, this does not mean the players did not face any kind of harsh criticism, even if that criticism had nothing to do with their decision.

WNBA players (and female athletes generally) face misogynistic attacks constantly. Johnson (2018) held a roundtable with six current and former WNBA players on sexism in basketball, including the quote to start this section. They discussed having to “prove” themselves on the court against boys and men, sometimes one-on-one, and the nastiness they receive through social media, particularly from men. Always misogynistic, the comments are also homophobic ("Why don’t you girls finger each other anyway? Whatever you lesbians do") and/or patriarchal ("A high school team could beat a pro team"), though each player said these comments were more annoying than hurtful.

The most misogynistic responses to the players’ decision may have been from users in an MMA forum. User “Mushroom Slap” started off by asking, “this side show is still around?”
“Sonester Sambo” followed with, “I hope those dykes get everything(everything(sic) to(sic) want from the league of fagolas.” In a transphobic comment, user “Cuckoldberry Finn” wrote, “Just wait until the current crop of trans athletes graduate with their basket weaving degrees. We will have a wnba (sic) with no actual women.” Lastly, tying patriarchy, masculinity, and misogyny together is user “kingofpancakes80,” who wrote, “Friggin’ broads. Always flapping their dick suckers about something.”

Patriarchy elevates males and men in society, evident in the reaction and discussion of the WNBPA opt-out. The WNBA operates at a deficit, but most college and university athletic departments also operate at a deficit; due to investment and partnerships with media, these institutions continue to thrive (Novy-Williams, 2017; Suggs, Jr., 2012). Even with the WNBA being the pinnacle for women’s basketball players (like the NBA for men), not only do the top WNBA players earn less than entry-level NBA referees (who earn 150 thousand dollars), but player Liz Cambage tweeted that the 12th man on NBA rosters (the last player on the team) makes more than an entire WNBA roster combined (Phillips, 2018). Although clearly stated as more than about higher salaries, much of the response by commentators devolved to salary discussions devoid of the context of revenue-sharing. In asking to be treated with dignity, respect, and equity, the WNBA players received misogynistic, homophobic, and transphobic comments, even from users in a forum for a different sport. Their words and actions were misconstrued, seeking to ensure not just the lesser status of the WNBA, but the complicity of those within and outside the league in the continued justification for the lack of compensation for the players.

“I’m un-de-fea-ted!”: Female masculinities as alternative masculinities
Sport has long been a hypermasculine arena, making any woman who participates in sport “masculine.” Further, since masculinity is supposed to be the realm of men, a woman embodying masculine characteristics threatens to upend prevailing ideologies of sex and gender. Thus, a woman participating in sport, particularly those considered aggressive and physical (football, combat sports, etc.), wields immense power to force society to have critical and reflexive discussions on masculinity, femininity, and misogyny, as well as stereotypes about the physical abilities and capabilities of women athletes. Bookending this discussion will be women from combat sports. First is Bianca Belair of WWE. Last is current UFC featherweight and bantamweight champion, Amanda “The Lioness” Nunes. In-between is the couple of Sue Bird and Megan Rapinoe, with each having won championships on the world stage. After an overview of the athletes, I will explain how their feminine masculinities can work to reconceptualize notions of masculinity, femininity, and ability.

A former collegiate track athlete, Belair (who is Black) oozes confidence. “I am the strongest, I’m the toughest, I’m the roughest, I’m the quickest, I’m the fastest, I’m the greatest, I’m the best” (Slabaugh, 2018). A former track star in high school and college (Sam, 2018), Belair is currently a professional wrestler who, though having suffered one loss, is “un-de-fea-ted” in mindset. She trained CrossFit, transitioning to WWE shortly after. Aside from her skill and ability, Belair stands out due to her strength and charisma; she routinely dead-lifts her opponents off the ground into a military press above her head, then walks around the ring with her opponent (Sam). She even uses her hair as a weapon, whipping opponents with her thick braid that is seemingly as long as her 5-foot-7 frame (Sam; Varsallone, 2019). Her strongest characteristic is arguably her sense of self, “I am who I am, I look how I look, I talk how I talk, and this is who I am,” adding it is important for her to be looked up to by little Black girls (Sam).
Bird and Rapinoe are two of the top players in their respective sports (basketball and soccer). They are both champions, as Bird is a two-time WNBA champion and four-time gold medal winning Olympian, and Rapinoe winning a gold medal and a World Cup (Loh, 2018). They also became the first openly gay couple to pose in *ESPN the Magazine’s Body Issue* (Hill, 2018). As one of the few White athletes to kneel during the playing of the national anthem prior to games in solidarity with Kaepernick, Rapinoe garnered some of the vitriolic attacks lobbed at Kaepernick (Hays, 2016; SI Wire, 2016). This led the owner of one of the teams competing against Rapinoe and her Seattle Reign teammates of the National Women’s Soccer League (NWSL) to play the national anthem while both teams were in the locker room (Redford, 2016).

Recently, the NBA’s Denver Nuggets (2018) announced their hiring of Bird to a front office position (Outsports, 2018), though she can continue playing if the WNBA season resumes in the summer (Pelton, 2018). Still pursuing her playing career has not hindered her work in Denver, as coach Mike Malone called her “an asset” (Graham, 2018).

Nunes, a Brazilian native, is arguably the greatest female mixed martial artist. With her last loss coming nearly four years ago, Nunes has defeated the best competition, including former champions Ronda Rousey, Miesha Tate, and Cris “Cyborg” Justino, the latter gaining Nunes a championship in a different weight class (Chiappetta, 2018; Prates & Morgan, 2018). She joined two other fighters to hold simultaneous UFC championships, and is the first female. Nunes is also the first openly gay fighter to be a UFC champion, with the support of her longtime partner and UFC fighter as well, Nina Ansaroff (Mindenhall, 2018).

Nunes also has to deal with the UFC promoting her opponents more than her (though Nunes is bilingual), even when she was favored to win (such as the Rousey fight); she only headlined a show because both Conor McGregor and Jon Jones, the two biggest pay-per-view
draws in UFC history, were pulled from a fight card (Munhos, 2018). After defeating Cyborg, who was long considered the best female mixed martial artist, Nunes declared herself the “GOAT,” or “greatest of all time” (Chiappetta, 2018; Prates & Morgan, 2018).

Belair, Bird and Rapinoe, and Nunes represent different intersections of female masculinities, which are antithetical to patriarchal masculinity. Their skill, strength, and athleticism are counter to traditional stereotypes associated with women, particularly as it relates to physical ability and athleticism. Belair and Nunes also represent the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality. Their athletic ability can shatter patriarchal notions of female athleticism and skill while also being examples for girls and women. Their self-confidence directly counters normative ideas of women as lacking the trait, while showing girls and women that being true and confident in yourself is warranted. On a more basic level, in a society that denigrates girls and women for participating in sports and athletics, their mere presence counters dominant narratives of physical ability and prowess. Their success may also help boys and men in reconceptualizing their ideas of women’s athletics and athleticism, as well as reassessing their positions and complicity in patriarchy. Further, this should help male students in reconceptualizing the idea of masculinity particularly as they perform and interrogate their masculinities.

**Conclusion**

Critical Race Theory and Critical Masculinity Studies are useful frameworks in the study of sport. CRT allows for discussions on the power structures in sport being representative of White supremacy as nearly every owner of a pro sports team and upper-management in professional and collegiate sports is a White man; most of the athletes in football, basketball, world soccer, and combat sports are of color. CMS provides tools to discuss how patriarchy and
misogyny reinforce the perceived physical dominance of males over females. Johnson (2014) argued patriarchy is seven thousand years old, so it would seem plausible that female athletes would be at similar or better stages of development as males had they been able to freely develop physically during these seven thousand years. These epistemologies drive not only my analysis and critique of sport, but also in how I pedagogically employ sport in the classroom.

However, it is not my pedagogy that is the focus of this study, but that of other university educators who employ sport in their classrooms. Educators are influenced by their epistemologies and academic training, which in turn drives their pedagogies. The next chapter discusses the methodology I employed in deriving these pedagogies and strategies from university educators (my participants) as they utilized sport to discuss the operations of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia in their classrooms. I will also discuss how I account for my epistemological influences as I formulated and implemented my methodology, including in analyzing the data.
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY, POSITIONALITY, AND REFLEXIVITY

This chapter details the methodology and methods I utilized for this dissertation. I begin with my positionality. This will account for my interest in sport as a research area, as well as why I am interviewing university educators as opposed to K-12 teachers. Further, I discuss my epistemological and academic training, and how they “impose” (Lather, 2001) on the research process, including on the participants and myself. I then discuss the strategies I undertook to account for the imposition of theory and my identities in the research process, which includes Pillow’s (2003) “reflexivities of discomfort.” This leads into a discussion of qualitative inquiry as a research methodology, and interviewing as a method of data collection. After a discussion of each, I discuss data analysis through transcribing and coding each interview. The final section examines how I specifically employed different strategies to account for credibility and trustworthiness, both qualitative reconceptualizations of the more traditional quantitative terms of validity and reliability.

Positionality

My experiences, assumptions, and socialization, as well as my multiple identity markers, shape the type of research I conduct, why I conduct it, and how I interpret and analyze data. There are specific reasons, which include my experiences as an educator and why I take a focus on the utilization of sport to teach issues of society and power in university classrooms rather than the use of a different arena or different intersections.

I intend to (and currently) teach at the university level, which accounts for my interviewing of university educators. I argue sport holds the most potential to educate students on systemic social issues like race and gender. Also, sports are a constant in my life. I participated in sports through my undergraduate years, and actively follow the sporting world. I coached K-1
youth soccer during spring 2018, and currently am an instructor for beginning and intermediate 
soccer physical education courses on campus.

I also teach university students. As an educator, I bring my understandings of pedagogy, 
curriculum, and evaluation of students to my research. Though I have only taught one course 
centering sport and am currently teaching another, in other non-sport centered courses, I 
incorporated sporting examples and analogies to better contextualize course 
materials/discussions for students. Even though I believe discussions, creative assignments, and 
participatory class activities are effective, I must also be reflexive enough to understand my 
approach is one of many, and other approaches do not make them any less suitable or effective. 
Because I do believe that sports can be a powerful pedagogical tool for students to learn about 
racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia, I must be cognizant of my passion and the fact 
that sports may not always be the most appropriate vehicle for critical pedagogy.

Additionally, I understand that because of patriarchy and heteronormativity, when 
discussing a hypermasculine arena like sports, my identity as a cisgender, heterosexual male 
provides me with instantaneous credibility to students (especially young males). This is an 
example of patriarchal dividend as I did nothing to gain that credibility, aside from my tradition 
of wearing a Colin Kaepernick jersey on the first day of class. Although I am a Korean-
American, biracial individual, my sex and gender identity afford me a sense of respect and 
integrity nearly anathema to females, women, and non-hetero males and men. I must be wary of 
two issues in the classroom: the thin line between building rapport with sport-inclined students 
while not becoming their “buddy,” “friend,” or “therapist,” and not exploiting the instantaneous 
credibility afforded to me to achieve my own ends.
I utilize both Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Masculinity Studies (CMS). Rather than view sport as practice or discipline, I can use both theories to analyze, for example, how stereotypes of Black male criminality affect the reception of these athletes by fans/teams/leagues (CRT); and/or how pregnant collegiate athletes face discrimination and prejudice (including losing scholarships) due to patriarchy and misogyny (CMS). These theories also force me to be conscious of the questions I ask, how I ask them, the identities of participants, and how I analyze my participant responses.

I will also engage in the act of critical reflexivity, key for qualitative researchers. Mayan (2009) argued it is the process of being highly attentive to how and why a researcher makes decisions and interpretations, and critically examines the role of the researcher. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) cautioned not to conflate reflection and reflexivity, as the former tends to be less critical than the latter. Reflection is a process of self; reflexivity is a process of self and others. Pillow (2003) argued, “Thus, reflexivity becomes important to demonstrate one’s awareness of the research problematics and is often used to potentially validate and legitimize the research precisely by raising questions about the research process” (p. 179).

I must be aware of criticisms of reflexivity, however. In discussing how reflexivity acts as a form of “validity” in research, Pillow (2003) wrote, “I argue that using reflexivity to write toward the familiar works against the critical impetus of reflexivity and thus masks continued reliance upon traditional notions of validity, truth, and essence in qualitative research” (p. 180). After describing the four “validated strategies” of reflexivity, she posited her “reflexivities of discomfort,” which locate, discuss, and challenge the limits of existing understandings of acceptable research practice while simultaneously fore-fronting the necessity of engaging in critical reflection about how it is researchers do the reflexive work of subjectivity and
representation (p. 188). “A tracing of the problematics of reflexivity calls for a positioning of reflexivity not as clarity, honesty, or humility, but as practices of confounding disruptions – at times even a failure of our language and practices” (p. 192). This means I must be willing to interrogate myself as a researcher, the questions I ask, how I interpret the responses, and how I analyze the data. I must also be willing to accept failure, such as an uncomfortable interview experience, at any point along the research process, accounting for why the failure occurred.

Beyond being critically self-reflexive, researchers should allow for critique and comments from other scholars as another layer of reflexive strategy. I engaged in member-checking (discussed later), which could lead to uncomfortable questions. Further, as I transcribed, I listened to the interviews as a reflexive act to improve my subsequent interviews. I modified certain questions and did not ask a couple of questions listed in the protocol after this reflexive act. I also noticed I spoke too much leading into questions and follow-up questions in my first three interviews, which helped me to be very conscious of my role as the interviewer in the subsequent interviews; this may account for my first three interviews being the longest.

**Methodology**

Because I move forward with a qualitative research study, the methodology and methods I choose must be consistent with the goals and aims of qualitative inquiry: seeking to understand how participants experience a phenomenon/event rather than generalizing findings to a larger group. This study will contribute to pedagogical understandings of teaching students systemic social issues like race, class, gender, sex, and sexuality through sport, hopefully opening new avenues for educators to reach their students.

**Qualitative Inquiry: Overview**
Like many areas of research, qualitative research has a problematic past. Early qualitative research was racist, classist, sexist, and homo/transphobic, only addressing these issues once scholars of color, women scholars, and non-hetero scholars gained more access to academia and research fields post-Civil Rights era of the 1960s. “Colonizing nations relied on the human disciplines, especially sociology and anthropology, to produce knowledge about strange and foreign worlds” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 1). However, even with the increase in women, queer, and scholars of color in the university (with many overlapping identities), there were still unethical research practices, such as Humphreys’ (1970) *Tearoom Trade* or Zambardo’s (Petit, 2018) defense of his 1971 Stanford prison experiment. The former failed to gain consent and be transparent about the research process while revealing the homosexual encounters of married men. The latter aimed to reproduce a prison setting by randomly assigning young men as inmates or prison guards, but was criticized for lacking a control group and more importantly, a lack of intervention with prisoner abuse. There were also the “paradigm wars” during the “crisis of representation” in qualitative research during the 1980s (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), but out of these “wars” came expanded views and voices in qualitative research. However, qualitative researchers must acknowledge this problematic history while seeking to address these issues writ large.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) provided an “initial, generic” definition of qualitative research:

*Qualitative research* is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world…At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative
researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p. 3, original emphasis).

Savin-Baden and Major (2013) argued, “Qualitative research has an ‘emic’ perspective (describing behaviour or beliefs that are meaningful to the participant) which leads to choices in determining what might be meaningful for a participant” (p. 12, original emphasis).

Qualitative inquiry focuses on naturally occurring phenomenon and events by listening to people (participants) explain how they experience these phenomenon/events. Most qualitative research utilizes words and images rather than numbers. Qualitative research conducted in the critical tradition focuses on issues of society and power like race, class, gender, sex, and sexuality, seeking to transform existing power structures into a more equitable society (Alcoff, 2006; Anzaldúa, 1987; Appadurai, 1996; Collins, 2000; Dávila, 2008; Fox, 2015; Picca & Feagin, 2007; West, 1993). Rather than claim objectivity, qualitative inquiries acknowledge researcher involvement in the process, but take approaches to address worries about rigor such as credibility and trustworthiness.

**Data Collection Method: Qualitative Interview**

Because I focus on how and why educators employ sport to teach difficult subjects like race and sexuality in the classroom, I conducted a qualitative interview study. Spradley (1979) argued interviews function to learn from people rather than studying people, adding, “Language is more than a means of communication about reality; it is a tool for constructing reality” (p. 17). Similarly, Seidman (2006) argued, “At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p. 9). He wrote that stories are a way of knowing, and interviews are a way to hear and disseminate those stories. Seidman further argued that interviewing provides access to the
context of people’s behavior, providing a path for researchers to understand the meaning of said behaviors.

Savin-Baden and Major (2013) wrote about four different types of interviews: structured, semi-structured, unstructured, and informal. Seidman (2006) mirrored this, though he focused on in-depth interviewing. The former wrote that structured interviews follow a preset script, asking each interviewee the same set of questions using the same verbiage with very little deviation. Semi-structured interviews do have a preset list of questions, but they also allow for follow-up questions by the researcher through seeking elaboration or follow-up responses from interviewees. I conducted semi-structured interviews, having an interview protocol, but was not bound by the protocol and followed the flow of the interview to determine follow-up questions.

In developing a protocol, Savin-Baden and Major (2013) suggested creating a script with questions, initially being direct/descriptive, narrative, and structural. In-depth and follow-up questions should be contrastive, evaluative, circular, and comparative. Spradley (1979) was a proponent of in-depth questions because they take advantage of the power of language, but also cautioned the more expansive a question, the more expansive a response. A more expansive response is not necessarily unwanted, but it does extend the transcription process. Seidman (2006) cautioned to avoid interruptions as well as strict adherence to the protocol. Lastly, while not built into the protocol, Bengtsson and Fynbo (2017) argued researchers should pay close attention to silence not as a form of avoiding questions, but as “enunciated” in time and language as a form of contextual power. This means the act of silence may be a power dynamic employed by the participant by not responding or answering a question. Further, in the critical traditions of qualitative research (particularly critical discourse analysis), what is not said is often as important as what is said. Fairclough (2003) wrote, “A significant initial question is which texts
and voices are included, which are excluded, and what significant absences are there?” (p. 47).

Appendix A includes the interview protocol for this project.

The next step was to recruit participants. Spradley (1979) provided five “minimal requirements” for the selection of a participant, though for this study, knowledge through enculturation, current involvement in a culture, and adequate time in a culture fit my parameters best (p. 46-54). Enculturation is of note (the process of learning a culture) as he argued good “informants” know their culture well. To build rapport with participants, Seidman (2006) encouraged researchers to initiate contact with potential participants to build a foundation for the interview relationship; if a researcher can make this initial contact in person, this should create a strong initial rapport. Further, when considering a time and place for the interview, he argued the prevailing principle must be equity. The researcher should be as accommodating as possible.

I contacted potential participants with whom I already had an established relationship, and then utilized snowball recruiting by asking them if they knew anyone who might be interested in contributing to this study and also fit the parameters. Enculturation was key as I recruited university educators, though those with more teaching experience may have provided more salient responses. This initial communication served as the starting point of building rapport, but I continued to build it by emailing the protocol ahead of the interview so that participants could ruminate on the upcoming conversation. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) provided a checklist for researchers to assist in developing rapport, including making eye contact and paying attention to body language. Further, while I initially worked to conduct all interviews in-person, snowball recruiting brought participants from a distance. I still conducted a face-to-face interview, but this was through Skype while simultaneously recording audio.
One contact occurred through Facebook Messenger as this participant was a former
colleague who now teaches at an institution in a different state. Another was made through the
contact page of a sports feminist podcast; I received an email from one of the hosts indicating
their interest. This held true for another participant as I messaged them through a contact page of
their personal website (a current doctoral candidate). Three contacts occurred face-to-face; the
remaining were through email. I contacted 11 participants, with four participants contacted
through snowball recruiting. However, of these 11 participants, two were unable to schedule
interviews after initial interest due to a sickness and scheduling conflicts, respectively. Another
participant was recruited by snowball, though this participant interviewed me. The total included
nine interviews I conducted and one interview of me for a total of 10 interviews. Two
participants I contacted are committee members, though one of the participants who were unable
to schedule interviews included one of these committee members. The interview with a
committee member does present issues of conflict of interest and subjectivity, but I employed
qualitative interpretations of credibility and trustworthiness to account for these issues.

Participant identities varied (all names are pseudonyms). Chipper, Dragić, and Etan are
White male professors, and Marta is a White female professor, though Dragić is an international
educator from Europe. Etan teaches Comparative Ethnic Studies, Chipper teaches History, and
Dragić teaches Sport Management. Marta is a professor of Central and Southern American
History. Flores is a Chicano male who earned his doctorate degree in American Studies in May
2018 and currently teaches interdisciplinary studies. Webber is biracial Mexican and Filipina
educator with a doctorate in literature who teaches Comparative Ethnic Studies. Caster is a
cisgender queer professor of color who teaches Gender and Sexuality Studies. AI is a Canadian
Black male professor of Africana Studies working at an American University. Monica is a Black
female doctoral candidate in Journalism who also has experience working in sports broadcasting. My interview was conducted by a White male professor at a historically Black college/university (HBCU). Chipper, Dragić, Caster, Etan, and Webber work at Research I institutions in the Pacific Northwest. Monica is a doctoral candidate at a private Research I university. Marta is a professor at a private, liberal arts university; Flores is a professor at a smaller public research university; and AI is a professor at a smaller public university. Participant data is represented in Table 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1 – Participants of Study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Identities</th>
<th>Academic Training</th>
<th>Degree Status</th>
<th>Institution Type</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chipper</td>
<td>Heterosexual White male</td>
<td>History and Colonialism</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Public R-I</td>
<td>Clinical Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dragić</td>
<td>Heterosexual White male</td>
<td>Sport Journalism, Sport Management</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Public R-I</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>“Black American woman”</td>
<td>Sports Broadcasting, Journalism</td>
<td>Doctoral candidate</td>
<td>Private R-I</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AI</td>
<td>Cisgender Black man</td>
<td>Africana Studies</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Public 4-year</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Sex/Gender Identity</td>
<td>Race/Country of Origin</td>
<td>Field of Study</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Institution Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marta</td>
<td>Cisgender White woman</td>
<td>Central/Southern American History</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Private 4-year</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flores</td>
<td>“Cisgender, light-skinned Brown male with heterosexual tendencies”</td>
<td>American Studies</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Public R-I</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caster</td>
<td>Cisgender, queer person of color</td>
<td>Feminist Studies, Queer Theory</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Public R-I</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etan</td>
<td>“Middle-class heterosexual White dude”</td>
<td>Black Studies, Comparative Ethnic Studies</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Public R-I</td>
<td>Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webber</td>
<td>Mixed-race Mexican and Filipina</td>
<td>Literature, Cultural Studies</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Public R-I</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce Lee (me)</td>
<td>Cisgender, heterosexual, Korean-American male</td>
<td>Comparative Ethnic Studies, Critical Masculinity Studies</td>
<td>Doctoral candidate</td>
<td>Public R-1</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I conducted interviews beginning on January 3rd, 2019 and ending on the 24th. Interviews varied in length between 46 minutes and 115 minutes. Interviews six, seven, and eight were constrained due to time. Interviews five and six occurred on consecutive days, while interviews seven, eight, and nine were conducted consecutively on the same day. My interview occurred on the 28th. Five interviews occurred in campus offices, and the remaining five (including my own) took place through Skype. I recorded the audio of all 10 interviews to provide a transcript for data analysis, while taking notes during the interview to account for anything not easily discernible through audio. Seidman (2006) cautioned to avoid any in-depth analysis while transcribing, though cursory analysis did occur during transcription. I followed Seidman’s advice that while ideal to hire transcribers, it is best for the researcher to transcribe to become more familiar with the participants and data. He also argued researchers should make note of any nonverbal signs, such as coughs, laughs, sighs, pauses, outside noises, telephone rings, and interruptions that are recorded on tape. While this took more time, it provided more fruitful data by taking context into account when I analyzed the transcriptions. I aimed to transcribe interviews within 24 hours as McGrath, Palmgren, and Lilijedahl (2018) advise to “transcribe interviews in good time” (p. 3), though this was not always feasible. The first four interviews were transcribed within 24 hours, however, the rapidity of interviews five through nine made this impossible. Nevertheless, I completed transcribing the nine interviews I conducted by January 28th. I transcribed the audio of my interview on February 2nd. With all the interviews transcribed, I moved into the formal data analysis phase.

**Data Analysis**

Seidman (2006) argued, “The researcher must come to the transcripts with an open attitude, seeking what emerges as important and of interest from the text. At the same time, no
interviewer can enter into the study of an interview as a clean slate” (p. 117). He wrote the best way to analyze the data is to bracket the most interesting responses, a pre-coding process. This leads to the actual coding process which “involves attaching one or more keywords to a text segment in order to permit later identification of a statement” (p. 201-202), and these codes should be immediate, short, and define the action/experience described in the response. Mayan (2009) argued coding occurs immediately as a researcher interfaces with their data, and importantly, “A code could be assigned to a line, portion, or a page of a transcript or document, or to a minute detail or larger portion of an image, or even to the image itself” (p. 89). Saldaña (2016) argued, “A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 4). He broke coding down to two cycles, with First cycle coding as a single word to a full sentence, and the Second cycle grouping the codes or longer passages of text into categories.

Before moving into themes, Saldaña (2016) argued “coding for themes” is misleading because codes and themes are different; themes are outcomes of coding. As an example, he wrote, “SECURITY can be a code, but DENIAL MEANS A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY can be a theme” (p. 16). With coding complete, the next process is to turn the (presumably many) codes and categories into themes (Spradley, 1979; Seidman, 2009). Mayan (2009) argued there is a difference between categories and themes. “Themes are thoughts or processes that weave throughout and tie the categories together. Theming, then, is the process of determining the thread(s) that integrate and anchor all the categories” (p. 97). While subtle, understanding the distinctions between a code, a category, and a theme are crucial for transcription analysis. Codes are grouped into categories, which are then sorted under overarching themes. Through analytical
reflection, themes are the outcomes of codes and categories, and are the overarching ideas or explorations of the participants’ understandings.

I engaged in First and Second cycle coding after transcribing interviews. For First cycle coding, I utilized a combination of descriptive and In Vivo coding. Saldaña (2016) argued descriptive coding “is a straightforward method for novices to qualitative research” (p. 105) and categorizes data at a basic level to provide an organizational grasp of the data for the researcher. Descriptive coding summarizes the topic of a passage in qualitative data usually in a word or short phrase. It is important to note descriptive codes are generally topical rather than contextual. This led Saldaña to caution, “Coding with simple descriptive nouns alone, however, may not enable more complex and theoretical analyses as the study progresses, particularly with interview transcript data” (p. 105). As I am a novice qualitative researcher, descriptive coding allows me to gain experience in coding while understanding it has limitations, particularly when transcribing interviews, because it focuses on topic rather than context.

I utilized In Vivo coding to address these concerns. Saldaña (2016) wrote this method of coding “refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative record” (p. 105). In Vivo codes the words used by participants, and is particularly useful when interviewing participants with their own jargon or “folk” terms. Saldaña argued In Vivo coding is also appropriate for beginning qualitative researchers, particularly for studies that “prioritize and honor the participant’s voice” (p. 106). He did advise beginning researchers to avoid an overreliance on In Vivo coding because it can hinder the researcher’s ability to transcend to deeper conceptual and theoretical levels of analysis, “Sometimes, the participant says it best; sometimes the researcher does” (p. 109).
Code mapping is the process of listing codes to bring meaning, structure, and order to the data, and as Saldaña (2016) argued, a strategy to enhance credibility and trustworthiness. After listing the codes as the first iteration of code mapping, the second iteration categorizes the codes, with the categories ranging from the real to the conceptual. The third iteration then “categorizes the categories” (p. 222). Saldaña argued, “[Code mapping] documents how a list of codes gets categorized, recategorized, and conceptualized throughout the analytic journey” (p. 222). There were many overlapping codes through the interviews, but the number of codes per interview ranged from 123 to 233, with an average of 171 codes per interview. A few common codes included sport is ubiquitous, students’ lack of critical thinking about sport, and building the academic and professional skills of students.

I engaged in the three iterations prior to Second cycle coding. The first iteration of pattern coding collapsed the list of codes into 21 categories. A second venture reduced those to 12 categories. A final iteration of code mapping ended with seven categories. A category that encompassed many codes was “Sport/Sports,” including the role of sport in the lives of participants, what students learn from sports, and the numerous athletes/coaches/figures the participants highlighted to discuss systemic social issues like racism and sexism. Another category was “Pedagogy,” which included strategies to teach the operations of racism, sexism, classism, and homo/transphobia, as well as philosophies of teaching and learning. I moved forward with the seven categories to Second cycle coding.

Saldaña (2016) argued Second cycle coding methods, if necessary “are advanced ways of reorganizing and reanalyzing data coded through first cycle methods” (p. 234). Further, he wrote the primary goal is to develop a sense of the categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from the First cycle codes. I utilized one Second cycle method outlined by Saldaña:
pattern coding. Pattern codes are explanatory or inferential codes that identify an emerging theme, configuration, or explanation as sort of a meta code (p. 236) and many times, patterns are captured through metaphors and analogy. However, Saldaña warned, “Several Pattern Codes can emerge from second cycle analysis of qualitative data. Each one may hold merit as a major theme to analyze and develop, but pattern codes are hunches; some pan out, other do not” (p. 239). Pattern coding allowed me to formalize my code mapping process into more succinct categories for thematic analysis. This pattern coding developed four main themes. The first theme is the belief in sport as an important access point to teach the operations of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia. The second theme is how the identities, both personal and academic, shaped the pedagogy of participants, and how these identities both helped and at times constrained their pedagogies. The third theme focused on the pedagogical strategies of educators, mainly through media. The fourth theme is the participants’ perception of student responses to critical sport pedagogies (CSP) via their engagement and assignments. These themes are explored more fully in the next chapter; however, they serve to reinforce my argument that sport may be the most effective vehicle to educate students on systemic social issues like racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Qualitative research has been critiqued for lacking the checklists of validity and reliability criteria that supposedly ensure the rigor of statistical research. However, many qualitative researchers have proposed alternatives or correspondences to those statistical constructs. Mayan cited Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) qualitative criteria, initially using trustworthiness in place of rigor (2009), but also adding credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility (replacing internal validity) assesses whether the findings make
sense and/or are an accurate representation, with member-checks and triangulation assisting in credibility. Transferability (replacing external validity or generalizability) assesses the applicability of the findings as transferrable to other settings. Unlike generalizability in quantitative studies, transferability assesses whether the research design and methods are transferable to a different phenomenon or setting, and is dependent on “thick” description of the contexts in which the study took place. Dependability (replacing reliability) refers to the reviewing of decision-making throughout the process. Confirmability (replacing objectivity) assess whether data collection and analysis are logical, with reflexivity contributing to the practice (all from p. 102). The concept of trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry is ever evolving, but these are criteria many qualitative researchers utilize with slight adjustments.

However, many heed Mayan’s (2009) message of using the quantitative terms in qualitative ways. Lather (2001) reconceptualized validity with construct, face, and catalytic validity. Construct validity applies to recognizing the roots of theory construction and the imposition of theory on the lives of participants. Face validity refers to the transparency and ethics of the researcher, with Lather arguing practices such as member-checks should be standard practice for emancipatory research designs. Catalytic validity refers to the degree which the research process reorients, focuses, and energizes participants “so that respondents gain self-understanding and, ideally, self-determination through research participation” (p. 352). Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) described validity as transgressive, as well as an ethical relationship with the research and the participants.

To address credibility and trustworthiness, my study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at this university. I housed e-files (audio files, transcripts, coding) in a password-protected folder on an external hard drive, and paper files (consent forms) in a folder
in a locked cabinet/drawer. Participants at a distance emailed me a scanned version of their consent forms with their hand-signed signatures. I had two participants who typed their name and date, but I asked for signatures by hand to avoid any ethical quandaries.

I engaged in triangulation during data analysis. For Flick (2007), triangulation assists in quality by extending the activities of the researcher by using multiple methods. “Put simply, the concept of triangulation means that an issue of research is considered – or in a constructivist fashion is constituted – from (at least) two points” (p. 40). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) wrote triangulation is the utilization of multiple methods as an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. Maxwell (2013) argued triangulation reduces the risk that conclusions will reflect the biases of a specific method, as well as to gain further insight into a phenomenon through a different viewpoint. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) argued triangulation means the researcher has multiple data points that can broaden their understanding of their research. Overall, triangulation utilizes multiple methods, theories, data, analysis, and even researchers to account for both researcher biases and dependability of the research. Triangulating between CRT, CMS, the interview data, meetings with other researchers, and member-checking includes at least five different practices to assert the credibility of this research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Huberman & Miles, 2001).

I also engaged in member-checking and research reciprocity to address face validity as much as possible (Lather, 2001) by following-up with participants sometime after interviewing to ensure I was not misinterpreting their responses. Not all participants agreed to member-checking (one said, “The data is the data”), but I sent coded transcripts to all participants; this was done after First cycle coding. Three participants responded that, “Everything looks good,” with two concerned at their frequent utterances of the words “Uh/Um.” I believe catalytic
validity (Lather) played an important role as many participants indicated not only that they enjoyed the interview, but it made them think about pedagogy and their use of sport in the classroom in different ways. Further, I adjusted, removed, or added questions in subsequent interviews after listening to previous interviews. I tried to add questions that were contextual to each participant’s experiences and location. I believe construct validity was met as participants explicitly described how their academic training and epistemological understandings shape their pedagogy, as well as how their identities mesh with their understandings.

Explained earlier, “reflexivities of discomfort” (2003) also played a role. An example here would be the recognition that I spoke too much in my first three interviews, asking myself, “Why didn’t I shut my mouth?” I also realized (in line with construct validity), particularly in my first three interviews, that I may have led participants to certain responses or topics rather than allowing them to contextualize their own experiences. This recognition allowed me to move forward and conduct more concise and timely interviews, while also striving to focus my follow-up questions on participants’ responses rather than my ambitions. Further, I believe “strong objectivity” (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011) is applicable as I not only critiqued my positionality, but also sought as much knowledge from others without attempting to guide their answers towards a specific response or area in subsequent interviews.

**Conclusion**

Though qualitative inquiry has a troubling past (as with all research), qualitative researchers both address this past while utilizing their research to strive for a more equitable society. As a methodological approach, qualitative inquiry’s goal of understanding how participants experience and interpret phenomenon or events proved most suitable for my study. Because I sought to understand how and why university educators utilize sport to educate
students on systemic social issues like racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia, I engaged in the method of qualitative interviewing, which allowed participants to explain how and why they employ certain pedagogical strategies in the classroom.

My use of triangulation, catalytic/construct/face validity (including member-checks), critical reflexivity, and reflexivities of discomfort throughout the research process addressed issues of credibility and trustworthiness. This is evident through the examples listed above, such as realizing I was speaking too much considering the purpose of interviewing is to hear from participants. I believe member-checks are the most important aspect of credibility and trustworthiness. Participants are trusting the researcher not to misrepresent their words, and member-checks allowed for participants to examine my coding of their responses, ensuring I am accounting for my subjectivity as much as possible.

The four main themes developed from the interviews represent interesting and critical sites of discussion. Why did my participants view sport as such an accessible space in which to teach systemic social inequalities, and how did they utilize sport to access inequalities in *other* institutions? How do the identities of participants, both personal and academic, shape their pedagogies? Why was media a universal pedagogical strategy for participants, and what other strategies were utilized? How do students respond to CSP both in classroom discussions and assignments, and what different ways do students use sport to address systemic social issues? Lastly, how did participants discuss the role of student-athletes? These questions are further discussed and analyzed in the next chapter, including various examples of pedagogy and student responses.
CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter will explore in-depth the overarching themes identified in the previous chapter. First, however, I highlight the social, economic, and political context in which the increasing reported intersections of sport and society take place. I admit that although there is no one set date, I believe there is a particular set of events that sparked this modern iteration of the relationship between sport and society, including athlete activism. These events include: the team picture the Miami Heat of the National Basketball Association (NBA) posted to social media in response to the murder of Trayvon Martin, and the kneeling of Colin Kaepernick during the playing of the national anthem prior to National Football League (NFL) games. This section ends with an argument that these increasing intersections demand that educators should turn to sport in the classroom.

Second, I utilize the words of my participants to discuss their pedagogical assumptions and beliefs, including how these assumptions are impacted by their racial, ethnic, and gendered identities. Third, I analyze the pedagogical strategies of these critical educators teaching the operations of systemic racism, sexism, classism, and homo/transphobia through sport. This will include a discussion of how the epistemological and academic training of each participant influenced these strategies. Fourth, I utilize examples of various student responses to critical sport pedagogies (CSP), including participants’ perception of student-athlete engagement and student critical thinking. I conclude the chapter with a summary of the arguments, and maintain that educators should turn to sports to teach these operations.

From Trayvon Martin to Colin Kaepernick: Modern connections of sport and society

Sport has, is, and always will be political (Coakley, 2017). Jack Johnson had to fight for the heavyweight championship in Australia for fear of a riot in the United States, and was
subsequently prosecuted for violating the Mann Act upon his return to the United States (Runstedtler, 2012). The Mann Act, formally the White Slave Traffic Act, “made it illegal to ‘transport any woman or girl’ across state lines ‘for any immoral purpose’” (History.com Editors, 2009); Johnson had many publicized relationships with White women. Other scholars point to the 1968 Mexico City Olympics protests, highlighted by the Black Power salutes of John Carlos and Tommie Smith on the medal stand (Cosgrove, 2014; Edwards, 2018; Maraniss, 2018), as the epitome of athlete-activism. However, as Rhoden (2006) noted, the increasing access to monetary success rendered many Black athletes silent on social issues, most importantly Michael Jordan’s insistence on remaining apolitical. This led Rhoden to coin the terms the “dilemma of neutrality” and the “Jordan model” where Black athletes avoid speaking about social and political issues for fear of damaging their brand, seemingly the prevailing model since the early 1980s. While Zirin (2008) and others (Abdelfatah & Arablouei, 2019; Davis, 2019) have noted that there were athletes and those in sport who maintained the athlete-activist role (particularly Black women) during the late 1980s to late 1990s (Jordan’s prime), Rhoden focused his critique on Jordan because he was the best, most prominent, and most monetarily successful Black athlete in the world at the time.

However, it appears this generation of athletes is channeling the generation of predecessors like Carlos, Smith, and Muhammad Ali. This reassertion of their voices and identities did not happen suddenly, but was sparked by a catalyst of events with a similar theme: the extrajudicial killing of Black men and women by police officers. The deaths of Philando Castile (CBS, 2016), Alton Sterling (Brennan, Hensley, & Slattery, 2016), 12-year-old Tamir Rice (Lee, 2014), Eric Garner (Murray, Burke, Marcius, & Parascandola, 2014), and Sandra Bland (Schuppe, 2015) made national headlines, but the killing of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin
by neighborhood watch member George Zimmerman, I argue, is the foundational moment of the modern turn to athlete-activism.

On February 26th, 2012, Martin was shot and killed in a scuffle with Zimmerman on Martin’s way home from the store (Dahl, 2013; Weinstein & The Mojo News Team, 2012). Zimmerman claimed Martin was “suspicious” because he was wearing a hoodie, and though he was warned by the 9-1-1 dispatcher he called not to pursue, Zimmerman ignored the warnings and killed Martin. In a show of solidarity, both LeBron James and Dwyane Wade posted a team photo of the 2011-2012 Miami Heat donning hoodies over their head (Demby, 2017; ESPN.com news services, 2012; NBC 6 South Florida, 2012). This seemed to be James’ “awakening” to the impact he had on society, and he continues to address social issues, such as when he was joined by Wade, Chris Paul, and Carmelo Anthony on the stage before the 2016 ESPYS broadcast to implore everyone that, “We all have to do better” (ESP. com news services, 2016; Grossman, 2016; Smith & Miller, 2016). It is important to note that players in the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) donned shirts reading “Change Starts with Us” with the names of Castile, Sterling, and the Dallas Police Department emblem (after five officers were killed) before the NBA players began their activism. However, because the NBA and NBA athletes dominated these conversations, the activism of WNBA athletes was and continues to be rendered nearly invisible (Berkman, 2016). Though Zimmerman was acquitted (Luscombe, 2013), these deaths, particularly Martin’s, were the initial catalysts that created arguably the most defining moment in sports and society since Carlos and Smith: Kaepernick kneeling (initially sitting) before the playing of the national anthem prior to NFL games to protest the criminal justice system and the killings of Black and Brown individuals, particularly men.
Only through a tweet (Chan, 2016) showing Kaepernick sitting during the playing of the national anthem prior to a preseason game (Wells, 2016) did people discover he was engaged in activism. After meeting with former Green Beret and Seattle Seahawks’ player Nate Boyer (seemingly a representative for military members), Kaepernick modified his demonstration by kneeling (Biderman, 2016), an act Keenan (2017) argued is generally one of deference and respect. Jones (2016) wrote that Kaepernick was seeking justice, not peace, “And there’s nothing American about muzzling a dissenting voice, especially one whose life is the sort of story people cite as an example of the American dream.” Though Kaepernick last played in the 2016 season (the season he began his activism), Fletcher (2019) argued on the eve of the most recent Super Bowl, Kaepernick still dominated conversations even though he rarely speaks. Further, Fletcher cited recent polling showing a stark racial divide: 80 percent of African-American NFL fans favorably view Kaepernick as opposed to 36 percent of White fans. However, Fletcher also cited that 77 percent of Black fans and 59 percent of White fans, no matter their opinion of Kaepernick, believed he is “being penalized for his political views.”

Beyond the criticisms of disrespecting the flag/military (many use the flag as a proxy for the military) that Kaepernick and other athletes have received, the other comments illuminate the discourse of the “stick to sports” crowd. Whether fans believe athletes are pampered and should just comment on their sport (Humphries, 2017); sport should be an area to “decompress from the stresses of daily living” (Salguero, 2017); and/or that sports broadcasting companies should resist covering politics for fear of dividing the audience (Huber, 2017), fans, media, and politicians alike find reason to denigrate (Black) athletes who decide not to “stick to sports.” Strauss (2018) noted that numerous Republican candidates during the 2018 primary season ran advertisements against Kaepernick and other athlete-activists. Further, Cullen (2017) and Isidore
(2017) both noted that around a quarter of NFL team owners donated money to now-President Trump’s campaign and/or inaugural committee. Basically, this discourse argues that athletes should “stick to sports,” unless the politics match that of the critics.

There are many examples this decade of athlete activism and increasing discussions of the role of sports in society. US Women’s National Team and Seattle Reign FC (Football Club) member Megan Rapinoe kneeled in solidarity with Kaepernick, defying the “expectations” of US Soccer (Hays, 2016; SI Wire, 2016). This also caused the team owner of the Washington Spirit to keep both teams in the locker room when Seattle visited Washington during the playing of the national anthem, which prompted Rapinoe to respond that this was “fucking unbelievable” (Schaerlaeckens, 2016). Rapinoe was one of few White professional athletes to demonstrate in solidarity with Kaepernick.

The culmination of the 2016 NFL season was Super Bowl 50, with a halftime show headlined by Beyoncé. Seemingly off the momentum of Kaepernick’s activism, her performance was distinct in its homage to the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, as well as the #BlackLivesMatter movement (Zaru, 2017). Many called her performance disrespectful to police, with Rudy Giuliani condemning her for using her “platform to attack police officers who are the people who protect her and protect us, keep us alive” (Zaru, 2017). In a society that routinely polices Black culture, such as the recent case of a high school wrestler being forced to cut his dreadlocks or forfeit a match (Johnson, 2018), Beyoncé’s halftime performance served as a reminder that the “post-racial” narrative remained a farce.

During a monologue on her show, Laura Ingraham criticized kneeling players in the NFL for kneeling and instructing them they should stand to “show that we love our country and wish it well,” (Ingraham, 2017) and directing LeBron James to “shut up and dribble” (Chavez, 2018).
Instead, as Sullivan (2018) argued, James “went to the hoop.” Wong (2018) argued James’ comments and the support from the NBA for players to speak their minds makes James “the vanguard of a league that has encouraged free expression more than most.” Further, through his SpringHill Entertainment company, James helped produce a three-part documentary series titled *Shut Up and Dribble* that explored how systemic social issues like racism and classism permeate sport, though the series was criticized for largely ignoring the activism of Black women (McDonald, 2018).

The lack of recognition of women and their accomplishments may account for underlying reasons why the WNBA players are currently negotiating a new collective bargaining agreement (CBA) for the upcoming season in summer 2019. In discussing the reasoning for seeking a new agreement, WNBA Player’s Association (WNBPA) President Nneka Ogwumike (2018) argued, “In opting out of this CBA, our primary objective is full transparency…we just want to see the receipts.” As Ellentuck (2018) noted, WNBA players receive around 20 percent of shared revenue within the league, whereas NBA players receive close to 50 (thought it had been closer to 57 percent before the 2011 lockout). As Johnson (2018) wrote, no matter their athletic successes and achievements, WNBA players routinely receive sexist comments such as, “Get back into the kitchen,” or, “I could take you one-on-one.”

Recent cases of professional athletes abusing women alongside the ongoing issues of sexual assault and rape in US Olympics, particularly the events of the Larry Nassar/USA Gymnastics/Michigan State University sexual assault and rape saga (ESPN, 2018; ESPN News Services, 2018b; Townes, 2017), represent another area where issues in sports reflect patterns in society. Kareem Hunt was seen on video shoving a woman to the ground and then kicking her, though the video was not released for nine months (ESPN, 2018). Even though the Kansas City
Chiefs (his employer) of the NFL knew of the incident, it was only after the video surfaced that they released Hunt from his contract, saying he was “not truthful” in his discussions with the team. He was signed by the Cleveland Browns in February (ESPN, 2019a), and recently suspended eight games for the upcoming 2019 NFL season (CBS/AP, 2019; ESPN. 2019b; Schad, 2019). These examples are indicative of the priorities of most sporting leagues and organizations: domestic violence and sexual assault/rape are overlooked when an athlete provides some value. Though many organizations claim there is on-the-field value through the talent of these athletes, as in the case of Hunt, that “value” directly translates to economic benefit for the team/league and management. If the talent dissipates, or the “distraction” (as is often argued about lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, and queer/questioning athletes as discussed in Chapter 3) outweighs the monetary value, the team/league can cut ties with that player.

Because nearly all league and team management are men and overwhelmingly White, these examples show the operations of patriarchy (Johnson, 2014) and White supremacy (Bell, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2009), the former through the disregard for women survivors of abuse by certain athletes, and the latter through the treatment of a mostly Black employee pool by White decision-makers.

Former NFL player Greg Hardy did not face legal repercussions for allegedly abusing his former partner, Nicole Holder, but he was suspended 10 games by Commissioner Roger Goodell (reduced to four) for the 2015 season, his last in the NFL (ESPN.com staff, 2015). He then pursued a mixed martial arts (MMA) career, ultimately signing with the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) and appearing on their first fight card on ESPN (Carroll, 2018; Samano, 2018). Placing him on the ESPN card angered many fighters due to the presence of Rachel Ostovich, who recovered from a broken orbital bone and other injuries inflicted on her by her
husband (who faces second-degree assault charges), also scheduled on the card. Many wondered what message it sent to have an alleged abuser fighting on the same fight card (event) as a domestic abuse survivor (Samano, 2018).

Aly Raisman, one of over 100 survivors of sexual abuse by former Michigan State University and US Olympic team doctor Larry Nassar, alleged that USA Gymnastics instructed her to “be quiet” about the abuse she suffered at the hands of Nassar (ESPN, 2018). Thanks to the actions of Raisman and the other survivors, Nassar is in jail, and the US Olympic Committee is seeking to revoke USA Gymnastics’ status as the governing body for the sport (ESPN News Services, 2018). Michigan State is also facing continuing scrutiny for enabling the abuse by Nassar for decades (Barr & Murphy, 2018). Sexual assault is just one of many issues plaguing youth sports, including head trauma in football (Westerman, 2018) and the recruitment of youth athletes across international borders by elite youth sport programs and schools (Stanmyre & Politi, 2017).

I have presented the above detailed political, economic, and social context to embed my discussion of two important points: the hyperattention of media and culture on the actions of athletes, and how these examples apply to the data analysis themes of this study. Professional athletes arguably receive more attention about their actions than politicians and other celebrities. This is furthered by the examples of Beyoncé using the platform of the Super Bowl halftime show for political activism and the President denigrating “that son of a bitch” NFL athlete who kneeled during the playing of the national anthem. Though James is not the only athlete or celebrity to call the President a “bum” or worse, he seemingly received more vitriol for his words than athletes like Stephen Curry or late-night hosts like John Oliver or Samantha Bee.
Through a Critical Race Theory critique, these events reflect the tenets of racism as normal, storytelling as counter-narrative, and intersectionality. Many of the critiques lobbed at these Black and Brown athletes channel what Bonilla-Silva (2014) argued is “color-blind racism.” Rather than explicit forms of bigotry and racism common before the Civil Rights Movements of the 1960s, Bonilla-Silva argued society and culture shifted to covert racism particularly through language. For example, instead of saying, “Black people are criminals,” people now say, “There is a culture of violence,” implying the same stereotypes but through more palatable language. Telling athletes “to shut up and dribble,” even though pundits like Ingraham rarely keep their commentary to the news and/or political realms, fails to account for White privilege and the operations of racism in the coverage of these issues. Further, the lack of criticism for team owners and league management donating to political campaigns (not sticking to sports) reveals the racial dynamics of these conversations as only the Black and Brown athletes receive critiques for similar actions as team owners. This is complicated by owners like the Dallas Cowboys’ Jerry Jones of the NFL who, although donating to political campaigns, said any Dallas player kneeling would be benched (Archer, 2017; Perez, 2017; Perez, 2017; Reid, 2017; Sanchez, 2017). Rovell (2017) wondered if it was legal for Jones to act in such a manner, and after conferring with a half-dozen legal experts, their opinions slightly favored owners like Jones. Many Whites who criticized and continue to criticize activist-athletes fail to see the hypocrisy in their actions and the actions of Whites in sport who escape the criticisms lobbed at activist-athletes.

James’ reframing of Ingraham’s words into a sports documentary series is a shining example of storytelling as counter-narrative. Utilizing the words and experiences of Black athletes throughout the decades in direct response to critiques by White society worked to
provide viewers with a wider context for these contemporary issues. Highlighting the history and lineage of Black activist-athletes helped educate viewers that the “shut up and dribble” and “stick to sports” arguments are a century old, dating to the times of Jack Johnson. The series also showed the continued struggle for racial equality in society and the various moments this struggle intersected with sports. *Shut Up and Dribble* also showed just how integral sports have been in the fight for racial equality, particularly for Black communities. Accounting for the critique of lacking the involvement of Black women athletes, this series signified that there has never been a moment when sport and politics were separate; they have always been intertwined.

The examples of the WNBPA and Fallon Fox represent the tenet of intersectionality from CRT, as well as leading into multiple applications of tenets from Critical Masculinity Studies (CMS). Many of the women in the WNBA, including WNBPA president Nneka Ogwumike, are Black women, with a visible presence of LGBTIQ-identifying players as well. As Crenshaw (1991) argued, any analysis of these issues that “does not take intersectionality into account” (p. 140) is insufficient to address the machinations of the oppression of Black women. Many of the “shut up and dribble” arguments also apply to these Black athletes, but is further complicated through their gender and sexual identities. Like the arguments against Beyoncé’s halftime performance or Serena Williams’ actions at the 2018 U.S. Open final, the Blackness of many of these women athletes serves to reinforce stereotypes of Black women as loud, unruly, and ungrateful.

This leads to how patriarchy, misogyny, alternative masculinities, and homo/transphobia are present in both the WNBPA and Fox examples. Johnson (2014) stated that patriarchy is a system characterized by being controlled by men and placing the needs and experiences of men as the default for society. Building off the previous discussion, even though WNBA players
receive around 20 percent of basketball-related revenue to the NBA players receiving 50 percent (Ellentuck, 2018), many still viewed the WNBPA’s fight for a higher percentage as unrealistic. The common argument is women’s sports are not as profitable as men’s sports, but Berri’s research (in Chapter 3) revealed a viable and profitable path forward: working with and marketing the WNBA and the players as superstars alongside their NBA counterparts. However, the operations of patriarchy and misogyny dismiss this solution as unfeasible and the actions of the WNBA players as unruly or “unladylike.”

Further, the overt homo/transphobia discussions of both the WNBA players and Fox are illuminating. As illustrated in Chapter 3, fans of a different sport (MMA) used misogynistic, homophobic, and transphobic comments to denigrate the actions of the WNBPA. Whether they criticized the players for, “Always flapping their dick suckers about something,” or that the WNBA is “a league of fagolas,” these forum posters seemed to relish in their overt bigotry. As women in sports and athletics are stereotyped to be LGBTIQ, these comments reinforce not only this stereotype, but also the belief in women’s sports as unworthy of praise. Fox received overt vitriolic hate as a Black trans woman who competed in MMA, much like her WNBA counterparts. Fighters, commentators, and fans alike viewed Fox as anything from “a sick, disgusting, sociopathic, disgusting freak” (Helwani, 2013) to a “fucking man,” erasing her identity as a trans woman and her years of hormone therapy. These comments also disregard research that refutes stereotypes of bone density, muscle mass, or any other physical advantage thought inherent in males would have been mitigated by years of hormone therapy (MacDonald, 2013a).

These two examples highlight how alternative masculinities in CMS are reflective of counter-narrative from CRT. Fox, specifically, represents Black, trans, and feminine
masculinities in the hypermasculine arena of a combat sport, an arena traditionally barred for the latter two identities. If women are supposed to lack the proclivities for athletics and are anathema to combat and violence (as patriarchy suggests), then Fox and other women athletes directly counter this narrative with their participation and visibility, particularly through their participation in arenas such as MMA, boxing, or hockey. Though Black women are stereotyped with having preternatural athletic abilities, the continued successes of Fox, the WNBPA, and other women in sports and athletics counter the view that women’s athletic prowess pales in comparison to men’s successes. Lastly, as Pascoe (2012) and Smith (2014) discussed, LGBTIQ people are stereotyped as lacking masculinity and athletic ability, with epithets like “fag” used to both denigrate LGBTIQ people and men who fail to meet masculine standards. Fox and other trans-identifying athletes in these hypermasculine sports highlight that LGBTIQ people have masculine identities, but that these athletes are athletically talented as well. These counter-narratives can work to undo stereotypes with more visibility and discussion.

This discussion helps setup the next section: the analysis of the major themes derived from an analysis of interview data. The viability of developing and utilizing a critical sport pedagogy (CSP) to teach the operations of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia partially relies on the relatability of sports to societal issues and the pervasiveness of sports to reach the lives of students. I believe the examples presented, and the analysis of themes in the next section, suggest that CSP may be an effective tool to educate students on systemic social issues.

Analysis of Themes

As the quote in the title of this study suggests, non-athletes are increasingly invoking sport in realms like politics. If the President is criticizing Black athletes for their activism, it
presents educators opportunities to utilize sport in the classroom to teach issues of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia. However, it is not a matter of utilizing sport in the classroom, but rather how to utilize sport to teach these operations in a critical fashion. By incorporating the voices of participants, the next section explores how educators employ sports in the classroom, but in doing so, I will also discuss the four main themes derived from an analysis of the transcripts: the belief in sport as an important access point for both content and humanizing participants; how the personal and academic identities of each participant shaped their pedagogies; the pedagogical assumptions and beliefs of participants; the strategies utilized by participants to employ sports in teaching the operations of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia; and the responses of students to critical sports pedagogies (CSP), including the participants’ perceptions of student-athlete engagement and students’ critical thinking in general.

“It’s an accessible sign”: Sport as the access point

As a reminder, four participants identified as White (Chipper, Etan, Dragić, Marta), one as Latino (Flores), two as Black (Monica, AI), one as Indian (Caster), and one of mixed Latina and Filipina heritages (Webber). Chipper, Etan, Dragić, Flores, AI, and Caster identified as men, and Marta, Monica, and Webber identified as women. Caster identified as queer. Dragić is an international educator from Europe with a background in sports journalism who currently teaches in a sport management program. Monica has a background in sports broadcasting and is a doctoral candidate in a journalism program. Chipper and Marta teach in history departments, though Chipper’s focus is the “U.S. project” worldwide and Marta’s expertise in Central and Southern American history. Etan and Webber teach in an Ethnic Studies program. Flores teaches interdisciplinary studies. Caster teaches Women’s and Gender Studies. AI teaches Africana
Studies and is a former collegiate and professional athlete. Lastly, I am a biracial, Korean-American, cisgender, heterosexual male with degrees in broadcast news and Comparative Ethnic Studies, currently situated in Cultural Studies. I teach a sport management course, but have experience teaching Ethnic Studies courses. This reminder of participant identities should assist in contextualizing responses.

Aside from Dragić (who teaches in a field where all courses are centered on sport), all participants remarked that sport, more than any other institution, is a more readily accessible area of engagement for students particularly in discussing issues of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia. Marta said that sport is a “popular knowledge that I can tap into.” Caster responded, “I think sport very much helps because it is something that they are invested in.” Similarly, Flores said, “As a student engagement piece, I think that’s kind of how I use sport.” Webber, whose quote is represented in the section header, opined, “Sports, for better or for worse, most people’s initial reaction is that it is outside of politics, outside of ideology, so you can kind of sneak up on them with it.” Corroborating Webber’s comment is Monica, who argued that sport is “kind of a cheat code,” because people, “know sport enough that we can start from that base of, ‘I like this thing.’”

Although all of the participants believed in the power of using sport as a cite to interrogate social inequalities, several mentioned that they used it in a subversive manner. Webber and Marta viewed their use of sport as “sneaky” or “kind of a cheat code.” Outside of sports sociology and fields like American Studies or Cultural Studies, using a critical analysis of sport to demonstrate how inequalities are perpetuated and challenged is seemingly viewed as less rigorous and more entertainment. It seems like the “stick to sports” crowd also applies to those who work in academia.
This is corroborated through statements uttered by Monica and Etan. Monica said her institution is offering more sport-centered courses mainly because sport is “popular” and “entertaining” to students and not necessarily because it can be used in critically interrogating systemic inequalities. More disconcerting, however, is the disconnect she identifies between different departments in teaching sport courses,

The support about making sport an important site of inquiry has been sometimes challenging because the classroom side is easy, they have a minor and they need someone to teach the classes. From a pedagogical standpoint, they say we need these classes, students want these classes, so students don’t have the same stress I’ve heard from other people trying to push the boundaries teaching critical aspects of sport. In terms of research, the thing that is always a little concerning is trying to prove the value of interrogating sport.

Etan attributed these challenges to “institutional devalument.” He said, “Institutional devalument comes from, for example, the belief that departments and the university as a whole has that there are certain topics that are popular, and therefore, we should teach them, yet they don’t require any expertise.” He wondered why educators who have no expertise in sport, “if you look at their resumés, it doesn’t say sport anywhere,” are able to teach sport courses. “The only connection is that they needed someone to teach this class, and I think that’s a disservice to students, but it furthers the devaluing and what it communicates. It limits the power of this work.”

These statements and practices are problematic in various ways. In failing to accept sport and athletics as sites of critical inquiry, the institution “devalues” the work and identities of educators and scholars who study sport and athletics in critical ways. Offering courses on sport because they are popular or fun reinforces notions of sport as merely a place of play and
entertainment separate from systemic social issues. This is exacerbated by hiring educators with little to no expertise to teach these courses. Of course, even those with no expertise can critically analyze sport through issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality, but if the environment in the institution is to approach sport in uncritical ways, then it is highly unlikely these educators would critique systemic issues in sport. Rather, they are more likely to reinforce traditional narratives and tropes associated with sport, particularly racism, sexism, hypermasculinity, misogyny, homo/transphobia, meritocracy, hard work, and the “play through pain” ethic (Messner’s mind/body split). This suggests educators who desire to teach the operations of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia may need to engage in subversive pedagogical strategies.

However, the ability to “kind of sneak up on them” with sport to teach systemic racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia represents the potential of sport as a tool to teach these operations. Sport is accessible, and it does reflect society and culture. As discussed, there are many critical analyses of sport and athletics, whether it is Edwards (1973), Rhoden (2006), Luther (2016), Mohamed (2017), or many others. The denigration of sport as a “legitimate” field of study may be due to the fact that academics really do think sport is entertainment or unworthy of research, or, due to Marta’s comment that many academics dislike sport because of their negative experiences with sport.

Dragić, being unique to the study as only teaching courses on sport, discussed that because students are already there to learn more about sport, “I try to present multiple alternatives. I try to explain what are the likely consequences of each of these alternatives. I try to make them aware of what are the often detrimental consequences of different courses of action.” As students in sport management intend to have careers in sporting leagues and organizations where they may have decision-making authority, an example he provided was if
students want to perpetuate racial bias or the sexualization of female athletes, “They should not be surprised if they face negative consequences of their actions.” If students prioritize the success of the institution’s athletic programs over the success of the student-athletes as students, then they should not be surprised when they have a low retention and graduation rate for student-athletes or if non-students-athletes view the former as privileged, pampered students (Brennan, 1990).

Further, he argued, “I would say that I use examples from the university’s own day-to-day life. I just try to expose students to examples of especially racism and sexism in sport,” and that, “The institution makes it relatively easy to draw critical examples from.” Again, with many sport management students not only working in but consuming their institution’s athletics, this becomes an “access point.” However, this “confuses” their everyday non-critical conspicuous consumption of sports, which channels Etan’s comment that, “Confusion is powerful.” This works as a way for students to interrogate their relationships to the institution’s athletics as a student, a fan, and/or an employee/intern.

Using confusion, or “making the familiar strange” as Monica stated, is effective when fostering the critical consumption of popular culture, including sport. However, it is not the pedagogical pinnacle for my participants, but it is one of many tactics employed to teach the operations of systemic social issues. One example of “making the familiar strange” is the dichotomy between non-student-athletes cheering and/or booing student-athletes during competitions but failing to interact with them as students in the classroom. Unfortunately, the students I teach in sport management generally do not interact with student-athletes, yet many of them work in the athletic department. They may cheer, boo, and lob expletives at student-athletes during a game/match/meet, but many are reticent to talk to these very same student-athletes
sitting next to them in their classrooms. Forcing them to interact with student-athletes, as well as exposing students to the realities and experiences of student-athletes at their institution, should encourage an interrogation of each student’s relationship to athletics. Not only does this confuse their relationship with their university’s athletics and their current/future careers, it also employs the day-to-day activities of the university as a tactic for critical consumption of the familiar. This should also humanize student-athletes to non-student-athletes, much the same way my participants used sport to make themselves more relatable to students.

“*It’s so visual*: Using sport to access other institutions

In further discussing their use of sport as an access point, several participants maintained that they utilized sport to access analysis of other institutions, particularly the military. Monica and AI had interesting responses as they discussed how they intertwine sport and military in their discussions. Regarding the military, Monica replied, “It’s so tangible, it’s so visual, you can show a flyover, you can show the anthem being played,” as a way to “make the familiar strange.” In comparing the problematic phenomena of Black athletes being cheered on the world stage (Olympics) yet facing White supremacy in the US, AI said, “Should the military go out to represent America in war and then, when [Black veterans] are coming home, being subject to racism?” Other responses included Etan, who said the relationship and familiarity that most students have with sport “might be something that religion isn’t, or the military isn’t.” Webber, in line with her previous comment, argued, “You can’t talk about religion without people already coming to it with a certain level of being on alert, same with the military.” These responses show just how much of an access point sport represents: it becomes the access point to other institutions.
Not only do the discourses of war and combat permeate football (“going to war,” “in the trenches,” “be a soldier”), but as Monica noted, there is a continued visible relationship through the presence of color guards, flag ceremonies, flyovers, and yes, national anthem ceremonies prior to and during NFL games (Madani, 2017; Schmitz, 2017). It was revealed the military actually paid the NFL for these events with taxpayer money between 2011-2014, dispensing 5.4 million dollars to teams, with another 10.4 million of the military’s budget spent on “’marketing and advertising contracts with professional sports teams’” between 2012-2015 (Schmitz, 2017). This has led some to argue (like Schmitz) that the military and the NFL engaged in the practice of “paid patriotism.” Historians and other scholars can tie together links between capitalism, militarism, sport, race, gender, femininity, and patriotism. This represents one example of utilizing sport to critique systemic social issues within other institutions.

“I think it gives me a little more legitimacy:” Relatability through sport

In varied ways, the participants discussed the process of demystifying the role of the educator and how sport plays a role in the process. While Marta admits sport “doesn’t appeal to every single student,” she believes that her interest in sport becomes a way of building rapport with students, particularly for those who are sport-inclined. Sport becomes the “access point” in making participants/educators more relatable to students. For Dragić, sport is a way of “getting students to relate better to you or me.” Etan discussed how his interest in sport leads students to seek him out before and after classes “as a pathway, the connections you can make with students through your own shared love of sports.” He mentioned a specific student who would seek him before and after class because “he’s a [Portland Trail] Blazers fan, we’d talk Blazers, [Los Angeles] Lakers, basketball, the NBA.” A last example from Etan was,
Just today, a student in another class was like, “Oh, I was going to wear my Lakers shirt today.” She noted that her dad is a Lakers fan and her mom was a [Boston] Celtics fan, and then we had a discussion about, “Huh?” Interestingly, this “shared love of sports” seems to humanize the participants to a greater degree in one specific student population: student-athletes.

Before proceeding, there is some caution to discuss from the previous paragraph on students who are sport-inclined. While people across identities have interests in sports, arguably no other group reifies dominant narratives in sport as much as cisgender, heterosexual males of ability. These tropes include the use of physicality and violence as appropriate masculine responses and viewing women as objects of conquest. As such, there can be a recentering of patriarchy, masculinity, misogyny, and homo/transphobia when viewing sports. This may be due to educators incorrectly assuming certain students will or will not have an interest in sport. In sport-centered courses, educators should be hyperconscious of these issues to be more inclusive rather than risk the alienation of women and non-hetero students. In non-sports-centered courses, educators should be conscious of which examples they utilize from sport; rather than discuss LeBron James frequently, educators could instead discuss the discourse surrounding athletes such as Serena Williams, Caster Semenya, or Megan Rapinoe. Ultimately, the utilization of a hypermasculine arena like sport necessitates educators to be critically conscious of the examples they employ to account for issues of patriarchy, masculinity, misogyny, and homo/transphobia. Interestingly, sport (and popular culture, generally) seemingly must meet higher standards of academic rigor than other areas of scholarship, similar to the standards set for qualitative inquiry. This added layer of critique seems to manifest in participants who constantly negotiate their relationship to sport as critical pedagogy.
It is important to note another assumption of participants in this study: they believe that they care more about the well-being of student-athletes than the average educator. Marta responded, “I think we’re some of the best teachers of student-athletes. We care very deeply about what happens to them.” Maybe this deep care, along with utilizing sport, humanizes these participants even more to student-athletes than non-student-athletes. For example, student-athletes take multiple courses with Flores, but as he stated, “How can my class be an outlet for them, but also a space where they can then get the theoretical tools to understand the pipelines to the pro level, the color lines across sports, the gendered lines?” While Etan did not respond with a necessarily positive comment regarding the relationship between student-athlete and educator, he did say, “While student-athletes might be struggling with the contradictions of being part of an institution and critiquing it, isn’t that the struggle we all have?” By acknowledging the contradictions and the individual struggle to grapple with those contradictions, these participants add one more layer of rapport that makes them more relatable to student-athletes.

Discussed in the previous section, not only can sport act as an access point to humanize student-athletes to non-student-athletes, it can make student-athletes more relatable as students to their peers. For example, many students seem to believe that student-athletes major in sport-related programs (sport management, kinesiology) because as athletes, sport must be the only arena in which student-athletes have an interest. However, as I discussed with students in a sport management course, student-athletes are tracked and clustered (Coakley, 2017; Infante, 2014) into areas that are close to and will not interfere with their athletics obligations. A student-athlete said she wanted to be a K-12 teacher, but was told in her first meeting with an advisor that the teaching program is a five-year program, exceeding her eligibility. As she decided to take an introductory sport management course, her advisor switched her major to sport management.
Another student-athlete wanted to major in biochemistry, but due to the number of labs, he was also forced to switch to sport management. Student-athletes have academic and personal aspirations just like their counterparts. Just because some aspire to play professionally does not mean that all student-athletes have the same desire. Helping student-athletes and non-student-athletes grapple with these issues seems to assist in making student-athletes relatable to both their peers and educators, at least those committed to the recognizing the humanity of student-athletes.

“**Young Latino cultural historian**: How identity shapes pedagogy

“Identity” is multidimensional in this discussion. Not only does it participants’ personal identities (Table 4.1), but also their academic identities. The academic identities of participants shapes their pedagogies as much as their personal identities, and sometimes these identities intertwine. All participants, to varying degrees, use their pedagogies to critique systemic social issues, particularly racism and sexism, but individual participants’ personal and professional identities made a difference in what and how they did this.

As Dragić noted, even though he is “as privileged as we come,” he also believes it is his privilege that drives him to raise these issues. “I take it as my responsibility to raise issues, to speak up for those who cannot, to bring attention to those issues that impact those who are not White, heterosexual, male, and so on.” Flores, who traveled to Arizona as an undergraduate to protest the state’s banning of ethnic studies, discussed how his identifying as a “young Latino cultural historian” helps at an institution with a high percentage of Latinx students. After showing the film *Gringos at the Gate* (Donati, Miralles, & Whalen, 2012), Flores said, “Some students really, really appreciated that because they themselves are going through this whole,
‘Am I Hispanic, am I Chicano, am I Mexican-American?’ It appeared that his identity, along with the student population he serves, shaped his pedagogy.

This is a critical point of discussion. If students of any minority population have an educator who is of their own racial/ethnic identity, students may be more likely to engage in class. Further, if educators foster this relationship by incorporating examples pertinent to the student populations they serve, they should garner further engagement. However, incorporating these sorts of examples is assisted if working at an institution with a higher population of students of color, particularly those students with similar identities as an educator. When Flores and I taught in the same department as graduate students (sharing an office one semester), we served a predominately White student population in an area with a small population of people with Central and Southern American identities. While we did have Latinx (and Asian-American) students in courses we taught, Flores was not able to tailor his pedagogy to discuss many issues specific to Latinx experiences. However, now that he works at an institution with a majority Latinx population and in an area with a higher population of Central and Southern American-identifying students, coupled with his identity as a “young Latino,” he attempts to connect with and highlight the realities and issues of his Latinx-identifying students.

As a “heterosexual White dude from L.A.” with degrees in Black and Ethnic Studies, Etan argued, “I think there is a way that inherent in the work in my position as a White male scholar mandates self-critique in ways to disrupt a history of Whiteness in relationship to communities of color.” This self-critique includes his utilization of sport as he worries “about that being a recentering of me.” Further, he argued, “Whether it’s true or not, I think it lends itself to privileging male voices because the assumptions of this is a male space, sport, so if you’re gonna do it, you have to be really cognizant no matter what.” Etan’s pedagogy is
reflective of Critical Race Theory’s argument that White CRT scholars are generally committed to the overthrow of their own privilege (Bell, 2009). This was also reflected in comments made by my other White participants, Chipper, Marta, and Dragić.

This critical self-reflection for Etan applies to his role as an educator and his multiple roles outside of the classroom, including his previous experiences. While enrolled in community college, Etan stated,

I had this dream, goal, plan of being a social worker. There was all this writing at the time and media commentary and film about gangs in Los Angeles, and so I had a level of consciousness about inequality and injustice, but it was outside of my own body. My Whiteness was irrelevant to the conversation. There wasn’t reflection about White saviorism or my own privileges or arrogance.

Etan also has experience coaching youth sports, including high school basketball and middle-school flag football. He discussed how his coaching and teaching philosophies influence each other through the reflective process, “When you’re coaching and you have 12 different people who each have different strengths and needs, when designing assignments, that allows that creativity and flexibility that will hopefully tap into each individual’s strengths.” Etan, in working to decenter Whiteness, works to first decenter his Whiteness. His admission that his Whiteness was “irrelevant” in his previous ambitions allows him to focus on critiquing Whiteness in his courses to his students (he also teaches a course called “White Power Movements and Ideologies”). This self-critique assists Etan in continually reworking his pedagogy to be more critical of Whiteness, including his own. Further, his ability to reflect on his pedagogy both as a teacher and a coach, and how each influences the other, shapes his abilities to more effectively engage in both roles.
He also discussed how Black Studies and Ethnic Studies, “literally and metaphorically in the history of the academy is one of critique, critique of power, of White supremacy, of patriarchy,” and where he embraces the critique is when it is self-critical.

Being an educator is about critique and the questions and the critical thinking that is generative in other work, but it’s also about turning that interrogation light the other direction, and I think that’s where truly critical work is done. How am I positioned in this structure that we’re all part of? To be critical is to be perpetually uncomfortable. Though he is perpetually uncomfortable, this is the state Etan and others must be in to wrestle with their own White privilege. Critiquing the systems without critiquing the self is a hypocritical endeavor that, in Etan’s opinion, would not be “truly critical work.” Not only does his identity shape his pedagogy, it shapes his critique of self in relation to systems of power, his role in perpetuating or challenging these systems, and his relationship to students.

With her experiences in sports broadcasting, Monica described herself as “heavily media driven.” She said, “My goal as an educator is my students leave with a critical lens towards the things they love,” including sport, and she tries to connect theory to practice by teaching a “critical cultural toolbox.” As a Black woman educator who is heavily media driven, she utilized segments like skits from Saturday Night Live to discuss how “all these racist stereotypes” are being utilized and critiqued “in real-time by popular culture.” Though this example occurred when she was employed in sports broadcasting, she discussed how she brought an issue of on-air blackface to her older White male supervisor. After explaining the situation to him, he responded that he believed her, but, “First you need to tell me what blackface is.” This interaction she had before she pursued her doctoral degree may be one reason why she teaches students a “critical cultural toolbox.”
This “critical cultural toolbox” develops students into more critical consumers of popular media, particularly sport. This “toolbox” is skill-based, focused on language,

I’m giving you this language, I’m giving you this history, I’m trying to connect history to contemporary moments. My hope is that I’m giving [students] that toolkit so they can be more critical the next time they’re watching an NFL game at a bar, or the next time that they’re competing, or the next time they’re watching a press conference. Think about it critically and think about not only how the sausage is made, but what are the dominant narratives about how women are portrayed in sport?

While she raised the portrayal of women in sport as an example, this pedagogical approach applies to discussions of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia across institutions. Her supervisor in sports broadcasting may have benefited from this critical cultural toolbox, yet his lack of knowledge on issues such as blackface indicates how much identity shapes pedagogy and the “need to know” (about blackface, for instance).

Other examples of how the racial/ethnic and gender identities of teachers shaped their pedagogy include Webber, whose biracial and gender identity influences the voices she highlights in her courses. As a literature expert, she assigns readings by women, including women of color and queer scholars as traditional literature courses skew towards White male authors. Her degree in literature also impacts how she educates students on systemic social issues as she uses the concept of “signs,” and how she finds signs that are accessible to most, such as sports. She utilizes signs as reflective of ideologies. “I typically come at sport as a sign. I don’t really discuss the narratives around sport, more so of the ideologies around sport.” For example, she discussed the Nike 30th anniversary campaign centered on Kaepernick to “talk about the sort of intimate relationships between social movements and capitalism. As great as I think that
commercial is, as great as I think so many commercials with sports figures are oftentimes, they’re still selling something.” While the activism of Kaepernick and other athletes is highlighted through the campaign, the purpose of the campaign is to have people consume Nike products, not necessarily to fight against police brutality and systemic racism. The ideology peddled by Nike is that somehow, buying Nike products in support of Kaepernick’s activism will solve these issues.

Caster, who identifies as queer, not only finds the impact of his identity in his utilization of Queer Theory, but also in his critique of binary thinking and systems. Caster, struggled as a youth where he internalized a negative “sense of shame” because he was uninterested in what was conceived as “natural proclivities” for young men (like sports), and uninterested in what was deemed “masculine.” In his pedagogy, he attempts to “deconstruct these binaries” and show how, “The dominant category in the binary almost always depends on the marginalized category for its existence.” The construction of Whiteness, an historically recent phenomenon in response to the Atlantic slave trade (Painter, 2011), arguably only exists due to how some people fervently hold onto and embody non-White identities, such as being Black or Asian. While gender, sex, and sexuality are more complicated than a binary and includes a broad spectrum of identities (Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Halberstam, 2012; Sedgwick, 1990; Spade, 2011), dominant US society relies on the belief in two genders and sexes, and the reification of heterosexuality as normal. The growing recognition of different gender and sex identities may help in deconstructing these barriers. However, it is arguable that these binaries would not be so stark if females, women, non-heterosexuals, and non-gender and sex binary individuals did not also believe in heteronormativity ideals.
More salient, however, is how certain educators of color understand how their racial and ethnic identities shape their pedagogy in terms of mentoring students, specifically Black student-athletes. As Monica stated, for many Black students and Black student-athletes at her institution, “[Monica] may be the only Black professor or Black TA that I have in my major, depending on what the major is.” Further, with Monica’s background in sports broadcasting, she feels there is another layer added “because the language I use, they feel like, ‘Oh, she knows what she’s talking about.’” This added layer of legitimacy may be due to an internalized sense that because she is a woman, student-athletes (and students in general) may not think she knows “what she’s talking about.” As a “Black American woman” who worked in sports broadcasting and is pursuing her Ph.D., Monica is an example of a person with powerful experiences and credentials, particularly as they relate to sporting identities. These experiences, along with her identity, seem to create a certain affinity with student-athletes which she takes as an important responsibility considering the lack of educators of color at her institution.

AI represents an even smaller subset of identity credentials. Having played professional football in the Canadian Football League (CFL) and earned his Ph.D. in Africana Studies, he said, “There’s a small percentage who play professional football, it’s a very small percentage…There is a small percentage of Black men who have Ph.D.’s, and it’s roughly about 1.5 percent of Ph.D. holders are Black men.” While he does have “some Black women that I mentor that are athletes,” AI believes, “I think my experiences in sport allow me to mentor specifically Black men…There’s not that many Black successful male athletes that are in positions to mentor other Black male athletes.” He added, “I think that my responsibility is to give people what I got, people mentored me, people invested in me, and so my responsibility is to mentor and invest in other people.”
While it is laudable that AI feels such a strong sense of mentorship for young Black male athletes, I wonder if he is hindering his mentorship potential through his lack of mentoring young Black female athletes, and Black female non-athletes as well. As mentorship and learning should be a reciprocal relationship, AI may learn as much about the daily issues facing Black women on his campus as these Black women would learn from him regarding Africana Studies, professional sports, or an area of his expertise. Further, by narrowing his scope of his pedagogical mentorship to Black men, I believe this may truncate the ability for AI to shift and grow his pedagogy as it relates to other groups of students. Lastly, I believe *everyone* has much to learn from a Black male former professional athlete with a Ph.D., and not just Black male student-athletes.

Possibly due to their racial and ethnic identities, both Monica and AI see mentoring as integral to their pedagogy. They seem to direct this mentoring role towards Black students, particularly Black male student-athletes for AI, partly due to their experiences as Black people in academia. However, this mentoring role seems driven by the belief by both participants that imparting their knowledges and experiences onto successive waves of Black students/student-athletes is as important a responsibility as their everyday teaching-related duties.

“It’s still in the oxygen that you breathe”: What is missing?

In this section I discuss how the multifaceted identities of my participants also skews their analyses of systemic social inequalities, leaving untapped areas in this study for CSP. I also discuss how I failed in addressing these issues more explicitly during interviews. Every participant discussed issues of racism and sexism, however, this is due to every participant having been trained in either Black/Ethnic/Cultural Studies or Feminist theory. Unfortunately, as discussed in the next chapter, discussions of sexuality were virtually absent, and there was never
a conscious discussion of mental and physical dis/ability. Part of this is my failure as an interviewer, but it also shows how much influence each participants’ identities, both personal and academic, shape their selection of inequalities they critique in their pedagogies.

“Queer Theory is invested in a deconstruction of binary thinking”: Discussions of sexuality

As the only participant who identified as either LGBTIQ or a queer theorist, Caster was the only participant to actively discuss Queer Theory and sexuality. In discussing how hegemonic masculinity precludes LGBTIQ male athletes from participating in tennis, Caster argued,

There’s just a certain kind of visibility; why have we had Martina Navratilovas, Amelie Mauresmos, Billie Jean Kings? Where are the out men in tennis? Having some of those conversations about the epistemologies of the closet, about discourses of gendered diligence, of the place of someone who is on hormone replacement therapy, how does that brush up against certain laws? What happens when those various vectors of experience brush up against others? I think those are very fruitful conversations.

Caster, though “it’s not an area of my research,” laid out tangible and effective ways to discuss issues of sexuality through CSP. In discussing the operations of hegemonic masculinity, educators could discuss how the policing and disciplining of male bodies is reinforced in part through homo/transphobic rhetoric and actions (such as the game “smear the queer”). Even though tennis is generally considered a less masculine sport than football or mixed martial arts (MMA), another discussion could focus on the presence and/or absence of LGBTIQ players (though not necessarily top-tier players) in the NFL and various MMA organizations, yet lacking in an arena such as tennis. This could include discussions of class and race to both channel CRT’s tenet of intersectionality and a Queer Theory’s goal of deconstructing binary thinking.
Caster further discussed how Queer Theory is not just about deconstructing the sexual binary, “I’m also talking about binary as a nature and nurture, essentialism versus constructivism, public and private.” Caster believed sport is a tangible arena of Queer Theory critique because,

In terms of sports, I would think that this arena where sort of the male/female separation has been naturalized that Queer Theory has a lot to intervene, and not just with the traditional understanding of someone who’s trans, but sort of the idea that people who are gender-neutral, what are the ways in which they would brush up against various sporting institutions that are so predicated on certain gendered divisions?

This “male/female separation” includes the binary of masculinity and femininity; physical ability and lack of physical ability; and ability to lead and inability to lead. However, Caster was the only participant to focus his responses about CSP on sexuality.

Though it is understandable that other participants would focus on race and gender issues based on their personal and academic identities, the absence of issues on sexuality and general applications of Queer Theory are problematic. Reflexively, though the interview protocol included homo/transphobia, maybe the placement of homo/transphobia at the end of a list of systemic inequalities made it seem less viable of a discussion point. Further, knowing that I was receiving many responses and examples of using CSP to teach issues of racism and sexism, I should have been more conscious of following-up and pressing participants to discuss how they utilized CSP to teach homo/transphobia. If participants would not have been able to provide examples, this represents an area of future pedagogical opportunities based on the absence from participants in discussing homo/transphobia.

*The invisibility of disability*
The other glaring omission in the data was dis/ability. While Caster discussed ability in relation to perceptions of physical ability and women of color, no participant discussed ableism. Ableism, as Coakley (2017) argued, is a default belief that everyone has all physical capabilities, resulting in society being constructed and operated for able-bodied individuals. This also leads to a paternalistic and deficit view of those with mental and physical disabilities, believing disabled individuals to be lacking the capacity to live a fulfilled life. However, what many people fail to understand (or actively choose to ignore) is that being able-bodied is perpetually a temporary state; any individual can become disabled at any moment. Further, in the Queer Theory tradition of deconstructing binary thinking, there are varying degrees of ability and disability that complicates these issues. For example, a former football player who walks with a limp may appear to be able-bodied, but the lasting effects from injuries suffered playing football left a limp, a degree of disability, that does not fit the traditional definition of able-bodied. An individual in an accident who suffers a brain injury may be physically able-bodied, but not necessarily able-minded.

In Chapter 2, I highlighted some scholarly literature on disability and physical education, noting the connection between academia, sport, and disability. Yet, the lack of attention paid to disability by participants (and me) is disconcerting. In the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), what is not said is as important as what is said (Fairclough, 2003). This does not mean participants do not discuss issues of dis/ability, but at least regarding CSP, disability seemed absent in my participants’ responses.

This also applies to the constructing and conducting of the interview protocol. I omitted questions on disability and failed to ask any follow-up questions on these issues. Participants may have been more inclined to think and respond about issues related to disability had I
included these questions. I need to better educate myself on disability issues and the scholarly literature in Disability Studies so I am more conscious of being inclusive of these issues in my personal growth, my pedagogy, and future research and scholarship.

Sexuality and disability were the main absences in responses from participants. However, these absences also show one way how identity shapes pedagogy. One participant identified as LGBTIQ and having a Queer Theorist academic identity, he focused some of his responses on sexuality and Queer Theory. However, no other participant (including myself) has an LGBTIQ or Queer Theory identity, possibly accounting for our lack of focus on issues of sexuality during our interviews. All participants identified as able-bodied, and none have degrees or specializations in Disability Studies. Further, no participant indicated any connection or relationship to anyone with a disability, but again, this may have been due to my lack of asking any questions on this issue. As sport is one of many occupations where there is a high probability of suffering a debilitating injury, this is an area of overlap for discussion. If we are to be truly intersectional in our work, particularly those who are Critical Race Theorists and Critical Masculinity scholars, then we must account for and be inclusive of all marginalized identities.

While these are the omissions from the interview data, the implications of these absences are discussed in Chapter 6. With the growing presence and visibility of LGBTIQ athletes (Zeigler, 2016), educators have more examples to discuss issues affecting LGBTIQ people. These are the discussions that sport-centered departments and courses should have, particularly if students in these programs intend to work in sport. The next section examines the pedagogical strategies of participants, particularly their use and reasoning for using media when utilizing a CSP. Media was not the only strategy, as others included small and large group discussions and allowing for student choice in topic when completing assignments and projects.
“I frame it as a production of African aesthetics”: Pedagogical strategies of educators

This section explores the strategies of educators in their implementations of sport to teach the operations of racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia. Every educator utilized multimedia (particularly films/documentaries) when discussing sport in the classroom. Multimedia includes films/videos, but also music, comics/cartoons, or printed materials. Study participants (excluding Dragić) discussed how many students turned to sport in their assignments/projects rather than other institutions or examples, particularly student-athletes, since these educators allowed for student topic choices in assignments/projects. Every participant utilized small and large group discussions, acting mostly as a mediator, but also an arbiter of knowledge when necessary. A few participants utilized group facilitations/projects specifically when utilizing sport. It is important to note that all strategies of pedagogy are driven by the participants’ academic training and personal identities, as previously discussed. For example, Webber’s literature background and mixed-race identities shape her strategies differently than that of Etan’s.

“Watch all the media coverage around the Super Bowl”: Media in the classroom

One athlete invoked by every participant was Serena Williams and the recent media discourse that focused on her. Caster said he “had an entire week around” the 2018 U.S. Open tennis championship final, including a cartoon channeling minstrel images of Williams while whitewashing her opponent Naomi Osaka, who is of Haitian and Japanese descent (Suk, 2018) as discussed in Chapter 3. Flores framed the discussion as one of, “Whose anger matters, whose bodies are sort of allowed to speak truth to power?”

Another media-driven strategy is the showing of clips or films/documentaries that illuminate the dynamic relationship between sport and society. Noted earlier, Flores showed the documentary *Gringos at the Gate* to not only provide a better understanding of identity for his
mostly Latinx student population, but also to discuss the economics and politics involved in the U.S.-Mexico soccer rivalry. He also utilized the film *Fernando Nation*, an ESPN 30 for 30 documentary series film, to discuss the history of the Los Angeles Dodgers, Mexicans, and Chavez Ravine, including how Mexican laborers built the stadium only to be displaced by its construction. Marta utilized the famed “Rumble in the Jungle” heavyweight boxing match between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman and the discourse surrounding it to discuss why the people of Zaire were drawn to Ali rather than Foreman. She argued this was due to Ali speaking against the Vietnam War, along with Zairians and other African people seeing countless conflicts at the hands of White powers.

Webber showed the film series *The Hunger Games*, and her students turned that into a discussion about street fighting and eventually, boxing. Webber responded by saying,

There’s all sorts of shows on TV where people are compelled to sort of commit violences against each other, and I don’t necessarily mean beating the crap out of each one another,

but be in competition with one another that really does dehumanize.

In this example, though unintended, the students made connections to sport through the dystopian competition of life and death in *The Hunger Games*. Not only does this provide another instance of sport acting as an access point, but it also shows how deftly conversations about sport can be applied to other examples and institutions.

As the conversation shifted to boxing and combat sports, Webber discussed how a Latina student approached her after class. The student said she was going to call her mom and instruct her not to watch boxing anymore. Webber responded that watching boxing is fine,

But the question becomes what other ways could they have become successful other than having to put their bodies on the line in these really dehumanizing ways? I said it’s the
same with the military. Poor folk, people of color, they’re always the ones on the
t frontline cuz it’s one of the few options they have

As a mixed Filipina-Mexicana herself, Webber said she understands the fandom associated with boxing for people of color, particularly Filipinos and Latinos. “In Filipino households, you can’t talk a particular way about [Manny] Pacquiao. He’s a raging homophobe, but you don’t say that to Filipino families.” Even though the film series is based on class differences, Webber was able to adjust to her students’ invoking of sport in the discussion by shifting the topic to race and the bodies on display in these “dehumanizing ways” where “violences” are committed against others.

A unique strategy employed by Dragić is to use examples from university athletics. Dragić showed his students the university football team’s Christmas card that pictured the coach and the quarterbacks, all of whom are White, to discuss stereotypes of position and race. The quarterback is deemed the “smart person’s positions” and out of eight shown, he remarked, “They just could not find one good Black quarterback.” He also highlighted how the athletic department seemed to market female athletes by using pictures of “female soccer players’ backsides,” or how “female basketball players are presented as feminine first and athletes second.” He asked his students why this was the case, and what might be possible alternatives?

However, as Dragić teaches in sport management, students may be less inclined to interrogate these issues. Many students view sport management as a training ground for their future careers, usually focused on aspects of capitalism in sport such as profit, responding to negative publicity, and mitigating market and public relations disasters. As Dragić remarked, While sport management students are given many opportunities to earn practical experience in the field of intercollegiate athletics, in campus recreation, this is all
wonderful, but I feel that some, perhaps many departments, do not seem to enforce a
culture of accountability, which to me is connected to responsibility…Probably most of
the situations that are offered to our students are more situations where students complete
a task. They may grow professionally, but I don’t think intellectually.

While comments from Monica and Etan maintained that sport in academia was deemed
unworthy of critical scholarly work, Dragić’s department and students represent the other side:
the practical application of sport as career. Beyond that, there is not as much intellectual growth
in students’ thinking about how their actions further perpetuate systemic inequities.

I also am media-driven. Like Monica, I have (brief) experiences working in sports
broadcasting, and like Webber, I am drawn to the narratives and signs in sport. I show between
10-16 videos/films a semester, depending on the class. I utilize *Last Week Tonight with John
Oliver, South Park*, and *VICE* in every course I teach. In my sport courses, I also include *VICE
World of Sport, 30 for 30’s* (*The Fab Five* is a favorite), ESPN’s *Nine for IX* series, *Shut Up and
Dribble* (this semester), and *Tough Guise 2*, among various podcasts I may assign. I have also
utilized *The Boondocks, Fresh off the Boat*, and a host of documentaries on hip hop and tourism
in other courses, as well as *Training Rules, The Journey of the Gay Athlete, and The Other Side
of the World Cup* in my previous sport course. I use these to contextualize readings and
hopefully spur students to think about the larger implications of systemic oppression. I also play
songs in the minutes leading to the start of class (mostly rap) and usually connect it to course
materials. In my sport-centered courses, I use songs that have lyrics specifically about sport,
athletes, themes for events like the NBA Finals or Paralympic Games, and on sport video game
soundtracks. I think the latter may be most salient as many students (particularly males) in sport-
centered courses play sport video games. Showing these subtle connections helps students understand that sport is not separate, but intertwined with society.

“Open up a communication channel”: Different pedagogical strategies

Some participants utilized structured but open-ended projects and some students turned to sport. Monica discussed her public speaking class, where she made one of the required speeches an awards ceremony/acceptance speech. Many student-athletes gave “a Hall of Fame” speech, envisioning a potential future for themselves. She also said, in general, “Students were giving speeches about important moments in their life that were sports related.” This does not necessarily mean each student critically reflected on their experiences in sport and/or critiqued issues of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia. These students may have reinforced oppressive narratives and ideals such as meritocracy and masculinity. While Monica’s students in this course may not have critically interrogated their relationships to sport, by making critical interrogation a component of the speech, this assignment has the potential to force students to reflect on issues or racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia.

Flores remarked how his first assignment in many classes is to have students think through the “role of education as an institution in their own intellectual upcomings,” with some students discussing the role of school sports as part of that journey. He also creates a word bubble with students on the first day of a class centering sport to gauge what they think and learn from sports. He remarked that generally, the word bubble consists mostly of meritocratic and capitalist discourse, indicating students may enter courses with an uncritical lens towards sport.

All participants utilized class discussions to teach the operations of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia through sport. Marta admitted she tells her students “this isn’t my intellectual specialism” if they discuss US sport, and she acts more as a moderator. However, as
Dragić stated, “I like class discussions when they’re meaningful,” otherwise, “We just keep regurgitating or reheating the same discussions about one of the about five or so great challenges or great topics and issues that American sports face nowadays.”

One of these “five or so great challenges” could be the discourse on successful female athletes, like Williams. Caster asked his students, “What are the reasons why excellence of women in sports needs to be explained in some ways?” He argued that narratives of women in sports are usually seen through a narrative of deceit. For example, Caster raised the discourse on Caster Semenya (accounting for his “Caster” pseudonym), a world champion runner from South Africa who has faced accusations for nearly a decade that she is either a male or has unfair advantages in her natural levels of elevated testosterone; this is further complicated as she is a Black woman. Caster began with a common argument against Semenya before proceeding,

Why is she so good? Because she secretly has this excessive testosterone. Now, Michael Phelps has, it’s been pointed out, are really almost like flippers [his feet]. Nobody talks about that as Michael Phelps has an unnatural advantage. Excellence in physical activities in sports and women has always been seen through this narrative of deceit, this narrative of suspicion. How is that both gendered and raced are the questions that I discuss in my class.

Even if Semenya has excessive testosterone, it is as “natural” as Phelps having webbed feet that assisted him in becoming the most medal-winning Olympian ever. Further, in discussing Williams, Caster responded,

Why is it that a Black woman being told that she is cheating, why did that trigger her? There is a long history that informs that, especially around Williams, who has been accused of secretly being a man and using performance-enhancing drugs.
The operations of racism, patriarchy, and transphobia are all present in these examples. This “narrative of deceit” seeks to explain women’s athletic success through nefarious means to discredit the accomplishments. As Black women, both Semenya and Williams face further scrutiny due to the stereotypes associated with Black women in that both are expected to achieve athletic excellence, yet this stereotype also reinforces that Black people have preternatural or unfair abilities. Both athletes faced accusations of being men (and Semenya undergoing Olympic sex testing), which highlights how this phobia applies to trans women due to biological stereotypes of the physical dominance of males over females. This is seen as an “unfair” advantage because of arguments surrounding denser bone structure, elevated testosterone, and increased muscle mass. These arguments fail to acknowledge, as discussed in Chapter 3, the variance in physical characteristics within and between sexes. Caster utilizes examples like this in his class discussions to “deconstruct” binary knowledges and dominant thinking, a great showcase of having “meaningful discussions.”

AI said he poses provocative questions to invoke discussions among students, “Then as a class we reflect on the things that have been said, and then I challenge them with a problem pose.” An example he gave is when students argue that integration was great for Black people, “I problem pose and I ask them, ‘Well, what about Black teachers who were out of jobs because Black kids went to White schools and White kids didn’t come to Black schools?’” He can then connect the integration of public education and greater society to the integration of baseball shortly before Brown v. Board.

Etan used discussions to connect sport to student experiences, “Then we can have a discussion that doesn’t flatten and ignore differences between being or going to a low-resourced, predominantly White rural school versus a predominately Black and Latino urban city central
school.” He highlighted the relationship between segregation and lack of access to swimming pools for Black people. During Jim Crow segregation, while many White people learned to swim at community pools, pools in Black communities were underfunded, unclean, and even had bleach poured into the water by White people seeking to prevent Black people from swimming (Wiltse, 2007; Zirin, 2008). These circumstances historically led to higher rates of drowning for Black people and the stereotype that Black people cannot swim. As Etan stated, “We’re having this discussion where you can’t have a discussion about swimming without talking about housing, and you can’t have a discussion about housing without talking about sport.” His discussions become a space to connect to student experiences and the intricate relationships between seemingly unrelated topics such as swimming, segregation, and sport.

Monica, Chipper, and Flores each discussed different group projects they assign in class. Monica includes a “group project component, and some of that allows for interaction.” These final projects may include multimedia projects. In his sport-centered course, Chipper has students work on semester-long group research projects, “Then I really impress upon them the necessity of going through the [research] process…and have the confidence that they can go to a database or search engine and come up with something relevant.” These projects generally revolve around the intersection of history, sport, and systemic social issues. Flores seeks to create student groups with “five people per group,” where throughout the semester these groups facilitate a class “constantly trying to have a back-and-forth dialogue with them.” As he is concerned with his students’ educational journeys, facilitations function to provide his students a sense of agency in their own educational development.

These strategies are driven by each participant’s academic training. While all utilize multimedia, the experience Monica and I have in sports broadcasting may provide us with more
comfortability in using popular media, which could be detrimental at times as we may revert to media rather than seek other avenues, such as different texts or guest speakers. Chipper and Marta’s training in history (and their respective specialties) influence the scope of Chipper’s group projects and Marta’s discussions. For example, the group projects in Chipper’s courses had a historical component, such as the role of sports gambling during the 1920s or the experiences of being the first Black cheerleader at a university. Caster, with his Queer Theory training, engaged students to “deconstruct binary thinking.” The Comparative Ethnic and Black Studies degrees that drive Etan seemingly accounts for his ability to connect issues of systemic racism to something like segregation and swimming. My background in Comparative Ethnic Studies (along with broadcasting) and Cultural Studies (where I was assigned several artistic projects) accounts for the assignments I construct, which are mostly creative and arts-based (poems/raps, art murals, short stories, podcasts, etc.). Further, my Cultural Studies training morphed me into a scholar who looks at issues beyond just race, particularly through gender and sex. However, I believe a salient example is how AI’s Africana Studies training influences the examples he utilizes as teaching tools.

AI describes Africana Studies as something that you “do” rather than something that you learn, that it is transdisciplinary, and it drives his goal of challenging ways of thinking to help develop critical thinkers. One way he challenges thinking in his discussions is, “I look at sports as a form of Black aesthetics…I look at rhythm, I look at style, I look at expression, I look at all these things and that’s how I teach it,” including the commodification of Blackness and the structure of American capitalism. He used Allen Iverson (accounting for his “AI” pseudonym) as an example of how he teaches the production of Black aesthetics. “When he dribbles, he uses call-and-response where he dribbles to the left, and the defender goes to his left, he dribbles to
his right, and the defender goes to his right.” This movement creates a bodily rhythm that Iverson can time, but also a repetition through his dribbling. Once he “rocks them to sleep,” he changes the rhythm on a count to create the “blue note;” a rhythmic move from jazz to “switch it up.” This means Iverson will hit the blue note when his defender “rocks” one way in rhythm without realizing Iverson has changed the beat. Other examples he used included Ali’s boxing style, Barry Sanders’ footwork as a running back, and “Dr. J.” Julius Erving as the embodiment of the music of the ‘70s, funk, particularly through his large afro.

The pedagogical strategies of these educators are similar yet varied in their implementations. Multimedia, particularly popular media, is seemingly an effective tool as all participants utilized media, including sport, in teaching the operations of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia. Media included video clips, television shows, film/documentaries, and music. Open-ended assignments included research projects and awards ceremony speeches, with some students turning to sport for their inspiration. Group projects and facilitations are effective strategies for a few participants. However, meaningful discussions that challenge ways of thinking are arguably the most utilized and most powerful strategy for all participants. Their academic training, such as Africana Studies for AI, is particularly influential in how they implement their strategies and what they teach. The next section discusses participants’ perceptions of student reception to a critical sports pedagogy, particularly student-athletes.

“I think they respond pretty well”: The reception of students to critical sport pedagogies

An interesting finding is that all participants, even the few who have had negative experiences, argued that students respond well to critical sports pedagogies (CSP), particularly student-athletes. This section will examine two important aspects of this finding, one being
examples of student responses to critical sport pedagogies in assignments/projects and discussions. The other will be an examination of how educators perceive the student responses to their utilizations of sport to teach systemic social issues. Perception is not always reality, so this latter discussion can help to mitigate a recentering of the educators and their relationship to sport rather than centering the experiences and education of students.

“Exposing them to examples seems to resonate better”: Student responses to CSP

Dragić said he will highlight an example to show the operations of White supremacy to his students, such as the Christmas card. “They seem to be responsive to short video clips and pictures other than theoretical concepts or more abstract intellectual discussions.” Similarly, Webber said students tend to respond well to CSP because “sports figures are oftentimes readily identifiable to folks than other figures.” This may also be due to her approaching sport as sign; even when assigning a text like Rhoden’s (2006) centered on sport, “We weren’t really talking about sports; we were talking about capitalism.” Utilizing Nike’s 30th anniversary campaign with Kaepernick was a way for her to discuss the corporatization of political movements, particularly those of Black athletes. Protest and activism are acceptable if there is a path to profit.

Monica believes utilizing a CSP “makes things easier” for both educator and student because rather than having the traditional “race” and “gender” week, “It was easier for me to think about in terms of sections.” She had a section on law examining Title IX and National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) cases, as well as a technology week focused on the body and surveillance through the increase in advanced analytics and wearable technologies, such as cataloguing the Fitbit data of athletes to tailor training and rehabilitation techniques. “I think the larger practice and things that students bring into the classroom ends up being richer.”
AI argued, “Students don’t realize how much sports impacts life or is about life or society.” While they generally do not respond negatively or angrily, “They’re certainly thrown back at the fact, when you watch sports, it’s a form of entertainment, and they’re thrown back by the fact this class is not entertaining to that degree. It’s intriguing, it’s interesting, but it’s not entertaining.” Marta cautioned educators to be strategic in their use of sport as critical pedagogy, particularly in the US with the seeming increase in tribalism; she also teaches in the Northeast, an area rife with sports rivalries. “If I talk about Afro-Brazilians protesting, it’s enough emotional space for them, and it’s too foreign for most of them to argue with me.” In her experience, “Kaepernick, in particular, is the one that there are people who will just die on that hill in terms of he is disrespectful to the national anthem, the police, to X, Y, and Z.” While students generally respond well, it seems there needs to be enough emotional and personal detachment, as well as specific examples that connect to systemic social issues for critical implementations of sport to be most effective.

I agree that students respond well, and figures 5.1 and 5.2 represent two separate pieces of artwork students submitted in two separate courses I taught, including one centering sport (Figure 5.2). Figure 5.1 is a piece submitted by a White male student in an Introduction to Comparative Ethnic Studies course during the fall semester of 2016. We were discussing police brutality and the #BlackLivesMatter movement. This was the semester Kaepernick began his activism, and many students raised his actions in discussions. Many students seemed to come to a better understanding of the racism in policing and incarceration, particularly through their connection to the NFL and Kaepernick by proxy. The art assignment instructed students to portray the operations of racism in society; it did not indicate sport as a specific institution for critique. However, because of class readings and discussions, this student drew on his interest in
sport and the issues of police brutality to critique not only the NFL, but also those criticizing Kaepernick. The left side portrays Kaepernick kneeling, underneath the verse of the national anthem referencing slavery, with a white male (resembling the President) pointing at Kaepernick and saying, “That’s offensive!” On the right side, underneath a police badge, are the tombs of Michael Brown, Ezell Ford, Philando Castile, Walter Scott, and Keith Scott, unarmed Black men killed by police. This student was able to connect our larger discussions of racism in policing and police brutality to the activism of Kaepernick and the #BlackLivesMatter movement.

Figure 5.2 represents a submission in a sports-centered course, Cultural Politics of Sport. The assignment instructed students to examine issues of race and either class, gender, or sexuality in sport. This creation by a Black woman centers popular sporting equipment like a football helmet, a basketball, hockey sticks, and boxing gloves. Surrounding the equipment are various depictions of women of different races, sexes, and outward femininity. Everyone is wearing a top with some denigrating comment, including “bitch,” “cunt,” and “whore.” She also included different symbols of femininity, including lipstick and flowers. Her critique is not of girls and women in sports, but of the messages to and resistance of girls and women in sports. The words on everyone’s tops indicate common epithets lobbed at girls and women who participate in sports, and as evidenced by Johnson’s (2018) article on sexism faced by WNBA players, these comments can be further exacerbated by boys and men who lose to or are less talented than girls and women. The combination of athletic equipment and feminine symbols represents both the view that these symbols are dichotomous with sport and how many girls and women in sports maintain a sense of femininity while participating in sports. To me, the inclusion of the football helmet, hockey sticks, and boxing gloves is a direct counterpunch to narratives of these sports being “too physical” or “dangerous” for girls and women. It is
seemingly a self-fulfilling prophecy since society lacks the capacity to provide many girls and women the opportunity to participate in these arenas. This student was able to channel her experiences, the experiences of girls and women in her life, and course materials to create an artistic piece that clearly critiques the discussion of girls and women in sports while simultaneously empowering these very targeted groups.

![Image](image_url)

**Figure 5.1 – “What’s Offensive?” Submitted by student Fall 2016**

“They very much enjoy it”: Perception of student-athlete responses to CSP

One other common thread is the perception that student-athletes respond well, if not better than non-student-athletes, to a critical sport pedagogy. Chipper said, “A lot of student-athletes will actually choose sports topics for their research projects,” including female athletes’ interest in Title IX issues, football players in the issues surrounding Colin Kaepernick, and others in Jackie Robinson or Muhammad Ali. He argued, “None of them are criticizing their coaches in their papers, but plenty are criticizing the NFL for its treatment of Kaepernick and [Eric] Reid.” He believes student-athletes “responded as positively if not more” than non-student-athletes to
CSP, a message mirrored by Dragić. This may be due to Monica’s belief that “their knowledge base is just so much deeper” due to their athletic and NCAA experiences. Caster corroborates Monica’s thoughts when he said, “A lot of the student-athletes actually connected a lot of those issues with their own experiences.” Flores agreed that student-athletes “very much enjoy it,” and this may be partially due to his goal of using his classroom space as an “outlet” for student-athletes.

Figure 5.2 – “Gender Stereotypes and Sports” Submitted by student Spring 2017

However, there are deeper issues to examine regarding student-athletes and critical sport pedagogies. As Etan stated, “Part of me thinks we’re assuming that student-athletes respond better in sports…I think we would do a disservice to ourselves to assume that that sort of knowledge is confined to that singular space.” This can subtly reinforce to student-athletes that their main identity is that of an athlete. Regardless of if student-athletes have interests in astronomy, renewable technologies, or the foster and adoption system in the U.S., assuming student-athletes respond better to a CSP is harmful if educators believe sport is the only interest
of student-athletes. Further, many non-student-athletes may be more critical of sport than student-athletes as they may not be as deeply embedded in the operations of and maintaining the structure of sport and athletics in higher education.

AI discussed his belief that many Black student-athletes shed their athlete identity in the classroom, entering as only Black students. “Maybe it’s that [the classroom] is their home when they don’t feel as though they have to be an athlete, so they don’t, right?” This may be a coping mechanism for Black student-athletes where the classroom is the one space on campus where they do not have to focus on sport. As discussed above in the analysis of Etan’s comment, Black student-athletes may be in class due to their interest in the subject matter as much as the classroom space being an escape from their sporting realities.

“I save it to the end of the semester for that very reason”: Implicating the institution

Further, an argument from Marta, Monica, and AI is that student-athletes respond well except when implicating their sport/coaches/team/institution in systemic social issues. Non-student-athletes also seem to respond more negatively and defensively, but not as vociferously as student-athletes. As such, Monica and AI stated they specifically wait until the end of the semester to begin discussions of their institution’s athletics. AI said, “I always leave that to the last, to the end of the class for that very reason.” This allows them to build up those “critical cultural skills” prior to discussing their very institution, particularly Monica’s focus on using language to educate students on issues of race and gender. Etan discussed how football players in a previous course would sit together and engage in small-group discussions with each other that were highly critical of the university and athletic structure when he would pass by or join them. However, in larger class discussions, they would glare at other students criticizing their coaches and university as if to say, “We can be critical, but y’all can’t.”
While Dragić is fond of using examples from the university’s day-to-day life, many factors may account for why he is able to raise these issues throughout the semester rather than at the end like Monica and AI. Besides being a heterosexual White male, he teaches in a field that centers sport, and most of his students are invested in the athletics at his university as fans and potential employees in the athletic department. They may also be more receptive than student-athletes when implicating their institution because, as Dragić argued, “For students who want to work in professional sports, they need to understand that many of those athletes will be at least as good, if not better at these jobs that students want to work in!"

An interesting and related discussion is Marta’s earlier invoking of students having enough emotional distance from a subject applies to her discussion on how she would utilize the Colin Kaepernick situation. In response to a question on constructing an ideal course, Marta replied she has already taught her ideal course, titled “Taking a Knee: Politics and Protest in Global History,” reflective of her academic background as a historian. “One of the things that’s very difficult doing a non-U.S. sports history class is that my students don’t come in with the language skills to do the required work I would like to see them do,” which is why she included sports scholars through texts and as guest speakers, including Zirin and Dr. Amira Rose Davis. Further, she commented,

The problem with doing Kaepernick in other classes, or why he becomes a flashpoint is you haven’t had time to do that work when it’s come up as a flashpoint because we haven’t had the time to do the history of it. That’s why I say the ideal class is the “Taking a Knee” class because that’s when Kaepernick comes last. I think the moral of the story is you need a semester with them to see what happens. It’s just not a conversation that can happen without a whole lot of work on the NFL beforehand and how the owners have
contributed to Trump and how they union bust and how they want to divide poor White people from poor people of color.

The “emotional space” Marta discussed earlier manifests in two ways through her remarks. First is space-as-distance evident through her remark about Afro-Brazilians. The second manifestation, however, includes creating emotional space by developing the critical thinking, reading, and writing skills of students. When students encounter a subject that breaches their “emotional space,” this development of skills should allow students to broach these issues with less defensiveness and more criticality.

These examples represent a few pedagogical hurdles an educator utilizing CSP may encounter. Implicating the institution and the institution’s connections to athletics is powerful and salient as highlighted through Dagić’s examples in sport management. However, his unique circumstances allow him to be critical of the institution with little defensiveness from students. As Monica, AI, and Marta discussed, whether it is the institution or an issue like Kaepernick, there needs to be enough emotional space for students to approach certain subjects critically. For this reason, these participants saved these types of subjects until the end of the semester after they had spent the term developing the critical thinking, reading, and writing skills of their students, represented through Monica’s “critical cultural toolbox.”

All participants believed that students respond well to a critical sport pedagogy. Student-athletes seem to respond and connect these issues to their own experiences, but this is qualified through their seeming unwillingness to implicate themselves and their institutions. However, there are certain issues that non-student-athletes “will just die on that hill,” such as Kaepernick. Also, we should heed Etan’s words that we may be unduly imparting our own beliefs that students and student-athletes respond better to CSP, which may act to recenter us rather than the
students. Educators must also be wary of if/when they implicate their university’s athletic practices, as many student-athletes react defensively. Nevertheless, what these examples highlight is that sport is a highly effective pedagogical tool to teach the operations of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia.

**Conclusion: “What do people bring to sports? What is this telling me to do?”**

In summary, the main themes of discussion from participants include perception of participants that sport is an access point in multiple ways, how the personal and academic identities of participants shaped their pedagogies, the pedagogical strategies participants employ when utilizing CSP (particularly media), and perceptions of student responses to these implementations. Each theme is tied together; one does not exist without the others. The main theme of note is that sport acts as the access point for students to discuss issues of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia, as well as making the educator and student-athletes more relatable. Further, it serves as an access point to other access points, such as the military or religion.

The second theme is how the identities of each participant shaped their pedagogies, an important discussion because of the varied experiences of participants and how they translate that to their pedagogy. AI, for example, feels a stronger affinity to Black male student-athletes as he himself was one, and utilizes Africana Studies in sport to discuss Black aesthetics. As the only Africana Studies scholar, he was the lone person to discuss Black aesthetics. Flores’ identity as a “young Latino cultural historian” and his degrees in Chicano and American Studies, coupled with the student population at his institution, shaped the sport examples he employed. These examples served to directly connect issues of racism and sport to the local and lived realities of
his mostly Latinx students. Each identity helps shape the other, and assists in participants’ implementations of CSP.

The third theme is the varied strategies participants utilized in implementing a critical sport pedagogy. This is tied to the first theme because many of the pedagogical assumptions of my participants, including their racial/ethnic, gender, and sexual identities, influenced the strategies they utilized in classrooms. For example, since sport tends to lend itself to media, it is unsurprising that video clips and films/documentaries are frequently utilized, particularly by Monica and myself who have experience in sports broadcasting. Further, allowing for student choice in topic for assignments/projects allowed students the freedom and creativity to explore issues in their own ways, whether these are research papers, group facilitations, or more artistic pieces like a poem or mural. This is tied to an assumption that students crave structure and some participants intentionally seek a lack of structure or confusion. Discussions are important, but only if they are “meaningful,” as Dragić stated, and educators should also be transparent with their students about their expertise, as Marta stated. These discussions include trying to “deconstruct binary thinking” and looking to sport as sign, as ideology, which are driven by each participant’s academic training. AI’s use of sport to discuss African aesthetics, or Marta’s invoking of Afro-Brazilian protest, are examples of how their academic disciplines influence how they utilize sport as critical pedagogy.

Lastly, there is a strong perception that students respond rather well to critical implementations of sport in the classroom. This assumption is directly tied to the other themes. If there was not a belief in my participants that sport acts as an access point for critical systemic discussions, then there would be no strategies involving a CSP in their pedagogies. These pedagogies would likely form without the shaping from the individual and academic identities of
participants. Further, there would be no belief in the positive student responses to CSP without first strategically implementing this pedagogy in the classroom. However, some issues are anathema for discussion for some portions of students (the Kaepernick issue). Participants suggested student-athletes respond better than non-student-athletes, maybe due to their ability to relate the issues of discussion to their experiences. There are some cautions along with this perception, particularly that student-athletes become rather defensive when implicating their institution. Further, educators should be cautious of recentering themselves in the classroom through their utilization of sport as the perceptions of students responding well may be due to the educators wanting students to respond well, negatively impacting their perceptions. However, even with these precautions, it seems like sport may be the most effective tool to teach the operations of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia due to its accessibility and humanizing process; the various ways educators can implement a critical sport pedagogy; and the perception that students respond positively.
CHAPTER SIX: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In Chapter 5, I discussed themes derived from the data analysis. Throughout the previous chapter, the belief in sport as an access point, how identity shape participants’ pedagogies, the pedagogical strategies of participants, and student responses to critical sport pedagogies (CSP) were highlighted, including some cautionary advice. Furthermore, the identities and academic training of each participant influenced each of their beliefs, strategies, and the perception of student responses, particularly from student-athletes and student-athletes of color. I believe my findings support an argument that teaching systemic social inequalities through sport may be an effective pedagogical tool for educators teaching about racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia. I also believe my findings suggest that CSP can be implemented in both sports-centered and non-sports-centered courses, opening pedagogical possibilities in fields like business, communications, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics).

Drawing from participant responses, I will refer to the research questions from Chapter 1 and discuss my findings in relation to these questions. This will lead into a discussion of my findings and implications for pedagogy/theory and research. I say pedagogy/theory because each influences the other. Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Masculinity Studies (CMS) provided epistemological support in asking these specific research questions, as well as in the construction of my interview protocol and the data analysis. This may also account for the specificity of responses from participants on issues of race and gender, rather than issues of class, sexuality, and disability. It seems students and educators alike are more comfortable discussing issues of race and gender rather than sexuality, specifically, which privileges the voices of people of color and women over LGBTIQ voices. Rather than feel uncomfortable discussing issues of disability, participants did not seem to consciously consider these issues.
However, these responses (as well as my experience as an educator) also serve as the basis for pedagogical recommendations I posit. I conclude with a discussion on avenues of potential future research, particularly as it relates to sexuality, homo/transphobia, and disability.

**Flashback to Research Questions**

In this section, I refer to the research questions stated in Chapter 1 that guided this study. These questions cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no.” I will use participant responses to provide in-depth responses to each research question. I will end with a brief discussion on the findings in relation to the research questions.

*How/why sport is employed to teach racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia*

The first theme answers the “why” as the universal response from participants is that sport is the most accessible point for student engagement. A few participants discussed how they utilized sport as the access point to discuss systemic social inequalities in other institutions (such as the military). This increased engagement applies to student-athletes, who seem to connect more with critical sport pedagogies because they can relate the issues to their own experiences more readily. On a more conceptual level, both Monica and Webber remarked they use sport to “make the familiar strange” and to create more critical consumers of “what they love.”

The “how,” or the pedagogical, is multimodal, including media, open-ended projects, and discussions, though using media was most popular. This also answers the next research question: “What strategies do university educators develop to teach the operations of racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia through sport?” As Chipper stated, sport is “so visual, the athletes are impressive to look at,” and that lends itself to using media. Documentaries, particularly the 30 for 30 series, were widely utilized. A few (including myself) play television shows as well, including *South Park* and *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*. Popular films are also utilized,
though rarely; *Coach Carter* and *Sugar* were the two highlighted by participants. Monica (at times) and I incorporate music in sports-centered courses, though I must admit I “poached” (to use a sports term) this strategy from Webber; as an undergraduate in her courses, she would play music at the beginning of class every day (I was somehow the only student in class who knew Ray Charles’ voice!).

Every participant also utilized open-ended projects that allow for student choice in topic. As Monica stated, “I guess the post-Millenials, the Gen-Zers, they want structure, they don’t want a creative project...They want the structure,” so she intentionally adds unstructured elements, as does every participant. While Chipper’s courses include semester-long research projects, his students can choose issues in sport (and many do). The open-ended nature of the assignments allows students to find connections between what they enjoy and systemic social inequalities, and since seemingly many students on college and university campus enjoy sport, this is where they focus their analysis. This is evident through Figure 5.2 in Chapter 5, where class discussions of systemic racism and police brutality spurred this student to submit an art piece of Colin Kaepernick in my course. Discussions also helped students become comfortable with each other for those who employ group projects, like Flores and Chipper.

Lastly, “meaningful” discussions, as Dragić stated, are effective and powerful. Students learn from each other as well as the educator. It allows students to connect their experiences more easily to issues discussed in class. However, particularly when using sport for sport-inclined educators (like myself), we should heed Etan’s words that using sport because we are comfortable with it as a pedagogical tool may work to recenter us as educators rather than the students. Critical pedagogy necessitates the centering of students as a strategy of avoiding the perpetuation of power inequalities. If educators center their experiences and knowledges, then
students are more likely to become automatons of the educator rather than growing and developing individuals. Furthermore, educators should recognize that implicating their institution’s athletics may best be served at the end of the semester after students have “built that critical cultural toolbox.”

How do students respond to CSP, and what happens with negative responses?

Implicating the university may work best at the end of the semester because student-athletes (in particular) react defensively or disengage from classroom discussions. As Etan stated about student-athletes, “We can critique our coach, but y’all can’t.” The other example that seems to draw the ire of students are discussions of Colin Kaepernick and his activism. “Some people will just die on that hill,” as Marta said. However, as with the assumption that sport is the best access point for discussions on systemic social issues, every participant believes students (student-athletes in particular) respond well to critical implementations of sport in the classroom.

As previously stated, many students/student-athletes turn to sport in their assignments and research projects. “You can’t talk about religion without people already coming to it with a certain level of being on alert,” said Webber. This may be changing a bit (as with Kaepernick), but students seem to be more willing to critically analyze sport than other institutions. As Marta said, sport is “so tangible” for students, making connections more apparent. Although sport is ubiquitous in society, it may not be so much compared to Disney; Etan stated he has never had more negative and “heated” responses from students than when he critiques Disney in class!

However, this is where a research question may have been unnecessary. I assumed, based on two vivid negative moments in my pedagogical experience, one as a guest lecturer and one as a graduate student, that every participant would have memorable negative experiences. Only Monica, Flores, and Etan had somewhat negative experiences when utilizing sport; Monica and
Flores had more negative experiences than Etan, possibly due to Etan’s White privilege. The other six participants could not recall a single instance of negative student responses when employing a critical sport pedagogy. However, some, like Marta, seemed to employ certain strategies to avoid negative responses, such as avoiding Kaepernick or not implicating the institution until the end of the semester. While this assumption proved incorrect, I believe many educators are hesitant to utilize sport because they perceive students will respond negatively. Of course, it matters how sport is utilized, but this study suggests students respond rather positively to CSP.

I also believed that students would be highly defensive to discussing issues of gender, masculinity, and femininity. However, this proved mostly incorrect. All participants indicated students responded well to both discussions of race and gender through sport, but the discussions of gender are not as critical as the discussions of race. Further, there seemed to be an absence of discussions on sexuality and disability. It is acceptable to discuss Title IX, women’s access to sport, and the lack of women in management and coaching positions; it is less acceptable to discuss gender integration and/or women’s athletic superiority for most students. An example from my past is illustrative of this point.

I was guest lecturing (which made matters worse) discussing masculinity and sport with undergraduates in a teaching program. This was during Ronda Rousey’s heights in mixed martial arts (MMA) as champion of the 135-pound (bantamweight) division. Her male counterpart at the time was T.J. Dillashaw. In a crass way, I asked students why we do not have gender-integrated sport, and that Rousey would have little issue in a fight with Dillashaw. The male students erupted, the female students sulked, the instructor looked shocked, and I was told to, “Get the fuck out of here!” by a male student. Afterwards, I apologized to the instructor, but channeling
Pillow’s (2003) reflexivities of discomfort, I have reflected on this incident many times, and discussed it openly with others. I had no tact nor, unfortunately, a calm demeanor; I responded in the worst way through a hostile defensiveness. I should have asked students what their thoughts were regarding integrating sport through gender. I should have then discussed Johnson’s (2014) argument that patriarchy has existed for seven thousand years, and the passing of Title IX (1972) only 50 years ago. I could have then asked, “What do you think women’s skills and abilities would be if they had the last seven thousand years to be hunters, soldiers, athletes, builders, and other physical roles reserved for men?”

This is the strategy I employed in the class I currently teach. They did not react defensively, at least outwardly. I saw many students nodding their heads and looking up as if working through the arguments in their minds. I also discussed my journey of being furious as a youth when losing some athletic competition to a girl due to believing in masculine ideals wholeheartedly, and my eventual realization that dominant masculinity is problematic. The class and students are in a sport management program, and it was a struggle at first to channel their critical thinking about sport. However, utilizing a CSP (such as through the strategy I discussed) has proven successful in garnering critical thinking from my students as they prepare for careers in sport organizations.

This assumption is about more than just comparisons in sport. As Marta said, specifically regarding Kaepernick, “It’s so divided by race and gender,” indicating I failed to account for how gender influences a student’s opinions on issues. She said that while young White women are more likely to understand the issues on both sides and “break liberal in the debate,” people of color are “all sympathetic to Kaepernick.” However, “White hetero men almost, with the
exception of one or two, will be very anti-Kaepernick, and it’s very upsetting because it breaks down exactly like you would expect it to… and you don’t want to assume that.”

**What incidents in sport do educators utilize?**

Participants invoked one main incident: the issues surrounding Colin Kaepernick and his activism. However, some (like Marta) tend to avoid it unless students raise the issue organically. Others, like AI, remarked how “you really can’t talk about sport and politics without Kaepernick,” especially for non-sports-centric people. Due to its timeliness, several participants utilized the controversy at the 2018 U.S. Open Women’s Tennis Final surrounding Serena Williams, Naomi Osaka, and how each was described (in words and images) after the event (O’Neal, 2018). Caster, in “queering” students’ thoughts about femininity and athleticism, used the example to discuss why it is that women’s athletic accomplishments have to be explained away in a discourse of “deceit.”

The most creative and critical pedagogical strategy was AI’s use of sport as a production of Black and African aesthetics. The example of Allen Iverson’s dribbling as call-and-response, repetition, rhythm, and the blue note highlights the broad spectrum in critical utilizations of sport in the classroom. He asked students how these productions also act as forms of resistance and subversion. Not only did he discuss sport as a production of African aesthetics, but he used these examples so students can interrogate their own consumption and relationship to capitalism by “problem posing”: why do many White people consume so much Black culture, yet fight against their very right to exist?

Other examples included Etan’s connecting the relationship between race, housing discrimination, segregation, and swimming. Flores and Marta utilized local (non-university) sports and issues, such as Chavez Ravine and Dodger Stadium for Flores, or the rivalry between
the New York Yankees and Boston Red Sox of Major League Baseball (MLB) for Marta. While others avoided or waited to implicate their institution, Dragić, possibly due to teaching in sport management, used everyday examples from the university as he believes the university “provides no shortage of critical examples” to critique, such as the Christmas card in Chapter 5.

Overall, every participant used sport to teach systemic social inequities. There were few negative responses to CSP, however. Media and discussions are the main strategies, but I was pleased to find that open-ended projects and group projects were effective as well. Though I thought there would be some negative and defensive responses, I also believed that students would generally respond positively to critical sport pedagogies, and this was the case. While Kaepernick was raised in each interview, not every participant utilized Kaepernick’s activism in class because of Marta’s earlier words. However, I believe these findings augment my argument that it may be more effective to teach the operations of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia through sport.

**Implications for Pedagogy/Theory**

In this section, the implications for (critical) pedagogy and theory are discussed. I weave together the discussion of theory in this section and the section on implications for future research. This is because theory shapes pedagogy and pedagogy shapes theory, so any discussion about pedagogy includes theory as they have a symbiotic relationship rather than a separate relationship. I will utilize these implications to discuss how a critical sport pedagogy can manifest in the classroom regardless of topic area. I will utilize examples from literature, those provided by the participants, popular media, and my pedagogical experiences to provide context and demonstrate the potential manifestations and impact of a CSP.
I advocate for educators, departments, colleges, and universities to interrogate their relationships to utilizing sport to teach systemic social issues. The strategies I highlight provide a basis for educators to conceptualize their own critical sport pedagogies. However, I will also discuss strategies for educators in reflecting on their pedagogies, particularly with sport, to account for Etan’s previous warnings. While it may seem this is only applicable to fields that traditionally study issues of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia (Ethnic Studies, Women’s Studies, Sociology, etc.), I will argue that educators in nearly every field can create and implement a critical sport pedagogy to discuss systemic social inequalities. Further, as high school and college sports, specifically, drive the desire and love for sports today, it is imperative for educational institutions to implement CSP in their operations as they assess how they perpetuate inequalities and their potential for change.

**Flexibility of educators**

The first implication is the ability of educators to adjust and be flexible in the classroom. I understand, as Marta said, that many educators avoid sport specifically because they have had negative personal experiences with sport. However, because sport is the access point for participants, it would seem detrimental to both educators and students not to access such a rich arena of study and discussion. Those who may not be “experts” in sport, such as Caster, still understand the systemic issues in sport and the connections to society writ large. I would urge educators to reassess their reticence in utilizing sport and employ sporting examples at strategic times. Particularly for those seeking more engagement from students, sport seems to be a rare institution that students feel comfortable discussing. Sports seemingly increases student-athlete interest as well.
In practice, this is represented best through the participants’ use of open-ended projects, discussions, and media. This does not mean assignments and projects need to be wholly unstructured. Rather, the participants offered assignments that allowed for student choice in topic. For example, if an assignment was to examine the discourse of labor movements and their opponents, the instructor could allow a student to analyze labor issues in sports. This is similar to Chipper’s research projects in his non-sport classes; some choose sport (particularly student-athletes), some do not. For example, the construction of an athletic stadium could be analyzed as to its effects on the local environmental and ecological systems. I also think many educators are wary of using media in class for fear that the class will be perceived as “easy” or “entertaining.” However, participants’ examples indicate media is just as powerful in the classroom to challenge dominant narratives as it is outside of the classroom in perpetuating power and oppression.

My own experience is suitable for this last point. In one class, students had an assignment where they acted as the admissions committee for a hypothetical college that valued academics, extra-curricular activities, and service to humanity as part of its three-pronged mission. One potential student was a former Olympian who wrote that they were looking forward to putting athletics behind them and focusing their energy towards education. Two main issues arose in the assignments and discussion. First, all but a handful of students referred to the student as “he” when there were no gender or sex identifiers. Two, even though the applicant said otherwise, most students felt this applicant would be focused too much on athletics to the detriment of their academics. Their notions were based in stereotypes and misinformation (as well as a lack of critical reading). After correcting them on the gender/sex and college aspirations of the applicant, I realized most of these students were not willing to shift their thinking…yet.
I discarded my lesson plan for the next class and focused on educating students on the experiences of student-athletes (this class had about nine out of 47 students). I decided to show *South Park*’s hyperbolic critique of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) through their “Crack Baby Athletic Association” episode (Parker & Stone, 2011). This created a more comfortable atmosphere for discussion, and I luckily had student-athletes willing to discuss their experiences, from waking up at 4:30 to prepare for morning practice to finally arriving back at home/dormitory at 8:30 pm, pending a meeting with coaches if necessary, all during the off-season, or when there are no official games/contents. Many of the non-student-athletes’ eyes widened as the student-athletes spoke and the former realized their notions of student-athletes as privileged and pampered were highly misinformed. This class was not a sport-centered course, nor were the readings focused on sport. However, I feel students gained *more* from this interaction than the original lesson I had planned. Beyond using sport as an access point and making me more relatable as an educator, for many students, it humanized the *student-athletes* they so often place on pedestals and cheer/boo, yet fail to interact with in class during the week.

An implication to further discuss from Chapter 5 is the absence of discussions on sexuality and disability. This presents another area where educators need to be flexible both in utilizing a CSP and any critical pedagogy. To truly channel Crenshaw’s (1991; 1997) concept of intersectionality, particularly those of us who identify as Critical Race scholars, we must be flexible enough to reach *beyond* race (such as Cultural Studies did for me with gender and sex) and include areas of identity outside of our areas of expertise. As with Marta admitting where her expertise lies, educators can remind students they may not be scholars of Queer Theory, but they can still discuss the relationship between issues of power, oppression, and sexuality/gender non-conformity; or as these issues relate to mental and physical disabilities. This assumes educators
will research Queer Theory and/or Disability Studies literature to account for how they may perpetuate the very issues of critique in these scholarly areas. With the growing presence and visibility of LGBTIQ and disabled identities, particularly in popular culture, a CSP could act to help students in deconstructing these issues.

Utilizing skills and specialties to the advantage of educators

Most indicative of this implication is AI’s use of sport as a production of African aesthetics. As an Africana Studies scholar, his expertise is in how Africana Studies applies to different facets of society, including sport. Monica’s expertise in sports broadcasting, and her shared expertise in journalism with Dragić, are evident in their use of media and their resulting analyses. Caster’s expertise is Queer Theory and Feminist Studies, and he used this knowledge to “queer” various aspects of sport, particularly femininity and athletic ability. Flores’ training and degree in Chicano Studies not only related to most of the student population he serves, but also how he approached his use of sport in class (Chavez Ravine probably has more connection to Latinx students in California than something like Olympic swimming).

An interesting cross-section is those participants who have expertise in sport (experience, scholarly work) along with their academic expertise. This sport expertise is the result of long-standing participation in sport (athlete, coach, broadcaster, journalist) and/or their direct scholarship about sport, which avoids Etan’s earlier comments about institutional devaluement stemming from the notion that “anyone” can teach a class on sport. I would classify Monica, AI, Etan, Dragić, Chipper, and Marta (and myself) as participants who also have an expertise in sport along with their academic expertise. Dragić puts his expertise to practice (along with scholarly research) as the only participant to teach in a department that is sport-centered. Etan has written two books centering issues of race and sport, as well as teaching a sport-centered course at times.
Chipper and Marta apply their historical training to their sport expertise to engage students in critical historical research at the intersection of sports and systemic social issues. AI’s experience as a former collegiate and professional athlete allows him to speak from a perspective that very few can. Monica, with her sports broadcasting experience, engages students in discourse and media surrounding sports and athletes. Wherever one’s skills and specialties lie, and whether they involve sport or not, educators should find ways these skills can find space in their classrooms through sport.

A historian like Chipper or Marta could trace the history of the relationship between the military/war and football, specifically college football. President Theodore Roosevelt brought together the heads of the top universities to “save” collegiate football due to the many on-field deaths of players, establishing the National Collegiate Athletic Association (Gems, Borish, & Pfister, 2017; Weathersby, 2013). As Gems, Borish, and Pfister noted, this was during a so-called “crisis of masculinity” (which seemingly occurs in each successive generation of men) after the Industrial Revolution and on the brink of World War I, leading many to view football as both a masculinizing endeavor and as preparation of soldiers for war. A further goal was that in developing loyalty to the university through football, it would instill loyalty to the country in these future soldiers as they enlisted in war.

This does not mean one should always channel their expertise(s). As Marta said, if a discussion or example in sport is raised that is outside of an educator’s niche, then verbalizing this to students helps. With her expertise in Central/South American and Caribbean Studies and soccer, she will utilize soccer in those countries (particularly women’s soccer) when necessary. However, as she discussed, if students discuss something like Kaepernick or something that is U.S.-centric, she admits where her expertise lies. This is also one way to avoid a recentering of
the educator. Outside of tennis, Caster does not enjoy or consume sports; this does not stop him from utilizing sport when necessary to challenge binary thinking, particularly gender and sexuality. The same applies to Webber, a scholar of American literature who uses sport as sign as instructive of issues such as racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia, as she would with literature. Her use of sport-specific advertisement works to deconstruct popular notions of meritocracy, masculinity, femininity, athleticism, and competition, as well as a forced interrogation of one’s consumption practices.

Herein lies the pedagogical power and flexibility of sport. It is accessible for critical analysis even for educators who would rather not consume sports. Educators seeking to better the understandings of students regarding issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality should turn to sport as a critical site of pedagogy. Applying an educator’s expertise and training to issues in sport may better educate students on systemic social inequities than traditional sites such as the criminal justice system or housing discrimination. Those who have an expertise in sport should be strategic in their utilizations: Educators should ask if sport is the appropriate example for an issue depending on the context of the course and the students enrolled. Nevertheless, the combination of sport and an educator’s expertise may prove highly effective.

Expand the boundaries: Academic disciplines being receptive to critical sport pedagogies

The last implication to discuss is the efficacy of critical sport pedagogies in fields like business and/or STEM disciplines. I contend that business courses should utilize examples such as the collective bargaining agreements (CBA) of professional sports leagues as a template to discuss issues of economics, power, race, class, gender, labor, and capitalism. The ongoing Women’s National Basketball Association Players Association’s (WNBPA) fight for higher basketball-related revenue could serve as both a timely and effective example in business
courses. However, this would need to go beyond comparing their CBA with that of the National Basketball Association (NBA) by examining the racial, gender, and sexual politics associated with women and women in sport. Further, educators would need to connect this to the larger implications associated with the gender pay-gap in all facets of society, including the business industry in which many of these students seek a career. This is just one of many potential examples that sport could be utilized. Because sport is so accessible, as indicated by the participants, it may encourage more critical student engagement regarding the intersections of business, sport, and systemic social inequalities.

STEM fields should recognize that issues in sport are endemic to STEM because they are endemic to society. Rather than conduct studies on the difference in physical abilities (strength, speed, etc.) or hormonal composition between men and women and races and ethnicities, educators could instruct students in their STEM classes to critically review previous studies and the assumptions made through language, methodology, and data analysis. This can be framed as a process of developing critical and ethical research skills, particularly as STEM students begin their research careers.

STEM Educators can also expand their boundaries by encouraging students to engage in a thought-experiment or other creative activity to create a more progressive study on similarities and differences in physical ability that would account for over seven thousand years of patriarchy (Johnson, 2014); the lack of women in athletics prior to the passing of Title IX (Gems, Borish, & Pfister, 2017; Mechikoff, 2014; Welch, 2004); and the increase in both participation and ability of women in the nearly 50 years since the passing of Title IX (Hoffman, Iverson, Allan, & Ropers-Huilman, 2010; Pauline, 2013). Though this may prove “messy” for STEM, it represents different pedagogical potentials.
An interesting discussion point is about educators teaching in sport-centered fields like sports sociology or sport management, like Dragić. Unlike the above, these fields represent potential of further developing these pedagogies, or hindering them. Responding to a question about how the department influences his pedagogy, Dragić argued departments like sport management need to have a coherence in values and to “enforce these values” through each class in the degree program. He discussed possibly attempting this coherence in a graduate program first as graduate programs are “much smaller” than undergraduate programs, and once students and faculty are satisfied, implementing it at the undergraduate level. However, the “values” are the most important aspect. If a department “values” teaching sport as a business or as a career, then most students will only think about sport in those terms. If the “values” are to consume and appreciate sport as a fan, then students will approach sport as fans. However, if the “values” are educating students on systemic social inequalities, then regardless if an educator is discussing sport as career or sport as fan, most students should understand and be able to examine the intersections of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia in sport as a business/career/fan.

The increasing role of sport in popular discussion, news, and politics (such as the President’s quote in this study’s title), coupled with accessibility of sport to many students, should spur more departments to utilize critical sport pedagogies. However, these pedagogies must focus on the operations of racism, classism, sexism, homo/transphobia, and other issues like ability, culture, and religion. Otherwise, as Etan said of educators who are not critical both of self and society, “You’re just a propagandist.”

**Implications for Future Research**

This section will explore potential research opportunities for scholars of CSP. There needs to be more research into utilizing sport to teach issues of sexuality, homophobia,
transphobia, classism, disability, and religion. In this discussion, I argue many educators who already employ sport to teach systemic social inequalities should write more on their experiences to foster more creative and effective sport pedagogies.

“Narrative of deceit”: Other systemic issues of study through sport

All participants focused their critique and analysis mainly through the lens of race and gender, with Caster the lone queer theorist. This is due both to their identities/experiences and their academic training in disciplines such as Ethnic Studies and History. While participants indicated CSP is effective in teaching issues of race and gender, there was little discussion (outside of Caster) on issues of sexuality, homophobia, and transphobia; classism seemed more implicit in responses (such as Etan’s connecting housing discrimination and access to swimming); disability was not mentioned; and religion (along with the military) is a restricted area of discussion.

This may also account for the seemingly dichotomous relationship between scholarly literature and pedagogy, aside from the lack of literature on CSP. In Chapter 2, I reviewed scholarly literature at the intersections of sport, race, gender and sex, and sexuality in sport and found that these were mostly sociocultural critiques of sport rather than the utilization of sport as critical pedagogy, but I assumed the array of literature on these issues would translate more to pedagogy in the classroom. It appears this is the case with my participants on issues of race and gender, but not with sex and sexuality. From utilizing CSP to discuss African aesthetics to issues of gender and race in women’s soccer in Central and Southern America, race and gender are ever-present in the pedagogies of participants. However, Caster is the only participant who seemingly focused on issues of sex and sexuality as well as race and gender.
This is an important distinction because, as Zeigler (2016) argued, there is a growing presence and recognition of LGBTIQ identities in sport (and society). It is unlikely that educators will have no LGBTIQ students, meaning disregarding and silencing their experiences and struggles only serves to reinforce patriarchy and heteronormativity. Zeigler’s work is one of many examining issues of sexuality in sport, as reviewed. There are also examples of LGBTIQ athletes and issues in sport, such as Brittney Griner (ESPN.com news services, 2013) or Michael Sam (Connolly, 2014). As participants indicated, sport serves as their access point due to its ubiquity, but also due to students having relationships and experiences in sport. Again, it would be irresponsible to believe LGBTIQ students do not have these same relationships and experiences. Utilizing sport could engage LGBTIQ students more because of its accessibility and the ability to relate the issues to their own experiences.

Trans and intersex identities and the “narrative of deceit” surrounding successful female athletes, particularly those of color, are also difficult issues that were largely ignored by the participants. Fallon Fox’s tribulations of being born male and participating as a female in a combat sport are indicative of the rampant transphobia, prejudicial thinking, and miseducation surrounding trans individuals (Felt, 2014; Fowlkes, 2013; MMA Fighting Newswire, 2013; Wetzel, 2013). The criticisms she faced (and still faces) are probably similar to those experiences of trans students. In a society where trans identities are generally perceived through *RuPaul’s Drag Race* (Murray, 2009-present) and the critically-acclaimed *Pose* (Murphy, Falchuk, & Canals, 2018), that is, in a more effeminate and pageant-like way, showcasing other trans identities can increase engagement of trans students while working to combat dominant stereotypes of trans identities for non-trans students.
Sex testing is also an insidious issue needing examination, and something only Caster discussed. He raised the sex testing conducted on champion South African runner Caster Semenya and Indian runner Dutee Chand, two women of color from “Third World countries” who excel in athletics (Block, 2016; Karkazis & Jordan-Young, 2018; Ross, 2009; Zirin & Wolf, 2009). As Caster said, “I go back to Semenya and sort of this anxiety around this ‘masculine women’ and this thread of her excellence that needs to be explained.” Whether the arguments are that these are men “parading” as women (Block) or there is excessive testosterone (either naturally or through supplements), it seems there is a need to explain away the athletic accomplishments of women of color and ambiguous-looking women.

I believe educators should be unafraid to broach these issues in courses. There are abundant examples and scholarly literature ready for use in CSP. There are educators who utilize sport to discuss issues of heteronormativity, homo/transphobia, and trans and intersex identities, yet not only was this pedagogical focus largely absent from my participants, but I believe there is hesitation to discuss these issues because it is not their area of “expertise” and in a hypermasculine arena like sport. It should not be the responsibility of queer theorists (like Caster) to be the ones to educate students on issues of sex, sexuality, heteronormativity, and homo/transphobia. However, there are many critical and salient examples from sport that non-queer theorist educators could utilize to discuss these issues. I would argue the examples of Fox and Semenya may prove to have the most positive effect in changing student perceptions.

Disability seems overlooked, and narratives of disability and paternalism are issues needing critical scholarship, particularly in sport. The Special Olympics provides a space for athletes with various disabilities to compete, but forcing these athletes to compete only amongst themselves is paternalistic in thinking that these athletes would have little success against able-
bodied and minded athletes. Further, this is an opportunity to challenge students to interrogate their relationships to disability, including their thoughts and conceptions of those with various mental and physical disabilities. As being able-bodied and minded is a perpetual temporary identity, it should be imperative for educators to teach the operations and perpetuation of ableism. With the rise in visibility of the Special Olympics and Paralympic Games, incorporating the experiences of athletes with various disabilities also works to deconstruct dominant narratives of individuals with disabilities. There are also Unified Leagues, with mixed teams of people with and without various forms of disabilities, which educators can highlight as another example to deconstruct dominant narratives.

Future research could incorporate a combination of interviews and observation. Researchers could interview critical and non-critical educators about why they discuss/do not discuss these issues through sport, and if they do, how they employ CSP to educate students on these issues. They can also observe participants in classroom practice to compare to their interview remarks, as well as how students receive and believe they learn (or not learn) when utilizing CSP for these issues. Interviewing students is crucial, though it may be more feasible to conduct unstructured interviews (Seidman, 2006) where researchers (while observing) may join a group of students for conversation without recording the discussion or taking notes to demystify the researcher. This would add a deeper layer of analysis by gathering actual student responses to CSP rather than the perception of educators.

For those like Dragić who teach in sport-centered departments, particularly those where students are preparing for careers in sport, this represents a unique but potentially radical opportunity. Educators could work to usurp traditional notions of the “great sport myth” (Coakley, 2017) that sport is good and therefore all participants are good, and that meritocracy
and hard-work are at play. Further, issues of masculinity, femininity, ability in relation to gender, sex, and sexuality, and disability are also critical sites of pedagogy. The role of sport, sporting organizations, and potential careers in sport in perpetuating and/or challenging these issues (as in a sport management department) are illuminating sites of critical scholarship and pedagogy because many students in these programs will work in sporting organizations. Rather than perpetuate existing inequalities, a department that has coherence in educating students on their roles in challenging systemic inequalities may help create more progressive organizations as students begin their careers. Educators could highlight how sport organizations perpetuate heteronormativity, patriarchy, homo/transphobia, and ableism through language, hiring practices, and rituals. Students could engage in discussions and creative projects to conceive of strategies to challenge dominant power relations in various sports organizations (hiring women as coaches/general managers, for example). If there is a concerted mission and effort by faculty in the department to teach systemic social inequalities, then students would be more receptive that their departments treat their programs as more than merely career-training spaces.

Addressing the lack of CSP literature

In Chapter 2, I highlighted that though there is an abundance of scholarly literature taking a sociocultural approach to critique and analyze sport, there is a dearth in using sport as critical pedagogy. The literature cited that discussed pedagogy were found either in physical education (Morrow & Gill, 2003) or sport sociology (McElroy, 1990). The former body of literature had suggestions for educators in how to conduct PE, but not how to use PE to teach about racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia. The latter body of work, sport sociology, is similar, using different critical frameworks such as feminism or applications (comic strips), which are closer to CSP. The larger issue with these examples is that they focus more on how educators can
interrogate systemic inequalities in their pedagogy (which is important) rather than coupling that with teaching systemic social issues to students. Critical educators who utilize CSP need to write about their pedagogical experiences so that other scholars and educators can learn about this approach. For example, Snyder (1997) discussed his use of comic strips to discuss issues of sport, social values, gender, and minorities, which provides an example for educators. The strategies discussed in this study by participants also represent potential literature on CSP. Educators should also be transparent about success and failures. Acknowledging failures could provide avenues for other educators to improve.

Fields such as sport sociology or Cultural Studies will be more receptive to scholarly literature on CSP; however, I believe CSP literature from fields such as business, STEM, and/or communication could foster more progressive practices in these fields. The greater breadth of CSP literature spanning multiple disciplines may spur educators seeking better student engagement; new avenues of teaching, learning, and research; and/or different examples of systemic social inequalities. I believe this can lead to better educated and more engaged students and faculty/researchers towards issues of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia. More CSP literature should lead to more educators being comfortable in utilizing sport in the classroom.

Summary

Sport is ubiquitous in society, yet seemingly an untapped tool of critical pedagogy for many educators. However, with the increasing intersection of sport with news and politics, educators may turn to sport more now than in the past. In this study, I found that another factor may be the universal appeal from participants of sport as an access point to educate students on issues of racism, classism, sexism, and homo/transphobia. It is so accessible to many students
that participants use sport to teach about systemic inequalities in other institutions, particularly the military. While this accessibility to sport generally garners positive and critical responses from students, some participants also had negative experiences utilizing CSP, though these seem outweighed by the numerous positive experiences. Sport is also accessible for educators through media, popular literature, and student experiences as more students tend to have sporting experience (unlike the military).

For educators who, like Marta, truly care about student-athletes, CSP seems to be very effective in keeping student-athletes engaged. Many participants discussed how some fellow educators view student-athletes as privileged and pampered, but these educators may fail to reflect on their pedagogy and ask if it is engaging and educative, or why they harbor such thoughts about student-athletes. CSP seems to account for these issues. Educators who care about student-athletes leave enough space in their assignments and projects for all students to pursue what they enjoy, which is often sport. However, educators should also be wary of unduly imparting their perceptions and hopes onto student-athletes regarding CSP.

Lastly, it seems sex, sexuality, homo/transphobia, and disability are areas participants avoided to a certain extent when utilizing CSP. This presents an area of future research to derive why this may be, as well as why and how some educators use CSP for these issues. All educators should be willing to teach and learn these issues, which can serve to interrogate an educator’s own homo/transphobia and ableism. The growing recognition of LGBTIQ and disabled identities in society includes the sporting arena. As such, educators should look to sport for accessible and critical examples to assist students in shifting their thoughts on these issues. This may prove particularly effective in fields such as STEM and business, but even more in a sport-centered field such as sport management. CSP represents potential for educators to reach more students on
issues of racism, classism, sexism, homo/transphobia, and ableism, and educators should take advantage of this ubiquitous and accessible arena.
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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1) Could you tell me about your road to becoming an educator generally?

2) How would you describe yourself as an educator?
   • What does being a “critical educator” mean to you? Why?

3) What is your philosophy of teaching and learning?
   • How do you implement this philosophy when you teach?

4) Could you tell me about the role sport, formal or informal, has played in your life?
   • Have you always been interested in sport?
   • Did you play sports?

5) What role does sport play in your classrooms?
   • Why do you employ sports in your classroom?
   • How does your criticality come into play when using sports?

6) What strategies have you developed to teach the operations of racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia through sport in class?
   • How would you say the students respond to these implementations, including in their quality of work?

7) How would you compare sport as a tool to teach issues of society and power to other institutions or areas of research (popular culture like television, military, education, etc.)?
   • How would you rank sport compared to other areas of intersections in terms of effectiveness in the classroom?

8) How does the institution, both departmentally and culturally, shape your pedagogy?
   • If you were able, what would be your ideal course, and what pedagogical practices would you employ? Is sport involved?
9) Could you tell me about a time when your use of sport as a vehicle to teach critical social issues caused classroom disruption? What happened?

- What pedagogical practices do you employ to answer these disruptions?

- Can you tell me about a time when teaching critically through sport was met with silence and an unwillingness to participate from students?

- Can you tell me about a time when teaching critically through sport was, in your mind, a positive learning experience for the students and yourself?

10) How do undergraduate students think about sport?

- How do students respond to a critical sports pedagogy?

- How do student-athletes respond?

- How do students think about sport critically based on your pedagogical experiences?

- What do they learn from sports?

11) What critical incidents in sport do you utilize to engage students in difficult knowledges?

- How and why do you choose these incidents?

12) Lastly, do you have anything you would like to add to this discussion?