



**“Black America, Systemic Failure, and How the NCAA is caught
in between the two”**

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Introduction

The issue of racism against blacks in America is perennial, and it is not as rudimentary as calling a person the n-word. Black people are victims of systemic racism, in which institutions that are dominated by white elites reinforce ideologies of white supremacy and black inferiority. Often coined as PWIs (predominantly white institutions), their pro-white and anti-black racial frames provoke black stereotypes and discrimination. This subsequently makes it extremely difficult for blacks to succeed in these institutions as the corrupt system leaves them stagnant in the lower class with little to no ways to move up. Numerous existing institutions incorporate systemic racism, but perhaps the most surprising institution is the NCAA. Though the NCAA often portrays black excellence and success of their college athletes to the nation, the harsh reality is that the NCAA's insatiable penchant for profit negatively affects college athletes, especially those of African American roots. The media describes NCAA corruption as bribery scandals and secretive payment of players. However, this merely scrapes the surface. Digging deeper into the bedrock of the NCAA, I discover the actual corruption lies in the false portrayal of black success in their systemically racist organization. The NCAA forges an appealing image of blacks in sports to the black youth. The black youth from poor neighborhoods, presented with slim chances to escape the poverty cycle, are lured into the organization that only operates to its benefit and nothing more. The NCAA wrongfully treats these black males with barely any

assistance, opportunities, and flexibility, which eventually reiterates the lack of success black people have within society and thus the negative connotations that come with it.

Through my work, I hope to bring to light how the NCAA recognizes the systemic racism of black America, and how they exploit and worsen it to gain fabulous sums of money.

Discrimination against the color of skin still exists to this very day and it is ridiculous that no matter which career path African Americans endeavor in, they bear unnecessary burdens because the American system is designed against them. This extends to the NCAA, and many people do not expect that. I plan to disprove the popular notion that student-athletes are privileged with free tuition and scholarships to prestigious universities and access to higher options. Black athletes are treated less than the average college student as the NCAA is working against them in more ways than people expect. In my paper, the primary question I hope to answer is, how does the NCAA perpetuate the lack of long-term success black males have had in American society? In doing so, I will address the following questions. Firstly, how does the NCAA trap and exploit black male athletes? Secondly, what are some ways the NCAA promotes systemic racism? Lastly, why are these hardships imposed on the black race still apparent in the NCAA to this day? To answer these questions, I propose various theoretical frameworks and a few of their respective case studies. Prior to my first framework, I prove the present economic plight of African Americans through various income-related statistics and accuse systemic racism as the culprit based on the *adjusted odds ratio method*. This, in turn, grants me leeway to introduce and develop the original idea of “the societal bait,” in which the NCAA utilizes the plight of black kids from poor neighborhoods to influence them into pursuing college athletics easily. The NCAA heavily relies on this technique to keep its supply of readily-exploitable college athletes sufficient. Afterwards, I advance to my second framework in which I argue that black athletes

trapped in the NCAA are dehumanized from the three different axes of “exploitation,” “commodification,” and “disposability” as their human value is disregarded entirely. Several case studies I implement into the discussion consist of statistics and protocols cited from the NCAA, economic analysis of athletes and their generated revenue, juxtaposition of the term “student-athlete,” and the true story of NCAA basketball star Shabazz Napier. In addition, my third theoretical framework aims to expose the NCAA of involuntarily promoting the very existent ideas of “systemic racism” and “white privilege” through its profit-oriented mentality. I unveil my case studies as the many unmentioned operations and externalities of the NCAA, which include social hostility, hyper-surveillance, “class-checkers,” and coaching staff oppression. I conclude with the final idea of “cyclical stereotyping” in which all these factors the NCAA places upon black male athletes confines them into reinforcing negative black stereotypes of society. This fourth theoretical framework will refer back to several instances of the NCAA’s corruption to vigorously interpret how they cause black people to appear as the lesser people society expects them to be. It will utilize case studies that specifically cover social hostility, lack of payment of student-athletes, and athlete exploitation to convey explicit effects of systemic racism on black athletes. The NCAA is a destructively-capitalist company, so bent-over on the maximization of profit that they operate to the detriment of black male athletes, which perpetuates the ideas of systemic racism and contributes to the lack of success black people have had in America.

The Societal Bait

It has become increasingly apparent that an alarming percentage of black people stagnate in the low socioeconomic class. In an attempt to prove this stagnation, I expected to merely uncover the lack of economic growth for African Americans compared to other races. However,

I astonishingly discovered something even worse: out of all races, only the black experiences an economic decline in incomes. This unpleasant reality was unveiled as a source states, “The median income for an African American household was \$39,490 last year [2016], according to U.S. Census Bureau data released this week. It was \$41,363 in 2000” (Long). While all other races demonstrated a gradual rise in their incomes in sixteen years, the black race was the only one that received an offset. Correspondingly, “The Census data also showed that almost 1 in 4 black households lives in poverty” (Long). Within poverty-stricken neighborhoods, substantially low incomes make it extremely difficult for African Americans to invest in their kids’ futures, as they barely have any income leftover to give their kids extra tools to succeed. It is no exaggeration to say that poor black youth face multiple crucial challenges to avoid poverty. Most of the time, the problems overwhelm them and cause blacks to remain stagnant in the lower class they were born in or become even worse off. According to a recent source, “seven out of 10 black children who are born to families with income that falls in the middle quintile of the income spectrum will find themselves with income that's one to two quintiles below their parents' during their own adulthood” (White). The economic backslide has ultimately been provoked by the black community failing to properly invest in their youth’s future. When the children become adults, they have even less money to work with and thus invest in their kids even less. This is what perpetuates the predominant existence of black people in the low socioeconomic class.

These hardships of poverty and stagnation continue to this day, not because of the lack of black effort, but because of the corruptness of the American system. Perhaps the most prominent misconception people have of black people is that they do not work hard enough, which explains their “self-induced” crisis in the lower class. Black people of the lower class have tried to break

the cycle multiple times, and barely any of them overcome it. This is because American institutions promote systemic racism against black people, making it difficult for them to achieve success. Though these claims may seem dubious at first, it can be proven through various examples of statistical evidence. For instance, Amon Emeka, an associate professor of sociology, utilized the *adjusted odds ratio method* in his text to demonstrate the systemic racism in the job market, which causes blacks to be outcompeted by their white counterparts and signify high levels of unemployment. This method holds “age and education constant when estimating the effects of racial status on employment status...If Black and White workers of the same age and education are equally likely to be employed the odds ratio will equal 1, but we will see that the ratio is well in excess of 2 in most places” (Emeka 562). Emeka supplies a demographic chart with all the states and recorded odds ratio and not once did the ratio equal 1. In fact, there were some ratios such as that from Nebraska and Minnesota where the ratio was over 4 (Emeka 566-567). Therefore, the discretions in the data indicate that black people are discriminated against in the job market due to their race. This indicates that blacks reside in the lower class because the American system hinders them from securing jobs. The systemic racism of America attributes to the unsurprising statistic that “In the third quarter of 2018, African American workers had the highest unemployment rate nationally, at 6.3 percent” (Jones). The poverty-stricken black youth are already in an unfavorable position and the failures of the American system makes matters even more cumbersome. These poor black kids realize their limited choices and near futures of failure.

Utilizing this plight of these black kids from poor neighborhoods, the NCAA sets up its “societal bait” which lures them into playing sports for their institution. The “societal bait” is what allows the NCAA to continually receive a steady inflow of black male athletes each year.

The NCAA heavily on this “societal bait” because the bait is then easily used to trap black athletes in its institution and use them in various ways to gain profit. Without this “societal bait,” the NCAA does not have an adequate supply of labor, and their business fails. The NCAA ensures it captivates the black youth enough with its “societal bait” so this possibility never arrives. The bait works effectively because the plight of African Americans kindles the desire to pursue sports. The NCAA recognizes that these kids from impoverished black neighborhoods grew up in a setting where playing sports was a very popular hobby. Not only is it a simple pleasure, but portrayal by the sports media of African Americans excelling in professional leagues and making millions of dollars inspired them. These black athletes became beacons of hope for the black youth to one day make it out of the poverty cycle. The result is that “Black male student-athletes have been socialized by their communities, families, friends, parents, and schools to value athletics over academics from a young age” (Williams 162). The black kids’ slim futures and impending realities of low socioeconomic status paved the way for a greater desire to play sports professionally. This is where the NCAA intervenes with its “societal bait.” The NCAA knows people see it as the best place for professional scouts to look for top talent. The NCAA also knows that poor black communities see college through high standards because many of them did not experience higher education. Making use of this information, the NCAA lures poor black kids by advertising an appealing offer of both academic and athletic opportunities to them. The NCAA publicizes itself as being the famous typical stepping stone to college success, career preparation, and potentially the professional league. Its motto is “Prioritizing academics, well-being, and fairness so college-athletes can succeed on the field, in the classroom, and for life” (NCAA.org). The NCAA acts towards the black youth as a figure that wants to help them succeed. Black kids in poor neighborhoods grew up with little guidance

and many were consequently ready to take up what the NCAA has to offer. The opportunity of a college education and a shot at the professional league is hard to pass up, especially when the black youth is stagnant in their poverty-stricken situation. Many black athletes agree to play college athletics not only for themselves but for their families and communities so one day, they can all escape poverty. This “societal bait” tactically sways black kids from poor communities into playing sports for the NCAA by presenting them with a hard-to-ignore offer.

Unfortunately, what the black youth fails to realize is that the NCAA is still a business and thus operates to its own benefit. The “societal bait” is a very deceptive lure because although it advertises the development of academics and athletics, the NCAA really only cares about one of them. According to a recent statistic, “Nearly a third of black and Hispanic students with high school grade-point averages of 3.5 or better end up at community colleges, compared to 22 percent of white students with the same grades, the Georgetown research found” (Marcus). It is no coincidence that a black person may be smart enough to attend the NCAA’s universities but end up going to community colleges instead. The statistic implies that the NCAA considers black scholars less compared to their white counterparts. If the black student is an athlete, in contrast, the outcome is quite different. A source states, “only 2.8 percent of full-time degree-seeking undergraduates were black men... [on the other hand,] black men comprise 57 percent of college football teams, on average. At some universities, it’s over 70 percent” (Roberts). The jarring difference between the number of black undergraduates and black student-athletes hints at the real intentions of the NCAA as it really only cares about the athletic ability of black applicants. The “societal bait” delivers false promises of education to black college athletes, and the black youth is essentially baited into the fixation of an athlete for these colleges. Black communities assume their youth will endeavor in the academic and career opportunities of the

NCAA. But as will be shown, it is nothing like that. The NCAA effectively set up their “societal bait” on the fishing line to reel in their fresh catch of readily exploitable black athletes.

Dehumanization of Black Male Athletes

Once the black athletes are trapped within the NCAA, the organization exploits these athletes by dehumanizing them to the extent where their value is only judged by athletic talent and labor. During the process of making enormous amounts of profit off of black college athletes, the NCAA neglects the needs of them entirely. The relationship between the two is hugely lopsided as the NCAA is more of a burden than a benefactor to black college athletes. While black athletes are led to believe the NCAA is benefiting them, the NCAA dehumanizes them from the three different axes of “exploitation”, “commodification”, and “disposability.”

The NCAA’s “exploitation” of black male athletes is a moral-philosophical concept that associates with its injustice and purposeful mistreatment in pursuance of massive rewards. Exploitation is “fundamentally a means to an end by [sic] using another person (or thing) to advance one’s ends” (Rheenen 553). The “exploitation” occurs when the NCAA unfairly benefits from its relationship with these athletes. People often argue against this claim by reasoning that the scholarships these athletes receive are more than enough to compensate for their labor. In fact, the NCAA defends itself as a non-profitable organization, working to the benefit of student-athletes: “As a non-profit organization, we put our money where our mission is: equipping student-athletes to succeed” (NCAA.org). These assumptions lead to the dangerous misconception of a mutual relationship based on money between student-athletes and the organization. The relationship is substantially lop-sided, much to people’s dismay: “An athlete paid US \$10 million per year would still be exploited if he was producing US \$20 million annually for the team’s revenue” (Rheenen 556). Additionally, the NCAA, although a self-

claimed non-profit organization, is worth a billion dollars. This implies the exploitative nature of this relationship as a college athlete's generated revenue does not equate to what he is receiving in return. These black male athletes in college do not realize how much they are worth to the NCAA. For example, Shabazz Napier was a superstar point guard leading UConn to a national basketball championship. As a result, "approximately 100,000 people in attendance, 20 million watching live on television, and many more viewing the free stream online" (Williams 152). Napier and his team's publicity raked in fabulous sums for the NCAA. But after he got drafted into the NBA, he unveiled the NCAA's mistreatment off the court. He states, "We're definitely blessed to get a scholarship to our universities, but at the end of the day, that doesn't cover everything. We do have hungry nights where we don't have enough money to get food and sometimes money is needed" (Williams 152). Furthermore, I found on the NCAA website that \$844.3 million dollars are made in revenue from Division I Basketball Men's Championship television and marketing rights and \$133.4 million dollars from ticket sales (NCAA.org). Student-athletes are not allowed to be rewarded a single penny from this revenue. It is ridiculous how black student-athletes draw so much attention and revenue to the NCAA but still bear the struggle of finding dinner after games. A mere ten dollars would suffice for student-athletes to eat a meal for the night, but the NCAA does not even do them the favor. Many black student-athletes from poor neighborhoods came to college with little money, so they are essentially forced to work for food or starve. What is more troubling is that Napier waited until after his success was ensured to talk about the misconduct. This implies the NCAA created an atmosphere of fear to keep him and other black male athletes from speaking out. Since the NCAA knows athletes hold high value to their scholarships, it continues to shortchange them because if they speak out, the scholarship can be revoked. Ironically, the success of the NCAA

is heavily reliant on black student-athletes, but they continue to treat them otherwise. There has been no intervention with this “exploitation” over the recent years because the NCAA is legally allowed to get away with it. These hardships of black student-athletes are continuous because the NCAA evades lawsuits of child labor through the juxtaposition of the word “student-athlete.” According to Collin D. Williams in his text, “Placing the word ‘student’ in front of ‘athlete,’ the NCAA tactically emphasized players’ statuses as students, prevented them from being identified as employees...the ambiguous term has been an exclusive shield for the NCAA” (Williams 158). This reveals the reason why the NCAA organization is almost as profitable as the NFL or the NBA even though it does not generate as much revenue as them. By labeling their players as students rather than workers, it gets away with not paying for them although the NCAA blatantly exploits black male athletes. It abuses black athletes, squeezing revenue out of them and defending their humanity with the “student-athlete” excuse.

“Commodification” and “disposability” are terms that could be used in conjunction with one another to describe the poor treatment of the NCAA on black athletes. “Commodification” is defined as when “human labor is transformed into a material product...or reified as athletic production” (Rheenen 554). This applies to black male athletes as “a worker in a sweatshop exchanges labor for a wage just as an athlete sells sweat labor for money or in-kind compensation” (Rheenen 554). It has become obvious that black male athletes are commodities rather than human beings in the eyes of the NCAA. Rheenen notes, “universities, with a surplus of applicants for admission, seem to only show an interest in those individuals from poorer educational backgrounds who have skills that are unique and exploitative, such as the athlete” (Rheenen 560). This conveys that NCAA college institutions only view black applicants as products, each with a certain degree of athletic ability. As a result, “these athletes...feel

shortchanged in terms of the kind of education received, as they are forced to spend the bulk of their time on athletic commitments rather than on academic and career development” (Rheenen 560). This, in turn, brings up the term “disposability.” The NCAA’s compliance statement affirms that “Aid based in any degree on athletics ability cannot be awarded in excess of one academic year; the decision of whether a student-athlete is awarded institutional financial aid is made on a year-by-year or term-by-term basis, depending on the regulations of the institution” (NCAA.org). This indicates that NCAA colleges decide whether a student-athlete is worth keeping. The NCAA can rip scholarships away from student-athletes after a year if their athletic labor is unproductive. In a hypothetical situation, if a student-athlete was injured, they can not play on the field and produce revenue. Thus the NCAA takes away their scholarship if they still can not play, despite the fact that the reason they cannot play is completely out of their control. Black athletes can not afford the heavy tuition rate to stay within the college institutions, so the revocation of their athletic scholarships means that the NCAA essentially kicked them out. Student-athletes are considered disposable to NCAA college institutions as they “are denied their fair market value, and moreover are not receiving guaranteed 4-year athletics scholarships, guaranteed medical benefits, guaranteed workers’ compensation, and protection from brain trauma” (Comeaux 39). This lack of protection renders the term “disposability” as athletes can be dropped when they fail to produce further revenue, similar to how defective goods are thrown in the trash because they have no more value. In addition, the NCAA mislead these young black athletes into thinking the professional league is within grasp. Many black athletes fall into this trap as it states, “Though many Black male student-athletes seek to play professionally...the NFL and NBA draft fewer than 2% of student-athletes each year...Further, the average sports career lasts a mere three and a half years...80% of former NFL players are broke or bankrupt”

(Williams 161). Black male athletes are lead to believe that their professional dreams are attainable when, in fact, it is highly unlikely. Even if they make it, they fail to grow their success properly and become bankrupt. This ties back to the lack of quality education they received in college about how to handle money and develop their careers well. These athletes robotically go through the motions of athletic labor and could not prepare for their near futures because these colleges did not provide adequate assistance for them. Hence, the other 98% hit even rockier bottoms because they did not make the professional league nor have quality career development. As proven, the job market of America is systemically racist, so unemployment became a reality for many of these black athletes after four years. The NCAA did not improve the lives of their black athletes and knew all along many of these black males would fail to make the professional league and land a career. They render them disposable objects whose lives they sacrifice in order to gain profit. The NCAA should not have the ability to dictate black athletes' fates. The NCAA traps black players in their system designed to extract revenue from the players like commodities and dispose of them once they run dry. Some may claim that the NCAA dehumanizes all student-athletes, regardless of race, so the African American race should not play the only victim. However, "according to a study of basketball players' graduation rates...79% of the teams...graduated at least 70% of their White athletes, while only 31% of the teams...graduated at least 70% of their Black players: a 48% achievement gap in graduation rates" (Rheenen 558). This demonstrates that although all student-athletes are exploited in three crucial ways, African Americans experience the most detrimental effects due to their low socioeconomic status. The gap in graduation implies not the mistakes of black male athletes, but the faults of the NCAA. As we will see, the NCAA promotes systemic racism, which makes it extremely difficult for them to thrive in college compared to their white counterparts.

Systemic Racism and White Privilege

The NCAA has displayed it operates under a business-oriented mentality from their disregard for the welfare of black male athletes, self-label as a non-profit organization when it is not, sneaky evasion of child labor lawsuits, and intense exploitation of student-athletes. The NCAA navigates through the market waters with a profit-focused tunnel vision. This mentality exemplifies the neo-liberalist ideology as the favoring of free-market capitalism induces businesses to compete for profit by any means necessary. In doing so, many companies create externalities that negatively affect other groups within their institutions. Specifically, within the NCAA, its multifarious externalities epitomize its corruption. Dr. Eddie Comeaux unearths that the NCAA's quest for profit inadvertently triggers racist implications targeted at African Americans, coining the concept as "neoliberal racism." This type of racism stems from the business roots of the NCAA, and its effects have been devastating to black male athletes. The NCAA's business mindset works to the disadvantage of black athletes as it reiterates the two perilous notions of systemic racism and white privilege.

There are many types of racism, but systemic racism is arguably the most dangerous because it controls entire institutions and organizations. Systemic racism begins at the very top of the corporate hierarchy and trickles down to infect all of its units. The NCAA and its sub-institutions are prime examples of systemic racism in various ways. The NCAA institution can be deemed a PWI, predominantly white institution, because according to the NCAA demographic database, charts display that nearly all departments such as athletic trainers, business operations, and coaches are mostly white. In fact, Williams in his text discovered "only 7% of the student body, 3% of the faculty, and less than 5% of the top athletic administrators and coaches are of the same race [as blacks]" (Williams 164). The vast gap in race makes

discrimination against black people inevitable. Though many people of the PWI are good-hearted, the environment, lifestyle, and community they grew up in caused them to become comfortable only within their particular race. They see black people as something different, an outlier within their mainly white community. As a result, their subconscious often provokes microaggressions, stereotypical ideas, and quick judgments that come off wrong when interacting with black people. Within many colleges, these stereotypes quickly turn derogatory and harmful for black student-athletes. For instance, “Sailes (1993) found that White college student participants believed that Black athletes were not as intelligent, and did not receive high grades compared to White athletes” (Comeaux 35). The social environment forged by the mostly white community alienates black athletes. According to the text, when blacks are in PWIs, “the culture shock they experience is exacerbated by ‘the connotations and social reverberations of the traditional ‘dumb jock’ caricature,’ the ‘implications of the myth of innate Black athletic superiority,’ and ‘the more blatantly racist stereotype of the ‘dumb Negro’” (Williams 164). This suggests that although white students may not mean to be racist, the lack of exposure to black people beforehand gives rise to their stereotypes of them. Systemic racism also trickles down to the sub-institution of professors and faculty as well. According to the text, “Black athletes feel they are marginalized and not taken seriously by White professors in the classroom and on campus... [this is] reinforcement of low academic expectations and detrimental and deeply rooted racial stereotypes held by...the college community” (Comeaux 34). This suggests that systemic racism affects the staff as well, causing them to come off wrong to black people regardless of how good their intentions may be. This analysis does not serve as an attempt to accuse members of the NCAA of being racist; rather, it is a demonstration is to how subtle systemic racism is implemented within the NCAA. Systemic racism spawned at the

very top of management due to its business practices, and now it is existent everywhere within the institution. Therefore, the college environment hostility leads to the lesser treatment of black athletes. Due to this, “these student-athletes are often outcasts in scholastic spaces, leaving them with feelings of deflated self-esteem, abandonment, and isolation” (Williams 164). The systemic racism of the NCAA ruins the mental stability of black athletes as these induced feelings are not signs of success. The NCAA practically strips the pride of these black athletes piece by piece through the creation of their systemically-racist environment and sends them spiraling into depression and failure.

Perhaps even more frightening, the NCAA unleashes a theme of oppression and control over black athletes that reiterate the idea of “white privilege” through the use of “class checkers” and overall hyper-surveillance of black athletes on campus. Class checkers are people who are “paid to attend classes, compile signatures of targeted athletes, and make sure that these same athletes arrive on time and remain for the duration of each class session” (Comeaux 37). This heavily invades the privacy of black athletes and induces severe psychological effects on them. People may argue that white athletes have to undergo the same treatment as well, so black people should stop playing the victim. But it states, “Class checkers, social media monitoring - appear race-neutral on the surface. However, they fail to identify and understand the material impact of their racist practices and patterns on the psyche and experience of Black male athletes” (Comeaux 38). Though the NCAA perceive their hyper-surveillance as a business decision, they emotionally harm black male athletes in doing so because they fail to empathize with the African American plight of society. African Americans have long been stereotyped and suspected continuously of bad intentions. When blacks undergo this pervasive treatment, they are not mentally prepared for it as racist implications arise. They feel more vulnerable and insecure than

their white counterparts and thus cannot function properly throughout the day. People do not understand the struggle of blacks within society because they have never experienced it, which creates a severe misinterpretation of the situation. In addition, black athletes are purposefully limited by their institutions with unnecessary and cumbersome rules. They are “(a) bound by housing restrictions; (b) required to give the athletic department detailed information about their cars; (c) restricted and closely monitored on the internet and social media” (Williams 154). Some may argue that these rules do not negatively affect blacks only as all student-athletes are subject to them. In retrospect, the fact that these restraints must be enforced is already ridiculous. But more importantly, it can be proven that the NCAA makes blacks strictly follow these rules while white student-athletes are given more leeway. According to the text, “From a CRT standpoint, unlike their white counterparts, a significant number of Black male athletes who enter college campuses are targeted and labeled by athletic department stakeholders, whether consciously or unconsciously, as suspicious and anti-intellectual” (Comeaux 37). The use of the CRT framework forms an unbiased and objective study of blacks within PWIs, thus implying these patterns of NCAA are driven by racism as it primarily targets black male athletes when creating these rules and regulations. The invasive behavior of the NCAA affects blacks negatively, which contributes to their lack of motivation and confidence in the college environment.

The theme of oppression and discrimination in NCAA is also portrayed through the toxic relationship between the coaching staff and black players. According to the text, “A head coach is likely to use utilitarian power to promise rewards...for control purposes, and to prioritize athletics over academics...This serves the coach’s own self-interests...and not necessarily developing the academic talents of recruited athletes” (Comeaux 36). The coach is a

systemically-racist byproduct of the NCAA colleges' mindsets to generate profit. The profit-oriented mentality of coaches causes them to poorly treat their black student-athletes, disregarding a lot of their needs. More trophies equate to more profit for the college team, which incentivizes coaches to overwork their athletes and selfishly take a lot of their time away to ensure winning seasons and a massive paycheck. One student-athlete noted that one time, he was struggling to find food for the day when he states, "I walk up to the facility and I see my coach pull up in a brand new Lexus. Beautiful" (Williams 159). The sarcastic manner of this player suggests the resentment black athletes have of their white coaches when white coaches show off their paychecks immodestly while black players have nothing. This mistreatment of black players, using them to produce money, and refusing to pay them anything sounds eerily familiar. Many athletes expressed their resentment by comparing their experiences to smelling "an unmistakable whiff of the plantation" (Rheenen 562). The notion of black athlete mistreatment has been analogized with modern-day slavery, as there are uncanny similarities. However, one should refrain from such strong diction, especially with such loose usage: "Perhaps a more apt metaphor is colonialism" (Rheenen 562). College-athletes may not be slaves, but they undeniably are forced to deal with the brazen display of "white privilege" by the coaching staff. People may argue that the kind of control the coach exerts over its black players may not seem racist because he may treat all his players the same way. But, once again, the coaches fail to empathize with the plight of black people within society, which is why the perception of white overlying dominance does not fit well with black athletes. Though the intentions of the coaches may be good, it should not matter when black players feel degraded. It states, "upperclassmen on the team reported feeling more exploited...this sense of 'feeling used' appears to be [frequent]" (Rheenen 560). The systemic racism of the NCAA attacks critical parts

of the black athletes' racial dignity, which people fail to empathize with because their race is not subject to the kind of treatment black people go through daily.

Cyclical Stereotypes

These discussed attributes of the NCAA corruption upon black male athletes essentially dumb down the black male athletes into reinforcing the negative black stereotypes. In other words, the NCAA perpetuates, if not worsens, the negative black stereotypes in society through their methods of societal bait, dehumanization, and systemic racism. The NCAA's motto claims they help black male athletes succeed overcome their negative stereotypes in the long run by developing their academics. However, the NCAA does not stick true to its saying because it does not see the financial gain from doing so. These false promises of the NCAA are the underlying reason for the continuity of hardships for black America. The NCAA ignores the burdens it inflicted upon black male athletes and leaves these athletes to struggle with them. By doing nothing to fix these problems generated by its business practices, the NCAA has caused many black athletes to be displayed as the "ghetto" and "unintelligent" beings society prejudices them to be.

The failure to recognize and resolve the psychological effects of hyper-surveillance and social hostility causes black athletes to unintentionally fit their "dumb negro" stereotype. The NCAA's systemically-racist business practices confine black athletes into appearing "unintelligent" which then reinforces the stereotype. These two dilemmas mentally fatigue them, which hinders them from expressing their full potential, creativity, and talent within the academic environment. This is because the lack of privacy black people undergo within PWIs is extremely invasive. The constant feeling of someone watching them wears black male athletes down and depletes their academic capacity. Black males are also subject to the hostility of the

social environment as other college students attack them with microaggressions and prejudices. African Americans are given the very significant challenge to defend two fronts of the invasion at the same time. Black male athletes can not succeed if they are more preoccupied and restricted than white people in college and the NCAA does nothing about it. These black males could beat these problems if the NCAA functioned as the support system they need. But in the end, the NCAA fails to lend assistance because there is no economic gain for them to help black male athletes. Therefore, the NCAA does not invest in these kids as much as they should. A source claims that “In these environments [PWIs], there are limited opportunities for them to engage in mentorship, advisory, and peer relationships” (Williams 164). This suggests that the NCAA practices already hurt black males, and doing nothing only makes it worse. When college athletes can not procure these three key things, they are forced to guide themselves and are often overwhelmed in the process. When they fail, people attribute their failures to being unintelligent and lazy because many incorrectly assume that the college grants them privileges and tools for success. The NCAA’s lack of aid enhances the black stereotype of unintelligence as these students are constantly left insecure about themselves which contributes to their academic underperformance. As the text states, “The simple possibility of being judged is enough to deter a student from raising a hand or distract the student from contributing to a group discussion if they are triggered to become hyper-aware of performance” (Comeaux 35). When black students have to constantly worry about their image, they prevent themselves from excelling in the classroom. They do poorly in class and ultimately reinforce the stereotypes regardless. They receive poor grades and the people of the institution see blacks as stupid despite not knowing what these athletes are going through. People may say the easy fix is to “just ignore them.” but the amount of mental strength required to do that is immense. Plus, the

fact that black people need to ignore people thinking of them as “dumb negroes” is ridiculous and should not be a reality. They cannot win whatsoever because the NCAA does nothing and leaves them to defend themselves. But perhaps the act that ultimately causes blacks to shape the stereotype entirely when the NCAA makes blacks believe they are stupid themselves. When blacks become increasingly aware of the negative connotations people label them with, that depletes their motivation to do better significantly. Without guidance, they crumble because of the heavy college-athlete demands and the unnecessary burden of being a black male within society. In this case, the NCAA manipulates blacks to place the blame on themselves rather than the organization. According to the text, “Under the high-stakes commercial model of college athletics, athletic stakeholders tend to place blame on Black male athletes for their academic underperformance, failure, or choices, believing it is a problem with the athlete rather than a problem with the college” (Comeaux 39). This suggests that the NCAA points the finger at black athletes as a preemptive strike in case black male athletes realize the reason they failed was that the NCAA did nothing for them. The NCAA heavily relies on black athlete labor, so the realization of their corruption could plummet their revenue. Thus, it demoralizes the hard work of blacks within college which eventually feeds into the stereotype that blacks are unintelligent and lack the work ethic to succeed. Once these black athletes believe they are stupid, they fail to try even more. Black people no longer see the point in trying if everyone is still going to view them as the “typical dumb black.” The NCAA does nothing to help them for economic reasons, and in doing so, they made black athletes succumb to becoming the stereotypes society expects them to be.

Moreover, the dehumanization component of black male athletes that refuses to pay them for their labor has left black athletes with even more limited opportunities and eventually

provokes them to undergo illegal activities to survive. The juxtaposition of “student-athlete” means the NCAA is not legally obligated to pay them despite the blatant fact that the NCAA’s massive profit is made entirely off of their exploitation. These black male athletes are required to travel constantly to play away games, practice regularly under the coach’s rule, and have the NCAA make high amounts of revenue from their performance on the playing field. It is also apparent that they frequently come from poor backgrounds with little to no money whatsoever coming into college. Although they appear fully pumped and ready to play on television, the reality of black athletes away from the screen is borderline poverty. Black athletes could be able to be financially stable if the NCAA pays them a sliver of what it makes off of them. According to a source, “if college sports revenue was distributed as it is in professional sports, the average Football...player would be worth \$137,357 per year, while the average basketball player at that level would be worth \$289,031” (Comeaux 39). However, the NCAA is profit-oriented and greedily keeps the money to themselves. College athletes have invested substantial amounts of time into training and playing for the NCAA: “football players are expected to arrive on campus before their peers for training camp and spend 50-60 hours per week on football-related activities, following strict schedules that often include 16-hour days” (Williams 154). This staggering amount of investment leaves eight hours a day leftover for the student-athlete. Within that time span, student-athletes need to sleep, eat, and catch up on schoolwork. The “eat” part comes natural to many white student-athletes because they usually have money coming into college supplied by their families. However, black student-athletes have no money and often have to find ways to make money to eat. In the remaining hours of each day, black athletes choose. They can choose schoolwork, and not eat dinner for the day. Or they can choose to work for dinner, but sacrifice their schoolwork. This ties back to the “unintelligent” stereotypes

of black male athletes. The strenuous schedules of college athletics leave these black males with decisions they should not need to make in the first place. If only the NCAA paid these athletes what they are worth, these black athletes could not only buy dinner for the day, but they could also send some money to their families and communities. To make the money black athletes need to stop the burden of choosing, many of them go down dangerous paths. One athlete stated, "There were a lot of guys on my team who sold drugs. That's why you hear a lot of guys selling their rings. They're just trying to eat man...But you don't say anything because...that will hurt your chances of getting to that next level" (Williams 159). This reinforces the "ghetto" stereotype of black people within society. When a black student-athlete gets caught selling drugs, many people say, "just another black person hurting society." But these black people do not want to sell drugs. Black student-athletes sell drugs because they need the money and they cannot get money elsewhere. People say that they could work jobs at fast-food places or college centers, but they need to keep in mind black athletes only have a remaining eight hours. Eight hours of minimum wage pay will still not be enough to justify missing out on schoolwork and sleep. Drug-dealing is an immoral and illegal option, but is the only option if black male athletes want to survive the night and maximize the money they make with limited time. The fact that this is the only option of black athletes is frustrating because it could be easily resolved if the NCAA pays its players. The NCAA implicitly endangers and steers student-athletes into their "ghetto" stereotype within America. Though black student-athletes train hard to put on a show on live television, the NCAA still forces black athletes to find another way to survive because it will not help. This is something that should not happen at all. The systemic failure of blacks is inevitable with the NCAA corruption. These choices should never be the reality of black athletes as regardless of the choices they make, they will end up failing in something. It is ridiculous

how these NCAA systemic failures of black athletes, one way or another, accumulate onto the failure of blacks in general within America.

Conclusion

The use of these theoretical frameworks and case studies has ultimately qualified my hypothesis accusing the NCAA as a stimulator of systemic racism that detracts African American athletes. The concept of “societal bait” is the most crucial tactic the NCAA relies on as it outputs the steady inflow of exploitable athletes. Taking advantage of the low socioeconomic status of black kids, the NCAA advertises itself as a benefactor of black athletes. But as we know, the NCAA is merely leading them into a trap where its business-oriented mentality initiates and extracts the revenue out of them through questionable means. The pinned-down black athletes are incredibly susceptible to the process of “exploitation.” Their entrenchment with college sports allows the NCAA to dehumanize them into “commodities” the NCAA can easily “dispose” once productivity dissipates and replace with new readily exploitable athletes. Furthermore, the NCAA’s thirst for profit effectuates “systemic racism” and “white privilege” that work to the disadvantage of black athletes. Given the big picture, the externalities of what the NCAA did to black athletes contribute to black athletes undesirably fitting their stereotypes of “unintelligent” and “ghetto.” By acting in its self-interest, the NCAA leaves black athletes to pick up the pieces of destruction it left in their lives. These challenges are responsible for the lack of success black athletes have. But many people only see the end product of black athletes and judge them off of their failed outcomes. Correspondingly, the NCAA blemished the image of black people through their decisions to make more money.

My continued discussion of African Americans within the NCAA can be used in various ways to synthesize notable ideas as well as potential implications. For instance, these multiple

practices of the NCAA produced blatant detrimental effects upon African Americans, so it must have realized the faults in the system at some point. However, the NCAA consciously decides not to fix its system because the NCAA does not feel it is necessary as huge profits are still generated. Thus, the organization is inherently fixated on money and creates an extremely lopsided negative-sum game: the NCAA's gain in profit will never equate the critical losses and failures of black athletes, implying the NCAA is a typical hegemonic company. Moreover, the NCAA understands that many black athletes do not use their worth to effectively uprise against the organization's practices, which is why the NCAA continues to abuse them vigorously. The organization puts them down rather than helping them up countless times, and it has become apparent to many. Currently, there has been an ongoing discussion about NCAA corruption as many famous athletic figures such as LeBron James and Dwayne Wade have expressed their objections. Therefore, athletes by now know ahead of time what they are getting into. However, black athletes still do it anyway because, as discussed in "The Societal Bait" subsection, other opportunities are lacking. This issue resides within the NCAA, but it also extrapolates to the American system in general. The broader scope of systemic racism within America is scarier than what the NCAA has to offer. Racism has been a root issue in the foundation of American civilization, and it will not disappear any time soon.

Due to these findings and implications, there could be alternative frameworks and future possibilities for further understanding of NCAA corruption. The concept of the NCAA's tendencies at a business level could be delved into further and stimulate the discussion as to how it is a "hegemony." In doing so, the injustice of the NCAA with its evasions of the law could serve as an interesting take on the problem. Furthermore, the oppression of the NCAA upon black athletes could be utilized that further develop the analogy between the NCAA and

“colonialism” as the colonizers, like the NCAA, exploited their annexed subjects economically. Lastly, these described faults of the American system could pave the way to have “neoliberal racism” as a more significant focus in future research endeavors. There are many instances where practices in the business realm induce racism. The development of the concept, with more research, could help tie neoliberal ideology more effectively with racism in a creative manner.

Nonetheless, this research has altogether proven to be highly significant in a myriad of ways. In this essay, I speak for black male athletes when they cannot due to the fear of losing scholarships and giving up their dreams if they get kicked out. This paper acts as a catalyst for African American athletes who have yet to realize their worth in the system of the NCAA. Their value is worth more than these college contracts as the NCAA does more harm than good in the long run. I also attack and disprove the false, critical notions people assume about student-athletes. Many argue that a student-athlete should be more than grateful for their scholarship and they need not ask for more. However, through this research, I hope to have demonstrated the typical worth of a student-athlete to the NCAA substantially exceeds the scholarship money. In a tactical, thought-out manner, I attempted to end the controversial debate on whether NCAA student-athletes should be paid. Lastly, I hoped to have brought to light why negative connotations of black people exist and why most of the time it is not their fault. Though the corruption of the NCAA, as well as corruption of the American system in general, is still evident and works to the detriment of blacks, society has been taking initiative to fix these problems. There are many black intellectual figures such as Cornel West, Barack Obama, LeBron James, and Oprah Winfrey fighting for the success of the black race within American society. The theme of black excellence has popularized in America and given the youth hope for a better future. In fact, within the NCAA in particular, a recent change has allowed college-athletes to

sign endorsements with brands. This is one step to athletes getting paid what they are worth, but the NCAA continues to hoard revenue these athletes should rightfully own. The problems induced by the NCAA can be improved if the law recognizes student-athletes as employees rather than students. If people take action to publicize the corruption of the NCAA, change will be implemented to extinguish the corruption and mistreatment of the NCAA over its black male athletes. My research paper has attempted to incite this publicity and hopefully, one day, we will see black people thrive within society in all institutions the way they should. Until then, we overcome the overlying issue of corruption and racism in American institutions one day at a time.

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