

The intersection of social justice activism and college athletics

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B.S., Kansas State University, 2019

B.S., Kansas State University, 2019

A REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Communication Studies  
College of Arts and Sciences

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

2021

Approved by:

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## **Abstract**

College student athletes have been participating in a movement to raise public awareness about the injustices and inequities experienced by marginalized communities. Student athletes can reach large audiences with their platforms yet are only allowed to use this platform within certain parameters. Athletic departments and higher education institutions hold a special relationship with the student athletes that allows them to monitor and restrict student athletes' public statements and actions. Meanwhile, the majority of student athletes speaking out on social issues such as racial injustice is black and indigenous people of color (BIPOC). The opportunity for student athletes, especially BIPOC, to civically engage is important for the future of a more equal society and the student athletes' holistic development. Therefore, I investigate how athletic departments can support marginalized student athletes in their social justice activism.

I analyze literature from two areas of study, organizational communication and holistic student development, to provide recommendations to collegiate athletic departments on how they can better support their marginalized student athletes in their social justice activism.

Organizations like athletic departments that operate in a system that recognizes power, utilizes emotion, and views their members as whole human beings with commitments outside of their organization membership can create a more positive, supportive environment. Holistic student development is a tool to facilitate this system through its mission to develop the whole person within and outside of a field of study. Holistic student development takes shape in the form of student organizations, clubs, resources, etc. Athletic departments, higher education, and overall society can benefit from this organization approach to learn to build community through difference.

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## Acknowledgements

This report was inspired by the hope for a better tomorrow and a true belief in humanity. Thank you to my professors at Kansas State University that invested the time to challenge me to grow and think critically. Thank you to my parents, Ron and Dina Davis, for supporting me in any and all dreams that I have. I dedicate this report to the victims that have suffered from the hands of racial injustice and discrimination. I pray that as a society we will all look inside ourselves to move beyond being a bystander, to not be neutral in the face of injustice and inequality.

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”

-Barack Obama, *44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America*

# **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

## **Student athletes mobilizing against injustice**

The depth of racial injustice in American society has prompted athletes, both college and professional, to use their platforms to speak out. The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and others have sparked protests, demonstrations, murals, and tough conversations about inequality. Professional athletes such as former NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick, Megan Rapinoe of the U.S. Women's Soccer Team, and Maya Moore of the WNBA are a few examples of professionals using their platforms to fight for social justice. LeBron James, too, has consistently used his status as one of the world's best basketball players to advocate for marginalized populations through actions including the founding of The I Promise School, demanding justice for the victims of police brutality, speaking on social-justice issues during his press conferences, and wearing the "I Can't Breathe" shirt with his teammates during warm-up. He also responded in a video with fellow basketball player, Kevin Durant to Fox News host Laura Ingraham, stating that he is "More Than An Athlete" after she harshly criticized James for offering political opinions and speaking out against President Donald Trump. Ingraham told James to "shut up and dribble" (Schwartz, 2018, para. 4). James used this incident to advocate for athletes as amounting to something more than their athletic ability.

At the college level, student-athletes also have been mobilizing to enact change at their higher education institutions. College athletes across the country have organized protests, worn patches, t-shirts, jerseys, and started social-justice initiatives within their institutions' athletic departments. At the University of Texas, student athletes played a major part in getting their university to change building names and remove monuments honoring individuals who

supported slavery and having it replaced with a statue of the first black football player at UT (O'Malley, 2020). The University of Florida's basketball, volleyball, soccer, baseball, and football teams led a protest in Gainesville in support of Black Lives Matter to demonstrate that they are people before players (Burtka, 2020). In August 2020, Kansas State University's athletes held a protest against racial injustice, police brutality, and all forms of hate on and off campus (Black, 2020). Like LeBron James, college student athletes are refusing, as Ingraham and others demanded, to "shut up and dribble."

While many student athletes are taking power into their own hands, they have faced some resistance. In response to criticisms much like Laura Ingraham's of LeBron James, Kansas State University women's basketball player Chrissy Carr, tweeted "If you don't support me with this... then don't support me with that... Simple." Her post featured an image of her at a Black Lives Matter protest and an image of her on the court. The tweet received 1,335 retweets and 9,964 favorites, but also racist and sexist comments regarding her being black and being a female athlete. Replies included "I don't support you in either. That's very simple," "odd cheerleading suit," or "I don't support you or BLM! So I guess we're good" are only a few examples of the thousands of responses. Likewise, the K-State football team was asked to remove patches with just the three letters-- "BLM" to symbolize "Black Lives Matter"-- for fear of donors withdrawing funding.

As the controversy over the BLM-patch at K-State illustrates, concrete instances rarely make the news, but history indicates athletic departments will censor student-athletes for public-relations purposes. For example, the University of Kentucky and East Carolina University prohibit student athletes from speaking negatively about their university (Harrigan, 2020). These policies may seem reasonable from the athletic-department standpoint since they seek to control



the organization's public image and put their best face forward. Ultimately, however, these policies are dangerous, as the sexual-assault cases at Michigan State University and Larry Nasar or the University of Iowa's strength coach's displays of racism demonstrate (Harrigan, 2020). Without organizational transparency, student athletes are denied an opportunity to improve society and their own working conditions.

As marginalized student athletes pursue activism, much of the conflict can be attributed to lack of understanding. The NCAA's Student Athlete Well-Being survey showed that only 45% of athletes felt comfortable discussing issues of race with campus administrators. Further, a bare majority of 50% of athletes believe that their athletic departments would support them if they were to take a public stance on a social issue (NCAA, 2020). The survey also showed that most student athletes who are participating in activism are black and indigenous people of color (BIPOC) (NCAA, 2020). The athletes stated as well that they hope for more honest conversations that include educational sessions. Overall, the survey results indicate deep disconnect between BIPOC student athletes, who feel unheard and misunderstood within their organizations, and their mostly white, straight, and male organizational administrators.

Additionally, a greater percentage of the athletes in revenue-generating sports are minority student (Hirko, 2009). They are men and women who are straight, LGBTQ+, poor, middle class, rich, African American, Asian American, and Hispanic, and many international identities as students from around the globe come to U.S. universities to study and compete, too. Pressuring these students to keep their frustrations, anger, and sadness about the racial injustice in America "under wraps" denies them full personhood. To dismiss or deny these aspects of their selves violates their autonomy. Therefore, athletic departments have a responsibility to support student athletes not just as players but as people.

Unfortunately, while National College Athletic Association (NCAA) athletic departments tout student athletes as more than athletes, rhetoric and reality too often do not match. For example, the NCAA touts in an advertising campaign, “There are more than 400,000 NCAA student-athletes, and most of us will be going pro in something other than sports.” They also point to their Life Skills program implemented in athletic departments to assist in student athletes’ development educationally and professionally. However, this is not a consistent message sent to the student athletes that their education and holistic development are the top priorities. The literature shows that NCAA athletic departments are disproportionately failing BIPOC in their educational mission. According to Hawkins (1996), black student athletes graduate at a 10% lower rate within football and a 12% lower rate within basketball compared to their white counterparts. Similar results still exist today. The NCAA reported in 2020 that the graduation success rate for white student athletes in football was 90% while black student athletes in football had a graduation success rate of 73% (NCAA, 2020). The racial disparity reflects in men’s basketball as well with white student athletes graduating at a 92% and black student athletes graduating at 85% (NCAA, 2020). Collegiate athletic departments utilize student athletes for their performance on their teams and in return the student athletes receive an education that is paid for or partially paid for depending on sport. But as Billy Hawkins (1996, p. 27) asked, “Are NCAA Division I Universities and Colleges mainly concerned with black bodies, or do they care about the minds of these students as well?”

Further, black student athletes not only deal with the “dumb jock”, but also racist stereotypes within their athletic departments and higher education institutions (Hawkins, 1996). Faculty members have shown to have negative attitudes toward student athletes, especially those within social sciences and humanities departments (Comeaux, 2011). Perhaps this is because

student athletes are pushed into social science and humanities coursework to “keep ‘em eligible,” so these faculty members are more frequently called upon to juggle the student athletes’ travel absences (Comeaux, 2011). These labor inequities borne disproportionately by some departments create a self-fulfilling cycle of decreased holistic support for student athletes (mostly athletes of color), leaving them with a lower career preparedness and post-college confidence (Beamon, 2008). To create a more positive culture that prioritizes the whole student athlete, not just the athlete, athletic departments must address inequities that exist for their student athletes of color. Without recognizing and acting upon these disparities, the cycle will only continue.

Thus, in this report, I consider the following: *“How might collegiate athletic departments better support marginalized student athletes in their social justice activism?”*.

### **Rationale for research**

Supporting marginalized student athletes in their social justice activism demands attention for two reasons. First, America’s social systems have been founded on a racist structure (Mayweather & Reynolds, 2017). As a society, if we do not recognize the inequality and injustice that affects student athletes, we will not be able to effectively make efforts toward equality. Second, student athletes are expected to be socially responsible leaders but are often denied the tools and full permission to be socially responsible while a part of the athletic department. Empowering student-athletes to intervene in oppressive systems is vital to supporting their development and involvement as full citizens in a democratic society. Below, I will develop each of these points.

According to critical race theory, for social change to occur inequities must be exposed so action can lead to true change. Critical race theory demonstrates that the law enforces racial oppression, and the education system reinforces ideologies of the current system, maintaining the

oppression and disparities (Dixson, 2018). Through the lens of America's unfortunate racist and sexist history, society holds stereotypes of black students and female students as inferior. Even if one is not outwardly sexist or racist, it does not mean that biases do not exist. Wolf-Wendel, Toma, and Morphew (2001, p. 375) argue that close contact and common goals can break such stereotypes. If athletic departments actively listen to what their athletes have to say in authentic dialogue, student athletes of color and mostly white staff and administrators might begin to see one another as individuals who share common goals.

To my second point, student-athletes want to be socially responsible, using their voice and taking action against injustice. Meanwhile, society, including athletic departments, expect athletes to be socially responsible leaders but not in a way that causes discomfort for fans, donors, or other stakeholders. As examples detailed above suggest, the athletic departments and other outside audiences seem to equate social responsibility with silence on social injustice. This mindset does not allow space for development or growth in ability to lead. Everyone has different opinions and if student athletes are not able to freely speak their minds to advocate for themselves and others, their civic and personal development will be hindered. To truly respect the whole student, athletic departments must respect the student athlete's development and ability to civically engage. Social-activist activism is a necessary part of being a socially responsible leader.

As part of an educational institution, athletic departments have an opportunity and responsibility beyond winning and athletic performance. They can support their students in their activism and acknowledge the whole person who is the student-athlete, not just someone who can dribble, jump high, or run fast. In May 2020, Mike Jones, a football player for Clemson University, organized a protest in response to George Floyd's murder. He said, "That stuff was

all very real to me. It could be me at any time. So it really hit me, that this is how it is. Some people might not ever understand, and so that's why I feel like I was so passionate” (Lyles Jr., 2020). Student athletes hold their intersectional identities as salient to them and not just their identity as an athlete. Despite conflict opinions, surely athletic departments can find ways to succeed in competition and while also valuing the whole student.

## **Research plan**

Many fields of study could contribute to our understanding of how athletic departments can better support marginalized students in their activism. In this report I review two: organizational communication and holistic student development. Regarding organizational communication, research on communication and conflict will contribute how amplification of marginalized works at its best and why it is so important. Brenda J. Allen (1995) writes in *“Diversity” and Organizational Communication* about the biases and stereotypes that have negative impacts on communication within organizations. There are differences that must be acknowledged during interracial or cross-ethnicity interactions. Organizational communication literature will reveal what the environment, relationships, and conflicts are like between leaders and members of organizations with the influence of power. Members like student athletes being able to freely express their beliefs and identities that go beyond just members of the organization is necessary to create a supportive environment. Understanding how organizations operate with their communication effectively and ineffectively is vital to resolving conflicts.

College athletic departments and universities influence the way student athletes are able to show up in spaces and use their voices to speak out against injustice. Therefore, studies surrounding holistic student development are vital to this report. According to Kristina Navarro and Stephen Malvaso (2015, p. 264), the search for identity intensifies in college. Student

athletes will have more identities than just their athlete identity and just their student identity. The ability to express the intersection of their identities is important for not only their development but maintaining a supportive environment. Social justice activism is a form of communication that student athletes continue to show they want to participate in. Athletic departments must be spaces that assist in the facilitation of their students' developments. They are a department that is here for educational purposes, which seems to be a goal that is often dismissed due to the overpowering demand for athletic success, revenue, and physical performance. Athletic departments push student athletes to be socially responsible leaders outside of athletics, but this is a contradicting expectation if athletic departments do not allow them to lead within their space (Malvaso & Navarro, 2015).

Therefore, this report proceeds as follows. In chapter two, I review recent academic literature on organizational communication, with a special concern for conflict within organizations. I also in chapter two review holistic student development literature, explaining the development and growth of the concept in higher education and how it has benefited students. In both cases, I read the literature through the lens of my research question, seeking to understand how athletic departments might manage conflict and participate in holistic student development in ways that better support marginalized student athletes in their social justice activism. I find that seeing conflict as a place of growth with consideration of identity, power, and emotion within organizations leads to a place that can increase understanding. Holistic student development can be utilized as a tool to further resolve the conflict with consideration for all students as human beings meeting their needs, appreciating their identities, and acknowledging all dimensions of development.

In the third and final chapter, I offer recommendations based on my review and a set of diversity training models that can be found in the Appendix. The models were created based on findings from the review and are meant as for athletic departments that seek to build community through understanding difference. Doing the time-consuming and difficult work of building community across difference will not only allow collegiate athletic departments to better address the racial inequities of college athletics but also live up to their promise of educating the whole student no matter their social identity.

## **Chapter 2 - Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

Conflict is inevitable in organizations, but it can happen well or poorly in organizations. When conflict is handled poorly, it can become a tense, anxious environment that seems to have no resolution. The literature shows that adopting a holistic development approach can facilitate resolutions. Conflict appears differently at a member, leader, and organizational level. Power influences not only the conflicts that occur but also the way leaders and members see and understand one another. The understanding of organizational communication from the literature can be applied to the way student athletes interact with their athletic department and college or university. In this chapter, I will review scholarship pertaining to organizational communication and holistic student development. I then draw on this literature to forward a statement of needed action and future research.

Thereafter, I consider holistic student development, which is an educational approach with reference to all dimensions of the student: intellectual, emotional, social, ethical, physical and spiritual. In this review, I focus on the history and growth of holistic student development as practiced by universities today. Students initiate their own development, too, when they participate in activism on and off campus. Cognitive dissonance is inevitable in development as well. It is a place of growth which is a purpose of development.

Based on this literature review, we can see shortcomings in the way organizations find the source of the conflicts and how they attempt to mediate it. Leader and member relationships do not foster a sense of support to be able to discuss needs that are and are not being met. Unrealistic expectations surrounding identity and organization affiliation create more tension than community. Development of members is a dynamic experience that is unique for each



individual. Organizations' fixed approach is showing to be ineffective and thus can create a harmful environment.

## **Organizational communication**

### **Introduction**

Organizations are created through five features – social collectivity, organizational and individual goals, coordinating activity, organization structure, and embedding of an organization within an environment of other organizations (Miller, 2013, p. 11). These five features only provide a preview to all that organizations are and can be. Organizations are dynamic and complicated which effects the communication that occurs verbally and nonverbally. It is through communication that makes organizations what they are in their organizing, action toward goals, maintenance of the organization and relationship building (Miller, 2013). Thinking about organizations through this wider, more complex lens pushes us to view organizations more holistically.

Additionally, organizations exhibit a unique culture. Keyton (2015) utilizes Schein's definition of organizational culture that it is

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group [social units of all sizes] learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (Schein, 1992, p.12)

Organizational culture confines and facilitates the way those within behave. It is a way to make sense of the things that are seen and how members interpret it. The varying degrees of power influence how we make meaning of the organization and understand it. This can be originated in status, job interest, organization interests, people you work with, and rewards offered by the organization (Keyton, 2015, p. 17). The culture can be recognized by being deeply felt by the members, a sense of common knowledge about the ways of operations, and it is widely accessible

to the group. In sum, the organizational culture serves as a roadmap for leaders and members to understand expectations and what they must do to meet them.

### **Diagnosing conflict**

Conflict is an interactive process. It is manifested in disagreement, incompatibility, and distance within or between social entities (Spaho, 2013, p. 106). Conflict can happen between those within the organization or those inside and outside of the organization. Conflict is dynamic and ever-changing in organizations just like the people within the organizations. Conflict is present between identities, leaders and members, expectations and reality, and collective and individual success. For organizations to be successful, they must first be able to recognize the conflict and understand what it is.

Organizational identity can be understood through three principles – central, enduring, and distinctive (CED). Whetten (2006) uses these principles to define it as the central and enduring attributes of an organization that distinguish it from other organizations (p.220). The central principle of the organization is the knowledge about the organization that informs members about how to perform tasks and conduct themselves appropriately. The enduring principle of the organization influences the reputation of the organization. The enduring principle can also be incorporated with higher leadership roles that members may strive for. Last, the distinctive principle is what makes the organization identity of high quality while emphasizing how it differs from other organizations (p. 224).

In organizations, members' self-identity and their identity as a member of their organization are closely linked (Lane & Scott, 2000, p. 43). The members' roles in the organization are determined through interactions in work groups, departments, age cohorts, et (Ashfort & Mael, 1989). The interactions of member to member, member to leader, and member

to outsider all assist in a member defining themselves and creating a self-schema (p. 46). The member identity becomes more salient in the self-schema as daily interactions and overlap of personal and member identity increase (p. 50). Members understand who they are, who they should be, and who they can be by the environment of their organization (Allen, 1995). This member identity can be termed the situated identity. The “situated identity” can be validated by leaders who see the identity as relevant to the time, situation, and context (Lane & Scott, 2000, p. 46). This understanding becomes more complex when considering the social identities, a member may hold. Those with social identities that are marginalized can experience negative implicit and explicit messages from leaders about their inability to identify with the majority (Allen, 1995). If a member chooses not to identify with the organization or is failing to find their member and self-identity to complement the relationship with the organization may terminate or continue with low trust and support (Lane & Scott, 2000, p. 52). The interactions shape how one views themselves and experiences the organization.

The organizational identity is a set of beliefs that are shared by the leaders and members about the characteristics of the organization (Lane & Scott, 2000, p. 45). Goals, missions, practices, values, and actions can all contribute to shaping an organizational identity (Lane & Scott, 2000). A member or leader of the organization will begin to define themselves through their organizational identity through the interactions they have within. These interactions help define who we are and become part of the self-schema (p. 46). The member or leader’s assessment of the audiences and situations help understand one’s self through the lens of the organization (Lane & Scott, 2000, p. 46). Then, the member can decide if the organizational identity aligns with their self-identity or not.

Not all members of the organization will share the beliefs of the organization. Those that do not share the beliefs can experience tension with the organizational identity and their self-identity. As stated, there are a lot of moving parts in understanding the difference between one's own self-identity and their identity as a member. There is a choice when identifying with an organization and legitimacy of the organization influences that choice (Lane & Scott, 2000, p.52). The legitimacy can be seen when members believe that their own needs and identity will not come at a cost for the organization or they ultimately feel supported in the transaction with the organization. Leaders must work to not treat their members a means to an end because this will solely result in more conflict (Ashfort & Mael, 1989, p. 29). Good leadership can increase member self esteem, which can then make the membership to the organization a salient identity (p. 28). If members see the organization as illegitimate, they will most likely choose not to identify.

Determining whether they must sacrifice their needs to identify can come from reference others. Reference others help one create their self-definition. Reference others can be parents, spouses, or members of a social group to which an individual belongs or identifies with (Lane & Scott, 2000, p.46). Identity is created through micro interactions with the reference others or fellow members and leaders within the organization, for better or worse. When the organizational identity and social identity do not align or are in conflict, one will have difficulty gaining knowledge and understanding about themselves and others (Allen, 2005, p. 43). Members and leaders are people with social identities, and it is impossible to assume that those social identities do not impact the communication practices of the organization or treatment either one receives (Allen, 1995). If one must constrain their social identity to fit the organizational identity, the social reality for that individual becomes strained (Allen, 2005, p.

46). The tension begins to manifest and grow as one tries to monitor and filter their self-identity to fit the organizational identity. “Leave it at work” or “Leave it at home” becomes ultimately impossible due to the maximized emotional labor. This leads to members denying affiliation with the organization, separating from the organization, or discrediting the organization.

All communicative elements, especially messages sent by either member or leader, are influenced by identity (Barge & Bisel, 2011, p. 259). For organizations to be effective, leader-to-member communication must involve sharing. Sharing can be a variety of things such as trust, respect, information, and feelings but ultimately the leader and member need mutual understanding (Cahn, 1986, p. 20). It is not enough for the leader to understand and appreciate the member or vice versa. Without this perceived understanding, there is a lack of organizational effectiveness and an increase in anxiety among members (Cahn, 1986).

Unsurprisingly, certain responses lead to increased understanding and others to alienation (Cahn, 1986, p. 21). People in either role – leader or member – fail to take time listen and attempt to understand. They criticize, interrupt, and dismiss (Cahn, 1986). An environment without understanding and with uncertainty leads to a cycle of unresolved conflict.

### **The new organization and moral conflict**

Hierarchies have an intrusive power that does not encourage innovation nor employee engagement (Pfeffer, 2013). The hierarchies increase competitive nature and increase control that those towards the top have over those at the bottom (p. 272). More and more organizations are moving toward a more horizontal, democratic work structure (Pfeffer, 2013). Organizations exhibiting a horizontal structure have a shared responsibility, accountability, and a more decentralized location of power (p. 273). This style of organization encourages an environment where leaders and members can express emotions, cultural differences, and positive attitudes

toward others that are different from us. Horizontal democratic organizations help to eliminate the us versus them mentality between leaders and members (p. 275).

When leaders and members do not foster a relationship, it becomes difficult to communicate about needs, emotions, and inequities. Adame and Bisel (2019, p. 140) wrote, “If employees cannot label behaviors as unethical publicly, organizational members will be unable to reflect on those judgements collectively and, in turn, will remain unable to update their work practices and policies accordingly.” Unethical behaviors threaten every crevice of society (Adame & Bisel, 2019). When members cannot speak to the injustice they experience within and outside of the organization, leaders are allowed to maintain the status quo.

Disallowing members to speak of frustrations over injustice feeds the brain-body dichotomy. The brain-body dichotomy exists when organizations only honor the brain as appropriate for the workplace and signal that the body should be left at home (Adame & Bisel, 2019, p. 143). This is also a visible aspect of power. Leaders have the unspoken permission to express emotions including anger or sadness without their competence questioned while members are expected to suppress the same emotions (Pfeffer, 2013). This dichotomy completely undermines the recommendation for leaders and organizations to embody moral knowing. The embodied moral knowing encourages intuition and gut feelings (Adame & Bisel, 2019). Embodied moral knowing can be a pathway for members to speak about their concerns without being sidelined as unprofessional, naïve, or unsophisticated. Embodied moral knowing may not be the right answer for every organization, but without the encouragement and desire to create real change the organization is likely to remain in the cycle it has been in.

Positioning theory explains that different storylines help to make a person’s actions seen as social acts and the members within the conversation each have a location. The position of

each person involved in the dialogue is determined by obligations, permissions, and prohibitions. The social acts make each person's "position" dynamic because it is constantly changing (Barge & Bisel, 2011, p. 261). Every member of an organization who is not a leader is given a position. When organizations do not function in a way that adapts to dynamic positions, the brain-body dichotomy continues. The communication practices for an organization to be adaptable must encompass the body, culture, emotions, and brain. A lack in acknowledgement of diverse positions and communication practice can perpetuate silencing and increase anxieties making the organization less effective (Adame & Bisel, 2019). Moving toward a holistic view pushes back on the brain-body dichotomy and allows all members of an organization to make decisions and engage in dialogue with empathy, cultural values, and emotions.

### **Power dynamics**

Foucault describes power as a system that is reinforced by ceaseless struggles and confrontations that are transformed, strengthened, and reversed (Alvesson, 1996, p. 96). Power is the way people put constraints on themselves and others (Alvesson, 1996). Power is everywhere, including organizations. Power in organizations can be seen as simple as leaders giving members their identities in the organization. It is important to note, what characteristics give power and take it away. The social systems of America let race, ethnicity, social economic status, gender, sexuality, education level etc. all play into whether or not one receives power in the form of privileges. This must be acknowledged so members are not silenced and alienated.

Power is intertwined in conflict. Power is a spectrum. It can be dependent on work ethic, social systems, identity, status, etc. The hierarchy allows those with power to have more control over those that are lower in the hierarchy (Pfeffer, 2013). Those that do have higher power in organizations are the leaders and their actions and decisions impact the members. Because of the

authority and responsibility granted them by the organization, leaders hold relatively more power than other members. Thanks to this disproportionate ability to exert influence in the organization, leaders battle the temptation to take care of their own interests over the collective's interests. Put differently, power allows leaders to push their own agenda and they have to make the conscious decision to pursue what is best for the organization not only themselves'. To maintain an effective organization, leaders must be aware of the responsibility they have to the group. This perception can often be stimulated by recognizing that they share an identity of being part of the organization rather than above the organization (Ellemers et al., 2018). The leaders will want or feel the need to value the organization's holistic goals because their identity with the members of the group contributes to the social self (p. 113). When members notice leaders identifying with their group and valuing their concerns, they are more likely to want to follow the leader's guidance (Ellemers et al., 2018).

Members have power as well. They are more complicit to following the leader when they feel their power distance is low (Ashuri et al., 2001). Power distance is greater with more difference in education level, expertise, ability, and knowledge. Members may not have the same amount of power as the leaders, but their power is that they are needed by the organization to be successful. Jeffrey Pfeffer (2001, p. 36) writes that power transforms individual interests into coordinated activities that accomplish valuable ends. Power can be education, skill, knowledge in organization's strategies and operations, and the ability to use the power – to feel an inclination to act (p. 48). Leaders need the power of members and their skills. Power is the unspoken secret to success for members, leaders, and the overall organization.



## **The “other”**

Conflict occurs in many ways and is initiated due to many different factors. In organizations this can look like low or lacking in cultural competency that demonstrates an appreciation for difference. Leaders themselves can be a diverse team, but so are all their members. The leaders need to be equipped to guide their members with empathy and appreciation. Thus, they have to acknowledge their biases, their place in power structures that allow them to have these biases, and potential lack of knowledge about the different members in the room so they can better understand and lead (Allen, 1995). Most organizations make an attempt to provide this knowledge through diversity trainings. Diversity trainings have developed to be problematic as they tend to exist annually and or are not pushing members and leaders to interact with one another. The training and communication have to be continuous to be effective in reaching understanding and appreciation for the other (Allen & Rothbart, 2018). Organizations can see the repercussions of adopting “every now and again” diversity trainings in way such as, members and leaders maintaining their original attitudes, the environments will stay the same, and little to no progress will be made toward being a cohesive organization (Allen & Rothbart, 2018).

Brenda Allen (1995) writes about the generalizations and stereotypes that black and white students have of one another. The generalizations and stereotypes being made were removing one another’s identities and personhood (Allen, 1995, p. 146). For instance, students’ teacher evaluations will show stereotypes and marginality at work. Black professors are generally reviewed more negatively than their white counterparts unless the course had an ethnic component (Holladay & Quinones, 2008, p. 345). Stereotypes create defensive climates and impede on effective communication. Leaders and members will view the other as exactly that, an

“other”. They view one another as an “other” in role, race, gender, beliefs, etc. According to Kendra Cherry, othering is a phenomenon in which other individuals or groups are labeled or defined as not fitting in with the social norm (Cherry, 2020). Thus, an “us vs. them” mentality is created. Othering can influence how one treats others as being worthy of less dignity and respect (Cherry, 2020). There is an in-group and an out-group that individuals’ minds naturally put themselves and others in, usually based on ethnicity or sexual orientation (Hebl et al., 2015). Members and leaders have shown to be more willing to help or assist people that share similarities with them like appearance, initials, job status, gender, etc. (Pfeffer, 2013, p. 275). This only increases the difficulty of building community and breaking walls of discrimination. Lack of leader to member or member to member interactions will prohibit a cohesive collective from forming.

Empathy allows one to understand others; emotions and experiences (Hebl et al., 2015, p.609). Some people contain empathy as more of a personality trait than others, but it is not a birthright to whether or not one is empathetic. However, empathy in organizations does not happen in a day. Those that are low in empathy toward diverse populations will benefit the most from interactions that allow them to take others’ perspectives. Empathetic leaders, who have the power to make decisions over those they may not share an identity with, will be the most impactful to their members’ holistic development – mentally, emotionally, and physically. Organizations that are low in emotions like empathy and compassion do not foster trusting spaces for members (Allen & Rothbart, 2018). Without recognition of the pains and concerns of one another, leaders and members will only see each other as the “other”.

## **Stepping up or standing by**

In this report, the relevant organizational conflict is between student athletes, who are the members, and athletic department and higher education administrators, who are the leaders. As student athletes, specifically BIPOC student athletes, have highlighted the injustices and inequities, they have received little to no understanding from leaders. Effective support requires athletic departments to dissolve the notion of the brain-body dichotomy by being a space of open communication and appreciating the whole person. Leaders and members must interact to no longer see one another as the “other” in roles, social identities, power, etc. Organizations must recognize the power that only leaders have, but power that members have too. It is a system that requires both roles and an appreciation of what they bring to the table. With proper support and perceived understanding, the organization will foster shared trust, respect, and understanding.

Within the context of the collegiate athletic department, the leaders have the power to be an active platform for their members, the student athletes. They are not only in a position of organizational authority, but the majority of the leadership in the NCAA is white and male (NCAA, 2020). Therefore, they also hold a measure of social privilege, and therefore, a measure of choice in how they approach their relationships with student athletes. Student athletes’ social identities are formed in relationship to their interactions with leaders in the athletic department and on campus. Unfortunately, the nature of higher education, athletics, and society, makes the athlete become the situated identity that is the focal point of who they are rather than the student, the man or woman, their culture, their values, etc. (Lane & Scott, 2000, p. 46). The athlete identity is reinforced over other identities of theirs over and over. The athlete aspect of their identity becomes the assumption and the expectation. And the brain-body dichotomy, if

reinforced by the department's organizational structure and communication, leaves little to no room for the student athletes to be a whole person.

Enforcing the brain-body dichotomy on student athletes is not the only way that conflict is manifested in the organization. Additionally, marginalized student athletes already participating in social justice activism must do so within the bounds of the organization's permission. The bounds of permission are restrictive and likely biased in favor of leader interests thanks to power imbalances. Rather than really listening to the needs of the members, the leaders rely on their power to make decisions for what they determine the betterment of the collective which can include students and fans. The lack of freedom in this practice dismisses their autonomy and personhood of these individuals whose intersectional identities are at the forefront of these societal conflicts. Proper communication between leaders and members that utilizes emotion and recognizes the value in one another can form relationships in the organization. These relationships can be a connection that allows leaders and members to learn from one another leading to learning about the other's needs. In the case of social justice activism, leaders can understand their members' needs and be able to support their student athletes appropriately.

When those who are less powerful in the conflict see a chance for change, it is likely they will not hesitate to act to change the power imbalance (Bui-Wrzosinska, 2010, p. 270). For example, in June 2020, multiple Kansas State University (K-State) football student athletes announced on social media that they did not want to play, practice, or meet as a team until Jaden McNeil, a student at K-State, was removed or punished (Boren & Giambalvo, 2020). McNeil had tweeted "Congratulations to George Floyd on being drug free for an entire month!" (Twitter, 2020). Many found the tweet to be insensitive and hurtful, so the student athletes took a stand by refusing to play which would be an absence of revenue for the university. This inverted or at

least dislodged the power dynamics within the athletic department. The program took a pause from all practices, workouts, and meetings until they could decide what they would expect as a response from the institution before they resumed play. Football is one of the main revenue generating sports for athletic departments and at K-State it is the highest. The student athletes refusing to play was an attempt to seek their own justice with urgency. The football program's response to their student athletes needs is an excellent example of the interactions needed to have a supportive organization. However, it should not take student athletes walking out to receive attention to their needs. Athletic departments do in fact have the power to reduce power distance through valuing one another beyond sports.

## **Holistic student development**

### **History and philosophy**

The approach of holistic student development can be summarized as “the concern for the development of the whole person” (Evans et al., 2016, p.24). This approach is meant for higher education officials to practice so they can stimulate growth in students. The idea of developing the whole person began in the 1920s when students were picking occupations that matched their personal characteristics. As enrollment increased after World War I, educators found that they needed to focus on guiding the “whole” student to reach their potential and be socially responsible graduates. In 1968, the Hazen Foundation directly encouraged higher education officials to “assume responsibility for the human development of their students” (p. 26). The student development work force continues to measure and analyze the students' experience in higher education and the way it influences the outcomes of their development.

Holistic student development encompasses many pieces of developing a person but the dimensions I will refer to are intellectual, emotional, social, ethical, physical, and spiritual (Kuh,

2018). I interpret these to be a strong depiction of the whole person. Holistic student development can be dissected down to small details that make up a person, but for a concise understanding of the dimensions of holistic student development I will be utilizing the six listed above. The intellectual dimension develops students' ability to communicate, synthesize, integrate, and apply the knowledge they have gained in their field. Beyond students' specific field of study, the goal is for students to be able to learn and think deeply (Kuh, 2018, p. 53). The emotional dimension develops a student's ability to display and understand their emotions appropriately. Next, the social dimension pushes students to gain a higher quality and depth of interpersonal relationships as well as to be civically engaged. The ethical dimension has students creating their own value system that they use to lead their life choices with. Fifth, the physical dimension increases a student's understanding of their health and how to maintain it as well as make informed decisions about it. Last, the spiritual dimension can look a variety of ways. While public institutions do not have religion weaved in their curriculum, higher education officials can still encourage development in their students to think about their own meaning and deeper purpose beyond the physical world (p. 53). Each of these dimensions are encompassed in a student's development. Some may be more salient than others for students, but their experience in college will shape the way they see themselves and act in the world.

When these dimensions are implicated in a student's life, students can learn how to conduct themselves in a classroom, engage with faculty and peers with intention, and develop strong and meaningful relationships. This can assist them in their ability to join a community. The psychological sense of community integrates belonging, social integration, and institutional commitment (Cheatle et al., 2020, p.594). The development of community can encourage a student's chances of thriving in college. This is not the usual general notion that the experience is

just enjoyable. Rather, thriving correlates with this holistic development approach in which students will be fully engaged intellectually, emotionally, and socially in their college experience (Cheatle et al., 2020, p. 594). The community can be built with peers and faculty, formally and informally. These interactions compiled together have shown to be a strong variable in one's sense of belonging (p. 600). Specifically, the increase in faculty interactions results in a stronger learning outcome. Overall, the peer interactions are the strongest variable in a student developing a psychological sense of community (p. 605). The academic, social, and deeper life interactions will all build on one another making a holistic experience that is backed with support.

The interactions with peers and faculty offer the opportunity for students to gain an increased knowledge of cultural competency. Cultural attitudes, knowledge, and skills are necessary for intercultural communication (Perez & Shim, 2020). In classrooms and communities of safe environments that recognize otherness, students can experience dissonance and gain an ethno-relative rather than ethnocentric perspective. This can happen not only in the classroom but through service-learning opportunities, study abroad, learning communities, and student-affairs programs. These frequent interactions allow students a chance to self-author their relationships and understand how their identity and others' impact social systems (Perez & Shim, 2020, p. 409). The dissonance experienced and reflective learning from these intercultural experiences teach students how to gain a global perspective and understand others' world views (p. 406). Students can live cohesively and appropriately in a diverse and ever-changing world.

### **College student activism**

Civic engagement and activism can be best understood as the behavior that addresses legitimate public matters (Browning et al, 2015, p.75). College and university campuses first began to see sites of activism in the 1920's. During this time, campus climates were

homogenous, and students did not address national issues, but rather confront town or college authority (Rosas, 2010, p. 11). It was not until the 1930s that U.S. students engaged in national politics, specifically anti-war protest. Their activism of bringing attention to their issues with war were seen in boycotts, traveling peace caravans, student conventions and those conventions lead to student organizations that were housed on campuses (p. 14). College campuses became a hub for activism. With the passing of the G.I. Bill, more students could attend college, which lead to an increase in exposure to diversity, and a chance to explore freedom of thought. This freedom gave students the initiative to push higher education officials to dismantle the notion that administration could act as the students' parents. Freedom of speech could finally begin to be fully practiced.

The combination of national and local address by college student activists was best noticed during the civil rights movement. The racial inequality in America had students pressing on college and government officials to create a more just, integrated environment. This had the most notable impact as attitudes towards African Americans, women, and the LGBTQ community improved (Rosas, 2010). They were by no means equal, but the world was becoming a little less exclusive.

Student engagement in activism can create tangible change for the collective, but it impacts the students individually as well. It can contribute to their development by increasing their commitment to their environment and assisting them in developing their life philosophy (Rosas, 2010). Activism also increases students' understanding of social issues and inequities and they gain a greater understanding and appreciation of diversity (p. 34). Students that are more involved in organizations and have strong social networks are more likely to be involved in activism. The campus involvement and creation of a social network fosters an increase in desire



to partake in activism (p. 58). The effects of being involved in activism stays with the student beyond their college years. It has showed to influence their future attitudes, behaviors, and involvement in their post-college life.

Colleges and universities have been responding to the criticism that they are not fully developing students to be civically responsible by providing more opportunities for this development. Some courses are developing activism into the curriculum with service learning. Other opportunities look like outreach missions and an abundance of opportunities to volunteer on campus and locally within the community (Rosas, 2010, p. 34). Students have demonstrated activism as well through social media. Social media lets students learn the methods and struggles of activism in the past, discover similar experiences on other college campuses, and share strategies and ideas of confronting inequities (Mayweather & Reynolds, 2017). For example, the mourning of Trayvon Martin's death due to police brutality motivated the #HandsUpDontShoot viral hashtag that a group of Howard University students created when posting a photo of themselves with their hands in the air (Mayweather & Reynolds, 2017, p. 285). The rapid spread of other shared #HandsUpDontShoot photos assisted in igniting a fire in college students and faculty to call attention and change to the systemic racism and white supremacy that exists on campuses (p. 287). The change is visible in dialogue regarding racial issues, diverse representation increasing among faculty, and safe spaces for marginalized students being created like multicultural centers and LGBTQ resource centers. Activism is always evolving and the interest from college students to civically engage is only increasing.

### **Walk the talk**

Every individual has their own reason for attending college, but often there is a core theme of wanting an experience that changes them for the better and prepares them for life after

college (Kuh, 2018, p. 53). Universities that adopt a holistic approach provide a wide array of opportunities for students to create their own experience, whether by choice or according to a team's set agenda. These opportunities can come in the shape of student jobs, organizations, clubs, athletics, etc. Higher education officials can practice this holistic development approach by creating intentional opportunities for students to utilize these experiences to better understand how it impact their lives and others' (Perez & Shim, 2020, p. 419).

Many pieces of the college experience contribute to a student's holistic development. The way universities can demonstrate their practice of holistic development is through their programming. Academic advising, counseling and psychology services, financial aid, dean of student life, disability support, international student services, leadership programs, multicultural student services, LGBTQ student services, and religious programs and services are examples of programming that facilitates holistic student development. Each of these programs target different needs and interests. For example, the dean of student life is a person or committee that has the responsibility of addressing student concerns. Members of the student body, faculty, and community can all raise concerns with this program (Dungy, 2003). Also, public institutions are not able to directly offer religious programs and services but can assist in student spiritual development via off-campus organizations (p. 352). The programs mentioned here do not make up an exhaustive list of all university services, but it does give a glimpse of what holistic development can look like in practice.

The programs that offer involvement and employment to students can give them a chance to develop leadership knowledge and skills from the variety of settings. Per the social change model, leadership is a process and not a position (Lewis, 2020, p. 541). This is the philosophy to

be imparted to student employees and organization members. It promotes self-knowledge, collaboration, social justice, and civic engagement.

As the cost of higher education increases, more students are looking for employment. However, through analysis of a sample of 36,000 students from 87 different campuses, Lewis (2020) found working while enrolled to be associated with lower self-reported capacity for socially responsible leaders. In other words, student workers do not believe their work experience contributes to their socially responsible leadership development, contradicting the goals of the social change model for students to have a transformational experience. The study, conducted by Jonathan S. Lewis (2020), is a reminder that the holistic development is only possible if higher education officials who staff and administer in these programs are willing to effectively demonstrate that leadership is a process and not a position. This could happen by facilitating student workers' experiences to learn more about themselves, conflicts, relationships, etc.

Overall, the facilitation of holistic development must be dynamic to meet changing student needs. For instance, when Millennials began enrolling in college, universities found that they needed to adapt their programs to help students learn how to function independently from their parents due to a large increase in parent involvement (Lowery, 2004). On the other hand, sometimes change is needed to achieve the same learning goals. For example, when millennials were entering college, student affairs found themselves struggling to encourage face-to-face interactions and relationship building because students were glued to their cellphones. Regardless of era or needs, holistic development maintains a commitment to developing the whole person with new skills, ideas, and ways of life.

## **Living in the grey area**

Healthy organizations always have some degree of conflict and acknowledging the conflict builds trust within the organization (Peterson, 2018). Higher education is meant to be a space for dialogue to challenge and produce knowledge, but too much dialogue can hinder productivity and create an unhealthy environment (Peterson, 2018). Good dialogue allows participants to learn from one another and grow in their competency from the conflict (Peterson, 2018). Academic leaders have the critical responsibility of managing conflicts so that it can be a place of growth (Peterson, 2018, p. 43).

Higher education is a community of groups faculty, administration, maintenance staff, professional staff, students, student groups, etc. There are groups of external interests as well. This can include donors, alumni, state legislatures for public institutions, and families of students and faculty. Many of these groups and their members, internal and external, have ideas of what is best for the university and its students (Fried, 2011).

Student affairs officials go through a moral judgement process to handle conflicts which include the knowledge of what is right, which is based on values, virtues, and the cognitive ability to adopt moral reasoning, as well as the ability to act on what is right (Blimling, 1998). Successful leaders within higher education utilize the “Fight when you can win, retreat when you cannot” informal theory which pushes leaders to become comfortable with there being only one ethical right answer and at times compromises will not be possible (p. 67). Going into these conflict situations that exhibit shades of grey, higher education officials remind themselves that they are committed to student learning, appreciation of difference, and an emphasis on education for effective citizenship. They want to instill academic honesty, respect for freedom of thought and expression, honesty, and compassion among other principles (p. 72). This commitment is not

always so simple. What happens when a student violates a principle of another student? For example, in March, 2020, Kansas State University's Morris Family Multicultural Center had an open forum on their white boards to encourage dialogue about Black History Month when students wrote comments supporting white nationalism on the board (Mottet, 2021). The group, America First, meets on K-State's campus. Allowing a student group such as America First to exist and advocate for the exclusion of those not white and Protestant from the country and campus puts university principles into conflict.

The higher education institution is responsible for maintaining a safe, civil, and educationally supportive environment, but they have to do this with transparency and congruency. Dilemmas like this call for reflection on competing values, recognizing that no solution will be ideal. Gregory Blimling (1998, p.74) offers a series of questions to ask in the face of such controversies:

- Is this decision consistent with the mission of the institution?
- Does this action promote student learning and development?
- Does the decision build educational environments and promote student learning?
- Does the decision help students develop coherent values and ethical standards?
- Does the decision set and communicate high expectations for student learning?

This is only a glimpse of the thought process of decision making that higher education institutions have to begin to mediate when in conflict.

### **An incongruent experience**

Student athletes experience college differently than do a traditional college student thanks to time constraints, class options, attendance requirements, academic services, and micromanagement. A large difference is the relationship between the student athlete and the

university compared to traditional students. College student athletes are legally distinct from their student peers in that colleges may monitor student athletes' on-campus and off-campus speech. Non-athlete traditional students are allowed freedom of speech so long as it does not threaten violence, incite of unlawful activity, or constitute sexual material that is legally obscene (Lomonte, 2014, p. 5). The legal differences exist because student athletes are ultimately equivalent to an employee and so they "represent" the school to the public (p. 3). Also, in voluntarily participating waives a degree of individual freedom to be an athlete.

This waiver can be implicit, explicit, or both. Almost all NCAA institutions have student athlete codes of conduct forms for students to sign, indicating they are now a representative of the university and must abide by the regulations that their athletic departments. These regulations can include dress code, class attendance, social media policies, and speech and expression (Rhim, 1996). So, how does holistic support for student athletes factor into this?

The student athletes and their institutions are in a mutually dependent relationship. The relationship is said to be a transaction that provides the student athletes with a transformational college experience. The student athletes perform and generate revenue for the institutions and the student athletes receive a quality education. Therefore, holistic student development for the traditional nonathlete student is incompatible with the student athlete experience and in this sense incomplete, for college and university campuses emphasize the importance of students being able to exchange ideas even if they are challenging or unpopular (Lomonte, 2014). But in contrast, student athletes are not allowed the same freedom of expression. Without this ability, their educational experience is hindered. The universities are not holding up their end of the deal in this relationship.

Due to student athletes wearing two hats, the student and the athlete, this often affects their performance in the classroom and presence on campus. There is an incongruence between the explicit goals and implicit expectations that athletic departments impose on their athletes (Dixon & Springer, 2021, p. 191). Student athletes are to meet the expectations of being a successful student, but most of the time their student identity needs to accommodate their athlete identity, not the other way around. Student athletes are having their degree paths picked for them, given their schedules and told to go, and have little free time to participate in other university activities to support development (Rhim, 1996). If the “non-sport” development hinders the athlete development, there is rarely if ever an accommodation (Dixon & Springer, 2021). This imbalance in the roles of student and athlete affects their relationships with campus professors and faculty as well.

Bias is present in all of us, even in those that work in higher education. With biases, come stereotypes. Student athletes are prone to experience prejudice from peers and faculty (Moses & Rubin, 2017, p. 319). Student athletes are pegged with the “dumb jock” stereotype when they enter the classroom (p. 26). They are perceived to be lacking in motivation and intelligence before they even turn in a homework assignment (Bosworth et al., 2007). In a study by Bosworth et al. (2007), 62.1% of student athletes reported that a faculty member made a negative remark about athletes in class and 61.5% they were refused or given a hard time about needed accommodations for athletic competitions (p. 251). Depending on the sport, student athletes have potential to miss many in- person classes and need to reschedule exams. The nature of college athletics places student athletes in situations where they unintentionally conform to the stereotypes. Student athletes who are academically underprepared, exhausted from workout schedules, placed in tutoring facilitated by athletic departments, or do just feel that their sport is a

salient part of their identity can initiate negative perceptions from campus faculty. Also, student athletes are routed into certain departments that have flexible degree paths; professors and faculty in these degrees are then more often asked to accommodate the student athletes and their schedules (Comeaux, 2011). Their frustration is understandable though not the student athletes' fault.

The battle of stereotypes and misperceptions is more complex for marginalized student athletes. BIPOC student athletes are in a constant battle of having to deem their whole selves worthy in their sport, their education, and to their fans. America has a plethora of predominantly white institutions that put BIPOC student athletes in a cultural transition, subject to more stereotyping and increased racism (Moses & Rubin, 2017). Just because marginalized students may also be athletes, this does not make them exempt from the racist structures and tendencies that surround them (Hirko, 2009, p. 93). These structures are visible even just with turning on a football or basketball game, seeing predominantly black athletes competing while the athletic directors, coaches, managers, etc. are white (Beamon, 2008). Without an acknowledgement of the disparities, BIPOC student athletes will not be developed appropriately and justly. Acknowledgement is only a first step. Disparities must be acknowledged in order to be acted on to create real social change. The actions that follow the education are vital to effectively intervene in these oppressive systems.

There are repercussions beneath the surface of an embarrassing moment for the students or a bad relationship with a professor. Athletes can internalize the dumb-jock stereotype into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Beyond circumstances that may leave them to be perceived as the stereotype, they will no longer have interest or belief that they are capable in an academic setting (Bosworth et al., 2007). The athletic departments feed into this as well with providing student



athlete-only academic centers. The centers are well-intentioned, but it encourages the notion that athletics will impede the academic experience and that this is okay and expected (Moses & Rubin, 2017, p. 320). With and without the self-fulfilled prophecies, it is apparent student athletes too often do not have equal access to the full educational experience.

Nevertheless, student athletes have shown a desire to civically engage in the oppressive systems that disadvantage marginalized persons. The combination of speaking out against injustice, the special relationship student athletes have with their institution, and fan back lash can cause discomfort. The discomfort increases when the speakers are BIPOC. This discomfort and constant monitoring of what student athletes are allowed to say and not to say violates their holistic development and ultimately their holistic self. In sports, athletes build community from difference (Hirko, 2009). Why would speaking out against racial injustice be any different except on a larger scale? Student athletes are held to contradictory expectations in their academics, sports, and social development. When students leave their institutions, it is the hope that they are able to civically engage in their communities. Yet, efforts to keep student athletes from mobilizing for justice dims this hope.

Scientific and popular media literature explain that sports and politics are linked (Beachy et al., 2001). There is a spotlight constantly on college athletics that gives student athletes access to an extremely large audience. Athletes want to bring attention to social injustice, but they can only do this within the boundaries determined by their athletic departments, which may or may not be supporting their full development as whole persons. This discourages participation in activism and ultimately socially responsible leadership (Beachy et al., 2001, p. 372). The censorship, discouragement, and possible negative feedback contradicts dimensions of holistic support that higher education officials deem their duty to facilitate. The empowerment is a

shared responsibility to all involved in the student athletes' experiences, not only the athletic department.

## **Chapter 3 - Discussions, Implications, and Proposed Solutions**

### **Introduction**

The literature from organizational communication and holistic student development revealed insight as to how best understand the question of “How do we better support marginalized student athletes in their social justice activism?” Organizational communication describes the influence of false expectations, power, and emotion. Holistic student development pointed to the conflicts that can come with it. Taken together, this review implies that an intervention designed to increase cultural competency and how to approach difference with an attitude of appreciation is needed. Therefore, a six-session diversity training model was developed to improve empathetic communication within athletic departments toward the goal of better outcomes for marginalized student athletes – their experiences and development. Growth is a process that requires investment. Thus, we must discover methods to continuously practice and improve cultural competency and unlearn attitudes and behaviors founded on privilege.

In this chapter, I first review the findings from chapter two, then reflect on the implications and reforms suggested for athletic departments. Next, I explain the development and purpose of my diversity training models, found in the Appendix. Finally, I consider limitations of this study and look toward future needed research. Finally, I conclude by returning to the society-wide implications of student athlete social justice activism.

### **Summary of findings**

Organizational communication and holistic student development are foundational to marginalized student athletes participating in social justice activism. Organizational communication literature highlights key points that call for recognition. First, members of an organization are whole, emotional beings that are not truly able to live up to the expectation that

they need to leave specific pieces of themselves at home and bring other pieces to the organization. Next, power is always intertwined in conflict. It is a spectrum. Leaders and members must acknowledge the power they do and do not have and self-reflexively consider how best to utilize their social position to co-exist in a supportive and effective way. Third, an organization that wants to operate cohesively with empathy and working for the good of the collective must see that achieving this is a continual process. Positive interactions with empathy and honesty between leaders and members must be frequent to demystify the “other”.

Colleges and universities acknowledge a duty to their student body to provide a positive and impacting educational experience beyond the curriculum. Holistic student development is a higher education practice that develops students with regards to many dimensions that make up who they are as people, within and outside of their field of study. Higher education institutions facilitate holistic development through programs of work, leadership, and frequent, continuous interactions between peers and their faculty. The goal of holistically developing students involves students making mistakes that may or may not impede other students’ development and sense of self. College and university administrations must manage these tensions since community values, such as freedom of expression and embracing diversity, often conflict in practice.

### **Discussion and implications**

As previewed in chapter one and developed in chapter two, the current experience of student athletes mobilizing against injustice falls short of the ideals of effective organization strategies and fails to support students in their holistic development. Higher education institutions and athletic departments are not appearing to be in the process of operating in empathy and honesty with their members while pushing for the good of the collective. Power can

be blinding, and it is seen in the silencing of and conditional activism marginalized student athletes are allowed to participate. Meanwhile, student athletes are not employees of the institution and are repeatedly told that they are students. Yet their experience of holistic student development differs significantly from that of non-athlete students. Without this development and ability to partake in social justice activism as civically engaged persons with agency, student athletes will not be able to live up to the expectation to be the socially responsible leaders the public needs once they graduate.

The system that athletic departments and universities have created for student athletes to be successful in college despite their difficult schedules seems driven more by the demand for eligibility, especially for marginalized student athletes, rather than career preparation or holistic student development. This skewed system disproportionately effects student athletes of color (Beamon, 2008, p. 352). Student athletes want to engage in their communities to make a collective difference; if members and the organization are to thrive, leaders in athletic departments and at universities must listen. They must engage with their student athletes and focus on the needs of the collective, which includes their marginalized student athletes. Together they can work to create a place of encouragement that actively works to fill in the gaps. The gaps must be filled with interacting frequently with empathy, refocusing on the imbalance between student and athlete identities, acknowledging disparities, and co-creating a process of change with the athletic department, higher education institution, and the student athletes.

Lack of empathy, low cultural competencies, and utilizing power without consciousness of the needs of the collective lead to a hostile, anxious environment. Diversity trainings are problematic in that they are infrequent, not interactive, and do not foster an appreciation for difference. With this knowledge, there is an urgency to address these problems and develop

trainings that get back to the original goal, which is to create community through understanding difference.

### **Ongoing training for authentic dialogue**

The diversity training sessions in Appendix A were developed to promote frequent interaction, compassion, and empathy. In interactive conflict resolution, compassion functions in the sharing of stories and finding resolutions to controversial issues (Allen & Rothbart, 2018, p. 379). Recognizing the pains and concerns of the other humanizes the other. However, it must be noted that one can suppress prejudicial attitudes for the annual diversity training. This diversity training is formed in a sustained dialogue to effectively change or alter harmful attitudes towards other groups of people. Persons cannot suppress their prejudicial attitudes for long periods of time (Hebl et al., 2018). When dissonance occurs, the door for learning and growth opens.

The six-session training works to foster an environment of empathy through story-telling and sustained dialogue. The variety of topics are meant to holistically address the obstacles that marginalized student athletes encounter. The student athletes participate in a portion of the training sessions because change is co-created and establishes the needs of the collective rather than just those that are leaders of the organization and university. However, there is work for only the leaders to do because it is not solely the job of marginalized individuals to find the solution to their marginalization. The storytelling of student athletes in Session #1 and Session #6 gives the leaders a chance to hear the perspectives of their student athletes with the potential for a transformation. The leaders can begin to picture what it would be like to be a part of that group and in turn the in-group and out-group categorization can slowly diminish (Hebl et al., 2015). The storytelling gives the student athletes space to be seen as more than their athletic ability.

The sustained dialogue can develop empathy and compassion. Sustained dialogue can be formal, informal, in groups, one-on-one, etc. (Allen & Rothbart, 2018). This is seen throughout almost all trainings with break-out groups. The groups are pre-determined, so participants do not always resort to the same group that provides comfort. Comfort is not bad, but the hope is that the conversation can happen throughout all staff and student athletes, not just with friends or those with whom one is most comfortable. The sustained dialogue recognizes that compassion and empathy take time, thus the sessions happen over the course of the year covering different topics and issues.

All diversity training sessions must happen outside of campus and the athletic department. The point of the location is to neutralize association to power dynamics and pre-determined attitudes assigned to a location such as campus or the athletic department. Facilitators must come from outside the institution. The facilitators could be from an organization that focuses on diversity and inclusion. For example, in Manhattan, Kansas, an event called ‘Conversations on Race and Reconciliation’ was hosted by the Manhattan Nonviolence Initiative. This would be a group that could enter and facilitate. The trainings will be held every other month to foster sustained dialogue. A survey will be administered the month in-between the sessions to all coaching staff, athletic department administration, and campus administration with a variety of dates to gauge when the maximum number of participants could attend.

My model diversity training sessions differ from traditional cases in that they engage the organization-continuously for a tangible result. Sustained dialogue happens over the course of the academic year rather than an annual or bi-annual training that does not require being mentally present as well as as physically. The homework assigned after each session allows space for continual reflection and engagement even when there is not a diversity training

occurring that month. Last, the trainings encourage dialogue to bring tangible change to the organization. This goes beyond gaining knowledge or individual actions. The trainings are designed to help members and leaders of the organization to find ways to better the policies and culture of the organization. The ways in which this model was developed correlates well to Shelly Corell (2017) of Stanford University's work on diversity trainings. The themes of my diversity training model are seen in her Small Wins Model in educating, diagnosing bias, developing tools, intervening, and evaluating (Correll, 2017, p. 736). My model can further develop intervening and evaluating as she suggests is needed to change organization policies and practices.

For continuous improvement, the trainings will be evaluated through attendance and the responses from the anonymous debrief slips that are turned in at the end of each training. The slips offer a measurement of 1-5 on how much participants feel that they learned as well as one or two other reflection questions over the information covered that day. Averages of the ratings can be calculated from each session with the hopes of increasing every session or staying at a high average across sessions.

### **Limitations and future research**

As a white, heterosexual woman I hold an amount of privilege that leads to blind spots and biases. I do not hold the same experiences of oppression as do students of color or LGBTQ+ identities in and outside of athletics. Also, I was not a student athlete, but did work in an athletic department for four years, so I hold the perspective of a student and employee but not a student athlete. These aspects of my identity impact the way I interpreted literature and my ultimate creation of the six-session diversity training model. In an effort to recognize biases and to seek full understanding, I discussed the materials of this report with BIPOC student athletes and



LGBTQ student athletes and non-athlete students. These discussions pushed me to see other details within the materials as well as insights that may have been missed.

Additionally, while I have sought to create a diversity training model that improves one-and-done efforts, all trainings have limitations, including these sessions. The trainings were created with the audience being college athletic departments and university administration. The concept of appreciating difference and creating an inclusive environment for marginalized identities goes beyond the audience for which this training was created. While organizational communication and culture help address conflicts within athletic departments, there are other obstacles that the diversity trainings may not be able to overcome. The obstacles of donors, legal concerns, and leaders of the organizations having their own chains of command to report to can limit the ability of the athletic department to determine its own path toward progressive inclusion. It is important to recognize that there are leaders in organizations that are doing the work to unlearn behaviors; however, they may run into conflicts with other leaders that do not have their same attitudes toward marginalized communities. Additionally, the training potentially can increase emotional labor for marginalized identities, forcing them to be vulnerable in spaces they may not wish to be so. The diversity training as well does not state who the facilitators are nor who trained them while that is the expectation. The facilitators only have so much control over the training. They cannot control that participants show up with homework completed and that they actively participate in their groups. Last, Session #5 over Sexism was created using a current event over Title IX. The questions created do not adapt to if that article were to be updated to a current one.

The information from the literature review and implications bring up questions and challenges that can be researched further. The report specifically addressed the inadequate

experience of marginalized student athletes, but this experience may be one that is experienced across all marginalized students, athlete or not. The literature review identified current resources and efforts being made on college campuses to holistically support students, including LGBTQ+ resource centers, academic advisors, multicultural centers, opportunities to do service-learning and community service. However, further research can look at whether these resources are fulfilling the needs of their marginalized students. As mentioned above, the audience for the diversity trainings specifically identifies higher education staff yet building community through understanding and appreciating difference is something that all members of society can partake in to make their communities equal in support and safety for all members.

## **Conclusion**

A student athlete's platform can reach a large audience to bring awareness to the social issues that the majority may be blind to or misinterpret due to bias. The understanding of the marginalized experience will always be distorted by white privilege and other limits on perspective. Therefore, as a society, we must allow every individual to speak to their experience and the injustice they and others like them experience thanks to systemic inequality. Marginalized student athletes exist in a unique space where power dynamics of race, hierarchy, and conditional free speech reside. The situation and experiences are unique, which is all the more reason to open our ears, hearts, and minds to steps toward a more just, equal world.

Athletic departments can join the movement and stop exploiting black bodies, or they will continue with the status quo. It is vital that athletic departments embrace their BIPOC student athletes on their terms and that their future receives at least as much concern as their performance on the field, court, or track. Unlearning behaviors and social norms endemic to capitalism, patriarchy, and the white privilege is of utmost priority. This can happen through

self-initiated education, periodical diversity trainings for organizations. However, it is important to understand this is not unlearned overnight. Living with the intention of empathy and awareness to the experiences of those that are different from us can bring an appreciation of difference. The hostility and anxiety can dwindle away if we move away from hating and merely tolerating difference.

Ultimately, the support of marginalized student athletes as they seek to make change through social justice activism is not solely an athletic department responsibility, nor the university's alone. It is all our responsibility. Individually, we must learn to foster this sense of urgency to continuously develop our identity as an ally for others. We may not work in higher education, college athletics, nor have a child that participates in athletics, but we all live in this society. We live in a society that wants and needs socially responsible leaders such as these student athletes for a better tomorrow.

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## **Appendix A - Diversity Training Model**

### **Diversity Training Model Session #1**

#### *Location:*

The diversity training needs to take place outside of the athletic department. It must be wide enough to hold breakout groups that can be secluded from others. The goal is to neutralize power imbalances between athletes and their coaches and administration.

#### *Participants:*

All athletic department administration, coaching staffs, and campus administration are encouraged to attend. Each team of men's and women's should have a minimum of four athletes that feel motivated to participate in the conversation around racial and gender equality. For the first diversity training session, the athletes will come prepared with a testimony of their experiences of marginalization within their current campus or athletic department.

#### *Procedure:*

The Collegiate Athletic Department Diversity Training will be a six session series that takes place each year. For the academic school year, there will be six topics that are covered every other month – 1. “Coming Together”, 2. “Glory Road”, 3. “Black Lives Matter & Intersectionality”, 4. “Effects of Predominantly White Institutions”, 5. “Sexism”, and 6. “Allyship”. The first will be “Coming Together”. The athletes will all go to the front of the space and be able to be fully seen by the administration that are in the audience. The athletes will each speak if they so please for a maximum of five minutes. After all the athletes speak, all in attendance including the athletes will go to a pre-assigned break-out group. Each break-out group will have a facilitator who has been trained to guide the conversation with ground rules and pre-

made questions. Everyone will return for a debrief and homework they are asked to complete before the next training.

#### *Break-Out Groups:*

The group composition will be pre-determined prior to the training. The composition of the group is to be equally divided with inclusion of racial identities, gender, and sexual orientation as well as avoiding fellow department members to be in the same group. This is important so members and leaders can interact outside of their comfort zone to further their practice in dialogue surrounding diversity and inclusion. The break-out groups will take place for 60-90 minutes where everyone sits within a circle so that everyone can be seen and power imbalances can be reduced. Within the breakout groups, the facilitator will first establish ground rules. The ground rules for each group include no name calling, each person is allowed to speak and will not be talked over, and everyone will be allowed to speak before a member of the group speaks twice. To start, the facilitator will ask generic questions of self-introductions and main takeaways or things that stuck out from the students' testimonies. Once those are mentioned, the group is allowed to respond to one another if they so please. As the initial thoughts pass, the facilitator will move through a set of questions posed to all break-out group members.

#### *Questions:*

- What aspects of your social identity(ies) feel most salient to you?
- What might social support look like for you at \_\_\_\_\_ University?
- What does meaningful support look like for each of you?
- What is your definition of allyship?
- What is needed from allies?
- What are action steps to becoming an ally?

*Debrief:*

After the break-out groups, everyone is invited back to their original seats. There will be a visual aid at the front of the room with the prompts, “What was the biggest learning moment for you today?”, “On a scale of 1-5 how much do you feel you learned today? Why?”, and “What is a step you will commit to taking to increase your cultural competency?” The participants will get 15 minutes to complete the prompts anonymously on a piece of paper. The facilitators will collect the papers with answers and use them to evaluate what worked and did not work for the participants.

*Homework:*

Watch the movie, “Glory Road”. Found on Netflix and Disney Plus. Session #2 will only be administration and coaching staffs.

**Diversity Training Model Session #2**

*Location:*

Location will remain the same as Session #1.

*Participants:*

All athletic department administration, coaching staffs, and campus administration are encouraged to attend.

*Procedure:*

The Collegiate Athletic Department Diversity Training will be a six session series that takes place each year. For the academic school year, there will be six topics that are covered every other month – 1. “Coming Together”, 2. “Glory Road”, 3. “Black Lives Matter & Intersectionality”, 4. “Effects of Predominantly White Institutions”, 5. “Sexism”, and 6. “Allyship”. This second training, “Glory Road”, will immediately break off into break-out

groups that are pre-assigned by the facilitators. Each break-out group will have a facilitator who has been trained to guide the conversation with ground rules and pre-determined questions. Everyone will return for a debrief and homework they are asked to complete before the next training.

*Break-Out Group:*

The group composition will be pre-determined prior to the training of who will be in each section. The break-out groups will take place for 60-90 minutes where everyone sits within a circle so that everyone can be seen and power imbalances can be reduced. Within the breakout groups, the facilitator will first establish ground rules. The ground rules for each groups are that name calling will not occur, each person is allowed to speak and will not be talked over, and everyone will be allowed to speak before a member of the group speaks twice. This session requires honesty and self-reflection. The facilitator must continue to encourage this throughout the time in the break-out group. To start, the facilitator will ask generic questions of self-introductions and main takeaways or things that stuck out from the film. Once those are mentioned, the group is allowed to respond to one another if they so please. As the initial thoughts pass, the facilitator will move through a set of questions posed to all break-out group members.

*Questions:*

- What were thoughts or feelings you had when Neville “Shed” was assaulted in the restroom?
- When Coach Haskins decided that only the black players would compete in the championship, what were your thoughts on his decision? If you were in his shoes, what would you have done? Do you think it was worth the possible championship

to take a stance against racial inequality? Is basketball success worth more than the stance Coach Haskins took, why or why not?

- In the locker room after a loss, one of the white players feels that he and his fellow white teammates are now the “minority” and is confronted by his teammate, Harry, that he cannot compare his experiences to being in a marginalized group. This could be called an example of white fragility. What were your initial thoughts? How does Harry’s response compare with today’s society of inequality and injustice that is still experienced by BIPOC communities?
- Why is it important to understand the difference among the following terms: racism, prejudice, and discrimination? How might understanding these differences better inform your thoughts and actions?
- How do you handle conflicts around racial differences on your teams and in the work place?
- How might this film increase your awareness of white privilege and how we are socialized with regard to race?
- How do you work to counter biases that you may hold?
- Based on the last training session, how do you hope to better meaningfully support your coworkers and athletes of color?

*Debrief:*

After the break-out groups, everyone is invited back to their original seats. There will be a visual aid at the front of the room with the prompts, “What was the biggest learning moment for you today?”, “On a scale of 1-5 how much do you feel you learned today? Why?”, and “How

can your team and coworkers increase their awareness of their own white privilege and leverage it to support those lacking in racial privilege?” The participants will get 15 minutes to complete the prompts anonymously on a piece of paper. The facilitators will collect the papers with answers and use them to evaluate what worked and did not work for the participants.

*Homework:*

Perform an interview with a peer, coworker, friend, student athlete etc. that is a member of a marginalized community utilizing the script of questions:

1. Please share what diversity, equity and inclusion mean to you and why they're important.
2. In your opinion, what is the most challenging aspect of working in a diverse environment?
3. What is your approach to understanding the perspectives of others From different backgrounds?
4. How would you handle a situation where a colleague was being culturally insensitive, sexist, homophobic, or racist?
5. How would you advocate for diversity, equity, and conclusion with others who don't understand its importance?
6. Tell me about a time when you advocated for diversity and inclusion.
7. What steps will you take to eliminate bias not only at work, but in all interactions?

**Diversity Training Model Session #3**

*Location:*

Location will remain the same as Session #1.

*Participants:*

All athletic department administration, coaching staffs, and campus administration are invited to attend. All student athletes are invited to attend as well, with a minimum of five members of each team that feel motivated to participate.

*Procedure:*

The Collegiate Athletic Department Diversity Training will be a six session series that takes place each year. For the academic school year, there will be six topics that are covered every other month – 1. “Coming Together”, 2. “Glory Road”, 3. “Black Lives Matter & Intersectionality”, 4. “Effects of Predominantly White Institutions”, 5. “Sexism”, and 6. “Allyship”. This third training, “Black Lives Matter & Intersectionality,” will begin with an invited speaker who participates or leads a local social-justice organization. Localizing the information on activist groups in the community will hopefully resonate more strongly with those who may be hesitant to support or against the idea of supporting a group such as Black Lives Matter. For example, Black Lives Matter MHK would be invited to speak for Kansas State to explain what the organization is, the needs of the community, and how we all can work to meet the needs. Second, the entire group in attendance will participate in a privilege walk. After the privilege walk, the groups will break off into break-out groups. Each break-out group will have a facilitator who has been trained to guide the conversation with ground rules and pre-written questions. Everyone will return for a debrief and homework they are asked to complete before the next training.

*Privilege Walk:*

The privilege walk will be lead with the statements and instructions from <https://peacelearner.org/2016/03/14/privilege-walk-lesson-plan/>. The facilitators can collaborate on statements to add or remove.

### *Break-Out Groups:*

The groups will be pre-determined prior to the training of who will be in each section. The break-out groups will take place for 30-60 minutes where everyone sits within a circle so that everyone can be seen and power imbalances are not present. Within the breakout groups, the facilitator will first establish ground rules. The ground rules for each groups are that name calling will not occur, each person is allowed to speak and will not be talked over, and everyone will be allowed to speak before a member of the group speaks twice. To start, the facilitator will ask generic questions of self-introductions and main takeaways or things that stuck out from the local group presentation. Once those are mentioned, the group is allowed to respond to one another if they so please. As the initial thoughts pass, the facilitator will move through a set of questions posed to all break-out group members.

### *Questions:*

- What did you feel when being in front of the group? In the back? In the middle?
- What were some factors you have never thought of before?
- How did you feel in the moments you stepped ahead or behind the person next to you?
- What do you wish people knew about one of the identities, situations, or disadvantages that caused you to take a step back?
- How can your understanding of your privileges or marginalization improve your existing relationships with yourself and others?

### *Debrief:*

After the break-out groups, everyone is invited back to their original seats. There will be a visual aid at the front of the room with the prompts, “What was the biggest learning moment



for you today?”, “On a scale of 1-5 how much do you feel you learned today? Why?”, “How has your understanding of the want to protest improved?”, and “When was your first experience of your privilege or marginalization? What was that like? Do experiences like that continue to today? How so?” Allow participants about 15 minutes to complete the prompts anonymously on a piece of paper. The facilitators will collect the papers with answers and use them to evaluate what worked and did not work for the participants.

*Homework:*

Visit the global Blacklivesmatter.com page to learn about the cause itself. Research racial unity groups such as ‘Black Lives Matter MHK’ in your own community and understand the work they are doing.

Review the demographic statistics for students, staff, and athletes of the university, athletic department, and NCAA.

## **Diversity Training Model Session #4**

*Location:*

Location will remain the same as Session #1.

*Participants:*

All athletic department administration, coaching staffs, and campus administration are encouraged to attend.

*Procedure:*

The Collegiate Athletic Department Diversity Training will be a six session series that takes place each year. For the academic school year, there will be six topics that are covered every other month – 1. “Coming Together”, 2. “Glory Road”, 3. “Black Lives Matter & Intersectionality”, 4. “Effects of Predominantly White Institutions”, 5. “Sexism”, and 6.

“Allyship”. The fourth training, “Effects of Predominantly White Institutions”, will be an educational session regarding the demographics of the university and a reflection regarding the resources needed that are and are not present for BIPOC, LGBTQ, and female students and staff. Multicultural Student Affairs staff, LGBTQ Student Affairs staff, Student Athlete Development staff, and Student Athlete Mental Wellness staff, will present about the needs of BIPOC, LGBTQ, and Female student athletes as well as how the campus climate is experienced by student athletes identifying in these groups. The presenters will share about the resources they provide and the gaps that exist in those resources. After the presentation, break-out groups will be formed by the staff those in attendance belong to – Coaching, Campus, and Athletic Department Administration.

*Break-Out Groups:*

The break-out groups will last 45 minutes. The break-out groups will have a facilitator; however, the facilitator will be there only to guide and prompt conversation when there are prolonged silences. Groups will share initial thoughts about the resources that are and are not provided, then discuss ways that their positions can work to fill in the gaps of needs for their students. For example, a college campus that is located within a conservative state houses one LGBTQ resource support center with a small staff for an entire student body. The break-out groups may see that this one resource for LGBTQ students is not enough to accommodate an entire student body let alone just LGBTQ student athletes. As they attempt to brainstorm solutions, the facilitator may probe the group to think of recruiting new staff, location, accessibility, etc. The needs must be able to be met within NCAA guidelines. If the groups determine that needs cannot be met without violating the guidelines, the groups should be encouraged to brainstorm ways to overcome this or address it with the NCAA.

*Debrief:*

After the break-out groups, everyone is invited back to their original seats. There will be a visual aid at the front of the room with the prompts, “What was the biggest learning moment for you today?”, “On a scale of 1-5 how much do you feel you learned today? Why?”, and “What is a step you individually can take to better support marginalized student athletes in their development, especially thinking about civic engagement like activism?” The participants will get 15 minutes to complete the prompts anonymously on a piece of paper. The facilitators will collect the papers with answers and use them to evaluate what worked and did not work for the participants.

*Homework:*

For the next training session, review Title IX and please read the following articles.

- <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/03/25/congress-wants-answers-from-ncaa-after-weight-room-disparity-at-womens-basketball-tournament.html>
- <https://www.npr.org/2021/03/20/979596524/under-fire-the-ncaa-apologizes-and-unveils-new-weight-room-for-womens-tournament>
- Chased by the Double Bind: Intersectionality and the Disciplining of Lolo Jones  
by Emily Deering Crosby

**Diversity Training Model Session #5**

*Location:*

The same location as Session #1.

*Participants:*

All athletic department administration, coaching staffs, and campus administration are encouraged to attend.

*Procedure:*

The Collegiate Athletic Department Diversity Training will be a six session series that takes place each year. For the academic school year, there will be six topics that are covered every other month – 1. “Coming Together”, 2. “Glory Road”, 3. “Black Lives Matter & Intersectionality”, 4. “Effects of Predominantly White Institutions”, 5. “Sexism”, and 6. “Allyship”. The fifth session, “Sexism”, will begin with the compliance office presenting on Title IX and then a short review of the articles that were provided for homework. Each break-out group will have a facilitator that has been trained to guide the conversation with ground rules and pre-made questions. Everyone will return for a debrief and homework they are asked to complete before the next training.

*Break-Out Group:*

The groups will be pre-determined prior to the training of who will be in each section. The break-out groups will take place for approximately 60 minutes where everyone sits within a circle so that everyone can be seen and power imbalances are not present. Within the breakout groups, the facilitator will first establish ground rules. The ground rules for each groups are that name calling will not occur, each person is allowed to speak and will not be talked over, and everyone will be allowed to speak before a member of the group speaks twice. This session requires honesty and self-reflection. The facilitator must continue to encourage this throughout the time in the break-out group. To start, the facilitator will ask generic questions of self-introductions and main takeaways or things that stuck out from the articles. Once those are mentioned, the group is allowed to respond to one another if they so please. As the initial thoughts pass, the facilitator will move through a set of questions posed to all break-out group members.

*Questions for the CNBC and NPR articles:*

- What are blindspots that allow incidents like the weight room to occur? How do we discover these blindspots?
- How can athletics be a place for equality between men's and women's sports?
- What can the athletic department and coaching staffs do to prevent incidents like this from occurring?

*Questions for the Lolo Jones article (provide a hard copy for all participants):*

- How can we uplift women in sports? How do we counter actions like the consistent commentary on female athletes' appearances like what Lolo Jones experienced?
- Crosby talks about the "Knowers" (p.234) that give the names, decide who get the names, and the privileges existing that sanction naming. Who were the "knowers" in the instance of the weight room facilities at the NCAA men's and women's basketball tournaments? Who are the "knowers" on your female teams? Who are the "knowers" on your staff? Last, who are the "knowers" that you do not have, but need?
- Which bind (feminine/athlete, poor/hustler, virginal/exotic) is the most salient to you or one that you interact with the most? What are responses you hear that perpetuate these binds?
- How can you disrupt these binds?

*Debrief:*

After the break-out groups, everyone is invited back to their original seats. There will be a visual aid at the front of the room with the prompts, "What was the biggest learning moment for you today?", "On a scale of 1-5 how much do you feel you learned today? Why?", and "What

is your definition of feminism?” The participants will get 15 minutes to complete the prompts anonymously on a piece of paper. The facilitators will collect the papers with answers and use them to evaluate what worked and did not work for the participants.

*Homework:*

Research examples of activism engaged by student athletes over the last two years. Bring your example to share at the next training.

**Diversity Training Model Session #6**

*Location:*

The same location as Session #1.

*Participants:*

All athletic department, coaching staff, and campus administration are encouraged to attend. Student athletes will attend upon nomination by their coaching staff or other staff members that notice their change efforts that could be organizing, use of voice, protest, overall leadership, and resilience in the face of challenges.

*Procedure:*

The Collegiate Athletic Department Diversity Training will be a six session series that takes place each year. For the academic school year, there will be six topics that are covered every other month – 1. “Coming Together”, 2. “Glory Road”, 3. “Black Lives Matter & Intersectionality”, 4. “Effects of Predominantly White Institutions”, 5. “Sexism”, and 6. “Allyship”. The sixth and final session, “Allyship”, will begin with the athletes that were nominated to present or share on their experiences with social justice activism, their motivations to partake in this kind of work, and what their hopes for the future are. Each athlete will have a maximum of 10 minutes to speak. After the presentations, everyone will break into pre-assigned

break-out groups. Each break-out group will have a facilitator that has been trained to guide the conversation with ground rules and pre-made questions. Everyone will return for a debrief.

*Break-Out Group:*

The groups will be pre-determined prior to the training of who will be in each section. The break-out groups will take place for approximately 60-90 minutes where everyone sits within a circle so that everyone can be seen and power imbalances are not present. Within the breakout groups, the facilitator will first establish ground rules. The ground rules for each groups are that name calling will not occur, each person is allowed to speak and will not be talked over, and everyone will be allowed to speak before a member of the group speaks twice. This session requires honesty and self-reflection. The facilitator must continue to encourage this throughout the time in the break-out group. To start, the facilitator will ask generic questions of self-introductions and main takeaways of the presentations and then each group member will share the information of the research they did for homework prior to the session. Once those are mentioned, the group is allowed to respond to one another if they so please. As the initial thoughts pass, the facilitator will move through a set of questions posed to all break-out group members. The first set of questions will be for a think and write in which the participants will write down their thoughts and answers to the questions before coming back to the group to share. The second set of questions will be normal verbal dialogue.

*First Set of Questions:*

- What emotions did you experience when reading the articles and hearing the presentations from the student athletes?
- What is a time you did not feel supported or silenced for speaking or acting on something you believed in?

- What is an example of someone you believe responds well to pushback and resistance?
- How would you like to see support in that moment or if and when you are one to partake in activism or speaking against injustice?
- What is your definition of allyship?
- Why is allyship important?

*Second Set of Questions:*

- What was your answer to the question, “How would you like to see support in that moment or if and when you are one to partake in activism or speaking against injustice?”
- Thinking about your answer to the question, “What is an example of someone you believe responds well to pushback and resistance?”, what deems their responses to be appropriate and well done?
- What are your initial thoughts and reactions to the term, “allyship”?
- Looking back to Session #1, we talked about what meaningful support looked like. Think of the student athletes and the other members in your break-out group and what they said. What is a need you can help meet for the student athletes to feel more supported as they practice civic engagement and social justice activism?
- What are ways you can continue learning to improve your ability and lens of being an ally?
- Thinking back to Session #4, what are the gaps that need to be closed in order for student athletes to receive proper support? How can we close the gap?
- As an athletic department and higher education institution, what systems need intervention to operate more justly? How do you intervene?
- How do we as a collective combat neutrality toward injustice?



*Debrief:*

After the break-out groups, everyone is invited to their original seats. There will be a visual aid at the front of the room with the prompts, “What was the biggest learning moment for you today?”, “On a scale of 1-5 how much do you feel you learned today? Why?”, “What session did you learn the most in?”, “What was something you did not like or would change about any of the sessions?”, “What is a gap or area that your athletic department still needs to address?”, and “What is the next step for you to improve your allyship for your student athletes and community?” The participants will get 25 minutes to complete the prompts anonymously on a piece of paper. The facilitators will collect the papers with answers and use them to evaluate what worked and did not work for the participants.