



(BLACK)listed: The College Sport Landscape, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and a Theory of Racialized Organizations

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Scholars have explored Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and their athletic spaces to better highlight the uniqueness of these institutions. In doing so, many have illuminated longstanding challenges within these athletic spaces in comparison to their Historically and Predominantly White Institution (HPWI) counterparts. With the recent development of Ray's (2019) Theory of Racialized Organizations, there is now a theoretical framework available to explore and understand how HBCUs are positioned within the broader college sport landscape (CSL). We achieve this by using Ray's framework in conjunction with existing scholarship to apply a cohesive theoretical foundation through a diversely investigated topic. Based upon Ray's suggestions for organizational change, we posit that the current rise of HBCU athletics and athlete empowerment will lead to noteworthy change when supported by scholarship and practice that actively interrogates the racialized structures within college sport.

Keywords: intercollegiate athletics, Minority-Serving Institutions, critical organizational theory

As reported by the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA), the college sport landscape (CSL) is currently comprised of 1,102 schools across three divisional levels. Within this population, 53 are classified as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (NCAA Membership Directory, 2021). Focusing on Division I athletics, 23 of 350 institutions are HBCUs – with the bulk competing solely within HBCU-centric conferences. Going further, the 101 total operating HBCUs currently account for 3% percent of all colleges and universities within the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). Given the sheer underrepresentation of HBCUs coupled with the deeply embedded role of racism and anti-Blackness within American higher education and sport, an in-depth analysis of this sporting space is needed in the journey for institutional integrity and equity (Dancy et. al, 2018; Mustaffa, 2017). Specifically, the CSL warrants an investigation that outlines the role of racialization in the operation of the CSL as it relates to HBCUs. The dynamic between HBCUs and the CSL has been explored across disciplines. To note, scholars have highlighted the disparities between HBCUs and Historically and Predominantly White Institutions (HPWIs) – from institutional, social, and sport settings (Richards et al, 2018; Sav, 2010; Smith & Kant, 2021). Focusing on HBCU athletics, Cheeks and Carter-Francique (2015) signaled the role of institutional distancing between HBCUs and HPWIs – resulting in a schism supported by organizational and social structures. Building from their work, we argue that the overrepresentation of HPWIs within the CSL led to an overtly HPWI-oriented conception and operation of college athletics.

The purpose of this study is to illuminate how multiple components of the college athletics realm has operated through a racialized lens – often to the detriment of HBCU athletics. This is achieved by synthesizing literature across various methodological approaches, theoretical underpinnings, and practical contexts to align with Ray's (2019) theory of racialized organizations. While the contributions of existing scholarship have aided in enriching the understanding and dialogue regarding HBCU athletics within the CSL, the lack of a fully-aligning theoretical foundation is missing. Given the novelty of Ray's (2019) theory, the integration into sport management is within the early stages. To note, Keaton and Cooper (2022) sparked the integration of this theory into the field by critically analyzing the NCAA institutional field (NIF) as a racialized organization due to the embedded nature of race and racialization within higher education, sport, and the intersection of both as a capitalist enterprise. To build upon their work that highlighted the pervasiveness of racialization within the NIF, this manuscript is presented through an HBCU-focused lens that explores the racialized organizational operations of multiple components of the CSL (media, resource allocation, governance, and social discourse). To support the purpose of this study, Frisby (2005) highlighted the importance of critical approaches within sport management – particularly organizational research. As noted by Frisby, critical approaches towards sport organization studies have been underrepresented and underutilized. Gammelsaeter (2021), along with Newman (2014), highlight the importance of including more sociocultural and critical perspectives into all facets of sport management research and practice.

Contextualizing the College Sport Landscape

Within organizational research, the primary perspectives and approaches draw from Perrowian and Weberian models (Perrow, 1991). While Weber holds the perspective that organizations are inherently bureaucratic and separate from human and societal interference, Perrow argues that organizations are socially embedded and not only contribute to society, but

society contributes to the operation of the organization. With college athletics consisting of multiple components (media, policy, athletic output, etc.), each element should be considered when investigating the operation of college sport as an organization because each of these components are impacted by societal trends. By viewing the CSL as a collaborative unit, Ray's (2019) theory of racialized organizations illuminates the role of racialization within the operation and culture of college athletics. Although the definition of racialization has undergone continuous development, the operationalized definition within this manuscript follows the process presented by Gans (2017), which posits that the racialization process is progression from ascribing social meaning to differing racial groups and expanding those differences into material domains, e.g. economics, politics, organizational structures, and inter-generational social structures. Gans further asserts that this racialization process highlights the white American emotional responses to non-white neighborhoods, the zoning and subsequent allocation of resources to non-white communities, and the correlation between wages and the racialization of occupations. The process of racialization extends across domains and contexts – which exposes the propensity for racialization to become embedded in structures and systems.

Within this manuscript, the CSL is presented through a Division I context to highlight that while there are HBCUs on the highest levels of college sport competition, the racialized superstructure persists. Going further given the presence and historic prominence of Division I athletics, employing this critical exploration uncovers the presence and operation of racialization on a larger and more visible stage, which presents ample opportunities for future scholarship and practice. By illuminating this phenomenon on a larger scale, future works can explore the nuances of the Division II CSL as it pertains to HBCU athletics. Given the structural differences between Division I and Division II athletics within NCAA governance, coupled with common institutional differences (funding, sport-based resources, and institutional resources), and media platforms (NCAA, 2022) – we believe that Division II HBCU athletics should be explored within their own context. To further contextualize the CSL, the components of the college sport landscape are: funding and resource allocation, media discourse and subsequent social perception, and the role of governing bodies in the operation of these units (Cheeks, 2016; Cheeks & Carter-Francique, 2015; Roberts, 2020). Although not exhaustive, each of these areas contribute to the broader operation and understanding of higher education, athletics, and the intersection of both.

Funding and Resources

Racialized funding structures serve as the foundation in differences between HBCUs and HPWI. As noted by Boland and Gasman (2014), HBCUs have been historically underfunded and structurally underserved by local, state, and federal governments. From a sporting perspective, scholars have noted the role of converging interests as HWPIs have amassed generational wealth following the integration of their athletics programs while simultaneously limiting the same opportunities for growth within HBCUs (Cheeks, 2016; Cheeks & Carter-Francique, 2015; Cooper et al., 2014; Cooper et al., 2017). Although some view the integration of college sport through an altruistic lens, Cooper and colleagues (2017) argued that the embedded racialization of higher education and sport fueled the decision to integrate to reclaim athletic superiority. Due to the mass exodus of talent from HBCUs to HPWIs, growing opportunities for media representation, revenue generation, and facility development were diminished (Cooper, 2012; Cooper et al., 2014; Hodge et al, 2008). Going further, the stark contrast in resource attainment places HBCU athletic programs in the precarious position of scheduling guarantee games (Jones & Black, 2021). The participation in these games are framed as precarious because HBCUs take

on the burden of expected lopsided losses to receive mass amounts of money to help bolster athletic and institutional budgets. The combination of these factors highlights the longstanding issues regarding equitable resource allocation and opportunity to obtain external funds.

Governance and Policy

Historically, the NCAA has been the central governing body for intercollegiate sport. The NCAA serves as the athletic and academic measure for athletic programs by setting academic, experiential, and athletic requirements under the guise of amateurism and corporate responsibility (Polite et al, 2011; Southall & Staurowsky, 2013). This is seen through the NCAA providing financial rewards for programs that maintain athletic and academic success (Roberts, 2020). Along with policy design, the NCAA established a prominent role in the financial success of college athletics, which has spread into increased control for conferences and schools – as seen in the development of television contracts, multimillion-dollar licensing deals, and increased visibility (Berr, 2015; Donne & Hunter, 2021; Scully, 1984). Given the growth of NCAA sanctioned sports into an economic behemoth, Donne and Hunter argued that the NCAA has transitioned from their foundational purpose of athlete well-being and into self-preservation. Considering this point, coupled with the racialized foundation of the NCAA, we argue that governance structure and policy-making reflect the corporate self-interests of the organization – as opposed to the betterment of college sport and protection of amateurism.

Media Representation

A key component of the CSL is media representation and discourse. Given the rise of mainstream sport networks, conference television deals, and multiple media outlets that track the peaks and valleys of the season – strong media representation is integral in brand development, recruitment, and subsequent athletic success (Carter-Francique & Richardson, 2016; Cheeks & Carter-Francique, 2015; Wallace et al, 2011). Additionally, sport media representation and discourse aids in creating connections between existing and emergent fan groups (Clavio & Walsh, 2014). Beyond building and maintaining fanbases, sport media is key in creating and directing discourse surrounding college sport and athletic programs. Higher level connections within media result in positive perceptions of sport, athletes, and programs. Scholarship has shown that the lack of comparable and culturally-responsive media representation for HBCUs and women in sport leads to diminished views of sport within both areas when compared to HPWIs and men in sport (Carter-Francique & Richardson, 2016; Cheeks & Carter-Francique, 2015; McDonald, 2010).

Social Perception and Discourse

Social perception and discourse an interesting phenomenon that shows the intersection between institutional pride and identity alignment with athletic programs (Ervin & Rosser, 2017). Although not unique to college sport, multiple components impact fan alignment, respect, and overall allegiance to an athletic program. To note, Lee and Pedersen (2011) found that high-level sponsorships have a positive relationship with fandom and team identification – partly due to the prestige of the brand being attached to the program. Along with brand alignment, media discourse impacts how fans view and understand respective programs across the landscape. With college sport media prominently displaying Power Five programs, many programs scramble to

gain media spotlights through alternative means. This presents challenges for athletic programs outside of this population to gain noteworthy fanbases and more enriched social perception – e.g. program history, positive brand perception, and overarching discourse.

Literature Review

Brief History of HBCUs

To understand the current placement of HBCU athletics within the CSL, the historical components of American higher education must be explored further. Being that the core of American higher education was built upon a foundation of racism and exclusion, the educational opportunities for emerging Black scholars were limited due to segregation and other systemic barriers (Minor, 2008; Mustaffa, 2017). Understanding this point, HBCUs were established on a foundation to provide safe and equitable educational opportunities for Black students. While private HBCUs existed, the scarcity of these institutions reflected the dearth of structural support from local, state, and federal government. Through the implementation of the second Morrill Act of 1890, the first public HBCUs were developed and offered the promise equitable funding by fulfilling state missions to serve as land-grant institutions (Gasman & Bowman III, 2012; Minor, 2008). Unfortunately, many states did not provide equitable funding and launched the broader scope of HBCUs into a perpetual game of ‘catch-up’ across university fronts (Albritton, 2012; Kujovich, 1993; Singh, 2021).

Despite race-based barriers, HBCUs expanded their philosophical approach to include the same educational and social spaces for first-generation, low-income, and historically excluded communities (Bettez & Suggs, 2012). This approach has created a unique landscape for HBCUs in comparison to their HPWI counterparts. This landscape is largely impacted by funding and policy structures that inherently benefit historically-championed institutions – e.g. flagship state institutions. For example, Minor (2008) found that both University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University received more state higher education funds than the five public HBCUs in the state of North Carolina combined. While there have been developments in large-scale federal funding, HBCUs still face considerable challenges in receiving equitable funding in comparison to their non-HBCU counterparts (Boland & Gasman, 2014; Williams & Davis, 2019). Nevertheless, HBCUs have continued to provide ideal opportunities, educational experiences, and social enrichment with far less resources than their HPWI counterparts (Startz, 2021).

A key component of HBCUs persisting beyond structural and societal barriers is the dynamic culture fostered at HBCUs. At the foundation, Albritton (2012) highlights the culture of HBCUs contributing to upward social, political, and economic mobility. This foundational culture extends into a campus community that Harris (2012) calls the ‘village pedagogy.’ This pedagogy, which extends beyond the classroom, offers educators (and students) the ideal space that emphasizes communal bonds, collective uplift, and cultural enrichment (Harris, 2012; Tafari, 2016). As a result, HBCUs are positioned as liberatory spaces, which inject a spirit of resistance and determination within the community (Douglas, 2012; Graham et al, 2009; Jackson & Nunn, 2003). Being that all members of the HBCU community can be liberated and empowered, the HBCU influence is reflected through all components of the institution (Graham et al, 2009; Tingle, 2021).

The Role of Sport at HBCUs

Aligning with the mission and purpose of HBCUs, the athletic spaces within these institutions are also driven by the desire to create safe and equitable spaces for Black athletes. Historically, HBCU athletic spaces provided sites for uplift, community, and resistance against the persistent presence of racism within American higher education and sport (White, 2019). White highlights the role of the complete HBCU athletic community as the Black Sporting Congregation – a community that consisted of fans, athletes, university members, media, and the broad sport network. Being likened to a congregation notes the communal nature and spiritual connection that many Black athletes could not experience within the White mainstream sport network. As a result, the HBCU athletic space produced sport figures who contributed to shifting the landscape of (inter)national sport through their embodiment of resistance (Cooper et al, 2014; Cooper et al, 2019; Hawkins et al, 2015).

Contemporarily, HBCU athletics have continued to follow the mission and purpose of HBCUs. As college sport grew into a social and economic juggernaut, the voice and platform of the college athlete has mirrored this growth (Garner & Singer, 2017). This resulted in the HBCU experience being communicated to wider audiences and subsequently enriched the overall public perception of HBCU athletics. To note, scholars have found the positive impact of HBCUs and their sporting spaces on the holistic experiences of athletes (Cooper & Dougherty, 2015; Cooper et al, 2017; Horton, 2012). Athletes at HBCUs celebrate their experiences of empowerment and ability to participate in social justice movements (Cooper, 2012; Cooper et al, 2014). To signal the impact of the HBCU sporting space as an extension of the institutions, HBCUs currently have a Black college athlete population of 79% in comparison to the HPWI population of only 14% within Division I athletics (NCAA Demographics Database, 2021). Going further, when reviewing multiple non-revenue generating sports against their HWPI counterparts, Division I HBCUs have considerably higher Black athlete populations in baseball (47% to 3%), softball (55% to 3%), men's tennis (39% to 3%), women's tennis (47% to 3%), men's outdoor track (90% to 20%), and women's outdoor track (90% to 18%) (NCAA Demographics Database, 2021). Outside of representation across popular non-revenue generating sports, the experiences and development Black athletes speak to at the unique culture and space of these institutions (Cooper & Dougherty, 2015; Cooper et al, 2017; Horton, 2012). Emphasizing these points, the continuation of this tradition and culture illuminates the strength and uniqueness of HBCUs within the broader CSL, which calls for the need to further explore the placement of these institutions in the grand scheme of intercollegiate athletics.

The Placement of HBCUs within the College Sport Landscape

While HBCUs have carved an invaluable space within the CSL, the existence of this sport space has not been utopic. Just as HBCUs have struggled against policy that has stunted their growth, their athletic spaces have been subject to the same constraints. Cooper and colleagues (2014) attributed the interest convergence of sport integration where HPWI athletic programs integrated athletic programs to maintain athletic superiority – which also coincided with the early developments of the college sports media empire. In doing so, formidable HBCU programs lost recruitment battles to institutions that could leverage broader social networks and amassed intergenerational wealth against historically excluded HBCU programs. The pillaging of talent from HBCUs also led to subsequent challenges in securing high-level sponsorships, prime television deals, and resources to expand athletic facilities (Cheeks & Carter-Francique, 2015). Reflective of the schism between HBCUs and HPWIs is also present within the athletics

realm. Cheeks and Carter-Francique explain that this schism is the result of institutional distancing, which highlight the differences in external economic support, media portrayal, and institutional consideration in governance/policy highlights how HBCU athletic programs have been placed on the fringes of the CSL. The subsequent explanation of Ray's (2019) theory of racialized organizations establishes a foundation to explore the racialization of the CSL.

Theoretical Framework

Ray (2019) presented a theoretical framework that illuminates the role and processes of racialization within organizations. It is important to note that the overarching perspective implemented within this framework aligns with the Perrowian view that asserts that organizations are inherently reflective of society – resulting in amplifying social systems while also contributing to social systems (Perrow, 1991). The inclusion of this point illuminates the constantly shifting operation of organizations based on social norms and rejects the notion that organizations are inherently bureaucratic. Ray outlines the following tenets for a theory of racialized organizations: a) racialized organizations enhance/diminish the agency of racial groups, b) racialized organizations legitimize the unequal distribution of resources, c) Whiteness serves as a credential within the organization, and d) the decoupling of rules from practice is racialized. Each of these components aid in critically examining how racialization within society has been operationalized within organizations.

While Ray's (2019) theory of racialized organizations is framed through a meso-level, a multiple structural form of analysis is introduced to aid with investigating across levels. This multilevel approach illuminates cyclical interactions between *racialized superstructures* that provide the overarching framework of racialized ideologies, *racial structures* that replicate the racialized ideology through rules and organizational resources, which reinforce *racial substructures* on the interpersonal domains (Ray, 2019). The application of this perspective within this study is that it gives credence to the multiple components of the CSL and how they intersect in maintaining the racialization of HBCUs.

Enhancing/Diminishing the Agency of Racialized Groups

Ray (2019) argues that racialized organizations enhance the agency of White groups while diminishing the agency of historically excluded groups through superstructural, structural, and substructural levels. This approach, as opposed to the macro-to-micro orientation within organizational studies, highlights the interrelatedness between widespread racialized ideological operations of society from the superstructural lens, that were integrated into structural organizational operations, which further affirms racialized social schemas on the substructural level – (see Figure 1 in Ray, 2019, p. 33). The most prominent method of diminishing agency within historically excluded communities is their overrepresentation and consistent placement within lower organizational tiers. Because agency is directly connected to organizational power differentials, overrepresentation of communities of color within lower organizational tiers establish an incessant culture of subordination towards others within the organization (Sewell, 1992). A primary example of this phenomenon is the organizational power differentials between lawyers, doctors, and facility operation staff members within the same organization (Ray, 2019). As explained by Ray, organizational hierarchies and subsequent power differentials are predicated on expected social norms and symbolism. These social norms and symbolic meanings, when accounting for the overrepresentation of racialized communities in lower

organizational tiers, result in attitudes and organizational practices grounded in racialized deference, expendability, and limited upward mobility.

In addition to the creation of racialized organizational structures, diminished agency is also manifested through limited control of time and space. Ray (2019) explained that due to the direct relationship between organizational placement and agency, those within lower tiers are subjected to minimal control of time and space. Sewell (1992) likens this process to the agency seen within the concept of the king (or higher-level organizational members) in comparison to those within positions beneath the position of the king. As the organizational placement increases, not only does agency over time and space increase, but control over subordinates' time and space increases. Conversely, lack of agency is also manifested in the dynamic nature of resources across organizational levels. Roy and colleagues (2004) highlight this process as the persistent crisis of time and space due to insufficient resources – manifested through the geographic placement of organizations, occupational safety and security, and differential wages (Edin & Schaefer, 2015; Mahadeo, 2018; Wilson, 1996). As emphasized by Mahadeo, each of these components continues the replication of racialized hierarchies within organizations.

The final component of diminishing the agency of racialized groups is the creation of racial deference rituals (Ray, 2019). As explained by Hitlin and Elder (2007), these deference rituals are manifested through socially-prescribed roles that influence employee-to-consumer and employee-to-employee interactions. Along racial lines, there is an expectation of persistent deference and limited displays of emotion – often to the comfort of White organizational members (Wingfield, 2009; Wingfield & Alston, 2013). The culmination of these components highlights how the replication of racialized social orders, specifically those that limit agency, are manifested in the daily operation of organizations.

Legitimizing the Unequal Distribution of Resources

Being that race-based segregation served as the foundation of multiple institutions, the residual effects of this practice are present – albeit transformed – in present day organizational operations. Ray (2019) argues that since racial segregation is the foundation of institutional histories, much like other forms of identity-based segregation practices, the structures are maintained through law, policy, and practice. This maintenance of inequality is visible across field levels and into micro-level interactions between members within organizations.

The primary tool used to legitimize the unequal distribution of resources is the racialized othering of organizations operated by and for historically marginalized communities. To support, Stinchcombe (1965) argued that the overt racialization of institutions set a foundation for White dominance and self-interest – resulting in the adjoining support systems to be designed through these interests. Additionally, racial schemas are established and maintained through an intricate social order that spans across institutions and industries, e.g. perceived institutional dominance of HPWIs and racialized othering of Minority Serving Institutions being replicated in the media discourse centering on racialized attitudes (Jones, 2016). By establishing racialized organizations as deviants and inferior, the broader landscape needed for success and survival is considerably imbalanced (Wooten, 2015; Wooten & Couloute, 2017). This imbalance, which has persisted across generations, is manifested through processes and programs. These processes and programs have been socially constructed and presented as wholly valid due to their connection with dominant White institution, e.g. school tracking (Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Tyson, 2011), vocational education (Oakes, 1983; Ozer & Perc, 2020), college rankings/assessments (Hardy et al., 2019; Jaschik, 2018), and reliance on White institutional benefactors (Ray, 2019).

Building upon the racialization and othering of organizations operated by historically marginalized communities, inequality of resources is also justified through the naturalization of race. Sewell (2016) explained this process as institutional actors reifying racial schemas by transforming racialized myths into assumed social facts. Sewell compares this process to discriminatory banking professionals engaging in disparate lending practices against Black and other historically excluded applicants. In doing so, racialized myths regarding the financial stability and trustworthiness of these communities are reinforced. With these myths transitioning to assumed facts, the broader institutional field accepts and continues practices that perpetuate the inequal distribution of resources.

The final component is the practice of occupational segregation within micro and meso-level settings. Ray (2019) explained this practice as the intentional and unintentional placement of historically excluded individuals within the lower tiers of the organizational hierarchy. While this historic intentional placement has transformed into seemingly unintentional biases and racial schemas, the long-term implications of this practice has led to longstanding disparities in resource allocation (Edin & Schaefer, 2015; Mahadeo, 2018; Wilson, 2011). Similar to lack of agency and time scarcity associated with lower organizational levels, these sectors are also subjected to larger disparities within economic and practical resources. This is manifested in multiple blue and brown-collar positions experiencing limited legal protections, minimal health and safety precautions, and limited opportunities for upward mobility (Catanzarite, 2002; Reskin, 2012). The intersecting components of the resource inequality leads to widespread outcomes that negatively impact historically underserved communities (Reskin, 2012).

Credentialing Whiteness

Being that race has been socially constructed to give meaning, the social construction of Whiteness provides the needed foundation into exploring how Whiteness has become credentialed within organizational operations. Whiteness is a result of the longstanding racialized history of both the United States and the globalized world where white identity has become synonymous with power and privilege – primarily to the detriment of racialized others (Kincheloe, 1999). Going further, Guess (2006) explained that connection to social power and privilege extended into material and structural domains (e.g. law, policy, education, etc.) – thereby creating an institutionalized form of Whiteness that impacts the operation and navigation of those within the structures. Whiteness serving as a credential, albeit abstract in nature, highlights the processes in which Whiteness creates and solidifies the institutionalization of racialized disparities. Ray (2019) presents this component as a tool used to legitimize organizational structures, amplify white agency, and inject bias into a seemingly unbiased assessment structure. This is centered on Collins (1979) argument that the meritocratic nature of credentialing is inherently objective and a legitimate means of assessment and validation (Pager, 2008). Understanding the processes of racialization, one must consider the insidious presence of race-based exclusion despite matching or exceeding credentials (Sen & Wasow, 2016). Pager and colleagues (2009) explain this phenomenon as negative credentialing. This process negatively impacts historically excluded groups by weaponizing their racialized identity against acceptable credentials. As a result, the negative credentialing of racialized identities presents race as a more unfavorable trait than a commonly understood negative trait. A key example of this process is that while former criminal convictions are treated as commonly understood negative credentials, Black and Latinx applicants without criminal records have lower rates of interview requests than White applicants with criminal records (Pager, 2009). Unfortunately, the most successful approaches towards counteracting this negative credentialing is for communities of

color to align with Whiteness through action and presentation – essentially passing for White through presentation or action (Harris, 1995). The culmination of this tenet highlights the connection between Whiteness, property, and how both establish institutions and industries as inherently acceptable due to their proximity to Whiteness.

Racialized Decoupling of Rules and Practice

Ray (2019) presented the final component through both a diversity/equity/inclusion (DEI) lens and a broader operational lens. The DEI lens specifically illuminates the inconsistencies between rules and practices regarding the creation and maintenance of DEI efforts. Ray notes the DEI efforts within the majority-White higher-level organizational ranks are not used within the majority-historically excluded lower organizational tiers. This is likened to Whiteness being centered and prioritized – therefore White-dominant spaces are protected through strategic integration and minority-centric lower tiers are not subjected to diversify by increasing White representation. With Whiteness being centered, those entering these spaces through DEI efforts are often tasked and expected to conform to the unspoken cultural norms of White-dominant spaces (Bell & Hartmann, 2007). Expanding beyond inconsistencies between DEI policy and practice, organizations exhibit similar approaches between protection and persecution processes. Roscigno (2007) explained that while organizations have protection processes for employees against harassment/discrimination, the organizational practices often leave initiators as victims of hazing, ostracization, or termination. Going further, Roscigno argued that organizational responses to complaints about policy violations are worse than the initial violation. Given the racialized dynamics between organizational tiers, historically excluded communities are often subjected to harsher working environments, limited protection by the organization, and inability to obtain resources needed for protection against this decoupling process (Ray, 2019; Roscigno, 2007).

The Racialization of HBCU Athletics

The racialization of HBCU athletic spaces is an interwoven arena where each of the CSL sectors intersect and work upon each other. Table 1 provides an overview of Ray's (2019) tenets, the aligning CSL sector, and the central arguments made through each tenet. Through illuminating the relationship between these components, scholar-practitioners can further interrogate the rippling effects of policies, funding structures, and practices across the CSL. In the subsequent paragraphs, each theoretical analysis is explained further.

Diminished Agency

With race-based segregation serving as a foundation for both sport and higher education, the remnant of this abysmal foundation is rather noticeable in the contemporary spaces of integrated sport and higher education (Minor, 2008; Southall & Weiler, 2014). The current manifestation of this foundation is seen in the placement of HBCU conferences within the broader scope of the CSL. Given the race-based exclusion of HBCU athletic programs from larger HPWCs (Historically Predominantly White Conferences), HBCUs were forced to create and sustain their own athletic conferences (Wiggins, 2000).

In addition to HPWCs intentionally excluding HBCU athletic conferences, the NCAA also excluded HBCU athletic conferences – resulting in limited opportunity for growth and development in comparison to other conferences and programs embraced by the NCAA (Cooper

et al, 2014). For context, in 1906, both the NCAA and the first HBCU conference (Inter-Scholastic Athletics Association or ISSA) were established. During the early growth and development of the NCAA, six (6) HBCU athletic conferences were developed and persisted without inclusion into the NCAA (Cooper et. al, 2014). While these programs and conferences thrived while excluded from the NCAA and National Association for Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), the gap between institutions grew despite the increasing popularity of HBCU sport and sport alumni. The inclusion of HBCUs in the NAIA and NCAA did not come until 1953 and 1965, respectively (Cooper et. al, 2014). As noted by Cooper and colleagues, the inclusion came during the Civil Rights Movement, an increased period of racial tension, and the cusp of televised live football – which muddies the true intentions of HBCU inclusion within these governing bodies. The current issue regarding HBCU agency within the NCAA structure is equitable and worthwhile representation (Cheeks, 2016). As noted by Cheeks, postseason participation and success is paramount in the development of HBCU athletic programs, but the academic reform policies of the NCAA have negatively impacted HBCUs at a much higher degrees with little intervention at mitigating the issue (Ositelu, 2018).

Building upon the historic exclusion of HBCU athletic conferences, contemporary examples highlight the symbolism and social discourse regarding HBCU athletics within the mainstream media (Cheeks & Carter-Francique, 2015). Cheeks and Carter-Francique brought attention to the limited media investment within HBCU athletics – which limits program and conference ability to obtain sponsorships and media contracts needed to expand and develop programs. Going further, given the pervasiveness of anti-Blackness within sport media outlets and/or personnel that choose to include or represent HBCU athletics are often clouded with problematic viewpoints and dialogue, e.g. Doug Gottlieb tweets regarding Travis Hunter committing to Jackson State University, Deion Sanders on the lack of HBCU coverage by ESPN, and the media-wide lack of coverage on HBCU athletic academic achievements (Jackson, 2021; McDonald, 2010).

Aligning with the Ray's (2019) emphasis on the relationship between time and agency, lack of noteworthy television and sponsorship contracts lead to an overreliance on participating in guarantee games (Lillig, 2009; Cheeks & Carter-Francique, 2015; Jones & Black, 2021). These games, which are designed and presented as surefire wins for the larger and more prominent HPWI football and basketball programs, present HBCUs with funds needed for athletic program and department development. Jones and Black's key finding that HBCUs receive less money from guarantee games than HWPIs further exacerbates the gap between HBCUs and their HPWI counterparts. Because of this, HBCUs are faced with multiple challenges regarding maintaining and/or building sport programs – e.g. employing team specific academic staff, working towards representation in postseason play, and increasing positive media discourse. The culmination of these challenges lead to challenges in maintaining APR and GSR rates due to increased travel and smaller staffs, devalued records and season success assessments due to lopsided losses in non-conference competition, and subsequently lower postseason performance payouts all highlight the widening gap that adversely impacts HBCUs (Jones & Black, 2021). Going further, Black and Jones also exposed the converging interests within the structure of guarantee games where HBCU culture and experience are presented as cultural enrichment opportunities for majority white audiences. However, the lack of additional measures taken to bridge cultural and experiential gaps between institutions in addition to, or separate from, these games illuminate the true purpose of these games – better positioning for rankings and overall media/social perception. When considering that many HBCU athletic programs were historically excluded from these conferences despite the athletic output, the decision to create and maintain lopsided athletic events at the expense of guarantee game funds also speaks to the

pervasiveness of HPWI converging interests. The necessity of these games for HBCUs, coupled with the longstanding inequities of this practice, highlights the limited agency of these programs and signal to a larger issue of racialized deference. Essentially, HBCUs are held at the whim of HPWI athletic programs for immediate returns on their economic stability.

Table 1
Overview of Tenets and Key Arguments

Tenets	CSL Sectors	Key Arguments
Enhancing & Diminishing Agency	Governance	Historic segregation of HBCUs from the early foundation of the NCAA in comparison to HPWI counterparts
	Media Social Discourse Funding/Resources	Anti-Blackness within sport media and subsequent limited opportunities for sponsorships with replicated attitudes from outgroup members Lower payouts from guarantee games against HPWIs
Legitimizing Unequal Resource Distribution	Funding/Resources	Lower funding allocations to institutions without regard to Special Mission Institution status
	Governance	Lack of inclusion in NCAA academic metric design and academic rewards system Stifled potential growth due to racialized exclusion into larger HPWI athletic conferences during the expansion of televised college sport
Credentialing Whiteness	Governance	Economic and numeric domination within NCAA leadership, coaching, and representation
	Media Social Discourse	HWPI-centric nature of college sport media coupled with limited understanding of HBCUs and HBCU sport culture Replication of HPWI-centric views within fan groups
Racialized Decoupling of Rules & Practice	Governance	Resource allocation based on academic performance without inclusion of institutional type and structural barriers although athlete services units were mandated by NCAA
	Funding/Resources	Established culture of academic misconduct within high-profile and powerhouse HPWI programs
		Increased presence of academic clustering within Power Five programs as opposed to HBCUs

Legitimized Resource Inequality

An expected consequence of diminishing the agency of HBCU athletic programs is the legitimization of unequal athletic resources between HBCUs and HPWIs. With big-time athletics programs (specifically Power Five and Group of Five) being HPWIs, multiple components of the CSL are designed to maintain social and economic dominance for HPWIs due to their primacy within the college sport dialogue. Cheeks and Carter-Francique (2015) expand on this disparity between resources through the practice of institutional distancing, which is the practice of dominant groups allocating resources and positive capital towards dominant groups while also assigning minimal resources and negative capital to subordinated groups (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Going further, Cheeks and Carter-Francique further assert that the institutional distancing processes is seen through persistently negative media portrayals resulting in limited opportunities for sponsorship and mainstream television representation. As noted by Wiggins (2000) HBCU athletic programs and conferences have been continuously othered through forceful exclusion and current practices that limit representation with college sport leadership, policy design, and institutional funding from governmental agencies (Boland & Gasman, 2014; Cheeks, 2015; Sav, 2010).

Boland and Gasman (2014) note the longstanding othering of HBCUs in comparison to their HPWI counterparts through governmental funding and policy design. Within the realm of higher education, HBCUs are primarily subjected to institutional funding parameters that limit the development of institutions. In particular, Boland and Gasman noted the differences in funding measures without consideration for the purpose and mission of HBCUs, with the most notable being funding related to full-time student enrollment, advanced degree offerings, and removing duplicate programs across states. Being that HBCUs are special mission institutions where part-time student populations are higher among the student body, funding based on full-time enrollment and full-time equivalents leaves these institutions in a deficit – as noted by Boland and Gasman. In addition to skewed funding, the removal of duplicate academic programs (and subsequent funding) across degree levels does not consider the deep-rooted purpose of HBCUs within the Black community by limiting the availability of academic programs to large and historically White public institutions. This lack of funding and academic diversity negatively impacts student (athlete) academic and social experiences by limiting the development of academic programs, institutional development, and opportunities to expand university facilities. McClelland (2011) highlighted the longstanding lack of equitable funding of HBCUs from external sources in comparison to the HPWI counterparts. Both McClelland and Cheeks (2016) note the role media discourse in shaping potential sponsors' views and understanding of HBCUs. The negative framing of these institutions and their athletic programs limit investment into these institutions, which hinders athletic growth.

In addition to highlighting differences within funding, McClelland found that athletic administrators noticed clear disconnects with HBCU culture/purpose/mission and the policies set by the NCAA. This could be credited to the considerable lack of HBCU representation within NCAA Division I council – where HBCU representatives account for three of the forty total top divisional leadership positions (NCAA Governance, 2022). As a result, athletic administrators believed that considerations for size, student population, and institutional resources would result in an increase of program effectiveness (McClelland, 2011). The lack of institutional nuance and inclusion under the guise of total equality signals to a broader system of inequity between HPWIs and HBCUs by presenting resource allocations as neutral and/or easily attainable by all groups involved without consideration into the existing disparities between the institutions, e.g. resources allocated per athlete, athlete-to-staff ratios, and factors impacting metrics.

To heighten the disparity in funds in guarantee game payouts, Jones and Black (2021) found that HBCUs are provided less money per athlete and lower amounts overall in comparison to HPWIs participating in guarantee games. This trend is also reflected in the diminished value and subsequent marginalization of their programs within championships and high-profile tournaments. Cheeks and Carter-Francique (2015) highlight the consistently low funds provided to the two Division I HBCU conferences for their participation in the NCAA Men's March Madness tournament due to low seeding. The scarce funds provided to these two conferences reflect their performance within the tournament, but due to the consistent devaluation of HBCU athletic programs, subsequent devaluation of HBCU strength of schedule assessments, and win-loss quality rankings by the seeding committee consistently places high-performing HBCU athletic programs at a disadvantage. A recent example of this devaluation would be the 2020-2021 Norfolk State Spartans being placed as a 16-seed bubble team although their 24-6 season record and 17-6 conference record was on par or better than 11-seed Syracuse (16-9), 5-seed Villanova (16-6), and 9-seed Georgia Tech (17-8) (Longman, 2022). Similarly, the 2018-2019 Prairie View A&M Panther had a conference season record of 22-12 but were placed in the 16-seed bubble game despite similar records by 10-seed Florida (19-15), 8-seed Mississippi (20-12), and 11-seed Ohio State (19-14). By being devalued as athletic programs and placed in lower seeds despite performing similarly, HBCUs are forced to play against consensus favorites and have considerably lower odds of progressing in the tournament – which significantly limits monies earned from postseason performance. The disparities across multiple fronts places HBCU athletic programs in perpetual battles against limitations in resources.

The final component, which centers on the results of athletic resource disparities, exposes the connections between sport integration, interest convergence, and rewards for athletic output. Cooper and colleagues (2014) liken the selective integration of HPWI athletic programs to the Critical Race Theory (CRT) tenet of interest convergence. Their explanation is that the integration of HPWI athletic programs were not implemented for the betterment of society or for altruistic reasons, but instead, to pillage athletic talent from HBCU programs. Following integration, the athletic output of Black athletes has resulted in championships, (inter)national recognition, and subsequent increases in financial resources across all fronts for HPWIs (Cooper et al., 2014; Lillig, 2009; Wiggins, 2000).

Credentialing and Centering Whiteness within the CSL

Focusing on athletic resources, the sheer overrepresentation of White professionals within coaching and leadership positions signal to a longstanding credentialing process that has excluded those who fall outside of this demographic (Hextrum, 2020). To support, the 2021 TIDES (The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport) Report reiterates the overwhelming Whiteness of NCAA leadership (Lapchick, 2021). In the findings, the report also acknowledged the propensity for HBCUs to hire more leaders from historically excluded communities in comparison to the broader non-HBCU sporting landscape. In addition to numerical domination within the highest and most-visible positions within college sport, White men are also the primary beneficiaries of economic domination when considering the positions of these roles. Dancy and colleagues (2018) further explained that the historic and contemporary economic and visual dominance of White men within the CSL solidifies racialized practices and policies within their institutions and the broader CSL. The combination of numeric and economic domination reiterates McClelland's (2011) argument that the lack of equitable HBCU representation and consideration within NCAA leadership (and subsequent practices) creates a notable divide that impacts the effectiveness of HBCUs – negatively impacting their legitimacy as athletic spaces.

This negative blow towards legitimacy further amplifies the inherent racialization through a negative credentialing process – which fuels the assumption that HBCUs are fundamentally flawed, as opposed to being placed on the fringes of the CSL.

Extending beyond coaching and leadership, Whiteness is rampant within sport media – with particular emphasis on college sport media (McDonald, 2010). Both historically and contemporarily, sport media has operated to the benefit of HPWI athletic programs given the primacy of Whiteness in college sports and media (Hextrum, 2020; McDonald, 2010). Being that a bulk of college sport media centers on the men’s basketball and football at HPWIs, the broader social discourse surrounding these sports exclude HBCU and women’s athletic programs (Hextrum, 2020). Hextrum explained that within this overemphasis on HWPI sport, in conjunction with the embeddedness of race, creates an ideological frame that positions programs at these institutions as the norm – leaving the outside institutions as deviants. Considering the systemically-driven disparity between HBCUs and these institutions – the existing higher education discourse is amplified when the sport context becomes a part of the broader conversation.

Contemporarily, sport media figures have limited views and understanding of the HBCU sporting experience and the systemic challenges faced by these institutions. As a result, much of the narratives surrounding HBCU sports are misinformed, racially charged, and supportive of the big-time HPWI narrative. For example, Doug Gottlieb took to Twitter and emphatically argued that Travis Hunter’s commitment to Jackson State University could not translate to opportunities within the National Football League due to their lack of resources and placement outside of the Power Five. In addition to his comments regarding the Jackson State-to-NFL pipeline, Gottlieb further asserted that HBCUs lacked the academic and professional networks to produce successful alumni as seen in his ‘Aggies hire Aggies’ tweet. Given the scope of his audience, coupled with his cache as a media member, these messages can further diminish the reputation and image of HBCUs and steer recruits away from these institutions. Alongside sport media figures, the media buy-in for Power Five programs and conferences signal to the mainstream overemphasis towards these programs. Media giants like the SEC Network, Longhorn Network, and Notre Dame football have established media presences that cycle mass amounts of revenue back into conferences and institutions – further asserting themselves as the socially and athletically dominant programs (Cheeks & Carter-Francique, 2015).

The combination of athletic resources, leadership, and media leads to a longstanding struggle for HBCUs and the fight for legitimacy. Each of these components contribute to a broader social cognition of HBCUs and their athletic spaces as inferior, or in some cases, serving as a unique niche within the sporting complex – e.g., bands, homecoming events, or components of sport history. If this process continues, the practical and scholarly implications point towards further ostracizing HBCU athletic spaces – along with other sporting spaces aligned with historically excluded and marginalized communities.

Racialized Decoupling of Rules and Practice

This final component shares a specific focus on college sport governance and policy – with a particular emphasis on the differences in design and response between HBCUs and the broader CSL. With the NCAA requiring and rewarding academic success (Hosick, 2016), it is important to acknowledge how these seemingly equal practices disadvantage differing institutional types – with particular attention to HBCUs. At their foundation, the purpose of HBCUs were to create safe and equitable educational opportunities for all Black students (Johnson, 2017). In alignment with this purpose, HBCUs have continually admitted students

from historically underserved communities –academically, economically, and socially – to bridge the higher education attainment gaps created by historic exclusionary practices within HPWIs (Albritton, 2012). This integral component positions the HBCU student population in stark contrast with the increasingly exclusive student populations in big-time college sport programs at HPWIs. Understanding this point, the academic benchmark requirements set by the NCAA are likely received and attained differently due to institutional type and approach.

Roberts (2020) found that the special mission foundation of HBCUs has created notable challenges in meeting the Academic Progress Rate (APR) Graduation Success Rate (GSR) set by the NCAA. Both measures and the subsequent responses for HBCUs often leave these institutions negatively impacted although their athletes speak to more enriching and positive academic and social experiences (Cooper & Dougherty, 2015). Conversely, while HWPI athletic programs meet NCAA academic guidelines, the approaches are problematic and counterintuitive. Foster and Huml (2017) found that academic clustering, or the strategic placement of athletes in certain majors, results in higher APR and GSR scores. By maintaining an easier and controlled academic path for athletes, programs who engage in coerced academic clustering expect meeting APR and GRS score requirements and not facing penalties regarding scholarships, athlete eligibility, or bowl game eligibility. Going further, as outlined by the newly implemented NCAA academic rewards, programs receive additional monies for athletic success and academic success (Hosick, 2016). These monies could be used to address the resource gap between institutional types. In particular, the per athlete resource spending gaps seen between HPWIs (upwards of \$190,000 for notable programs) and HBCUS (below \$55,000) suggests the latter are not worthy (Harrell, 2020). By not including institutional purpose, student profiles, or athlete experiences – governing bodies are amplifying the longstanding disparities between these institutions.

While HBCU athletic programs have been marred by NCAA and conference violations, high-profile and powerhouse programs have built and sustained success through a culture of academic misconduct. As noted by Otto (2005), and further supported by Clayton and colleagues (2015), universities with elite athletic programs are complicit in academic misconduct where athletic prowess and success is the ultimate reward. Conversely, scholarship has noted that while HBCU athletic programs experience the longstanding rippling effects of not meeting NCAA academic benchmarks due to inequalities in funding and the absence of NCAA assistance, the holistic experiences of athletes rival their HPWI counterparts in the areas of social freedom, academic development, and overall wellness (Cooper & Dougherty, 2015). Although HBCUs succeed in areas that provide long-term benefits, their practices are not celebrated or rewarded despite NCAA language signaling towards academic success and overall well-being. In fact, the existence and maintenance of inequities in academic assessment, resources for success, and holistic approaches further highlight how HBCUs have been negatively impacted by the decoupling of rules and practice.

Discussion

Through unpacking and reviewing components of the CSL through the Theory of Racialized Organizations lens, each area is understood from a perspective that outlines the manifestation of historical and contemporary conceptions of race in sport. This manuscript exposes the pivotal role of Whiteness within sport media that impacts social perception (resulting in broad-stroke othering of HBCU athletic spaces), limiting time and space within mainstream sport dialogue, and subsequent opportunities to establish strong relationships with sponsors. Building upon media, the dynamic disparities in funding and resource allocation within the CSL reflect the longstanding structures that have stifled the full potential of HBCUs. Although the

role of institutional and governmental funds are not the primary sources for athletic development, noting the differences highlight the longstanding marginalization of HBCUs (Harrell, 2020).

By not acknowledging and including the role of HBCUs as special mission institutions within funding and resource allocation structures, these institutions are placed in a perpetual battle against meeting and maintaining athletic and academic structures built against them. A notable example of this struggle is the NCAA requirement for athletic academic support staff, opportunities for financial reward through athlete academic success, and the lack of equitable funding to create and build these units within HBCU athletic departments (Harrell, 2020). In turn, HBCU athletic departments are faced with the challenge to provide the necessary resources to maintain NCAA academic standards, align with institutional mission, and maintain athletic competitiveness with considerably lower budgets and resources – which have been severely impacted by both overt and covert racialized structures. Given Robertson and colleagues (2021) exploration into institutional logics within sport, coupled with the arguments made within this manuscript, the current operation of the CSL does not fully consider the complexities of HBCUs, MSIs, and other special mission institutions. Being that HWPIs set the foundation and make up a considerable portion of institutions within the CSL, the guiding principles primarily align with the interests and culture of these institutions

Conclusion

The contributions to the field of sport management are two-fold. From a scholarly perspective, an emerging theory is further developed the field of sport management. In building upon the works of Keaton and Cooper (2022), this work also answers the call to include more critical and socially-grounded theoretical frameworks – resulting in more nuanced and socially-reflective practices within research (Amis & Silk, 2005; Frisby, 2005). Within practice, this study illuminates how seemingly race-neutral organizations and agents operate through racialized lenses. In doing so, professionals and organizations can actively interrogate their practices and work to create a more equitable CSL. Some examples of a more equitable CSL would show more reflection of institutional type within academic requirements, bridging gaps in resources for athletic departments, and intentional language within sport media. Given the approach of the study, future scholarship could implement similar processes across different sport contexts or include similar theoretical frameworks that can be used to interrogate the operation of organizations and spaces.

The culmination of these components highlights the role of society in shaping the operation of sporting space. By acknowledging and interrogating the rampant nature of racialization within the CSL, scholars and practitioners can work to understand, communicate, and implement socially reflective practices. It is important to note that much of this racialization is a result of prevailing logics that have shaped the operation of CSL components, which can be subject to change through agents within spaces, information exchange processes, governance procedures, and developing alternative belief systems (Robertson et. al, 2021). As college sport scholarship continues to expand, we encourage scholars to consider the arguments made within this piece to consider how HBCU athletic spaces are investigated, understood, and communicated on their own and in relation to the broader scope of college athletics with particular attention to developments in practice. Additionally, we implore that as scholar-practitioners work in and with HBCUs, the differences between HBCUs and HPWIs are interrogated. Through shifting discourse via scholarship, coupled with active engagement within practice, we believe that noteworthy strides can be made in the search for true parity within college sports.

Following the suggestions made by Ray (2019) we believe the recent external social movement of athlete empowerment will lead to longstanding internal and external change in how HBCUs are understood and positioned in the CSL. In particular, the swift resurgence of the Jackson State University and Florida A&M University football programs (along with the consistent upsets of HPWI basketball programs by the Texas Southern University men's basketball teams against elite HPWI programs), sheds a much-needed contemporary light on HBCU athletic spaces as viable sites for competition. The addition of high-profile coaches (Deion Sanders and Eddie George), commitments from elite recruits/transfers, and securing wins against perennially high-ranked competition point towards a resurgence in the HBCU sporting space – which bodes well in working towards creating a more equitable CSL. In addition to growing in athletic prominence, the current wave of athlete empowerment aligns with existing scholarship that notes the positive academic and social experiences of athletes at HBCUs. If the trend continues, we could expect shifts in media representation, funding/sponsorship opportunities, and subsequent increases in institutionally and externally-driven resources.

Within the professional sports complex, HBCUs have experienced higher levels of acceptance and reflection within the NBA and NFL talent acquisition processes. The recent implementation of the HBCU Combine, coupled with the NBA HBCU All-Star event, has amplified the HBCU sporting space and worked towards illuminating the importance of (and talent within) these institutions while actively shifting media coverage and discourse. While there has not been a formal relationship between the components of the CSL and these initiatives, the prominence of these organizations and subsequent success for athletes presents a noteworthy opportunity for each component of the CSL to establish a valuable investment in creating a more equitable CSL.

To build upon this piece, we encourage scholar-practitioners to continue engaging with this theoretical framework across contexts and methodological approaches. For example, a similar approach using Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organizations can address the persistence of sexism and gender-based exclusion and violence within the college sport landscape, as can the inclusion of DisCrit when exploring NCAA mental health, academic, and social supports (Hosking, 2008). Continuing the integration of critical organizational theory, we encourage future scholarship to critically investigate the reproduction of social norms into varying sporting contexts. Echoing Cunningham's (2019) sentiments, we believe this approach towards organizational studies works to create more equitable and inclusive sporting spaces – resulting in a better placement for HBCUs within the CSL. Being that the CSL consists of sport media, organizational operations and development, and sport governance – these scholarly critiques aid in creating more equitable practices within the field. Once applied to other areas, the field of sport management can begin to see notable shifts for historically excluded communities.

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