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Beyond Sport: Black Student Athletes Experiences with Race and Anti Racist Practices

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Abstract

This qualitative study highlights the experiences of Black student-athletes in Ontario, Canada. It explores how universities' commitments to antiracism, through policies, student support groups, and education, contribute to an antiracist environment. Critical Race Theory, antiracism, and nonperformative theory are the guiding frameworks for this study which draws on data from eight semi-structured interviews with Black student-athletes who play various sports in the Ontario University Athletics (OUA) league. The themes that emerged from this study support the notion that anti Black racism exists within the OUA and is often manifested as microaggressions. Given the participants' unique perspectives on the universities' acts of commitment, the findings support the claim that policies do not perform as they are intended to perform. Rather, student support groups and education are more effective commitments towards facilitating an antiracist environment. The data were divided into three major themes that help to serve as recommendations for future directions.

Keywords

Summary for Lay Audience

Antiracism is becoming a more frequent topic of discussion in athletics, specifically in universities. To ensure athletics is free of racial discrimination, it is essential to move past theoretical understanding to understand racism experienced by Black student-athletes who play a sport in the Ontario University Athletics (OUA) league and to understand how their universities support them. My study investigates how universities support Black student-athletes and how the universities' efforts foster an antiracist environment—if indeed they do. Participants shared their experiences with racism and their perspectives on the impact the universities' commitments have on contributing to an antiracist environment. The experiences shared by a majority of the eight participants showed that racism at a university sport level does exist. Additionally, their perspectives showed that policies are not practiced as intended but that committees and education contribute to building an antiracist environment. My study provides recommendations to highlight racism at the university student-athlete level and encourages individuals in leadership positions to evaluate various policies and commitments using an antiracist lens.

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To my partner, thank you for your unwavering support. Thanks for believing in me and the importance of my work.

Big up yuh selves!!

Dedication

To anyone who experienced racism as an athlete and was dismissed. Your experience is

valid, and I see you.

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Chapter 1

Introduction, Background, and Theoretical Framework

1.1 Introduction

This first chapter introduces the reader to the background and context of my study, including the research problem, rationale for the research, and research questions pertaining to the experiences of Black student-athletes and how institutions work to support them through an antiracist framework. Over the years, there has been a history of sports culture fueling racial discrimination and harassment. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (European Commissions against Racism and Intolerance [ECRI], 2021) claims that "sports can be a powerful tool for promoting social cohesion and important values . . . . But sometimes it is also an area in which racism and racial discrimination can thrive" (p. 1). Many sports organizations' efforts to address racial discrimination and harassment within sports have not gone unnoticed. Some may say these organizations have done a great job at fighting against racism; others, however, disagree. These organizations have implemented numerous policies and initiatives that shed light on the intolerance of racism. Nevertheless, it is difficult to know if addressing such discrimination is enough and whether or not it is being done for the right reasons. Therefore, questions about how sports organizations have enacted antidiscrimination and antiracist policies and diversity commitments, such as student support groups and education, continue to be raised, as well as questions about how Black athletes can feel supported institutionally. Further, this chapter presents the theoretical frameworks that support my study as well as a summary of key points.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 Research Problem

The main research problem is addressed in my study is how university commitments support Black student-athletes' experiences. Those experiences are critical in providing a deeper understanding of how racism is present within athletics. Moreover, there needs to be more clarity between what policies the universities implement and how they practice those policies. Therefore, exploring how the universities' commitments benefit Back student-athletes is essential, as is inquiring if policies, student groups, and educational commitments foster an antiBlack, antiracist environment.

1.2.2 Positionality

In the summer of 2017, two friends and I, who all identify as Black, joined a summer lacrosse league with many elite players from the Ontario University Athletics (OUA) league and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). We wanted to stay active during the off-season. We got put on a team that was run out of Southern Ontario and was made up of a predominantly White affluent demographic; on this team, there were only two other racialized athletes. One weekend, we experienced racism as we had never experienced it before. The others on the team racially profiled us and spat racist statements at us. After processing our experience, we each wrote email messages, as did our two other racialized friends, to the heads of the lacrosse league and each of the coaches about the events that had occurred that weekend. We stated that we would no longer be attending the league this summer. Unfortunately, we never received a response.

In the summer of 2019, the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) was in all the headlines after footage was released of a Black man, George Floyd, being murdered by law enforcement officers. Standing in solidarity with the Black community was highlighted everywhere one went.

The same lacrosse league in which I and my friends had experienced racism posted a very superficial, cookie-cutter statement on their social media highlighting their "solidarity" with the Black community and the steps they have taken to support their Black lacrosse players.

My two friends and I saw this statement and were shocked as our emails sent out years before had been ignored. We took the time to comment under their post, stating that our experience in 2017 had still not been addressed. The league deleted our comments and privately messaged us asking where our emails were as "they did not receive them." After we explained, we emailed the messages; they continued asking us to share our experiences and bombarded us with questions we had already answered in the emails. This racist experience emphasized that I am a Black woman in a predominantly White sport. I subsequently used my power at the university to advocate for the importance of student support groups to create Ontario Tech University's Black Athlete Association for Marginalized Groups (BAA). The BAA works to uplift other Black voices and create a safe space for athletes with experiences like mine while providing tools to push the institution to challenge institutional whiteness.

In my experiences working alongside other associations and collaborating with other student-athletes, we have encountered many challenges when advocating for antiracist change within these institutions. Firstly, racialized athletes are often put in positions of doing "diversity work" for White institutions. The responsibility of addressing whiteness and racism to improve diversity within these institutions is often displaced to student-led support groups made up of minoritized athletes. Another common theme is that institutions encourage students to create equity-deserving groups advocating antiracism. However, they will not actively work with us to ensure that initiatives are sustainable and effective.

Universities want these coalitions and associations to be 'student-run and led,' which comes with a great deal of responsibility, especially considering it should not be students' jobs to ensure their athletic organization is antiracist. Another issue many student-athletes have encountered when doing diversity work is that the institutions utilize these students' advocacy groups as a marketing practice to gain recruits without actively supporting the students within the group. Being in this precarious situation has made me question whether the institutions' commitments, initiatives, and policies are truly rooted in antiracist pedagogy.

1.2.3 Rationale

After conducting research and being exposed to racism and institutional inertia firsthand, it became apparent to me that studies that examine race relations from a Canadian university athletics context are slim to none. Research within a higher education athletics context from an American perspective is also limited. Scholars, however, suggest that literature should investigate how sports policies foster an antiracist environment (Carrington & McDonald, 2010). Most current literature is based on professional athletics and its history of racism and explores the initiatives and policies that are used to address racial discrimination but the outcomes of such policies and initiatives are yet to be explored. Thus, my research on racism and the experiences of Black athletes in a Canadian university context was conducted. Research on institutionalized diversity and nonperformativity can often be found in neoliberal institutions (Ball, 2012). Literature on institutionalized diversity and nonperformativity is covered in interdisciplinary realms such as education, health care, climate change, and politics. However, the literature overall lacks an antiracist perspective on athletics. Noticing gaps in race relations in sports and how institutions use antiracist pedagogies in literature is crucial to exploring this topic within a Canadian university context.

1.2.4 Why Student-athletes

Ahmed (2012) claims that "whiteness is only invisible to those who inhabit it or those who get so used to inheritance that they learn not to see it, even when they are not in it" (p. 35). As, racialized athletes are more likely to notice institutional whiteness within the league and at their university; evaluating their experiences in my study provided a unique perspective. Their perspectives allowed a critique of the institution's whiteness, provided first-hand experience of how racism penetrates sports, and provided insights into universities' commitments to addressing racial inequities. Within the Ontario University Athletics (OUA) league, less than 30% of student-athletes are racialized; the remainder identify as White (Joseph et al., 2020, p.8). Therefore, the experiences of racialized student-athletes were vital to my study. The racial gap illustrated ways universities seem to support Black student-athletes, cater to White bodies. and have institutionalized diversity.

When exploring institutional diversity, Ahmed (2012) says, "If institutionalizing diversity is a goal for diversity workers, it does not necessarily mean it is the institution's goal" (p. 22). According to Ahmed (2012), to institutionalize diversity is to ensure diversity is part of the automatic system of the institution. Likewise, "having an institutional aim to make diversity a goal can even be a sign that diversity is not an institutional goal" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 23) which highlights the superficiality of diversity work within institutions. Ahmed (2012) says, "When your task is to remove the necessity of your existence, then your existence is necessary for the task" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 23). Ahmed ultimately stated that diversity workers and groups should be temporary; further exploring these long-term diversity groups shed light on whiteness. The student-athlete turned diversity worker's experience was crucial to understanding the presence of institutional inertia within the athletic departments. Investigating the institutional inertia

challenged the institutions' effort to institutionalize diversity as there is an evident lack of active participation from the university (Joseph et al., 2020; Ahmed, 2012).

1.2.5 Research Questions

I investigated in my study, from the Black student-athlete perspective, how racism penetrates sports at an institutional level. Additionally, I assessed institutionalized inertia and nonperformativity to gain a complex understanding of how the institution has embedded diversity rather than "[aiming] to make thought about equality and diversity issues' automatic'" (Ahmed, 2012, p.25). My main research questions were: What are the experiences of Black university student-athletes with race and racism in Ontario universities? In what ways have the institutions' Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) commitments contributed to fostering an antiracist environment?

1.3 Theoretical Framework

My study drew on the work done by Sara Ahmed (2012) to provide theories and a deeper understanding of the complexities of the nonperformativity of diversity groups within institutions. Moreover, Ahmed's (2012) work provided insights into how institutions should do more, allowing equity and diversity to be "automatic" (p. 25). I used an antiracism conceptual theory to provide insights into developing a more inclusive sports community that is not delegative but rather collaborative and sustainable. Finally, I used Critical Race Theory (CRT) to provide insights into systemic racism and challenge the status quo while highlighting the importance of storytelling.

1.3.1 Nonperformative Theory

The key aspects of Ahmed's work are institutional life, diversity, and nonperformativity. She states, "if institutionalizing diversity is a goal for diversity workers, it does not necessarily

mean it is the institution's goal" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 22). Often, commitments to antiracism can function as performance indicators and contribute to a sense of organizational pride. She states, "Being committed to antiracism can function as a perverse performance of racism: 'you are wrong to describe us as uncaring and racist because we are committed to being antiracist'" (Ahmed, 2007, p. 601). Ahmed underscores that "having an institutional aim to make diversity a goal can even be a sign that diversity is not an institutional goal" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 23). One problem Ahmed explores is that institutions often claim the individuals' accomplishments as their own (Ahmed, 2012). She further highlights the resistance that diversity workers often face. She calls this "institutional inertia," "the lack of an institutional will to change" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 26) and "to persist by making diversity into an explicit institutional end, by bringing diversity to the foreground, stops diversity from becoming habitual" (Ahmed, 2012, pp. 26-27). Institutional inertia speaks to diversity workers' challenges when attempting to do their job and challenges the institutions' effort to institutionalize diversity as the actors need more active participation (Ahmed, 2012). To this, Ahmed (2012) says, "To embed diversity within an institution involves working with the physicality of the institution: putting diversity into the organizational flow of things" (p. 28).

The image of diversity has now become a marketing practice. As Ahmed (2012) states, diversity work is about generating the "right image" (p. 34) and correcting the wrong. Ahmed's use of "image" plays into the nonperformativity that institutions demonstrate when "doing" diversity work. "Diversity becomes about changing perceptions of whiteness rather than changing the whiteness of organizations" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 34). The challenges diversity workers encounter when doing diversity work within a White institution are spotlighted because such work often excludes White bodies.

Nonperformativity is the "reiterative and citational practice by which discourse does not produce the effect that it names" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 117). In other words, nonperformativity is the failure of commitments to do what they say. Ahmed explores nonperformativity when investigating institutional commitments to diversity. These include 1) statements of commitments which come in written documents and 2) actions an institution can get behind, such as committees and education (Ahmed, 2012, p.114).

> Finally, Ahmed states that
>
> racism should not be seen as about individuals with bad attitudes (the 'bad apple model'), not because such individuals do not exist (they do) but because such a way of thinking undermines the scope and scale of racism, thus leaving us without an account of how racism gets reproduced. (Ahmed, 2012, p. 44)

She also states that "eliminating the racist individual would preserve the racism of the institution in part by creating an illusion that we are eliminating racism" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 44). Further, Ahmed says, "We say we are or have been racist, and insofar as we are writing about racism (and racists are unwitting), then we show 'we are not racist,' or at least not racist in the same way" (Ahmed, 2012, pp.46-47). Here she sheds light on the superficiality of just addressing racism and minimizing the wrong doings of the institution. Ahmed (2012) notes that "if we recognize the institutional nature of racism, this recognition is not a solution" (p. 48), emphasizing that not supporting racism is not enough and that institutional support needs to be much more.

1.3.2 Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Antiracism Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theory formed by various scholars and activists who studied and looked to transform the relationship between "race, racism and power" (p. 2) within the legal field during the Civil Rights movement (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Critical race

theory intends to critique the liberal order; it builds on two previous movements, critical legal studies and radical feminism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Ideally, CRT looks at the systemic racism rooted in policy, law, and institutions. The experiences of Black bodies are now included as there is a similar experience with racial oppression shared by many marginalized communities (Yosso, 2002). Critical race theory helps deconstruct covert power relations and challenge neutrality and colorblindness related to race and racialization (Abawi & Berman, 2019). CRT emphasizes the importance of storytelling and values the importance of bringing Black experiences to the forefront (Gillborn, 2007). Yosso (2002) defines *critical race theory* as a framework to challenge systemic racism in structures, processes, and discourses. Yosso (2002) highlights the five main aspects of CRT as "(1) the intersectionality of race and racism with gender, class, and sexuality; (2) the challenge to dominant ideology; (3) the commitment to social justice; (4) the centrality of experiential knowledge; and (5) the utilization of interdisciplinary approaches" (p. 95).

CRT is justified within my study because it is connected to the challenging of neutrality and the bringing of Black experiences to the forefront. CRT allows a critique of the systemic roots of racism and works to hold institutions accountable for taking action. My study highlighted Black voices as crucial to antiracism and to the challenging of institutions. Gillborn (2007) states, "CRT approaches serve to appropriate such forms [storytelling] and use them to build a powerful challenge to mainstream assumptions" (p. 24). CRT is justified because my study challenges the mainstream assumptions of institutions.

Initially, the theory of antiracism was used to critique conservative approaches and to challenge them as they fell victim to upholding the status quo and overlooking perspectives of and so antiracism must be flexible and consistently adapt" (p. 13). Gillborn (2007) also

emphasizes that antiracism should constantly be evolving and challenging while highlighting the perspectives of Black bodies, a focus which multiculturalism lacks. Multicultural education has not examined oppression and power (Lee, 2014). Furthermore, Gillborn states that true antiracism has yet to be experimented with in an education context, and only a certain level of multicultural education has been accomplished (Lee, 2014; Gillborn, 2007). Moreover, antiracism must take a multi-level approach. By focusing on one level or "scale of inequity, we lose sight [of] the most powerful forces operating at the societal level to sustain and extend these inequities" (Gillborn, 2007, p. 18).

According to Enid Lee (2014), antiracism not only accepts that people are different but also highlights how their differences can be seen as deficits. Additionally, antiracism looks at power dynamics and how racial differences can put different individuals and communities at a disadvantage within society. Moreover, Lee states, "antiracist education helps us move that European perspective over to the side to make room for the other cultural perspectives that must be included" (p. 11). Contrarily, multicultural education does not highlight the different perspectives that counter discrimination, thus catering to the hegemonic perspective which is often White European. More than representation is needed; challenging the status quo needs to occur. Lee looks to challenge the status quo. Critical race theory looks to "use knowledge to empower people and change their lives" (Lee, 2014, p. 12) and with privilege should use their power to change what is within their reach.

Like Gillborn and Lee, George Dei views antiracism through an intersectional lens in education. *Intersectionality* can be defined as the crossroads of race, gender, and class and their impact on discrimination. The term intersectionality was coined by Kimberlee Crenshaw and introduced in the late 1980s to explore the interrelation between many social factors (Cho et al.,

2013, p. 787). Dei's antiracism framework (2001) focuses on the intersections of race, class, and gender and evaluates the connections between community and culture. This framework emphasizes creating a sense of community within teachings that are not oppressive, patriarchal, or limiting and ensures equity deserving individuals foster a sense of belonging (Dei, 2001). Multicultural education can often alienate communities of colour. Multiculturalism acknowledges differences and allow the 'others' to engage in their community without considering how the system works against them. Dei also emphasizes that individuals with power, such as educators, administrators, decision-makers, and community organizers, must be liable in efforts to eradicate racism from an intersectional perspective (Dei, 2001) and take a multi-level way of challenging the system.

1.4 Summary of Chapter One

This chapter provided context, rationale, and justification for using institutionalized diversity, nonperformativity, and antiracist theory as the framework for the research questions. The following chapter will provide an in-depth background to my research with an overview of the current literature on student-athlete encounters with racism, institutions' lack of dismantling whiteness, an authentic antiracist pedagogy, and diversity's nonperformativity. After the literature review, I will share the methods used in this study. The following chapters will include data analysis and a conclusion of the findings.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, to provide further insights regarding the experiences of Black and racialized athletes in universities, I explore current literature that addresses race relations in university athletics. I also review policies and initiatives implemented by higher education associations. There is limited research on Canadian student-athletes and their experience with racism, and analysis of antiracism policies within university athletics is an area that has often been forgotten (Joseph, 2021). As I attempted to draw on literature that addressed racism in universities and explored policies that universities have initiated, it became apparent that more research on these topics is vitally important.

In this chapter I explore the history and context of universities' athletics programs and their history with racism. After exploring universities' track records, I review research on the experiences of Black student athletes within their respective universities. Then I highlight written commitments in the form of antiracism policies within five Ontario universities (Western University, University of Toronto, York University, Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly known as Ryerson University), and Queens University), policies that could shed light on how those universities are working towards antiracism. Lastly, because there is ample research done on professional athletics and their history of racism, many scholars have highlighted and assessed commitments that organizations have created. In this section, I explore various antiracist commitments in three professional sports leagues, Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), National Basketball Association (NBA), National Football League (NFL).

These three leagues were chosen based on their demographics of players ad varying efforts towards advancing antiracism and social justice.

2.2 Racism within University Athletics

There has been a history of sports culture being fueled by racial inequity. Racial harassment occurs among and between athletes, coaching staff, and fans. In addition, many athletes, coaches, and people of colour in leadership roles have been discriminated against because of their skin colour. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (European Commissions against Racism and Intolerance [ECRI], 2021) states that "[s]ports can be a powerful tool for promoting social cohesion and important values [. . .]. But sometimes it is also an area in which racism and racial discrimination can thrive" (ECRI, 2021, p.1). Overt forms of discrimination on the part of athletes, coaches, and stakeholders have led to severe consequences such as fines, suspensions, and reassignment to different organizations.

Within university and college sports, most student-athletes are White. Until the late 1960s, Black bodies were seldom seen in American College sports and White individuals were the majority (Sailes, 2017). Within the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), 63% of student-athletes are White, 16% are Black, 5% are mixed race, and the remainder are International, Asian, or of unknown ethnicity. In 1986, the NCAA proposed a regulation named "Proposition 48". This regulation requires

> a student-athlete to meet the following criteria to compete in an athletic activity during the first year at an NCAA Division One School: (1) earn a minimum grade-point average of 2.000 (4.00 = A) over a specific secondary core curriculum, and (2) obtain a minimum combined Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) score of 700 or a composite score of 15 on the American College Test (ACT). The 2.000 grade-point average is based on an eleven-

course minimum academic core curriculum encompassing at least three courses in English, two in mathematics, two in the social sciences, and two in the natural or physical sciences (with at least one laboratory class if offered by the high school). These courses must be certified on the high school transcript or by official correspondence. (Clarke et al., 1986, p. 162)

This regulation requires prospective athletes to perform well academically on standardized tests. Several scholars, advocates, and athletes, however, have pointed out that this regulation seemed to participate in modern-day segregation. The regulation increased challenges for Black student-athletes to attend university and colleges—because, historically, standardized testing has done more harm than good—and it thereby prevented the Black community from playing College sports, thus contributing to systemic racism. A study done by Michael Couch II (2021) on African American students and standardized testing stated:

Since the creation of standardized testing, many factors have contributed to why African Americans do not do well on these tests. External factors include poverty, racial segregation, inadequate funding for schools, cultural bias (i.e., test questions that often require specific, upper-middle-class White cultural knowledge), and stereotype threat. (Couch, 2021, p. 2)

External factors can also impact the outcome of Scholastic Achievement Testing (SAT), or American College Testing (ACT) scores and Black student-athletes are more likely to get rejected from NCAA Division 1 (D1)[1] athletics programs because they are already

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[1] NCAA is the major governing body for intercollegiate sports in America. Division 1 (D1) is the highest-ranking division of sports within the NCAA. D1 has the largest athletic budget, largest student bodies and provides the most athletic scholarships (Berkman, 2021.). NCAA D1 is comparable to USports as they take a national approach.

disadvantaged. For example, when the Proposition 48 regulation was enacted, it was noted that two-thirds of D1 basketball or football players came from impoverished backgrounds, and they were subjected to educational and other types of stereotypes that affected how society perceived Black athletes (Sailes, 2017).

The NCAA's history of racism does not stop here. There has been a history of Black male D1 football players being stigmatized as 'aggressive and violent,' putting them at risk of getting expelled and losing a scholarship. Yearwood (2018) stated that "the so-called negative behaviours were a direct result of structural violence young Black male student-athletes experienced in sport" (Yearwood, 2018, p. 21). Challenging White power dynamics in a predominantly White institution "could result in immediate dismissal from the team and expulsion from the university, without an athlete violating any type of university policy" (Yearwood, 2018, p.32). Stereotypes remained at the forefront as Black excellence was highlighted across the media and in college sports. Black athletes were now praised for their athletic abilities; however, academic capabilities were consistently undermined. Thus, Black athletes were seen as "dumb jocks" (Sailes, 1993). The stereotype resulted in Black athletes being scouted for positions on teams that required more athletic abilities - "the brute" stereotype - over positions that required more tactical and strategic abilities (Kooistra et al., 1993).

Jordan (2010) explored the impact that racial microaggressions have on the academic and athletic success of Black college athletes. The findings highlighted that Black student-athletes' experiences with racism primarily manifested in this way. *Microaggressions* are "everyday slights and insults that minoritized people endure and that most people of the dominant group do not notice or take seriously" (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, p. 226). These experiences make Black student-athletes feel intellectually inferior to their White counterparts. Some examples of

microaggressions include race being linked to athletic nature, Black culture being devalued by White counterparts, and lastly, Black athletes were often stereotyped by fans, teammates and community members.

In a Canadian context, research on racism within Canadian universities has just scratched the surface of the issue. In 2021, an Anti-Racism Report from the Indigeneity, Diaspora, Equity & Anti-racism in Sport (IDEAS) research lab led by Dr. Janelle Joseph from the University of Toronto was released. The IDEAS report provided some predictable conceptual evidence of racism within the Ontario University Athletics (OUA) organization. The qualitative study took a multi-level approach that explored over 4000 student-athletes, coaches, and administrators' experiences with racism within the OUA. The report provides Canadian athletics with tangible tools to address racism within sports. It outlined four pillars that will contribute to facilitating change within the league: "Education, recruitment, support and accountability" (Joseph et al., 2021). The report highlighted that one-third of athletes on the OUA are racialized, and that of those who felt angry about something racist they have experienced, 31% identified as Black student-athletes (Joseph et al., 2021).

Joseph et al. (2021) state that education is needed. This education should include a culture shift that is inclusive of normalizing conversations around race. After looking into the hiring process, unnecessary qualifications that predominantly White people had over racialized people were among the hiring prerequisites that presented as boundaries. Thus, Joseph et al. (2021) further outline that unnecessary experience should be removed to ensure racialized individuals can access the same hiring opportunities to which privileged people have access (Joseph et al., 2021). Moreover, the Anti-Racism Report states that when "creat[ing] and hir[ing] for a position devoted to antiracism for case management and programming, [it is important to]

hire racialized students, [and] implement mental health supports" (Joseph et al., 2021, pp. 42 & 65-73). Lastly, accountability must be held (Joseph et al., 2021). Many participants stated that the absence of accountability—rules, consequences, and step-by-step processes to report racism— has upheld whiteness and ignorance within the OUA (Joseph et al., 2021, pp.75–82).

Along with the Anti-Racism Report, the OUA league has outlined a policy stating their intolerance of racial discrimination and harassment. The following behaviours are prohibited:

a) any behaviour that constitutes harassment, where harassment is defined as comment or conduct towards an individual or group which is offensive, abusive, racist, sexist, degrading or malicious. Types of behaviour that constitute harassment include but are not limited to:

b) racial and gender-based harassment, which includes slurs, jokes, name-calling, or insulting behaviour or terminology that reinforces stereotypes or discounts abilities because of gender, racial or ethnic origin;

c) contributing to a poisoned sports environment, which can include displaying discriminatory material (e.g., sexually explicit posters and racial/racist cartoons) (Ontario University Athletics, 2020, p. 7)

Early in 2020, the OUA formed the Black, Biracial and Indigenous (BBI) task force as "a platform to make positive change across the province, through building strategies to increase diversity and representation across the OUA, and to drive policy change to remove systemic barriers regarding racism" (Ontario University Athletics [OUA], 2022, para. 3). To start, the BBI has highlighted five pillars. These include racial violence policy, educational/antiracism training, hiring policies, financial access, and mental health (Ontario University Athletics [OUA], 2022).

These five focus areas align with the OUA's Anti-racism report as both seek to challenge the racial hegemonies and barriers within Ontario University Athletics.

Despite the OUA's research and efforts to combat racism, the antiracism report is one of the only critical antiracism resources available in Ontario. U Sports, however, an elite Canadian Intercollegiate athletic league that, in its makeup, is comparative to the NCAA, does have on their website a policy that expresses an intolerance to racial harassment and discrimination (U Sports, 2020).

In 2020, when several professional athletes and organizations globally used their positionality to address police brutality through public statements, many organizations followed suit (Evans et al., 2020). U Sports and the OUA released statements stating their "intolerance" of racism. Although some would argue these statements are one step towards becoming antiracist, concerns were raised about whether these statements actively help dismantle the deep-rooted racism in sports or if they in fact accomplish other, hidden agendas. U Sports and the OUA were some of the many organizations in Canada that released statements. To add to their antiracist statement, U Sports has created policies and has led and participated in various initiatives to educate themselves and the community on the voices of racialized student-athletes, coaches, and administrators. For example, U Sports and Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Sports (CBC) partnered to release a study on the lack of diversity within its league. Out of 400 top sports leadership positions at 56 Canadian universities, only 10% were filled by a Black or Indigenous person or a person of colour (Heroux & Strashin, 2020, paras. 7-9). After this study was released, U Sports introduced an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee to level the playing field for all marginalized groups within the U Sports Community (U Sports, 2021, paras. 5-7). Although positive initiatives have been added to the U Sports website, it has become apparent

that racialized athletic administrators are severely underrepresented. Race is almost certainly a determining factor in this gap.

Although the OUA and U Sports have created policies to eliminate racism from their leagues, student-athletes, coaches, administrators of colour, and the community have openly highlighted a lack of support in eliminating racism within these leagues. Joseph et al. (2020) explore many barriers to reporting racial incidents. The Anti-Racism Report highlights the lack of processes, tools, and ambiguous consequences that athletes, coaches, and administrators encountered as barriers when attempting to report racial discrimination. For example, a Black administrator stated, "We do not have . . . the process in place for me to escalate these issues if I find it happens" (Joseph et al., 2020, p. 15). A White administrator stated, "People who want to say something do not feel equipped to say something" (Joseph et al., 2020, p. 15). The experiences of staff demonstrate the lack of institutional commitment to ensuring their leagues are antiracist—they "lack transparent antiracism policies and reporting processes" (Joseph et al., 2020, p. 4). This lack of actionable steps to address racism within the leagues exemplifies "institutional inertia"—"the lack of an institutional will to change" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 26). Without a transparent accountability process and without the tools to report racial discrimination, an institution's lack of accountability and commitment to racial discrimination is clear. In turn, this lack upholds the whiteness embedded in the institution and thus demonstrates lack of commitment to creating equitable change.

Many institutions released statements outlining their solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement; Ahmed (2012), however, states that written statements do not truly state intolerance for racism. Many communities found the statements contradictory and insincere because the BLM movement cannot be supported without ensuring that an institution's

governing body upholds antiracism. Racialized communities called for a policy re-evaluation and actionable steps for antiracism to be outlined by the institution (Joseph et al., 2020). Joseph et al. (2020) state, "Institutions must have strategies to transform statements into action" (p. 58). These statements act as a performative measure. Ahmed (2012) states that diversity work is about generating the "right image" and correcting the wrong. Sometimes "diversity becomes about changing perceptions of whiteness rather than changing the whiteness of organizations" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 34). Insincere statements, paired with a lack of actionable steps and consequences that address intolerance for racial discrimination, demonstrate that an institution's statements are performative and only used to change the perception of whiteness rather than the institution's whiteness.

In university athletics, specifically the NCAA and some Ontario universities, we see educational equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) programs introduced to help educate all bodies involved in sports. However, because these programs have only been implemented recently, there is limited research on the effectiveness of these antiracist educational programs.

Economou, Glascock and Gamble (2022) conducted a qualitative study within the NCAA with 14 student-athletes on their lived experience of racism within their athletic careers. This study aimed to provide insight into implementations of antiracism programs. Some suggestions for the future included "develop[ing] strategies for athletes to understand and evaluate their identity" (p. 1); integrating antiracist practices into large systems which include bias training, undoing racism and privilege education" (Economou et al., 2022, p. 15). A final recommendation was to "create tools and visuals for athletes of colour illustrating the institution's commitment to EDI" (Economou et al., 2022, p.1 & 15).

2.3 Black Student Athlete Experience

Many Black student-athletes have been exposed to racism, especially within their post-secondary experience (Singer, 2005; Beamer, 2014; Economou et al., 2022). In 2005, John N. Singer from James Madison University conducted a study on the racist encounters of male African American student-athletes who attend predominantly white institutions (PWI) in America. This qualitative case study was intended to explore the impact racism can have on educational experiences. Racism in PWIs is infectious as these institutions historically tolerated and promoted segregation, white privilege, and systemic racism. In addition, Black students who have attended PWIs have often been labelled as academically unqualified, and their athletic abilities have been exploited (Strayhorn, 2008 & Bilberry, 2000). Singer (2005) justified his study using Critical Race Theory (CRT) for three primary reasons. Firstly, CRT recognizes that racism in America is deeply engrained within society. Secondly, CRT highlights that American laws work against racialized people and "insist on the critique of liberalism, arguing that liberalism has no mechanism for the sweeping changes that are needed to address racism appropriately" (Tate, 1997). Lastly, critical race theory challenges many neutral stances on colorblindness, objectivity, and meritocracy as it is a disguise used by powerful interests to stay dominant in society (Delgado,1995).

Singer's (2005) use of semi-structured interviews aligns with CRT as CRT highlights the importance of storytelling and encourages participants to speak freely of their perspectives and lived experiences. Participants in the study had to meet two criteria: "(1) African American male football players with eligibility in a [PWI] college sports program, and (2) African American male football players willing to participate in the study" (Singer, 2005, p. 372).

Two main themes surfaced from Singer's study. First, the participants highlighted that, from an African American perspective, there is a lack of opportunity to participate in decision-

making roles that are offered to other athletes on their teams. They emphasized that most African American footballers were placed in roles that required skill but that leadership roles such as quarterback were left to White players, because such roles require decision-making (Singer, 2005). More broadly, the African American participants felt treated differently than their White counterparts in their respective sports and relationships with academic advisors (Singer, 2005, p.374). For example, the White teammates were explicitly given guidance about class scheduling while the Black footballers were not given guidance on how to graduate on time. Furthermore, the Black footballers often felt that academic counsellors and advisors deemed Black bodies unqualified even to be at their university (Singer, 2005).

Singer (2005) suggests that the growth of student-athlete academic support groups would help reform intercollegiate athletics. Such support groups should also be culturally competent to cater to the Black/African American student-athlete experience at a PWI (Singer & Armstrong, 2001; Singer, 2005). As for sport-specific experiences, Singer (2005) suggests that administrators and mentors should advocate and empower African American students with a passion for decision-making so they may take leadership roles on their teams (Singer, 2005).

Singer (2005) provided insight into the experiences of African American student-athletes within predominantly White institutions in America. Unfortunately, within Canada, recognized predominantly White institutions do not exist. Thus, my study will focus on multiple universities across Ontario. I hope to shed light on the experiences with race and racism from the Black student-athletes perspective while delving deeper into their challenges when advocating for themselves.

Krystal Beamon (2014) from the University of Texas at Arlington conducted a study that examines the perceptions of racism of former NCAA D11 athletes. Her study aimed to explore

Alumni athletes' experiences with racism at predominantly White institutions (PWI). Her study showed that racism and exploitation within athletics exist systemically within higher education and athletics. Some of the examples she provided align with Singer's findings, which include the lack of support for academic success provided to Black student-athletes compared to their White counterparts, the lack of Black bodies in decision-making spaces, labour exploitation, and pay inequities (Beamon, 2014).

Beamon (2014) qualitatively assessed 20 African American Alumni D1 athletes' experiences with racism on campus. Beamon raised two questions: firstly, what are the experiences of high-profile African American student-athletes concerning racism on predominantly White campuses? Secondly, does the status of "athlete" serve as a buffer against racism? As with Singer's study (2005), these questions were analyzed using CRT to reveal the significance of the data gathered through storytelling. The study found that acts of self-segregation within locker rooms and the absence of racial harmony were common themes. Moreover, racism was highlighted as a significant barrier to success. This study found that being an athlete did not protect the students from experiencing racism at their respective PWI (Beamon, 2014).

Beamon (2014) used a larger sample size than Singer (2005) and highlighted the segregation within university athletics. Beamon's (2014) research has provided context for my study and addressed the gaps in antiracism educational practices that could be implemented to ensure Black athletes are successful within their sport and academics from a Canadian perspective. In addition, Beamon's study looked at alum athletes, which allowed us to see that racism has a history within university athletics. The study further solidifies that racism at the university level needs further exploration.

2.4 AntiRacism Policies

In this section I provide insight into the antiracism policies that select universities in Ontario have introduced: Western University, the University of Toronto, York University, Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly known as Ryerson University), and Queens University. I refer to policies as statements of commitment.

Because of Western University's history of racism (Bicknell, 2020; Butler, 2020; CBC News, 2020; LeBel, 2020), I have chosen to investigate its antiracism policies. There have been many accounts of students and faculty members being discriminated against because of their race or having heard their White counterparts using racial slurs on campus (CBC News, 2020). Subsequently, the University hired a senior diversity officer to help address and navigate racism on campus. The University outlined a Policy 1.35 nondiscrimination/harassment policy that staff and students must follow. This nondiscrimination/harassment policy states:

> Discrimination means a distinction, intentional or not, based on a prohibited ground, which has the effect of imposing burdens, obligations, or disadvantages on an individual or group not imposed on others, or which withholds or limits access to opportunities, benefits, and advantages available to other members of society. (Western University, 2019, p.1)

This policy defines "race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin [and] citizenship" (Western University, 2019, p.1) as a prohibited ground, following human rights codes. However, the policy does not include consequences, resources, and steps that hold individuals accountable for their actions.

The University of Toronto (U of T) has dedicated an office to antiracism and cultural diversity. Within their antisemitism and racism statement, they state:

Every person has a right to equal treatment concerning services, goods, and facilities,

without discrimination because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin,

citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, or handicap.

(University of Toronto, 2019)

Unlike Western University, U of T has outlined that incidents of racial vilification should be

directed to the office of antiracism. Individuals with complaints are also advised to speak to the

Race Relations Office and the Equity Issues Advisory Group for resources and support. These

offices are asked to "mediate and dispute . . . the complainant[s]" (University of Toronto, 2019,

para. 18.3). Moreover, U of T has a direct link that allows an individual to address discrimination

and harassment discretely.

York University's approach to addressing antiBlack racism is unlike others as they

specifically outline a framework along with resources to get support for human rights, equity,

and inclusion violations. This antiBlack framework "outline[s] overarching values,

understandings and objectives to guide the university community in making an impactful

systemic change on antiBlack racism" (York University, 2021, p. 3). The framework outlines

nine focus areas that address antiBlack racism holistically. These focus areas include

representation, safety, mental health support, community engagement, data collection, education,

decision-making, and accountability (York University, 2021a). York also has a resource hub

where case resolution services are located—its Center for Human Rights, Equity, and Inclusion

office (York University, 2021b).

Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) has a webpage dedicated to confronting

antiBlack racism within the University (Toronto Metropolitan University [TMU], n.d). This

webpage comprises many educational resources, including the Black Student Advisory Council's

recommendations for tackling anti-Black racism and support. The website includes a list of

support services for staff, students, and faculty members. In addition, a discrimination and

harassment policy are outlined and within this same policy, a related document is dedicated to a

complaint and investigation process (Toronto Metropolitan University [TMU], 2021). A

university police hotline is also available for any incidents on campus.

In 2020, Queens University released a statement on its commitment to addressing

systemic racism (Queens University, 2022a). Queen's University has a deeply rooted culture of

systemic racism that has fueled whiteness within its institution (Andrew-Gee, 2016; CBC News,

2016; Davis, 2020; Glauser, 2020). On their harassment and discrimination page, they have

outlined steps of their complaint process and how they conduct investigations regarding racism

on campus (Queens University, 2022b).

Overall, all five universities have similar policies for harassment and discrimination. U of

T, York, and TMU have specific offices and reports that delve deeper into antiracism within the

institution. Western and Queens differ as they have general departments dedicated to harassment

and discrimination but lack an explicitly antiracist perspective. All five universities have outlined

a policy. However, it remains to be investigated how well these universities follow their policies

and whether students, faculty, and staff know and adhere to them.

2.5 Professional athletics (WNBA, NBA, NFL)

In this section I explore Black professional athletes' experiences with racism within their

sport. I review three American professional sports leagues—the Women's National Basketball

Association (WNBA), the National Basketball Association (NBA), and the National Football

League (NFL). I chose these three specific leagues because they are comprised of similar

demographics: within each league, most athletes identify as Black, and most stakeholders,

coaches, and administrators identify as White (ESPN, 2016). For example, 80% of NBA players identify as Black and 70% of WNBA players identify as Black (ESPN, 2016). Approximately 50% of WNBA and NBA stakeholders identify as White. Therefore, race demographics in the WNBA and NBA run similarly.

2.5.1 Women's National Basketball Association

Women's basketball is among the world's longest-standing professional team sports leagues. Unofficially, women were able to shoot hoops before they could vote. However, once the WNBA league was officially founded in 1997, there was a collective agreement to "transform basketball into something beyond sport" (Borders, 2018, p. 122). The Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) prides itself on three core principles: "balancing the rules of the game with the realities on the ground" (Borders, 2018, p. 122), "[engaging] with a broader society" (Borders, 2018, p. 123), and "inspire[ing], empower[ing], elevat[ing]" (Borders, 2018, p. 123).

Literature indicates that since the WNBA first emerged in 1997, they have fought for racial equity, LGBTQ+ rights, representation, and much more, and has in fact been a prominent social change actor from the start. Their mission statement outlines four fundamental principles: "Represent, engage, function and take." However, to the dismay of the league, the WNBA has been fighting for social change and representation in the mainstream media (Howell, 2010).

Before Colin Kaepernick, LeBron James, and many other NBA players took the time to speak up against gun violence in the Black community, Maya Moore, the top pick in her WNBA draft class, WNBA Champion, and MVP, advocated for criminal justice reform after learning about a wrongfully convicted Johnathan Irons in 2007 (Streeter, 2020). The WNBA team, known as the Minnesota Lynx, wore t-shirts that read "Change Starts with Us—Justice and

Accountability." The shirts also bore the names of two victims of police brutality within America

(Borders, 2018, p. 123). Moreover, the WNBA participated in the #SayHerName campaign, in

which the murder of Breonna Taylor was the primary focus. Moore proclaimed in an interview,

"Tonight we will be wearing shirts to honour and mourn the losses of precious American citizens

and to plea for change in all of us" (HOOPFEED, 2016, para. 5). Initially, the league stated that

alterations to uniforms would result in monetary fines; increased awareness of the purpose of the

protest, however, led to the fines being overturned. This demonstrated that the league was

carefully listening to the voices of its racialized athletes. The league's first principle of

"balancing rules of the game with the realities on the ground" displayed the lengths they would

take to ensure representation was present (Borders, 2018). The WNBA have emphasized the

importance of uplifting the Black community, showing up for the Black community, and

displaying that police brutality and gun violence are unacceptable. The WNBA advocated

against gun violence at the same time the NFL blackballed Kaepernick for taking a knee during

the anthem in protest of police brutality. As the popularity of their shirts rose on the courts, and

as media blackouts and incidents of taking the knee during the anthem increased, many WNBA

athletes felt moved to speak out about the injustices rooted in America and look to continue their

antiracism journey.

The second core principle of the WNBA is, "engage with a broader society" and to many

educational conversations led by WNBA partnering with the NBA athletes on how sports can be

a great tool to address different social issues through a critical lens (Borders, 2018). These

conversations snowballed across America that focus on promoting and empowering youth while

providing solutions to systemic barriers within the health and fitness industry (Borders, 2018, p.

123). Nonetheless, the WNBA's efforts to hold difficult conversations on race, gun violence, and

racial equity did not stop there. The Seattle Storm held a Planned Parenthood night that advocated for women's and girls' health and well-being (Borders, 2018). During this movement the WNBA offered fans to donate a portion of their ticket to a designated non-profit organization committed to empowering and uplifting women and girls of all races, ethnicities, and cultures. The former WNBA president Lisa Borders voiced, "With Take a Seat, Take a Stand, we are proud to come together as a league to stand with our partner organizations, our fans, and the many inspiring women raising their voices for change in the current women's movement" (Nanak, 2020, para. 6).

The WNBA's final core principle is to "inspire, empower and elevate one another" (Borders, 2018, p. 124). Several WNBA players used their platform to speak out on sexual violence against women during the #MeToo movement. WNBA player Breanna Stewart, for example, spoke about being a sexual violence survivor, which led to many other WNBA athletes feeling comfortable enough to share their own stories and experiences (Borders, 2018).

Aside from their three core principles, the WNBA has created a Social Justice council that addresses America's deeply rooted White supremacy that cultivates inequality, implicit bias, and systemic racism toward Black and Brown communities (Connley, 2021). This council consists of seven WNBA players and supporting leaders such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term "intersectionality"; the President and Executive Director of Rock the Vote, Carolyn DeWitt, who focused on building long-term political power for America's diverse youth; Alicia Garza, who is the co-creator of the Black Lives Matter Global Network; and Black transgender activist Raquel Willis (Women's National Basketball Association [WNBA], 2020). Although some scholars, fans, and the public may be skeptical of these tumultuous initiatives,

the WNBA's longstanding fight for representation and intersectional equity allows any skepticism to be curbed.

It is important to note that, often, Black women are not seen as women. They often are dismissed within the social justice realms because both identifying factors—being Black and being women—cause them to be seen as systemically and unfairly oppressed in the law, economy, and society (Thomas & Wright, 2021, p. 503). The WNBA has taken steps to advocate for LGBTQ+ rights, women's health, sexual violence, and the overall fight for pay equity and representation by mainstream media sources. Taking an intersectional approach and highlighting the importance of intersectional voices demonstrates that sports can be a tool to aid in social change and to address intersectional systemic issues.

Efforts to address systemic racism within the WNBA, especially when taking an intersectional approach, demonstrates that women are willing to create a solution that is free of oppression. Creating the social justice council, donating a portion of fan tickets to many non-profit organizations, and holding conventions that focus on healthy living and empowering youth demonstrates the league's dedication to developing the community needed to make certain marginalized groups feel heard and supported, and to ensuring sustainability for years to come. Likewise, the fact that the league overturned the fines after learning the purpose behind the campaign t-shirts exhibited their willingness to listen, reflect, and dismantle institutional whiteness within the league.

The WNBA's efforts are genuinely attempting a transformative approach by using the shared passion of basketball to educate prospective athletes and fans on racial equity through empowerment. Banks (2016) states, "A transformative curriculum designed to empower students, especially those from victimized and marginalized groups, must help students develop

the knowledge and skills to critically examine the current political and economic structures and the myths and ideologies used to justify it" (Banks, 2016, p. 189). Banks (2016) also says that additive or infusion approaches are not part of a transformative curriculum. Nevertheless, within the WNBA, many additive initiatives hope to dismantle whiteness and promote empowerment. The critical factor that separates the WNBA's ambitions from other pro-sports leagues is their empowerment conferences that educate youth on challenging dominant hegemonies, and their voices calling for gun control and systemic reform that no longer targets Black and Brown communities. They are also working to eradicate the White privilege and systemic racism on which sports are built and is a start to transformative antiracist education.

2.5.2 National Basketball Association

In 2020, the National Basketball Association (NBA) stepped up and advocated against police brutality (Thomas & Wright, 2021). They used their games to fight against systemic racism in America. Such advocacy from the NBA is one step in the right direction and works to support the diverse individuals within the sport of basketball. Though the NBA is known to be a diverse sports organization where most players are African American or Black, most team presidents and general managers (GM) are White. This imbalance has sparked many instances where racial discrimination from GMs has been present, ending their careers as a GM or president (Reeves et al., 2014). This is not to say the NBA is exempt from racism, but it does take actionable steps toward addressing discrimination within basketball. When addressing racism in sports, there have been many times when general managers or athletes have been fined and even forced to resign from their positions, protecting their athletes from racial vilification.

Some scholars and equity-deserving communities say the NBA's efforts to fight against racism are improving, but others disagree. Although these sports leagues have implemented

various policies and initiatives to shed light on intolerance and racism, it is difficult to comprehend if addressing such discrimination is enough, whether it is being done for the right reasons, and whether these initiatives and policies are sustainable and are rooted in an antiracist pedagogy.

2.5.3 National Football League

In 2016, during the national anthem at a San Francisco 49ers game, quarterback Colin Kaepernick kneeled in protest of police brutality toward Black people in America. He stated in an interview done by the Washington Post (2020),

> I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses Black people and people of colour. To me, this is bigger than football, and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder. (Boren, 2020, para. 6)

This led to great animosity toward Kaepernick from NFL fans, players, stakeholders, and even political figures. After Kaepernick resigned from his team, several reporters in sports media suggested his resignation was suspicious. After further digging, the Washington Post (2020) wrote:

> After the season, he opted out of his contract. With several mediocre quarterbacks landing with other teams, suspicions grew that he was being blackballed [2] by NFL owners, who presumably did not want the attention that signing him would bring. (Boren, 2020, para. 11)

While some said that Kaepernick was brave for standing up to racial injustice, the league's blackballing of Kaepernick upheld its whiteness and supported systemic racism. Furthermore, it

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[2] Blackball: " an adverse vote especially against admitting someone to membership in an organization" (Meriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.)

demonstrated that Black athletes cannot advocate for racial injustice without putting their careers on the line.

Many organizations and institutions globally were speaking out against racial inequalities and making statements supporting BLM; the intolerance of racism was displayed across all media platforms. The NFL's official Instagram (NFL, 2020) stated,

> This is a time of self-reflection for all – the NFL is no exception. We stand with the Black community because Black Lives Matter. Through Inspire Change, the NFL. Players and our partners have supported programs and initiatives throughout the country to address systemic racism. We will continue using our platform to challenge the injustice around us. (NFL, 2020)

Many fans, players, the Black community, and allies were unsatisfied with these statements saying they contributed nothing towards dismantling systemic racism within an organization where whiteness thrives. Indeed, the triviality of its statements and actions suggests that the NFL is far from supporting the Black community.

Examining the statement the NFL released, Evans et al. (2020) argue that "there has also been a tendency to shift attention away from a general discussion about systemic racism towards drawn-out debates agonizing over specific incidents, actions or symbols, disputing whether they are 'racist' or not" (p. 292). The NFL does not address the racist past and present and instead shift the focus to highlighting their intolerance for racism. The NFL does not address the systemic racism in which they built their league. Thus, it mirrors the general makeup of America. Ahmed emphasizes the hollowness that has come from band-aid statements that many institutions release—statements that say "we are or have been racist, and insofar as we are [now] writing about racism (and racists are unwitting), then we show 'we are not racist,' or at least not

racist in the same way" (Ahmed, 2012, pp. 46-47), thus diminishing the wrongdoings and presence of racism within the NFL. Such statements become more "about changing perceptions of whiteness rather than [about] changing the whiteness of organizations" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 34). The statement's superficiality is evident and serves as a band aid as the NFL's; initiatives towards supporting Black lives only emerged because the organizations feared being deemed racist. The NFL lacks self-awareness of its deeply rooted White supremacy and does not provide an antiracist plan of action (Ahmed, 2004). Instead, their statement and lack of actions to support and uplift the Black community carry an underlying weight that allows the NFL to use their statement to accomplish alternate agendas. The NFL unavoidably gains collective social capital by accepting Black bodies into their organization, which turns into economic capital as over 60% of Black athletes ensure the organization blossoms. Notwithstanding the marketing practice that comes out of this statement is that they can now use their surface-level support to gain funding, fans' views, and exceptional athletes who deserve to be somewhere where they are appreciated, not just supported.

During the pandemic, several acts of xenophobic behaviour occurred toward the Asian American and Pacific Islanders community (AAPI). The NFL's efforts to support the AAPI community were less than satisfactory and individual community members spoke up against the absence of support (NFL, 2021).

The current Washington Commanders team rebranded and changed its name from 'Washington Redskins' to the Washington Football Team. The team only became the Commanders after many institutions voiced their support for Black and Indigenous communities. As early as 1972, the former name had sparked controversy as it was deemed derogatory and appropriative by many activists and Indigenous communities (Bernstein, 2020). The lack of

initiatives to end racism within other contexts demonstrates the level of whiteness rooted within

the NFL. Their initiatives and track record demonstrate that they prioritize White bodies and

ignore Black voices, and that the league is not antiracist.

2.6 Summary of Chapter Two

In this chapter I have provided an overview of racism within university settings, of the

history of Black student-athletes, and of the policy context of five different Ontario universities.

The limited literature on the Canadian Black student-athlete experience with race and my

overview of universities' antiracism harassment and discrimination policies illustrate a particular

gap and the necessity to conduct research within this field. The following chapter includes an

overview of the methods and methodologies of my study.

Chapter 3.0: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

      This chapter outlines the methodology and methods used in this research. The chosen

research method is a qualitative case study, which will be defined and justified within this.

Moreover, the data collection process will also be shared. This chapter also explores the research

design, including sampling and recruitment processes. The participants recruited for the study

will be introduced along with the data analysis method used. Finally, this chapter discusses the

study's ethical considerations and potential limitations.

3.2 Methodology

      This phenomenological case study explored Black student-athletes' experiences of racism

and antiracism initiatives within various Ontario universities. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison

(2018) define *phenomenological study* as "based on the view that our knowledge of the world is

rooted in our (immediate) experiences, and the task of the researcher is to describe, understand,

interpret and explain these experiences." Moreover, a phenomenological case study is derived

from a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is used to "study [several] naturally

occurring cases in detail and to use verbal rather than statistical forms of approach"

(Hammersley, 2013, p.12, as cited by Cohen et al., 2018, p. 287). Cohen, Manion and Morrison

(2018) state that qualitative research provides voices to individuals as it explores deeper

understandings of behaviours and actions that quantitative data cannot provide.

      Moreover, qualitative research regards people as beings who construct their perception of

the world based on their social situations and experiences (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 288). Further,

Cohen et al. (2018) state that qualitative research hopes to capture the multiple realities of a

culture within a particular situation that may be out of the participant's control. Bogdan & Biklen

(2005) states that "phenomenological research emphasizes the individual subjective experience (as cited by Mertens, 2005, p.250). Additionally, qualitative research analyzes barriers that exist to oppress specific communities in society (Hammersley, 2013, as cited by Cohen et al., 2018). Since this research study explored racism and antiracist practices within Ontario Universities, it justifies the methodology choice of qualitative research.

This phenomenological research design allowed the participants to explore various experiences from social and contextual situations they may have encountered (Cohen et al., 2018). Therefore, this study explored Black student athletes' experiences with racism and antiracist practices. Thus, a phenomenological case study with Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT emphasizes the importance of storytelling; thus, the task was to understand and interpret the experiences of racism and antiracism practices from Black student-athletes' perspectives. Moreover, the studies explored within the literature review (Singer, 2005 & Beamon, 2014) took a similar approach by using a qualitative methodology to ensure participants could elaborate on their experiences and shed light on how their experiences shaped their success.

Therefore, the overall purpose of this case study was to "focus on a particular instance and [reach] an understanding within [a] complex context" (Mertens, 2015, p. 252). Tackling antiracism training and initiatives within a Canadian context can be a complex phenomenon, as White bodies dominate Ontario sports. Thus, equity-deserving communities have often perceived antiracism programs as a "check box tool" or seen in a performative light. Highlighting the perspectives of Black athletes within Canadian Universities with different policies on antiracism provided the researchers with a deeper understanding of how institutions work to prioritize White voices. My previous experience has informed my interest in addressing racism within Ontario athletics.

As the researcher and a former Black student-athlete with previous experience representing two Ontario universities, it was crucial to address past experiences and their influence on the analysis of the interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Doing this demonstrated reflexivity through addressing biases, values, and social positionality (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Due to privilege and proximity to whiteness, as a bi-racial researcher, further discussing racism and exploring antiracist practices by highlighting all Black student athletes' experiences was crucial.

3.3 Research Design:

3.3.1 Sampling

In this research project, the interviews consisted of current 2022-2023 student-athletes who identify as Black within an Ontario university. Further, the sport they participate in must be recognized in the Ontario University Athletics (OUA) league. This preeminent university sports conference, the OUA, comprises 49 sports. With the league being reasonably large, it allowed many Black student-athletes across Ontario the opportunity to participate. The amplification of the Black student-athletes' voices allowed a historically neglected perspective to be shared. From personal experience, universities fall short in sharing their racial harassment and discrimination policies with student-athletes. Therefore, the researcher shared a summary of the policies at their respective university during the interview process.

Purposive sampling ensured that various voices and perspectives would be shared. For example, participants were not excluded based on their gender and the sport they played. The chosen participants identified as Black; further, there was room to specify cultural background. Specifying cultural background allowed a deeper understanding of social and contextual experiences, "values, beliefs and cultural factors" (Cohen et al., 2018 & Mertens, 2020, p. 298).

The chosen method was purposive over random sampling due to targeting specific demographics' experiences. Singer (2004) and Beamer (2014) emphasized the importance of Black student-athlete experiences as they are essential to the nature of racism within North America. This research study intended to allow eight student-athletes to share their experiences with racism and various antiracist commitments.

Additionally, this study provided a deeper understanding of participants' experiences rather than generalizable data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Thus, the first research question, "What are the experiences of a Black university student-athlete with race and racism in Ontario Universities?" investigated if racism does or does not exist within Ontario University Athletics (OUA). The second question, "How have equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) commitments fostered an antiracist environment?" will address whether the university is taking proper steps to combat racism from a Black student athlete's perspective.

3.3.2 Recruitment

The researcher sought out volunteers to participate in this study. These participants identified as Black student-athletes playing a sport within the 2022-2023 school year. Purposive sampling was used to seek out participants. The Black student-athlete experience is crucial to explore as racial bias exists within academia, and White voices are often prioritized (Coleman, 2005).

Recruitment took place quickly due to personal connections within the OUA and connections at two Ontario universities. The researcher has connections with Athletes for Change Alliance (ACA), a Black, Indigenous and Persons of Colour student-athlete liaison group that offers a sense of community and support to racialized athletes within Canadian Universities (ACA, 2021). The ACA currently has student-athlete members across various Ontario

Universities, which include the University of Toronto, Ontario Tech University, Carleton University, York University, Western University, University of Waterloo, Nipissing University, University of Windsor, and the University of Ottawa. The researcher advertised this research study through infographics (See Appendix C) to the current members of the ACA, outlining the purpose of the research. The ACA is the ideal organization with access to many racialized student-athletes. The ACA shared this study on social media platforms for greater reach. This relationship and connection remain the most vital recruitment tool, as the ACA has just announced a partnership with the OUA. In addition to the ACA sharing the posting with their members, the ACA's partnership with the OUA allows this research study to have an even greater reach to universities with which the ACA may not have a connection. Additional research advertisement was through social media.

3.3.3 Participants:

This study explored eight Black student-athletes' experiences with racism and antiracism within Ontario Universities. Due to time constraints, eight Black student-athletes to gather the perspectives needed for this study. Further, this sample size allowed in-depth conversations to be held in a limited time frame.

The following table outlines information about each participant. The table includes their racial identification, pronouns and reason for choosing their university. All the participants identified as Black and played an OUA-accredited sport in the 2022-2023 season. We interviewed eight participants who were in varying years in their studies. To ensure participants' identities remained confidential, each participant was assigned a pseudonym[3].

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[3] Pseudonyms were randomly chosen by participants.

Table 1:Participant Demographic Information

Pseudonym[4]	Racial identification	Pronouns	Reason for attending their university
Alex	Black	He / Him	Scouted by a coach in the athletics program.
Dillon	Black	He / Him	Interested in academic program and at the university provided an opportunity to be a varsity athlete.
Jason	Black	He / Him	Transferred from another university to be closer to home.
Malik	Black	He / Him	Scouted by a coach in the athletics program.
Megan	Black	She / Her	Interested in an academic program at the university and provided an opportunity to be a varsity athlete.
Patrice	Black	He / Him	University was a short commute.
Sydney	Black	She / Her	University was a short commute.
Tydarius	Black	He / Him	Scouted by a coach in the athletics program.

3.4 Data collection

The chosen method for data collection was semi-structured interviews. Creswell & Creswell (2018) highlight the importance of semi-structured interviews as they gather various participants' perspectives. Due to the small sample size, one-hour interviews in one-on-one sessions were conducted. Participants could have in-person sessions at a local public library or

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[4] Pseudonyms are alphabetically displayed in the chart.

virtual based on travel time. Most participants opted for virtual interviews because their schedules could not accommodate in-person meetings. One participant participated in the interview in person. Moreover, due to the potential of these interviews to bring forth vulnerable experiences with race and racism, individual interviews were the chosen data collection method. Additionally, the one-on-one interviews allowed voices that have often been neglected to be heard.

The in-person interview was recorded using an MP3 audio recorder, and virtual interviews were held using a Western-hosted Zoom. The process began with an overview of the purpose of the study and how the information gathered will be used; credentials and positionality, ethical considerations, and signed informed consent (See Appendix B) from participants were returned. Lastly, participants had the opportunity to ask any questions. As previously stated, the interview portion will be conducted with semi-structured interview questions (See Appendix D). The semi-structured interviews facilitated conversation surrounding experiences with antiBlack racism and evaluation of the antiracism commitments, starting from most general questions to more specific ones (Mertens, 2015). A combination of informal conversational and interview guide approaches was utilized to ensure the conversation was natural and vital topics would be addressed systematically. Systemically addressing questions eliminated organizational difficulties and facilitated conversation on topics that needed to be considered.

These questions contributed to shedding light on racism and antiracism commitments within Ontario athletics. The interview ended with any questions or concerns the participants had, and the researcher's contact information was provided if needed. Periodically throughout the interview, participants' consent was provided to ensure participants did not feel obligated to

answer questions that may raise unwanted feelings. Additionally, participants could take a break if needed and resume the interview process when ready.

3.4.1 Data analysis/ Coding and Content Analysis

In data analysis, transcribing and coding methods were used to identify common themes throughout the interviews. The researcher looked to evaluate code words, which can be simple phrases or just a singular word; ultimately, these code words can also be combined and used in multiple sections. Coding and exploring common themes allowed the data to be easily managed and identified patterns across participants, which assisted in creating the final compilation.

Additionally, this study's results were evaluated through coding patterns, assisting in comparing different themes within each interview. Common themes or code words were weighted heavier than topics not shared by the collective group (Creswell & Creswell, 2018); due to the uncertainty that all participants had the same vocabulary, coding by themes helped connect the participant's answers. The interview data was reported in the participants' language; however, some identifying information such as university names, sports, names of programs, committees and workshops were changed and given pseudonyms or general names.

3.5 Timeline

This study was conducted over one year, including the final write-up. The three months ensured all ethics training and courses were completed with approval from Western's ethics board (See Appendix A). The next three months were dedicated to participant recruitment within Ontario universities through a series of outreach, which included ACA, the OUA, social media, and networking.

Interviews took place over one month and three weeks, with an additional two weeks allocated to missed interviews due to unforeseen circumstances such as COVID-19 and

participants' conflicts. One month was dedicated to data analysis and interpretation. Two weeks were used to code and two weeks for interpretation. Lastly, the remaining months were allotted for the final write-up.

3.6 Summary of Chapter 3

This chapter has provided insight into the methodology, research design, methods and data analysis. This chapter justified the qualitative phenomenological case study as it provided the researcher with the best method to answer the research questions and consolidate the participant's perspectives and experiences with antiracist commitments.

Chapter 4

Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss findings from the semi-structured interviews that focused on my research questions. Four main themes emerged from the interviews: 1) Black student-athletes' experience with race; 2) Black student-athletes' experience with racism; 3) Black student-athletes' experience with various commitments to equity, diversity & inclusion (EDI); and 4) Black student-athletes' experience with an antiracist environment. Within each theme, sub-themes emerged.

4.2 The Black Student-Athletes' Experience with Race

The demographics of athletics involves predominantly White bodies such as coaches and athletic directors in positions of power (Joseph et al., 2022) while the players on the field are often athletes of colour. The participants in my study confirmed the validity of the Joseph et al. (2022) study: there is a lack of Black representation in positions of power such as among coaches and within athletics departments. The following narratives reveal how my participants experience the demographics of their sport, coaching staff, and athletic departments.

Megan is a Black student-athlete at a university in one of Ontario's diverse cities. Megan's team was very diverse. As she reflected on her coaching staff, she identified a small group of racialized coaches, but the majority were White. Moreover, she noticed that White individuals run the athletic department. She said:

> I would say that when it comes to my teammates, we are very mixed; half of the girls are White, and the other half are Black. Regarding the coaching staff, we have many White individuals and a small group of minorities. [During] my first year, there were little to no

[racialized] coaches, but that did increase as my second year came. Within the athletic

department, I would say there is a significant number of White individuals. (Megan,

Black student-athlete, 2023)

Megan's experience with the White coaching demographic is like that of many other

participants whose universities are in racially diverse regions of Ontario. Alex, Tydarius, and

Malik found that most people of colour were players on teams but that White individuals

constituted the majority of their coaching staffs and athletic departments. Alex said that his

teammates and coaching staff are more racially diverse than his athletic department: "Our team is

racially diverse; our coaching staff is pretty diverse, too; I would say our athletic department,

though, is mainly White people" (Alex, Black student-athlete, 2023). USports and Canadian

Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) Sports highlighted the fact that 10% of leadership positions at

56 Canadian universities were filled by a Black, Indigenous, or other (Heroux & Strashin, 2020,

paras.709). Tydarius explained how his teammates are comprised of racialized individuals while

leadership positions such as coaches and athletic directors remain White. Tydarius (Black

student-Athlete, 2023) said, "So I will start with my team; we have always been diverse . . .. Our

coaching staff is all White [people], so it is not that diverse and the same with our athletic

department; it is all White [people]."

Malik (Black student-athlete, 2023) reflects on his experience with race distribution at his

university compared to other universities his team plays against; he emphasizes that the men's

and women's teams in his sport are racially diverse. He said:

[The team is] more racially diverse than [the teams at] other schools, but I would say we

have a decent number [of racialized individuals], especially within the men's and

women's teams . . .. Our coaching [staff] is pretty diverse . . .. [It is] one race (White)

within the athletic directors . . .. (Malik, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Unlike other participants in this study, Patrice's experience with race differs slightly. He

shares how his athletic department is diverse—that it includes various individuals from different

backgrounds and heritages because he plays a different sport that do the other participants in my

study, and his school is in a highly diverse area in Toronto. He said:

The players themselves are a mix of European players. There are maybe three or four

Black players . . . and the people who organize the behind-the-scenes, taking care of our

travel and everything like that, they are also pretty diverse. Our massage therapists are

Asian, and everyone else is Black. (Patrice, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Unlike Patrice, Sydney, a Black student-athlete playing a predominantly White sport in a less

diverse area, is one of only two Black athletes in her sport. She reflects on how her coaching

staff and athletic department consist of mainly White individuals. She said, "It is not diverse;

when I was playing, two Black girls were on the team, and the rest of my team was White. The

coaching staff and athletic therapists are White, so there is not much diversity" (Sydney, Black

student-athlete, 2023).

Jason's experience as a student-athlete on a large team was similar to Sydney's. He

recognizes that the athletics department, inclusive of athletes, coaches, and athletic directors, is

not diverse: "Overall, there needs to be more diversity in all three facets (players, coaches, and

athletic directors). The only people I could think of right now in terms of diversity are, myself

included, ten others on the team and staff" (Jason, Black student-athlete, 2023).

Although all eight participants, located in various areas of Ontario, shared different

experiences with demographics at their university, they all agreed that diverse representation is

the case among players. On the other hand, coaching staff and athletic departments remain overwhelmingly White.

4.3 Black Student-Athletes' Experience with Racism

During the interviews, I asked the student-athletes about their experience with racism at their respective Ontario universities. Six of the eight Black student-athletes could describe at least one experience of racism that had occurred either towards them as student-athletes or around the school community. Their experience aligns with research from the Ontario University Athletics Anti-Racist Report: Joseph et al. (2020) reported that 31.5% of athletes who said they are always upset about experiencing racism identified as Black. In my study, six of my eight respondents (75%) could share at least one incident in which racism had been directed towards them.

Dillon, Megan, and Alex highlighted their experience with microaggressions, also called new racism. Microaggressions are defined as subtle forms of racism that are "invisible to those who are part of the dominant culture . . .. [New racism] rarely demonstrates itself in violence or overt racist behaviour' [Henry and Tator, 2002, p .23]" (Valentine, 2012, p. 110). Sensoy and DiAnelo (2017) define microaggressions as the "everyday slights and insults that minoritized people endure and that most people of the dominant group do not notice or take seriously" (p. 226). Alex reflected in his interview on his experience of being stereotyped during a game (Sailes,1993):

> We played [another school], and I remember [the opposing fans] bleachers were behind
> our bench, and I remember [the fans] were very aggressive to our team. I know their
> school is predominantly White, with their . . . team having a few Black guys, but I can
> tell that a few of the things that they're saying were racially motivated as they were

comparing me to other Black guys because of my dreads. (Alex, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Dillon's experience aligns with findings from Jordan's (2010) study on microaggressions with Black college student-athletes and how their athleticism was linked to their racial identity. Dillon shared an interaction with a taxi driver, the taxi driver assuming he played basketball, revealing his stereotyped notion that Black people only play basketball. Dillon said:

One taxi driver picked me up as I was on my way to the bus station as I was going home. We were having a good conversation. The driver then asked me if I played a sport at the university; I responded 'yes,' and right away he responded, 'Oh, you play basketball?' and I responded, 'No [I don't play basketball].' (Dillon, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Sydney's and Tydarius' experience showed how White people in the community were dismissive of racism while showcasing their racial bias and colorblindness. *Colorblindness* can be defined as the minimalization of racism; it suggests that "prejudiced views and behaviours are no longer a major factor in affecting the lives of [racialized people]" (Burdesy, 2011, p. 268). Tydarius reported that the town in which his school was located did not see the need for Black student groups run by student-athletes. This showcases the community's minimalization of racism; community members remained ignorant of the prejudice Black student-athletes face. He said:

So, I interviewed for [local newspaper on our Black student group], and when the story dropped, there's a lot of good feedback, but there were people in the comments questioning, 'Oh, why does this group have to exist'? (Tydarius, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Sydney shared her experience as one of two Black women on her team. She explained that her White teammates did not understand that, as a Black woman, there are certain safety precautions

she had to be mindful of when going out late at night—because certain stereotypes are often affiliated with Black women (Theim et al., 2019).

Jason shared his experience with a White teammate who used a racial slur. It remained unclear whether the White teammate had ill intent, but he had nevertheless participated in racism and caused harm to Jason and possibly others who were present (Popa-Wyatt & Wyatt, 2017). Jason said:

> I remember an incident off the field, though this was with a group of guys I was living with. I remember we were in the car; I think we were driving back from dinner or something, and one of them used the N-word with the hard -ER, and everyone in the car perked up and said, 'Whoa, bro, that's not cool, man' and he's a White guy, too, who was also on the team. (Jason, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Ultimately, my findings in this study demonstrate that several Black student-athletes in Ontario have experienced racism as have many others across North America. Many of their experiences manifest as new racism or microaggressions. It is thus evident that racism still exists at the post-secondary varsity athletics level.

4.4 The Black Student-Athlete Experience with Various Commitments to EDI

In this section, I explore three types of commitments. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (2012) by Sara Ahmed defines commitment in two ways. A commitment can be a "readable document," also called a "statement of commitment" (p. 114). She also refers to commitment as "something more substantial: what the institution is behind or gets behind" (p. 114). Commitments can be seen as nonperformative: "The failure of the speech act to do what it says is not a failure of the intent or even circumstance, but is actually what the speech act is doing" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 117). In other words, nonperformative commitments do

not produce the effect they are intended to produce. Commitment statements must be transformed into actions. The three kinds of commitments I explore here are 1) statements as commitments, 2) committees as commitments, and 3) education as commitments.

In the first section below, concerning statements as commitments, three sub-themes emerged from my data: lack of awareness of policies, poor dissemination of policies, and nonperformativity of policies. In the second section below, I explore committees (student-led support groups and antiracism committees) as commitments. In the final section below, I explore education—training and workshops—as commitments.

4.4.1 Statements as Commitments

I define policies as statements of commitments. I prompted my participants to describe policies the university had created that catered to supporting Black student-athletes and I prompted them to answer two questions: "What antiracism or racial discrimination policies are you aware of? Are they athlete-specific or university-wide?" Very quickly, it became apparent that most of my participants were unsure and unaware of their universities' discrimination/harassment or antiracism policies.

Lack of awareness of policies

Two participants said their schools did not have an antiracism policy and were unaware of other discrimination policies. Dillon said, "As far as we know, there are no antiracist policies in [the university], and that needs to change, and we've been pushing for [one] for almost two to three years now." Likewise, Tydarius shared that his university does not have an antiracist policy. He further said:

So, this is something I've been fighting for the last couple of years to get an antiracist policy. Right now, the university is going through the process of creating an equity audit

that will hopefully [be included] in the [implementation] of an antiracist policy.

(Tydarius, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Institutional inertia is evident in Dillon's and Tydarius' experiences with antiracism policies. Ahmed (2012) defines *institutional inertia* as "the lack of an institutional will to change" (p. 26). The student-athletes' experiences move them to act as activists and push the institution to create an antiracist policy. Even after a few years, they are still pushing for policy additions, but they have not seen any changes. It seems that institutions need to make greater effort to institutionalize antiracism. Ahmed (2006) writes that "'promoting race equality' has meant that all public bodies must have a race equality policy and action plan" (p. 97). In the examples of Tydarius and Dillon, a lack of accountability and a lack of action planning at their institutions is evident.

Poor Dissemination of Policies

Poor dissemination of policies disproportionally affects racialized athletes. Throughout the interviews, participants demonstrated how the universities' lack of distribution of their policies impacted them. Five of eight participants speculated that discrimination and antiracism policies existed but could not describe where to find them or what they stated. Sydney, for example, explained that discrimination and antiracism policies had not been shared with her. Sydney said, "I'm sure there is [a policy], but it has never been brought to my attention." Megan went to a different school and speculated that a policy existed as there had been discussions about it. She said:

> I believe we do have some [policies] because there have been events and discussions
>
> about it, but I wouldn't know exactly the whole breakdown or exactly what it says.
>
> (Megan, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Patrice shared a similar sentiment to both Sydney's and Megan's. He said, "I am aware that we have an antiracism [policy] and that we [say] we don't tolerate any racism within the [university varsity athletics]. But I do not know where we clearly outline it" (Patrice, Black student-athlete, 2023).

Literature states that poor dissemination can manifest as systemic discrimination (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Although each university has a policy outlining its intolerance for discrimination and harassment based on race, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, and more, my participants were unaware of the policies, an unawareness that perpetuates existing racial disparities in accessing resources. The Ontario Human Rights Commission (2023) states that poor dissemination of policies can be dangerous as it can leave marginalized students across campus vulnerable to discrimination. The universities' lack of transparency concerning their policies demonstrates a clear power imbalance; it is difficult to hold perpetrators accountable. Proper dissemination of policies is critical as it demonstrates the institution's commitment to antiracism, removes speculation of secrecy, and promotes transformative learning (Trabucco, 2014). By effectively disseminating policies to marginalized groups and being receptive to feedback, institutions can work towards dismantling systemic barriers and promoting equity (Trabucco, 2014, p. 93).

4.4.1.C - The Nonperformativity of Policies

Ahmed defines nonperformativity as "'reiterative and citational practice by which discourse" does not produce 'the effects that it names'" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 117). Nonperformativity questions the notion that using correct language and speech leads to meaningful change or challenges oppressive structures. "The failure of the speech act to do what

it says is not a failure of intent or even circumstance but is actually what the speech act is doing" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 117).

Throughout the interview process, some of my participants questioned the effectiveness of the policies which they saw as nonperformatives (Ahmed, 2012). Jason's experience showed how he perceived one of the policies at his university as a nonperformative: "Yeah, I think I knew of [the policy]…" Although Jason's university has an antiracist policy and uses inclusive language, its performance is inconsistent with these systemic protocols. Ahmed (2012) also describes the inconsistency as opaque; the policy's purpose remains unclear, as the university is not doing what it says it is doing. Jason's experience aligns with Ahmed's statement that the "institution [is making a] commitment without actually being behind it" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 119). Joseph et al. (2021) and Ahmed (2012) emphasize the importance of creating strategies to transform statements into action, supporting Jason's view that strategies must be implemented.

Ahmed (2012) discusses the phenomenon of the tick-box approach. The tick-box approach occurs "when an action is completed to indicate yes"; it happens when "institutions . . . make commitments" without acting on them (Ahmed, 2012, p.119). Indeed, Jason suggests that policies he had encountered were just tick-box actions: "I felt they were saying it just to say it. I don't think a lot of it was acted upon" (Jason, Black student-athlete, 2023).

On a more positive note, Jason reports that he has witnessed significant improvement in the past year. In his experiences with the university's Black student support center and its initiatives around Black History Month, he sounded optimistic: "I saw a lot more change [this year], and I felt like they're actually beginning to act on a lot of those statements they released."

The three sub-themes I outline here illustrate the significant gaps between how policies are broadcast and how they act as nonperformatives. First, some universities do not have

policies; second, some universities uphold systemic racism through the lack of transparency surrounding their policies; and third, student-athletes do not feel supported by university policies, so they are ineffective. Even if antiracist policies are established, they are often not proactively enforced because of a lack of processes (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2021).

4.4.2 Committees as Commitment

During interviews, I asked participants about their experiences with the antiracism initiatives at their universities. The following narratives reveal that, in the absence of the enactment of these initiatives, students sought cultural communities within their universities to feel supported. Jason shared two examples of ways he found community through the student success center and the Black student-led support group. These spaces offered him a place for conversation and cultural authenticity. For Jason, the Black Student Success Center worked to increase student and student-athlete academic success, especially for Black students; the Success Center thus demonstrated a commitment to holistically developing student-athletes (Singer, 2005). Jason said:

> They started [a Black student success center], so it's a safe space for primarily Black students, but also any racialized students. It really is a space where we could go get help regarding anything we needed; it could be academics, it could be financial [support], mapping out a professional career, but also any kind of concerns that students had about their time at [the university], whether it was any kind of prejudice they faced or stuff like that. It was a space where anything could be addressed. (Jason, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Through his time with Black student-led support conversations, he felt a sense of cultural community in challenging times and brought Black experiences to the forefront (Gillborn, 2007; Dei, 2001). Jason went on to say:

> Around the incident of the George Floyd murder, we (various student-athletes) had a series of Zoom calls where we got together just to discuss what was going on and how it made us feel, how we thought we could have better relationships with teammates and like other faculty, too. We also talked about how to be an ally if that question was asked to us and how we continue to keep up our team bonding with this going on. (Jason, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Like Jason, the other participants found a cultural community through student support groups. Sydney talks about her experience in her student support group, the focus of which was to ensure Black student-athletes felt a sense of community through cultural events. She said: "We do have a [student support group], which I am part of, but that's really all. In this club, we run events to help build a community for Black student-athletes to come together outside their respective sports."

Alex (Black student-athlete, 2023) went on to expand on how his student support group built cultural community and said: "[We] just like to bring the Black community together; if you need any support, you're able to reach out and talk to them, and they'll help you with anything you need." Another participant, Malik (Black student-athlete, 2023), said, "[The student group] helps the Black student body [at the school] with whatever they need." Gillborn (2007) emphasizes the importance of a multi-level approach to antiracism, but it is apparent that such an approach was absent in Malik's student support group. He said, "The students were the main forces behind pushing for the student group."

Tydarius and Dillon's experiences align with the findings of Joseph et al. (2021), which highlight the importance of amplifying a sustainable awareness of racism. Tydarius underscores the importance of his student support group as they normalize conversations about race and racism. Dei (2001) highlights the importance of amplifying Black student voices, and CRT emphasizes bringing Black experiences to the forefront to challenge mainstream narratives. My interviews with Tydarius and Dillon demonstrate that student groups are necessary to normalize conversations of race and racism while empowering students to use their voices to push for institutional change. Tydarius said:

> [The student group] keeps the conversation going, especially after 2020. Many student-athletes were inspired by what happened or were impacted by what happened to George Floyd. There is a necessity to do something so the topic of race is kept at the forefront. (Tydarius, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Dillon shared similar ideas as the group he is part of plays a more prominent role in addressing racism at the institutional level and challenging the current state of the university. He states:

> [We] try to enact change through policies at a higher level, not just surface level, so that involved us giving presentations to high schools in the area, students, and staff. We've done presentations with students in our school and to our faculty members and staff about how we can challenge racism at an institutional level, what racism looks like in the community and stuff like that. (Dillon, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Patrice's experience with how his university is building community is different from that of other participants. Patrice stated that an "antiracism committee" started during the season, and student-athletes were encouraged to join. He describes his committee as taking a multi-level approach.

He says, "The [antiracism committee] is run by the faculty of our varsity program, and then there's a mixture of students who are ambassadors that are part of the committee."

All participants have said that, through their experiences with their student groups, they have found the sense of belonging suggested by Dei's (2001) antiracism framework. Many participants highlighted the support that is available to them. Beamon (2014) suggests that closing pay inequities is also critical for student-athlete success. For example, Malik highlighted the bursary his student group funded to close pay inequities in the athletic department. Malik (Black student-athlete, 2023) stated that "the way the [student group] has helped the most is by launching the bursary for Black student-athletes." Student support groups are vital spaces where diversity work happens (Ahmed, 2012). The student-athletes on their school's committees are directly involved in ensuring that the Black student body has a support system.

Many student-athletes stated that their schools participated in "shoot for change," a movement "created [by student-athletes] to address the common, systemic lack of financial opportunity for student-athletes" (Tydarius, student-athlete, 2023)[5]. Five of my eight participants spoke about 'shoot for change,' suggesting that many schools find value in closing the financial gap among university athletes.

To conclude, the various experiences of my participant student-athletes make it apparent that there is a need for Black student support groups because universities fail at providing a sense of cultural community. My participants revealed a need for a feeling of belonging and for a combination of academic and financial support. Although Black student groups foster a feeling of cultural community and support, it appears that student-athletes are the driving forces behind finding community, thus suggesting that a multi-level approach is needed.

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[5] See also Sydney, 2023; Malik, 2023; Megan, 2023; Alex, 2023.

4.4.3 Education as Commitment

Throughout the interviews, my participants spoke of the universities' cultural competency training workshops they had attended or heard of. Such cultural competency training demonstrates a level of commitment to learning. The student-athletes said they had witnessed the benefits of the training, which ultimately contributes to an antiracist environment.

Indeed, studies have suggested that integrating antiracist practices such as bias training with other forms of educational and cultural competency workshops exhibits a commitment to antiracism and equity, diversity, and inclusion. Economou et al. (2002) highlighted the importance of racial bias training to undo racism and to privilege education. Similarly, the OUA's Black, Biracial, and Indigenous task forces saw the importance of educational and antiracism training as a vital pillar of the task force (OUA, 2022).

Alex noted that his university values antiracism training that is mandated and directed towards White bodies. He said: "I know in our introductory to athletics, our athletic department makes us take mandatory courses . . . A lot of it has to do with how to not offend people, what's the best way to talk to racialized people, stuff like that" (Alex, Black student-athlete, 2023). Sydney shared a similar sentiment to Alex, saying, "They make [every team] take a seminar about diversity and understanding [racism] . . . It's only mandatory to attend one seminar, and it's supposed to be our antiracism training, but no one really listens" (Sydney, Black student-athlete, 2023).

Megan also spoke about training that her coach shared. She said, "I know, after February [Black History Month], my coach did send out an antiracism workshop that people were open to sign up for…." (Megan, Black student-athlete, 2023). It is important to note that she also questions how the lack of a mandate deterred some people from attending the training, even

individuals who might need the training: "But . . . I feel like sometimes if it's open to signing up, you're not getting a lot of people who attend because it's not mandatory" (Megan, Black student-athlete, 2023). Sydney and Megan are curious about how the training is mandated; they do not believe people are taking the training seriously. They were trying to determine whether the training was performative, or it acts as a nonperformative (Ahmed, 2012). Although the training was being held and advertised, it did not perform as intended, thus it was acting as a nonperformative.

Jason's university took a different approach. The faculty and athletic staff take mandatory courses that were five hours per semester and catered to a more sustainable antiracism training; he stated:

> There were [trainings] which was directed to staff. I think it was open to general faculty as well, so not just staff with the athletic department. I think it was 5 hours a semester catered towards antiracism training. It included educational videos, and there was a workshopping component that was broken up into semesters to better train faculty and give them more exposure to the different kinds of things that racialized students, or even other racialized faculty, might deal with. (Jason, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Tydarius spoke about trying to build cultural competency by changing organizational structures and incentivizing the taking of elective courses rooted in multicultural education and antiracism. He said:

> One of the things we're trying to work on is building a multicultural course list. There are a lot of multicultural courses that are offered [at the school], and people don't know about them. That would help students, in terms of learning about different cultures and can get credit for it. (Tydarius, Black student-athlete, 2023)

It appears that student-athletes know the courses and training offered within their schools. The institutions' willingness to educate their athletes, faculty, and staff suggests that they are taking the first step to normalize conversations around race and racism while also providing tools to become an ally.

4.5 The Black Student-Athlete Experience with Antiracist Environments

After asking them about policies and initiatives, I prompted my participants to reflect and share their views about whether or not the universities' commitments fuel an antiracist environment. Two major themes emerged from their experiences: 1) the importance of cultural community and 2) the nonperformativity of policies and initiatives.

4.5.1 Sense of Cultural Community

The first common theme that emerged from the student-athletes' experiences was a sense of cultural community. The theory of antiracism emphasizes the importance of having a cultural community that is sustainable and collaborative. Dei (2001) says that antiracism should create a sense of community that can foster a sense of belonging. In the interviews, the student-athletes said they could find a sustainable community through the school's initiatives.

Dillon shared how he has felt safe to freely express himself and supported through the Black student group which contributed to an antiracist environment. He said:

> It has, it has helped. It hasn't cured anything or resolved everything. But it has helped me feel safe, in a sense, as a university student over the last three years because I know I have a group, and I have allies within the community who feel like they support me and understand what we're trying to do, regardless of people who see otherwise. (Dillon, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Gillborn (2007) highlights the importance of a multi-level approach as it gives the group power to close systemic gaps; Dillon shed light on the importance of student support groups and shared how the university president's support is impactful:

> The [student support group is] driving towards bringing more inclusion to the university and showing racialized students that they're not alone, and we're here to fight for you in a sense . . . I would say the [student support group] contributes to an inclusive environment . . . We've gotten a new [university] president since we started the [student support group], which has been great. He's been supporting us, and the overall school community has been really, really supportive . . . So, it's been really well received by everyone, I would say. (Dillon, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Patrice shared a similar sentiment, highlighting the sense of community that allows him to feel safe. When asked if he believes the university contributes to an antiracist environment, he said:

> I think when I heard that [the student group] was something that was being [implemented], I felt like that was just creating more of an inviting environment for me… I'm like, OK, I don't have to worry about anyone who would be against [supporting Black athletes] there. (Patrice, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Patrice continued to speak of the importance the student support groups played from an institutional level and how it acted as a safety net that advocates for the Black community. He said:

> Because I haven't experienced racism since joining [the team], I feel like perhaps if anything were to happen, I don't even have to think [if the school] will support me. So, it was never a lingering issue in my mind with racism. (Patrice, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Both Patrice and Alex spoke about how the community has provided a space to feel safe should they face discrimination based on race; they feel their voices will be heard and will be used to enact change. Critical race theory emphasizes the importance of sharing lived experiences, and the student support groups allow lived experiences to be shared and valued (Dei, 2001). The student groups also allow Black narratives to be told which serve as a platform for student-athletes to challenge mainstream narratives (Gillborn, 2007). Patrice said:

> Connecting with students on campus, I've met many people through these clubs and associations. So, once you have an interconnected environment, you can't discriminate against one person and not feel backlash because you're all connected. I think the more you hear about these events and things like that, there's a stronger community of Black people on campus that …creates a more inclusive environment. So, if there was anything to happen, there would be support. (Patrice, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Tydarius spoke about the accountability of the school president and how his support fuels an antiracist environment. This demonstrates that there is institutional support for mitigating racial inequities. Anti racism and CRT scholars emphasize the importance of having individuals in positions of power to promote anti- racism (Gillborn, 2007; Lee, 2014; Dei, 2001). He said:

> I want to believe it was August 2021, and I'll never forget it. [The president of the school] came into our practice at the beginning of the season, basically saying that he believes that all post-secondary institutions in the system are racist, and he wants to make a change. (Tydarius, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Then he went on to speak about the importance of student support groups and how they accomplish several goals, such as recognizing the importance of diversity, thus contributing to

Ahmed's (2012) sentiment that ensuring diversity must be automatic and must be a goal of the institution. Tydarius said:

> It's helped to improve the school because I think that people now, who once didn't realize the importance of diversity, are starting to realize [its significance] and showing that there are many benefits to it. So, it's helped to increase specific individuals' awareness and understanding. Different stakeholders at the institution are now opening their eyes to different things, different ideas that they may have never thought about before, and it's ultimately helped to set a positive future for the university . . .Ultimately, I think it keeps the conversation going and helps to keep people aware and hopefully work towards a brighter future for the institution. (Tydarius, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Jason's experience led him to notice an increase in diversity and appreciation for highlighting Black bodies in the gym during the university's Black History Month activations. Gillborn (2007) believes different bodies are not enough and that the status quo must be challenged. Jason believes that mandated antiracism workshops contributed to the growing racial representation in fans during Black History Month;

> This year, I noticed more diversity in the basketball gym than ever before [during Black History Month]. So, I think part of that is crediting some of those trainings. It's not just a matter of having the trainings but acting on them and then implementing them into policies and procedures and stuff like that to increase student diversity, but also just to make the environment more welcoming to diverse students . . .. Before those trainings, I don't think many coaches and athletics departments understood exactly [the importance]. But after they did take the training, I think it kind of expanded their worldview, especially in the workshop component of the training . . .. I also feel like depending on

whom you have in your workshops . . .. it can be very impactful [by] talking face-to-face with your fellow faculty members . . . . It changed [the culture] at [the university]. (Jason, Black student-athlete, 2023)

4.5.2 The Nonperformativity of Commitments

Sara Ahmed (2012) writes about diversity work and how often it is seen as a nonperformative. Although some participants found their universities to be on a journey to becoming antiracist, three participants had not seen a change even after over two years.

Megan and Sydney confirm the sentiment expressed by Joseph et al. (2020) concerning the need for processes and consequences to prevent racism so that ultimately an antiracist environment can be created. Sydney said she believes that the various forms of institutional commitments act as nonperformatives. She argued:

People go to [events and the training], buy gear, and say they're antiracist, but then they go back to their everyday respective lives and are still ignorant. It's just like, 'Hey, this day I'm going to be antiracist, and I'm in support of Black people and people of colour, but after the day ends, I'm just going to go back to being how I was after that. (Sydney, Black student-athlete, 2023)

Like Sydney, Megan questioned her university's approach to their educational training and viewed it as nonperformative as it lacked an institutional push. Megan's perspective alludes to the importance of people in leadership positions actively promoting and advocating for antiracism (Dei, 2001). She said:

There needs to be some sort of like mandate, [and] in order to play, you have to do [the antiracist training], and it's not optional . . .. We should have more [workshops] in athletics because I felt it didn't [gain traction] the way they promoted it. Like, you shared

it with some teams, but you give them the option of just not coming . . .. so, is this really

beneficial? (Megan, Black student-athlete, 2023).

Lastly, Malik shared that although he had seen no change after over two years, he remains

optimistic. He said, "I would say it's still like the same kind of state [as it was when there was

not an emphasis on EDI], but you know, hopefully, if the organization and [workshops] stay for

the longevity of time, it can really impact some people" (Malik, Black student-athlete, 2023).

My participants feel that although there are policies and programs within their schools,

they need more than support. They question whether their universities are taking an active

approach—they notice a lack of processes and a lack of a multi-level approach in the

universities' commitments. The participants feel that the universities' commitments are tick-box

actions and that the universities have instituted them perhaps only because of external pressures.

4.6 Summary of Chapter 4

In this chapter I have provided an overview of the key findings from my study. These

findings highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of being a Black student-athlete attending

an Ontario university. Considering the racialization of Black student-athletes in Canada (Joseph

et al., 2022), it is not surprising that the participants encountered racism during their varsity

athletics journeys. It was clear that many factors, such as the location of the university and the

sport the student-athlete played, affected their experience with race and racism, and that their

experience was manifested in different ways including through microaggressions.

Ahmed (2012) highlights that institutions often delegate diversity work to people of

colour. Student-led initiatives and groups contributed to creating a more antiracist environment

for some of my participants, but others questioned the effectiveness of specific institutional

policies. Their experiences with various forms of institutional commitments were either accepted

or questioned. My study's findings support the need for a multi-level approach and strategies to ensure that universities are fostering an antiracist environment (Lee, 2014; Gillborn, 2007; Joseph et al., 2022; Dei, 2001). In the next chapter I review my study and discuss its implications and limitations. I will conclude by discussing possibilities for future research leading on from my findings.

Chapter 5

Summary & Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

In this final chapter I provide an overview of my study and a summary of the key

findings. I outline implications of the study, and its significance and potential contributions to the

field. Lastly, I review the limitations of the study and potential directions for future research.

5.2 Overview of the Research

With this qualitative study I aimed to examine the experiences of Black student-athletes

participating in various Ontario university sports, asking if their universities' antiracist

commitments fostered an antiracist environment. I conducted eight semi-structured interviews

with Black student-athletes across Ontario. The participants included six male and two female

student-athletes in various years of their student-athlete careers. I recruited these participants

through 'purposive' sampling (Coleman, 2005) because I had personal connections with the

Athletes for Change Alliance (ACA) and previous experiences with two Ontario universities, and

because purposive sampling was appropriate for my goal of exploring Black student-athletes'

insights on their institutions' commitments through policies and initiatives. Data collection took

place during the summer between April 2023 and June 2023.

My study is informed by critical race theory (CRT), antiracism theory and

nonperformativity theory. I emphasized listening and uplifting Black experiences with race and

racism to address the notion that antiBlack racism is present in Ontario University Athletics

(OUA). CRT and antiracism theory assists in measuring how Ontario universities support their

Black student-athletes through policies and procedures (Dei, 2001; Ahmed, 2012). Both critical

theories illustrate what true inclusion looks like. As diversity work has become more popular

since the death of George Floyd in 2020, universities have been placing more emphasis on their equity, diversity, and inclusion journey through various commitments (Yeo & Jeon, 2023) but it has yet to be determined whether universities are taking the correct steps to address systemic inequities (Evans et al., 2020; Bernstein, 2020). Ahmed's (2012) theory of nonperformativity provides insight into how institutions' acts of commitment do not always perform as they are intended to perform.

Current research demonstrates the necessity for evaluating Black student-athlete experiences with race and racism, as intercollegiate sports are often a space where racial inequities are present. My research is a response to the call for further examination of Black student-athletes' experience with race and racism while also exploring their universities' commitments to closing systemic inequities (Evans et al., 2020). In 2021, Janelle Joseph, Sabrina Razack, and Braeden McKenzie published an OUA Anti-Racism Report, which explored Ontario University sports' racial demographics and how universities support their racialized student-athletes. My study explores how Black student-athletes view their institutions' commitments to closing systemic gaps and whether or not those commitments contribute to fueling an antiracist environment.

Additionally, my study took place in response to the limited amount of research that has been undertaken in a Canadian context. The majority of research conducted on the Black student-athlete experience is based on the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), an intercollegiate sports league in the United States (Sailes, 2017; Yearwood, 2018; Kooistra et al., 1993; Economou et al., 2022; Beamon, 2014; Singer, 2005). The Anti-Racism Report by Joseph et al. (2021) is one of the significant contributors to evaluating race and racism in Ontario and calls for more research on Black student-athletes and their experience.

5.3 Summary and Discussion

In this section, I highlight key findings from my study and discuss their significance. The main research questions were: 1) What are the experiences of Black university student-athletes with race and racism in Ontario Universities? 2) How have the institutions' equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) policies and initiatives fostered an antiracist environment?

My study was meant to highlight the experiences of Black student-athletes and share their perspective on how the institutions are addressing systemic inequities through various forms of commitment. Within CRT, I acknowledge the student-athletes' lived experiences and other ways of knowing. Examining the participants' experiences and critical analysis using both CRT and antiracism theory, it becomes apparent that more work needs to be done. Although I did not specifically explore the impact of racial microaggressions, the experiences that emerged underscore the various forms of discrimination and inequity that Black university student-athletes experience.

5.3.1 Student-Athletes Experience with Race and Racism

Experience with Race

All participants identified as Black and played a university sport in the Ontario University Athletics (OUA) League. The participants were part of similar athletic departments, all of which consisted of players, coaching staff, a medical team, and athletic directors. The majority of the participants were able to describe their departments in terms of racialized or lack of racialized bodies, particularly in leadership positions at their respective universities. Most participants highlighted that their coaching staff and athletic directors were primarily White. Depending on their sport and the university's location, the greatest variety of racial representation existed among the players. In the OUA Anti-Racism report (Joseph et al., 2021)

and CBC's demographic breakdown on USports, the demographics were laid out quite similarly: most coaches and athletic directors were White.

Experience with Racism

Throughout my investigation, participants alluded to experiences with racism within their OUA career. It became apparent that racism manifested as microaggressions. The primary experiences that emerged were stereotyping, racial slurs, and racial biases. The student-athletes shared that these experiences came from White individuals around them, such as teammates, opposing fans, and community members. Consistent with existing research, stereotypes emerged in many ways, which included racial comparisons based on hair type and linking athleticism with race (Sailes,1993; Jordan, 2010, Omi & Winant, 1994). The participants experience with stereotypes affirm many racial classifications and categories, that society has thought to be true about a group of individuals (Omi & Winant, 1994). For example, community members assumed a participant played basketball because he was Black when that was not the case (Dillon, student-athlete, 2023). Additionally, one participant shared how a White teammate used a racial slur around his Black counterparts. Although it is assumed the perpetrator did not have ill intent, the racial slur demonstrated lack of awareness and revealed racial bias.

Some participants shared experiences with racial biases and colorblindness. This was shared as community members questioned the need for equity-deserving support groups and as teammates disregarded safety from an intersectional perspective. Color blindness suggests that "race is irrelevant and all should be treated equally" (Gearity & Henderson Metzger, 2017, p. 162). The participants in my study shared experiences of community members' colour blindness regarding the inception of Black student support groups and teammates who were uninformed of the safety concerns felt by a Black woman in a predominantly White town.

Microaggressions are "everyday slights and insults that minoritized people endure and that most people of the dominant group do not notice or take seriously" (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, p. 226). A study by Sue et al. (2007) found that microaggressions can often go unrecognized; however, my participants recognized microaggressions even if they could not share an experience of them.

5.3.2 The Nonperformativity of Acts of Commitments

Throughout the interview process, the student-athletes explored the antiBlack racism commitments the university has implemented. The following section draws on Sara Ahmed's theories of nonperformativity and acts of commitment. The three acts of commitment that participants identified were statements of commitments, also known as policies; committees as commitments, which show up as student-led support groups; and education as commitment.

Statements of commitments

The participants shared knowledge of antiracism policies at their respective universities. Some student-athletes indicated that they are 'sure' a policy exists; however, they could not describe the policy and did not know where the policy could be found. Two other participants explained that their universities do not have an antiracism policy but that they are urging their universities to create one. Some participants highlighted that they did not know a policy existed until after we explored the universities' websites. Such findings suggest that these policies are speech acts and do not perform as intended (Ahmed, 2012). The lack of transparency and poor dissemination of policies make them nonperformatives. Although they use the correct language, these policies are ineffective and do not support student-athletes (Ahmed, 2012). A participant shared a sentiment: "I felt they were saying it just to say it" (Jason, student athlete, 2023)- which

Ahmed (2012) views as a tick-box action and a nonperformative. Ultimately, the research participants did not feel that their universities' statements of commitments supported them.

Committees of commitments

My study has highlighted the importance of student-led committees—otherwise known as student-led support groups—as commitments. These support groups are a main contributor to making Black student-athletes feel safe. Black student support groups or success centers have created a safe space for many. The student-athletes' sentiments align with the suggestions of many scholars who suggest that such support groups assist in closing financial and academic gaps, and assist with tutoring and mentorship, ultimately creating a "community for Black student-athletes" (Beamer, 2014; Dei, 2001; Joseph et al., 2021; Singer, 2005). The findings of previous studies align with mine as student-athletes highlight the role of student support groups in normalizing conversations on race and antiBlack racism (Dei, 2001; Joseph et al., 2021). One commonality between universities is that most student groups were student-led and run. Gillborn (2007) highlights the importance of a multi-level presence in such groups; however, my study found a lack of multi-level presence in Black student support groups, a lack that rendered the antiracist framework ineffective.

Education as Commitment

Economou et al. (2002) and OUA (2022) underscore the importance of education and racial bias training. The Black student-athletes in my study shared experiences with various educational tools and training programs available to them, their athletic departments, and university faculty members. Although some student-athletes question if those who require training are benefiting from it, many participants believe that education is a step in the right

direction toward normalizing conversations around race and racism and equipping people with tools to become allies.

5.3.3 Sense of Cultural Community

Because my study explored how policies and initiatives contributed to an antiracist environment, many participants shared that they believe initiatives such as committees and education are critical factors in building an antiracist environment, revealing that they were focused on building and finding a sense of cultural community. Some participants shared that student support groups would constitute a support system should discrimination occur. Contrarily, some participants did not believe that the universities' commitments contribute to an antiracist environment. These student-athletes were hesitant to call their universities' commitments antiracist and beneficial and named them as tick-box actions.

5.4 Significance of the Research

My study offers insights into Black university student-athletes' experiences with race and racism, experiences that have not been extensively explored. My research delves into racial demographics and illustrates the need for representation in leadership positions. My study was intended to examine universities' equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) commitments and determine if Black student-athletes believe they contribute to fueling an antiracist environment. The participants' experiences reveal that policies serve as nonperformatives.

5.5 Limitations

Because various university commitments were at a standstill and universities were on partial lockdown during the COVID-19 outbreak from 2020 to 2022, participants in my study may not have been able to witness some university commitments that actually existed, thereby impacting my findings. Since the participants were students and athletes, finding time for

interviews was challenging as they juggled their academics, practices and competitions, and work. To accommodate their schedules, I adjusted the length of their interviews, and not all participants had the opportunity to share all of their experiences.

My study involved eight Black student-athletes, a small sample size. My study, however aimed not to generalize findings across a population but to shed light on the experiences of one group of Black student-athletes.

5.6 Research Contributions & Implications

The findings of my study are relevant to many interdisciplinary fields including education, critical race studies, kinesiology/sport management, and critical policy. Findings from my study can potentially enhance the understanding of Black student athletes' experiences in intercollegiate athletics.

My findings contribute to education, kinesiology, and sports management through enhancing our understanding of Black student-athletes' experiences in higher education. I hope these findings provide insight into Black student athletes' experience with race and racism while challenging common stereotypes and assumptions about Black student-athletes. Likewise, I hope my findings will inform coaches, athletic departments, sports organizations, and researchers about the manifestation of racism in sports and impact the implementation of EDI commitments.

My study contributes to a small collection of studies evaluating Black student athletes' experiences and their perception of antiracism commitments in an Ontario, Canadian context (Joseph et al., 2021; OUA, 2022; CBC, 2020). Additionally, my study expands the research on racism and discourses on the nonperformativity of commitments (Ahmed, 2012).

5.7 Future Research Directions

In the future, it will be essential to continue and to expand this research on Black student-athlete experiences in other fields and engage with other theoretical concepts of race and racism to understand further the details of Black student-athletes' experiences and the role color plays in microaggressions. Drawing on additional critical frameworks will provide a deeper understanding of race relations and the nonperformativity of commitments.

In response to a growing emphasis on EDI, I propose that further educational research about Black student-athletes' experience with race and racism should be conducted. Further research about the impact EDI commitments have on Black student-athletes and their contribution to an antiracist environment should be studied. Such studies should be based on CRT and antiracism theory to further theorize this population's experiences.

Because of the limited number of studies focused on the Black student-athlete's experience with race and racism, it is crucial to explore other Black student-athletes' experiences to draw parallels across this population. Future directions should include various voices, such as coaches, faculty members, administrators, alumni athletes and parents. It will be vital to expand on Black student-athlete experiences with race and the coping mechanisms that student-athletes may adopt, providing insights into creative and impactful ways of creating innovative commitments. Exploring microaggressions and their effect on academic and athletic success from many intersections, such as gender and sexuality, should be a focus of future research, and exploring the difference in experiences of male and female athletes would be helpful in further understanding the manifestation of racism in sports and its implications.

Further research should also explore power, privilege, and microaggressions within sports. It is essential to evaluate how policies and practices support Black student-athletes from

an intersectional perspective that incorporates gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and multi-racial heritage.

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Appendix 1: Ethics Approval

Western Research

Date: 16 March 2023

To: Prof. Goli Rezai-Rashti

Project ID: 122327

Study Title: Beyond Sport: Black Student Athletes Experiences with Race and Anti-Racist practices

Application Type: NMREB Initial Application

Review Type: Delegated

Full Board Reporting Date: 14/Apr/2023

Date Approval Issued: 16/Mar/2023 11:38

REB Approval Expiry Date: 16/Mar/2024

_____

Dear Prof. Goli Rezai-Rashti

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the above mentioned study, as of the date noted above. NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the expiry date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

This research study is to be conducted by the investigator noted above. **All other required institutional approvals and mandated training must also be obtained prior to the conduct of the study.**

Documents Approved:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Interview guide Topics (02.26.2022) CLEAN	Interview Guide	26/Feb/2023	2
Thesis -4	Recruitment Materials	04/Mar/2023	3
Recruitment Information 08.03.2023	Recruitment Materials	08/Mar/2023	3
Letter of Information and Consent 03.15.23	Written Consent/Assent	15/Mar/2023	5

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ms. Katelyn Harris , Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).

Appendix 2: Letter of Information / Consent

Western
UNIVERSITY · CANADA

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Project Title: Beyond Sport: Experiences of Race and Anti-Racism practices

Principal Investigator and Contact:
Goli Rezai-Rashti, PhD
Faculty of Education, Western University

Study Investigator and Contact
Brianna Nicolas
Faculty of Education, Western University

Introduction
My name is Brianna Nicolas conducting a project on Black student-athletes and their experiences with race and anti-racism practices in Ontario Universities. The objective of this study is to understand your experiences with racism as a racialized athlete and investigate if the policies and programs cultivate an anti-racist environment. More importantly, how policies are enacted at the ground level for racialized student-athletes. You are asked to participate because your experience is valuable and will provide insights into the experience of Black student-athletes in the Ontario University Athletics (OUA).

Purpose
The purpose of this study is to recognize and acknowledge the experience of Black student-athletes in the OUA. The purposed study intends to investigate how racism has conditioned or changed Black student-athletes' experiences in Ontario while simultaneously investigating the ways in which policies and support programs foster an anti-racist environment.

Study Procedure and Length of Study
This research intends to recruit approximately eight participants. Participant selection will be based on their eligibility for the inclusion criteria. Participants must identify as **Black student-athletes who play an accredited OUA sport in the 2022-2023 season**. If you agree to participate in the study, you can expect to be interviewed for approximately one hour. The interview session will be scheduled for any date of your convenience. All interviews will be done in person or conducted via Western-hosted Zoom. The in person interviews will be audio recorded via an external MP3 drive. Zoom hosted interviews will require both audio and video recording. Should you choose to have a virtual interview, in order to participate in the study, you must consent to this conversation being audio and video recorded via zoom. The audio recording will be generated for the purposes of analysis. Please note, during the recorded interview, you will be interviewed by Brianna Nicolas. The audio recording will be kept in a safe and secure

place by the PI who will have access to the information for up to 7 years. The audio recording is mandatory for participation in the study. The interviews will be transcribed solely by Brianna Nicolas of this study. You will be provided the opportunity to gain access to your transcript and will be allowed to ensure data has been recorded accurately. The co-investigator, Brianna, will share the transcript through a Western-hosted One-Drive where you will be able to confirm your transcript. This is optional and not mandatory. All participants will be given a pseudonym. A list linking your pseudonym with your name and preferred method of contact will be kept by the research team in a secure place on Western University's server separate from the transcripts of interviews. The study participants' data will be reported in the dissemination of results by de-identification and direct quotes from participants. Your information will be removed from Zoom platforms as soon as possible and then will be stored securely under local password-protected files that will only be accessible to the research team.

Prior to the interview the Letter Information and Consent will be sent to you electronically via email. Prior to the in person interview, you will be provided with an opportunity to physically sign and consent to participate in this research study. Prior to the virtual interview, you will be required to send the signed consent form Brianna Nicolas.

Direct identifiers will be delineated within the master list that is only accessed by members of the project. This direct identifiers/personal information is solely collected for coding, interpretation, and analysis purposes which will be represented under a pseudonym. Some indirect identifiers may be collected within the interview process, these may include gender, ethnicity, sport & university. These will not be used within the results. Only pseudonyms and race will be used for direct quotes.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your participation will be compensated through a Tim Hortons gift card valued at $15. You may choose to withdraw at any given point within the research procedure. Even if you consent to partake in the study, you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any given time up to the final submission of the thesis. You do not waive any legal right by consenting to this study.

If you choose to withdraw from the study, you have the right to request via email to the principal investigator or the co-investigator indicating that you would like to withdraw all, or part of any information collected about you. Once the request to withdraw has been received and motioned, your information will be removed and destroyed by following the data destruction procedures of Western University. Please note, your data can be removed but a record of your participation, including the master list/ signed consent form, will be retained for monitoring purposes. For participants that did not request to withdraw, their interview data will be saved in a protected and confidential location for seven years.

Confidentiality

The audio and video recording will be kept in a safe and secure place by the principal researcher who will have access to the information. The interviews will be transcribed solely by the researchers of this study. All participants will be given a pseudonym. A list linking your

pseudonym with your name and preferred method of contact will be kept by the research team in a secure place on Western University's server separate from the transcripts of interviews. The study participants' data will be reported in the dissemination of results by de-identification and direct quotes from participants (by signing the consent form you are consenting to the use of quotes).

Delegated institutional representatives of Western University and its Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research in accordance with regulatory requirements.

Inclusion Criteria

Potential participants must identify as the following:
I) Black Identifying Student athletes
2) Playing an accredited OUA sport (G1, G2, G3) in the 2022-2023 season

Risks and Benefits

There are no known identified or anticipated risks associated with participating in this study. There may not be any direct benefit from participating in this study. However, the information you provide may improve the current educational practices. During the interview you may feel some discomfort when answering questions, you may seek counselling services at your respective university.

Questions & Additional Information

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics or email. This office oversees the ethical conduct of research studies and is not part of the study team. All interviews will be kept confidential. If you have any other questions about this study, please contact the Principal Investigator.

If you require any further information about this study, please contact Brianna Nicolas or Professor Goli Rezai-Rashti (the primary investigator).
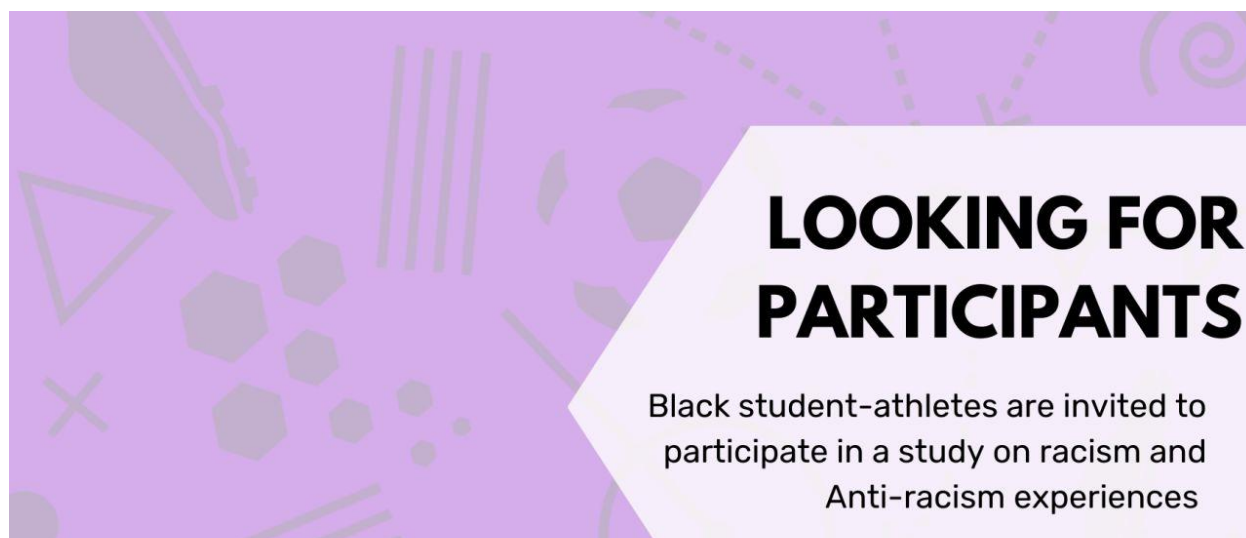
This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Appendix 3: Interview Questions

Interview questions for participants:

1. Can you start by sharing where you study and your sport. If possible, please share how you chose your respective university?

2. How racially diverse is your team, coaching staff, athletic department managers?

3. Throughout your time as a Varsity athlete, do you have an example of racism you could share on or off the field?

4. What anti-racism policies or racial discrimination policies are you aware of? Are they athletes specific or are they university-wide?

5. How has your university upheld its anti-racist or racial discrimination policy? Do you believe that the policies support you as a racialized student-athlete?

6. Could you provide ways the university is adhering to their policies to further support you as an athlete?

7. What anti-racism initiatives are you a part of or aware of and what did they include? Do you know who facilitated the initiatives? Were they staff run and led or led by other varsity athletes?

8. How have these anti-racism initiatives contributed to fueling an anti-racist environment?

9. Could you provide ways the Anti-racist initiatives could support you as a varsity athlete?

10. Outside of Policies and initiatives in your athletic department, what is support is not currently implemented that you would benefit from and who would best provide it?

Appendix 4: Infographic

LOOKING FOR PARTICIPANTS

Black student-athletes are invited to participate in a study on racism and Anti-racism experiences

This Research project will look to explore how racism manifests itself in University athletics. Further, it investigates how the institution's policies and practices contribute to fostering an anti-racist environment.

If interested please contact Brianna Nicolas (Masters student) at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or call at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or the Principal Investigator Professor Goli Rezai Rashti at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮.

Please provide:
- Your full name
- Contact information
- How you heard about the study
- How you align with the inclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria
- ✔ Identify as Black
- ✔ Play an OUA acreeddited sport
- ✔ Played or will play in the 2022-2023 season

The participants who fit the inclusion criteria will be asked to participate in an approximately 60-minute interview and will receive a $15 Tim Hortons giftcard for compensation

*Email is an unsecure method of communication.

Curriculum Vitae

Name:	Brianna Nicolas
Post-secondary Education and Degrees:	Ontario Tech University Oshawa, Ontario, Canada 2016-2021 B.HS. The University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada 2021-2023 M.A.
Honours and awards:	Ridgebacks Legacy Award Ontario Tech University 2020-2021 Ontario University Athletics (OUA) All-OUA Academic Award Western University, Women's Lacrosse 2021-2022 Ontario University Athletics (OUA) All-OUA Academic Award Ontario Tech University, Women's Lacrosse 2020-2021
Related Work Experience	Intern, Organizational Culture Intern Toronto Raptors Sept 2022- Dec 2022 Coordinator, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment (MLSE) Feb 2023-Present