"IF YOU COULD BALL YOU WERE ON THE COURT": RACE, TEAM, AND CULTURE IN HIGH SCHOOL BOYS' BASKETBALL

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all the people who believed in me when I didn't believe in myself, who cheered me on when I struggled and needed it most, and, of course, the participants, for none of this would be possible without them.

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ABSTRACT

There is a substantial body of research examining the experiences of Black collegiate student athletes at primarily White universities. Many studies, however, have privileged exploring the experiences of college athletes over high school athletes. The purpose of the current study was to explore the role of race in the context of high school boys' basketball by investigating whether and how race manifests as part of team dynamics and culture. An additional purpose of the current study was to examine high school boys' basketball players' understandings of and experiences with race, particularly within the context of sport.

Interpretive phenomenological interviews were conducted with 14 current and former Black/African American high school boys' basketball players. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which produced seven primary themes. With respect to team, themes included (a) key elements of a team and (b) team as family/brotherhood. With respect to culture, themes included (a) key elements of culture and (b) avoiding, ignoring, and minimizing race. With respect to the role of race on the team, themes included (a) choosing basketball, (b) basketball (and other sports) stereotypes, and (c) comparing Black and White players in basketball. These themes were interpreted using a theoretical framework consisting of critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018), and the White colonial frame (Carrington, 2010).

Findings suggest a discrepancy between the definitions of team and culture found in previous literature and those produced by the participants, indicating a need to develop a singular concept—team culture—that more accurately describes their intersections in a sport context. Findings of the current study also provided support that color-blind racism remains the dominant racial ideology in American society that influences people of all races (Bonilla-Silva, 2018).

Despite notions that sport remains color-blind, race continues to shape the experiences of athletes of color. The intersection of race and sport, therefore, remains an important topic of inquiry that requires further exploration to better understand the experiences of athletes of color.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In this introductory chapter, I establish the foundation for the current study by identifying the problem, purpose, and corresponding research questions of the current study. I then briefly describe my theoretical framework, followed by a description of the specific method I employ and my positionality. I discuss the delimitations, limitations, significance of the current study, and provide a list of key terms and definitions. I conclude with a brief description regarding the organization of the study.

Statement of the Problem

People across various sectors of society are categorized in a number of ways (Deaux, 1993), and sport is no exception. Athletes are often subject to various stereotypes based on their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or other social and cultural identities. In particular, identity characteristics and ideologies associated with race initially emerged in the seventeenth century, making it a relatively recent means of social categorization (Smedley, 1998). Nonetheless, issues of race have been present in varying levels of sport, which has led to considerable academic discourse about race, equality, and discrimination (Thornton, Champion & Ruddell, 2012). Specifically, scholars have examined narratives about Black and White athletes, with much of the focus placed on racialized sport stereotypes such as "Black brawn" versus "White intellect" (Azzarito & Harrison, 2008; Bigler & Jeffries, 2008; Buffington & Fraley, 2008; Eastman & Billings, 2001; Harrison, Lawrence, & Bukstein, 2011; Hughey & Goss, 2015; Mercurio & Filak, 2010). Other research has explored the perceptions of high school and college students and the ways they apply racial sport stereotypes (Azzarito & Harrison, 2008; Harrison et al., 2011). At an interscholastic level, such racialized narratives and stereotypes may also influence how people perceive athletes' academic success.

Disguised within the Black brawn versus White intellect stereotype is a notion that sport is a vital avenue for Black high school students to matriculate to college. Hwang, Feltz, Kietzmann, and Diemer (2016) found that sport participation in high school is related to formation of an academic identity for White and Hispanic students; however, Black students did not form an academic identity through sport participation. This finding, while not necessarily suggesting the validity of racialized sport stereotypes, may lead some people to accept the notion that Black athletes are naturally athletic (and implicitly less intelligent) and White athletes have higher levels of intelligence (and are implicitly less athletic). Thus, some sports may be racialized in different ways according to the skills that are perceived to be required for success. Golf, for example, may be viewed by some as a "White sport" that requires less athleticism and more strategy. In contrast, basketball—the sport at the center of this study and one that requires high levels of athleticism—may be classified by some as a "Black man's game" (Mohamed, 2017). Regardless of the application of stereotypes, it is apparent that sport—typically thought to be color-blind and apolitical (Billings, Butterworth, & Turman, 2018; Carrington, 2010; Smith, 2009)—is indeed racialized in various ways.

Studies have also noted disparities in the graduation rates of high school students according to various social factors (Murnane, 2013; Storer et al., 2012). For example, female students have graduated at higher rates when compared to male students. With respect to race, Black students graduate high school and attend college at lower rates than White students (Murnane, 2013; Storer et al., 2012). The gap in graduation rates between Black and White *female* students has decreased, while the gap between Black and White *male* students has not (Murnane, 2013). Participating in high school sports, however, has tended to be an advantage for students who wish to attend college, with the exception of Black girls (Shifrer, Pearson, Muller,

& Wilkinson, 2015). It is, therefore, more likely that high school athletes in general will have a greater chance of matriculating to 4-year colleges (Shifrer et al., 2015). Sport participation and success might thus be perceived as a more effective means for Black male students and other students of color—when juxtaposed to academic success—to attend college.

Though it is not my intention to frame the current study *solely* as an investigation of racialized sport stereotypes per se, it is important to consider the role of stereotypes and how they may (or may not) influence the experiences of athletes. Numerous scholars have examined the experiences of Black collegiate student athletes at primarily White universities (Beamon, 2008, 2012, 2014; Bimper, 2015, 2017; Cooper, Davis, & Dougherty, 2017; Fuller, 2017; Fuller, Harrison, & Bukstein, 2017; Hawkins, 1995; Sato, Eckert, & Turner, 2018; Sato, Hodge, & Eckert, 2017). Particular focus has been given to connections between racial and athletic identities (Beamon, 2012; Fuller et al., 2017); mentorship (Bimper, 2017; Sato et al., 2018); social, academic, and athletic experiences (Cooper et al., 2017; Sato et al., 2017); exploitation (Beamon, 2008; Hawkins, 1995); and racism and stereotyping (Beamon, 2014; Bimper, 2015; Fuller, 2017). Many studies, however, have privileged exploring the experiences of college athletes over high school athletes.

Sport is not simply an extracurricular activity for youth athletes; rather it has become a central part of development with respect to identity formation, relationships with friends and family, life skills, and values (Brooks, Knudtson, & Smith, 2017; Forneris, Camiré, & Trudel, 2012). As such, it is important to explore the various interpersonal relationships that have the potential to influence youth athletes' sport experiences (Jowett, Shanmugam, & Caccoulis, 2012). Moreover, sport has the potential to amplify the skills—both cognitive and non-cognitive—that allow youth athletes to succeed in school and life (Leeds, 2015). Thus, there is a

need for additional studies that specifically explore such topics at the high school level. While examining all of these topics is beyond the scope of the current study, I explore various aspects that contribute to being part of a team and developing a culture, as well as ways in which race may (or may not) influence these processes.

Despite the previously noted benefits of sport participation, I do not argue the role of sport as a form of upward mobility for athletes of color (Brooks et al., 2017; Forneris et al., 2012; Leeds, 2015; Shifrer et al., 2015). I instead explored the intersection of race and sport and the corresponding influence (or lack thereof) on the experiences of athletes, particularly athletes of color. I did so by examining the experiences and perceptions of current and former Black/African American high school boys' basketball players. It was important to investigate this particular group to further examine the experiences of youth athletes at the high school level with respect to developing relationships and life skills (Brooks et al., 2017; Forneris et al., 2012; Jowett et al., 2012). Furthermore, it was important to give attention to the experiences of youth athletes of color—particularly in the sport of basketball, which has been racialized as the "Black man's game" (Mohamed, 2017)—and give them a voice, as previous research has tended to explore the experiences of White youth athletes (Brooks et al., 2017).

Given the information I have detailed above, I envision the current study as a broad investigation of racial ideology within a sport context. I investigated what the participants thought about race and how it related to their perceptions, actions, and behaviors. Additionally, I examined the function of race (or lack thereof) with respect to team dynamics and culture. In the section below, I briefly describe the purpose and research questions of the current study.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of the current study was to explore the role of race in the context of high school boys' basketball. Specifically, I investigated whether and how race manifests as part of team dynamics and culture. An additional purpose of the current study was to examine high school boys' basketball players' understandings of and experiences with race, particularly within the context of sport. As such, the primary research questions that guided the current study were:

RQ_{1a}: How do current and former Black/African American players on a high school boys' basketball team understand and conceptualize *team*?

RQ_{1b}: How do current and former Black/African American players on a high school boys' basketball team understand and conceptualize *culture*?

RQ_2: How do current and former Black/African American players on a high school boys' basketball team understand and conceptualize the role of race in their experiences?

In the section below, I briefly introduce the theoretical framework I utilized to address these research questions.

Theoretical Framework

I explored the issues noted above through a theoretical framework that incorporates critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018), and the White colonial frame (Carrington, 2010). By using these three theories I aimed to investigate the racial dynamics present on a high school boys' basketball team. I used critical race theory (CRT) to center race within my analysis and provide a general frame in which it can be understood in broader society. Scholars have applied CRT to a variety of sport contexts (Anderson & McCormack, 2010; Armstrong & Jeffries, 2018; Bimper, 2017; Brooks et al., 2017;

Cooper & Hawkins, 2014; Hylton, 2005, 2010; Smith et al., 2017), which makes it an appropriate theory to use in the current study.

Although I primarily emphasized race within my analysis, I considered intersections of other identities—including but not limited to class, gender, and others—to remain consistent with a CRT approach (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). I incorporated this theory because a central tenet common to most CRT work states that people of color are uniquely situated to discuss their experiences of race, racial discrimination, and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Additionally, I used CRT to address potential examples of interest convergence—the notion that progress only occurs when it benefits Whites (Bell, 1980; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012)—and provide opportunities for counter storytelling through which participants can articulate their understandings and experiences of race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Finally, applying CRT allowed me to offer critiques of a color-blind ideology that suggests race is no longer significant in the lives of people of color.

I expand my critique of the color-blind ideology by applying color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). I specifically addressed the frames and rhetoric—disclaimers, projection, and diminutives—used to perpetuate color-blind racism. I examined factors that may *appear to be* absent of race, yet remain subtly racialized. Examining such factors in a sport context is particularly necessary as sport is often thought of as a color-blind, apolitical meritocracy in which race is no longer significant; however, race and racism continue to shape the experiences of athletes of color (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018; Bimper, 2017; Carrington, 2010; Cooper & Hawkins, 2014; Deeb & Love, 2018; Hylton, 2005, 2010; Rankin-Wright, Hylton, & Norman, 2016; Smith, 2009; Smith, Harrison, & Brown, 2017). Indeed, scholars have applied color-blind racism to sport in a variety of contexts (Bimper, 2015; Buffington & Fraley, 2011; Deeb & Love,

2018), which makes it appropriate to use in the current study. Therefore, in grounding my analysis in Bonilla-Silva's (2018) concept of color-blind racism, as well as CRT, I further investigated and contextualized the effects (or lack) of race and racism in the lived experiences of the participants of the current study (Bimper, 2015). However, both CRT and color-blind racism approach race and racism from a general societal perspective. It is, therefore, necessary to incorporate a theory that is more closely associated with sport.

In order to minimize the limitations of CRT and color-blind racism with respect to sport studies, I drew from Carrington's (2010) notion of the White colonial frame. By employing the White colonial frame I specifically examined the role of sport in providing opportunities for people of color to engage in a struggle for recognition of their sporting achievements and their humanity (Carrington, 2010). As I have noted previously, both CRT and color-blind racism have been applied to a sport context in various forms; however, I used the White colonial frame to purposefully examine the experiences of Black athletes, giving particular attention to the role of sport in shaping discourses of race. Furthermore, using the White colonial frame assisted me to reframe multiculturalism in sport, which is typically used to suggest athletes of all races are viewed and treated equally. I argue that multiculturalism—the concept that all athletes are treated equally under notions of national identity and citizenship—in sport is an example of both color-blind racism and interest convergence disguised in the rhetoric of equality (Bell, 1980; Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Carrington, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). I, therefore, used the theoretical framework to consciously draw attention to the role (or lack thereof) that race played in shaping reality for the participants. I specifically examined these topics through interpretive phenomenological interviews with current and former Black/African American high school boys' basketball players.

Method

I have chosen to explore the above research questions through a qualitative methodology in which the primary method used was interpretive phenomenological interviews (Adams & van Manen, 2017; Arpanantikul, 2018; Ivey, 2013; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy, & Sixsmith, 2013**).** Phenomenological interviews are typically used to examine the immediate and conscious lived experiences of participants in a way that generates detailed and in-depth descriptions (Adams & van Manen, 2017; deMarrais & Tisdale, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roulston, 2010; van Manen & Adams, 2010). More specifically, *interpretive* phenomenological interviews are used to go beyond description and look for meanings embedded within common practices and experiences (Adams & van Manen, 2017; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Thomas & Pollio, 2002; Tuohy et al., 2013). Thus, interpretive phenomenological interviews were an appropriate method to answer the research questions, because I was interested in responses that provide details about the participants' perceptions and experiences of team, culture, and race (deMarrais & Tisdale, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roulston, 2010).

By incorporating interpretive phenomenological interviews, I sought to answer the research questions of the current study and remain consistent with the notion that people of color are uniquely situated to discuss their experiences of race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Given my interest to explore the experiences of marginalized racial groups and their encounters with race, it was important that I frame the current study within an appropriate paradigm. I used the critical paradigm to guide the current study, situate race within a particular historical and cultural context (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005), and examine structures of power that give way to various privileges and oppressions (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2018). Additionally, interpretive phenomenological interviews aligned with a relativist ontology and

subjectivist epistemology in which I recognized that knowledge is produced through my interactions with participants as I explored the processes they use to navigate and make sense of their world (Lincoln et al., 2018; Patton, 2015; Preissle & Grant, 2004). I do not claim the findings as objective facts but as a form of empowerment for marginalized groups that will allow them to contest issues such as power and control (Bhattacharya, 2008; Foley & Valenzuela, 2005; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Kincheloe, McLaren, Steinberg, & Monzó, 2018).

I further describe the qualitative methodology for the current study in Chapter Three. I ultimately argue that interpretive phenomenological interviews were an appropriate method to answer the research questions stated above, because they provided an opportunity to explore the ways participants perceive their life-world by providing detailed and in-depth descriptions of their understandings and conceptualizations of team and culture, as well as the role race played in their experiences (Adams & van Manen, 2017; Arpanantikul, 2018; deMarrais & Tisdale, 2002; Ivey, 2013; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roulston, 2010; Tuohy et al., 2013). Next, I address my personal biases and assumptions that may have influenced my interactions with participants and interpretation of findings.

Positionality

The research process was—at least in some part—influenced by my characteristics, background, and status (Bailey, 2007; Patton, 2015). Thus, I likely entered this process with certain (un)conscious biases and assumptions about the current study. By acknowledging my biases and assumptions, I hope to provide insight into my positionality—my stance or position "in relation to the social and political context" (Rowe, 2014, p. 628) of the current study, the research process, and the interpretation of the findings (Charmaz, 2006; Cihelkova, 2013; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Peshkin, 1988). I tried to be mindful of the ways in which my positionality

might have influenced my interactions with participants, as disparities in our respective positions could potentially create conflict and change "the process and outcomes of the study" (Rowe, 2014, p. 628). Specifically, I reflected upon differences and similarities with respect to race, age, gender, and geographic location.

Race

Given that I have chosen to primarily center race within the analysis of the current study, I find it a reasonable starting point to discuss my own racial identity. As someone who identifies as multiracial, the word "race" means maintaining status in two or more groups, frequently facing identity questions from others and myself. I often view racial matters through my own subjective lens and heritage of Lebanese, African American, and Caucasian. At times, my multiracial identity has made me feel like a minority within a minority. Whereas some multiracial people may be more likely to identify with the race of a non-White parent (Bratter, 2000; Herman, 2004), I try to emphasize being *multiracial* and what it means to me. As such, I sometimes find it difficult to wholly relate to people with a strong *monoracial* identity. I am not Black. I am not White. I am not Lebanese. I am all three. Each of my racial identities informs the others and the ways I perceive and experience race.

My experiences of race are largely based in my interactions with others. I have a skin tone that does not necessarily associate me with one particular racial group. In other words, I am often able to "pass" as White, Black, or Lebanese depending on the social context. I recognize the fortune I gain from this, as skin tone tends to play a significant role in how people perceive the racial identity of others (Herman, 2004; Omi & Winant, 2015). However, this also means that I am not always recognized as a member of a particular racial group. I have been made aware of the ways in which others may perceive my racial identity through various interactions and

conversations that feel as though they come with a sense of pre-judgement. As a result, I sometimes find myself adjusting my response according to my perceptions of others' assumptions about my own identity (Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2001). It becomes a game of sorts—trying to guess what the other person is thinking and responding in a way that will produce a satisfactory explanation.

I personally identify differently than the participants in terms of racial identity. All of the participants in some form or another identified as Black or African American. As addressed previously, I also identify as Black, but in addition to Lebanese and White. Though some participants identified as "biracial" or "mixed," I did not share the same intersection of specific racial identities. I attempted to remain conscious of the ways participants perceived *my* racial identity, as well as the ways in which I perceive their racial identities. Furthermore, I struggled to negotiate if and when to share my racial identity, specifically when it may have influenced relationships and interactions with participants. In several cases I did choose to share my own racial identity, but only when it seemed relevant to the conversation—often when participants asked for clarification about describing their own racial identity or when they specifically identified with more than one race.

I felt it was important to consider the role my own racial identity played with respect to the ways participants chose to interact with me according to their perceptions of shared experiences, or lack thereof. With respect to the current study, discussing my own racial identity with participants was, in many cases, a valuable conversation that allowed me to build rapport and support the process of further reduce the researcher–participant barriers (Preissle, 2008; Roulston, 2010). However, I remained mindful that discussions of race are often a difficult topic. As such, I inquired about race in a way that was comfortable for participants and allowed them to

freely express their ideas, opinions, and experiences. Given that the primary emphasis was placed on studying race, I remained generally aware of the implications of this identity and the way it positions me within the current study.

Age

In addition to race, I made note of similarities and differences in age between the participants and me. I found myself in a peculiar situation where I was both younger *and* older than some of the participants, yet similar in age to others. I was approximately 13 years older than the youngest participant and 41 years younger than the oldest participant at the time of data collection. I note this because am close enough to my own high school years that I can remember some of what I experienced during that time. Yet, I am far enough removed that I cannot recall everything, thereby potentially restricting my ability to relate to the participants who were younger than me. However, I regularly engaged with undergraduate students who are younger than me—yet slightly older than high school students—through my role as an instructor. I realize the differences between high school and college age students, though I believe my role as an instructor allowed me to better relate to a younger demographic in various ways.

When speaking with participants who were older than me, I remained mindful of my own difficulty in recalling specific details from high school. At the time of this writing, I am approximately 10 years removed from my own high school years. There are some things I remember vividly, whereas other memories from that time feel lost forever. Furthermore, the participants who were older than me sometimes mentioned things I am not old enough to remember, which further demonstrated the differences in age. I worked to reduce this potential barrier by asking clarifying questions about those topics, particularly when they related to the interviews. As such, my age positioned me in a way that required me to be more mindful of the

participants' responses to my inquiries. I tried to remember what it was like to be in high school when speaking with younger participants. When speaking with older participants, I tried to provide additional time for responses to allow them to think of specific examples. In these ways, my own age required me to remain patient and maintain a particular conversation with the participants based on any age differences.

Gender

Although I often differed from participants with respect to race and age, it is likely that I shared a common gender identity as a male researcher studying a male sporting experience. The perceived gender alignment with the participants might have increased rapport, though I attempted to guard against overlooking any details as a result of this insider status (Markula, 2016). I was conscious of the fact that, although I studied the experiences of a *boys'* basketball team, it is possible that not all participants identified as male or masculine. Furthermore, I reminded myself that the way I define maleness and masculinity for myself might differ from the participants' personal definitions. I, therefore, attempted to be aware of how maleness and masculinity were understood in the context of the team, and the implications for both participants and myself as it relates to accepting and challenging norms.

Geographic Location and Culture

In addition to race, age, and gender, the various geographic locations in which the participants were situated may have generally influenced their understandings—and my own interpretations—of various topics. Given that participants lived in different regions of the United States, I am generally less aware of the existing cultures as someone who lived in the Midwest for most of my life. I have, however, lived in other regions, where I observed and experienced the cultural differences. For example, I lived in the Southeast for a number of years and visited

the Western Pacific on multiple occasions. As such, I have at least some, albeit limited, experience of the cultural practices in those regions. This was important to consider in my interpretations of the participants' experiences so I could situate them within an appropriate cultural (and temporal) context.

I strived to remain aware of all my subjectivities—race, age, gender, geographic location and culture, and others that did not occur to me—and consider the ways in which each may have influenced the design of the current study, my interactions with participants, and my interpretation of the findings (Charmaz, 2006; Cihelkova, 2013; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Peshkin, 1988). It is, however, important to note the ever-changing nature of subjectivity and that my position had the potential to evolve throughout the development of the current study (Cihelkova, 2013). It is also likely that my positionality related to the overall development, limitations, and delimitations of the current study.

(De)Limitations

In the following sections I briefly detail the delimitations, or criteria, for selecting participants to be included in the current study. I then list some limitations of the current study, specifically those related to the chosen method.

Delimitations

The first delimitation is related to my specific focus on a *boys'* high school basketball team. It is not that I believe a boys' team is more important the a girls' team; rather, I have chosen to explore a boys' team as boys tend to participate in more sports and have more sporting opportunities available compared to girls (Drake et al., 2015). Furthermore, sport tends to be more closely associated with a masculine identity than a feminine identity (Anderson & White,

2018). Thus, it was important to explore the role of sport in the lives and experiences of male participants in conjunction with other aspects of identity such as race.

An additional delimitation to the current study is my emphasis on exploring the ways team and culture are understood and conceptualized in the context of *basketball*. I have selected basketball as the sport to be explored, as it is one of the most racialized sports in terms of connections to Blackness. Indeed, Mohamed (2017) argued that basketball has come to be viewed as a "Black man's game." As such, basketball maintains a specific racial component in a way that other sports may not, thereby making it an appropriate context for the current study. Further delimitations are related to the selection of the participants.

I used a purposive criterion specific sampling technique to identify potential participants based on a predetermined list of attributes that had to be met to qualify for inclusion in the current study (LeCompte & Preissle, 2003; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). I used snowball sampling as a complementary technique, which assisted me to use the predetermined inclusion criteria to select and interview participants then ask them for referrals to others who also met the criteria (Merriam, 2009). Specifically, participants must have identified as a Black/African American male who played on his high school boys' basketball team for at least one year.

I emphasized the selection of participants who identified as Black or African American to remain consistent with work that has examined the experiences of Black collegiate student athletes at primarily White universities (Beamon, 2008, 2012, 2014; Bimper, 2015, 2017; Cooper et al., 2017; Fuller, 2017; Fuller et al., 2017; Hawkins, 1995; Sato et al., 2018; Sato et al., 2017). However, I strive to fill a gap in the literature by exploring similar topics at the high school level. Furthermore, centering race was consistent with a critical race theory (CRT) approach, given the centrality of race in the sport of basketball, where Black athletes tend to be overrepresented—the

proportion of Black basketball players is greater than the proportion of Black people in a particular population (Coakley, 2017).

Limitations

Given the criteria described above, it is also important to consider the limitations of the current study. One limitation is my decision to center race as the primary aspect of analysis. Though I consider the intersection(s) of multiple identities, I made efforts to remain consistent with a CRT approach by giving primacy to race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Omi & Winant, 2015). Therefore, it was less likely that I am able to provide a detailed analysis that incorporates all facets of identity. An additional limitation of the current study was that I only gave attention to one sport. Though I have detailed my rationale for selecting basketball as the sport under investigation in the current study—the notion that it is often viewed as the "Black man's game" due to its specific racial components (Mohamed, 2017)—I acknowledge that other sports warrant investigation as well.

Another limitation is the level of competition at the center of the current study. It is important to understand the experiences of youth athletes of color (Brooks et al., 2017), though there is merit to exploring how the concepts of *team* and *culture* are conceptualized and understood by athletes of color at higher levels of competition. An associated limitation is the method I used in the current study. By conducting interviews, I was able to hear directly from the participants about the ways they understand and conceptualize various topics. However, other qualitative methodologies might have addressed the topics considered in the current study more thoroughly.

Significance

Despite the limitations of the current study, I expect that it will make positive contributions to sport studies in several ways. Regarding existing literature, the findings from the current study contribute to the sociology of sport and organizational behavior literature in sport. With respect to the sociology of sport, the current study contributes to the existing body of knowledge regarding race and sport. I have noted previously in this introduction that the experiences of high school athletes of color have received little academic attention in comparison to collegiate athletes. I aim to address this absence and extend the literature in an effort to "produce important insights into both the (changing) meaning and structure of 'race' as well as the importance and place of sport" (Carrington, 2010, p. 12) in American society.

I strive to fill this gap in the literature by examining race in the context of youth sport, specifically high school athletics. Brooks et al. (2017) argued that sports are central to identity, development, and relationships for children and contended that most research on youth sport has presented a limited view by primarily examining majority White settings. It is, therefore, necessary to include more work that centers race to address a gap in knowledge and "set an agenda for new research and reform in sports" (Brooks et al., 2017, p. 10). Furthermore, the findings from the current study extend research that has explored the formation of an identity through sport (DeMeulenaere, 2010; Hwang et al., 2016); the ways in which high school athletes perceive, understand, and apply racial stereotypes (Azzarito & Harrison, 2008); and the players' perceived values to participating in sport (Forneris et al., 2012). As such, it is my intention to provide additional insight to youth sport in general, and more specifically, the role of race in youth sport.

As an additional contribution to the sociology of sport, the findings of current study provide insight to the role of race in the context of basketball as an organized team sport. Several scholars have indeed centered race within previous studies, particularly in the context of "street" basketball (Hartmann, 2016; Mohamed, 2017; Woodbine, 2016); yet, there remains an absence of literature that has explored race in the context of organized team sports. I seek to extend the findings of previous work, as well as begin to fill a gap in knowledge regarding the role of race and team sports. Though I do not claim the findings to be generalizable—as this is not an objective of qualitative research—they may be transferrable to teams and individuals in similar contexts (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Saldaña, 2016). Therefore, the findings of the current study may hold practical significance for other organized high school boys' basketball teams.

The current study contributes to the organizational behavior literature in sport by exploring a high school, rather than professional or collegiate, setting. Furthermore, I provide additional insight into what constitutes an effective team and culture. Several scholars have noted the role of leadership styles of coaches and athletes, and the relation to the motivational climate and team cohesion (Eys et al., 2013; Horn, Byrd, Martin, & Young, 2012; Vincer & Loughead, 2010). While it is beyond the scope of the current study to investigate specific motivations for playing, I provide additional information regarding the culture of a team, particularly with respect to motivational climate, leadership, and cohesion. In the section below I identify and define key terms for the current study.

Definitions of Terms

The following list contains brief definitions of key terms that are used throughout the current study. In some cases, these terms are described in greater detail in later chapters:

- **Black/African American** – I use this phrase when referring to the participants of the current study. While the terms "Black" and "African American" are often separated and used interchangeably, the combination "Black/African American" is frequently used on census and other demographics collection data. Likewise, I have elected to use them together in an effort to respect the varied ways participants chose to self-identify. Whereas some identified as Black, others identified as African American. By using "Black/African American" I aim to avoid (improperly) labeling the participants, as many of them detailed their rationale for using a particular term. However, I use the singular term "Black" to remain consistent with previous scholarly literature while making references to race that do not explicitly relate to the identities of the participants.
- **Colorblindness** – A "belief that one should treat all persons equally, without regard to their race" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 158).
- **Color-Blind Racism** – An ideology that explains and provides justifications for modern racial inequality as the result of nonracial dynamics (Bonilla-Silva, 2018).
- **Critical Race Theory (CRT)** – A movement that includes scholars and activists who are "interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 3). At a general level, CRT is used to question the foundations of liberalism rather than advocating for small incremental change and progress (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).
- **Culture** – For the purposes of the current study, I define culture as a clearly articulated system of values and beliefs (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015); a process of integrating and teaching new members in which espoused and experienced values remain congruent (Dolan & Garcia, 2002; Hamm et al., 2008); and supportive

team leaders who endorse a task-oriented motivational climate that promotes trust, cohesion, and performance (Eys et al., 2013; Horn et al., 2012; Mach et al., 2010; Vincer & Loughead, 2010). I provide further context and descriptions of the individual elements of this definition in Chapter Two.

- **Diversity** – The representation of various social identities that generally reflects the surrounding social environment (Nahavandi, Denhardt, Denhardt, & Aristigueta, 2015).
- **Empowerment** – The process of giving power to and enabling "individuals, groups and communities to make purposive choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes" (Pant, 2014, p. 291).
- **Gender** – A form of social categorization that is fluid and dynamic in nature and involves "relations between people, bodies, and institutions" that exist between and among men and women, "while recognizing that even the categories man and woman are variable, fluid and subject to change" (Oliver, 2014, p. 374).
- **Identity** – The result of a process that involves categorizing, classifying, or naming oneself or others "in particular ways in relation to other social categories or classifications" (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 224).
- **Intersectionality** – The recognition that social inequality, people's lives, and distributions of power in society are shaped by multiple factors of social division that work with and are impacted by one another. In short, intersectionality is "a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences" (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 2) by examining various social identities "and how their combination plays out in various settings" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 57).

- **Meritocracy** – A social setting in which reward is based on individual worthiness and a lack of success is attributed to individual inability, choices, and motivation (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Coakley, 2017; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).
- **Minority** – "A socially identified population that suffers disadvantages due to systematic discrimination and has a strong sense of social togetherness based on shared experiences of past and current discrimination" (Coakley, 2017, p. 216).
- **Multiculturalism** – A system of politics that re-center race and racism to produce different narratives grounded in nationalism and national identity in a way that appears to include people of all races, but is instead used to meet the needs of government leaders. In this system, addressing and challenging racism is viewed as a strategic goal, the concepts of nationhood and citizenship are expanded to be more open, and diversity is defined "as a good in and of itself" (Carrington, 2010, p. 151). In short, "'multiculturalism' has become a surrogate way to discuss race, politics and identity" (Carrington, 2010, p. 142) without appearing to do so.
- **New Racism** – A racial ideology that is more subtle, institutional, and *seemingly* nonracial in comparison to Jim Crow racism (Alexander, 2012; Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Collins, 2004; Ferber, 2007; King, Leonard, & Kusz, 2007; Leonard, 2017). This new racism has led to the creation of a "racial caste system" that is less noticeable and largely invisible at surface level (Alexander, 2012).
- **Organizational Behavior** – The study and practices of managing individual behaviors, group dynamics, performance, and organizational operations (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015).

- **Organizational Culture** – The social and physical environment, values, norms, beliefs, and basic assumptions that are shared and expressed by members of an organization (Nahavandi et al., 2015). This is a basic definition used to understand the culture of organizations in a broad sense. For a more specific definition see the terms *team* and *culture*.
- **Positionality** – "The stance or positioning of the researcher in relation to the social and political context of the study—the community, the organization or the participant group" (Rowe, 2014, p. 628).
- **Race** – A form of social categorization that "refers to physical differences that groups and cultures consider socially significant" (American Sociological Association, 2018, para. 1). Sociologists recognize that race has no biological or genetic reality, and is instead a social construction that is subject to change and is related to issues of power, inequality, and political ideologies that produce a social reality (American Sociological Association, 2018; Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Carrington, 2010; Omi & Winant, 2015).
- **Racial Frame** – A primary component of interpreting racial ideologies that is used to explain racial phenomena and serve as a means for dominant groups to retain power while simultaneously restricting access and opportunities to freedom and equality for racial minorities (Bonilla-Silva, 2018).
- **Racial Ideology** – "The racially based frameworks used by actors to explain and justify…or challenge…the racial status quo" (Bonilla-Silva, 2018, p. 9).
- **Racial Rhetoric** – The linguistic manners and strategies employed when speaking about race, used as "technical tools that allow users to articulate its [racial ideology] frames and story lines" (Bonilla-Silva, 2018, p. 77).

- **Racialization –** "The extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group" (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 111).
- **Reality** – The meaning people give to their social world that is shaped by lived experiences, personal values, status and identity characteristics, and other social processes (Bailey, 2007; Given, 2016; Lincoln et al., 2018; Patton, 2015; Preissle & Grant, 2004).
- **Socialization** – "The process by which humans become participating members of contemporary society" (Sailes, 1984, p. 9). For the purposes of the current study, I refer to socialization as the process of becoming a member of a high school boys' basketball team.
- **Sports** – "Physical activities that involve challenges or competitive contests. They are usually organized so that participants can assess their performances and compare them to the performances of others or to their own performances from one situation to another" (Coakley, 2017 pp. 6-7).
- **Stereotype** – "A widely shared generalization used to define and judge all individuals who are classified in a particular social category" (Coakley, 2017, p. 652).
- **Stigma** – "A personal attribute that may discredit or 'spoil' an identity because people respond with negative expectations" (Walkup, 2012, p. 1386) that signify social devaluation, prejudice, and discrimination.
- **Team** – For the purposes of the current study, I define a team as self-managing and diverse (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Rock & Grant, 2016), with clearly defined roles (Mumford et al., 2008)—both task and social (Carron & Brawley, 2000)—for an indeterminate number of members with specific skill sets (Gratton & Erickson, 2007),

who interdependently strive to complete work-related tasks and goals (Nahavandi et al., 2015), while holding each other accountable to promote cohesion and reduce social loafing (Beal et al., 2003; Horn et al., 2012; Jowett et al., 2012; Mach et al., 2010; Liden et al., 2004). I provide further context and descriptions of the individual elements of this definition in Chapter Two.

- **Team Dynamics** – For the purposes of the current study, team dynamics refer to essential elements of team construction and development that are related to size, composition, roles, cohesion, socialization and integration of new members, personality management, leadership, and motivation (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019).
- **White Colonial Frame** – A general account and theoretical map that can be used to make sense of "critical conjunctures between race and sport within the wider Black diaspora" in a way that uses sport as a site for the application *and* generation of social theory (Carrington, 2010, p. 14). The inclusion of "colonial" is meant to draw attention to the notion that racialized understandings and framings of society emerged in the 16th century from a set of European institutions that structured much of the world in specific ways—commonly referred to as European colonialism (Carrington, 2010).

Organization of Study

In Chapter One, I provided a general background for the current study. I outlined the purpose, research questions, (de)limitations, and significance of the current study, as well as definitions of select terms. In Chapter Two, I include a more thorough discussion of the terms *team* and *culture*, and provide an operational definition that articulates my conceptualization of each term for the purposes of the current study. I then detail the theoretical framework I use to support centering race within the current study. In Chapter Three, I describe the methodological,

ontological, epistemological, and paradigmatic procedures and assumptions that inform my data collection and analysis. In Chapter Four, I present the findings that emerged from an interpretive analysis. Finally, I engage in a discussion of the findings in Chapter Five, and explain the implications of the current study, suggest directions for future research, and provide conclusions about this work in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I provide a discussion of team, culture, and the theoretical framework that I use to guide this work. I begin by identifying the important components of a team, followed by an operational definition, and an application of the definition. I then move into a discussion of culture, again identifying the key components and developing an operational definition for the context of the current study. I follow the discussion of culture with a brief description of the role diversity plays in the development of a culture and team formation. I close the chapter with the theoretical framework, in which I provide a detailed description of the theories that will be used to guide this work.

Defining Team

When discussing sport organizations the concept of *team* seems almost self-explanatory. Teams exist at all levels of sport, from professional to amateur, international to domestic. Despite the apparent simplicity, a team is a complex dynamic. There are various types of teams that operate in different ways and rely on various resources in order to be successful. Furthermore, there are several social, psychological, and communication constructs that must be properly managed in order for a team to be efficient. Additionally, there are several aspects of a team that must be identified before a definition can be articulated. In the sections below I briefly define the term *team* and explain the important elements: (a) type; (b) size, composition, and roles; and (c) cohesion and social loafing. I then develop an operational definition of *team* and apply it to a high school boys' basketball context. Next, I detail the specific social, psychological, and communication constructs that are vital to successfully managing a team. Following the discussion of *team* I address the values of participating in a high school basketball team, as well as the barriers to formation of such a team.

Important Elements

Definition and team types. MacIntosh and Burton (2019) defined a team as "a group of people brought together based on specific skill sets or abilities to accomplish a specific task or function" (p. 140). While this definition provides a better understanding of a team in a general sense, it remains vague. Nahavandi, Denhardt, Denhardt, and Aristigueta (2015) provided a more specific definition, detailing teams as "mature groups with a high degree of interdependence geared toward the achievement of a goal or the completion of a task" (p. 302). Though these definitions are similar, the point of distinction is the aspect of interdependence noted by Nahavandi et al. (2015), as team members also share a strong common purpose, have complementary skill sets, and hold others accountable to the work. Teams differ from groups, which develop based on shared interests and experiences to perform a task; however, groups are not typically developed for specific work-related objectives (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015).

In addition to delineating between teams and groups, it is also necessary to describe the types of teams. There are several types of teams—cross-functional, problem-solving, employee involvement, self-managing, and senior-level—each with specific characteristics and functions. I have chosen to describe a *self-managing team*, as it most closely resembles a high school boys' basketball team. A self-managing team does not require outside leadership in order to function and members are responsible for making their own decisions (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). Specifically, members of a self-managing team identify their specific work-related tasks, determine schedules, establish the training and skills required for membership, select new members to be trained, and develop specific means for controlling the quality of work produced (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). The size of a self-managing team can range from 5-15 members,

each with multiple skill sets that allow the team to be successful. A self-managing team must be large enough to complete tasks, but small enough to function—an important aspect of team size (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019).

Team size, composition, and roles. Size and composition are additional aspects of a team that contribute to success. As previously stated, the ideal size for a team is one small enough to be manageable, yet large enough to complete tasks and accomplish objectives in a timely manner (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). There is not a specific number that can represent this ideal, though teams larger than 10 members tend to function less smoothly (Gratton & Erickson, 2007; MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015). In addition to the size of a team, it is important to consider the composition. Teams that are comprised of members with numerous similarities tend to have better relationships (Nahavandi et al., 2015), whereas more diverse teams may have greater struggles and disagreements related to different ways of thinking (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). Nonetheless, diverse teams are more likely to remain objective, focus on facts, and process facts more carefully (Rock & Grant, 2016). Therefore, diversity and team composition are simultaneously potential advantages and challenges that must be carefully managed (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019).

Another aspect of team composition that must be carefully managed is the assignment and function of team roles. Nahavandi et al. (2015) described team roles as specific responsibilities, both formal and informal, that each member is expected to perform. The requirements of each role may change over time, meaning it is vital for team members to remain aware of such changes in order to adapt and continue functioning effectively (Mumford, Van Iddekinge, Morgeson, & Campion, 2008). It is also necessary for team members to understand whether their role is task-oriented or social. Task roles relate to the completion of specific duties

that allow the group to function (Nahavandi et al., 2015) and can be broken down into five subcategories: *contractor*, *creator*, *contributor*, *completer*, and *critic* (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Mumford et al., 2008). The *contractor* is responsible for coordinating work, setting schedules, and creating timelines for the completion of specific tasks. The *creator* is responsible for the continued evaluation and assessment of team goals in order to determine when they must be realigned (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). The *contributor* is a dependable task-oriented member, who brings expertise, provides information, does his or her work, and pushes the team to set high standards (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015). The *completer* is responsible for putting ideas into action (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019), and the *critic* is tasked with respectfully questioning the team in order to challenge assumptions and encourage alternative ideas (Nahavandi et al., 2015). Social roles are related to task roles in that they ensure efficient operation and the maintenance of relationships within the team (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Mumford et al., 2008; Nahavandi et al., 2015). When team members perform effectively in their respective roles they contribute to overall cohesion.

Cohesion and social loafing. Cohesion—the degree of connectedness between members—is a vital aspect of teams, as greater cohesion tends to result in greater effectiveness (Beal, Cohen, Burke, & McLendon, 2003; Mach, Dolan, & Tzafrir, 2010; MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015). Team cohesion contains both task and social elements (Carron & Brawley, 2000) that emphasize, respectively, members' feelings about personal involvement in specific tasks and interactions with other members (Horn, Byrd, Martin, & Young, 2012; Jowett, Shanmuguam, & Caccoulis, 2012). A greater sense of team cohesion allows members to build a collective identity and share a bond of a similar purpose (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Yaeger, 2016). An important contributing factor to cohesion is collective efficacy, or "a group's

confidence in performing collective tasks successfully" (Jowett et al., 2012, p. 66). Teams that maintain higher levels of collective efficacy are likely to be more cohesive and can lead to greater levels of satisfaction for team members (Jowett et al., 2012). Additionally, increased cohesion and satisfaction may lead members to more readily accept and support the team norms and behaviors (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015). However, conformity—how heavily members adhere to the norms—can also lead to negative consequences such as the rejection of ideas from people not associated with the team, avoiding conflict, and loss of creativity (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015). Despite the potential consequences, cohesion is an important aspect of a team that promotes efficient operation and has the potential to reduce social loafing.

Social loafing, a decline in individual efforts of team members, can undercut effective teamwork (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). It is more likely to occur in larger, less cohesive teams (Liden, Wayne, Jaworski, & Bennett, 2004), which reinforces the need for managing the size of a team. Social loafing does not suggest team members are lazy or slacking, but rather that some individuals may be dissatisfied with their role and question the significance of their contributions (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). One way to counter social loafing is to hold people accountable and remind them of their value to the team, which is supported through maintaining cohesion (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). Therefore, teams must strive to maintain high levels of cohesion in an effort to remain productive and reduce social loafing. This is particularly important for a team that has a relative level of freedom to make its own decision, such as a self-managing team. In the following section I provide a robust description of the operational definition I employ for *team* and apply it to a high school boys' basketball context.

Operational Definition

Given the above discussion, it is important to articulate how I define a *team* in the current study. For the purposes of this study, I conceptualize a team as a group of people with specific and complementary skill sets who hold each other accountable to interdependently move toward the completion of a specific work-related task (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015). There is no perfect number for the size of a team; it must be large enough to accomplish its objectives, yet small enough to remain manageable (Gratton & Erickson, 2007). Likewise, there is no "perfect formula" for team composition, rather a team must consist of a diverse group of people who are willing and able to respectfully and constructively challenge one another to accomplish team objectives (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Rock & Grant, 2016). Furthermore, a team should be capable of making its own decisions regarding everyday functions with minimal input from organizational leadership. The members of a team collectively identify roles (Mumford et al., 2008), both task and social (Carron & Brawley, 2000), and strive to promote cohesion (Beal et al., 2003; Horn et al., 2012; Jowett et al., 2012; Mach et al., 2010) and reduce social loafing (Liden et al., 2004). In short, a team is self-managing and diverse, with clearly defined roles for an indeterminate number of members with specific skill sets, who interdependently strive to complete work-related tasks and goals while holding each other accountable to promote cohesion and reduce social loafing. Though this definition may largely apply to organizations in general, I use it to guide my understanding of an interscholastic athletics team, specifically high school boys' basketball.

Application of Definition

I find it necessary to demonstrate how my operational definition of a team may apply in a sport setting. I, therefore, describe how a high school boys' basketball team is consistent with my

conceptualization of a team. First, the basketball team may be viewed as a self-managing team in that coaches fill the primary leadership roles. The school principal and athletics director may offer commentary on occasion, but they are largely absent from the routine day-to-day decisions. The team, led by the coaches, is responsible for determining the daily tasks that must be completed, such as drills, creating and testing new plays, watching film, or conditioning. New members can be identified through tryouts and those with the requisite skills will be able to join the team; however, only a specific number of new members are accepted in order to maintain a sufficient team size. Furthermore, new members receive training in the form of practices that allow them to acclimate to the group norms and expectations. The final aspect of a high school boys' basketball team that is consistent with a self-managing team is control over the quality of work. Specifically, coaches can control the quality of work by ensuring that the players who produce at the highest levels receive the most playing time. In other words, high-level producers (starters) receive more work (playing time) than lower-level producers (non-starters).

A high school boys' basketball team is also consistent with the aforementioned conceptualization of team in that it is comprised of a number of people with diverse social backgrounds and skill sets who take on specific roles. Not only do most team members vary in age, race, ethnicity, and class, but they are also assigned roles according to their contributions to team success. For example, a head coach may undertake a "contractor" role as the primary individual responsible for coordinating specific-work related tasks for the team. Other coaches, as well as team captains, are "creators" who reassess goals when necessary and ensure the team stays on task. Each player can be thought of as a "contributor" who is asked to perform various tasks, whether it is scoring, rebounding, defense, or some other contribution. Specific players on the team resemble the "completer" role, as they are typically responsible for a specific task; they

"put ideas into action" (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019, p. 145). An assistant coach who is responsible for respectfully challenging the head coach with regard to play calls, strategies, and other tasks may fill the critic role. No matter a person's role, each is clearly defined and members understand where they can make a positive contribution.

Cohesion and accountability are the final salient aspects of a team that apply to a high school boys' basketball context. For example, a team with higher levels of cohesion typically feels more connected to one another and remain more effective. Likewise, a team with high levels of collective efficacy is more likely to display greater trust in other members' abilities, thereby contributing to cohesion (Jowett et al., 2012). As such, team members are able to identify potential social loafing and hold each other accountable. Therefore, a high school boys' basketball program is an appropriate example of a context that is consistent with the stated operational definition of a team. In order to develop a more robust understanding of team dynamics, it is also important to consider the various underlying constructs.

Team Constructs

There are several elements that are vital to the development of a team. For instance, various sociological, psychological, and communication constructs work in unison to integrate new members and help them become more comfortable with their responsibilities. Personality and motivation also play key roles, as it is important to understand how people with different personalities remain motivated in different ways. Moreover, leaders have an essential role within a team, as they are responsible for establishing a culture and environment that encourages and motivates other members to perform at their highest levels. In the sections below, I further detail the importance of the various elements of a team including sociological, psychological, communication, personality, motivation, and leadership constructs.

Sociological, psychological, and communication constructs. In addition to the specific elements of a team, there are various sociological, psychological, and communication constructs that are part of team success. These aspects work together to ensure each team member is aware of the expectations and is satisfied with his or her role. In order to better understand their place within the team each member must undergo a socialization process—the strategies and techniques used to structure the learning experiences of team members when they assume a new position, role, or status (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). The socialization process is also vital to establishing an environment that celebrates and respects diversity and inclusion. An awareness of and increase in diversity can lead to various benefits, such as greater interaction between team members (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). However, it is also important for team members to share similarities so they do not feel isolated within the team. Therefore, effectively managing diversity is related to the construction of a social identity that encourages members to develop an emotional connection to the team and feel like they belong (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). This may also factor into collective efficacy and lead to increased cohesion among team members (Jowett et al., 2012). Properly managing diversity and the socialization process may further aid in constructing and supporting various psychological constructs with the team.

Personality and motivation. Once each member has been socialized and integrated into the team, it is important to understand the specific aspects of their personality, such as attitude, emotions, and motivations (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). Understanding what motivates each team member is particularly important to ensure they remain actively engaged. This is especially important for high school athletes, as they tend to feel more motivated when they receive support from multiple sources, such as coaches and parents (Amorose, Anderson-Butcher, Newman, Fraina, & Iachini, 2016). High school athletes may also be more motivated when they believe

sport participation will develop various life skills and values (Forneris, Camiré, & Trudel, 2012). Ensuring that team members remain motivated can guard against dissatisfaction with their roles and responsibilities and reduce stress levels (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). However, it is not enough to simply provide motivation for participation. It is also important to establish strong communication in order to manage team development.

Leadership and teams. The most important component of establishing communication on a team begins with leadership. Each team requires a particular type of leader who is able to establish effective communication. For example, some teams may need a more relaxed and democratic leader who is able to effectively communicate through collaboration, whereas other teams may function more efficiently with an autocratic leader who is responsible for directing and controlling various actions (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). Particularly on a high school athletics team, leadership may refer to multiple coaches who can exhibit the different types of leaders at different times. No matter the style of leadership, it is also important for team members, especially players, to trust the decision-making of those in charge. Decision-making is a vital aspect of communication within a team, because leaders must be able to determine and effectively communicate a specific course of action to be taken to address an opportunity or crisis (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). Without clear and proper communication, a team may devolve into confusion that cannot be overcome. Nevertheless, effective communication must be paired with the various sociological and psychological constructs in order to effectively manage a team.

Benefits and Barriers to Participation

While it is important to understand the definition of a team, it is also necessary to acknowledge some of the benefits and barriers to participation in high school sport, which are described in the sections below.

Benefits to Participation

There are numerous potential benefits that may serve as motivating factors for high school students to be part of youth sport. Participation can result in the development of various life skills and values (Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2009; Danish, Forneris, Hodge, & Heke, 2004; Forneris et al., 2012; Gould & Voelker, 2010; Holt, Tink, Mandigo, & Fox, 2008). It can also have a positive influence on academic identity and performance, particularly for students of color (DeMeulenaere, 2010; Hwang, Feltz, Kietzmann, & Diemer, 2016; Leeds, 2015; Shifrer, Pearson, Muller, & Wilkinson, 2015). In the following sections, I briefly describe the benefits of participation in high school athletics that are related to life skills and values. I then detail some of the benefits that are associated with academic identity and performance. Given the focus of the current study, I specifically discuss the benefits in terms of participation in high school boys' basketball.

Life skills. Participation in sport provides the opportunity for youth athletes to develop a variety of life skills and values (Danish et al., 2004; Forneris, 2012). Through participation in sport, youth athletes are given opportunities to develop their initiative, respect for others, and teamwork (Holt et al., 2008). Participating in youth sports, such as high school basketball, may also result in the development and improvement of social skills and behaviors (Camiré et al., 2009). Additionally, sports participation gives youth athletes an opportunity to improve their leadership skills (Holt et al., 2008), particularly when coaches and other administrators take an

active role in developing athlete leaders (Gould & Voelker, 2010). Each benefit of participation in athletics is a potential motivating factor for youth athletes, who tend to grant greater significance to the various life skills and values when compared to parents, coaches, and administrators (Forneris et al., 2012). In addition to improved life skills, participation in high school athletics may also result in academic benefits.

Academics. Several scholars have argued that participating in youth athletics has a positive effect on academic benefits (DeMeulenaere, 2010; Hwang et al., 2016; Leeds, 2015; Shifrer et al., 2015). Leeds (2015) contended that youth sport, when viewed as an investment in cognitive development, is positively correlated to academic performance. Sport participation in high school is also related to the formation of an academic identity for White and Hispanic students, though Black students may not readily form an academic identity through sport participation (Hwang et al., 2016). However, DeMeulenaere (2010) found that school sport could indeed shape academic performance and identity for young Black athletes by providing structure and incentives to seek high achievement. Participating in high school sports has, in fact, been an advantage for students who wish to attend college, thereby increasing the opportunities to matriculate to 4-year colleges (Shifrer et al., 2015). Therefore, it is evident that participation in a sport such as high school boys' basketball can result in numerous academic benefits, as well as improved life skills. However, it is also important to consider potential challenges that may arise from participation in high school athletics.

Barriers to Participation

Despite the various values and motivations for participating in high school athletics, there are potential barriers that may inhibit formation of a unified and functional team. The barriers can arise out of challenges related to diversity, cohesion, motivation, trust, personality,

socialization and integration, or leadership. The various barriers can exist independently of one another or they can intersect to create more complex problems. No matter the barrier, it is important to be aware of the challenges each may present. In the sections below, I provide a brief description of the relation between some of the aforementioned barriers, including how they may interact to form multifaceted challenges. I begin by discussing what I label leadership-related barriers—the intersection of leadership, motivation, trust, and cohesion. I then provide a description of interaction-related barriers—the intersections of personality, socialization and integration, and diversity. I acknowledge that this is not the only way these factors can be conceptualized. However, I have chosen to organize them in a way that best fits the context of the current study.

Leadership-related barriers. Leadership-related barriers are those that can be directly managed through the actions and behaviors of team leaders. These barriers are specifically associated with the style of leadership and motivational climate adopted by team leaders. They are also connected to the levels of trust and cohesion that exist within a team. In essence, leadership-related barriers are, at least somewhat, controlled by the leaders of a team.

The leaders of a team—coaches and athletes—are responsible for establishing the goals, objectives, values, and expectations for each member. However, many athletes are chosen to be leaders (team captains), but are not granted sufficient opportunities to express their opinions and contribute to team decisions. As a result, many team captains are not prepared to effectively address issues that may arise. Teams should, therefore, establish programs that intentionally train and develop athletes to become informed leaders who can effectively motivate teammates (Gould & Voelker, 2010). Athletes can become informed leaders by learning the complexities of leadership, understanding different personalities, and taking advantage of opportunities that

allow them to gain experience and practice. It is also essential that athletes understand the various styles of leadership required to effectively inspire and motivate other team members.

While there is not a single style of leadership that is best for all people, it is necessary to understand which styles tend to foster higher levels of performance. Specifically, teams with leaders who adopt a democratic style that is collaborative and supportive, with an emphasis on training and instruction, tend to increase cohesion (Vincer & Loughead, 2010). Furthermore, Amorose et al. (2016) found that high school athletes are likely to report higher levels of motivation if they feel support from multiple sources, such as parents and coaches. It is also important to understand that some members of a team may require a more autocratic style of leadership that places greater emphasis on directing and controlling actions and regulations (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). Leadership, then, serves as a potential barrier if coaches and athlete leaders are unaware of the style required to extract the best performance from other members of the team.

Another potential barrier related to leadership and overall team performance is the motivational climate. A climate that promotes the mastery of specific tasks over competition between team members is likely to increase cohesion and performance, particularly in youth sport (Eys et al., 2013; Horn et al., 2012). Additionally, it is important to consider all aspects of ability when evaluating improvement as a contributing factor to the mastery of tasks and skills. Burgess and Naughton (2010) argued that talent development should include both physical *and* mental skills, such as maturation and sport intelligence. It is important for team leaders to be cognizant of these skills in order to provide an ideal motivational climate that will allow members to develop in a positive way. Such awareness may also lead to greater trust between team members.

The final leadership-related barrier to the formation of a successful team is trust and its relation to cohesion. Team members who trust one another tend to perform better and see benefits that extend beyond team purposes (Mach et al., 2010). Trust is also related to collective efficacy and role satisfaction. Jowett et al. (2012) found that athletes who trust and are satisfied with their teammates' abilities are "more likely to persist, to exert more effort, and select more challenging tasks to enable them to progress and succeed in their chosen sport" (p. 76). Thus, it is important for leaders to establish trust in team members, as well as ensure they remain trustworthy themselves. Teams that lack trust are less likely to work cooperatively toward their goals (Mach et al., 2010). Leadership-related barriers can, therefore, be combatted by identifying the requisite style of leadership that promotes a positive and trusting motivational climate, one that will lead to higher levels of team cohesion and performance.

Interaction-related barriers. Interaction-related barriers are those that cannot necessarily be managed through leaders' actions and behaviors and are instead reliant upon effectively managing *interactions* between team members. These barriers tend to be associated with challenges in managing different personalities. They are also correlated to facing challenges of effectively socializing and integrating new members into the team. Finally, diversity—representations of various social identities that generally reflect the surrounding environment (Nahavandi et al., 2015)—within a team (or lack thereof) can serve as an interaction-related barrier. In short, interaction-related barriers cannot be controlled for as easily as leadership-related barriers. They instead require a heightened awareness of various interpersonal dynamics.

The first aspect of interaction-related barriers is to understand the different personalities that can (or cannot) coexist within a team. Nahavandi et al. (2015) defined personality as "a set of psychological characteristics that makes each person unique" (p. 76). Each team member must

first be aware of the strengths that are part of his or her own personality. Such self-awareness will provide space for team members to surround themselves with people who have complementary skills and personalities (Nahavandi et al., 2015). Similarly, it is imperative for each team member—leaders in particular—to have at least some understanding of the other personalities on a team. It is especially important to be aware of the extent to which other members display primary personality dimensions such as extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and open-mindedness (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015). Each dimension can present various challenges that can manifest in different ways. It is, therefore, necessary for team members to know how to interact with and respond to others with specific personality traits.

Personality is also related to the processes of socialization and integration, as it is important to understand how people respond to others in a social setting. Socialization is a key process that can be used to introduce team members to the team as a whole, their specific role(s), and the expectations of each role (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Wang, Kammeyer-Mueller, Liu, & Li, 2015). Feldman (1976) developed a model of socialization that details the phases of socialization within an organization or team. New members attempt to learn as much as possible before joining, learn what the organization or team is like while attempting to join, and subsequently begin to master tasks and roles while acclimating to the team norms and values (Feldman, 1976; MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). Wang et al. (2015) further argued that the climate, people, and formal practices within an organization could influence the socialization process. It is important for the socialization process to be context and person-specific in an effort to develop effective procedures for introducing new members to an organization (MacIntosh & Burton,

2019). As such, it is necessary to be aware of the various personality traits, learning processes, and contexts that contribute to socialization and integration.

In addition to understanding personality, socialization, and integration, it is important to consider team diversity and the potential challenges it may present. Team members may differ in terms of a variety of social and cultural statuses that contribute to the ways they interact with others. Though diverse teams tend to perform at higher levels (Rock & Grant, 2016), they may also experience more disagreements as a result of varying experiences and ways of thinking (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). An inability to effectively integrate a diverse group of people could result in prejudice and bias among team members (Cunningham, 2011). For example, some team members may rely on stereotypes that guide their interactions with others and lead to discrimination. Fink and Pastore (1999) argued that sports teams and organizations should take a proactive approach toward managing diversity, as it "is most likely to bring…positive organizational outcomes" (p. 321). Hence, it is necessary for teams and organizations to establish some level of diversity training that exposes members to other cultures and ways of thinking and reduces bias within the group (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). Managing diversity—through the development of an effective process of socialization and integration that accounts for various cultural, social, and personality differences—is a vital component of combatting interaction-related barriers. As such, it is important for teams to develop, establish, and effectively communicate a culture in which members know what is expected of them.

Defining Culture

In addition to identifying the key components of a team, as well as the benefits and barriers to participation, it is also necessary to discuss the role of *culture* in team dynamics. For the purposes of the discussion below, the terms "organization" and "team" are used

interchangeably. Every organization—including high school athletics teams—must develop a culture that will influence its operations. As part of the culture, each organization should find ways to articulate its values and beliefs, as well as what is expected of new members. Ultimately, the culture guides the actions and behaviors of people within the organization. In the sections below I briefly define the term *culture* and explain the important elements: (a) artifacts, values, and basic assumptions; (b) teaching and integrating new members; and (c) leadership and motivation. I then develop an operational definition of *culture*. I then explain the role of diversity in culture and team formation. I also provide a conceptual model (see Appendix A) to illustrate my understanding of the culture for a high school boys' basketball team.

Important Elements

In a general sense, organizational culture refers to the "norms, beliefs, and values expressed by members of a particular group" (Nahavandi, Denhardt, Denhardt, & Aristigueta, 2015, p. 477). Another way to understand culture is an explanation of how tasks are completed and what is expected of people within an organization (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). Organizational culture is often related to leadership, diversity, and change and can affect both individual and group work (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015). Culture often remains unseen, yet it guides the actions and behaviors of the organization and its members (Nahavandi et al., 2015). It is, therefore, necessary to make organization and team members aware of the culture through a variety of means, such as artifacts, values and beliefs, and basic assumptions.

Artifacts, values, and basic assumptions. Artifacts are visible, tangible items that describe the social and physical environment of a particular organization. They tend to be readily available, describe day-to-day operations and routines, and signal what the organization

considers important (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015). For example, sports organizations and teams may use trophies as artifacts and cultural symbols that signal the importance of winning. Artifacts can also take the form of policies that describe the desired qualities and characteristics of the organization and its members (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). In short, artifacts serve as a surface level introduction to the culture of an organization. However, members can increase their awareness of organizational culture through values and beliefs.

Organizational values and beliefs give a more detailed explanation of the inner workings of an organization and the way it ought to operate (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015). Values and beliefs are typically less readily identifiable than artifacts and require joining an organization to become familiar with. Values and beliefs identify the norms and desirable behaviors that, if fully accepted by members, will be reflected in their actions (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015). Remaining relatively stable, values and beliefs are an important part of developing a culture and distinguish appropriate and inappropriate actions and behaviors (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). In short, values and beliefs grant additional understanding regarding the culture of an organization or team, yet there is a final layer of culture that grants further insight.

Basic assumptions—the actions and beliefs that are taken for granted to the point they are nearly imperceptible—form the final level of organizational culture (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015). Such assumptions form the basis for values and beliefs and shed light on *why* people do what they do in an organization. The basic assumptions are often informed, at least in part, by the personal values, expectations, and experiences of organizational leaders (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015). These assumptions, however, are less salient than artifacts, values, and beliefs, and are most often perceived when violated (MacIntosh

& Burton, 2019). Nevertheless, basic assumptions work in unison with artifacts, values, and beliefs to shape the foundation of a culture and inform members of the expected behaviors. Once the foundation has been formed, it is important to ensure organization and team members learn the culture through a variety of means.

Teaching and integrating new members. Although artifacts, values, beliefs, and basic assumptions can implicitly introduce new members to organizational culture, there are other means that provide more explicit exposure. Specifically, new members can observe a culture through espoused means (what is stated) and personal experiences (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015). Each method of learning can provide valuable insight to the "true" culture of an organization. For example, a statement of values explains what is important to the organization; however, this may not be consistent with the experiences of the members. It is, therefore, important to ensure that both statements and experiences are congruent in identifying and promoting organizational culture (Hamm, MacLean, Kikulis, & Thibault, 2008).

Hamm et al. (2008) found that espoused values within an organization are not always congruent with the experiences of its members. An organization or team may face various obstacles as the incongruence and dissonance between stated and experienced cultures are left unresolved (Hamm et al., 2008; MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). It is essential that team leaders ensure the values they espouse are upheld in a way that remains consistent with members' experiences and encourages them to more readily accept the culture. Failing to do so may risk losing the trust and commitment of athletes, thereby disrupting the culture.

One method that can be used to align the espoused and experienced cultures is management by values (MBV)—what Dolan and Garcia (2002) described as a "strategic leadership tool" (p. 103) that can be used to simplify, guide, and ensure member commitment to

the organizational culture. Specifically, MBV can be used to identify the incongruences between espoused and experienced cultures and reinforce the important principles of the organization (Dolan & Garcia, 2002; MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; MacIntosh & Spence, 2012). With respect to sport organizations and teams, MBV can be used as part of a strategic plan that intentionally emphasizes the need to effectively manage values—such as recruitment, management, and development—and achieve a competitive advantage (Bell-Laroche, MacLean, Thibault, & Wolfe, 2014; Kerwin, MacLean, & Bell-Laroche, 2014). However, it is not enough to simply align espoused and experienced cultures; new members must also be effectively integrated into the overall organizational culture.

Integrating new members into a culture is particularly valuable with respect to high school sports as it is imperative that coaches "understand how athletes derive enjoyment from sport" (Eys et al., 2013, p. 381). As such, the integration process requires coaches to utilize an *authentic* approach that is focused on teaching the long-standing values and important aspects of performing within the team, as well as understanding the needs of new members (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). This can be challenging in sport organizations and teams due to the high rate of turnover, especially at the high school level. However, new members may learn the culture through continued interactions and socialization with stakeholders in and outside the organization (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). The integration process should, therefore, emphasize teaching the established core values and beliefs, as well as informing new members of the organizational vision and mission. As such, it is imperative to consider the needs and interests of each new member, including the obstacles—such as language barriers—that may prevent them from successfully integrating (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). It is important to establish clear

techniques for teaching the espoused and experienced organizational culture, in addition to successfully integrating new members, in order to maintain higher levels of performance.

Leadership and motivation. Related to integrating new members into an organization's culture is to ensure that each member, new and returning, remains motivated to perform at the highest levels possible. The leaders of an organization and team, both coaches and athletes, are especially responsible for developing a culture that allows members to succeed. Specifically, a democratic style of leadership that incorporates collaboration with other members, training and instruction, and social support is essential to development of the culture (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Vincer & Loughead, 2010). It is particularly important to create specific leadership development opportunities for athletes in order to give them formal guidance (Gould & Voelker, 2010). This can help ensure that athlete leaders display supportive and democratic leadership qualities, as their actions can have an impact on team cohesion (Vincer & Loughead, 2010). Likewise, the leadership style of coaches can impact team cohesion as well as the motivational climate (Eys et al., 2013; Horn, Byrd, Martin, & Young, 2012).

It is important for coaches and athlete leaders alike to display specific behaviors that promote both task and social cohesion. For example, some leaders will inspire motivation by detailing expectations for and confidence in the team (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). The ideal motivational climate is one that is task-oriented and places an emphasis on developing and improving specific skills. Establishing such a motivational climate is more likely to increase trust among team members, thereby improving cohesion and, potentially, performance (Eys et al., 2013; Horn et al., 2012; Mach, Dolan, & Tzafrir, 2010). An important aspect of culture, trust is "an integral part of teamwork because team tasks require a high level of interdependence between members" (Mach et al., 2010, p. 772). In short, leaders, specifically coaches and athlete

leaders (team captains), are responsible for developing the motivational climate that will be used to shape the culture of a team.

Operational Definition

Given the above discussion, it is important to articulate how I define *culture* in the current study. For the purposes of this study, I conceptualize culture as an articulation of the norms and expectations for members of an organization or team. The cultural values, beliefs, and basic assumptions should be clearly stated through the use of artifacts and other materials (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015). The organization must develop an intentional process of integrating new members to familiarize them with the culture. Specifically, the stated (espoused) culture must be congruent with the experiences of members through the use of management by values (Dolan & Garcia, 2002; Hamm et al., 2008). Furthermore, the leaders of the organization are responsible for exhibiting positive and supportive democratic behaviors that promote trust and cohesion (Eys et al., 2013; Horn et al., 2012; Mach et al., 2010).

With regard to sport, and specifically interscholastic athletics, a culture should present opportunities for athletes to develop as leaders (Gould & Voelker, 2010). However, athlete leaders and coaches are responsible for promoting a motivational climate that emphasizes improvement and mastery of tasks (Eys et al., 2013; Horn et al., 2012; Vincer & Loughead, 2010). In short, culture consists of a clearly articulated system of values and beliefs; a process of integrating and teaching new members in which espoused and experienced values remain congruent; and supportive team leaders who endorse a task-oriented motivational climate that promotes trust, cohesion, and performance. It is important to note that others have described similar topics to those detailed above using the phrase “team culture” rather than referring to them simply as “culture” (Brajdic, 2017; Hess, 2018; Schroeder, 2010). However, I envision

team and *culture* as separate concepts in the context of the current study. As such, I have chosen not to use the phrase "team culture" in my descriptions of each term in order to emphasize and maintain the different conceptualizations.

Role of Diversity in Culture and Team Formation

Diversity, if properly managed, can be a valuable asset to sport organizations regarding development of a culture and team formation (Cunningham, 2009; MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). Sport is often (mistakenly) considered a space that is a color-blind meritocracy, one where race and other social identities no longer play a role in the marginalization of various athletes (Carrington, 2010; Cunningham, 2011). With regard to race, Cunningham (2011) suggested that some might consider sport as "a context where prejudice and discrimination are commonplace" (p. 214). As such, it is important to consider the role diversity plays in the operation, development, and promotion of a culture for sports teams. There are various components to diversity; however, for the purposes of the current study I briefly discuss potential strategies for effectively managing diversity and the resulting benefits.

Some people argue that sport, especially at the interscholastic level, is a place where athletes benefit from exposure to people from other cultures and reduces prejudice (Cunningham, 2011). In order to effectively manage diversity, it is important to understand its impact on the various stakeholders and other organizational factors (Cunningham, 2009). Cunningham (2011) argued that bias could occur in situations, such as sports competitions, that disrupt the positive images in-group members—people who self-identify with specific social and cultural groups (Tajfel, 1978)—have developed for themselves. It is important to construct a culture that is inclusive of diversity in order to prevent in-group members from developing a bias against others who are associated with various out-groups. One strategy for promoting such a culture is to

develop a greater understanding of how people identify with in-groups and subsequently view different out-groups.

Reducing prejudice among team members requires a process of *decategorization* and *recategorization* (Cunningham, 2011). Decategorization requires the deconstruction of social and cultural categories and barriers of separation that lead to group bias. This process allows the people in a specific in-group to understand that not all out-group members are the same (Cunningham, 2011). Recategorization, subsequently, involves generating interest in the out-group in order to form connections and reduce bias from the in-group. Recategorization is particularly relevant to athletics teams, because it is likely to result in recognizing the unique and personal characteristics in others, thereby diminishing perceived boundaries (Cunningham, 2011). The deconstruction of boundaries allows for all members of the team to identify as one larger in-group, yet observe and maintain differences such as race.

Promoting a climate that emphasizes respect for diversity and difference results in better outcomes for the team as a whole, such as improved intergroup relations, a reduction in prejudice and bias among team members, and greater innovation (Cunningham, 2011; MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Rock & Grant, 2016). Indeed, Cunningham (2011) suggested that "a commitment to diversity and inclusion must be engrained in the very culture of the team" because without such a commitment, "it is likely that prejudice will persist and benefits of diversity go unrealized" (p. 228). Teams that take a proactive approach to managing diversity tend to perform at higher levels and see greater benefits. Emphasizing and promoting diversity can also lead to increased interactions between team members, subsequently influencing trust, cohesion, and performance (Eys et al., 2013; Horn et al., 2012; Mach et al., 2010; MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). Therefore, diversity plays a valuable role in the development and formation of a team and its

culture. Having defined both *team* and *culture*, I move into a discussion of the theoretical framework I use to analyze and interpret the participants' descriptions of team and culture, as well as their experiences with race.

Theoretical Framework

I use three primary theories to construct the theoretical framework for the current study: critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018), and the White colonial frame (Carrington, 2010). I use critical race theory to provide a general frame within which race can be understood in society at large. I use color-blind racism to examine specific actions, behaviors, and comments of the participants that may *appear to be* absent of race and power discrepancies, yet may remain subtly racialized. Finally, I use the White colonial frame to specifically examine the experiences of Black athletes and the role of sport in shaping discourses of race. I outline these to make explicit the theoretical position and understanding I employ within the current study.

Critical Race Theory

In the sections below, I provide a description of critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). I begin with a brief background and move into a discussion of the basic tenets of critical race theory. I end my discussion of this theory by detailing how it has been used to examine issues in sport and education.

Background. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) argued that a critical race theory (CRT) movement has occurred that includes scholars and activists who are "interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power" (p. 3). At a general level, CRT is used to question the foundations of liberalism rather than advocating for small incremental change and progress (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). The early uses of CRT drew from and built

upon critical legal studies and radical feminism. A central aspect of critical legal studies that is used by CRT scholars is the notion of legal indeterminacy—the belief that there is not necessarily one correct outcome for every legal case (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). This is similar to a relativist ontology that acknowledges and advocates for the existence of multiple realities that are unique to the experiences of each person (Bailey, 2007; Given, 2016; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2018; Patton, 2015). No individual reality is greater, or truer, than another.

Work that uses CRT typically contains an activist dimension. CRT scholars attempt to understand specific social situations and investigate how to change them (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). There is a specific interest in studying how society is organized across racial lines and hierarchies, and the ways they can be transformed. Beyond the activist dimension and emphasis on relationships, there are specific basic tenets that ground most works that use CRT.

Central tenets of CRT. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) described six basic tenets of CRT. While not all critical race theorists may agree upon all of the tenets, Delgado and Stefancic (2012) argue that the following concepts represent ideas that tend to be present in most CRT work. The first tenet of CRT suggests race and racism have become "ordinary" and are part of the lived experience of people of color. This "ordinariness" makes race and racism difficult to address because they are not always acknowledged. People are, therefore, less inclined to recognize structural and institutional racism, instead identifying overt actions and behaviors as racist (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Feagin, 2013). Exploring this tenet is particularly useful in sport studies, as Bimper (2017) argued that sport studies scholars use CRT to explore the relationships between race and the structure and organization of sport. Sport is typically viewed as a space where people of varying racial identities come together to "demonstrate" the elimination of racism within a "post-racial" society (Bimper, 2017;

Carrington, 2010). However, the embedded nature of race in society plays a role in the lives of people of color, including athletes (Bimper, 2017; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

There is a strong connection between school and sport in American society (Singer & May, 2010). Thus, it is important to investigate the structure and function of interscholastic athletics—the primary setting of the current study—and their respective influence in the lives of high school athletes, particularly athletes of color (Singer & May, 2010). Applying CRT to sport, particularly in an educational context such as intercollegiate athletics, provides space for identifying if and how race is a salient factor in the educational and sport experiences of athletes of color (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018). Specifically, Armstrong and Jennings (2018) argued:

> CRT contests and interrogates the racial neutrality of the educational experiences of Black student-athletes. It posits that the interactive modes of human agency…that sustain and/or impede the educational experiences of Black males are fundamentally rooted in macro- and micro-elements of race. (p. 353)

Furthermore, Nebeker (1998) argued that a CRT perspective could be used to challenge educational policies that claim to be color-blind and race neutral. Indeed, Armstrong and Jennings (2018) found that Black male student-athletes were able to become critical race theorists themselves and articulate the salience of race in their interactions and experiences regarding the intersection of race, sport, and education. Hence, there is a need to further explore the juxtaposition of education and athletics for Blacks and other student athletes of color (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018).

The ordinary nature of race also gives way to the second tenet of CRT, which argues that the current racial hierarchy serves specific purposes for the dominant group (Bell, 1980; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Specially, Whites benefit both psychically and materially from the current

racial order and are reluctant to change it as a result. Further, progress with regard to race and racism is viewed as the result of interest convergence—the notion that progress only occurs when it benefits Whites (Bell, 1980; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Exploring interest convergence in various contexts has allowed CRT scholars to reimagine certain moments that have been described as racial progress to include perspectives from people of color and provide alternative views regarding the value of such moments (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Smith, Harrison, & Brown, 2017). One strategy of identifying and challenging interest convergence is the use of a revisionist history to add minority voices and reform common and comfortable narratives about race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Utilizing a revisionist history can highlight the various examples of racial struggles that are not always addressed, which can be used to combat the notion that minority racial groups have been passive participants in their own domination (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Smith et al., 2017). This can be applied to narratives in various contexts, including sport and education. For example, Smith et al. (2017) utilized CRT to investigate sport as a means to give context to the historical and contemporary experiences of Black males in schools and society. Looking at the stories of Jackie Robinson and *Brown v. Board of Education*, Smith et al. (2017) argued that each led to various forms of racial abuse as a result of integrating sport and education, and suggested the popular narratives about Robinson and *Brown* lead to "over-exaggerations and simplifications of very complex [racial] issues" (p. 754) and disguise the challenges that transpired.

An additional strategy of challenging interest convergence through revisionism is the use of counter stories, which build on everyday experiences to explain the different ways people understand race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Story telling also

relates to a third tenet of CRT—the notion that people of color are uniquely situated to discuss their experiences with race. As such, there is an assumption that people of color maintain a certain level of competence that allows them to speak about race and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Particularly in sport, counter stories have been used to give voice to athletes of color and allow them to describe their personal experiences with race (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018; Bimper, 2017; Cooper & Hawkins, 2014). Listening to the experiences of athletes of color, especially at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) of higher education, provides space to "understand and eliminate racial inequities and the subordination of persons of color precipitated by a regime of White supremacy" (Bimper, 2017, p. 177). Similarly, asking athletes of color to tell their stories allows them to interrogate and assess the role of race in their experiences, thus becoming—at least temporarily—critical race theorists in their own right (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018).

Because the experiences of people of color can be difficult for some Whites to understand, counter stories can be used to name specific types of discrimination that can then be combatted (Nebeker, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Similarly, counter stories can reduce the perceived separation between racial groups and provide space for people to come to an understanding of others' experiences with regard to race and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The use of counter stories also recognizes that people often operate from a specific "truth" that is difficult to challenge or change (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Nebeker, 1998). CRT, thus, maintains a relativist ontology in which multiple truths and experiences are viewed as being equally valid (Bailey, 2007; Given, 2016; Lincoln et al., 2018; Patton, 2015). In this sense, counter stories serve a deconstructive function to challenge certain narratives and beliefs (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

With regard to sport, Cooper and Hawkins (2014) have used the deconstructive function of storytelling to examine intercollegiate athletics as a site of interest convergence. Athletes of color—specifically Black males—are given opportunities to attend colleges and universities, which affords institutions the benefits of increased visibility and revenue while providing "little to no regard for Black male student athletes' academic or personal development" (Cooper & Hawkins, 2014, p. 95). In short, counter stories also provide space for placing an emphasis on the experiences of specific racial groups. However, telling counter stories does not always allow people of color to escape the meanings ascribed to specific racial groups.

The fourth tenet of CRT acknowledges race as a social construction that is neither biological nor an inherent quality or characteristic people maintain. Instead, race is an abstract concept and racial categories are created and manipulated by people in society (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Carrington, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Feagin, 2013; Omi & Winant, 2015). Although race can be viewed as an abstract social construct that does not mean it is not "real." Indeed, race has implications in people's lives and maintains a social reality that has real effects for people as they are racialized and categorized into different, and often contesting, groups (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Omi & Winant, 2015). Because of the socially constructed nature of race, it is susceptible to the fifth tenet, differential racialization—racial groups are racialized differently at various times to fit the specific needs of the dominant group in society. Indeed, racial categories have changed over time, as multiple groups that were once considered people of color were re-classified as White as the result of various historical expansions of American Whiteness (Ignatiev, 2009; Mills, 1997; Painter, 2010). Additionally, images and stereotypes of different racial groups change over time, further cementing the constantly changing nature of racial meanings (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). For example, Smith et al. (2017) argued that Black

males, in both sport and broader society, are expected to live up to a particular standard that governs their interactions around Whites.

Carrington (2010) further suggested that sport has been a particular avenue through which racial meanings have been ascribed to Black athletes. Specifically, they are expected to make an effort to appear "good-natured," even while suffering physical and verbal abuse from Whites (Carrington, 2010; Smith et al., 2017). Although re-definitions of various groups may have transformed the expressions and understandings of racial ideologies and meanings, race remains a significant part of American society. However, it is also important to note the role of differential racialization in defining broad racial groups in particular ways throughout history, which does not account for potential subgroups and their interests.

Related to differential racialization are the notions of intersectionality and antiessentialism, the sixth primary tenet of CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). By emphasizing intersectionality, CRT scholars stress that no person has a singular identity. Rather, all people maintain complex identities that consist of various interconnections of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, and other social statuses. Within a sport context, Anderson and McCormack (2010) utilized CRT and intersectionality to argue that examining the respective experiences of heterosexual Black male athletes and gay White male athletes may provide insight into the oppression that gay Black athletes may face. An additional part of intersectionality, antiessentialism, stresses that the needs of a group in general should not take precedent over the needs of subgroups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). However, there are times when it is reasonable to give specific attention to a particular racial group.

The concept of exceptionalism suggests all group histories are distinct and that it is reasonable, and sometimes warranted, to place specific racial groups at the center of analysis

(Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). However, it is important to consider various intersectional identities and avoid essentialism when telling counter stories. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) defined intersectionality as "the examination of race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation, and how their combination plays out in various settings" (p. 57). It is necessary to consider intersectionality, because a broad focus on racial justice may ignore specific needs of various racial subgroups. Likewise, it is important to pursue racial justice with an approach grounded in perspectivalism and multiple consciousnesses to understand that people understand the world in different ways according to their subjective experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Keeping intersectionality in mind when pursuing racial justice also helps to avoid essentialism—the search for a "proper" form of social change. Essentialism typically places the general goals of a group of people—"unified" by race, gender, or some other social status—over the needs of specific subgroups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The larger group benefits from the increased number of voices that come from the different subgroups; however, there is also a risk in leaving some people dissatisfied and their needs unmet. Critical race theorists, therefore, call for individualized treatment that provides additional and specific context with regard to the intersectional experiences of people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

CRT in sport and education. The commonly held belief that sport is a color-blind, apolitical meritocracy makes it worthy of investigating from a CRT perspective. Cooper and Hawkins (2014) specifically argued that the "adherence to the colorblind ideology or beliefs of a postracial society undermine the critical examination of systemic racism…As a result, CRT serves as an applicable framework to examine the impact on race and racism within…education and sport" (pp. 84-85). Hylton (2005) argued that CRT could be used as an "ontological starting

point for the study of sport and leisure" (p. 81) to resist a passive reproduction of the systems—practices, knowledge, and resources—that comprise social conditions and marginalize people of color. Employing a critical theoretical standpoint calls for a (re)interpretation of experiences of people of color, meaning making processes, and the exploration of racial inequality (Hylton, 2005).

Numerous studies have investigated the relationship between race, sport, and education at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) of higher education (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018; Beamon, 2008, 2012, 2014; Bimper, 2015, 2017; Cooper, Davis, & Dougherty, 2017; Cooper & Hawkins, 2014; Fuller, 2017; Fuller, Harrison, & Bukstein, 2017; Hawkins, 1995; Sato, Eckert, & Turner, 2018; Sato, Hodge, & Eckert, 2017). Topics that specifically utilized CRT have varied from considering athletes of color as critical race theorists themselves (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018) to mentoring relationships (Bimper, 2017) and experiences of Black male transfer student athletes (Cooper & Hawkins, 2014). Centralizing race challenges the power relations in society and critiques aspects that claim to be fair and equal across racial lines, including sport (Hylton, 2005, 2010).

Despite claims that society, and its institutions by proxy, is a post-racial and color-blind meritocracy, race and racism continue to play a vital role in the experiences of student athletes of color at PWIs (Cooper & Hawkins, 2014). Furthermore, Armstrong and Jennings (2018) suggested that race manifests in "overt and covert values, ideologies, thoughts, and behaviors" (p. 351) that are woven into the various systems of higher education, including intercollegiate sport. This demonstrates the role of sport in a higher education setting, though it does not account for other levels of education such as high school.

Hylton (2010) argued that challenging racism in sport must occur in several forms to contest the various methods that have been used to give meaning to race. Despite the attention that has been given to intercollegiate sport, one area that requires further exploration is the relationship between race and youth sport (Brooks et al., 2017). Accordingly, Sleeter (2017) contended, "race has been undertheorized in education in general" (p. 157), which supports exploring race and sport within various educational settings. Brooks et al. (2017) further suggested that sports are no longer simple extracurricular activities for children, but are instead becoming a central part of identity formation.

The current racial structure maintains an implicit bias that holds Whites as the standard to which different racial groups are judged (Carrington, 2010; Feagin, 2013). As such, racialized sport stereotypes and meanings have an adverse effect on educational experiences for people of color (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018). Hence, there is a need to examine the central role of race in the educational experiences of athletes of color (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018), including the experiences of youth athletes (Brooks et al., 2017). It is, therefore, important to include the experiences of athletes of color both within and outside of sport using CRT to contextualize sport as part of a racialized social structure (Brooks et al., 2017; Hylton, 2005, 2010).

Hylton (2005) claimed the meanings given to race within a sport context would not disappear, because sport can be viewed as a key means of subjugation for people of color. Sport magnifies the role of race in structuring society, yet a majority of sport and leisure studies "fail to centralize 'race' and racism as a starting point of its critique of social systems" (Hylton, 2005, p. 92). This is not to suggest an absence of research on race and sport; rather, it is a call to continue to investigate issues of race in a way that gives voice to people of color to make their views heard in spaces when they may otherwise be marginalized. As noted previously, CRT has been

applied to various sport contexts, each utilizing different tenets to examine race and racism (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018; Bimper, 2017; Cooper & Hawkins, 2014; Smith et al., 2017). Additionally, scholars have challenged the color-blind ideology that views sport as a meritocratic space where race no longer matters (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018; Bimper, 2017; Carrington, 2010; Cooper & Hawkins, 2014; Smith et al., 2017).

Applying CRT to sport is useful because of its transformative potential in rejecting notions of sport as a color-blind and meritocratic space (Hylton, 2005, 2010). This view stands in opposition to traditional liberal ideals, which suggest all people should be treated equally regardless of varying histories or current situations. Specifically with regard to race, liberal ideals tend to foster a color-blind ideology that ignores racial disparities or justifies them as the result of nonracial explanations (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Nebeker, 1998). Such justifications then become part of the racial narrative and perpetuate a system built upon color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018).

Color-Blind Racism

In the sections below, I describe the central components of color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). I briefly provide a background and move into a discussion of the central frames and "style" of color-blind racism. I end my discussion of this theory with a description of storytelling and the ways it is used to perpetuate a color-blind ideology.

Background. Bonilla-Silva (2018) defined color-blind racism as an ideology that explains modern racial inequality as the result of nonracial dynamics. More specifically, Bonilla-Silva (2018) argued "Whites have developed powerful explanations—which ultimately become justifications—for contemporary racial inequality that exculpate them from any responsibility for the status of people of color" (p. 2). The color-blind ideology is (re)produced through "new

racism" that is more subtle, institutional, and *seemingly* nonracial in comparison to Jim Crow racism (Alexander, 2012; Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Collins, 2004; Ferber, 2007; King, Leonard, & Kusz, 2007; Leonard, 2017). This new racism has led to the creation of a racial hierarchy that is less noticeable and largely invisible at surface level (Alexander, 2012; Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Collins, 2004; Feagin, 2013). The invisibility of the new racial system allows people to adhere to a color-blind ideology, believe discrimination no longer occurs, and attribute social differences to poor individual choices and deficiencies (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Ferber, 2007). Additionally, the color-blind ideology helps maintain White privilege without naming who benefits and who suffers (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). In short, the color-blind ideology has (re)defined the social structure in a way that allows new racism to flourish.

Bonilla-Silva (2018) argued that color-blind racism has been (re)articulated through the use of traditional elements of liberalism—hard work, meritocracy, and equal opportunity—to address racial matters. However, the point of distinction is that color-blind racism is based on an interpretation of *racial discourse* rather than an investigation of *personal prejudice* (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Furthermore, Bonilla-Silva (2018) argued that race is a socially constructed category that has a social reality and produces real effects for people of different racial groups. Bonilla-Silva (2018) introduced the concept of a racial structure as a way to further explicate race as a social construction.

A racial structure is "the totality of the social relations and practices that reinforce White privilege" (Bonilla-Silva, 2018, p. 9). Race emerged as a way to form a social system that privileged people who were perceived to be White and placed all others in subordinate positions (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Feagin, 2013; Mills, 1997). Mills (1997) argued that within this social system "all Whites are equal, then, but some are Whiter, and so more equal, than others, and all

non-Whites are unequal, but some are Blacker, and so more unequal, than others" (p. 80). Color-blind racism, therefore, emerged from new racism and the current racial structure, which have combined to develop into a new racial ideology that can be used to "defend the contemporary racial order" (Bonilla-Silva, 2018, p. 53). Furthermore, color-blind racism is grounded in four primary frames that work together to provide the basis for people to espouse seemingly nonracial views about racial matters: (a) abstract liberalism, (b) naturalization, (c) cultural racism, and (d) minimization of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Each frame is described in the section below.

Central frames. The first frame of color-blind racism, abstract liberalism, involves using ideas associated with political and economic liberalism in an abstract way to explain racial matters (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). By employing this frame as a strategy for addressing race, Whites can appear reasonable and moral while opposing practical solutions for combatting racial inequality. The abstract liberalism frame is largely based in the belief that all racial groups have equal power in American society. This frame also allows people to suggest that government should remain mostly absent from the everyday lives of people and let disparities balance themselves out (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). For example, someone may support equal opportunities for all people yet oppose policies that specifically grant opportunities to people of color.

This frame may manifest in other sectors of society as well, such as sport. For example, Bimper (2015) argued that viewing sport as a space that promotes equal opportunity and individualism allows people to "passively legitimize racial matters and existing racial inequities" (p. 230). Likewise, Rankin-Wright et al. (2016) found that some people would justify a lack of diversity in some areas of sport as the result of personal choice, meritocracy, and individual responsibility. Cooper, Nwadike, and Macaulay (2017) argued that abstract liberalism has been used by some sports organizations, such as the NCAA, to enact seemingly color-blind policies

that "ignore the detrimental impacts of systematic racism and prevailing racialized norms in society" (p. 206). Rather than critiquing the current racial structure, abstract liberalism allows people to shift the responsibility for racial discrepancies from broader social systems to specific individual choices and behaviors.

Naturalization is a frame that allows Whites to justify racial phenomena as the result of natural occurrences (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). People are able to use this frame to suggest that racial differences happen "naturally" in relation to personal preferences. For example, segregation would not be viewed as the result of larger systemic issues, but rather people choosing to live around others like them. In other contexts, such as sport, people may use the naturalization frame to justify racial matters as common and unrelated to overtly racist practices (Bimper, 2015; Rankin-Wright et al., 2016). Furthermore, people use the naturalization frame to normalize actions and behaviors that would otherwise be interpreted as racially motivated (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). The naturalization frame allows people to move away from abstract explanations of racial inequality and instead point to personal actions and behaviors as the cause of racial differences.

Related to the naturalization frame is the use of cultural racism to levy culturally based arguments in an attempt to explain the standing of people of color in American society (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). For example, people may argue that specific groups "do not value education" or "have too many babies" as a result of a larger group culture. This frame replaces the previous views about race that were thought to be biological, and allows people to share views that are just as effective in protecting the racial order (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Cultural racism is typically based on racialized stereotypes; for example, the notion that Black student athletes are less interested in education (Bimper, 2015). The cultural racism frame can also be conceptualized as a strategy of "blaming the victim" for their own plight. Rather than facing structural and

institutional disadvantages, racial minorities' social standing is considered to be the result of their lack of effort, family organization, and misplaced values (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Cultural racism also creates space for people to minimize the role of racism in society.

The fourth frame of color-blind racism, minimization of racism, is used to suggest that discrimination is no longer a central factor affecting minorities' lives (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). This frame allows Whites to accept examples of discrimination and instead argue that people of color are hypersensitive and use race as an excuse. Under this frame, discrimination is only understood as behavior that is overtly racist and reduces the significance of other actions that might be interpreted as racially motivated (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). This frame is also used to view certain aspects of society, such as sport, as moving beyond race because of the presence of people of color (Bimper, 2015; Carrington, 2010; Deeb & Love, 2018; Rankin-Wright et al., 2016). Additionally, Whites may use phrases like "I don't see discrimination" or "Some of my best friends are Black" in an effort to distance themselves from race (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Minimization of racism, in combination with the other frames, provides space for people to suggest race is no longer a significant factor in society. Indeed, one of the strengths of color-blind racism is its flexibility. It does not rely on absolutes, but instead provides some room for exceptions and allows people to manipulate the frames in various ways, using a particular "style."

Style of color-blind racism. In addition to the various frames of color-blind racism, Bonilla-Silva (2018) suggested it maintains a unique "style" as well. The style consists of rhetorical incoherence, racial statements prefaced by nonracial defenses, projection, and diminutives. Each can be used to construct carefully coded and indirect language that Whites use to talk about people of color (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). For example, rhetorical incoherence typically

occurs when Whites become uncomfortable discussing their racial views to the point that they have difficult articulating themselves and become difficult to understand. On the other hand, some racial statements may be prefaced by comments such as "I am not prejudiced, but…" or a "yes and no" response that is used to justify issues of race (Bonilla-Silva, 2018).

Hewitt and Stokes (1975) referred to such statements as "disclaimers" that are "verbal device[s] employed to ward off and defeat in advance doubts and negative typifications which may result from intended conduct" (p. 3). Following this notion, Buffington and Fraley (2011) found that people use disclaimers in a sport context to talk about race in seemingly nonracial language. Projection is another tool that can be used to project racism onto minorities and absolve Whites from any responsibility, such as "feeling bad" about affirmative action because it "rewards" people for their race rather than merit. Buffington and Fraley (2011) referred to projecting statements as "transfers" that accuse others as the source of racism. The final style aspect of color-blind racism, diminutives, plays a similar role by allowing Whites to be less explicit about their racially motivated feelings and "soften their racial blows" (Bonilla-Silva, 2018, p. 90). For example, someone may express support for interracial marriage while simultaneously noting worries about the welfare of the children, thereby (re)articulating their racial views as concern for others. Rather than totally rejecting policies and developments, people might instead argue that they are "just a little bit" opposed in order to maintain a color-blind view and deflect accusations of racism. In essence, the style and language of color-blind racism helps to preserve the myth that America is a nonracial society (Bonilla-Silva, 2018).

Storytelling. Another valuable tool in perpetuating a color-blind ideology is the use of storytelling. Not to be confused with *counter* storytelling used by CRT scholars, storytelling as part of color-blind racism is used to articulate matter-of-fact representations of race and racism in

an attempt to lessen or change their salience and meaning (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Stories are central to communication, because they help to reinforce arguments and make sense of the world. As such, some stories can serve a particular need without appearing to do so (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Bonilla-Silva (2018) identified story lines and testimonies as specific story types that are used to preserve the color-blind ideology. Story lines are impersonal generic arguments based on generalizations that contain little narrative content. For example, people may be inclined to believe that poor people of color receive welfare benefits without the ability to corroborate such beliefs. Story lines are also used to justify and defend the current racial structure through the use of idioms such as "the past is the past" or similar notions (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). The purpose of such story lines is to allow the storytellers to construct a world in which certain ideas and arguments seem like facts.

Testimonies are an additional strategy for telling stories. In contrast to general story lines, testimonies typically include accounts in which the storyteller was a central part of the story or was close to the people in the story (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Using testimonies allows people to give the impression of authenticity by telling a firsthand account. These stories appear more detailed and personal and are typically used to support arguments about racial matters (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Testimonies can take many forms such as descriptions about positive and negative interactions with people of color, knowing someone who would be considered racist, and other personal stories. No matter the form, testimonies and story lines as parts of storytelling provide additional strategies that allow people to talk about race in seemingly nonracial ways (Bonilla-Silva, 2018).

It is necessary to combat color-blind narratives and stories by incorporating CRT through the use of counter storytelling. Drawing from Bonilla-Silva's (2018) concept of color-blind

racism, in conjunction with utilizing a CRT perspective, assists me to examine and contextualize the effects of race and racism in the lived experiences of the participants in the current study (Bimper, 2015). However, both CRT and color-blind racism approach race and racism from a general societal perspective. Therefore, it is necessary to draw from Carrington's (2010) notion of the White colonial frame, which is directly related to exploring the role of race in sport.

White Colonial Frame

In the sections below, I provide a description of the White colonial frame (Carrington, 2010). I begin with a brief background and proceed to discuss sport and the meanings of race. I then describe Carrington's (2010) concepts of sporting negritude and Black exceptionalism, followed by a discussion of sport and multiculturalism. I end my description of this theory by detailing the ways twenty-first century sport has been used to give meaning to race.

Background. Carrington (2010) suggested sport has played an essential role in the process of framing and defining race. Building from Feagin's (2013) concept of the White racial frame—a racial hierarchy that placed Whites at the top and framed all other racial groups as subordinate—Carrington (2010) argued the White *colonial* frame highlights "the lived experience of White supremacy…and the systematic features of colonialism" (p. 5). Carrington (2010) argued that sport, through the lens of the White colonial frame, has provided a space for Black athletes to physically struggle against Whites for their humanity and to combat anti-Black racism. The current period of racial formation—the process of giving meaning to specific racial identities (Omi & Winant, 2015)—is marked by a "post/colonial" moniker that symbolizes both the time after the colonial period, as well as a continuing practice of neocolonialism, and has been marked by resistance and a struggle for freedom that has been related to race, sport, and politics (Carrington, 2010). All of these combined in various ways to create new narratives about

race that manifest in the form of an abstract, yet visible, concept: the Black athlete (Carrington, 2010).

Carrington (2010) argued that the concept of the "Black athlete" was constructed from the meanings attributed to Blacks in sport during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The meanings have shifted over time; however, they maintain an inherent contradiction with regard to the ways in which the Black athlete has been constructed. For example, the Black athlete represented a threatening yet obedient being that was politically rebellious at times, but could still be used as a valuable political commodity to meet the needs of the racial order (Carrington, 2010). The Black athlete has largely been unable to speak for itself, spoken for instead by journalists, other competitors, and societal definitions—all of which combine to give meaning to race.

Stripping the Black athlete of voice was and is an attempt to relegate Blackness to a position of otherness. The boundaries that define the Black athlete can be challenged, therefore creating a site of political struggle (Carrington, 2010). Race, then, is given meaning through the Black athlete and its attributes are transferred to Black people as a whole. Thus, sport serves an important role in (re)producing race and its meaning (Carrington, 2010). Sport has played a central role in popularizing ideas about race and biological differences, but it also provides a space for resisting racism. Because sport is commonly thought to be apolitical, it creates an interesting paradox in which the Black athlete can challenge Whiteness and other political ideologies in ways that would not be acceptable in other spaces: "Sport is able to symbolically impact the racial order precisely because it can simultaneously claim to be a space removed from politics" (Carrington, 2010, p. 93).

Sport and meanings of race. Carrington (2010) argued that sport, as a field of study, has fallen into a dualistic debate "between useless physicality and purposeful intellectualism" (p. 6). It is difficult to give specific social meaning to sport while also separating it from broader social meanings. Carrington (2010) asserted that theories of race, including CRT, "have rarely centered sport within their analyses" (p. 12). However, studying race and sport can produce insights about both. It allows for the investigation of the ways race is (re)produced within and from sport, as well as exploring the role and importance of sport in Western societies. As a result, sport can be thought of as an agent of social resistance and change with regard to (re)defining racial identities (Carrington, 2010).

Sport exists as a space rooted in contradictions, a place for freedom and creativity that is also governed by rules and boundaries (Carrington, 2010). It is a space where ideologies of domination and resistance can compete with no guarantee which will prevail. Sport has been a space for contesting and resisting social structures, though it is losing some of its liberatory power and is becoming more likely to reproduce conservative cultural views (Carrington, 2010). However, the apolitical assumptions about sport continue to allow it to become a space for political revolution. Black athletes of the early twentieth century, for example, developed into symbols of the transition from slavery into a new racial system (Carrington, 2010). In this way sport has served as a space to give new meanings to race, what Carrington (2010) described as a "sporting racial project" (p. 66).

Omi and Winant (2015) described a racial project as an effort to (re)articulate racial identities and meanings and (re)distribute resources along racial lines. A *sporting* racial project, then, is one in which sport is considered "a particular racial project…that has effects in changing racial discourse more generally and that therefore reshapes wider social structures" (Carrington,

2010, p. 66). Because race is a social construct, its meanings are (re)produced within sport and have real social effects within and beyond sport (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Carrington, 2010). In other words, sport allows people to make sense of and reshape the meanings of race. For example, sport has served as a space to contest the notion that Whites were intellectually and physical superior to Blacks. The success of various Black athletes against White competitors in the early twentieth century allowed sport to develop into a sort of "racial spectacle" where racism was "lived, embodied, and challenged" (Carrington, 2010, p. 72). Sport, as a racial project, undertook a certain racial significance in that competitions between Black and White athletes assumed broader symbolic meanings with regard to (re)defining race. These meanings, however, do not always work in favor of Black athletes and may, in fact, be used to further restrict their identities.

Sporting negritude and Black exceptionalism. Although sport served as a space for Black athletes to challenge racial meanings, it also gave way to Whites to construct notions about Blackness that could be thrust upon athletes (Carrington, 2010). As part of what Carrington (2010) described as "sporting negritude," the Black athlete is viewed as a figure that was less than human, nearly primal and animalistic, and owed its success to innate physiological features. As a result, Whites believed that Black athletes required some sort of (White) oversight to provide insight and motivation for a lazy but otherwise potentially capable Black subject (Carrington, 2010). This allowed sport to develop into a valuable space for constructing racialized identity characteristics about Black and White athletes.

The meanings given to the Black athlete as part of sporting negritude played a role in the generation of racialized sport stereotypes of Black athleticism and White intellect (Carrington, 2010). Sport, Carrington (2010) argued, became a means by which the "White cognitive self is produced" (p. 81) through comparisons to Black athletes. The construction of the White

cognitive self allowed for the creation of narratives about Black athletes that were used in an attempt to rationalize and justify their success. Black athletes who were successful against White competitors were often thought to be exceptional, displaying characteristics that were "contrary" to their "nature" or similar to those often associated with Whiteness (Carrington, 2010).

Black athletic success was never the result of hard work, dedication, and perseverance; rather, it was used to indicate limited cognitive development that required overcompensation in physicality (Carrington, 2010). *Individual* Black athletes were not allowed to be successful in their own right and were instead absorbed into the broader category of the *abstract* Black athlete. Furthermore, sporting negritude was used as a way to establish a standard that Black athletes were expected to live up to, even when experiencing racial abuse (Carrington, 2010; Smith et al., 2017). For example, a "good" Black athlete is deferential to Whites and does not cause much political fervor, whereas a "bad" Black athlete is resistant and refuses to follow the rules—which are assumed to be apolitical and color-blind—that govern sport (Carrington, 2010). In short, there was no escaping the racialized beliefs, assumptions, and expectations.

Sport and multiculturalism. Despite the role of sport in perpetuating racial discourse in some ways, it has also been used to signal "progress" in changing the racial order (Bimper, 2017; Carrington, 2010). For example, sport has been used as a way to "demonstrate" a sense of multiculturalism in a variety of ways, such as having people of color on national sports teams that are otherwise primarily White. Examples of sporting multiculturalism also come in the form of people of color being celebrated and revered as the best athletes in predominantly White sports (Carrington, 2010). Rather than furthering the racial divide, these athletes are used as political pawns to suggest that (White) fans can push aside previous racial animus to cheer for

athletes of color. However, athletes of color still face challenges of racism in various forms (Carrington, 2010).

Despite examples of racism in sport, the idea of sport as a multicultural space can still be used for political means (Carrington, 2010). Viewing sport as a space where multiculturalism can thrive provides room for discussing race, politics, and identity within the context of sport. However, this multicultural perspective also contains a color-blind aspect in that it allows for recognizing racial and ethnic differences without acknowledging inequalities (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Carrington, 2010). Sporting multiculturalism, therefore, may be viewed through a CRT perspective as an example of interest convergence (Bell, 1980; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) in that it provides a space for athletes of color to be accepted by and marketed to (White) society at large, yet they are increasingly becoming a commodity that can be exploited for (White) capital and political gains (Carrington, 2010; Cooper & Hawkins, 2014).

Twenty-first century sport. Contemporary sport contests are rarely seen as symbolizing similar racial meanings as those during the early twentieth century (Carrington, 2010). It is instead considered a nonracial space that demonstrates the "progress" and change in the racial structure. Sport has instead become "a cultural barometer for measuring the deeper, structural changes within western societies concerning the changing meanings of race and the declining significance of racism" (Carrington, 2010, p. 169). However, examples of overt racism—such as monkey chants toward Black athletes—suggest sport perpetuates a mythical notion of racial difference rather than reducing the social significance of race (Brooks et al., 2017; Carrington, 2010). In short, sport "damages Black America and helps to preserve the myth of race" (Carrington, 2010, p. 174).

Black athletes have re-made sports, but only insofar as they have been given meanings that suit the needs of Whites (Carrington, 2010). This is consistent with the notion of differential racialization (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) in the sense that Black athletes have, over time, been defined and created, negotiated and opposed, to fit the needs of Whites. Similarly, sport is often viewed as an apolitical meritocracy where race is no longer significant, thereby perpetuating a color-blind ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). It is, therefore, important to view sport as a space that (re)produces and (re)articulates racial meanings and assumptions that can be contested in a broader struggle over ideology, politics, and identity (Carrington, 2010). As such, in the current study I retain a central focus on sport and its role in giving meanings to race. Given this background, the purpose of the current study was to investigate the ways current and former Black/African American high school boys' basketball players perceived and experienced race, and how that contributed to their understandings and conceptualizations of terms such as *team* and *culture*, as well as whether and how race manifests as part of team dynamics and culture.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I discussed team, culture, and the theoretical framework I use in the current study. I began by outlining the important elements of a team and provided an operational definition that I apply to the context of a high school boys' basketball team. I then described the key components and provided an operational definition of culture in a sport organization context. Next, I briefly detailed the role of diversity in team formation and development of a culture. Finally, I concluded with a discussion of the individual theories that comprise my theoretical framework. In the next chapter I discuss the methodological, ontological, epistemological, and paradigmatic procedures and assumptions that informed my data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the current study was to explore the role of race in the context of high school boys' basketball. Specifically, I investigated the ways current and former Black/African American high school boys' basketball players understand and conceptualize terms such as *team* and *culture,* as well as whether and how race manifests as part of team dynamics and culture. An additional purpose of the current study was to examine current and former Black/African American players' understandings of and experiences with race, particularly within the context of sport. As such, the primary research questions that guided the current study were:

RQ_{1a}: How do current and former Black/African American players on a high school boys' basketball team understand and conceptualize *team*?

RQ_{1b}: How do current and former Black/African American players on a high school boys' basketball team understand and conceptualize *culture*?

RQ_2: How do current and former Black/African American players on a high school boys' basketball team understand and conceptualize the role of race in their experiences?

In this chapter, I detail the qualitative methodology employed for the current study. I begin with a discussion of qualitative research followed by a description of my conceptual framework. I then provide a brief background regarding interpretive phenomenological interviews and include a rationale as to why this was an appropriate method. Next, I describe the sampling techniques, procedures for recruitment, and the participants of the current study. I close the chapter with a discussion of the procedures for data collection and analysis.

Description of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a broad term for research that is human-focused and attempts to uncover the meanings people ascribe to their experiences, actions, and beliefs (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Simply put, "qualitative research inquires into, documents, and interprets the meaning-making process" (Patton, 2015, p. 3). The researcher is often referred to as the single "instrument" in a qualitative study (Bailey, 2007; Patton, 2015; Preissle & Grant, 2004; Thomas & Pollio, 2002). Qualitative researchers typically follow an inductive reasoning process to generate meanings that emerge from the data and develop into larger themes or theories (Bailey, 2007; Fetterman, 1998; Given, 2016). Rather than trying to control settings and environments, qualitative researchers attempt to become part of and provide detailed descriptions of the settings in which they conduct research (Bailey, 2007). Patton (2015) argued that qualitative findings are largely based on three primary types of data: (a) interviews, (b) observations, and (c) written communications. Details of findings are often presented through the use of quotes from participants (Fetterman, 1998). In relation to quantitative research, qualitative research is more fluid and dynamic, providing room for flexibility in the application of various approaches (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In the context of the current study, I employed a qualitative methodology that used interviews to uncover the meanings current and former Black/African American high school boys' basketball players attributed to their experiences with race, team, and culture. As such, it is important to address specific aspects of design and how I used them to frame and guide the current study.

Design in a qualitative study is an ongoing process that "does not begin from a predetermined starting point or proceed through a fixed sequence of steps, but involves interconnection and interaction among the different design components" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 3).

Moving beyond design, Corbin and Strauss (2008) noted specific characteristics of "good" qualitative research: a focus on people, curiosity, creativity, the ability to recognize and live with diversity and ambiguity, working through problems in the field, accepting the researcher as the instrument, and trusting the ability to identify value in the work that is produced. Qualitative researchers place an emphasis on description in order to detail the lives of people and their actions within specific settings (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The research process is—at least in some part—influenced by the researcher's characteristics, background, and status (Bailey, 2007; Patton, 2015). In the context of the current study, I was routinely tasked with remaining aware of my personal biases, assumptions, and experiences, and the ways they might influence my interpretations of the data (as I described in the "Positionality" section in Chapter One). As part of acknowledging positionality, qualitative researchers—met with questions of validity, reliability, and objectivity—are called to provide the ontological, epistemological, and paradigmatic assumptions used to guide and inform a study (which I detail in the "Conceptual Framework" section below). Given (2016) explained that qualitative research does not aspire to such ideals, and is instead deemed rigorous if it is trustworthy, credible, transferrable, and dependable.

The people in qualitative research settings are described as *participants* rather than *subjects* in an effort to acknowledge their humanity and their involvement in the research (Given, 2016). As such, qualitative researchers largely employ a constructivist framework grounded in the belief that people *construct* reality and give meaning to their social worlds (Bailey, 2007; Charmaz, 2006; Given, 2016). The goal for constructivists, Charmaz (2006) suggested, is to "enter the phenomenon, gain multiple views of it, and locate it in its web of connections and constraints" (p. 187). These beliefs and practices may also be associated with specific

methodological procedures that take place in the natural settings of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). The specific reality is then interpreted and presented according to the data that was collected, as well as the beliefs and perspectives of the researcher.

The types of data collected and strategies of inquiry employed in qualitative studies that operate within a constructivist framework depend on the stated purpose and research questions of a particular study (Bailey, 2007; Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Fetterman, 1998; Given, 2016; Gobo & Molle, 2017; Patton, 2015). More specifically, qualitative researchers pursue inquiries through a variety of strategies such as grounded theory, case studies, ethnography, phenomenology, narrative inquiry, evaluation research, and more (Bailey, 2007; Given, 2016; Patton, 2015). Each approach can be used for different purposes and has distinct advantages. Given the purpose and research questions of the current study to explore the role of race in the experiences of current and former Black/African American high school boys' basketball players, while also giving attention to concepts such as *team* and *culture*, I have chosen to use phenomenological interviews to answer the research questions stated above. In the next section I detail the underlying ontological, epistemological, and paradigmatic assumptions, as well as the theoretical framework, that informed the current study.

Conceptual Framework

Maxwell (2005) broadly defined a conceptual framework as "the actual ideas and beliefs that [researchers] hold about the phenomena studied" (p. 33). The conceptual framework is typically informed by a particular paradigm that contains certain philosophical beliefs about the nature of reality (ontology) and the production of knowledge (epistemology). The relationships between the ontological, epistemological, and paradigmatic assumptions influence and shape the way qualitative research is designed and conducted (Bailey, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 2008;

Given, 2016; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2018; Patton, 2015). In the context of the current study, I used the conceptual framework to inform and guide my interviews with participants in a way that assisted me to share the responsibility of producing knowledge, examine racialized structures of power, and interpret their experiences through a theoretical framework that gives attention to the ways race and sport intersect to give meaning to each other.

In the next section, I detail the specific ontological and epistemological assumptions I used to frame the current study. I then provide a brief description of the paradigm within which the current study is situated. I end with an abbreviated discussion of the theoretical framework, providing context for how each theory was used throughout the current study. Each part of my conceptual framework—ontology, epistemology, paradigm, and theoretical framework—is described in further detail below.

Ontology and Epistemology

I have chosen to ground the current study in a relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology. In adopting a relativist ontology I acknowledge the existence of multiple realities as opposed to one objective reality (Lincoln et al., 2018; Patton, 2015; Peck & Mummery, 2018). I am interested in the social processes participants engage in to navigate and give meaning to their social worlds (Lincoln et al., 2018; Patton, 2015; Peck & Mummery, 2018). By embracing a subjectivist epistemology I acknowledge my own role in the research process and consider that knowledge will be produced through my interactions with participants (Lincoln et al., 2018; Patton, 2015; Preissle & Grant, 2004). I recognize that both participants and myself are shaped by lived experiences, values, and status characteristics that influence the knowledge production process (Lincoln et al., 2018; Preissle & Grant, 2004). In the context of the current study, I used these ontological and epistemological beliefs and assumptions to work in unison with the

participants to interpret topics from multiple perspectives, and maximize our subjective experiences and understandings to produce knowledge and meaning. The results of this process are detailed further in Chapter Four and Chapter Five.

A relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology are typically associated with particular paradigms (for example, interpretivism or constructivism); however, Patton (2015) argued that "there is no definitive way to categorize the various philosophical and theoretical perspectives that have influenced and that distinguish the types of qualitative inquiry" (p. 97). This premise appears to receive support in the form of multifarious descriptions regarding the broader philosophical and theoretical conceptualizations that include a relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology. For example, relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology have been described as part of a *postmodern* framework (Given, 2016), both *interpretive* (Bailey, 2007) and *constructivist* paradigms (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Lincoln et al., 2018), as well as assumptions of *idealism* (Preissle & Grant, 2004) and a *social constructivist* framework (Patton, 2015). In short, there does not appear to be a singular or definitive paradigm with which relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology are associated.

Given the discrepancies in the descriptions from various scholars, I hesitate to definitively label the current study as a constructivist work. A salient similarity across individual conceptualizations, however, is the shared description of a relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology—the recognition of multiple realities and the role of the researcher and participants in shaping the production of knowledge (Bailey, 2007; Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Given, 2016; Lincoln et al., 2018; Patton, 2015; Preissle & Grant, 2004). I have, therefore, chosen to individually describe the ontology and epistemology of the current study rather than framing them as part of a broader constructivist paradigmatic perspective. However, these

ontological and epistemological beliefs are consistent with those of a critical paradigmatic perspective (Lincoln et al., 2018), which I employed in the current study and describe in further detail below.

Paradigm

The critical paradigm is consistent with the belief in a subjective reality and shared production of knowledge that is characteristic of a relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology (Lincoln et al., 2018). Each subjective reality is shaped and interpreted through various factors such as individual characteristics, values, and status—for example, race (Bailey, 2007). As such, I framed the current study through a critical paradigm in which I examined structures of power that give way to various privileges and oppressions (Lincoln et al., 2018). A critical paradigmatic perspective was particularly instructive as critical theory focuses on processes of producing culture and the ways people "make sense of the world, form identities, interact with others, and transform the conditions of their lives" (Coakley, 2007, p. 41). I, therefore, examined issues such as power and empowerment, (in)equality, and various forms of domination (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Kincheloe, McLaren, Steinberg, & Monzó, 2018; Lincoln et al., 2018).

Framing this study through a critical approach is relevant to understand the development, maintenance, and meaning of the cultural ideologies—ideas and beliefs that give meaning to social worlds—generated on a high school boys' basketball team (Coakley, 2007). The critical approach is similarly built upon a foundation of social critique that is tied to raising consciousness for the possibility of social change (Bernal, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012 Lincoln et al., 2018). By framing the current study within a critical approach, I am "uninterested in any theory…that does not directly address the needs of victims of oppression and the suffering

they must endure" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 307). A central part of critical research is to combat the status quo that provides specific advantages to privileged groups (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). It was, therefore, necessary that I work with theories that challenge the status quo and specifically address the experiences of people of color and other marginalized groups.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is consistent with a critical paradigm guided by a relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology. I utilized the theoretical framework to consciously draw attention to the role (or lack thereof) that race plays in shaping reality for the participants. Additionally, I used the theoretical framework to guide my interactions with participants in a way that promoted a shared production of knowledge. I primarily drew from three areas to construct the theoretical framework for the current study: critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018), and the White colonial frame (Carrington, 2010). I employed critical race theory to provide a general frame within which race can be understood in society at large. I used color-blind racism to examine specific actions, behaviors, and comments from the participants that may *appear to be* absent of race and power discrepancies, yet remain subtly racialized. Finally, I made use of the White colonial frame to specifically examine the experiences of Black athletes and the role of sport in shaping discourses of race. A brief description of each theory is provided below, as I provided a more detailed description of the theoretical framework in Chapter Two.

Critical race theory. The central tenets of critical race theory (CRT) make it a valuable theory to use in the current study. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) noted six primary points as central tenets that tend to be present in most CRT work. The first tenet, the "ordinariness" of race, has resulted in an inability or unwillingness for people to recognize structural and

institutional racism, instead identifying only overt actions and behaviors as racist (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Feagin, 2013). The second tenet suggests that progress related to race relations occurs only when it benefits Whites, often referred to as interest convergence (Bell, 1980; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Furthermore, the third tenet of CRT views race as a social construction, something that is neither biological nor inherent, but rather is a concept used to create racial categories that are manipulated by members of society (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Carrington, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Feagin, 2013; Omi & Winant, 2015).

Because race is socially constructed, it is susceptible to the fourth tenet, differential racialization—the notion that meanings of race for various groups can shift and vary over time (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). This has been demonstrated by various historical expansions of American Whiteness in which groups that were once considered people of color were re-classified as White (Ignatiev, 2009; Mills, 1997; Painter, 2010). Related to differential racialization is intersectionality, the fifth primary tenet of CRT, which recognizes that social inequality, people's lives, and distributions of power in society are shaped by multiple social identities that combine to work with and impact one another in various settings (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The sixth and final tenet of CRT is the notion that people of color are uniquely situated to discuss their experiences of race and, thus, maintain a certain competency to speak about racial discrimination and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

I applied these tenets in different ways throughout the current study. Specifically, I used them to guide my interviews with participants, acknowledge their unique perspectives to comment on issues of race, and interpret their experiences. As such, I remained mindful of the varying and intersecting identities that may influence interpretations, both my own and those of

the participants. In short, I utilized CRT to center my analysis on race, as well as establish a foundation for discussions of other race theories that address "new racism" (Alexander, 2012; Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Collins, 2004; Ferber, 2007; King, Leonard, & Kusz, 2007; Leonard, 2017).

Color-blind racism. The notion of new racism suggests that racism has not been eradicated, but instead has evolved from overt expressions to more subtle and covert forms (Alexander, 2012; Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Collins, 2004; Ferber, 2007; King et al., 2007; Leonard, 2017). The new racism, largely invisible and imperceptible, has continued to maintain a social hierarchy that marginalizes people of color (Alexander, 2012; Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Collins, 2004). This reformed hierarchy is primarily supported by a color-blind ideology in which racial inequality is rationalized and justified through a seemingly nonracial explanation (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Ferber, 2007). It is important to note, however, that color-blindness can be viewed as the *dominant* but not the *only* racial ideology. Though there would appear to be a resurgence of overt racial expressions, color-blind racism has been identified as the means by which a *majority* of, but not all, Whites express themselves about racial matters (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Even in the current political context, people whose rhetoric suggests the reemergence of overt racism are forced to acquiesce to the norms of the color-blind ideology. The objective is not to identify who is or is not racist, but rather to better understand the often unseen workings of institutional and systematic racism in society (Bonilla-Silva, 2018).

Of primary use to this study is Bonilla-Silva's (2018) conception of color-blind racism and its four frames: (a) abstract liberalism, (b) naturalization, (c) cultural racism, and (d) minimization of racism. Each frame is used in different ways to "explain away" various types of racial matters of discrimination and segregation. In essence, most Whites use color-blind racism as a way to absolve themselves "from any responsibility for the status of people of color"

(Bonilla-Silva, 2018, p. 2). In the context of the current study, I drew from color-blind racism to examine sport as a space that is perceived to be absent of race and power discrepancies (Carrington, 2010).

White colonial frame. Despite the belief that sport is an apolitical space—one where all people are viewed equally and are given equal opportunities to succeed—Carrington (2010) argued there is in fact a political nature to sport. This political nature is used to dictate behavior and power relations along racial lines (Carrington, 2010). Building from Feagin's (2013) concept of the White racial frame, Carrington (2010) introduced his concept of the White *colonial* frame in which Whiteness is deemed the standard to which all other racial groups are compared. The subtle and taken-for-granted aspect of the White colonial frame leads people to unconsciously align with and support it, including those who claim to be antiracist (Carrington, 2010; Feagin, 2013; Hughey, 2012). As such, I used the White colonial frame in the current study to investigate sport and the role it plays in shaping discourses about race, especially those regarding Black athletes (Carrington, 2010). Therefore, I utilized a theoretical framework consisting of CRT, color-blind racism, and the White colonial frame to inform the current study.

I used this aforementioned theoretical framework to guide my work in the current study. I employed CRT to center race and use its various tenets to provide a foundation for analysis. I incorporated color-blind racism to further investigate thoughts, actions, and behaviors that may *appear to be* innocuous, but are racialized in various ways. Finally, using the White colonial frame assisted me to explore the relationship(s) between race and sport, and the ways in which one can give meaning to the other. In the sections below I provide a brief overview of interpretive phenomenological interviewing as a method and why it was appropriate to use in the current study.

Qualitative Interviews

In the sections below, I briefly articulate the method I selected to answer my research questions. I begin with a description of qualitative interviews and move into a discussion of phenomenological interviews. I then detail the characteristics of interpretive phenomenological interviews and provide a rationale as to why they were appropriate to use in the current study.

Definition and Background

An interview can refer to many forms of communication that involve multiple parties who ask and answer questions (Roulston, 2010). In research terms, an interview can be understood as "a process in which a researcher asks questions and a participant (or participants) responds with thoughts, perspectives, and narratives usually based on his or her experiences" (deMarrais & Tisdale, 2002, p. 116). Most research interviews tend to fall somewhere on a continuum between high to minimal levels of structure, including some that blend aspects of each to remain semi-structured (Brinkmann, 2018; Roulston, 2010). No matter the structure or format, however, the sequence of asking and answering questions remains "the basic unit of interaction" in an interview (Roulston, 2010, p. 10). Thus, the purpose of a research interview is to utilize the question–answer sequence in a way that serves the goal of producing knowledge (Brinkmann, 2018).

The use of interviews has changed over time, sometimes treated as a distinct method or as something that is part of a broader methodological category (Platt, 2012). Open-ended interviews, for example, provide space to "gaze into the soul of another" (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997, p. 305) in the search for mutual understanding between the researcher and participants. However, Atkinson and Silverman (1997) cautioned that promoting interviews as narratives of experience too often results in the perpetuation of an interview society in which the

"biographical work of interviewer and interviewee is concealed" (p. 305). It is, therefore, important to understand interview questions as part of a circular process in which the meanings of the questions and their answers are developed as part of a joint effort by both the researcher and participant (Mishler, 1991). In the current study, I used interviews to engage in the question–answer sequence with participants to share in the production of knowledge and better understand their understandings and conceptualizations of team and culture, as well as the role that race played in their experiences.

This way of thinking about interviews is related to the relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology in which I have grounded the current study. The participants and I used our own subjective knowledge, values, statuses, and experiences to work together in a way that creates space for multiple truths and realities, and provides a foundation that gives meaning to the social world we live in (Lincoln et al., 2018; Patton, 2015; Peck & Mummery, 2018; Preissle & Grant, 2004). I did not attempt to gain access to a singular or "real" truth; I was instead interested in obtaining detailed accounts of personal experiences (Riessman, 2008). Specifically, the participants and I worked to uncover the meanings they placed on their lived experiences as members of their high school boys' basketball teams (deMarrais & Tisdale, 2002). My interest in the participants' experiences, therefore, aligned with the basic tenets of interpretive phenomenological interviews (Adams & van Manen, 2017; Arpanantikul, 2018; Ivey, 2013; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Tuohy et al., 2013). In the section below, I provide a brief description of interpretive phenomenological interviews and provide a rationale for why they were appropriate to use in the current study.

Interpretive Phenomenological Interviews

Before explicating interpretive phenomenological interviews, it is necessary that I first describe phenomenological interviews in general. Phenomenological interviews are typically used to examine the lived experiences of participants in a way that generates detailed and in-depth descriptions (Adams & van Manen, 2017; deMarrais & Tisdale, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roulston, 2010; van Manen & Adams, 2010). There is less interest in categorization, simplification, and reduction of phenomena to abstract laws of science, as phenomenologists instead focus on individuals' immediate and conscious experiences of their life-world (Adams & van Manen, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; van Manen & Adams, 2010). The researcher is responsible for articulating the experience though the interpretation of rich data that has been provided by participants as they describe the particular aspects of their experience (Adams & van Manen, 2017; deMarrais & Tisdale, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Thomas & Pollio, 2002; van Manen & Adams, 2010). It is important, however, that the researcher also clearly articulate whether a study is guided by descriptive or interpretive phenomenology (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

Whereas descriptive phenomenologists emphasize describing the essence of a phenomenon and its general characteristics, interpretive phenomenologists go beyond description to look for meanings that are embedded within common practices and experiences (Adams & van Manen, 2017; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Thomas & Pollio, 2002; Tuohy et al., 2013). The meanings can be derived from a single interview or multiple interviews in which the exact words of participants become the focus of data collection (Ivey, 2013). It is important, therefore, that a researcher conducting an interpretive phenomenological interview give attention to the various social, historical, cultural, and political contexts that contribute to and influence an experience (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Thomas & Pollio, 2002; Tuohy et al., 2013). Conducting interviews from

this perspective was consistent with the critical paradigm, which assumes "that all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are socially and historically constituted" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 304). By keeping these contexts in mind, I aspired to gain insight into an experience that is "not understood…or [occurs] in a widely scattered population" (Ivey, 2013, p. 27). In the context of the current study, I sought to explore the experiences of a "widely scattered population" in the form of current and former Black/African American high school boys' basketball players.

I chose to use interpretive phenomenological interviews in the current study because I was interested in responses that provide details about the participants' perceptions and experiences of team, culture, and race (deMarrais & Tisdale, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roulston, 2010). I used the critical paradigm—as part of the broader qualitative methodology—to guide the current study and situate it within a social, historical, and political context (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005) in which sport is widely viewed as a raceless, meritocratic, and apolitical space (Billings et al., 2018; Carrington, 2010) that is nonetheless racialized in various ways and requires investigation, particularly at the high school level (Brooks et al., 2017; Forneris et al., 2012; Jowett et al., 2012; Leeds, 2015). I used the theoretical framework described above—critical race theory, color-blind racism, and the White colonial frame—to make explicit my frame of reference and "focus the inquiry where research is needed" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 730). In doing so, I designed the study in a way that was meant to connect the research question(s) with the conversations and actions that occurred during data collection and analysis (Brinkmann, 2013).

While conducting these interpretive phenomenological interviews I drew upon Roulston (2013) and the notion of the "romantic" conception of interviews. I entered the current study

with a particular knowledge base about the topics I have explored, which proved valuable and necessary to assist me in the process of interpretive decision making and guiding the inquiry to produce useful knowledge (Geanellos, 2000; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Roulston, 2010). For example, I spent three years as the manager on the boys' basketball team at my own high school, so I am generally familiar with the ways a team may operate and develop a particular culture. Entering the current study with this knowledge assisted me to work with the participants and ask questions in a particular sequence designed to produce rich data (Roulston, 2010). I make no claim to being objective, and instead acknowledge my subjectivities and the ways in which they influence my own experiences and contribute to my biography as a researcher (Cihelkova, 2013; Patton, 2015; Peshkin, 1988; Preissle, 2008; Preissle & Grant, 2004; Roulston, 2010; see "Positionality" section in Chapter One). In doing so, I continue to draw from a relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology in which the participants and I acknowledged our own values and experiences to identify and discuss multiple truths and realities that gave meaning to the social world under investigation (Lincoln et al., 2018; Patton, 2015; Peck & Mummery, 2018; Preissle & Grant, 2004). This acknowledgement allowed me to remain consistent with the aspect of interpretive phenomenological interviews that calls for giving proper attention to the various contexts—social, historical, political, and cultural—that contribute to and influence an experience within a particular social world (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Thomas & Pollio, 2002; Tuohy et al., 2013).

Given the information I have detailed above, interpretive phenomenological interviews were appropriate to use in the current study. Using interpretive phenomenological interviews provided an opportunity to explore the ways participants perceived their life-world by providing detailed and in-depth descriptions of their understandings and conceptualizations of team and

culture, as well as the role race played in their experiences (Adams & van Manen, 2017; Arpanantikul, 2018; deMarrais & Tisdale, 2002; Ivey, 2013; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roulston, 2010; Tuohy et al., 2013). I remained consistent with the critical paradigm by situating the interviews within a particular social, historical, and political context (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Tuohy et al., 2013) that calls for exploring issues of race in sport (Billings et al., 2018; Carrington, 2010), with a particular focus on high school athletics (Brooks et al., 2017; Forneris et al., 2012; Jowett et al., 2012; Leeds, 2015). Additionally, interpretive phenomenological interviews aligned with a relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology in which I recognized that knowledge was produced through my interactions with participants as I explored the processes they used to navigate and make sense of their worlds (Lincoln et al., 2018; Patton, 2015; Preissle & Grant, 2004). In the following sections I describe the processes of sampling and recruitment to identify potential participants for these interpretive phenomenological interviews.

Sampling, Recruitment, and the Participants

In the sections below I discuss the sampling techniques, recruitment procedures, and participants of the current study. I first describe the specific sampling strategies and inclusion criteria that were used to determine whether or not an individual would qualify for participation in the current study. I then provide a brief discussion of the procedures for recruitment. I end with a description of the demographics of the participants.

Sampling

I used a purposive criterion specific sampling technique (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015) to identify potential participants for the current study. The criterion-based sampling technique allowed me to establish a predetermined list of attributes that had to be met for participants to

qualify for inclusion in the current study (LeCompte & Preissle, 2003; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). Specifically, participants must have identified as a Black/African American male who played on his high school boys' basketball team for at least one year. The selection criteria of this particular racial group at the high school level was important, because a substantial body of research has examined the experiences of Black collegiate student athletes at primarily White universities (Beamon, 2008, 2012, 2014; Bimper, 2015, 2017; Cooper, Davis, & Dougherty, 2017; Fuller, 2017; Fuller, Harrison, & Bukstein, 2017; Hawkins, 1995; Sato, Eckert, & Turner, 2018; Sato, Hodge, & Eckert, 2017). However, there is an absence of studies that have specifically explored similar topics at the high school level. I, therefore, gave particular attention to the *high school* experiences of the participants to better understand their perceptions and the ways they made sense of their social worlds.

In addition to purposive criterion-based sampling, I used snowball sampling as a complementary technique. Merriam (2009) argued snowball sampling is the most common type of purposive sampling, as it allows a researcher to use the predetermined inclusion criteria to select and interview participants then ask them for referrals to others who meet the criteria. LeCompte and Preissle (2003) stated this particular sampling strategy "is useful in situations where the individuals investigated are scattered throughout populations and form no naturally bounded, common groups" (p. 74). Adopting this particular strategy allowed me to begin at a single point I could use to obtain access to potential participants I would otherwise be unable to speak with. I asked each participant to recommend others who fit the criteria for inclusion and the process was repeated until selection was complete (LeCompte & Preissle, 2003).

Procedures for Recruitment

Upon receiving approval from the university IRB, I used the sampling strategies described above to contact individuals who met the criteria for inclusion. I contacted potential participants in January of 2019 via email, text messages, and phone calls using my personal social network and through multiple posts on social media. Each initial contact message included an IRB-approved recruitment letter that explained the research topic, expectations of participants, criteria for inclusion, and asked those who were interested to contact me (see Appendix B). After an individual expressed interest in participating, I provided an informed consent form that contained a more detailed description of the study (see Appendix C). Once the informed consent form was signed and returned, each participant and I worked together to find a time that was mutually convenient for an interview. I followed up with each participant closer to the scheduled date of the interview to verify that it would still be suitable. In some cases, when the date needed to be changed, I repeated the process of finding a mutually convenient date until a new one could be established.

I followed these procedures until I felt confident I had achieved data saturation. However, there is an absence of clear guidelines to definitively assess how saturation is reached and identified (Beitin, 2012; Walker, 2012). I, therefore, conducted interviews with participants until the depth of information resulted in a thick and rich description of the phenomenon explored in the current study (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Mason, 2010; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). More specifically, I engaged in regular conversations with a critical friend (Costa & Kallick, 1993; Foulger, 2010; Swaffield, 2005) and peer debriefer (Cooper, Brandon, & Lindberg, 1998; Spall, 1998) to discuss my interpretations and understandings of the data and help me grow comfortable that I had conducted a sufficient number of interviews to achieve saturation (which I

describe further in the "Trustworthiness and Triangulation" section below). Thus, I did not come to this conclusion alone, as my advisor and other faculty members in my department filled vital roles to assist me in this process. These procedures for recruitment resulted in 14 current and former Black/African American high school boys' basketball players who agreed to participate in the current study.

Participants

The participants of the current study shared many similarities with respect to their social identities. However, there was one difference that is necessary to address before listing other demographics. All the participants identified as *either* Black *or* African American males; however, the meaning of the two terms varied for each participant. While some identified as Black and detailed their personal meaning, others specifically chose to identify as African American. While this may appear to be rather innocuous on the surface, it is important to note that even something as seemingly simple as a racial category "is infused with personal meaning" (Deaux, 1993, p. 5) and can be defined in many ways. As such, I have chosen to use the phrase "Black/African American" to refer to the collective race of the participants from this point forward.

The participants in the current study consisted of 14 Black/African American males. In addition to differences in describing their respective racial identities, participants varied in other areas such as age, geographic location, years of basketball experience, and years on the high school basketball team. Participants ranged in age from 14-68 years old with an average age of 30. They lived in various regions of the United States such as the Southeast, Midwest, Western Pacific, and Mid Atlantic. Their total basketball experience ranged from 4-30 years for a cumulative total of 215 years and an average total of 15.36 years basketball experience.

Participants had varying lengths of high school basketball experience, ranging from 1-4 years with an average of 2.57 years played in high school. Participants were given the option to select a pseudonym or have one assigned to them. Pseudonyms were organized alphabetically to recognize the humanity in each participant, rather than categorize them based on specific demographics. Additional information about each participant can be found in Table 1.

Data Collection and Analysis

In the following sections, I discuss the processes of data collection and analysis. I first describe the specific method used for data collection. I then detail the specific procedures and steps I followed. I also include a discussion of trustworthiness and briefly restate the ways in which I am positioned within the research process of the current study.

Data Collection

Interviews with participants occurred over the course of five months during which I conducted semi-structured interpretive phenomenological interviews to address the research topics in detail (Brinkmann, 2018; Crang & Cook, 2007; Fetterman, 1998; Roulston, 2010). I invited each participant to a single interview to discuss their understandings, conceptualizations, and experiences of team and culture in a sport context. The questions were organized in a flexible order—an important element of interpretive phenomenology that allows for variation between interviews based on individual participants' responses (Adams & van Manen, 2017; Roulston, 2010; Thomas & Pollio, 2002). Interview questions fell under four primary topics: (a) demographics, (b) experiences in high school and on the basketball team, (c) race in basketball, and (d) race in general (see Appendix D).

The first topic was used to gather general information about the participants that might reflect the ways they understood their experiences based on various factors such as age,

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age at Time of Interview	Years of Basketball Experience	Years on High School Team	Geographic Location During High School
Ashton	14	10	1	Southeast
Charles	28	18	4	Midwest
Chris	28	15	4	Midwest
Dexter	28	18	1	Midwest
Jerome	34	16	3	Southeast
John	23	17	4	Southeast
Kobe	24	11	1	Southeast
Lance	14	5	1	Southeast
Lawrence	36	20	4	Southeast
Luke	40	25	4	Mid Atlantic
Mac	68	6	3	Midwest
Remy	39	30	4	Western Pacific
Rob	28	20	1	Midwest
Url	14	4	1	Southeast

geographic location, years of basketball experience, and the number of years they were part of the high school basketball team. Asking about their experiences in the school and on the team remained consistent with the basic tenets of interpretive phenomenological interviews (Adams & van Manen, 2017; Arpanantikul, 2018; deMarrais & Tisdale, 2002; Ivey, 2013; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roulston, 2010; Tuohy et al., 2013) and addressed the first two research questions (RQ_{1a} and RQ_{1b}) by providing insight to the environment each participant was situated within, as well as how participants understood the concepts of team and culture. Furthermore, using interviews to ask the participants about race aligned with the tenet of CRT that states people of color are uniquely situated to discuss their experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). As such, the final two topics addressed the final research question (RQ_2) and were used to better understand the ways in which participants thought about race and the role it played in their experiences.

I invited each participant to a 45-minute interview, though the interviews often lasted much longer. I remained mindful of the time during each interview by watching a timer, and asked each participant if they would like to continue once we reached 45 minutes. Each participant agreed to continue beyond the requested 45 minutes, which resulted in 14 interviews with current and former Black/African American high school boys' basketball players that ranged from 50 minutes to two hours. Two interviews were conducted in-person and the remaining 12 interviews were conducted using teleconferencing software provided by the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The participants were asked to click a link or call a designated telephone number via the teleconferencing software to access a digital "meeting room" where the interviews were conducted.

Though most qualitative researchers who wish to interview participants may prefer to do so face-to-face, Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) found that the method of an interview did not influence the nature and depth of responses from participants. Indeed, using the teleconferencing software proved to be an advantage as it provided increased access to participants in various geographic regions (Novick, 2008; Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, because the information discussed "is not data until it gets put on paper" (Crang & Cook, 2007, p. 82). However, verbal utterances and fillers (e.g., um, like, you know) were omitted when they appeared to have no meaningful purpose and were not important to analysis (Tilley, 2003). Eliminating verbal utterances and fillers aligned with the ontological and epistemological assumptions I have previously detailed in that I acknowledge my own contributions to the production—or in this case, perhaps, reduction—of knowledge while considering that transcripts were not meant to represent an "objective" or "complete" truth, but rather serve as a subjective point of reference to examine the processes participants employed to navigate and give meaning to their social worlds (Lincoln et al., 2018; Patton, 2015; Peck & Mummery, 2018). Interviews, therefore, were vital for obtaining detailed information and the shared production of knowledge between the participants and myself.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred simultaneously with data collection (Saldaña, 2016). Throughout the data collection process I analyzed and compared the information gathered, constantly checking for repetition of similar topics as well as novel developments (Given, 2016). Keeping in mind that data from the "romantic" interview may be organized to produce thematic descriptors (Roulston, 2010), I drew upon Braun and Clarke's (2006) model to develop a five-step process of thematic data analysis: (a) review and pre-coding of the data; (b) initial formal

coding of the data; (c) comparison of codes between and within observations and interviews; (d) condense codes into categories and themes; and (e) define and review themes. This thematic analysis process aligned with the relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology I used to ground the current study by assisting me to interpret topics from multiple perspectives and maximize the subjective experiences and understandings of the participants to produce knowledge and meaning (Lincoln et al., 2018; Patton, 2015; Peck & Mummery, 2018; Preissle & Grant, 2004). Furthermore, this served as a recursive rather than linear process of data analysis that allowed me to move between steps as needed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each of the five steps is described in further detail below.

Step 1. I reviewed the data by first reading through interview transcripts and listening to the recordings. During this process, I corrected any typographical errors and practiced pre-coding by commenting on, highlighting, bolding, or otherwise distinguishing quotes and passages that stood out to me (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maxwell & Miller, 2008; Saldaña, 2016). Once I reviewed the data and corrected typographical errors, I then began a more formal coding process.

Step 2. The second step of my data analysis process consisted of multiple readings of individual interview transcripts while formally coding the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I used initial coding as a means to examine the data with an open-ended approach that allowed for reflection and identification of similarities and differences (Maxwell & Miller, 2008; Saldaña, 2016). As a part of the initial coding process, I employed descriptive and in vivo coding. Descriptive coding was used to examine and identify topics that emerged from the interview transcripts (Saldaña, 2016). For example, I used "experiencing racism" as a descriptive code to represent times when participants recounted examples of blatant racism, microaggressions, or color-blind expressions of racism. With respect to in vivo coding, I primarily used codes such as

"choosing basketball" to identify significant quotes and passages using the participants' own words (Saldaña, 2016). This process of descriptive and in vivo coding resulted in 26 initial codes that were later condensed into categories.

Step 3. Upon completion of initial coding, I compared codes between and within the various interview transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This step began a process of "categorizing strategies" (Maxwell & Miller, 2008) in which I read through the descriptions of the initial codes to identify similarities and differences. I then compared codes between and within interview transcripts to identify similarities and differences in the ways participants understood and articulated their perceptions of team, culture, and race. For example, the category "about basketball" consisted of codes that explicitly focused on basketball without giving much attention to race: because of basketball, choosing basketball, emotion of basketball, and sport–life lessons. I followed this process of categorizing, which resulted in five initial categories: (a) codes about basketball, (b) education and diversity, (c) race, (d) relationships, and (e) team and culture. However, after reflecting on these groupings it became apparent that there was a need to develop a new category. As such, some codes that were organized under "race" were removed to form a sixth category for race and sport.

Step 4. The fourth step in the data analysis process consisted of second cycle coding—condensing categories into themes (Maxwell & Miller, 2008; Saldaña, 2016). In this step, I used pattern and focused coding to combine categories that had similar descriptions and thematic or conceptual meanings. For example, the categories "codes about basketball" and "education and diversity" were combined to form themes that gave attention to the role of race in the participants' experiences. Following this process of condensing categories, I then organized the themes using a hierarchical approach—organized from most to least frequent, important, or

impactful (Saldaña, 2016). This provided a level of abstraction that allowed me to move past the particulars of the current study and enabled transferability to comparable contexts (Saldaña, 2016).

Step 5. The final step of my data analysis process involved naming and defining each theme. For example, the theme "choosing basketball" emphasized motivating factors participants gave as part of their decision to play basketball that were implicitly or explicitly tied to race. After the process of naming and defining, I verified each theme by checking to ensure it aligned with the data from the interview transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I then organized themes in a hierarchical order from most to least frequent or impactful (Saldaña, 2016). The title and meaning of each theme are described in greater detail in Chapter Four and Chapter Five. The data analysis process described above also provided structure and rigor to establish trustworthiness, which I detail in the next section.

Trustworthiness and Triangulation

Establishing trustworthiness is an important goal of all research (Cho & Trent, 2006; Cope, 2014). It is essential to demonstrate the rigor of a project in ways that differ from "validity" and "reliability," which are typically associated with quantitative research (Cope, 2014). Specifically regarding qualitative research, trustworthiness is achieved through the design and implementation of credible, dependable methods (Cho & Trent, 2006; Cope, 2014). Credibility can also be established through the use of verbatim quotes from participants "that are typical or characteristic of the situation or event described" (Fetterman, 1998, p. 12). Furthermore, trustworthiness can be established when findings are transferable across a variety of similar sociocultural contexts or settings (Cope, 2014). Because generalizability is not an inherent objective of qualitative research, transferability is a vital aspect of trustworthiness in

qualitative research. Thus, for the purposes of the current study, I conceptualized credibility and trustworthiness as quotations or experiences that could be viewed as typical in the sense that they might be applied to others in similar contexts and settings. In addition to the use of credible and dependable methods that can produce transferable findings, trustworthiness can be achieved through member checking and triangulation.

Cho and Trent (2006) described member checking as a process of distributing collected data to participants to review for accuracy and reactions. I used member checking to provide participants an opportunity to review interview transcripts; however, none of the participants responded with feedback. As a result, I turned to various strategies of triangulation to establish trustworthiness. Hewson (2008) described triangulation as the process of addressing a problem or question from multiple perspectives to "gain a more comprehensive and better informed account" (p. 559). When appropriately implemented, triangulation strategies and approaches can enrich the completeness of data and researcher understandings of the phenomena under exploration (Renz, Carrington, & Badger, 2018; Thurmond, 2001). Accordingly, I envisioned triangulation in the current study as a research strategy that was used to better understand the findings in a way that "recognizes the multiplicity and simultaneity of cultural frames of reference" (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005, p. 832). Specifically, I have utilized multiple theories, a critical friend, and a peer debriefer as the primary components of triangulation.

Theory triangulation. The first component of triangulation I used in the current study was theory triangulation—the use of multiple theories to analyze and interpret data (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014; Thurmond, 2001). This type of triangulation assisted me to support and refute previous findings by using multiple theories in my analysis (Carter et al., 2014). As detailed previously, I utilized a theoretical framework that

consisted of critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018) and the White colonial frame (Carrington, 2010). The benefit of using these three theories is that they provided a broader analysis of the findings (Banik, 1993; Thurmond, 2001). In particular, the process of thematic analysis offered a certain "theoretical freedom" and flexibility that afforded space for me to employ the aforementioned theories and "provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of [the] data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). Specifically, I used these theories to center race and provide a foundation for analysis (critical race theory), while giving attention to things that are racialized in various ways despite appearances that suggest otherwise (color-blind racism), and explore the ways race and sport intersect to give meaning to one another (White colonial frame). The unification of these theories not only guided my analysis, but also served as a form of triangulation that provided a deeper understanding of the findings. There are, however, limitations to theoretical triangulation—the findings, for example, are not necessarily more valid or credible simply because multiple theories have been used (Thurmond, 2001)—meaning additional strategies were needed to ensure trustworthiness.

Critical friend. To complement my use of theory triangulation, and to account for some of its shortcomings, I used a critical friend in my overall triangulation strategies. A critical friend can fill many roles that are meant to support research projects (Kember et al., 1997). There is not a singular definition for a critical friend (Swaffield, 2005); however, the purpose of a critical friend in the current study was to "provide alternative perspectives, support, and protection from bias and self-delusion" (Foulger, 2010, p. 140). Indeed, the aim was to develop a "friendship" that empowered me to improve my interpretations of the data while "providing an informed critique of processes and practices" (Swaffield, 2005, p. 45). It was my intention to find a person who would ask questions, provide alternative perspectives, and offer constructive critiques of

this work (Costa & Kallick, 1993). In the context of the current study, my critical friend was my advisor.

Deuchar (2008) suggested that an advisor who is "always available but not always needed" (p. 497) could serve as a critical friend. Keeping this in mind, I met with my advisor on a regular basis to seek counsel about various aspects of the data collection and analysis processes. My advisor is knowledgeable about the topics I have explored and was involved throughout the process of conducting this project—having read and commented on the theoretical framework as the current study developed. During our meetings, I would describe the information I believed was emerging from the data and ask for a different perspective and critiques that would assist me to strengthen the work (Costa & Kallick, 1993). The conversations allowed me to confront my biases, assumptions, and values in a way that allowed me to consider how they influenced my interpretations of the data (Foulger, 2010).

As my critical friend, my advisor would read my preliminary findings and provide feedback that encouraged me to consider additional aspects of a particular theory that could be applied to better understand a particular finding. In many ways my advisor was the consummate critical friend by filling multiple roles (Kember et al., 1997), providing an informed alternate perspective to make me aware of and guard against some of my biases (Foulger, 2010; Swaffield, 2005), and offering constructive critiques that encouraged me to view the data in different ways (Costa & Kallick, 1993). It was important to me, however, that I seek alternative perspectives from others who shared a different level of knowledge about the topics I have explored in the current study.

Peer debriefer. The third source of triangulation I used for the current study was a peer debriefer. My intention was to find another person who could understand the phenomena I

explored and establish trustworthiness and credibility of the findings by ensuring that my interpretations were "worthy, honest, and believable" (Spall, 1998, p. 280). I wanted to find someone with whom I could discuss the findings and ask for feedback, though on a smaller scale than the critical friend. For the purposes of the current study my peer debriefer was a sport management faculty member within my department. I would speak with them about the things participants would say, the patterns that emerged, and how I felt they compared to previous literature. The peer debriefer served as a neutral ally who provided a safe space for me to discuss my early interpretations of the data and the implications of the findings (Cooper et al., 1998) before and after conversations with my critical friend. In essence, the peer debriefer was an additional source of triangulation—in a smaller role than the critical friend and theory triangulation, albeit no less important—that allowed me to interpret the data from multiple perspectives and increase trustworthiness.

Positionality

Given that my critical friend and peer debriefer assisted me in confronting my biases as a researcher, I find it necessary to restate them and the ways they might have influenced my interpretations of the findings. As I noted in Chapter One, my personal characteristics, background, and status likely influenced—at least in part—the research process (Bailey, 2007; Patton, 2015). By acknowledging my biases and assumptions, I hope to provide insight into the ways this has positioned me within the current study, the research process, and the interpretation of the findings (Cihelkova, 2013; Patton, 2015; Peshkin, 1988; Preissle, 2008; Preissle & Grant, 2004). Given that I provided a detailed discussion of my positionality in Chapter One (see "Positionality" section), I include below a summarized description of the ways my race, age, gender, and geographic location and culture positioned me within the research.

Given that I have chosen to primarily center race within the analysis of the current study, I find it reasonable to begin here again. I often view racial matters through my own experiences as a Lebanese, African American, and Caucasian man. These three racial identities work in unison to inform one another and influence the way I conceptualize and interpret *my* lived experience in terms of race. As a result, I guard and protect my racial identities, sometimes adjusting my response according to my perceptions of others' assumptions about my own identity (Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2001). I find this particularly necessary to address in the current study, as I shared a common identity (Black) with the participants; however, I also identify as more than Black, meaning my Lebanese and Caucasian identities also influence my interpretations. I tried to keep this in mind throughout my communication with the participants. It was important that I effectively managed if and when to share my racial identity. I shared my personal racial identity on few occasions—often when participants asked for clarification about describing their own racial identity or when they specifically identified with more than one race. Discussing my own racial identity with participants was, in these cases, a valuable conversation that allowed me to build rapport and support the process of further reduce the researcher–participant barriers (Preissle, 2008; Roulston, 2010).

In addition to race, I found myself in a peculiar situation where I was both younger *and* older than some of the participants, yet similar in age to others. I am close enough to my own high school years that I can remember many of my experiences during that time. Yet I am far enough removed that I cannot recall everything, thereby potentially restricting my ability to relate to the participants who were younger than me. Additionally, my own difficulty in recalling specific details from high school was something I remained mindful of when speaking with participants who were older than me. As such, my age positioned me in a way that required me

to be more mindful of the participants' responses to my inquiries. I tried to remember what it was like to be in high school when speaking with younger participants. When speaking with older participants, I tried to provide additional time for responses to allow them to think of specific examples. In these ways, my own age required me to remain patient and maintain a particular conversation with the participants based on any age differences.

Despite differing from participants with respect to race and age, it is likely that I shared a common gender identity as a male researcher studying a specifically male sporting experience. The perceived gender alignment with the participants might have increased rapport, though I attempted to guard against overlooking any details as a result of this insider status (Markula, 2016). I was also conscious of the fact that, although I studied the experiences in high school *boys'* basketball, it is possible that not all participants identified as male or masculine. Though there were few occurrences when gender became a primary topic of discussion, it was important for me to remain aware of the ways participants understood and conceptualized maleness and masculinity, particularly if their interpretations differed from my own.

In addition to race, age, and gender, the various geographic locations in which the participants were situated may have generally influenced their understandings—and my own interpretations—of various topics. Given that participants lived in different regions of the United States, I am generally less aware of the existing cultures as someone who lived in the Midwest for most of my life. I have, however, lived in and visited other regions, where I have observed and experienced the cultural differences. This was important to consider in my interpretations of the participants' experiences so they could be situated within an appropriate cultural context. I strived to remain aware of all my subjectivities—race, age, gender, geographic location and culture, and others that did not occur to me—and consider the ways in which each may have

influenced the design of the current study, my interactions with participants, and my interpretation of the findings (Charmaz, 2006; Cihelkova, 2013; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Peshkin, 1988). It is, however, important to note the ever-changing nature of subjectivity and that my position may have evolved over time as the current study developed (Cihelkova, 2013).

Chapter Summary

I began this chapter with a review of qualitative research and a description of my conceptual framework. I then outlined interpretive phenomenological interviewing and included a rationale as to why it was appropriate for the current study. Next, I described the sampling strategies, procedures for recruitment, and participants of the current study. I closed this chapter with a discussion of the procedures for data collection and analysis, the process of establishing trustworthiness, and an abbreviated explanation of my position within the research. The findings from the current study are described in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

In this chapter I present the findings of the current study, presented in the order of the research questions. I first address the concepts of *team* and *culture* independent from one another (RQ_{1a} & RQ_{1b}), followed by an analysis of the two in unison. I then address the role of race in the participants' experiences (RQ_2). It is important to note that the themes, while organized under the respective research questions, are not intended to be mutually exclusive. Thus, a particular quote might "fit" under more than one theme, and it is not unreasonable to observe some overlap across various topics. The names associated with the various quotes are the pseudonyms for the participants.

Defining Team

The first set of themes addresses RQ_{1a}: How do Black/African American players on a high school boys' basketball team understand and conceptualize *team*? Throughout the process of data collection and analysis I tried to keep in mind the operational definition of *team* for the current study: self-managing and diverse (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Rock & Grant, 2016), with clearly defined roles (Mumford et al., 2008)—both task and social (Carron & Brawley, 2000)—for an indeterminate number of members with specific skill sets (Gratton & Erickson, 2007), who interdependently strive to complete work-related tasks and goals (Nahavandi et al., 2015), while holding each other accountable to promote cohesion and reduce social loafing (Beal et al., 2003; Horn et al., 2012; Jowett et al., 2012; Mach et al., 2010; Liden et al., 2004). Upon completion of analysis, two primary themes emerged: (a) key elements of a team and (b) family/brotherhood.

Key Elements of a Team

As the definition above states, there are multiple aspects to a team. Participants demonstrated relative ease identifying the key components of a team, as they mentioned several of the elements listed in the introduction to these themes. While participants did not necessarily address every single aspect of a team, they did give particular attention to three key elements: (a) goals, (b) roles, and (c) cohesion. I describe each of these sub-themes in the sections below.

Goals. Setting clear goals was the first element of a team that participants talked about. Participants often agreed that understanding the goals of the team took precedent over anything else. Unsurprisingly, participants believed winning was the most important goal, as Ashton succinctly stated, "We have one goal, which is to win games and get where we need to be." Lance provided a similar assessment, saying, "I guess our goal is to win every game." While each statement is relatively simple, they are also significant as they identify what the team is striving to accomplish.

Winning was something that every member of the team could enjoy. It was so important that it could, on occasion, become a unifying force, as Chris described:

> It was just more about unification, just saying all of us from different backgrounds, different places, different sides of the city. But it was just all about coming together for the one common goal, which was to win. So, it was more about unification than anything.

No matter how people differed, a desire to win was a constant similarity that brought the team together. Dexter shared a similar sentiment, explaining his feelings about playing on a team with people he felt were different from him:

> On the basketball team, you don't get to pick who you play with. You play with the people that make the team and if you don't really identify with them that's too bad, you're there to do one job and one job only. And that's win basketball games.

For both Chris and Dexter, differences among the team faded away when it was time to play. Winning provided the "unification" their teams needed to overcome any differences and work toward the same goal. Such a unifying force also served to reduce conflict in some cases.

No matter the severity of conflicts the team may endure, participants described that winning remained the primary goal. Luke, for example, recounted how a focus on winning allowed his team to overcome conflict with some opponents:

> We got into fights with knuckleheads from the other side of town that didn't like us or whatever, or their girls liked us, or whatever. So off the court, yeah, that was normal, to get into a fight or arguments. But on the court, I guess it was never an issue. Like it didn't matter if the other team was Black, White, or green, we all had each other's back 'cause we were trying to win.

Participants often suggested that struggles off the court could not even derail the team's primary objective of winning. Beyond confrontations with opposing teams, winning appeared to be a salve when a team experienced internal conflict. For example, Charles recalled a moment when winning allowed his team to move past internal disputes:

> I remember my freshman year, a fight had broke out in the locker room between two players and it didn't stop… From being at practice, then they weren't holding the ball from each other. We still had winning on our minds, still had that goal to accomplish. It's like people they would always put those things behind us. And work those things out and move on. Simply because it would hinder us from being able to try to win.

Similar to the way Luke's team overcame external conflict by focusing on a shared goal, Charles's team managed to overcome internal struggles using the same approach. Winning, therefore, was more than a simple goal. It was also a unifying force that brought different people together and gave them a singular focus that allowed them to manage moments of conflict.

Roles. In addition to setting goals, participants mentioned that understanding roles was an important aspect of a team. Primarily determined based on talent, participants understood they were expected to accept their respective roles as part of the decisions made by coaches. Rob, for example, shared his displeasure about being placed on what he believed was the team for less talented players:

> We had an A and a B team. I was on the B team. So that was a little discouraging. Because I thought I was better... I don't even wanna say that I actually was. But I feel like I deserved a spot over some people that were on the A team and everything. But I didn't complain too much, I just made it what it was… I mean, I thought I was better than my peers on the B team. I thought I was better than people that were on the A team. But it really didn't come down to what I thought. It was more so what the coaches thought.

Although Rob was not initially pleased with his team placement, he understood his role and made the best of the situation. It was important for him to accept the role in order to have a positive experience. Mac also talked about having a minimal role with his team, and his understanding of what he was expected to do:

> You could always tell that there was this thing about playing time just like it is now. Whether you were one of the five starters or whether you were the sixth man. I didn't understand any of that crap, and didn't really care because I was on the team. And if [the

coach] played me, he played me. It just so happened that…[my team] generally tried to find a place for you. What could you do better than anybody else? And mine was defense.

Mac knew he wasn't one of the most talented players, but he understood his role and did what he could to help the team accomplish its goals. Similarly, Rob—initially upset with what he perceived to be a lesser role—knew he had to trust the coaches to make decisions that would help the team win. Thus, talent was frequently used as a barometer to regulate which players would assume particular roles.

Talent was also a primary factor in determining which players would be viewed as the leaders for a team. Participants noted that the best players were often viewed as, and expected to be, the leaders. Lawrence, for example, talked about his role as the best player on his team:

> I think in high school the fact that I was the best player on that team, I think that helped out a lot because I guess when you're in high school and it's based on how you are, can you play? And so with me being the leader of that team and we were gonna go as far as I was gonna take them, I think that that automatically bought me, I guess, a closer bond with my teammates.

Lawrence knew he was the most talented player on the team and understood that meant he was expected to be a leader. Accordingly, he was able to develop a stronger relationship with teammates as part of his specific role. John also believed the best players were expected to be leaders, no mater the level of competition:

> If you didn't play a lot on varsity and if you were getting a lot of time, playing time on the junior varsity team, you were being placed in this role where alright, now you're the focal point. Now you're the leader.

Even players on junior varsity are expected to be leaders, especially those who are seen as the most talented. Thus, talent is a significant factor in determining team leaders. Those who were perceived to have the most talent became leaders, whereas other players were given different tasks and responsibilities. No matter how a player might feel about his role, it is important for him to perform at his best for the team to accomplish its goals and find success.

Cohesion. While setting clear goals and understanding roles can help lead to success, it is also important to consider the third key element of a team: cohesion. Maintaining cohesion can allow the team to remain focused on the goal and roles, thereby providing opportunities for success. Participants talked about cohesion in three specific forms: (a) on the court, (b) off the court, and (c) lacking cohesion. Each of these forms is described in further detail below.

On the court. Cohesion is an important aspect of a team, but it is perhaps no more important in any space than on the court. It is imperative that a team maintains cohesion and understands one another. As Remy described, on-court cohesion is vital to team success:

> The way teams have to operate, a basketball team, you have to get to know one another. You have a pretty shitty basketball team if you don't know each other, if you don't like each other, 'cause then you're not playing for each other and you're not optimal.

Participants perceived getting to know each other and maintaining cohesion as key for performing at an optimal level. It allows team members to work toward success and better prepares them to defy adversity. Ashton, for instance, believed the cohesion on his team helped them to face any challenge:

> Through thick and thin. Like how we were losing and how some of us weren't getting along, like some of the Black players weren't getting along with the Black players

> because we wanted to win and we weren't on the same page and…the White players were like, "We're all brothers, we have one goal. And we should have that one goal."

Although some members of the team began to assign blame for losing, the overall cohesion was able to allow them to overcome any issues. They were able to refocus on the overall goal of winning and move past blame and miscommunications. As Remy and Ashton each described, maintaining cohesion on the court is essential for a team to reach its goals. However, it is important for a team to be cohesive off the court as well.

Off the court. Multiple participants acknowledged that connecting with teammates off the court was a valuable part of promoting and maintaining cohesion. In some cases, the cohesion came from additional time playing basketball outside official team activities. Luke and his teammates, for example, built cohesion by playing basketball in more than just the school setting:

> I'll be honest, in high school, we played ball for the high school, we played AAU and then when we weren't doing one of those we were normally playing at the Boys Club or the YMCA on the weekends... Seems like that's all I did, was play basketball. So we had something in common. That's why I was with them all the time, 'cause if we weren't playing video games, chasing girls, hanging out or playing ball, I don't really know what else I was doing.

Even though Luke and his teammates shared interests outside of basketball, they continuously found themselves playing in a variety of settings, thereby adding to their cohesion off the court. In other cases, participants talked about building off-court cohesion that went beyond basketball and into other aspects of life, as John detailed:

> So I connect with my teammates, just going out, we do a lot... Like in high school…you're gonna be at somebody's house all the time, things of that nature. So, just connecting by doing little things as far as just like chilling with my friends, go out for the weekend or things of that nature or trying to do things outside of basketball, so not just having it all about basketball 24/7.

John made a concerted effort to connect with his teammates in other areas, not just basketball. Their shared interests allowed them further develop their cohesion off the court and build lasting connections. Sharing connections—both on and off the court—it would appear is vital for success. Without them, a team may risk a total lack of cohesion.

Lacking cohesion. Although participants discussed the ways they were able to maintain cohesion with teammates in various forms, they also noted difficulty in developing off-court relationships and cohesion. In some cases, participants felt they simply did not have enough time outside team activities to spend with teammates. Mac, for example, rarely even saw his teammates at school:

> I didn't have a whole lot of time to hang out… So as far as teammates, spending any time with them at school, yes. We'd sit at the same table and eat lunch and that sort of thing. But at [my school], they didn't allow a whole lot of goofing around. You couldn't really hang out except at lunch… In general, just hanging out with people, I just didn't do it.

Presented with few opportunities, Mac spent what time he could with his teammates, but he was ultimately unable to further develop relationships and build cohesion. Other participants, such as Rob, suggested they did not share enough common interests with teammates to spend time together off the court, describing his difficulty connecting with teammates:

> It wasn't a natural connection or vibe really. It would be people I wouldn't really consider a friend... I wouldn't be like standoffish or anything. It was more so like, "I know where this is going. I know we are on the same team and everything. You're a cool person. But I don't really see us hanging outside of basketball."

Whereas Luke and John made an effort to strengthen connections off the court, Rob felt there was little need because he did not have a similar relationship with his teammates. Neither he nor Mac spent much time with teammates outside of team activities, which resulted in relationships that did not extend past superficial levels. In essence, the basketball court was the only place they could develop team cohesion. Despite the struggles of Mac and Rob, other participants suggested their bonds with teammates extended beyond building cohesion, and moved to a deeper type of relationship.

Team as Family/Brotherhood

In multiple cases, participants described being part of a team as belonging to something greater than themselves. Members of the team built specific relationships that went beyond goals, roles, and cohesion. More than a team, they were a family. In the sections below, I describe the ways in which participants referred to their relationships with teammates as a family and brotherhood.

Family. In addition to the various components of a team described above, participants frequently compared team membership as a "familial" bond of sorts. Ashton, for example, had this to say when describing his team:

> It's cool. It's one happy family. There's not anyone that discriminates another person. There's not anyone that's racist. I mean we're just all one family. We have one goal, which is to win games and to get where we need to be. So I mean it's not like we're

> putting our race to the side. No, it's actually like we love each other and stuff like that and we actually care about each other's well being. We have each other's back through thick and thin.

Ashton and his teammates not only focused on setting and achieving goals, but also gave attention to building and developing relationships. Similarly, Remy described his experience as a "family environment" and explained that:

> If you were an outsider looking in, you would think that this basketball team lived with each other because we were always with each other. And it was a true really family environment, where we all, our families obviously knew each other. But we were at each other's houses constantly… [W]e pretty much grew up together.

Similar to Ashton, Remy felt his team was more than just a collection of players brought together for a common purpose. Instead, they spent time together outside of regular team activities, to the point where they felt like family. As such, team membership is not simply and solely working toward a particular set of goals with a group of other people. It is a phenomenon that consists of multiple and complex layers related to the ways players personalize what it means to be part of a team. In short, team membership goes beyond work-related tasks and goals; it instead creates a bond similar to that of a family.

Brotherhood. A specific type of familial descriptor participants used to describe what it meant to be part of the team was the word "brotherhood." For example, Ashton explained, "me and my teammates bond a lot and we're very close to each other. I feel like it's more of a brotherhood." John, on the other hand, was more succinct when talking about his role engaging with younger teammates: "It was a big brother type." Lance also described the team as a brotherhood, but went a step further to give a more detailed explanation: "You're always hanging

with them, do everything with them, you practice with them after school every day, you go to class with them and you hang outside of school." As the participants described, they were able to create and develop a specific type of familial relationship—a bond as strong as one between siblings. Their "brotherhood" was an important part of team relations and, in some ways, laid the foundation for establishing a culture.

Defining Culture

The second set of themes addresses RQ_{1b}: How do Black/African American players on a high school boys' basketball team understand and conceptualize *culture*? Throughout the process of data collection and analysis I tried to keep in mind the operational definition of *culture* for the current study—a clearly articulated system of values and beliefs (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015); a process of integrating and teaching new members in which espoused and experienced values remain congruent (Dolan & Garcia, 2002; Hamm et al., 2008); and supportive team leaders who endorse a task-oriented motivational climate that promotes trust, cohesion, and performance (Eys et al., 2013; Horn et al., 2012; Mach et al., 2010; Vincer & Loughead, 2010). Upon completion of analysis, two primary themes emerged: (a) key elements of culture and (b) avoiding, ignoring, and minimizing race.

Key Elements of Culture

As the definition above states, a culture tends to have clearly defined values and beliefs. However, participants rarely discussed culture in terms of something that was explicitly salient to them. Instead, the culture was often likely to be an implicit system of beliefs that participants had to observe to determine the key elements. Through their observations and discussions, the participants identified four primary elements of a successful culture: (a) trust, (b) coaches, (c)

supportive competition, and (d) dedication and focus. Each sub-theme is described below, followed by a revised definition of culture that includes these key elements.

Trust. The first key element of a successful culture is trust. Multiple participants talked about the importance of trust and how it can influence success. Chris, for example, talked about trust from both the coach and player perspectives:

> I'd say the first thing will be trust… Each player has to trust that the coach, he doesn't necessarily have to know what he's doing, well, yeah, you just have to trust that the coach knows what they're doing, or that what they're telling you is right. So trust, and then from a player perspective accepting that trust. If the coach tells you to do one thing and you wanna do another thing, there is the choice. And if I have 12 players who all choose to do what the coach says, we're gonna be more successful, more often, than when one person decides to do something else.

As Chris described, trust is multilayered. Coaches have to trust players, players have to trust coaches, and players have to trust other players. Maintaining such trust is important to help individual players build confidence and develop relationships, as John described:

> Before practices and everything like that we carpool... Some people went to get food, some people who need to study they would study. Everybody was grouped up so it really made our team stronger, and it was also because these were expectations put on us by our coaches so that we can have a winning mentality… To grow that team chemistry we were placed in groups like that.

Just as Chris discussed the need for trust as a means for success, John expressed that building trust only made the team stronger. Trust, however, goes beyond support on the court and flows into other areas. Building trust in all parts of the culture is important, because it can be difficult

to rebuild once broken. For example, Ashton described the difficulty he had trusting his teammates when something was stolen from him:

> I really didn't trust everyone that was around me. Because I would make sure that I was very- what's the word- I was very aware of my surroundings after [my belongings] got stolen, but I really wasn't aware before [they] got stolen because I really thought nothing would happen. But I was obviously wrong when they got stolen, so I've been more aware. I do trust my teammates, not to seem like I never did, but I just- I really didn't feel that great when they were stolen from me, because I didn't really know who it was at first.

Although Ashton trusted his teammates, he also felt the need to remain aware once that trust was threatened. Trust, therefore, is a necessary component of a successful culture, and it exists in multiple forms. Players and coaches need to trust one another to successfully execute strategies. Teammates need to build confidence for each other and show support. It is also important for each person to trust that they and their belongings will be secure in various settings. Maintaining trust throughout the culture can be difficult and complex, but it remains an essential requirement for success.

Coaches. The second key element of culture is coaches, as they play an essential role in constructing a culture. Not only are they responsible for building trust; they must also construct a positive climate for all members of the team. Additionally, coaches have a duty to develop the talent of their players, so the individual and the team can improve. In the sections below, I expand on two specific responsibilities of coaches pertaining to culture: (a) climate and (b) talent development.

Climate. Coaches, as the primary leaders of a team, tended to be viewed as the people who set the expectations for the team as a whole. It is the responsibility of coaches to provide

space for open and honest conversations that positively contribute to the overall climate and culture. For example, Chris talked about a lack of conversations and meetings and the resulting impact:

> I would say I don't remember having many conversations, not as a team. There might have been some conversations between the coach and some players, but there was never really a team meeting where we talked about our feelings and talked about this or that. We just kinda went out there and played, which I think in the long run was probably detrimental for everyone.

Although Chris had conversations with his coaches, he lamented the fact that there were rarely any team meetings. It is, therefore, important that coaches create space for multiple types of conversations and meetings that allow all members of the team to felt heard.

It is also important that coaches set expectations that are fair, reasonable, and promote a positive climate for success. When players feel singled-out, it can lead to a disruption of the overall culture. Lawrence, for instance, recounted a "defining moment" with a former coach that resulted in him missing 10 games:

> Coming into my senior year, I had [an] afro, and I would wear it sometimes in an afro, sometimes in braids. And my coach at some point in time in the season had said that that hair style was more like a "hoodlum" hairstyle and that he wasn't gonna have that on his team, and that in order for me to get back on the team, after getting in some trouble in the classroom, that I had to cut my hair off or I wouldn't be allowed back on the team. And so that was a really defining moment for me, and in high school with that coach and with basketball in particular.

Coaches can have a large influence on the overall climate. A mandate as seemingly simple as cutting hair can leave a lasting impression for a player and create tension in a relationship. For Lawrence, the directive led to a "defining moment" where he refused, missed a portion of the season, and saw his relationship with the coach suffer as a result. As this example shows, it is important that coaches establish a climate that allows players to feel supported, and provide means to express themselves when issues arise. Otherwise, as Lawrence's example suggests, they may risk ostracizing some players and disrupting the overall culture.

Talent development. In addition to creating a positive climate, coaches are responsible for developing the talents of their players. Without the proper development, players might not appreciate their coaches as much. Rob, for example, noted what he felt was a lack of proper coaching and development:

> I never felt like I was pushed. I didn't really feel like I was pushed to my limit or anything. I never felt like I was necessarily personally challenged. When [I was] pledging [my fraternity], we got pushed to see what we could actually be and do. But on that I never felt like I was pushed to be anything more than I guess a B team player. A lot of your development was on you. But you're a kid, so you don't really know what you need to focus on.

Rob wanted more coaching, because he felt there was more he could do on the court. Never receiving the level of coaching he wanted influenced his experience on the team and his views of the culture.

While some participants simply wanted coaching in general, others expressed a need for coaches to be adaptable in a way that puts the players in the best positions for success. Specifically, Lawrence talked about a coach whose methods he felt were not flexible enough:

> I would say that the biggest thing that really shaped my high school career is I had a coach that was really old school and very disciplined. And he believed in that you...fit your team into a system, rather than build your team around your best player's strength. And so one thing, I was very vocal in the basketball arena, and so if I disagreed with something that the coach said I would let my voice be heard. And unfortunately sometimes that was to my detriment.

Whereas Rob simply wanted coaching in general, Lawrence believed coaches should utilize an approach that maximizes the talents of the players. Talent development is, thus, a responsibility of coaches that contributes to culture. Players want to be pushed, but in ways they feel will best maximize their skills.

Coaches play an integral role in the development and maintenance of a successful culture. They are responsible for building trust through various means. Constructing a positive climate by initiating conversations and meetings can allow players and other members to express themselves and feel heard. Coaches are also responsible for effectively developing the talent of players, whether that means providing general guidance or taking a more specific approach to best utilize different players' strengths. Regardless of the task—building trust, developing a positive climate, talent development—coaches have a complex and unique role with respect to culture.

Supportive competition. Along with trust and coaches, supportive competition was a common thread in participants' discussion of culture. Participants felt it was important to have some level of competition that encouraged people to play at their best. Dexter, for example, talked about the ways competing led to winning:

> I thought in general our team culture was good. I think that whenever you win games, and we were winning games, the culture tends to be a lot better than when you're losing and people start pointing fingers at one another. I think that we challenged each other to be better on the court. We definitely competed every day… But we'd definitely challenge each other on the court to be better. And it transitioned into a lot of winning. I think overall team culture was pretty good.

For Dexter, competition was a vital aspect of the culture because it correlated to winning. The challenges between teammates encourage better play and benefitted the culture as success continued. In other cases, participants talked about competing and pushing teammates to be their best so they could be prepared when it was time to play. Mac in particular expressed the pride he felt about the way his team was supportively competitive:

> We'd just push each other. If you saw somebody was slacking off, you'd just get on their case. "You gotta step it up. Yes, everybody's tired. Everybody's got work to do. Nobody's getting to play a lot except for the starting five. We still have a job to do as a team. And when you get in, you're gonna be expected to perform just like a replacement." But pushing each other and supporting each other to be successful, that was probably one of the things that I felt most proud about in comparison to other teams.

For both Mac and Dexter, the supportive competition was a necessary part of the culture. It allowed teammates to challenge each other to perform at the highest level without assigning blame. In essence, supportive competition strengthened the culture and, in some cases, resulted in greater overall success.

Dedication and focus. The final aspect of culture was a display of dedication and focus to the sport of basketball. Some participants noted that basketball required a certain dedication

that required work at all times, even out of season. Sometimes the dedication was exemplified by participation in off-season workouts. Charles, for example, felt he could rarely afford to take time off once the season ended:

> So because I kept getting moved up I always said like, “Oh, I can't afford to take time off.” So like my freshman year, I was playing sophomore… “I got to work extra hard because I'm not gonna be playing against freshmen.” Then I got moved up and I was like, “Well, I'm on varsity now. I gotta work harder because everybody is going to be bigger and faster.” And then my junior year I was like, “Okay, now I'm supposed to be the guy so I gotta work harder. Because I'm supposed to be the guy.”

Charles believed getting moved up meant he had to continually work to improve. His understanding of the culture at each level of competition encouraged him to dedicate himself to getting better between each season. While Charles knew the level of dedication required to maintain success, other participants noted improper focus could have negative consequences. For instance, Rob believed a lack of focus on his team prohibited his growth:

> I would say the team wasn't as focused on basketball as we probably should have been. Myself included. I don't think we were as focused as we should have been… We weren't like a top basketball team. Or in like a big area… We weren’t getting the notoriety. We weren't getting the opportunities in the classroom or on any athletic team really. And I think that kind of stunted my growth as an athlete as well.

As Rob expressed, a lack of focus can spread throughout a culture and influence the development of individual players. In comparison to Charles, Rob was unable to improve his skills as a basketball player. Charles, in contrast, understood the culture of dedication on his team and put in the extra work required to play at the next level. It is important, therefore, for a culture to

promote dedication and focus in a way that encourages players to seek continuous improvement. Dedication and focus, in conjunction with the other elements of culture described above, suggest a need to reconsider the initial operational definition of *culture* used in the current study.

Reconsidering culture. Though implicitly stated in most cases, there were four main aspects that participants believed contribute to a successful culture. Members of the team need to first have trust in all areas of the culture. In most cases, trust building was a responsibility of coaches in the form of establishing a positive climate and focusing on talent development that got the most out of players' skills. Subsequently, players are responsible for supporting one another as they compete and challenge each other to remain dedicated and focused on improvement. Thus, a revised definition would suggest that a culture should consist of *trust* among all members; *coaches* who establish that trust, as well as a positive climate and a process for developing talent; players who maintain a sense of *supportive competition*; and a specific *dedication and focus* that encourages players to work toward continuous improvement. The various elements—important in their own right—are part of an intricate web where each supports and relies on the others to create a sustainable culture.

Avoiding, Ignoring, and Minimizing Race

In addition to discussing key elements, a peculiar trend began to emerge as participants discussed the role (or lack thereof) race played in culture. Though the participants played on different teams with varying degrees of racial diversity, nearly every participant believed race was not a significant factor that impacted the culture. Instead, it was almost as if the participants and their teammates found ways to avoid, ignore, or minimize race through a variety of means.

Avoiding race. Avoiding race consisted of moments when participants actively chose not to engage in discussions with teammates about the racial dynamics on a team. Race was

something to be left alone, viewed primarily as an implicit part of the team and culture to an extent, yet was not worth a dialog. When it came to avoiding race, participants noted they and their teams implemented a variety of means. Ashton, for instance, felt a conversation about race could have merit, yet was still avoided:

> But I feel like the conversation [about race] would be very positive. I mean…it wouldn't get out of hand or anything. We'll say what we need to say. But I really feel like some people get defensive. That's why we don't talk about it that much.

Despite the belief that a conversation could have positive results, Ashton was aware of the apprehension of his teammates, and found that it was easier to simply avoid the conversation. Others, such as Charles, expressed feelings about the notion that race does not come up often in a sport setting compared to other social settings:

> So from [my teammate] being the only White guy and me being on the team with nothing but Black guys and just [him]. There was still the camaraderie and togetherness the same way it was when I was the only Black guy on my club team… We were still able to work towards that same common goal together. So I feel like there is less race clashing in sports. And that comes from working together.

Although Charles noticed the racial demographics on his team, he felt race was something that never needed to be discussed in greater detail, suggesting instead that the sport setting allowed the team to avoid any discussions and instead focus on a common goal. Avoiding race, then, appeared to be an implicit part of the culture that allowed for participants and their teammates to focus on other goals.

Ignoring race. Ignoring race consisted of moments when participants acknowledged the salience of race but would disregard it as something that did not require much additional thought.

Different from avoiding race—where participants noted the implicit role of race but actively chose not to acknowledge it in team settings—ignoring race was used as a strategy for identifying explicit examples of race in the team setting yet neglecting to talk about it. Whereas some participants and their teams found ways to avoid talking about race, at other times, participants talked about the race dynamics on a team as being "natural," or something that did not stand out for one reason or another. Lawrence, for instance, talked about the experience being the only Black player on his team:

> I would say I didn't think about it a lot because I was always the only Black student or Black kid on a team, and so just that's what it was. And so it wasn't a lot of thinking involved… It was natural, because that's how it had always been. I had never actually been in an environment after my mother moved where I wasn't the only minority on a team.

Rather than using the sport setting as a way to avoid talking about race, Lawrence instead chose not to think about it any further. The race dynamics on the team were no different than his everyday life, so in his mind there was no need to give it much attention. Other participants, however, cited tolerance and an inability to approach a conversation around race as reasons it did not come up:

> Remy: I don't think there were really any [conversations]... I mean, all the kids on the team were very tolerant, all the White kids. [My teammate of color] and I as the minorities didn't look at them any different, we all looked at each other as equals.
>
> Alex: Why do you think the team didn't really talk about it?
>
> Remy: You know, it's probably 'cause we probably didn't know how. None of the kids were probably gonna bring it up, my White teammates. Not 'cause they wouldn't

> want to. I mean, I've had separate conversations with them, with teammates, about these kind of things, about race… We never brought it up in high school. I don't know why. I would venture to say it's because no one knew how to approach it. It was so bizarre for us… I think it's more bizarre the coach didn't bring it up, or maybe it's not bizarre, but maybe he didn't know how to either. Maybe people just thought we would just sweep it under the rug. I don't know. But I don't think it was any negative intent in not bringing it up.

Remy, trying to find reasons why race never became a talking point, posited that tolerance, inexperience, and perhaps a bit of ignorance were factors in his team rarely talking about race. His team had instead constructed a culture where people were at least somewhat aware of the race dynamics yet did not talk about them—they could simply "sweep it under the rug" to be ignored. Ignoring race, in essence, was another implicit aspect of the culture for a team with diverse members. Rather than talk about race, it was simpler to push it to the side, rarely considered again yet always lingering.

Minimizing race. While some participants mentioned they and their teammates may have avoided or ignored race in different ways, others acknowledged the presence of race yet minimized its significance. Minimizing race consisted of moments when participants noted that race had some sort of role yet actively reduced its significance. Whereas avoiding and ignoring race meant acknowledging and finding ways not to address race, minimizing race instead framed it as something that essentially did not matter. Mac, for example, had this to say when asked whether race played a role on his team:

> I think to an extent. Not much, because once they got past the race issues, it was, "We are going to win," and I think there were some [White] people who had ideas when they

> found out that we [Black players] were gonna help them win. You weren't winning before like you're winning now. And then I think a lot of that was once their parents became more comfortable. They [White teammates] were very friendly in school. All you had to do was put the parent right in at the basketball game, and then it's like you got this tension. And the slow introduction like, "Why don't you ask your friend to come by the house this week?"

Mac, who lived in a segregated town and played for a desegregated school during the 1960s, acknowledged race played a role on his team but quickly noted that it was limited. Rather than becoming a primary aspect of the culture, the focus on race began to fade as the team began winning. Even parents—initially concerned about their White children playing with Black peers—appeared to shed concerns over time.

Other participants noted that race, while present, had little influence on how a team would operate. Luke, for example, talked about race in terms of playing time on his team:

> If I had to say [there were race] influences at all I'd say mostly sports was probably for the most part, positive. That gave me more of a positive reinforcement about race really. It wasn't a big deal. At the end of the day, if you could ball, you were on the court for basketball. If you couldn't ball, it don't matter if you're Black or White. You wasn't gonna play. That's just how it worked.

Whereas Mac felt race was initially salient and slowly faded over time, Luke downplayed the role of race on his team. The best players would be on the court regardless of race, which allowed Luke to believe it was not an essential aspect of the team. Minimizing race, therefore, allowed participants to notice or acknowledge the presence of race yet reduce its role to a point that it was viewed as non-influential to the culture.

Although several participants viewed race as a nonessential aspect of culture, a more careful inspection suggests an alternate result. Race indeed played a role, albeit more implicit rather than clearly stated. It would seem, based on comments from the participants, that a vital component of culture is *not giving attention to race* through tactics such as avoiding, ignoring, and minimizing. This allowed participants to acknowledge the presence of race while simultaneously believing that it had no role on their teams or as part of the culture.

A Synthesis of Team/Culture

Throughout the process of data collection and analysis I noticed that participants frequently referred to both *team* and *culture* as if the two had the same meaning. While the literature has separated these concepts into distinct aspects of organizational structure and behavior, it appeared as though the two were more difficult to separate in practice. In essence, team influences culture as culture simultaneously influences team. There is a sort of yin-yang relationship to the dynamic: neither concept can exist without the other, yet to understand one is to have some understanding of both, even if that understanding cannot be clearly articulated.

In the sections below, I demonstrate some ways in which the lines between team and culture seemed to "blur" at times. The quotes are meant to serve as examples of moments when participants were discussing one concept that could not easily be separated from the other. As the descriptions show, there were times when participants talked about team in terms of culture, whereas others talked about culture in terms of team.

Team in Terms of Culture

Describing team in terms of culture consisted of moments when participants talked about or specifically mentioned the word "team" in their discussions and definitions but used

descriptors that are more likely to be associated with *culture*, as seen below in John's description of a team environment:

> Basically what I'm just saying is that, in that basketball team environment, in that team environment, since everybody is literally on the same page, and everybody is Black, and everybody has a lot of interest, it's easier for you to motivate somebody, and uplift somebody to do something that is out of their comfort zone.

Although John is referring to the *team* environment, it appears as if he is actually describing the *culture*. Particularly, his description of motivation and uplift more closely align with the revised definition of culture presented above rather than the concept of team (see "Descriptions of Terms" in Chapter One).

John's use of the word "team" to describe something that more closely relates to culture was just one example of a "blurring of the lines" between the two concepts. Dexter, for example, described what it meant to be part of a team that he felt did not fully accept him:

> I would say I felt like I had a point to prove… So I kinda always played with a chip on my shoulder… I kinda played with people who didn't really uplift you, maybe it was because I wasn't close with them, but I know that one of the beautiful things about sports is your confidence shows in, it manifests itself in a lot of different areas on the court, whether that be your jump shot, to your dribbling, your trust in your teammates. When your teammates have your back and you have theirs, it's a little bit different and we just never got to that level when I was in high school.

In his description of the team, Dexter addressed his (lacking) process of integration and socialization that are essential components of a culture. Rather than discussing tasks and roles, Dexter instead focused on the feelings of trust, acceptance, and support. In both cases for John

and Dexter, the team experience was heavily dictated by the culture, thereby demonstrating the difficulty of separating the two.

Culture in Terms of Team

Just as some participants had difficulty clearly articulating their idea of *team* without referencing elements of *culture*, others provided an inverse explanation. Describing culture in terms of team consisted of moments when participants discussed conflict that implicitly or explicitly related to certain aspect of *team*. Chris, for example, detailed the ways in which an emphasis on individual roles can potentially lead to the erosion of the culture:

> I think it kind of put a divide in the team, because you have some people, the younger guys who are trying to make a name for themselves, who are trying to show that they belong, but then you have older people who all they wanna do is win. So winning and going after yours always... Most of the time, it led to conflict, because team ball is normally going to suppress your numbers a little bit. So yes, I believe that it interrupted the team dynamic.

Based on Chris's description, having defined roles means little if people try to step outside them. Individuals who are not committed to playing "team ball" have the potential to negatively influence the culture and create conflict.

As an example of the tension Chris was referring to, Charles found that his experience of the culture changed once his individual role and the team goals became more clearly defined:

> But like that [out-of-place feeling] dwindled out as the season started, because I was the leading scorer on the team. My point to shot ratio was plus 300 and something. They couldn't argue with my stats. You know what I mean? I was the leading scorer as a

freshman on the sophomore team. I was like top two in rebounds. I was up there in assists and all that.

In this case, Charles was initially socialized into a culture that made him feel out of place. It wasn't until his role within the team was more clearly defined that he began to see a change in the way he was received by teammates. In essence, determining roles and setting goals—each a central component of a team—can influence a person's experience and further muddy the waters between team and culture.

Interdependence Between Team/Culture

As noted in the sections above, participants could not always separate the concepts of team and culture with ease. The two could not exist separately, and instead depended on and informed one another to influence the experiences of the different participants. A more explicit example of this dependence can be seen in the exchange below:

Lance: I guess our season wasn't as good this year.

Alex: Why do you say that?

Lance: 'Cause we were... We only won like half our games.

Alex: What did that do for the team relations? How did people engage with one another?

Lance: I felt like the relations got better, 'cause our season started off really bad, but it got better... We lost the first half and then won most of the second half.

Alex: What are some things you saw that maybe started to get better from that first half to the second half?

Lance: I guess we started playing more like a team.

While Lance did not explicitly explain what it meant to "play like a team," the implication is that doing so led to an improved culture when the team started winning and meeting goals. Rob

detailed a similar experience, one that was marked by an apparent lack of culture except for when addressing team goals and objectives. For example, he noted that team goals were the primary driver of his interactions, describing an absence of culture and relationships with teammates:

> I'm only around these people because we share a common interest in basketball. But outside of that, we would never interact. And it wasn't like that common interest brought us closer. Well I guess it brought us closer in terms of we had a common interest, a common goal and a common purpose. But outside of that, it wasn't anything that was really bonding us together. For me at least.

Being part of a team held little significance for Rob because the culture did not promote relationship building, trust, or supportive competition. For both Lance and Rob, the *culture* was influenced by whether or not the *team* goals were achieved. Those shared goals—a central aspect of a team—became the primary drivers for creating a bond within the group. Yet, a stronger culture in each case may have overcome the challenges of not meeting team goals. Thus, culture and team appeared interwoven in different ways; each is dependent upon and influenced by the other.

Role of Race

The third set of themes addresses RQ_2: How do Black/African American players on a high school boys' basketball team understand and conceptualize the role of race in their experiences? Upon completion of analysis, three primary themes emerged: (a) choosing basketball, (b) basketball (and other sports) stereotypes, and (c) comparing Black and White players in basketball.

Choosing Basketball

The participants provided various reasons and justifications for choosing to play basketball. Some of the discussions were implicitly tied to race, particularly when addressing basketball as "a way out" of a poor situation or its accessibility. More explicit connections included topics like access and connecting with family, as well as the chance to see an area of Black success. In the sections below, I describe four motivating factors that played a role in the participants choosing basketball: (a) a way out, (b) access, (c) family, and (d) visibility.

A way out. One of the reasons participants chose to play basketball was seeing it as some sort of means to a different life experience. Basketball was seen as "a way out" or something that can provide additional opportunities beyond high school. Whether the opportunity was college or professional endeavors, participants felt basketball was one potential avenue to follow. John, in particular, felt playing basketball provided a certain sense of control to construct a future plan:

> So basketball I say is like... It must be a symbol of like everything that goes on with life, and for me, the person with the basketball in their hand has ultimate control over whatever they want to go through. So, basketball in your hand is just like a pencil in your hand, something like that.

John viewed basketball as something that a young (Black) man could use to construct his own future. There was no greater moment of control than holding the basketball. For others, like Charles, the devastation of seeing it all come to an end was never clearer than after a season-ending loss:

> One of the guys on the team... I remember we lost and I was like, I was heartbroken, but then I remember [he] was going like crazy. And he was punching lockers and kicking stuff. And he was like mad and crying at the same time. Like everybody was trying to tell

> him it's gonna be okay. And I remember he was saying like, "No, it's not gonna be okay!" He was like, "This was it! Niggas like me ain't going to college!" He was like, "I ain't got shit else to do after this!" That shit stuck with me.

As Charles detailed, his teammate felt basketball was the only way out of his current situation. In the teammate's mind, a particular segment of young Black men "like him" have few alternatives to obtain a college education. Whereas John saw basketball as equivalent to more "academic" pursuits—a pencil in hand and the ability to use that for success, for example—Charles's teammate could not see another option. Basketball, in this sense, was a strong motivating factor for choosing to play in the first place and was, at least for some, "a way out" of their current situations.

Access. More than presenting a way to change their life circumstances, participants chose to play basketball for other reasons. In some cases, they talked about playing basketball due to an ease of access. Rather than needing to find space in a community for other sports, basketball requires simpler needs, as Jerome articulated:

> I think the reason [basketball] is considered a Black sport is because it's really easy to put up a blacktop and two rims in a poor neighborhood and kids will be out there playing basketball for hours. Plus you see more people that look like you in the sport. You look at baseball, you don't see many of us. If you look at hockey, you don't see many of us... But if you look at those sports, it's not a lot of access to it in the community where it's predominantly Black. So I think it's access that will determine what the predominant demographic is in the sport.

According to Jerome, the lack of resources for other sports resulted in a higher proportion of people choosing to play basketball. It was easier to build a basketball court, which provided

greater access in his community. In addition to physical spaces to play basketball, some participants discussed accessibility in terms of equipment needs. Luke, for example, shared a similar sentiment about the ease of finding a place to play:

> I always liked the competition of hoops and it was something that you could always play like whether you had money or not, you didn't need a racket like tennis or clubs like golf and even baseball. They're kind of expensive when you get into bats and everything else, but really basketball was one of those sports that I don't wanna say inner city kids, but where I grew up, all you needed was a ball so it didn't cost anything. We could walk down the street and play.

As Jerome and Luke stated, basketball is a sport that is easier to access compared to others. It didn't matter what the participants and their families had in terms of money for equipment. All they needed was "a blacktop and two rims."

Family. While some participants discussed future opportunities and the ease of access as reasons for playing basketball, others talked about different connections with family. Rob, for example, wanted to be like his father:

> My dad was a Bulls fanatic. And we grew up in the Jordan era. So I wasn't really old enough to comprehend Michael Jordan and the Bulls dynasty. But if he was going crazy, I was going crazy... You see what you are exposed to. So he was going crazy. I was going crazy. He was playing basketball. I want to play basketball. You know, my friends played basketball. I wanted to play more basketball. So that's how I got involved in it.

Though he was too young to fully understand the significance of Michael Jordan at the time, Rob's desire to emulate his father played a role in his decision to play basketball. Much like Rob wanted to follow his dad, Luke followed his siblings to the hardwood:

> I have an older brother and an older sister, and I'll be honest, from the time I can remember, I've always played basketball. They both played basketball. When we moved here, they started at the Y[MCA] same as me, in the instructional league, and then I just played all through elementary at the Y and at the elementary school and then at the middle school and played AAU in the summer, pretty much spring and summer, so I kinda played basketball year round... I just always played basketball. I guess it was kind of our family's thing.

For both Rob and Luke, basketball was more than just a game to be played. It was more than something easy to access. However, the very access they had meant basketball was more than a simple game. It was a way to connect with family.

Visibility. Beyond access and connecting with family, some participants chose to play basketball for a different reason: visibility. Basketball was the sport they saw the most, so it made for a natural fit. For example, Chris talked about choosing basketball over other sports like tennis or baseball:

> Cause I guess maybe looking back, I probably did see on TV, more basketball, which probably may have influenced my decision. I'm not sure had I played tennis and baseball that I would have chosen... I don't know. It might have been something different, but I think maybe seeing NBA and college on TV all the time, maybe it influenced me to push me towards basketball.

For Chris, the sheer visibility of basketball was a partial motivating factor to play. It was something he saw often, and he wanted to participate as well. For others, watching basketball was one place they saw people who looked like them. Charles, for instance, described the people he saw on the television screens and the success they were enjoying:

> I think a large part of it is where we've seen more Black success. So like there's tons of Black players in the NBA, right? And everybody knows they make a lot of money being in the NBA. So when you see a lot of Black people in that position making a lot of money doing it. As a Black person you think, "Oh, that's something I can do…" It's like more so not trying to recreate the wheel than just trying to stay within the lane that's already been or the path that's already been laid.

For Charles, seeing Black success was important, because he was able to observe a model that worked for others. Like Chris, the visible nature of basketball gave Charles a desire to play. The visibility of basketball, and the Black faces participants saw, provided motivation to pursue it. However, visibility was just one reason some participants chose to play basketball.

In their discussions of choosing to play basketball, the participants noted four specific motivating factors. For some, basketball was a potential avenue to a different life experience. The accessibility of basketball also played a role for some participants, since all they needed was a court and a ball. Family was an additional motivating factor, as some participants noted the connections their respective families had to the sport. Moreover, the visibility of basketball allowed participants to develop an appreciation for the game, whether it was due to long-term viewing or witnessing Black success. No matter the specific motivating factor, choosing basketball involved more than just playing a game.

Basketball (and Other Sports) Stereotypes

Over the course of the interviews, the participants noted several sport stereotypes that were implicitly or explicitly related to race. In some cases, participants discussed stereotypes in a general sense, choosing to focus on sport as a whole. At other times participants talked about racial stereotypes that are specific to basketball. I provide additional descriptions and examples

in the sections below about these two sub-themes: (a) general sport stereotypes and (b) basketball-specific stereotypes.

General sport stereotypes. When talking about the role of race in sport, participants often referred to various stereotypes. In particular, some participants addressed their feeling that Black people prioritize sport over education. For example, Dexter said, "Just that's what we do. School is not a priority, sports is our priority, sports that we can access easily." Lawrence shared a similar sentiment, but provided a more elaborate explanation:

> My opinion is that I feel like that unfortunately, within the Black community, there's too high of an emphasis placed on sports as being the way out, the way to be successful, to have a high income. And maybe we should just place more emphasis on academics or other avenues to get out of our unique individual situations. And that sports does have the power to break barriers between groups of people because it gives people commonalities, but I think that is unhealthy for minorities to place too much emphasis on that sport, neglecting other avenues that can also get you the same success.

Dexter and Lawrence both expressed concern that some Black people place a disproportionate emphasis on sport as a means to success. In this case, it would appear as though the stereotype they are referring to prevented some people from exploring alternate avenues for success.

While some participants focused on stereotypes in terms of prioritizing sport, others addressed the likelihood of different racial groups to play specific sports. Charles, for example, noted the levels of athleticism and skill required in different sports:

> In sports in general, I feel like Black people dominate the physical sports and White people dominate the more skilled sports. So like hockey, like skating is definitely a skill and being able to see the puck and move it is not as much about running and

> jumping as football or basketball or even track. And in baseball, baseball it's a real skill to be able to hit a ball that's moving 90 plus miles per hour... If you can't develop that skill but you can develop enough skill, especially like football, being physically stronger and quicker… There's more an advantage in that sport, than it is in other sports... That's just how the cookie crumbles, per se, between Black and White people. And that's because Black people on average are more athletic than White people.

For Charles, the reason Black and White athletes choose different sports was as simple as athleticism versus skill. Others, such as Chris, provided an alternate perspective:

> Basketball and football are Black-dominated and just most of us watch that most of the time. I just think that where we just care more about those sports because that's what most of us play, that's what most of us see our peers playing on TV. It's just in our face most of the time... Just put it against tennis. Tennis is on ESPN, basically, four times a year for four grand slams. But you don't really hear about tennis other than that, but every day we hear something about the NFL or the NBA, and just those are predominantly Black sports, and so we just care about those more.

Whereas Charles felt different racial groups choose sports based on athleticism and skill, Chris attributed the choice to exposure. Because there are higher numbers of Black athletes in basketball and football, those sports are particularly appealing. Regardless of the reason, it would appear as though Charles and Chris are suggesting a predisposition for different racial groups to participate in certain sports. As a result, those different sports are more likely to be associated with one group in particular.

Basketball-specific stereotypes. In addition to various stereotypes in sport overall, participants mentioned stereotypes that are specific to basketball. In most cases, the stereotypes tended to focus on a difference in physical abilities between races. John, for example, touched on an age-old notion:

> So for basketball race plays a big part. Like the movie *White Men Can't Jump*... As far as that, just a stereotype that White people can't jump high. That's not true, but you know what I'm saying? Because there's so many Black people and you're seeing all these Black faces doing amazing dunks.

Although John did not agree with this particular stereotype, he was well aware of its prevalence—so strong that it was used as the title for a Hollywood movie. Other participants, such as Mac, addressed the stereotypes that tend to be associated with Black basketball players in terms of physical abilities:

> Not [much] that I can recall, except in terms of things like, "Why do you black guys run so fast?" Or, "Why do you black guys jump so high?" The people that they had came into contact with, all of a sudden they're noticing these differences, "They can out jump us, they can run faster than us, they can dribble better, they can do more fancy stuff than we do." That would probably have been the content.

In many cases, the basketball-specific stereotypes gave particular attention to differences in physical abilities, as John and Mac both noted. The prevalence of such stereotypes is something that participants were aware of, and in some cases, attempted to refute. Nevertheless, the different stereotypes have been so deeply engrained in the sport of basketball that they play a role in how players of different races are viewed and compared.

Comparing Black and White Players in Basketball

Beyond discussing various racialized sport stereotypes, some participants gave specific attention to comparing Black and White players in basketball. The participants drew comparisons in multiple ways. Some conversations centered on general stereotypes of Black and White players. In other cases, participants talked about the ways players of different races are "expected" to play. An additional point of comparison focused on the experience of playing against predominantly Black teams in contrast to playing predominantly White teams. In the sections below, I describe three sub-themes of comparing Black and White players in basketball: (a) expectations, (b) playing style, and (c) Black vs. White teams.

Expectations. One point of distinction between Black and White players, as described by participants, centered on the "expectations" for each group. Specifically, Dexter discussed the stereotype that Black people are expected to play basketball simply because of their race:

> I know that when I was coming up, especially in high school, playing soccer and sometimes playing soccer on a team that was all White, that was the one thing that stood out to me was that sometimes players on the opposing team would say, "Why are you playing soccer? You should be playing basketball." And I didn't know whether that had more to do with my height or my skin color, and I wanna believe that it had something to do with both. But I do think that it's expected of Black people to be able to play basketball, just like if you're running a scrimmage, I feel like if there was a White person or a Black person, the Black person would probably get picked first if they were the same height and had the same build, just 'cause that's expected is that the Black person plays basketball, 'cause he's Black.

As Dexter detailed, there was an implicit “expectation” that Black people play basketball. Even when playing a different sport, the various racial stereotypes lead others to believe Black athletes should play basketball.

In addition to the expectation of playing basketball, some participants talked about the potential dangers when labeling players based on race. Chris, for example, addressed the notion that White players are expected to be “shooters” in basketball:

> So there's this one article that sticks out in my mind when you asked that question… I wanna say it was written by a White guy... He was basically saying that from a young age, the "White kid" was labeled as a shooter so, therefore, he never worked on the rest of his game, which handicapped him in the long run, which that normally doesn't happen with Black kids, so to speak. They just let them go out there, play, figure out their game, and such and such... So, once you've been labeled such and such, the kid's like, "Oh well, I can only do this or I can only do that." And they kinda stop working on the rest of their stuff, which hinders them as a basketball player.

Dexter and Chris each described different “expectations” of basketball players that are based in racial stereotypes. For Dexter, his height and race led others to suggest he should play basketball instead of soccer. As Chris described, being labeled based on race could potentially impact the experience of a White or Black player. Simply being aware of the various “expectations” makes race particularly salient, potentially influencing a player’s overall experiences.

Playing style. In addition to expectations of Black and White players, participants discussed racial stereotypes in basketball in terms of a difference in playing style. Lance, for instance, talked about his understanding of the different playing styles—noting the stereotypical nature of the discussion—in the exchange below:

Lance: I guess [people] expect different styles of play, because I guess Black people play different from White people.

Alex: Can you tell me about some of those differences that you see?

Lance: I guess it's mostly stereotypical, but most people say White people are shooters and Black people are usually defense and they're trying to full court press and steal the ball and stuff.

According to Lance, the labels associated with each group often lead others to anticipate a particular playing style: Black players are likely to be associated with a more aggressive style, whereas White players take a different approach. Though Lance's interpretation of playing styles was more of a general assessment, other participants provided specific examples. Rob, for example, talked about differences he noticed while playing:

I guess it was a little different. Because just style of play. Black people are more flashy. Have less fundamentals. Not that that's a bad thing necessarily. But playing with White people, they are a lot more fundamental. They are a lot more precise.

As Lance and Rob described, a particular style of play is often related to some sort of racial stereotype. The perceived difference in playing style may also lead to different experiences when playing a team that is predominantly Black compared to one that is predominantly White.

Black vs. White teams. The third point of comparison between Black and White players focused on different experiences of playing against teams that were either predominantly Black or White. More than stereotypes of playing styles, however, participants discussed their *experiences* playing against teams of different races. Ashton, in particular, noticed how his White teammates acted when playing against a Black or White team:

> I really feel like some of my teammates that are White have a fear of playing against "hood," well I wouldn't say "hood" but urban or low-income players or areas. So for example, some of our teammates, they fear that the Black kids will just get out there and beat all up on us… I really feel like they are grimy and they are like scrappy and stuff, and they're like very together. But some of my teammates get scared of that. And we're like, "No, don't be scared. You don't have anything to worry about. They're just going out to play basketball, just how we are." Now say, if there's a White player it's calmer because they don't come out with the same aggression. Some do, but they don't come out with the same eagerness, like go after what they need to do.

As Ashton described, his White teammates displayed distinct feelings and emotions when playing against Black teams that were seemingly nonexistent against White teams. He tried to assuage their concerns by reminding them that there was no need to fear any particular opponent because of race. All the other team wanted to do was simply play a game.

While Ashton detailed the observations of his teammates, other participants discussed their personal experiences playing teams of different races. Charles, for example, gave a detailed explanation of playing against a predominantly White team compared to a predominantly Black team:

> The White teams were more standard across the board, if that makes sense... They would all be big football players and would all move slow and would all not be that good, or they would be like basketball players more, say and all be able to hoop a little bit. Not necessarily be great, but be good basketball players… They could hoop, but they weren't what we consider hoopers... So, with the predominantly Black teams, there was more hoopers and then it just came about, you know what I'm saying, identifying like, "Oh,

he's really good but he can't go to his left…" It became more of a chess match... 'Cause the Black teams were more physically the same.

For Charles, some White players had basketball ability ("they could hoop") but did not match his expectations of what it meant to be *great* at basketball ("they weren't what we consider hoopers"). As a result, playing teams of different races meant giving particular attention to differences in strategy. The perceived difference in athleticism and ability resulted in games that presented separate challenges. For both Ashton and Charles, playing against a team that was predominantly Black or White led to a noticeable difference in the way their respective teams approached each opponent. The common thought was that predominantly Black teams would present a greater challenge compared to predominantly White teams.

When talking about Black and White players in basketball, the participants addressed three specific differences. Some players are expected to maintain a certain role on a team, and others are simply expected to play without restrictions. Participants also noted a difference in playing style between White and Black players. When describing the experience of playing teams of different races, participants noted a difference in the way teammates reacted, as well as the challenge each team presented. In short, the ways Black and White players are stereotyped in the sport of basketball can result in different "expectations" that lead to different playing styles and require separate strategies.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I discussed the research questions of the current study and the corresponding themes that emerged. I examined how the participants understood and conceptualized *team* and *culture.* I then provided a description of the trouble participants demonstrated in describing these concepts, and suggested they are more difficult to separate in

practice in comparison to the literature. Finally, I provided my interpretation of the ways race played a role in the basketball experiences of the participants. In the next chapter, I draw from the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter Two to discuss the meaning and significance of these findings.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I discuss the meanings of the themes described in Chapter Four. It is important to note, however, that the meanings and descriptions below are not meant to represent a singular interpretation of the experiences for all of the participants. Indeed, each participant's experience was likely influenced by differences in age, geography, years of experience with their respective teams, and the historical context of their playing careers. As such, it is not my intention to discuss the findings as incontrovertible truth, particularly when recounting the experiences of an individual participant. Rather, I provide individual instances in some cases as representative exemplars to present an interpretation of the participants' common descriptions of their experiences that is grounded in previous literature and the theoretical framework presented in Chapter Two. I have organized the discussion to follow a similar structure as the previous chapter. I first address the ways participants understood and conceptualized the concepts of *team* and *culture*. Following this description, I provide an explanation for participants' difficulty in articulating differences between the two and suggest a potential remedy to synthesize these concepts. I then explain the role of race in the participants' basketball experiences.

Conceptualizing and Understanding Team

Most American sport organizations at various levels of competition can be referred to as "teams," with the exception of professional sport organizations, which may be referred to as "franchises" or "clubs" in other contexts. Approaching this topic from a research perspective, however, required a deeper exploration to better understand the concept of *team* in an abstract sense—the key elements, as well as what it means to be part of a team. To consider how the participants conceptualized and understood *team*, it is important to restate the operational definition employed in the current study: self-managing and diverse (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019;

Rock & Grant, 2016), with clearly defined roles (Mumford et al., 2008)—both task and social (Carron & Brawley, 2000)—for an indeterminate number of members with specific skill sets (Gratton & Erickson, 2007), who interdependently strive to complete work-related tasks and goals (Nahavandi et al., 2015), while holding each other accountable to promote cohesion and reduce social loafing (Beal et al., 2003; Horn et al., 2012; Jowett et al., 2012; Mach et al., 2010; Liden et al., 2004). In the sections below, I discuss how this operational definition aligned with the key elements of a team described by the participants, as well as what it meant for a team to feel like a family or brotherhood.

Identifying Elements of a Team

Participants displayed the ability to identify some of the key elements of a team—setting goals, defining roles, and building cohesion—with relative ease. Though they did not necessarily identify the primary aspects using the same language as the definition above, their descriptions suggest they were able to conceptualize *team* in their own way that is similar to, yet distinct from, definitions provided in the literature. Indeed, sports organizations at many levels are referred to simply as a "team." As such, it is not surprising that participants could identify key aspects since they would have likely been able to observe elements of a team before playing on one. A point of significance, however, is that participants appeared to view some of the key elements in a way that differed from descriptions in the literature.

Participants frequently noted that winning was a goal of their respective teams, though they did not discuss how that goal was established. One potential reason for this is that a team often refers to a group of people brought together to work toward accomplishing a specific task (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015). Though winning might often be discussed as an explicit goal—through conversations with coaches and teammates about upcoming

opponents, for example—none of the participants described how they *knew* the goal was to win. It would appear as though winning was an implicit goal that is best understood simply through participation in sports. As the participants described, placing winning over everything else allowed their teams to focus on a singular goal, thereby providing opportunities to give attention to other aspects of the team, such as specific roles.

When discussing roles, participants often discussed them in terms of task-oriented roles. It was apparent that it was important for each player to understand his role and accept it. If someone had difficulty with their personal involvement, it could potentially influence their experience and perception of team cohesion. Indeed, a team's collective efficacy—the confidence to successfully perform specific tasks (Jowett et al., 2012)—was related to players accepting their roles. Rob, for example, was not initially pleased with his role and felt cohesion was lacking. Mac, however, embraced his role as a defender, which he believed positively contributed to team cohesion. It is important, therefore, that the task-oriented roles each team member is given are clearly explained so players can be informed enough to accept them.

When a player feels devalued in his role, it could threaten cohesion and result in social loafing (Linden et al., 2004; MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). In contrast, clearly defining roles for each team member informs them about what they will be expected to do, and allows them to play with fewer expectations in some cases. Using Rob's example again, it was apparent that social loafing became part of his experience. He never said anything to suggest he was lazy; rather, he expressed dissatisfaction with his role and questioned the significance of his contributions to his team—a key indicator of social loafing (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). Had his role been more clearly defined, he may have had a different perspective and experience. Clearly defining roles is also a key component of the socialization process of a team.

Socialization—the process by which new members are introduced to the team and assume their role (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019)—is an important team construct, as a player's experience can be influenced by the way he was socialized into a team. Proper socialization can help new members better understand other constructs of a team, such as roles, different personalities, motivating factors, and leadership styles. The socialization process is also related to collective efficacy and promoting cohesion between team members (Jowett et al., 2014). Rob's experience, for example, demonstrated the need for a team to develop an effective process of socialization.

Rob wanted a specific type of leadership—in his case, coaching style—that was more involved in some areas and pushed him to be a better player. He did not feel his mastery was challenged, and his maturation and sport intelligence were "stunted" as a result, something Burgess and Naughton (2010) argued is potentially damaging for a player's development. This supports previous findings that suggest a need for players—especially at the high school level—to feel they have received the proper support and attention in a way that motivates and encourages them to master certain skills (Amorose et al., 2016; Eys et al., 2013; Horn et al., 2012). Likewise, a lack of confidence in other members of the team could negatively influence the collective efficacy and cohesion, which might lead players to leave the team (Jowett et al., 2012). As such, the need to design an effective process of socialization can best be understood through Rob's experience. Feeling displeased with the socialization, roles, and collective efficacy, Rob left his team after one year. Additionally, his experience highlights the importance of the final key element of a team: cohesion.

When describing how they developed cohesion—including the various task and social elements (Carron & Brawley, 2000)—participants discussed the importance of preserving it both

on and off the court through. Their descriptions suggested an understanding that increased cohesion was a significant contributing factor of team effectiveness and success (Beal et al., 2003; Mach et al., 2010; MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015). On-court cohesion was related to specific tasks, achieving goals, and understanding roles so the team could operate at an optimal level. In contrast, off-court cohesion was primarily spent building relationships. By focusing on cohesion in both areas, participants were often able to improve their feelings of personal involvement on the team and interactions with teammates (Horn et al., 2012; Jowett et al., 2012). In many cases, cohesion—in addition to setting goals and understanding roles—was so strong that participants felt they were part of something greater than a team.

More Than a Team

The participants demonstrated an awareness of the key elements of a team, though they sometimes described it in different terms—something similar to a "family" or "brotherhood." The idea that a team is a family implies a unique experience influenced by the sport context. Another way to interpret the "family" or "brotherhood" labels is with respect to trust and cohesion. The participants and their teammates trusted one another enough that they were able to develop strong cohesion, which resulted in family-type relationships and allowed them to work cooperatively toward various goals (Mach et al., 2010). Unbeknownst to them, the various sociological, psychological, and communication constructs likely played a role in the team feeling like a family.

Participants rarely, if ever, described moments when they learned the sociological, psychological, and communication constructs of a team. However, their interpretation of team as a family or brotherhood suggests these were all positive to some extent. They were able to construct and maintain a particular camaraderie that encouraged them to form emotional

connections, build a collective identity, and establish a sense of belonging that strengthened the overall culture (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Yaeger, 2016). The "family" and "brotherhood" monikers can also be interpreted as the participants' expression of a collective efficacy and cohesion among team members (Jowett et al., 2012). As a result, participants and their teammates were able to navigate and manage differences in personality, which promoted a supportive motivational climate that allowed the team to remain cohesive, "through thick and thin" as Ashton said.

The participants' ability to develop a family-like atmosphere within their teams also suggests they were able to effectively manage different barriers to participation. By emphasizing trust and support, participants and their teammates were able to develop a motivational climate with the potential to increase cohesion and performance (Eys et al., 2013; Horn et al., 2012). Trust and cohesion were so strong that, as participants described, their teams became an additional place of support where they could care for one another and encourage teammates to perform at a higher level. This reinforces the notion that receiving support from multiple sources can result in higher levels of motivation for high school athletes (Amorose et al., 2016). In short, confronting the different barriers to participation resulted in improved cohesion, which led to increased trust among teammates, to the point that they began to feel like a family. This family feeling likely contributed to the way participants understood and experienced the culture on their respective teams.

Conceptualizing and Understanding Culture

Whereas defining and conceptualizing a team in the sport context is rather simple on the surface, effectively describing a culture is a bit more complex; it often requires spending some amount of time in a particular setting to truly understand the culture. To consider how the

participants conceptualized and understood *culture*, it is important to restate the operational definition employed in the current study: a clearly articulated system of values and beliefs (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015); a process of integrating and teaching new members in which espoused and experienced values remain congruent (Dolan & Garcia, 2002; Hamm et al., 2008); and supportive team leaders who endorse a task-oriented motivational climate that promotes trust, cohesion, and performance (Eys et al., 2013; Horn et al., 2012; Mach et al., 2010; Vincer & Loughead, 2010). In the sections below, I discuss how this operational definition aligned with participants' descriptions of the key elements of culture, as well as the way race was understood as part of culture.

Identifying Elements of Culture

Participants rarely, if ever, mentioned that they were explicitly told which values, beliefs, and basic assumptions were essential parts of culture. They often talked about their understandings, but did not speak to whether or how they were given information that was clearly articulated, perhaps signifying an "ideal" characteristic of culture. In contrast, a more "practical" description might state that a culture is articulated and experienced *through various means*. One reason for this suggested change is that a strong understanding of values, beliefs, and assumptions sometimes requires becoming part of an organization or team to experience and learn a culture that has been constructed and developed over time (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015). For example, participants' descriptions suggested trust and supportive competition were more readily identifiable once they became members of the team. Leadership and motivation, in contrast, were discussed in relatively explicit terms, suggesting some elements of a culture are easier to identify than others. In essence, the participants' descriptions suggest

culture is not always "clearly articulated," as they were able to identify some explicit key elements, though other implicit aspects required different strategies to learn and understand.

Although some aspects of culture may be easier to identify than others, one thing that remained constant was the role of leaders who were expected to demonstrate the values and beliefs that are inherent to a culture. By developing different cultures that promoted supportive competition, participants' descriptions suggested they and their teammates followed a democratic leadership style that incorporated collaboration with other members, training and instruction, and social support (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Vincer & Loughead, 2010). Likewise, the participants suggested it is important that coaches fill their own leadership roles through developing a positive climate and giving attention to talent development. Maintaining these elements aided the participants who received them and helped to ensure their experiences remained congruent with the espoused values (Hamm et al., 2008)—even when said values were implicitly communicated—and encouraged them to further immerse themselves within the culture. Leadership, both from a player and coach perspective, was thus an important aspect of culture that correlated with the development and strengthening of other primary components.

In most cases, it appeared team leaders—consciously or not—were able to successfully implement the management by values (MBV) approach to simplify, guide, and ensure member commitment to the culture (Dolan & Garcia, 2002). Coaches, specifically, were able to effectively manage values regarding motivational climate and talent development—important aspects of the MBV strategic plan that can result in a competitive advantage for sports organizations (Bell-Laroche et al., 2014; Kerwin et al., 2014). As such, coaches may have been the single most important element of a culture, for they must ensure all the other aspects align. Participants described that coaches established culture through both explicit and implicit means,

which allowed the best players to adopt a democratic style of leadership to motivate teammates in a way that upholds the important values, beliefs, and basic assumptions. Coaches are also responsible for constructing a culture that provides space to address difficult topics such as race.

Race and Culture

Though many participants argued race played little to no role in their respective team experiences, their descriptions suggested an alternate interpretation. Race did indeed play a role, though it may not have always been particularly salient. As noted in the previous chapter, an implicit part of culture—as descried by the participants—is perhaps *not giving attention to race*. This practice and way of thinking about culture is consistent with the notion that people consider sport a color-blind, apolitical, and meritocratic space (Carrington, 2010; Smith, 2009), and aligns with a primary tenet of critical race theory (CRT)—the "ordinary" nature of race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The participants' collective tendency to push race to the side suggests they felt there was little need to discuss it. Their explanations suggest they justified not talking about race as a part of the culture, because it was viewed as ordinary.

Considering race as an "ordinary" part of a culture and subsequently giving it little attention is also consistent with the frames of colorblind-racism (CBR). Specifically, the participants' explanations suggest their practices and beliefs aligned with the *naturalization* frame (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Naturalization—often used by Whites to explain away racial situations—allowed participants to articulate the lack of race talks as a "natural" part of the culture. As Lawrence described, it was often "natural" for him to be the only Black person in an environment. Even when race appeared to manifest in different ways—for example, the "defining moment" in which the coach made him, the only Black player on the team, cut his hair—Lawrence still seemed compelled to attribute his experiences to something unrelated to

race, perhaps due to a desire to see racialized matters as something "ordinary" and the expectations of needing to remain color-blind as part of the culture. His repeated experiences led him to believe race did not require attention in the team setting, because it was no different than his everyday life.

A second example of the "ordinary" and "natural" status of race in basketball was John's description of his team as a "Black space." His statement that "everybody was Black" suggests that race was indeed salient in the team setting. However, because the team was a "Black space" in a sport that is racialized as Black, race could go unspoken. Though John's description differs from Lawrence's experience of feeling singled-out as the only Black player on his team, the two are nonetheless related. As the participants' descriptions suggested, their perceived "ordinariness" of race allowed it to exist in a noticeable and recognizable way without being addressed because it was a "natural" part of the culture not to give it much attention (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Bonilla-Silva, 2018). In other words, they were "color-blinded" by their sport participation.

In addition to viewing race as ordinary and natural, the participants' descriptions tended to align with the *minimization* frame of CBR. A complementary component to constructing a culture that does not give attention to race is the practice of minimizing its significance. Minimization is often used to suggest discrimination is no longer a factor in the lives of racial minorities by defining racism and discrimination as overt acts and comments that are directly and noticeably related to race (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Rankin-Wright et al., 2016). A prominent example was Luke suggesting that race played no role in who received the most playing time. He instead credited ability as the sole determining factor in the equation: "if you could ball you were on the court." Luke's explanation is an example of the dominance of color-blindness as an

ideology that is part of the fabric of modern American society (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). While most coaches likely strive to give the best players the most playing time, their decisions about who is the "best" are influenced by a multitude of factors. Nevertheless, Luke's description of race in the team setting is consistent with other findings that suggest sport is viewed as a "raceless" space because of the metrics used to determine playing time and the presence of people of color (Bimper, 2015; Carrington, 2010; Deeb & Love, 2018; Rankin-Wright et al., 2016; Smith, 2009). Though Luke's description of playing time was but one example, the participants' descriptions generally suggested minimizing race and racism was a critical component of culture—one that leads people to believe sport remains color-blind.

The propensity for participants to describe race as something natural and ordinary that had little to no influence on culture for their respective teams supports the notion that CBR is the dominant racial ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Though the frames are most likely to be used by Whites to articulate reasons why they are not racist, the findings of the current study suggest that people of color can ascribe to a similar way of thinking about race. Blacks may not use the frames of CBR in the same ways as Whites, yet both groups remain connected in the ways they think about race. The effectiveness of CBR is thus established by providing strategies to organize and rationalize racial differences (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Indeed, color-blind racism—as the dominant racial ideology in America—has granted Whites the power to dictate and frame discussions about race as something else, even when the explanations come from people of color.

Sport, despite the notion that it is an apolitical space, is no exception. The primary frames of CBR are so dominant that people have managed to work them into their conversations about race, which at times can result in a culture—as described by the participants—that does not give attention to race and is instead protected by color-blindness. Even when issues of race became

salient and were acknowledged, the participants' explanations suggest they instead chose to view their experiences of culture as anything but racial. Such a view is potentially problematic as choosing not to see race in sport allows others to (incorrectly) view it as apolitical, meritocratic, and a place where all people are equal, thereby reducing the impact of using sport as a space for political revolution (Carrington, 2010).

In addition to a reduced impact as an area for political revolution, adopting the color-blind ideology to view sport as a racial equalizer provides space for the "new racism" to thrive. Failing to address issues of race in sport gives power to new racism in that the subtle, institutional, and *seemingly* nonracial structures remain unchallenged (Alexander, 2012; Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Collins, 2004; Ferber, 2007; King et al., 2007; Leonard, 2017). Thus, sport—when viewed through a color-blind ideology that does not give attention to race and racial inequality—potentially perpetuates this new racism and the associated racial hierarchy that largely remains invisible, thereby allowing people to believe discrimination no longer occurs and instead attribute social differences to individual choices and personal failings (Alexander, 2012; Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Collins, 2004; Feagin, 2013; Ferber, 2007). As such, any racial inequalities will likely continue, hidden beneath the surface; rarely acknowledged, yet always present as part of the new racism that subtly disadvantages many people of color. It is important, therefore, that a culture includes regular discussions about race, even when it has not become salient—on all teams, not just those that are racially diverse—to break the cycle of color-blindness in sport.

The Sport Synthesis of Team and Culture

While thinking about the difficulty participants showed in stating the differences between *team* and *culture*, I began to consider the key elements of these two terms. A closer look at the operational definition used for each showed a distinct conceptual difference. Thinking about the

participants' use of one to describe the other, however, suggested practical similarities. In the sections below, I describe the difficulty participants had in clearly and consistently separating *team* and *culture*, propose a new term and accompanying definition, introduce what I label as the "sport synthesis," and articulate how it can be used to understand the difficulty of separating team and culture in a sport organization.

Difficulty of Separating

As I noted in the previous chapter, participants sometimes struggled to describe the concepts of *team* and *culture* without using ideas from one to explain the other. This is not to suggest, however, that there was some sort of "inherent failure" in the minds of participants. I am instead arguing that the "academic" definitions of *team* and *culture*—operational definitions I have selected by grounding them in the literature, though nonetheless open to alternative conceptualizations by other scholars—demonstrate both connections and disconnections from the participants' responses. This disconnection is what I aim to analyze.

The difficulty in clearly separating and defining the two terms suggests a tension in the ways each is understood from different perspectives. From an "academic" and "conceptual" standpoint, the two consist of similar yet distinct pieces that differentiate one from the other. For example, the primary components of a team, according to the operational definition used for the current study, are diversity, people, roles, tasks, goals, and promoting cohesion. In contrast, the operational definition of culture refers to values and beliefs, socialization and integration, and a particular organizational climate.

When merely *defining* these two terms, it is rather simple to identify differences. In *practice*, however, it would appear as though the two are not so easily separated. Participants were often able to identify specific aspects of each, which appeared to suggest they saw a clear

delineation between the two terms. Yet their use of one term to describe the other implied there was some sort of complicating factor that does not allow for a clear separation of team from culture, and culture from team. As such, I am proposing an alternate term and definition that more broadly addresses specific aspects of both *team* and *culture* within the same description.

In developing a new term and subsequent definition, it is important to keep in mind the key elements of each as described by the participants. A team sets goals, determines roles, and builds cohesion—sometimes to the point of creating a family-like bond. A culture consists of trust, coaches who establish a particular climate, supportive competition, and a dedication and focus that encourage constant improvement. Considering these primary aspects, I propose the use of *team culture* as a singular concept that refers to *a system of values, beliefs, and basic assumptions that is articulated and experienced through various means by a diverse collection of people who work together to set and achieve specific task-oriented goals; with members who understand and accept their respective roles so they can promote a positive climate that emphasizes trust, dedication, focus, and continuous improvement; and supportive competition that builds cohesion to the point of potentially developing a family-like bond.*

While the phrase "team culture" has been used in previous research and other settings (Brajdic, 2017; Hess, 2018; Schroeder, 2010), the descriptions primarily tend to refer to key elements of *culture*—leaders, motivation, values, beliefs, assumptions, trust, support, sociological, psychological, and communication constructs—with minimal consideration for the associated key elements of *team*. An exception is Hess (2018), who discussed various elements of *team*, but primarily gave attention to culture by focusing on the potential for leaders to influence a culture. Such descriptions of "team culture" could be misleading, as they might suggest a robust understanding of the two in unison, but give attention to elements of *culture*

over elements of *team*. I instead argue for a more thorough conceptualization and definition of *team culture* that includes key elements of both *team* and *culture*. Though I acknowledge there are many ways this can be done, the definition above is meant to serve as an example for understanding *team culture* as a singular concept. In the section below, I describe how sport is a unique setting that necessitates the use of this term.

The Sport Synthesis

As part of the definition described above, I argue that sport is a unique type of organizational setting that does not allow for team and culture to be easily separated. Thus, this "sport synthesis" is a central part of what blurs the lines between the two and results in a singular *team culture*. Sports organizations tend to operate in a way that is different from other industries (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). For example, the concept of a team in other settings often refers to a segment of people who are selected from various parts of a particular organization (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Nahavandi et al., 2015). A sport organization, in contrast, *is the team*. When considering the concept of *team* in this sense, it is reasonable to understand why participants could not always readily separate it from the concept of *culture*. By considering a sport organization as a team, the key elements that should otherwise be easily identifiable become hidden, left for members to discover through observations and time.

The concept of *culture* is likewise associated with the organization overall, permeating all levels of the organization—though in this case it is directly and explicitly associated with a team. It is, therefore, more accurate to use the term *team culture* when discussing sports organizations in particular. The unique structure as an organization that is *already considered a team* suggests that the "organizational culture" is more closely related to a "team culture." Thus, participants were perhaps not confused about the differences between the two terms. Instead, they provided a

succinct description for the primary elements of a *team culture*, using sport as the vehicle to provide that synthesis.

How Race Played a Role

Although the participants generally downplayed the role of race on their individual teams, they also acknowledged race plays a particular role in basketball more broadly. As such, there appeared to be a tension of sorts between identifying the role of race in participants' basketball experiences and their broader interpretations of the sport overall. In the sections below, I describe the way race played a role in the participants choosing to play basketball, as well as how they used basketball to give meaning to race.

Individual Choice

Race appeared to be at the forefront of the motivating factors participants described for choosing to play basketball. Although none of the participants explicitly said, "I play basketball because I'm Black," race was nonetheless apparent in other areas of their explanations. Specifically, *cultural racism*—ascribing racial circumstances to culture rather than biology or social structures (Bonilla-Silva, 2018)—can be applied to interpret participants' explanations of their reasons for playing basketball. The disproportionate dominance of basketball by Black athletes is not simply a "choice," nor is it the result of "natural athleticism." Rather, there are a set of structural factors that the participants suggested prohibited them from playing other sports, such as the lack of resources, facilities, and overall access to other sports. In articulating additional motivations, however, they inadvertently attributed their choices to various factors that could be misconstrued and overly emphasized as part of "Black culture" (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Such a view is potentially harmful, as it can lead to the (re)production of racialized beliefs through and about sport.

The participants' use of the cultural racism frame, though implicitly and perhaps subconsciously, suggests they acknowledged the role of race in their choice to play basketball with being part of "Black culture." Rather than seeing their choice to play as something that was subtly driven by racialized institutional structures, the participants' descriptions are consistent with a part of the new racism in which discrimination occurs in covert forms—in this case through the structural factors that resulted in a lack of resources, facilities, and access to other sports—which leads people to believe racial disparities or inequalities are the result of personal choices or deficiencies (Alexander, 2012; Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Collins, 2004; Feagin, 2013; Ferber, 2007). Using the cultural racism frame, then, provides a unique opportunity in which people talk about multiple factors—without explicitly mentioning race—that go into the decision to play basketball and use those "alternate" explanations as a justification for the disproportionate representation of Black basketball players, suggesting that it is merely an aspect of "Black culture" (Bonilla-Silva, 2018).

To better understand the potentially damaging nature of the "culture" argument to interpret the choice by Blacks to play basketball, it is important to consider how it relates to differential racialization—the notion that different groups are racialized in different contexts to meet dominant needs (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Viewing sport as a vital part of "Black culture" suits dominant needs, because it is consistent with the stereotype that Black people are cognitively inferior to Whites and are forced to turn to sports—basketball in this case—to find success using physical, rather than intellectual, abilities (Carrington, 2010) However, it is not as important to White success because of their own perceived superiority in areas outside sport, thereby making sure other sectors of society remain exclusive to promoting White success (Carrington, 2010; Smith, 2009).

Those who ascribe to this view allow themselves to abdicate any responsibility for racial inequalities and downplay their own White privileges that may play a role in the disproportionate representation of Blacks in basketball by instead suggesting Black people play basketball because it is "part of their culture" (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). When making it a salient topic in basketball—particularly when discussing the choice to play—people who interpret issues of race through the cultural racism frame lead themselves to view sport, and basketball in particular, as color-blind. The connection between basketball and race is tied to personal choice as a part of "Black culture," and subsequently perpetuates aspects of new racism that disguise the social inequities that restrict Blacks' access to other sports (Alexander, 2012; Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Collins, 2004; Feagin, 2013; Ferber, 2007). In this sense, sport is used as a means to give meaning to race.

Though sport can sometimes be used as a platform to contest social inequalities (Carrington, 2010), in this case it was used to reinforce them to an extent. Whereas basketball could have been used as a sporting racial project to challenge and contest meanings of race, participants' perceptions were consistent with widely held beliefs about stereotypes that aligned with racialized assumptions and expectations about Black athletes (Azzarito & Harrison, 2008; Bigler & Jeffries, 2008; Buffington & Fraley, 2008; Eastman & Billings, 2001; Harrison, et al., 2011; Hughey & Goss, 2015; Mercurio & Filak, 2010). In essence, seeing basketball as part of "Black culture" gives meaning to race through sport by perpetuating various racialized stereotypes and certain aspects of new racism that are applied by some White people as a way to reinforce their own ideas of racial superiority (Carrington, 2010).

Giving Meaning to Race Through Sport

Participants found different ways to give meaning to race using sport as the primary example. In various cases, participants used racialized sport stereotypes to articulate their interpretations of race in basketball. The ease with which they were able to identify the different stereotypes is another example of the "ordinary" nature of race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Race is so seemingly ordinary in basketball that the stereotypes are well known and are often discussed to the point that players of particular races may develop specific skills based on what they believe is expected of them. In many cases, the stereotypes can be understood as examples of what Carrington (2010) referred to as sporting negritude and Black exceptionalism.

The various stereotypes participants discussed are thrust upon athletes in a way that could be used to construct notions about Black athleticism and White intellect—a central aspect of sporting negritude (Carrington, 2010). The multiple stereotypes—in basketball specifically and sport more broadly—were based in the idea that players of particular races are most, if not only, capable of playing certain ways and displaying particular skills. White players, for example, were understood to be everything a Black player is not. As Charles suggested, even White players with some level of basketball ability are not considered *great* basketball players when juxtaposed to Black players.

The idea that some White players "could hoop" but "weren't considered hoopers" perpetuates a notion that basketball remains a "Black man's game" (Mohamed, 2017). In this example, the term "hooper" is reserved for those who demonstrate a particularly high level of athleticism and ability. As Charles explained, Whites rarely earn such a distinction because they are perceived as not being able to display the same basketball abilities as Blacks. Viewed as less talented and athletic, White players are credited for their fundamentals and shooting ability, as

Rob described, whereas Black players are viewed as having a "flashy" style and a "natural" knack for the game of basketball. Read a different way: Black players receive less credit for their hard work, dedication, and perseverance because they are "naturally" more talented, whereas White players are considered good but not *great* for their fundamentals and shooting abilities.

The identification of specific skills and abilities can lead some people to conclude that Black athletes are exceptional in comparison to White athletes when using these criteria. This was particularly salient in Charles's remark about his views that Black people are more athletic than White people. Although his comment could be understood as a compliment for Black athletes, it also contributes to the ideas of sporting negritude and Black exceptionalism by providing space for Whites to maintain a belief that they are intellectually superior. Sport, through such stereotypes and beliefs, then serves as a space where "the Black sporting other becomes the means through which the White cognitive self is produced" (Carrington, 2010, p. 81). In essence, Whites are able to use sport—through comparisons to Blacks—to develop a positive image of their intellectual and cognitive selves.

Using sport in such a way to construct a positive self-image is also a demonstration of differential racialization (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). For example, White players being labeled as "shooters" suits their needs because it allows them to exploit a difference of skill, particularly in comparisons to Black players. The "shooter" label, therefore, becomes less limiting and more a badge of honor, despite participants suggesting otherwise. White players are only expected to shoot; they are not expected to be "hoopers" who fully compete on the same level with Black players. The "shooter" label becomes a pre-established excuse that can be used to justify why a White player may struggle to find success in basketball. In essence, all he needs to focus on is his shooting ability. He need not compare himself in other aspects of his game, which allows him to

construct a more positive self-image using sport as a foundation for any racial beliefs (Carrington, 2010).

Using sport in this way reinforces race as a social construct. The meaning of race is malleable and ever changing, continuously manipulated by members of society, particularly when used to meet the needs of the dominant group (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Carrington, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Feagin, 2013; Omi & Winant, 2015). For example, thinking of basketball as the "Black man's game" (Mohamed, 2017) might be less celebratory and more restrictive. By applying such a label, basketball becomes a sporting racial project in which Black and White participants give meaning to race and shape various social structures (Carrington, 2010). It is a visible area for witnessing Black success, yet it also allows Whites to remain in power in other areas of society, knowing all the while that one of the few places their dominance will be challenged is on the basketball court. A particularly salient example of this was Charles's description of his teammate who felt basketball was his only way to attend college.

The social construction of race, and its associated meanings, suggested to the teammate that his only means to find success was on the basketball court. He had been socialized to believe that basketball held a particular racial meaning in which he could challenge White dominance. Without it, however, the teammate was left to believe he had run out of options and missed his opportunity for a different future. Thus, sport remains a valuable space for constructing racial meanings (Carrington, 2010). By viewing sports—and basketball in particular—as a space where only the most talented ascend to the next level, Charles's teammate subsequently contributed to the notion of sport as a meritocracy, thereby feeding the power of Whites and meeting their needs to continue viewing sport through this particular lens (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Carrington, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Feagin, 2013; Omi & Winant, 2015). The seemingly apolitical

and meritocratic nature of sport allows—and perhaps encourages—people of all races to perpetuate the notion that we live in a postracial and color-blind society, denying that there is a need to discuss race in any form while simultaneously using sport and other areas of society to give it new meanings.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the meaning of the findings by using information from the literature review and theoretical framework to guide my interpretations. I demonstrated the ways in which Black/African American high school boys' basketball players understood and conceptualized the concepts of *team* and *culture*. Furthermore, I identified a need to further investigate the two terms as a singular concept represented by *team culture*. I have also shown how race played a role in participants' experiences, and the ways they can be understood through a theoretical framework of critical race theory, color-blind racism, and the White colonial frame. In the next chapter, I note the limitations of the current study, suggest directions for future research, discuss the implications of the findings, and draw final conclusions.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, I first acknowledge the limitations of the current study and suggest directions for future research. I then note the implications of the findings to demonstrate how the participants' descriptions and experiences support and expand current understandings of team, culture, and race in a sport context. I close this chapter with final conclusions for the study.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The findings of the current study identified some key narratives regarding how current and former Black/African American high school boys' basketball players understood and conceptualized team and culture, as well as the role of race in their experiences. However, there are several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, I have chosen to remain consistent with a critical race theory approach by placing a primary emphasis on race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Omi & Winant, 2015), with a specific focus on the experiences of Black athletes. I acknowledge there are other racial groups and aspects of identity that warrant further exploration, such as class or gender, though that was beyond the scope of the current study.

Omi and Winant (2015) argued that examining class alone, for example, provides a narrow understanding of race by reducing it to "an ancillary aspect of inequality" (p. 67) that is limited by economic determinism. Nevertheless, future research may include an exploration of the intersection(s) of multiple identities and their subsequent role(s) in the sport experiences of Black athletes, particularly those at the high school level. For example, future research could examine the experiences, conceptualizations, and understandings of Black/African American high school girls' basketball players. Additionally, similar topics with participants from various racial groups, social classes, and socioeconomic statuses merit further exploration. Though this is by no means an exhaustive list, exploring gender and class in addition to race could provide

greater understanding of the ways various identities intersect and influence sport experiences, particularly for people of color.

An additional limitation of the current study was that I only gave attention to one sport. Though Mohamed (2017) argued basketball has come to be viewed as the "Black man's game" due to its specific racial components, other sports warrant investigation as well. Furthermore, basketball is a sport in which Black participants are disproportionately represented. It would be prudent, therefore, to explore the concepts of team, culture, and race in sports with varying degrees of racial representation. Football, for example, was a sport many participants mentioned in comparisons to basketball as one with high numbers of Black participants, whereas hockey and lacrosse were raised as examples of sports with low numbers of Black participants. Exploring other sports with different levels of racial representation could provide valuable insight into the experiences of athletes of color, particularly those who participate in sports that have low numbers of minority participants.

Another limitation was the level of competition at the center of the current study. Though it is important to consider the experiences of youth athletes of color (Brooks et al., 2017), further research could expand on the current study by exploring similar issues at the collegiate and professional levels. This is particularly significant to better understand how the concepts of *team* and *culture* are conceptualized and understood by athletes of color at higher levels of competition. An associated limitation is the method I used in the current study. By conducting interviews, I was able to hear directly from the participants about the ways they understood and conceptualized various topics. Future research may consider implementing additional qualitative methodologies to more thoroughly address the topics considered in the current study. Ethnographic fieldwork with a single team at the high school, collegiate, or professional level,

for example, might provide greater insight to the aspects of team and culture that can best be understood through observation rather than conversation. Indeed, ethnographies have gained visibility in sport and fitness as these subjects of study become larger parts of everyday life (Dunn & Hughson, 2016; Markula, 2016). Likewise, Dunn and Hughson (2016) argued that race remains "under-investigated in sports ethnography" (p. 20), and that more research is needed to explore both elite and amateur sports organizations.

In addition to the limitations noted above, the findings of the current study suggest a need for future research to further develop, expand, and refine the definition of *team culture*—not just team and culture as separate entities—by exploring the concept in various sport contexts. Doing so likely requires developing a singular definition that allows people to understand a sport organization and explore it in greater detail than I was able to do in the current study. Furthermore, differences in the ways team and culture are defined in the literature—compared to the ways they were described by the participants—suggest a tension between the "academic" and "practical" definitions. As such, future research may be needed to revise and refine the definitions of both *team* and *culture* to incorporate more language from participants and reduce the separation between the academy and practice.

With respect to future research, subsequent inquiry could also expand on the ways roles are determined on a sports team. For example, few participants described their specific roles as something rooted in maintaining a social balance. Rather, roles tended to be determined by talent and were often related to tasks and achieving goals. One potential reason for this is that social roles may develop more often outside team settings—such as building cohesion off the court—to ensure efficient operation and the maintenance of relationships (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Mumford et al., 2008; Nahavandi et al., 2015). Thus, future research could identify ways social

roles are determined on a sports team, as it may be relatively simple to observe superior talent but is more difficult to observe a "superior" personality.

Implications and Conclusions

Despite the limitations noted in the section above, the findings of the current study present implications in multiple areas. The purpose of the current study was to explore the role of race in the context of high school boys' basketball. I specifically investigated whether and how race manifested as part of team and culture. An additional purpose of the current study was to examine Black/African American high school boys' basketball players' understandings of and experiences with race, particularly within the context of sport. The findings indicated that the participants demonstrated their collective understanding and conceptualization of both team and culture by identifying the key elements of each.

With respect to the concept of *team*, participants noted goals, roles, and cohesion as important aspects. Their descriptions support previous assertions that a team consists of people who have defined roles (Mumford et al., 2008), which allow them to complete work-related goals and tasks (Nahavandi et al., 2015), while holding each other accountable to promote cohesion and reduce social loafing (Beal et al., 2003; Horn et al., 2012; Jowett et al., 2012; Mach et al., 2010; Liden et al., 2004). Yet, participants also described team membership as a relationship akin to a family or brotherhood, implying there may be a need to expand the current definition.

With respect to the concept of *culture*, participants identified trust, coaches, supportive competition, dedication, and focus as key components. Though the language used differed in some ways, these descriptions are consistent with past definitions that describe a culture as consisting of team leaders who construct a positive motivational climate that promotes trust,

cohesion, and performance (Eys et al., 2013; Horn et al., 2012; Mach et al., 2010; Vincer & Loughead, 2010). Furthermore, participants identified an additional aspect of culture with respect to sport organizations. By not giving attention to race as an implicit element of culture, participants' descriptions subsequently perpetuated the problematic notion that sport is a color-blind, apolitical, and meritocratic space where race is no longer significant. Such a belief aligns with the "new racism" that manifests in subtle and covert ways to maintain a system of inequity without making explicit reference to race, and is largely allowed to remain invisible through the dominance of the color-blind ideology (Alexander, Bonilla-Silva, 2018, Collins, 2004). As such, the participants' adherence to color-blindness as an aspect of culture is consistent with the new racism and the racial system that has developed to act as a form of social control by stigmatizing and locking racial groups into inferior positions (Alexander, 2012).

With respect to not giving attention to race as part of culture, the findings of the current study hold practical implications for athletic administrators and coaches. As the participants' descriptions suggested, race was salient in different ways at times, but was rarely discussed. It is important, therefore, that coaches and other athletic administrators actively seek to develop a culture that encourages and provides space for regular conversations about race and other areas of diversity, inclusion, and equity. Establishing and maintaining such conversations as a key element of culture could lead to improved outcomes for the team as a whole, including improved intergroup relations, reduction in prejudice and bias among team members, and greater innovation (Cunningham, 2011; MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Rock & Grant, 2016), thereby leading to a potential increase in trust, cohesion, and performance (Eys et al., 2013; Horn et al., 2012; Mach et al., 2010; MacIntosh & Burton, 2019).

Despite the potentially problematic elements noted above—such as an absence of discussions about diversity allowing space for not giving attention to race as part of culture—participants' descriptions of team and culture generally supported previous definitions found in the literature. However, the findings indicate a need to develop a singular concept—team culture—that more accurately describes their intersections in a sport context. Participants were able to describe both team and culture in ways that are similar to, yet subtly differ from, the "academic" definitions. Accordingly, future definitions would benefit from using the language of participants to more thoroughly delineate between team and culture.

Findings of the current study also provided support that color-blind racism remains the dominant racial ideology in American society that influences people of all races (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Despite notions that sport remains color-blind, the participants' descriptions of their experiences suggested race continues to shape the experiences of athletes of color (Armstrong & Jennings, 2018; Bimper, 2017; Carrington, 2010; Cooper & Hawkins, 2014; Deeb & Love, 2018; Hylton, 2005, 2010; Rankin-Wright et al., 2016; Smith, 2009; Smith et al., 2017). Sport in general, and basketball in particular, contains various stereotypes based in racial assumptions and beliefs. The stereotypes can be easily identified, and are sometimes used to give meaning to race through sport (Carrington, 2010). The intersection of race and sport, therefore, remains an important topic of inquiry that requires further exploration to better understand the experiences of athletes of color.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

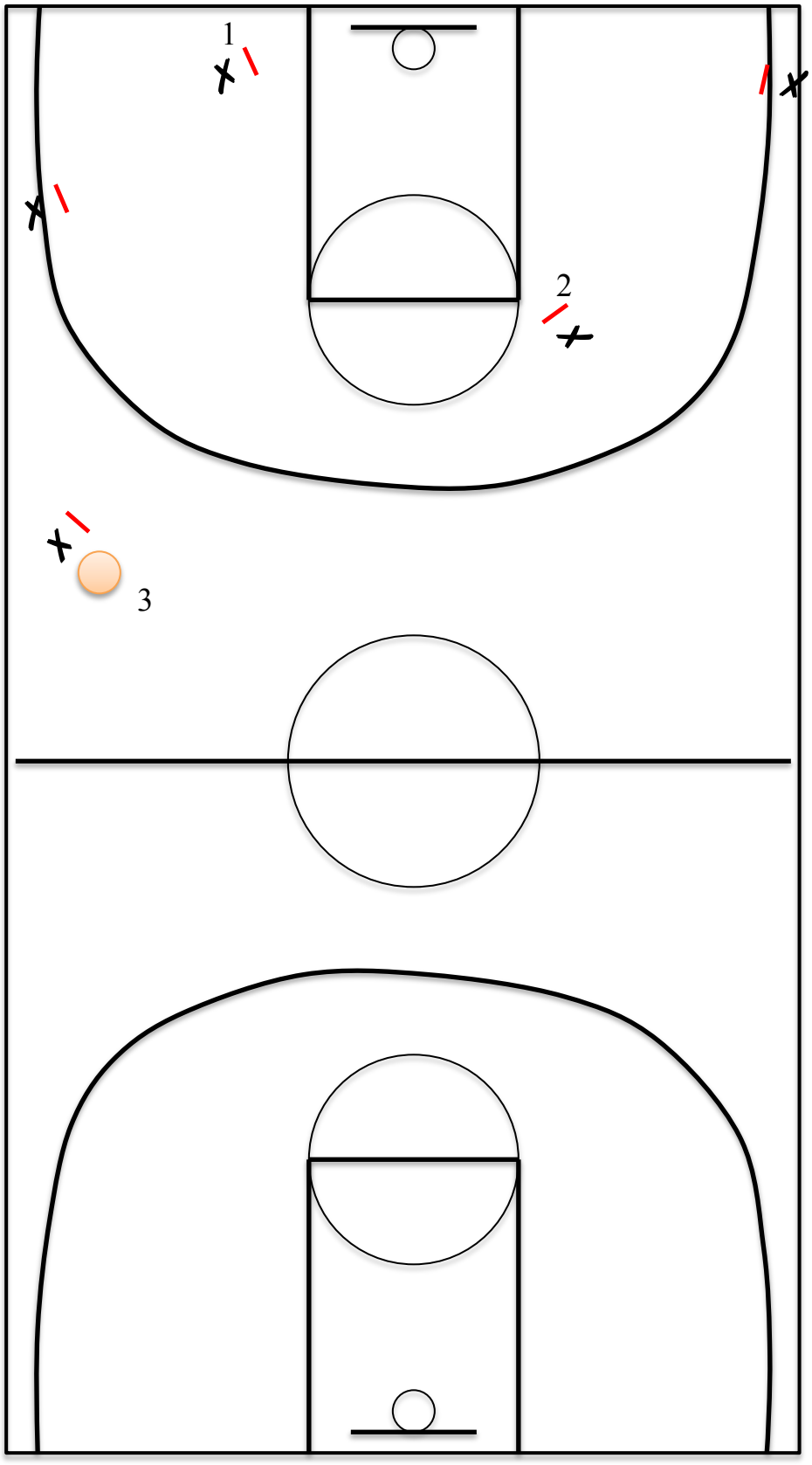
Conceptual Model of Team Culture

The following Figure represents a conceptual model of the culture of an interscholastic basketball team. Each component is described in further detail below:

1. Each "✗" represents a player on the team. Furthermore, each symbol is meant to represent a different player, each with his own specific skill set, role, personality, and identity. Though each player is unique in his own right, he becomes a member of a larger group upon joining the team. In this sense, each player becomes part of the in-group while maintaining his differences (skills, playing style, personality) in other ways (Cunningham, 2011).

2. Each "|" represents a "defender" on the opposing team. More specifically, this symbolizes the various leadership- and interaction-related barriers that may get in the way of establishing a strong team culture. For example, one "defender" might represent cultural and social differences between teammates such as race or class. Others may present challenges in the form of motivation, leadership, and cohesion. In this sense, it is vital for the team to establish a culture in which all players are motivated to achieve a common goal. This can be accomplished by developing cohesion through the formation of a trusting culture that is task-oriented and features democratic leaders—coaches and athletes—who are instructive and supportive (Eys et al., 2013; Horn, Byrd, Martin, & Young, 2012; Mach, Dolan, & Tzafrir, 2010; Vincer & Loughead, 2010).

3. The orange circle represents the basketball and (implicitly) the ways it can be shared among teammates. The basketball specifically represents the itinerate nature of team culture, and the ability to adapt to new changes. Teammates must be able to effectively communicate when changes occur and develop plans that effectively respond to the change (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). For example, a starter may suffer an injury that forces him to miss a significant amount of playing time, in which case the team will need to formulate a plan to face the change (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). In such a case, the team—players, coaches, and administrators— will need to rely on trust and cohesion in order to share the burden and counter a regression in performance (Eys et al., 2013; Horn et al., 2012; Mach et al., 2010; Vincer & Loughead, 2010).


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Appendix B

Initial Contact Message

The following message was sent to potential participants that met the criteria for inclusion:

Hello,

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in a research study entitled: **Role of Race on a High School Boys Basketball Team**. Being in this research study is voluntary, and you are not required to agree to participate.

This study will be open to Black or African American males who are current or former members of their high school basketball team. This study will be conducted by Alexander Deeb, a doctoral degree candidate in the Department of Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sport Studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

The study will involve approximately 20 participants, and is being done to better understand the experiences of high school student athletes. The study will involve one (1) video- or audio-recorded interview that is approximately 45 minutes in length. The interview will specifically focus on race as a factor that impacts athlete experiences and team dynamics. Participants' identity and information will be confidential and will not be included in research reports or materials. The interview would be scheduled at a time that is convenient for you. A list of questions will be provided before the interview upon request. Each interview will be transcribed, and a copy of the transcript(s) will be provided to participants for review.

Please contact Alexander Deeb if you are interested in participating in this study.

Sincerely,
Alexander Deeb
(865) 974-3340
adeeb@vols.utk.edu

Appendix C

Informed Consent (Current Players)
Role of Race on a High School Boys' Basketball Team
Parent Permission + Assent Form

Hello, my name is Alexander Deeb. I am a graduate student at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I am interested in studying sports teams and the experiences of athletes. Your son is invited to be part of a research study I will conduct, because he identifies as a Black or African American male and is a member of the boys' basketball team at his school. Being in this research study is voluntary, and you should only agree if you completely understand the study and want to allow your son to participate. This form contains information that will help you decide if you want your son to be part of this research study or not. Please take the time to read it carefully, and if there is anything you don't understand, please ask questions.

Purpose
The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of high school student athletes. I will focus on race as a factor that impacts athlete experiences and team dynamics. I plan to publish articles and/or books, and make presentations at conferences to share the results of this research. However, your son's identity and information will be confidential, and it will not be included in research reports of materials.

Participation
If you choose for your son to participate, and if he also agrees, I will ask your son to participate in an audio- or video-recorded interview that will be about 45 minutes in length. I will ask questions about your son's experiences as an athlete, as well as his perceptions and understandings of race. If you wish to see a list of questions before the interview, I will be happy to provide one. I, or a transcription service that has agreed to a confidentiality agreement, will transcribe the interview. I will provide a copy of the transcript(s) for you and your son to review. After the interview has been transcribed, I will keep the recording on a password-protected laptop for three (3) years after the study is complete. The interview file will be given an additional layer of password-protection. You and your son may be contacted up to three (3) times about the interview, if necessary, with questions about the information and/or to review the transcript(s) for accuracy. ***Your participation in the interview is completely voluntary and you may choose not to participate at any time throughout the study without penalty.***

Benefit
Your son will not receive any direct benefit from participating in the research project, but I hope to learn things that will benefit athletes, teachers, researchers, and society in the future.

Risks
There is some risk that your son may feel uncomfortable sharing opinions and experiences about race or other topics. However, please know that I will keep all of your son's responses confidential and the responses will not affect your son's status with the team or school. I will not pressure your son to provide any information he is uncomfortable sharing. If you or your son feel uncomfortable at any point, you or he may choose not to answer any question or stop

participating at any time without penalty.

There is also the risk of possible loss of confidentiality, as someone could find out your son was in the study or see his study information. I would like to remind you that you or your son can choose not to participate in the study at any time, at which point I will not include any of your son's information in transcripts or other written materials.

Confidentiality
If you and your son agree to participate in the research, I will assign your son a pseudonym (fake name) and use that instead of his actual name on all of the materials before I begin looking at them for the research study. These materials will be stored on a password-protected computer and each individual file will also be protected using a password that only I know. No information that could be used to identify your son will be shared in publications and/or presentations about this study.

Future Research
Your son's responses may be used for future research studies. The responses may also be shared with other researchers to use in future studies without obtaining additional informed consent from you. If this happens, all of your son's identifiable information will be removed before any future use or sharing with other researchers to maintain confidentiality.

Contact Information
If you have any questions about this research, please contact me, Alexander Deeb, at adeeb@vols.utk.edu or (865) 974-3340. You may also contact my advisor, Adam Love, at adamlove@utk.edu or (865) 974-5291. If you have any questions about your or your son's rights as a research participant, please contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, at utkirb@utk.edu or (865) 974-7697. You may also contact the IRB with any problems, complaints, or concerns you have about this or any other research study.

Voluntary Participation
It is completely up to you and your son to decide to be part of this research study. Even if you and your son decide to be part of the study now, you or he may change your minds at any time and stop participating by notifying me as soon as you are able. Your son will not lose any services, benefits, or rights he would normally have if you choose not to give permission, or if you or your son change your minds and stop participating later.

If you agree that your son may participate, please sign the **Parent Permission** section on the next page, and on both copies of this form. Please return one copy to me and keep one copy for your records. If you do not wish for your son to participate in the research, it is not necessary to do anything, as I cannot and will not use his materials without your permission and his.

Parent Permission
I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I understand that participation in this research includes allowing Alexander Deeb to interview my son and use his information for research purposes. I agree that my son may participate in this study. If I change my mind, and decide my son may not participate later, I only need to notify Alexander Deeb.

Son's Name (printed) _____

Parent's Name (printed) _____

Parent's Signature _____ Date _____

Permission For Use of Images
I understand and agree it is possible that I may be video-recorded, but that this will only be necessary if the interview is conducted via videoconference. I understand and agree this will be done using a professional and secure program (Zoom) provided to Alexander Deeb by the University of Tennessee. I understand that the video file will be erased as soon as the interview is completed, and only an audio file will be kept, which will then be used for research purposes.

Parent's Signature _____ Date _____

Son Assent
I have talked about this research with my parent(s). I understand that participation in this research includes allowing Alexander Deeb to interview me and use my information for research purposes. I agree to participate in this study. If I change my mind, and decide not to participate later, I only need to notify my parent(s) or Alexander Deeb.

Son's Name (printed) _____

Son's Signature _____ Date _____

Assent For Use of Images
I understand and agree it is possible that I may be video-recorded, but that this will only be necessary if the interview is conducted via videoconference. I understand and agree this will be done using a professional and secure program (Zoom) provided to Alexander Deeb by the University of Tennessee. I understand that the video file will be erased as soon as the interview is completed, and only an audio file will be kept, which will then be used for research purposes.

Parent's Signature _____ Date _____

Informed Consent (Former Players)
Role of Race on a High School Boys' Basketball Team
Informed Consent Form

Hello, my name is Alexander Deeb. I am a graduate student at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I am interested in studying sports teams and the experiences of athletes. You are invited to be part of a research study I will conduct, because you identify as a Black or African American male and were a member of the boys' basketball team at your high school. Being in this research study is voluntary, and you should only agree if you completely understand the study and want to participate. This form contains information that will help you decide if you want to be part of this research study or not. Please take the time to read it carefully, and if there is anything you don't understand, please ask questions.

Purpose
The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of high school student athletes. I will focus on race as a factor that impacts athlete experiences and team dynamics. I plan to publish articles and/or books, and make presentations at conferences to share the results of this research. However, your identity and information will be confidential, and it will not be included in research reports of materials.

Participation
If you choose to participate, I will ask you to participate in an audio- or video-recorded interview that will be about 45 minutes in length. I will ask questions about your experiences as an athlete, as well as your perceptions and understandings of race. If you wish to see a list of questions before the interview, I will be happy to provide one. I, or a transcription service that has agreed to a confidentiality agreement, will transcribe the interview. I will provide a copy of the transcript(s) for you to review. After the interview has been transcribed, I will keep the recording on a password-protected laptop for three (3) years after the study is complete. The interview file will be given an additional layer of password-protection. You may be contacted up to three (3) times about the interview, if necessary, with questions about the information and/or to review the transcript(s) for accuracy. ***Your participation in the interview is completely voluntary and you may choose not to participate at any time throughout the study without penalty.***

Benefit
You will not receive any direct benefit from participating in the research project, but I hope to learn things that will benefit athletes, teachers, researchers, and society in the future.

Risks
There is some risk that you may feel uncomfortable sharing opinions and experiences about race or other topics. However, please know that I will keep all of your responses confidential and the responses will not affect your status with the team or school. I will not pressure you to provide any information you are uncomfortable sharing. If you feel uncomfortable at any point, you may choose not to answer any question or stop participating at any time without penalty.

There is also the risk of possible loss of confidentiality, as someone could find out you were in the study or see your study information. I would like to remind you that you can choose not to

participate in the study at any time, at which point I will not include any of your information in transcripts or other written materials.

Confidentiality
If you agree to participate in the research, I will assign you a pseudonym (fake name) and use that instead of your actual name on all of the materials before I begin looking at them for the research study. These materials will be stored on a password-protected computer and each individual file will also be protected using a password that only I know. No information that could be used to identify you will be shared in publications and/or presentations about this study.

Future Research
Your responses may be used for future research studies. The responses may also be shared with other researchers to use in future studies without obtaining additional informed consent from you. If this happens, all of your identifiable information will be removed before any future use or sharing with other researchers to maintain confidentiality.

Contact Information
If you have any questions about this research, please contact me, Alexander Deeb, at adeeb@vols.utk.edu or (865) 974-3340. You may also contact my advisor, Adam Love, at adamlove@utk.edu or (865) 974-5291. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, at utkirb@utk.edu or (865) 974-7697. You may also contact the IRB with any problems, complaints, or concerns you have about this or any other research study.

Voluntary Participation
It is completely up to you to decide to be part of this research study. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind at any time and stop participating by notifying me as soon as you are able. You will not lose any services, benefits, or rights you would normally have if you choose not to give permission, or if you change your mind and stop participating later.

If you agree to participate, please sign the **Consent** section on the next page, and on both copies of this form. Please return one copy to me and keep one copy for your records. If you do not wish to participate in the research, it is not necessary to do anything, as I cannot and will not use your materials without your permission.

Consent
I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I understand that participation in this research includes allowing Alexander Deeb to interview me and use my information for research purposes. I agree to participate in this study. If I change my mind, and decide I do not wish to participate later, I only need to notify Alexander Deeb.

Name (printed) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Permission For Use of Images
I understand and agree it is possible that I may be video-recorded, but that this will only be necessary if the interview is conducted via videoconference. I understand and agree this will be done using a professional and secure program (Zoom) provided to Alexander Deeb by the University of Tennessee. I understand that the video file will be erased as soon as the interview is completed, and only an audio file will be kept, which will then be used for research purposes.

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix D

Interview Guide (Current Players)

I will begin the interviews by explaining to participants that the purpose of my research involves exploring the ways in which athletes' sport experiences are impacted by social dynamics, with a particular focus on race. The questions included in the following interview guide are meant to serve as examples of what may be asked in an interview. The phrasing and order of questions will be flexible. Other questions may be included or excluded based on the flow of the interview. An example of the opening script can be found below:

Hello, and thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I want to remind you that we may discuss some sensitive topics. ***All responses are voluntary and you may refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the interview at anytime without penalty.*** With your permission, I would like to record this interview, and write a few notes. Do you have any questions before we start the interview? Are you ready to begin?

Upon receiving confirmation that the participant is prepared to begin, I will proceed by asking demographics questions, such as:

- How would you describe your racial identity?
- What is your year in school?
- How old are you?
- Tell me about the community you live in.
- When did you start playing?
- How long have you played?
- How long have you played for the high school basketball team?

Once these questions have been answered, I will then ask open-ended questions, such as:

- What are the racial demographics and makeup of your school?
- Tell me about your experiences in school.
- What is the school culture like?
- What are the racial demographics and makeup of your team?
- Tell me about your experiences on the high school basketball team.
- What is the team culture like?
- How do your experiences on the team compare to those in the school?

Based on participants' responses, I will then ask appropriate follow-up questions. For example, if participants mention that they interact with specific classmates and peers, specific follow-up questions might include:

- Who do you spend the most time with in school?
- Who do you spend the most time with on the basketball team?
- How do you connect with people in school?
- How do you connect with your teammates?
- What happens if you cannot connect with someone?
- What factors might make it most likely that you will spend time with someone?
- What factors might make it less likely that you spend time with someone?

Once I have reached information redundancy on a specific topic (i.e., the participants have nothing more to say about the topic of who they spend time with) I will return to a general question, such as:

- Why/how did you choose to play basketball?
- What does playing basketball do for you?
- What other sports do you play? Why (not)?

Based on participants' responses, I will again ask appropriate follow-up questions. For example, if participants mention that they chose to play basketball for particular reasons, specific follow-up questions might include:

- What does basketball mean to your identity?
- When do you play basketball outside the school setting?
- You play basketball, which some people may consider a "black sport," or a sport that includes a high level of black participants. What do you think when you hear that?
- Explain your understanding of the role of race in basketball.
- How often do you think about race in general?
- How often do you think about your race specifically?
- How often do you think about your teammates' race(s) specifically?
- How often do you think about others' race(s) specifically?
- How do you feel around people of the same race?
- How do you feel around people of different races?
- Tell me about the race dynamics on the basketball team.
- Are there times when you and your teammates talk about race?
- If so, when do you talk about race? If not, why do you think you do not talk about it?
- What do you and your teammates say when race is a topic of discussion?
- What are some things people say or do when the basketball team plays against a predominantly white team as compared to a predominantly black team?
- Do you think race plays a role on your team? If so, in what way? How have you experienced that?
- Ask opinion about race and sport in general. Do certain sports matter? Is there something unique about basketball?
- Are there any experiences you have had as an athlete that contributes to your understanding/experiences of race?
- Are there any experiences you have had as a spectator that contributes to your understanding/experiences of race?
- Is there anything I haven't asked you about that you would like to touch on?

Based on participants' responses to this question, I will proceed with follow-up questions such as those outlined above. Each time participants mention a new reason for playing basketball, I will ask follow-up questions, such as the aforementioned questions about basketball and race. Once I have reached information redundancy about the general topic of basketball and race (i.e., the participants have nothing more to say about basketball and race) the interview will be complete. This approach is designed to allow participants to discuss the topics most relevant to them, and to allow the researcher to maximize understanding of the participants' perspectives.

Interview Guide (Former Players)

I will begin the interviews by explaining to participants that the purpose of my research involves exploring the ways in which athletes' sport experiences are impacted by social dynamics, with a particular focus on race. The questions included in the following interview guide are meant to serve as examples of what may be asked in an interview. The phrasing and order of questions will be flexible. Other questions may be included or excluded based on the flow of the interview. An example of the opening script can be found below:

Hello, and thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I want to remind you that we may discuss some sensitive topics. ***All responses are voluntary and you may refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the interview at anytime without penalty.*** With your permission, I would like to record this interview, and write a few notes. Do you have any questions before we start the interview? Are you ready to begin?

Upon receiving confirmation that the participant is prepared to begin, I will proceed by asking demographics questions, such as:

- How would you describe your racial identity?
- What year did you graduate from high school?
- How old are you?
- Tell me about the community you lived in during high school.
- When did you start playing basketball?
- How long have you played?
- How long did you play for the high school basketball team?

Once these questions have been answered, I will then ask open-ended questions, such as:

- What were the racial demographics and makeup of your high school?
- Tell me about your experiences in high school.
- What was the school culture like?
- What were the racial demographics and makeup of your team?
- Tell me about your experiences on the high school basketball team.
- What was the team culture like?
- How did your experiences on the team compare to those in the school?

Based on participants' responses, I will then ask appropriate follow-up questions. For example, if participants mention that they interacted with specific classmates and peers, specific follow-up questions might include:

- Who did you spend the most time with in high school?
- Who did you spend the most time with on the basketball team?
- How did you connect with people in school?
- How did you connect with your teammates?
- What happened if you could not connect with someone?
- What factors might make it most likely that you would have spent time with someone?
- What factors might make it less likely that you would have spent time with someone?

Once I have reached information redundancy on a specific topic (i.e., the participants have nothing more to say about the topic of who they spent time with) I will return to a general question, such as:

- Why/how did you choose to play basketball?
- What did playing basketball in high school do for you?
- What other sports did you play in high school? Why (not)?

Based on participants' responses, I will again ask appropriate follow-up questions. For example, if participants mention that they chose to play basketball for particular reasons, specific follow-up questions might include:

- What does basketball mean to your identity?
- When did you play basketball outside the school setting?
- You played basketball, which some people may consider a "black sport," or a sport that includes a high level of black participants. What do you think when you hear that?
- Explain your understanding of the role of race in basketball.
- How often do you think about race in general?
- How often do you think about your race specifically?
- How often did you think about your teammates' race(s) specifically?
- How often do you think about others' race(s) specifically?
- How do you feel around people of the same race?
- How do you feel around people of different races?
- Tell me about the race dynamics on your high school basketball team.
- Were there times when you and your teammates talked about race?
- If so, when did you talk about race? If not, why do you think you did not talk about it?
- What did you and your teammates say when race was a topic of discussion?
- What are some things people said or did when the basketball team played against a predominantly white team as compared to a predominantly black team?
- Do you think race played a role on your team? If so, in what way? How did you experience that?
- What is your opinion about race and sport in general? Do certain sports matter? Is there something unique about basketball?
- Are there any experiences you had as an athlete that contributed to your understanding/experiences of race?
- Are there any experiences you had as a spectator that contributed to your understanding/experiences of race?
- Is there anything I haven't asked you about that you would like to touch on?

Based on participants' responses to this question, I will proceed with follow-up questions such as those outlined above. Each time participants mention a new reason for playing basketball, I will ask follow-up questions, such as the aforementioned questions about basketball and race. Once I have reached information redundancy about the general topic of basketball and race (i.e., the participants have nothing more to say about basketball and race) the interview will be complete. This approach is designed to allow participants to discuss the topics most relevant to them, and to allow the researcher to maximize understanding of the participants' perspectives.

VITA

Alexander Deeb has been interested in questioning and studying race since he was a child. He identifies as multiracial and his scholarly work is propelled by a drive to identify and cultivate means by which sport can be used as a catalyst to promote the development of a diverse, equitable, and inclusive society. Broadly, his scholarly interests involve examining socio-cultural issues in sport, and his research is primarily centered in investigating racial ideology and sport. Prominent themes in his research include (a) experiences of multiracial athletes, (b) the intersection of race and masculinity for athletes of color, and (c) racial ideology and discourse in sport media. Ultimately, these threads of research are united by an ambition to aid in the development of sport as a diverse, equitable, and all-inclusive space that not only accepts people as they are, but values them for their differences. Alexander attended Bradley University in his hometown of Peoria, IL, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Communication, with a focus in Sport Communication. Following his undergraduate studies, he graduated from Western Illinois University with a Master of Science degree in Sport Management. He then attended the University of Tennessee, Knoxville to pursue his doctorate. While working toward his degree, Alexander taught two upper-level undergraduate courses for the Department of Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sport Studies: Sport Communication and Socio-Cultural Foundations of Sport and Recreation. His developing research record consists of two publications, multiple works under review or in progress, and 12 presentations at various regional, national, and international conferences. Upon graduating in August, Alexander will receive a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Kinesiology and Sport Studies.