



## **A Racial Reckoning in a Racialized Organization? Applying Racialized Organization Theory to the NCAA Institutional Field**

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**Ajhanai C.I. Keaton**  
University of Louisville

**Joseph N. Cooper**  
University of Massachusetts at Boston

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*During the summer of 2020, NCAA athletic departments, conferences, and leaders felt compelled to address racial inequity in the broader United States. Interestingly, there was a wave of excitement for racial equity, as Black lives “appeared” to matter to the NCAA institutional field (NIF) (e.g., athletic departments, conferences, leaders, etc.), as anti-racist initiatives, race-specific hiring tactics, and inaugural diversity, equity, and inclusion committees were formed and celebrated. Additionally, many Athletic Diversity and Inclusion Officer (ADIO) positions were adopted following this fervor. To support NIF leaders in their espoused aims, we argue that the NIF is a racialized organization (Ray, 2019), to more fully depict the pervasiveness of racial inequity that marginalizes Black athletes and Black administrators. In this paper we highlight for NIF leaders, specifically ADIOs and senior-level administration, that their novel DEI measures can easily be argued as symbolic given the history of racial exclusion in Division I athletics. Consequently, arguments presented in this paper will illuminate to NIF leaders that race is not an issue in athletic departments because racial marginalization is of or how the NIF operates. We hope this shift in perspective will lead to DEI efforts that address institutional and organizational dynamics that marginalize Black athlete’s and administrator’s agentic capabilities.*

*Keywords: Racialized organization theory, race, Athletic Diversity and Inclusion Officers, Black athletes, Black collegiate sport administrators, diversity, equity, and inclusion*

The murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor served as rallying cries for Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests and socio-political unrest that occurred during spring/summer of 2020. Subsequently, this unrest led to collegiate athletic departments feeling compelled, pressured, and inspired to acknowledge the distinct vulnerability of, and injustices imposed upon, Black Americans (Washington, 2020). In response to the high-profile killings of Floyd and Taylor, many historically White athletic departments tweeted statements acknowledging the national civil unrest and called for racial solidarity (Duru, 2020; Washington, 2020). The recent acknowledgements of Black lives mattering from historically White collegiate athletic departments and administrators may come across as disingenuous attempts to align with social justice efforts, as doing so positions elevates their legitimacy with external and internal stakeholders (Keaton, 2020; Rockhill, Howe, Agyemang, ahead of print). Thus, the act of acknowledging Black lives publicly is an organizational response to external pressures upon athletic departments to be perceived as ‘appropriate’ and ‘proper’ (i.e. an organization that embraces and supports diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)) (Suchman, 1995), as this strengthens their legitimacy in their respective institutional field<sup>1</sup> (Keaton, 2020).

Additionally, this “racial reckoning” influenced several National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) conferences to adopt initiatives focused on DEI. For example, The Summit League formed an inaugural diversity council (The Summit League, 2020), the Big South conference formed an inaugural anti-racist initiative (Big South Sports, 2020), the Sun Belt Conference created the “Be the Change”<sup>2</sup> Initiative focused on racial equity (Sun Belt Conference, 2020), and the West Coast Conference implemented the “Russell Rule”<sup>3</sup>. At the governance level, the NCAA passed legislation allowing student-athletes to wear social justice statements on their uniforms (Johnson, 2020), and the LEAD 1<sup>4</sup> Association established a working group to examine issues of DEI in collegiate athletics (LEAD 1 Association, 2020). In unprecedented fashion, addressing racial inequity “appeared” to be of significance to the institutional field. Subsequently, many athletic departments adopted Athletic Diversity and Inclusion Officer (ADIO) positions during this heightened attention to anti-Black marginalization, aligning with the work of (Keaton, 2020), who theorized sociological influences, like BLM protests, would serve as catalysts for Division I collegiate athletic departments to adopt ADIO positions.

Anti-racist initiatives (Big South Sports, 2020), diversity committees (LEAD 1 Association, 2020), inclusion statements (Washington, 2020), and the hiring of ADIOs (Keaton,

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<sup>1</sup> An institutional field is made up particular norms, logics, and practices that become taken for granted to make fields disparate from others (Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010). Thus, collegiate athletics is an institutional field with values and norms that differentiate it from other fields. Amateurism is a logic that makes this field different from other institutional (sport) fields.

<sup>2</sup> The Be the Change initiative seeks to promote racial equity by making election a mandatory day off from athletic participation

<sup>3</sup> The Russell Rule is a policy implemented by the West Coast Conference that states a member of a member of a “traditionally underrepresented” must be interviewed for the following positions: Athletic director, senior administrator, head coach or full-time assistant coach.

<sup>4</sup> An association of athletic directors associated with the Football Bowl Subdivision. The association seeks to advocate for the future of collegiate athletics.

2020) are well-intentioned efforts to address issues of inequity, but these efforts do not fully address how racial marginalization is embedded in collegiate sport organizational structures, policies, and ideologies. Although many NCAA conferences and athletic departments appear eager to address issues of racial injustice, the organizational field possesses and perpetuates racialized processes, schemes, and structures that marginalize Black athletes (Cooper, Nwadike, & Macaulay, 2017; Hawkins, 2013; Singer, 2019; Van Rheen, 2013) and Black administrators (Agyemang & DeLorme, 2010; Howe & Rockhill, 2020; McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017; Steward & Cunningham, 2015).

The purpose of the current conceptual paper is to demonstrate that marginalization is not simply an issue in the NIF, rather racial marginalization is of and how the NIF is maintained and sustained. We make this claim by examining racial marginalization through the theoretical tenets of racialized organization theory (Ray, 2019). We conclude by challenging ADIOs to adopt a racialized organization perspective to complement their leadership agenda. We argue that their leadership agenda must address racial inequity in a manner that acknowledges racial marginalization as not simply in their athletic departments but innate to how their organization is maintained and sustained. We believe this shift in perspective can instill in ADIOs to create a leadership agenda that addresses structural, institutional, and organizational issues in the field and focus less of their attention on altering individual attitudes of NIF actors.

We use the term NCAA institutional field (NIF), to articulate that NCAA collegiate athletics is more than collegiate students engaging in educational and athletic pursuits. Rather, the NIF is inclusive of NCAA bylaws and policies, university boosters providing financial support, athletic conferences and departments with disparate revenues and operational budgets, sport administrators, university administrators, media contracts and television rights, and legal precedents like Title IX and other relevant legal cases addressing amateurism and sexual abuse/racial discrimination. Thus, the term “NIF” will be used to ensure that organizational (athletic departments, athletic conferences) and institutional (NCAA matters) policies, structures, and experiences can be applied to our conceptual argument articulating NCAA collegiate athletics (organizationally and institutionally) as aligning with the theoretical prescriptions of a racialized organization (Ray, 2019).

A racialized organization perpetuates racial hierarchies extant in society and bolsters the dominance of White interests at the expense of historically marginalized groups. By bringing attention to how the NIF is a racialized organization, we seek to illuminate the types of organizational issues related to racial marginalization that ADIOs will encounter (and hopefully address) in their leadership.

### *Racialized Analyses of Collegiate Athletics*

Examinations of race in the NIF have depicted the field as a slave plantation (Hawkins, 2013), racially colorblind (Bimper & Harrison, 2017), lacking racially conscious leadership (Cooper et al., 2017; Cooper, Newton, Klein, & Jolly, 2020), deficient of institutional integrity (Singer, 2009), a 21<sup>st</sup> century Jim Crow entity (Jackson, 2018), a model that reinforces whiteness (Hextrum, 2019) and a model that fails to advance anti-racist policies and leadership (Cooper et al., 2020). Such characterizations have influenced the theoretical lenses scholars have applied to studying the significance of race in the experiences of NCAA Black athletes (Bimper, 2016; Carter-Francique, 2013; Cooper et al., 2017; Singer, 2019), the adoption of NCAA bylaws and policies (Comeaux, 2018), and sustained inequities in leadership representation and experiences

(McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017; Turick & Bopp, 2016). For example, theoretical lenses centering the significance of race (and gender in the case of Black women) in the NIF include: critical race theory (CRT) (Cooper et al., 2017; Bimper et al., 2013; Donner, 2005, Oshiro et al., 2020; Singer, 2009;) systemic racism theory (SRT) (Singer et al., 2017, Turick et al., 2020), intersectionality, (Johnson & Newton, 2020; Keaton, 2021a; McDowell & Carter-Francique; Walker & Melton 2015), Black feminist thought (BFT) (Borland & Bruening, 2010), critical whiteness theory (Keaton, 2021b; Hextrum, 2019; Vadeboncoeur & Bopp, 2020), and racial tasking (Bopp et al., 2020). The application of these race-(gendered) specific theories in sport management scholarship acknowledges the pervasiveness of race (and racism) in the NIF and introducing the theory of racialized organizations (Ray, 2019) compliments previous analyses, while offering a new perspective centered on organizational dynamics.

We believe this focus on the organizational level is beneficial to ADIOs whose job responsibilities are focused on creating and sustaining more inclusive athletic departments. Previous scholarship does a commendable job demonstrating how individual experiences in the NIF are marginalized (Cooper, 2019; McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017; Singer, 2019). By applying the theory of racialized organization, we aim to illuminate for ADIOs and senior-level administrators the various racial exclusionary issues their leadership must address. Hence, by demonstrating that “race [is] constitutive of organizations” (Ray, 2019, p. 26), diversity leaders can adopt a leadership agenda that addresses the institutionalization of racial inequity that is innate to how the NIF and their respective athletic department functions.

## Theory of Racialized Organizations

The theory of racialized organizations prescribes that race is innate to organizational structures and processes. Racialized organizations replicate societal racial hierarchies and distribute resources along racial lines. Hence, race is more than a variable *in* organizational contexts, race purposively dictates organizational and institutional orders in racialized organizations. Ray (2019) prescribes four tenets informing how racialized organizations function: (a) racialized organizations diminish the personal and collective agency of subordinate racial groups, (b) racialized organizations legitimate unequal resource distribution along racial lines, (c) whiteness is a credential in a racialized organization and receives unearned organizational advantage, (d) formalized policies and practices are decoupled in racialized organizations to benefit White organizational actors, at the expense of racially marginalized groups. Moreover, the theory of racialized organizations asserts organizational hierarchies and processes are not race neutral, as “racial inequality is not merely ‘in’ organizations but ‘of’ them, as racial processes are foundational to organizational formation and continuity” (Ray, 2019, p. 48). Ray (2019) challenges race and organizational theorists to perceive organizations as “fundamentally racialized,” in an effort study how organizations perpetuate racial inequality extant in our broader social world (p. 47).

Lastly, Ray’s theorizing addresses how racialized organizations are influenced by the institutional logics and symbolic systems shaping organizational fields. Thus, organizations are influenced by institutionalized norms and practices and applying the theory of racialized organizations in a manner that perceives organizations to be nested in broader institutional structures that are informed by race offers insightful understandings of how, when, where, and why racism is perpetuated. More importantly, how, when, where, and why it needs to be challenged. Therefore, we will apply the four tenets of racialized organizations theory to the NIF,

enabling a comprehensive account for how race (and racism) manifests in NIF norms, practices, and structures.

Although our analysis focuses on Division I collegiate athletics, issues of racialized structures, processes, and experiences are also evident in Division II and Division III of NCAA collegiate sport (Cooper, Davis, & Dougherty, 2017). Our analysis centers the organizational and institutional experiences of Black and African American administrators and athletes. Although other marginalized racial groups experience discrimination in the NIF (Ortega, 2021; Shim et al., 2020), we believe there is a unique Black experience in collegiate sport that must be disaggregated from the experiences of other marginalized groups. Lastly, given that anti-Black racism (e.g., murder of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor) induced the fervor for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the NIF (Keaton, 2020), we elected to solely focus on the experiences of Black and African American athletes and leaders.

### *Tenet 1: Racialized Organizations Diminish the Agency of Marginalized Groups*

Racialized organizations diminish the historical and perceived agency of Black organizational actors, which creates a stratification of hierarchal power based upon race (Ray, 2019). This stratification of power dictates where and how Black actors influence organizational processes that inform larger institutional orders and structures (Ray, 2019). The NIF stratifies power along racial lines diminishing the agency of Black administrators and coaches (Agyemang & DeLorme, 2010; McDowell et al., 2009; Turick & Bopp, 2016; Wells & Kerwin, 2017) and the educational pursuits of Black athletes' during and beyond their collegiate tenure (Beamon, 2008; Bimper, 2015; Cooper, 2019; Singer, 2009).

*Experiences of Black Collegiate Athletic Administrators.* According to Lapchick (2019), Black administrators represent 9% of associate and assistant level positions in the NIF. When specifically examining Black administrator representation in Division I athletics, 9.5% of associate and assistant athletic directors are Black and 8.8% of athletic directors are Black. Although these descriptive statistics of Black leadership appears to be in congruence with mid-level managers (assistant positions) and senior-level positions (AD and associate positions), Black administrators do not perceive themselves as having access to senior-level opportunities (McDowell et al., 2009; Price et al., 2017; Wells & Kerwin, 2017). According to Ray (2019), agency in racialized organizations is influenced by one's positionality and how organizations play into "*identity agency*," an organizational ritual prescribing certain actors as "best suited" for particular roles based upon their racial identity. McDowell et al. (2009) illuminates "*identity agency*" (Ray, 2019) in the experiences of Black collegiate administrators serving in academic and student support roles, as they are over-represented in these positions demonstrating *occupational segregation*. Academic and student support positions are not perceived as career pathways for achieving the AD position (McDowell et al., 2009). Additionally, some Black administrators feel compelled or called to enter these positions to support the academic careers of Black athletes because the NIF fails to do so equitably (Cooper, 2019; Harper, 2018). This means Black administrators take it upon themselves to play an influential role in reversing the academic harm the NIF has imposed upon Black educational pursuits, influencing Black administrators to

engage in “racialized organizational scripts”<sup>5</sup>(Ray, 2019, p. 37). Also, *racialized organizational scripts* pressure Black administrators to take on additional responsibilities due to their racial and gender identity (Price et al., 2017). The manifestation of these scripts looks like Black female administrators being “best-suited” to work with Black athletes, even if doing so falls outside the bounds of their job responsibilities. Consequently, the racialized organizational script of “black kids who [are] academically at risk” (Price et al., 2017, p. 66) needing the support of a Black woman SWA not working in academic support, is an example of ‘cultural taxation’ (Padilla, 1994) that is embedded in racialized organizations (Price et al., 2017). Black administrators believe in their ability to be an AD, but do not perceive the AD position as being a *career choice* or an *expected* option in their career accession (Wells & Kerwin, 2017). Thus, the agency of Black administrators, in terms of expectancy and choice, is likely to be influenced by “unmarked Whiteness” (see Moore, 2008; Ray, 2019, p. 38), which addresses the symbolic and silent manifestation of AD positions being for White collegiate sport administrators (Lapchick et al., 2019). As a racialized organization the NIF segregates Black collegiate athletic administrators “into the lower tiers [which] diminishes one’s ability (agency) to influence organizational procedures [in the] larger institutional environment” (Ray, 2019, p. 36). Such segregation is evident as the NIF continues to celebrate historic “first” hires, demonstrating the significance of racial symbolism, as Black leaders are more recently attaining contemporary positions long held by White leaders. For example, “the first” Black female AD of a Power 5 conference occurred in 2017 (Carla Williams), “the first” Black AD at University of California Los Angeles in its 101-year history occurred in 2020 (Martin Jarmond) (Skalji, 2021), “the first” Black female to lead a Southeastern Conference (SEC) athletics program occurred in 2020 (Candance Storey) (Lewis, 2021), and “the first” Black Power 5 conference commissioner in 2019 (Kevin Warren) (Ryan, 2019). These historic and celebratory achievements illuminate how there is a lack of agency in the career accession of Black collegiate sport administrators in the Division I Power 5 conferences. The institutional prowess of the Power 5 conferences allows these departments to operate quasi-independently from broader NCAA bylaws (Dodd, 2020) as their ability to set their own standard gives these conferences a level of autonomy to inform the larger “institutional environment” (Ray, 2019, p. 36) in a manner that differs from non-Power 5 conferences. Thus, the aforementioned contemporary hires demonstrate how Black leaders are hindered in their agentic abilities to lead in the wealthiest NIF conferences and athletic departments, exemplifying how the NIF is racially segregated positioning Black leaders to lead less wealthy conferences or lead in low tiers of the organizational field (Ray, 2019).

*The Experiences of Black NCAA Collegiate Coaches.* In racialized organizations, one’s career navigation is more heavily influenced by racial identity, rather than experience and competency (Ray, 2019). When examining the agency of Black coaches in the NIF, scholarship typically focus on coaches in women’s and men’s basketball and football. The focus on these sports is in part due to the athletes who play these sports, as Black males represent 53% of Division I men’s basketball athletes and 45% of Division I football athletes, and Black females represent 42% of Division I women’s basketball athletes (Lapchick, 2019). Thus, scholars examining issues of career ascension in the basketball and football, acknowledge the racial disparities between the athletes participating and the coaches leading these sports (see Figure 1).

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<sup>5</sup> Racialized organizational scripts are organizational beliefs that perceive certain racial groups to be better positioned for specific organizational tasks.

The data illuminates the significance of *racialized organizational scripts* (Ray, 2019), as it is acceptable for Black athletes to be over-represented in basketball and football, while the opportunity to lead in these sports demonstrates under-representation of Black coaches (Agyemang & Delorme, 2010; Borland & Bruening, 2010; Cunningham, 2010; Singer et al., 2010; Walker & Melton, 2015).

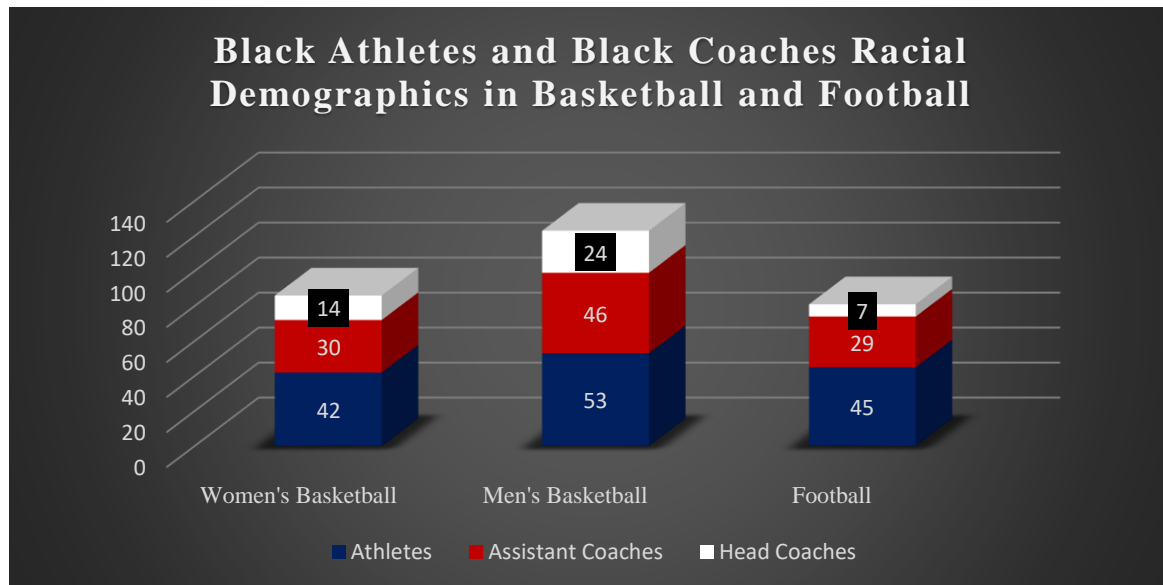


Figure 1.  
Athlete and Coach Racial Demographics in Basketball and Football<sup>6</sup>

Racialized organizations assign and task racial minorities with job responsibilities that limit their agency and reinforce White positionality in organizational hierarchy (Ray, 2019; see Bopp et al., 2019). The NIF perpetuates this aspect of racialized organizations as Black assistant coaches are subjected to job responsibilities and positions that are less likely to lead to head coaching opportunities (Turick & Bopp, 2016). Recent hiring patterns depict the offensive coordinator position as a career pathway for becoming a Division I FBS head coach (Turick & Bopp, 2016). However, from 2008-2015, an average of 9 Black coaches held the offensive coordinator position out of 130 FBS football programs, reinforcing White coaches' positionality and Black coaches' limited agency. This statistic illuminates how racialized organizations "limit the personal agency" of subordinate groups and "magnify the agency" of dominant racial groups (Ray, p. 2019, p. 36). Moreover, White head coaches are given longer tenure lengths (close to a year more) and win more games in their first season as a head coach, in comparison to Black head coaches (Turick & Bopp, 2016). The differential treatment in tenure length, 'magnifies' (Ray, 2019) the agency and professional opportunities of White coaches, demonstrating how racial discrimination is embedded in organizational decision-making. Differential experiences in career navigation leads to disparate career opportunities for White and Black football coaches (Cunningham & Bopp, 2010; Day, 2015). After nine seasons in an assistant coach position, 25% of White assistant coaches transition to an executive position (head coach, coordinator), whereas

<sup>6</sup> The data on assistant women's basketball coaches only includes female coaches, as Black male coaches represent 12% of Division I women's basketball.

it takes Black assistant coaches 13 seasons to transition to an executive position (Day, 2015). Additionally, we learn that Black coaches in central positions (i.e., quarterback, offensive line, linebacker, defensive back) and White coaches in non-central positions (wide receiver, running back, tight end, and defensive line) are equally as likely to transition to executive positions, but the inverse of this dynamic does not equally benefit Black coaches (Day, 2015). Cunningham and Bopp (2010) found that media biases also assist in diminishing the agency of Black football coaches as media portrayals of newly hired coaches are more likely to emphasize the coaching experiences of White coaches in comparison to Black coaches. Diminishing or downplaying a Black coaches' coaching experience, perpetuates *racialized organizational scripts* (Ray, 2019) of Black coaches being hired for their other attributes, like recruiting, rather than their competency and experience. In racialized organizations, agency is temporal. Perceptions of agency are informed by historical experiences that then inform contemporary lived experiences (Ray, 2019). This attribute of racialized organizations is relevant to Black football coaches because the temporal nature of their agency is evident in only four Black head coaches of Division I FBS programs being rehired at the FBS level once terminated from their initial post. However, four White SEC coaches during the 2020 season were on their second or third opportunity of being rehired at the FBS level after being terminated from their initial FBS university (Schrotenboer, 2020). To exacerbate the racialized aspect of agency for Black football coaches, "...only six major-college programs ever hired a second Black head coach after previously firing their first" (Schrotenboer, 2020, para 10). Thus, we see how sustained histories of racial discrimination, inform the contemporary and future career aspirations for Black football coaches (Cunningham et al., 2006), but in racialized organizational fields, career aspirations are not enough to disrupt how racialized processes and structures limit the agentic abilities of Black football coaches in the NIF (Ray, 2019).

*Black Male NCAA Athletes and Educational Agency.* According to Ray (2019), racialized organizations shape and control the "...time use" and "...influence the amount of control [marginalized racialized groups] exercise over their time, their ability to plan non-work time, and their ability to plot the future" (p. 36). These characteristics of racialized organizations are relevant to Black male athletes (BMA) participating in the NIF, as revenue production and athletic success, takes precedence over their *time* (Ray, 2019), which limits their opportunities and agency to pursue educational pursuits (Comeaux, 2018; Cooper, 2016; Gayles et al., 2018; Singer, 2019).

The NIF is comprised of two competing institutional logics, the NIF is a commercialized commodity and the NIF is an institution supporting the academic interests of collegiate athletes (Gayles et al., 2018; Southall & Staurowsky, 2013; Van Rheenan, 2013). The competing institutional logics of commercialization and educational attainment (Southall et al., 2008) has led to BMA's agency during their collegiate tenure to be aimed at supporting commercial logics (Beamon, 2008; Cooper & Cooper, 2016; Hawkins, 2013), rather than educational logics (Gayles et al., 2018; Harper 2018). Scholarship tends to focus on how the commercialization of men's basketball and football diminishes the academic pursuits of BMAs (Singer, 2019), as they are over-represented in these sports (Harper, 2018; Lapchick, 2019) and these two sports contribute disproportionately to the revenue generated in the NIF (Hawkins, 2013; Jackson, 2020; Van Rheenen, 2013). Although, athletes of non-revenue sports perceive the NIF as disadvantaging their agentic abilities to pursue academic opportunities (Macaulay, 2021), the magnitude of commercialization logics in revenue-generating sports is disparate, given the NIF is *currently*



sustained through BMA labor in basketball and football (Jackson, 2020; Murty et al., 2014; Van Rheen, 2013).

BMA's participating in revenue-generating sports experience structural barriers that limit their agentic opportunities to meaningfully engage in educational pursuits (Cooper, 2016; Gayles et al., 2018; Singer, 2019). These structural barriers "control [the] time use" of Black athletes (Ray, 2019, p. 36), as they report not selecting academic majors of their choosing (Bimper, 2015), are hindered from participating in non-athletic activities (Cooper, 2016), and their social behaviors are hyper-surveilled by administrators (Comeaux, 2018). These barriers control the "future [educational] hopes" (Ray, 2019, p. 36) of BMA's and has led to this population perceiving themselves as "used goods" (Beamon, 2008), given the NIF *uses* their athletic prowess and lacks institutional integrity as it pertains to the needs and time of Black male athletes (Singer, 2009, 2019). John, a Division I Black male basketball player, illuminates issues of control and time as he asserts, "They try to manipulate us and just so many things just to benefit themselves... Sometimes, it's so tough you don't want to believe it because that's cruel, but that's how it is when it's all business" (Cooper & Cooper, 2016, p. 146). Hence, BMA's highlight how "manipulation" or *control* is an attribute of their experience due to logics of commercialization, while also highlighting how their positionality in the NIF leads them to accept this reality, as "one's positionality in racialized organizations shapes agency" or lack thereof (Ray, 2019, p. 36). The NIF controlling the time and agency of BMA's has led to them being hyper-surveilled by athletic departments and athletic administrators (Comeaux, 2018). These hyper-surveillance tactics include closely monitoring the academic and athletic movements of BMA's, emphasizing eligibility over meaningful academic engagement, class checkers, and digital class checking software (Comeaux, 2018). These tactics control the time and agency of BMA's and limit their ability to pursue a meaningful education (Comeaux, 2018). The emphasis upon eligibility has led BMA's to perceive their educational pursuits to be matters they do not control (Bimper, 2015). Additionally, academic clustering (Case et al., 1987), the tactic of structurally concentrating athletes in particular academic majors (Houston & Baber, 2017), is another hyper-surveillance tactic limiting the lack of educational agency BMA's have. This control tactic is more likely to hinder the educational pursuits of BMA's, in comparison to White athletes (Houston & Baber, 2017). Thus the "future hopes (read: educational and career pursuits)" (Ray, 2019, p. 36) of BMA's are hindered in comparison to White athletes, as "over seventy percent of athletic [departments] had significant levels of academic clustering for [Black and other historically marginalized groups] athletes and only thirty-eight percent for White male athletes" (Houston & Baber, p. 232). Thus, academic clustering is an issue for White athletes, but the pervasiveness of academic clustering among BMA's undermines the essentiality of their racialized labor within the NIF. Rather than attributing Black male's educational pursuits to intrapersonal issues, we must consider how organizational mechanisms controlling the time and agency of BMA's (Comeaux, 2018; Houston & Baber, 2017) intersect with commercialized logics of the NIF (Southall & Staurowsky, 2013) and create racialized athletic departments with racialized structures hindering BMA's educational pursuits (Ray, 2019).

### *Tenet 2: Racialized Organizations Legitimate Processes for Unequal Resource Distribution*

When organizations have racialized structures and processes, it legitimates unequal resource distribution to benefit dominant groups (Ray, 2019). In racialized organizations,

segregation is inherent and marginalized groups have limited access to organizational resources (Ray, 2019). Racialized organizations remain intact due to “customs, policy, and law” (Ray, p. 38). As it relates to the NIF, amateurism and other NCAA bylaws act as *customs, policies* and *laws* legitimizing unequal resource distribution to benefit Division I historically White institutions (HWI) and White actors, while marginalizing historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU) and Black athletes.

Amateurism is a foundational institutional logic of the NIF prescribing collegiate athletes cannot derive financial compensation from their performance because they are not employees (Nite, 2017; Southall & Staurowsky, 2013), but more recently can derive financial compensation from their name, image and likeness (NIL) (NCAA, 2021). In the NIF, financial resources for men’s basketball and football can be secured through post-season athletic success, like Bowl Championship Series, the NCAA March Madness Tournament, and select universities and conferences can secure financial resources through television and media contracts. However, athletic teams are barred from some of these opportunities if they fail to comply with the NCAA Academic Progress Rates (APR). Thus far, since the institutionalization of APR, the institutional policy has disproportionately harmed HBCUs in comparison to HWIs. In this section, we will discuss how the institutional legitimation of amateurism and APR has led to unequal resource distribution in the NIF to benefit White institutions and marginalize Black athletes and Black institutions (Ositelu, 2019; Squirres, 2021; Westman, 2018).

*Black Athletes, Amateurism, and Unequal Resource Distribution.* When applying a racialized organization perspective, amateurism is a *facially-neutral* institutional logic preserving and maintaining the property interest of White institutions and whiteness (Ray, 2019). The NCAA actively works to maintain that amateurism is an institutional policy preserving the educational values of higher education and enabling equitable playing conditions for *all* NCAA member institutions and athletes (Nite, 2017; Southall et al., 2008), without considering how this egalitarian approach inequitably harms BMAs (Gayles et al., 2018; Hawkins, 2013; vanRheenen, 2013). The NIF is financially lucrative largely because of BMA labor in Division I men’s basketball and football at historically White institutions (HWI) (Hawkins, 2013) and amateurism maintains that these athletes do not receive direct financial compensation for how their athletic accomplishments maintain the NIF’s financial model (Gayles et al., 2018; Huma & Staurowsky, 2012).

The NIF, in its contemporary form, has legitimized multi-million-dollar basketball and football coaching contracts, extravagant athletic complexes, and multi-million-dollar media contracts (Berkowitz, 2020; Grenardo, 2016; Norcera & Strauss, 2018). Additionally, we must consider the ancillary markets that benefit from BMA labor, as the evolution of the 24-hour sport news cycles focused on collegiate Power 5 conferences illuminates the commercialization of the NIF. Despite these contemporary financial changes, amateurism continues to be touted. However, dissolving this embedded logic would illuminate how this *facially neutral* logic (Ray, 2019) disadvantages Black athletes (Bimper, 2015; Gayles et al., 2018; Hawkins, 2013; Van Rheenan, 2013) and benefits White coaches (Grenardo, 2016), White athletic departments (Hawkins, 2013), and upper to middle-class White student-athletes (Hextrum, 2021; Jackson, 2018).

Amateurism asserts that athletes should be motivated by educational pursuits and the social, physical, and mental benefits of participating in collegiate athletics (Comeaux, 2019). However, these aims do not align with athletes participating in men’s basketball and football at

major NIF institutions (Gayles et al., 2018). In the Power-5 conferences, Black males represent 55% of football teams and 56% of basketball teams, and only 2.4% of undergraduates (Harper, 2018). When examining revenue generation per sport, University of Kentucky basketball and football generated \$28 million and \$36 million respectively, with Black males representing 57% and 59% of these teams (Gayles et al., 2018). These two sports alone generated 52% of the athletic department's revenue in 2016 (Gaston-Gayles et al., 2018). Similar financial data are evident across Division I FBS athletic departments (see Table 2). Huma and Staurowsky (2012) found that between 2011-2015, FBS men's basketball and football athletes were denied \$6.2 billion of their market value due to amateurism bylaws. This market value has now evolved to \$17 billion when offsetting for aid provided athletes and \$21 billion when not offsetting for aid between 2005 and 2019 (Tatos & Singer, 2021). This revenue maintains White athletic departments and positions White coaches to be benefactors, as the highest-ranking revenue generating athletic departments are HWIs and the top 10 highest paid football coaches are White, except James Franklin at University of Pennsylvania who is Black (Cooper, forthcoming). As another example, the University of Texas (UT) athletic department revenue during the 2018-2019 academic term was \$223.8 million, and football generated \$146.8 million (Davis, 2021). Thus, 65% of the total revenue was generated by a football program that has a Black male population close to 70%, while the UT Black male undergraduate population was 1.6% (Davis, 2021; Harper, 2018). In the wealthiest athletic departments (Power 5 Conferences), Black male athletes in men's basketball and football represent an average of 65% of the athletic participation (see Table 1). Despite being under-represented as collegiate students, men's basketball teams primarily consisting of Black males, generated \$1.1 billion in the 2019 NCAA Men's March Madness tournament. Although these numbers are startling, in racialized organizations, this type of racial segregation and resource distribution is to be expected and perceived as legitimate (Ray, 2019). Amateurism fuels the property interests of White leaders and mostly White organizations (Ray, 2019) by asserting the aforementioned generated revenue must be distributed amongst the 1,200 NCAA member institutions (NCAAb, n.d.), an egalitarian approach operating in a racialized capitalist market. Moreover, 64% of NCAA athletes are White and participate in upper to middle class sports (e.g., rowing, swimming and diving; lacrosse) that do not generate revenue to support the NIF in the same capacity as men's basketball and football (Hextrum, 2021). According to Garthwaite et al. (2020), less than 7% of FBS revenue from men's basketball and football is paid back to these athletes via academic scholarships and cost of attendance. Jackson (2018) illuminates how this unequal resource distribution in the NIF is a portrayal of "White privilege," as White athletes earn a meaningful education at elite schools due to the athletic labor of Black males in men's basketball and football (para.19). Such unequal resource distribution highlights how "[race] is real in its consequences", as the consequences of amateurism have stratified the economic and social prowess of BMAs to benefit White institutional interests (Ray, 2019, p. 40). Lastly, Nigel Hayes, a former University of Wisconsin men's basketball player states,

Most are aware these university teams, primarily men's basketball and football, are filled with Black players. Making money for usually white people and not being able to have their share of a billion dollar plus industry. So, the visual you get is white institutions recruit Black talent to make millions. While dealing with all the other hurdles of being Black (Kalman-Lamb et al., para.6, 2021)

Consequently, amateurism is a “reification of racism (Ray, 2019, p. 40),” as amateurism privies equality and forgoes concerns of equity at the expense of Black male athletic labor to benefit White institutions. Thus, the racialized nature of resource allocation and resource distribution in the NIF is legitimated through institutional bylaws (amateurism) and exacerbates the role of policies, laws, and customs in maintaining racialized organizations (Ray, 2019).

Table 1

*Top Revenue Historically White Athletic Departments<sup>7</sup> and Percentage of Black Male Men’s Basketball and Football Athletes<sup>8</sup>*

Top Revenue Generating Historically White Institution (HWI) Athletic Departments in 2018-2019		Annual Total Revenue	Percent of Black Male Undergraduates (2018)	Percent of Black Male Basketball and Football Athletes (2018)
The University of Texas		\$223.8 million	1.6%	68.3%
Texas A&M University		\$212.7 million	1.5%	68.3%
The Ohio State University		\$210.5 million	2.3%	67%
University of Michigan		\$197.8 million	2.7%	52.6%
University of Georgia		\$174 million	2.7%	72.6

*Academic Progress Rates and Unequal Resource Distribution.* As previously discussed, racialized organizations have “facially neutral” policies and processes that legitimate unequal resource distribution to benefit White institutions and White interests (Ray, 2019). An example of a “facially neutral” policy in the NIF is the institutionalization of Academic Progress Rates (APR) in 2003 (NCAA, n.d.). To promote and establish academic standards, the NCAA created APR bylaws, a team-based metric seeking to establish accountability for student-athlete eligibility and retention (NCAA, n.d.). NCAA sport teams must achieve at least an APR score of 930 for an average of four years to participate in NCAA championships. Moreover, teams failing to achieve an APR score of 930 can receive the following penalties: (a) a reduced number of athletic scholarships, (b) barred from post-season competition, (c) reduced practice hours, (d) fewer in-season games, e. coaching suspensions, (f) being removed as an NCAA affiliated sport (level three penalty) (Ositelu, 2019; Westman, 2018). Although the intent of APR is to promote student-athlete retention (NCAA, n.d.), in praxis, APR policies uniquely disadvantage HBCU athletic departments and HBCU athletes (Cooper, Cavil, & Cheeks, 2014; Westman). For example, Cooper et al. (2014) found that HBCUs accounted for one-third of Division 1 APR penalties during the 2009-2010 season and 50% of level one and level three APR penalties in 2012. In 2019, HBCUs accounted for 75% of teams penalized for failing to achieve the benchmark APR score of 930 (Ositelu, 2019). Westman (2018) found race, not resources, to be a more significant predictor of APR penalties, as similar resourced HWI institutions did not receive similar APR penalties (Westman, 2018). These penalties demarcate HBCU athletic teams as “incapable” of achieving academic success, but in reality, APR policies have failed to

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved from USA Today (2020). NCAA Finances. Retrieved from <https://sports.usatoday.com/ncaa/finances/>

<sup>8</sup> Harper, S. R. (2018). Black male student-athletes and racial inequities in NCAA Division I college sports: 2018 edition. Los Angeles: University of Southern California, Race and Equity Center.

consider the educational mission, cultural significance, and financial resources of HBCUs (Cooper et al., 2014; Rochelle, 2020), as HBCUs have a tradition of educating low-income and first-generation students (Rochelle, 2020; Westman, 2018). Rochelle (2020) conducted a case study at Prairie View A&M University (a HBCU) and examined coaches and athletic administrators' perceptions of APR. Participants explicitly perceived APR to be discriminatory and inequitable, as a coach shared,

APR is designed to measure the success of programs only through the eyes of the scholarship athletes. It fails to look at all factors that make up teams and learning outcomes of all students on the rosters but benefit Power 5 schools because they have more resources than other schools (Rochelle, 2020, p. 60)

APR has standardized "academic success" to have a shared understanding across disparate Academic institutions, regardless of an institution's educational mission and resources. Hence, the institutional bylaw "does not accurately tell the complete story", specifically the stories of HBCUs, as the mechanisms for achieving an APR score of 930 benefits wealthy White academic institutions given their resources (Rochelle, 2020, p. 60). As one participant highlights, some HBCUs have two academic advisors supporting hundreds of athletes, thus, students who need additional academic support "get lost in the daily grind" (p. 59).

The calculation of APR scores ensures inequity between lowered resourced institutions and wealthy institutions persists, as APR scores are only calculated utilizing athletic scholarship athletes, not athletes who receive financial aid in other forms of institutional funding (Ositelu, 2019). This means wealthy White athletic departments can manipulate APR reporting by ensuring historically underserved or students needing more academic assistance are not receiving athletic aid and are provided aid through other financial channels (i.e., boosters, financial aid) (Ositelu, 2019). Moreover, failing to achieve APR benchmarks limits HBCUs opportunities to compete for financial revenue. Given HBCUs are more likely to receive post-season bans due to APR penalties (Westman, 2018), these bans limit their opportunities to compete for financial revenue in NCAA sponsored championship events like March Madness. From a racialized organization analysis, APR policy promotes racial exclusion and disadvantages HBCU's opportunity to secure financial resources in the same manner as wealthy HWIs and similarly resourced HWIs. Ray (2019) concludes that "While White organizations are seen as normative and neutral, non-White organizations are seen as deviations from the norm and often stigmatized" (p. 38). The stigmatization of HBCUs is evident in Table 2, as HBCUs have been 74% of teams banned from post-season play since 2010. APR policies have positioned HBCUS as deviant from wealthy and limited resource HWIs, given only one Power 5 conference has ever received a postseason APR penalty, HBCUs are 43x more likely to receive a postseason ban in comparison to HWIs (see *Manassa v. NCAA* (2021), and HBCUs are six to eight times more likely to receive a postseason ban in comparison to similarly resourced institutions (Westman, 2018). Henceforth, a "facially neutral" policy has harmed the past, contemporary, and future financial opportunities of HBCUs and HBCU athletes – a main argument presented in a recent class action complaint filed in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana by former HBCU athletes. An argument presented in the class action suit challenges us to refrain from solely thinking of unequal resource distribution to be financial resources derived from March Madness:

The NCAA's postseason bans deny players the opportunity to further compete with their peers; further develop their athletic careers; receive greater media coverage and acclaim; improve and achieve meaningful play-based metrics, which affects subsequent career trajectory; and capture the attention of and access to recruiters and sponsors, including the lucrative post-college benefits they offer... The full opportunity to compete also impacts student-athletes' opportunities for careers in coaching and the business of collegiate and professional sports (*Manassa v. NCAA*, 2021, para. 191-192)

As highlighted above, resource distribution and financial opportunities in the NIF comes in many forms. The intent of neutrality in APR policies has resulted in racialized institutional bylaws that promote unequal resource distribution in the NIF to benefit White institutions, while disparately impacting HBCUs and affiliated athletes.

*Table 2*

Athletic Departments with Highest Black Male Representation in Basketball and Football Per Power 5 Conference

Universities <sup>9</sup> with Highest Percentage of Black Male Men's Basketball and Football Representation	Percent of Black Male Basketball and Football Athletes (2018)	Reported Revenue from Men's Basketball and Football (Equity in Athletics Data Analysis)	% of Athletic Department Revenue from Men's Basketball and Football	Total <sup>10</sup> Athletic Department Revenue
University of Louisville (ACC)	75%	90 million	60%	148.6 million
The Ohio State University (Big 10)	67%	140 million	94%	147.7 million
Texas Christian University (Big 12)	68%	80 million	67.7%	118.4 million
Arizona State University (PAC 12)	58%	49.6 million	48.7%	101.8 million
Mississippi State University (SEC)	83%	46 million	45.3%	101.4 million

Recent data from winning HBCU athletic programs bolster the arguments presented in *Manassa* (Squires, 2021) and scholarship from Willis and Black (ahead of print) captures what unequal resource distribution looks like in a racialized organization. For example, during the 2021 track and field season, North Carolina A&T achieved athletic success at the collegiate level and alums found success in the summer Olympics (Squires, 2021). This success garnished additional television and media coverage for the university brand and Cephas B. Naanwaab, NC A&T economics professor, estimated this exposure to be worth \$200-\$600 million (Squires, 2021). Additionally, Dr. Kenyatta Cavil estimated that Texas Southern Men's Basketball first round victory in the 2021 March Madness tournament is valued at \$90 million-\$100 million in

<sup>9</sup> Data on Black male representation is provided by Harper (2018). The six conferences examined in Harper (2018) are as follows: Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Big Ten Conference (Big 10), Big 12 Conference (Big 12), Pac 12 Conference, Southeastern Conference (SEC).

<sup>10</sup> Data is collected from Equity in Athletics Data Analysis (EADA). Reported total revenues do not include private donations or revenue from being a member of a Power 5 conference (Big 10, Big 12, Pac 12, SEC, ACC).

media exposure and triggered the “Flutie Effect” (Squires, 2021). However, this exposure (and the subsequent financial impact) only occurred because Texas Southern was APR compliant. Consequently, less resourced HBCUs are vying for the same opportunities, as Norfolk State University saw an increase in bookstore sales, athletic donations, and exponential increase in google searches after their first-round win in the 2021 March Madness tournament (Squires, 2021).

Relatedly, Willis and Black (ahead of print) found that “HBCUs, on average, receive around \$6,600 less to participate in a guarantee [men’s basketball] game[s] relative to non-HBCUs” during the 2019 -2020 season. Their analysis, like the scholarship of Westman (2018), found race to be heavily influential factor in this inequitable practice and structure. More specifically, White dominant athletic departments create contracts with HBCU athletic programs that reflect lower payouts compared to non-HBCU athletic programs. This data is picturesque of how racialized organizations legitimate unequal resource distribution on the axis of race.

Lastly, the reliance on APR scores ignores the racial inequities extant in HWI athletic departments and higher education institutions, as Graduation Success Rates (GSRs) illuminate how prominent (e.g., athletically successful and financially lucrative) athletic departments fail Black athletes. For example, Jackson (2020) essentially asks: What if HWI athletic teams with a Black male GSR under 50% and GSR that differed 25 percentage points from White male athletes on the same team resulted penalties? If such a policy was implemented, the following HWI men’s basketball teams would be penalized for having a 25-percentage point difference in GSR scores for White and Black players: Dayton, Baylor, San Diego State, Kentucky, Maryland, Oregon, Brigham Young, Louisville, Ohio State, Auburn, Houston, Stephen F. Austin, Providence, Saint Mary’s, Arizona and Louisiana State (Jackson, 2020). HWIs have evaded the stigmatization associated with APR scores, relegating HWIs as the norm (Ray, 2019), but racial disparities in GSR scores illuminate the need for academic reform in the NIF not solely in HBCUs.

### *Tenet 3: Whiteness is a Credential*

Organizations with racialized structures and processes prioritize Whiteness as a property interest, allowing White individuals to gain access and receive unearned merit/advantages (Ray, 2019). Ray (2019) explains how whiteness operates in organizational structures by asserting, “Whiteness is a credential providing access to organizational resources, legitimizing work hierarchies, and expanding White agency” (Ray, 2019, p. 41). Hence, White individuals garnish organizational power simply for being White in racialized organizations (Ray, 2019) (see Figure 2).

Regarding the NIF, whiteness is a credential when examining racial leadership demographics of influential collegiate sport leadership positions (Lapchick et al., 2020) (see Table 3) and is evident in the experiences of Black collegiate sport administrators (Borland & Bruening, 2010; Champagne, 2017; Day, 2015; Howe & Rocklin, 2020; Steward & Cunningham, 2015; Walker & Melton, 2015). Black collegiate sport administrators do not perceive their respective organizations as race neutral. Rather, they interpret race to be a legitimized organizational resource, as whiteness is assumed to be the norm and standard (Ray, 2019).

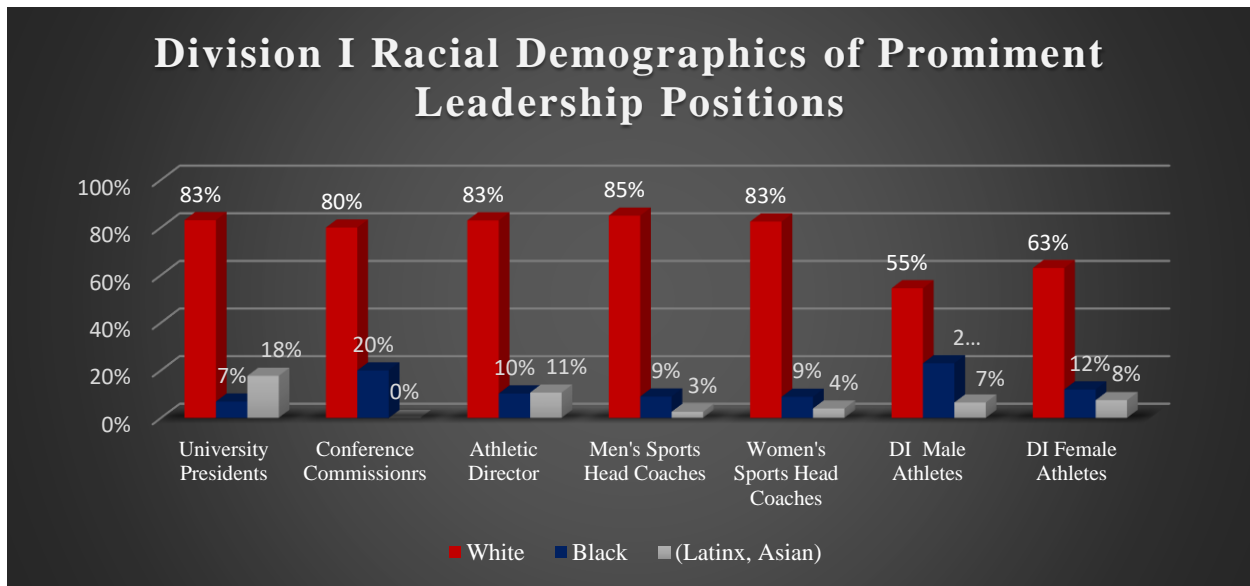


Figure 2. Division 1 Racial Demographics of Prominent Leadership Positions

Table 3  
Frequency of HBCU Post Season Bans<sup>11</sup>

Year	Number of HBCU Teams Receiving a Post Season Ban	Total Number of Teams Receiving a Post Season Ban	Percentage of Banned Teams that Were from HBCUs
2010-2011	5	14	36%
2011-2012	10	13	77%
2012-2013	23	42	55%
2013-2014	17	21	81%
2014-2015	21	22	95%
2015-2016	14	16	88%
2016-2017	7	8	88%
2017-2018	6	8	75%
2018-2019	11	15	73%
2019-2020	6	8	75%
2020-2021	11	15	73%

**Racialized Organizational Hierarchies.** The credentialing of whiteness is evident as applicants for athletic director positions perceived as “too Black” or too closely aligned with Black interests, are perceived as less-desirable candidates (Steward & Cunningham, 2015). Steward and Cunningham’s findings highlight how a White racial identity or a minimized Black racial identity, benefits applicants applying to the AD position. Consequently, the credentialing of whiteness can deny access to Black individuals before they formally work for an athletic

<sup>11</sup> Retrieved from *Manassa, Daseant, Freeman v. NCAA (2021)*.



department, reinforcing racialized organizational hierarchies and illuminating how White agency is taken for granted in the NIF.

Black assistant female women's basketball coaches perceive White women assistant coaches as receiving more access to the head coach position because their racial identity aligns with White male ADs (Borland & Bruening, 2010). Black participants in Howe and Rocklin's (2020) study perceive entry positions in fundraising to be reserved for White administrators and this racialized job placement creates a pipeline for White administrators to achieve prominent leadership positions, specifically the AD position. These studies demonstrate how Black administrators are less likely to pinpoint human capital issues (training, education, coaching experience, etc.) as marginalizing their organizational experiences, illuminating the significance of their racial identity in their professional experiences (Borland & Bruening, 2010; Howe & Rocklin, 2020). Wright et al. (2011) explored to what extent human capital investments (training, education, coaching experience, etc.) informed the career trajectories of White men, women, and racial minorities attaining the AD position. Their results found no statistical differences between the aforementioned demographic groups and their human capital investments. Henceforth, hiring practices continue to advantage White men (and at times White women), even though, women and racially minoritized groups have comparable training, experiences, and education (Wright et al., 2011).

The credentialing of whiteness in HWIs has led to Black women ADs navigating perceptions of being an affirmative action hire (McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017). The credentialing of whiteness influences Black women ADs to doubt their professional competencies, as one participant shared, “[when] you are the only one that looks like you doing that (e.g., holding the AD position), you may wonder am I really supposed to be here” (p. 400). Although not captured in scholarly publications, Black women head coaches experience similar challenges navigating the credentialing of whiteness in the NIF (The Player's Tribune, 2018). When a collective of prominent Black women Division I head coaches came together during a roundtable, they were asked if they felt the need to alter their presence to appease or make themselves “attractive” hires for White male ADs, Coach Dawn Stanley affirmed:

It's a tough position to be in...Because you look differently than who's sitting across the desk. And you can look the part, you can dress the part, but you're still at a disadvantage. When you're at a [HWI] a lot of times people don't know how to work with you (The Player's Tribune, 2018).

Similar sentiments were expressed by Black female basketball assistant coaches in Borland and Bruening (2010) and Black administrators in Howe and Rocklin (2020) and Price et al. (2017), demonstrating how these Black administrators are keen to how whiteness “legitimizes organizational hierarchies” and their positionality in the NIF (Ray, 2019, p. 41). These findings demonstrate the significance of applying a racialized organization perspective to the NIF, as we need to move beyond perceiving racial discrimination as solely perpetuated by “bad” organizational actors. Rather, we must transition to perceiving race as legitimized in organizational hierarchies and processes across the NIF, resulting in systemic advantage for White administrators (Ray, 2019).

*Whiteness in Organizational Symbols.* The taken-for-granted aspect of whiteness has led to NIF athletic departments naming their football stadium/practice facilities and basketball

arenas after White racist figureheads. Turick et al. (2020) found that 18 Division I football and basketball facilities were named after individuals known for: (a) holding racist ideologies against people of color (4), (b) individuals who enacted racism towards student-athletes (9), (c) individuals who upheld racism through Confederate ties and ideologies (2), (d) and individuals known for upholding racist organizational practices (3). This affirmative framing of whiteness (i.e., stadium naming rights) exacerbates its unearned merit and illuminates how whiteness is reproduced through institutional and organizational symbols.

The dangers of affirming whiteness in the NIF is evident in a collection of emails from UT athletic department donors and alumni who vehemently rejected “The Eyes of Texas”<sup>12</sup> (a university cultural song) being protested by UT football players, a 70% Black team (McGee, 2021). The unofficial university song has been questioned for decades, as the song has historical ties to Confederate general Robert E. Lee and was performed at on-campus minstrel shows by UT Austin students (Cramer & Diaz, 2020). In a collection of emails from UT Austin donors, we learn that whiteness not only provides access to organizational resources in racialized organizations (Ray, 2019), but whiteness also has the ability to control organizational resources. For example, university donors and alumni threatened to pull their financial contributions to the university and the athletic department if “The Eyes of Texas” was rewritten or removed from the university. These donors would rather uphold a cultural song with a racialized anti-Black history that memorializes whiteness, rather than reimagine an anti-racist cultural tradition. This notion of whiteness controlling organizational resources is evident in the following email from Larry Wilkinson, a White donor and 1970 UT alumni,

Less than 6% of our current student body is black...The tail cannot be allowed to wag the dog...and the dog must instead stand up for what is right. Nothing forces those students to attend UT Austin. Encourage them to select an alternate school...NOW!  
(McGee, 2021, para. 33).

The excerpt elucidates how a White (presumably wealthy) donor attempted to minimize the harm of “The Eyes of Texas” by arguing Black students on campus (the tail) should not dictate the dominant group (the dog) because their (or White) organizational influence exceeds that of the 6% Black student population.

A similar credentialing of whiteness can be seen in research on Texas A&M alumni and fan perceptions of former Texas A&M football players who sat or knelt during the national anthem as NFL players. Oshiro et al. (2020) found that Texas A&M fans and alumni use their social capital and whiteness in online community spaces to characterize Texas A&M football players as “anti-American, bad Aggies (depending on the degree to which each athlete spoke out), dumb or misguided sheep, and thugs” (Oshiro et al., 2020, p. 15). Although donors and fans are often perceived as ancillary parties in the NIF, we must be cognizant of how they weaponize their whiteness by threatening to control organizational resources (McGee, 2021) and attempt to characterize Black athletes engaging in activism negatively through a White gaze (Oshiro et al., 2020), which can have implications upon how future Black athletes engage in activist efforts.

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<sup>12</sup> In the summer of 2020, UT Austin football players created a list of demands that they perceived as promoting racial equity within the university. One of these demands included discontinuing to sing “The Eyes of Texas” after athletic competitions, the unofficial university fight of UT Austin (Cramer & Diaz, 2020).

*Whiteness and White Athletes.* From a racialized organization perspective, whiteness should be perceived as operating within multiple spheres of the NIF, including the experiences of White student-athletes, as they benefit from athletically competing in a racialized organization (Hextrum, 2019, 2021; Vadeboncoeur & Bopp, 2020). Hextrum (2021) specifically draws upon Harris's (1993) theory of whiteness as property to demonstrate how White athletes are normalized in the collegiate athletic space, benefit from mostly White recruiting networks, utilize their social capital to have access to participate in select sports, and lastly, benefit from college admission processes. White athletes' access and navigation of collegiate athletics has led to a lack of racial identity reflection and development (Hextrum, 2019) and an inability to make sense of race, structural inequity, and systemic power in collegiate sport (Vadeboncoeur & Bopp, 2020). Additionally, Keaton (2021) found that White athletes attending HBCUs refrain from engaging in larger societal discourses of race and normalize their positionality in HBCUs by evoking discourses of abstract liberalism, whiteness as property, and colorblindness. Hence, White athletes contribute to the racialized structures, processes, and ideologies operating in the NIF by refraining to reflect upon the significance of their racial identity (Keaton, 2021b; Hextrum, 2019, 2021; Vadeboncoeur & Bopp, 2020), which in turn contributes to a credentialing of whiteness in organizations (Ray, 2019). Conceptualizing the NIF as a racialized organization must consider the organizational and institutional credentialing of White athletes.

#### *Tenet 4: Formalized Rules are Decoupled to Benefit Dominant Group*

Racialized organizations selectively uphold formalized rules that benefit the dominant group and "racialized organizations are likely to apply rules differentially based on the race of the rule-breaker" (Ray, 2019, p. 42). This aspect of racialized organization theory leads us to question to what extent White administrators in the NIF experience decoupled rules that seem inconceivable for Black administrators. In this section, we present several case examples demonstrating how White administrators have benefitted from a decoupling of formalized rules in the NIF and why race (and racism) must be considered when examining how White administrator deviance is perceived differentially in comparison to Black administrators and racially minoritized groups.

In the spring of 2018, Jordan McNair, a University of Maryland football player, died from a heatstroke during spring football workouts (Fazio, 2021). His death spurred several independent investigations resulting in differing depictions of the football program's organizational culture. Reporting conducted by ESPN found that McNair's death was reflective of a "toxic culture" within the football program (Fazio, 2021). While university investigations found that the football program had a "culture where problems festered because too many players feared speaking out," this university investigation did not corroborate the findings of ESPN reporting (Sallee, 2018, para. 3)). The university investigation was prompted by the University of Maryland President, Dr. Wallace Loh, and the legal commission he formed found the football program was not adequately monitored by the athletic department and head coach DJ Durkin. Additionally, the football program strength coach, Mr. Court, was not adequately monitored and his tactics created a culture of fear and a lack of accountability. The report led by the appointed Commission discussed incidents of humiliation, grossly used fear tactics, and a culture where language like "pussy bitch" and "pussy faggot" were commonly used expletives to "encourage" and "motivate" players (Walters Inc, 2018). The investigation found that McNair had a fever of 106 degrees and his symptoms were not properly cared for and medical attention

was not sought in a timely manner. Despite these reported incidents and investigative reports, the University of Maryland Board of Regents voted to reinstate Durkin, however, President Loh overruled the Board and fired Durkin.

Notwithstanding the accusations and investigative reports depicting DJ Durkin's football program as lacking accountability and a culture that could reasonably lead to the death of an athlete, Durkin was hired as an assistant coach at the University of Mississippi as of January 2020, a year and half after the death of Jordan McNair. As previously discussed, racialized organizations apply rules differentially based upon the individual breaking the rules (Ray, 2019). From a racialized organization analysis, we must question to what extent Durkin's racial identity influenced his ability to gain swift employment, despite such insidious reports of his leadership as a head football coach. Moreover, if Durkin were Black, would he be characterized as a "decent person" and would prominent college and National Football League (NFL) coaches advocate for his character (Wolken, 2020), despite the issues that unfolded in his football program?

Durkin is not the only White male coach as of late to receive employment opportunities despite accusations and findings of insidious acts. For example, Kendall Briles, former Baylor University Offensive Coordinator, was accused of contributing to the sexual assault culture of Baylor football during his 2008 - 2016 tenure (The Palm Beach Post, 2017). Despite allegedly using the allure of White women to recruit Black male athletes to the Baylor football program, Briles gained employment as an Offense Coordinator (a critical career advancement position, see Turick & Bopp, 2016) at four FBS institutions and two of these employment opportunities were at Power 5 institutions, Florida State University and University of Arkansas (Brantley, 2019). Additionally, former University of Louisville head men's basketball coach, Rick Pitino, found employment as a head coach at Iona University despite his coaching tenure over the last 10 years including: Federal Bureau Investigations (FBI) of pay-to-play scandals, former employees providing strippers and prostitutes to recruits during on-campus visits, the NCAA vacating Louisville's 2013 national championship, and being found complicit in violating NCAA bylaws. (Thomson, 2020; Witz, 2021).

According to Ray (2019), "Racialized organizations often decouple formal commitments to equity, access, and inclusion from policies and practices that reinforce, or at least do not challenge, existing racial hierarchies" (p. 42). The aforementioned case examples promote, rather than challenge racial hierarchies in the NIF, despite White administrators breaking institutional rules and failing to uphold student-athlete safety, an espoused (but not practiced) NIF logic (Nite & Nauright, 2020). Because whiteness is a credential in the NIF, we must question how the aforementioned White male coaches are legitimized to break rules in a manner that Black coaches are not. The aforementioned case examples received public attention. However, we are unaware of decoupled rule breaking that operates silently in athletic departments to benefit White administrators and perpetuate racialized hierarchies in the NIF.

### *Athletic Diversity and Inclusion Officers Adopting a Racialized Organization Perspective*

The purpose of this conceptual paper was to illuminate how the NIF is a racialized institutional field, in turn revealing the array of organizational and institutional issues of racial inequity that ADIOs will encounter and should address in their leadership agenda. Through a racialized organization perspective, we learn that race is more than a variable in the NIF, as racism is constitutive of NIF organizational and institutional practices, structures, and ideologies.

The socio-political unrest that occurred during the spring/summer of 2020 “appeared” to disrupt the colorblind racist status quo of the NIF (Cooper et al., 2020). In unprecedented circumstances, coaches, athletic departments, and conferences verbally committed to addressing racial inequity. However, these symbolic or well-intended calls for action have focused more upon how society is racially inequitable rather than addressing how the NIF (institutionally and organizationally) is racially inequitable. Thus, we sought to contribute to the literature by drawing upon the theoretical prescriptions of racialized organization theory (Ray, 2019) to demonstrate how the NIF is a racialized organization, in turn, revealing organizational issues ADIOs must incorporate in their leadership agenda.

Regarding issues of agency (e.g., tenet one), ADIOs must disrupt how Black athlete educational agency is devalued for financial profits, as this is an issue of equity and inclusion. Additionally, will ADIO’s leadership agenda address the pervasiveness of whiteness within their respective athletic departments? Specifically, the role of whiteness in leadership ascension (Howe & Rocklin, 2020), athletic facilities (Turick et al., 2020) institutional bylaws (Westman, 2018), and ideologies held by boosters, athletes, and fans (Oshiro et al., 2020). Diversity leadership positions were formed to create organizations that are diverse, inclusive, and equitable (Keaton, 2020). To what extent will ADIOs have the autonomy and/or opportunity to address how bylaws, norms, structures, and ideologies have become legitimized in the NIF to create racialized organizations?

The NIF is at a juncture of race-specific firsts – the first Black AD at UCLA (Martin Jarmond), the first Black female to lead a SEC athletics department (Candance Storey), the first anti-racist initiative, and the first race centered hiring policy (e.g. The Russell Rule). While these historic firsts are exciting, they do not diminish how the NIF historically and contemporaneously aligns with the tenets of a racialized organization (Ray, 2019). We challenge ADIOs to adopt a racialized organization perspective and question/challenge to what extent these historic firsts and other novel DEI specific ventures are meaningful substantive markers of racial inclusivity and organizational and institutional change – as these firsts depict the extent to which whiteness is legitimated (e.g., tenet three) and elevated (e.g., tenet one) in collegiate athletic departments. Consequently, ADIOs seeking to capitalize on this perceived fervor for racial inclusion by challenging the status quo of DEI in collegiate sport, may find that these historic firsts and novel DEI initiatives are actually gestures that maintain legitimacy (Keaton, 2020; Carter et al., in-press).

Athletic departments hiring ADIOs must be honest about the organizational, institutional, and socio-political conditions of ADIO leadership, particularly as many inaugural ADIOs are Black and seek to create inclusive HWI athletic departments (Keaton, 2020). Thus, Black (male and female) ADIO leadership should be studied and perceived as a peculiar conundrum, as NIF athletic departments have hired mostly Black men and women to create inclusive athletic departments in organizational fields that are deeply racialized and gendered. Such a complexity cannot ignore how Black administrators experience racial marginalization in the NIF (see Howe & Rockhill, 2020; Walker & Melton, 2015). Hence, these previously studied experiences on the axis of race must be considered for Black ADIOs, and we should question how does a marginalized individual address or navigate organizational and institutional conditions that were not structured to benefit their identity group? Such a fair and critical question is pertinent, especially for Black women ADIOs as their visibly salient identities directly challenge the gendered and racialized aspects of the NIF.

Lastly, the NIF is hiring ADIOs during a juncture of national workplace interest in diversity leadership positions. According to LinkedIn 2020 data, positions titled *Head of Diversity*, *Director of Diversity*, and *Chief Diversity Officer* experienced an increase of 107%, 75%, and 68%, respectively, compared to 2015 data (Anderson, 2020). Interestingly, Anderson (2020) found that June 2020 (e.g., the “racial reckoning of American society”) experienced a quadruple number of positions posted in comparison to June 2015. This empirical finding aligns with previous research that argued socio-political issues serve as critical pressure levers for the creation of DEI leadership positions (Keaton, 2020). Hence, the popularity of diversity leadership positions means empirical investigations of ADIOs are necessary to acquire a sound understanding of what makes these positions successful (and not successful) organizational leaders.

## Conclusion

By applying a racialized organization analysis to the NIF, we argued race is more than a variable *in* these organizational contexts, but rather racial marginalization is *of* and inherent to NIF ways of operating. This perspective is partially accounted for in other race specific frameworks, like CRT (Cooper et al., 2017; Hawkins, 2013; Singer, 2019). However, many analyses of race in sport are focused on the individual experience of marginalization (Bimper, 2015; Cooper, 2019; Howe & Rocklin, 2020; Singer, 2009, 2019). By drawing upon the theory of racialized organizations (Ray, 2019), individual experiences of marginalization are accounted for (i.e., agency), but more importantly this theory allows for a focus on the organization, or in the case of this paper the organizational field. Thus, this paper extends and contributes to examinations of race (and embedded racism) in sport by perceiving organizations as active contributors of racial injustice and marginalization. We encourage future scholarship to consider how organizations are racialized and to refrain from perceiving race as merely a variable in organizations.

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