

Duquesne University

Duquesne Scholarship Collection

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Summer 8-7-2021

Different Strokes: A Critical Race Discourse Analysis of the Experiences of Four Black Women Rowing for a Predominantly White Institution (PWI)

Carol Schoenecker

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dsc.duq.edu/etd>



Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Schoenecker, C. (2021). Different Strokes: A Critical Race Discourse Analysis of the Experiences of Four Black Women Rowing for a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) (Doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University). Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/etd/2025>

This One-year Embargo is brought to you for free and open access by Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Duquesne Scholarship Collection.

DIFFERENT STROKES: A CRITICAL RACE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE
EXPERIENCES OF FOUR BLACK WOMEN ROWING FOR A PREDOMINANTLY
WHITE INSTITUTION (PWI)

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Education

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Education

By

Carol E. Schoenecker

August 2021

Copyright by
Carol E. Schoenecker

2021

DIFFERENT STROKES: A CRITICAL RACE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE
EXPERIENCES OF FOUR BLACK WOMEN ROWING FOR A PREDOMINANTLY
WHITE INSTITUTION (PWI)

By

Carol Schoenecker

Approved May 25th, 2021

Gretchen Givens Generett, Ph.D.
Interim Dean of the School of Education
Professor, Department of Educational
Foundations and Leadership
Duquesne University
(Chair)

Amy M. Olson, Ph.D.
Associate Dean for Administration,
School of Education
Associate Professor, Department of
Educational Foundations and Leadership
Duquesne University
(Committee Member)

Elizabeth A. Winter, PhD., LSW
Clinical Assistant Professor, Child
Welfare Resource Center
School of Social Work
University of Pittsburgh
(Committee Member)

ABSTRACT

DIFFERENT STROKES: A CRITICAL RACE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERIENCES OF FOUR BLACK WOMEN ROWING FOR A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTION (PWI)

By

Carol Schoenecker

August 2021

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Gretchen Givens Generett

Collegiate athletics has the remarkable ability to serve as a catalyst for positive and wide-spread social change and identity formation. For Black women, the formation of identity comes with the added intersections of race and gender in addition to sport. Collegiate rowing is one of the most heavily scholarshiped sports coming out of the passing of Title IX legislation in 1972 and requires no previous rowing experience for participation (Garran, 2012). Despite the opportunity for rowing to serve as an access point for innumerable young athletes to obtain financial and social support through a pathway to higher education, there remains very little representation from Black females (NCAA, 2019). This dissertation combines critical race theory (CRT) and discourse analysis to create a critical race discourse analysis (CRDA) of the narrative experiences

of four Black women rowing for a predominantly White institution (PWI) in the Northeastern region of the United States. Through a series of four athlete-led storytelling circles, the author (and coach of the athletes) qualitatively coded the participants' experiences as Black female rowers into four overarching themes: constructing and deconstructing race and racism in White spaces, code-switching, advocacy, and belonging. At the conclusion of the four storytelling circles, the athletes elected to host a fifth storytelling circle with myself as the researcher where they could learn more about my own experiences and story to better understand how our collective identities intersect within our rowing program. What came out of our collective discourse is two proposed designs for action that begin to address issues of inclusion and opportunity in collegiate rowing.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all my athletes and students—past, present, and future. Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to be your coach and teacher. It has been an honor to learn and grow with each one of you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The iconic educator Fred Rogers once said, “All of us have special ones who have loved us into being” (Pollak, 2019). I have thought of Mr. Rogers frequently throughout this program, not only because of his reminder of the incredible power of radical kindness amid an often unfair and tumultuous world—but also because his words have consistently kept me grounded. I have been graced with a number of special people in my life who have very much loved me into being over the course of my thirty-two years on this planet.

I would like to thank my parents for raising and encouraging a strong-willed daughter who never once doubted she could be anything she wanted to be and for sacrificing everything to make sure Becky and I had every opportunity imaginable. To my sister, thank you for being my best friend and confidant. To Carlee, thank you for showing me the way forward and reminding me that we can create our own path and write our own story. To DJ, my partner and love, thank you for being my constant companion and pushing me to always be the best version of myself. I love you all.

To the teachers in my life, both past and present, I owe you the world. To Mairi, thank you for helping to raise me, for loving me when I had trouble loving myself, and for guiding me towards the path of education. I truly would not be where I am today without you. To LP and RDW (prof. mom and dad), thank you for pushing me out of my comfort zone. I learned early on that taking risks and embracing vulnerability is a lot easier when you have someone to catch you when you fall. Thank you both for always catching me, for fostering my love of research and academia, and for your continued

encouragement. To Dr. Generett and Ramona—words cannot express how grateful I am that you both came into my life. Thank you for your love, guidance, wisdom, and kindness. Here’s to many more adventures. Thank you to Dr. Olson and Liz for your continued mentorship and friendship. It means the world. And to Dr. Moss, thank you for bringing me into this program and ensuring all of this was possible. This department will not be the same without you.

Last, but not least, I would like to acknowledge the rowing coaches I have had along the way and who gave me the opportunity to find myself through sport. To Dr. B, thank you for giving me an entry-point into rowing. Your love and passion for your athletes and this sport is unparalleled. Thank you to Joe and Jenn, for teaching me how to row and for giving me my first serious coaching job. I am eternally grateful. To Coach Kish, thank you for giving this first-generation college kid a shot at the big leagues. It shaped who I am today in so many ways. And to Rebecca, for telling me ten years ago that I would make a great coach and hiring me that first summer. Thank you for being such a strong and constant role model to so many young female coaches.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	v
Dedication	vii
Acknowledgement	ix
Table of Contents	x
Chapter I: A Symphony of Motion	1
Chapter II: A Review of the Literature	25
Chapter III: The Research Method	40
Chapter IV: The Stories they Tell	59
Chapter V: Where do we go from here? Designs for Action.....	93
References.....	117
Appendix A: Storytelling Circle Team Activity.....	125
Appendix B: Storytelling Circle Discussion Guide	126
Appendix C: IRB Protocol.....	128

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACT: Africana Critical Theory

ASWIS: Alliance of Social Workers in Sport

CRCA: Collegiate Rowing Coaches Association

CRDA: Critical Race Discourse Analysis

CRT: Critical Race Theory

ESP: Early Success Program

HBCU: Historically Black Colleges and Universities

NCAA: National Collegiate Athletic Association

OCR: Office of Civil Rights

PWI: Predominantly White Institution

SAAC: Student Athlete Advisory Committee

CHAPTER I

A SYMPHONY OF MOTION

“It’s a great art, is rowing. It’s the finest art there is. It’s a symphony of motion. And when you’re rowing well...why it’s nearing perfection. And when you reach perfection, you’re touching the Divine. It touches the you of you’s, which is your soul.” -George Pocock (Brown, pg. 149)

Different Strokes

Sport has the ability to be a critical tool in identity formation. For the Black female athlete, however, the formation of identity comes with the added intersection of race and gender in addition to sport.¹ This study is a critical race discourse analysis (CRDA) of four Black female rowers studying in, and competing for, a predominantly White institution (PWI) in southwestern Pennsylvania. Each of the young women in the study are in a different academic year of their college experience and come from varying socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, they bring with them differing stories as to how they found their way towards rowing and how the sport has played a role in shaping their identities.

While collegiate rowing is one of the most heavily scholarshipped sports and requires no previous experience, there remains very little representation of Black females (NCAA, 2019). For this study, the focus is on discourse as it pertains to the narratives of identity formation for each athlete individually as well as within their shared experience. Utilizing CRDA as a methodology in itself not only recognizes the Black

¹ Throughout this work, Black and White will be capitalized based upon discussion with the participants involved and the decision to use these terms to refer to people in a racialized way. The one exception to this rule comes later in my own story’s discussion on white fragility in order to deny that concept weight within this anti-racist work.

female narrative as legitimate, but also crucial due to the simple fact that this narrative, currently, barely exists in the collegiate rowing space (Briscoe & Khalifa, 2013). Furthermore, the inclusion of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and CRT methodology ensures that the focus of these discourses are rooted in, "...the racialized, gendered, and class experiences of people of color" (Solorzano and Yosso 2002, 24).

When Michel Foucault spoke about discourse, he spoke about power and power structures (Foucault, 1980). Foucault (1980) wrote, "Power is never localized here or there... [rather it] is employed and exercised through a net-like organization...[individuals] are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power" (p. 98). Briscoe (2006) expanded on Foucault's idea by stating, "Social actions and the power relations enacted through them are largely (re)produced and organized through discourse" (p. 3). This discussion of power as it relates to discourse is critical to this study because I, as the researcher, am also the coach of these four tremendous women. Recognizing the inherent power imbalance present in not only being a White female coach currently working with the athletes in this research (and being their coach) and my unintentional yet present role in perpetuating power imbalances through the social structures of educational institutions, athletic departments, and sport in general, it is important to remove myself from direct discourse. Therefore, the four women have elected to interview each other about their respective journeys as Black rowers in a PWI and the intersection of gender, race, and sport in the formation of their identities. It is my intention, as both researcher and coach, to give as much of a context and framework to their discourse as possible with the insight and feedback of my

athletes, then take an intentional step back in order to better amplify their voices in this space.

A River Runs Through It: Finding Myself on the River

I discovered who I was in an eight-oared rowing shell on the Allegheny River in the fall of 2003. Having never been an athlete before, there was something immensely beautiful and healing in the rhythm of the strokes, the synchronized exhale of nine women breathing and moving in unison--as a single heartbeat. It takes a unique kind of person to fall in love with rowing. The sport itself, I would argue, does not take much raw talent. More important is the iron will, relentless work ethic, and a deeply seated belief and faith in the power of human connection and our coexistence with the world around us.

For those unfamiliar with a rowing race, let me give you an overview of what happens to the body over the course of 2,000 meters. The first hundred meters of race, the start, is often talked about as “free speed.” Muscle size and efficiency through the rowing stroke helps you jump off the starting platform and surge ahead while the body utilizes its minimal store of anaerobic energy. Anaerobic energy relies solely on energy already stored in the muscles and functions without the help of oxygen. What happens when the anaerobic energy stores are depleted? The body needs to compensate. The heart rate quickens. Breathing becomes more labored in a desperate attempt to push oxygen towards the muscles. Lactate begins to build in the blood. By the third minute of the race--just under 1,000 meters in--rowers have reached maximum oxygen consumption and lactate load in the blood. This is where the real race begins. Rowers

know that the body is more than capable of sustaining this extreme level of lactate buildup and maximum oxygen consumption and that the mind is likely to give out long before the heart and muscles. A disciplined rower must learn how to mentally sustain speed through the second 1,000 meters. Marathon runners talk about hitting “the wall” at the twenty-third mile of the race. What rowers face is more like an abyss of pain--one into which they have willingly thrown themselves.

But why do it? Why subject yourself to such excruciating agony time and time again? For me, there is something immensely therapeutic and empowering in having such intensely regimented control over my body--to feel my weight suspended through the water--every muscle and fiber engaged to propel the shell seamlessly through the water. I *choose* to enter into the abyss because I find comfort in knowing that I am far stronger than I grew up giving myself credit for. When I carry that boat from the river at the end of practice, having survived, having proven again and again, stroke by stroke that I am, in fact, the master of my own pain--it makes any other challenge or semblance of adversity easier to confront. To quote the legendary boat maker, George Pocock, “It is hard to make that boat go as fast as you want to. The enemy is the resistance of the water...But that very water is what supports you and that very enemy is your friend. So is life: the very problems you must overcome also support and make you strong in overcoming them” (Brown, pg. 53)

Then, there is the boat. Author Daniel James Brown (2013) published *The Boys in the Boat* about the University of Washington men’s rowing team who represented the United States in the 1936 Olympics. The story Brown (2013) told stemmed from one of

the members of the crew, Joe Rantz, who spoke repeatedly about “the boat.” Brown (2013) wrote of his first encounter with Joe as an old man in hospice care:

...It was when he tried to talk about “the boat” that his words began to falter and tears welled up in his bright eyes. At first I thought he meant the *Husky Clipper*, the racing shell in which he had rowed his way to glory. Or did he mean his teammates, the improbable assemblage of young men who had pulled off one of rowing’s greatest achievements? Finally, watching Joe struggle for composure over and over, I realized that “the boat” was something more than just the shell or its crew. To Joe, it encompassed but transcended both--it was something mysterious and almost beyond definition. It was a shared experience--a singular thing that had unfolded in a golden sliver of time long gone, when nine good-hearted young men strove together, pulled together as one, gave everything they had for one another, bound together forever by pride and respect and love (Brown, 2013, p. 2)

I wept reading Brown’s book because I had never been able to put into words the power of “the boat.” When you are bound together with eight other women through the ultimate test of resolve and willpower--through months of freezing 5:00am practices, blistered hands, glorious victories, and exhilarating defeats--there is a shared experience that lasts a lifetime. You learn the true power of trust, vulnerability, accountability, and the love that manifests through human connection. These relationships transcend “the boat.” Often invisible to the outside world, we carry them with us, always.

Just as important, for context is that the University of Washington’s team were largely young men of the Great Depression who utilized sport to make meaning and opportunity from education. They were blue-collared sons of loggers, shipyard workers, and farmers yearning to make their way in the world. The bond the nine men formed throughout their years together took on the epitome of privilege and power in the form of other crews and triumphed. They sailed ahead of the legacy of elite Ivy League institutions, surged past British aristocrats at Oxford and Cambridge, and, most importantly, they defeated the German sons of the Nazi state in front of Adolf Hitler

himself. Though rowing had its roots among the working class, somewhere along the way we lost ourselves in a classist divide. Rowing in the city of Pittsburgh--on each of the three rivers--I had the chance to rediscover my roots and a piece of my identity.

Pittsburgh is a city built on its rivers. It is the whole reason why people settled here hundreds of years ago. Water guarantees life. It nurtures us, allows us to transport ourselves from place to place, sends goods and services around the world--and makes up the majority of our physical bodies. The Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio Rivers are the veins of the city of Pittsburgh, pumping life into all of us. Just as Norman Maclean wrote in *A River Runs through It*, "Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of the rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs. I am haunted by waters" (para. 3). If you spend a day traveling along the city's rivers, you will eventually run into the skeletons of Pittsburgh's past--of a challenging and industrial history that, for the most part, has faded into the shoreline.

My father's family settled in the North Side of Pittsburgh sometime in the late 1800's. They brought with them generations of blue-collared workers and tradesmen who made a living in a city defined by steel and industry. My dad grew up running the streets when the air was still so thick with smog that it stained his White t-shirts brown within a couple of hours. My grandmother was a waitress and bartender. My grandfather, an electrician. When my father graduated high school at the very end of the Vietnam War, he went to work in a packaging plant with the majority of his high school friends. He

worked there for over thirty years, rising through the ranks to plant manager before Package Products, like so many other plants across the city, closed down.

People in Pittsburgh often speak of the “Great Migration” as the period in the 1970’s and 80’s when the steel plants began to close and generations of Pittsburghers traveled westward looking for new opportunities. Similar to the farmers in Steinbeck’s, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), this city saw the loss of a way of life. As I watched my father struggle to find new employment amidst a changing economy, as I watched him doubt his self-worth, intelligence, and relevance while everything he knew came crumbling down around him, he pushed me towards college and what he thought would be a different way of life. As a first-generation college student, rowing gave me my first shot at higher education. Just as the Washington crew of the 1930’s who worked with their hands and lived off the land and used rowing as a tool for survival, I began to understand myself and my pull to the water as synonymous to the way I was raised and who I wanted to be. The rivers of Pittsburgh are littered with steel mills long forgotten and hidden industrial plants that awaken with the sun and the generations of men who have known only the rivers, who wave from gargantuan barges silently making their way south towards New Orleans and the Gulf. When I shove off from the dock, I am part of them, part of their story just as they are part of mine.

A Brief History of Collegiate Rowing

The early beginnings of rowing as a high stakes sport is largely credited to the British (Garran, 2012). For centuries prior, worldwide, rowing was a practical skill used for survival—for transportation, for food and livelihood, and during naval battles at times of great unrest. A brief historical survey of the most skilled boatmen lists the Greeks,

Phoenicians, and later the Romans as masters of the craft. In England, skilled rowers were able to make a lucrative living as watermen, sailing up and down the Thames River. These skills gave way to high stakes barge races, which were eventually replaced with the slender and sleek eight-oared shells we see today (Garran, 2012).

Meanwhile in the United States, it was not long before the foremost amateur scullers began to question the lack of any organized sport at the collegiate level. In the book, *Ever True: The History of Brown Crew*, the author wrote, “It is worth pondering the total absence of collegiate athletics prior to 1852...one may wonder what it is about rowing that predestined it to be the first galaxy in the intercollegiate athletic universe” (Garran, 2012, p. 13). The rowing greats of the United Kingdom—Bob Cooke, Rudy Lehmann, and the Pocock brothers—made their way to the United States to advise the construction of intercollegiate rowing in America. The English had been enjoying the popularity of the Cambridge and Oxford boat race along the Thames since 1829. Furthermore, the excitement generated around watching the most skilled oarsmen work in unison to propel their eight-oared shell 4.2 miles down a sometimes tumultuous body of water sparked prep schools to begin training their young pupils in the sport of rowing from a much younger age. This, of course, created a feeder system of experienced rowers to universities. For several years in the United States, there were only two feeder schools (St. Paul’s in Concord, New Hampshire, and Groton in Massachusetts), so the majority of oarsmen were walk-ons at their respective universities. Ultimately, the longing to create legacy and tradition eventually prevailed. Harvard began their rowing program in 1844 under the tutelage of Horace Cunningham just a year after Yale purchased their first rowing shell in 1843. By 1852,

the very first collegiate athletic event in the United States took place between Harvard and Yale, thus beginning the long-standing legacy of the Harvard-Yale Boat Race (Garran, 2012). And with that, the top universities in America began to capitalize on the tremendous opportunities that rowing adds to the educational experience.

Women Take to the Water

Though the first collegiate rowing program for women to develop in the United States occurred at Wellesley College in 1875, women's rowing was slow to develop in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Garran, 2012). On the West Coast, the first rowing club for women, ZLAC was started in 1892, while on the East Coast Ernestine Bayer worked to establish the Philadelphia Girls Rowing Club in 1938. By 1962, Joanne Wright Iverson and Ted Nash were working to establish the National Women's Rowing Association and pushing to get women's rowing recognized by the International Olympic Committee by proving that there was growing interest in the sport by a large population of women. Despite the growing number of women participating in the sport, their efforts were not sufficient to convince universities to invest in equal opportunities and facilities for their female students. As Daniella Garran wrote, "That would all change with the passage of Title IX" (Garran, 2012, p. 86).

The passing of Title IX legislation in 1972 was perhaps the most significant event in the history of collegiate rowing as a whole. Title IX declares, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under an education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" (NCAA, 2020). Though athletics was only one area affected by the legislation, each university was now required to provide equal

facilities, treatment, and opportunities to both their male and female students. Although the legislation was passed in 1972, it was delayed going to effect until 1975. Even then, universities and colleges had a three-year grace period before they were legally required to be in compliance. Despite these legal obligations, universities remained defiant, forcing a strong contingent of female athletes to take matters into their own hands (NCAA, 2020).

At Yale University in the spring of 1976, 19 members of the school's championship women's rowing program who were sick and tired of being denied the same treatment and facilities as the male team marched into the office of Joni Barnett, the Director of Physical Education, stripped naked and read the following statement:

These are the bodies Yale is exploiting. We have come here today to make clear how unprotected we are, to show graphically what we are being exposed to...On a day like today, the rain freezes on our skin. Then we sit on a bus for half an hour as the ice melts into our sweats to meet the sweat that has soaked our clothes underneath...No effective action has been taken and no matter what we hear, it doesn't make these bodies warmer, or dryer, or less prone to sickness...We are not just healthy young things in blue and White uniforms who perform feats of strength for Yale in the nice spring weather; we are not just statistics on your win column. We're human and being treated as less than such. (Wulf, 2012)

The passage of Title IX brought attention to the sport of women's rowing because schools and universities have the ability to utilize it as an equivalency sport. A fully funded women's rowing program can boast up to 100 athletes racing in a variety of different boat classes and events. In short, adding rowing is perhaps the fastest way to balance out a football roster and ensure an athletic department's compliance with Title IX.

When the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) assesses a school's compliance with Title IX, they look for alignment in one of three areas: student interests and abilities, athletic

benefits, and opportunities and athletic financial assistance (“Equal Opportunity in Intercollegiate Athletics: Requirements under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972”). As Scott Rosner and Kenneth Shropshire (2011) wrote in, *The Growth of NCAA Women’s Rowing: A Financial, Ethical and Legal Analysis*, “The growth of women’s rowing in the NCAA is primarily attributable to its positive impact on institutions attempting to comply with the interests and abilities aspect of Title IX via the substantial proportionality test” (pg. 617). Rosner and Shropshire go on to say, “...the average roster size of a women’s rowing team is the largest of any NCAA women’s sport--nearly twice that of outdoor track and field, which has the second largest roster of any women’s sport” (pg. 617).

By 1981, the NCAA had replaced the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) (Garran, 89). With forty-three women’s championship rowing programs nationally, athletes remained dissatisfied by the lack of a national NCAA championship (Garran, 89). Rowing was labeled as an “emerging” sport in the 1993 report issued by the NCAA Gender Equity Task Force (Garran, 89). With the need for more sponsorship and promotion, the NCAA agreed to establish a national rowing championship in 1996, with the first occurring on Lake Natoma in Sacramento, California among 8 universities and 296 athletes (Garran, 83).

With the rise of women’s rowing programs across the country came an influx of increased opportunities for women. The few boat and equipment manufacturers around the world were forced to start developing rowing shells and oars designed for women to remain competitive in the market. Programs requiring large roster numbers left their universities and colleges with no other choice than to increase the sizes of their coaching

staff, invest in new equipment and boathouses, and, perhaps most importantly, bring the total scholarship count to twenty. The most important benefit to these young female athletes, however, were the intrinsic lessons learned from having the opportunity and privilege to participate in such a unique and hyperbolic sport. As Amy Nutt, a former Smith oarswoman said,

“...Smith inoculated us against doubt and timidity while we were there: Why SHOULDN'T I major in English and Philosophy-or Physics, or Pre-med--and why SHOULDN'T I try out for the crew? While there were many disappointments to follow in life, and instances, definitely, where I felt being a woman hindered career advancement, I never allowed those disappointments or discriminations to veer me off course. I know I can attribute much of that to Smith, and insofar as crew was such an integral part of my life at Smith, I can surely attribute that to rowing as well” (Garran, 94).

In my corner of the world, the rise and popularity of women's rowing gave me the opportunity to discover who I was as an awkward young teenager with no previous athletic experience. It helped me find balance, mindfulness, and the power of human connection. Rowing pulled me towards college and supported me on several levels as a first-generation college student, and when I graduated, it gave me a second family and support system with bonds that will last a lifetime. As the head coach of a Division I rowing program, I recognize my responsibility and privilege in being able to offer the same experiences and environment of support and growth to new generations of young women. As a largely White and elitist sport, Black women are routinely absent from collegiate rowing programs.

Where are All the Black Women?

Collegiate athletics as a whole has been struggling with representation from women and Black professionals in their day-to-day business operations. Richard

Lapchick, the founder, and head of the Center for the Study of Sport in Society, puts out a yearly report card with the Institute of Ethics in Sport detailing the hiring practices of the NCAA and its member institutions. The 2018 report includes gender and racial personnel data at the NCAA headquarters, for university presidents, head and assistant coaches, and faculty athletic representatives (Lapchick, 2018). Unsurprisingly, White coaches made up 83.7 percent, 92 percent, and 94.7 percent of men's basketball, football, and baseball head coaching positions, respectively, in all divisions combined during 2017-2018 (Lapchick, 2018, p. 2). Women are severely underrepresented in administrative positions and coaching positions (even among female teams) (Lapchick, 2018). Lapchick wrote, "While the overall representation of women within college sport in all three Divisions continued to improve, it was negatively balanced by the fact that in the 47th year after the passage of Title IX, nearly 60 percent of all women's teams are still coached by men and 51 percent of all the assistant coaches on women's teams are men" (p. 2).

NCAA rowing, specifically, poses an even bleaker picture when looking at racial equity. The 2018-2019 NCAA Race and Gender Demographics Database reported only one Black head coach among Division I schools and one Black male and two Black female assistant coaches (2019). As far as athletes are concerned, the NCAA reported 5,410 Division I female rowers. Of these young women, only 125 are Black--just 2% of the total population. The reasons behind the lack of representation of Black women in collegiate rowing are numerous, complex, and point to deeper systemic inequities within the American education and social system. It appears to begin with issues of equity in access and opportunity to participate in the sport and moves to include centuries old systems of oppression, bias, and deeply entrenched racist ideologies.

A Brief History of the NCAA and Black Athletes

Black participation in collegiate sports has a long and tumultuous history (Smith, 2011). In the early 1970's, Black athletes played primarily for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). In fact, up until the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, Jim Crow and segregation made HBCU's pretty much the only choice for Black athletes (Hill, 2019). Predominantly White institutions (PWI's), homing in on the level of athleticism and talent present within HBCU athletics and the potential for monetary profit within, pushed for recruitment of Black athletes to football and basketball powerhouses (Smith, 2011). In 2017 alone, the NCAA reported over \$1.1 billion in revenue for the fiscal year (Hill, 2019). Just the year before that in 2016, the NCAA extended its television agreement with CBS Sports and Turner Broadcasting through 2032 culminating in a \$8.8 billion deal (Hill, 2019). Jameel Hill (2019) of *The Atlantic* wrote of the sheer wealth PWI's obtain from their predominantly Black athletes:

About 30 Division I schools each bring in at least \$100 million in athletic revenue every year. Almost all of these schools are majority White—in fact, Black men make up only 2.4 percent of the total undergraduate population of the 65 schools in the so-called Power Five athletic conferences. Yet Black men make up 55 percent of the football players in those conferences, and 56 percent of basketball players.

Lured to PWI's with the promise of making it to professional teams and scoring lucrative endorsement deals, or at the very least winning a national championship in giant stadiums and arenas in front of millions of viewers, Black males have long been targeted for their athletic prowess (Hill, 2019).

Eventual growing concern at the appallingly low entrance statistics and graduation rates of Black collegiate athletes forced modifications to enrollment and admissions standards. Smith (2011) documented that by 1977, the average SAT scores

for Black athletes entering college was a combined 650 out of 1600 compared to the median score of 940 out of 1600 for White male athletes. High school GPA's showed similar disparities with Black male athletes averaging a 2.39 compared to the White male athletes average of 2.90 (Smith, 2011). Smith (2011) noted similar trends among Black female student athletes. Though Black females averaged higher scores on both standardized tests and within cumulative GPA, they consistently had marks well below their White peers. Black females averaged a 710 SAT score with a 2.62 GPA, while White female athletes averaged a 960 on the SAT's and boasted a 3.20 high school GPA (Smith, 2011). With little-to-no consideration of the oppressive policies that had disproportionately affected Black schools, and therefore, Black students, for decades, the NCAA (with no representation from HBCU officials) voted to pass Proposition 48 in 1986 thereby raising standardized testing and GPA requirements for athletic eligibility (Smith, 2011).

The effect of Proposition 48 was that a disproportionate number of Black athletes suddenly found themselves ineligible for collegiate athletics based on stricter standardized testing requirements. In fact, 90% of students who found themselves ineligible were Black (Smith, 2011). With the knowledge that low-income and minority students routinely score lower on standardized tests due to a lack of access to preparatory courses and the price tags associated with them, the NCAA ultimately ended up enacting legislation that discriminated against an entire population of young potential athletes. A former president of Grambling University spoke out against the legislation, pointing out that, "...it discriminates against student-athletes from low-income and minority-group families by introducing arbitrary SAT and ACT cutoff scores as criteria for eligibility"

(Smith, 2011, p. 155). Edward B. Fort, Chancellor of North Carolina A & T furthered the argument against Proposition 48 by pointing out that, “[Proposition 48] had unfortunately become a race issue...one in which the aptitude test (SAT and ACT) had been repeatedly challenged by empirical evidence of numerous studies discriminating against the working and middle classes, Black and White” (Smith, 2011, p. 155). This pre-existing educational inequity became even more heightened after the passage of Proposal 48, when NCAA legislators and the American Council on Education discovered that with the new standardized testing requirements, 75% of Black athletes scored below the ACT cutoff for athletic eligibility (Smith, 2011).

Instead of taking the approach of athletic eligibility being an issue of social justice, and therefore pushing towards reform, it was a decline in athletic talent (and therefore revenue) that pushed the NCAA to enact amendments to the proposition. Athletic programs were able to adopt the “partial-qualifier” status to persuade the larger university rather than the athletic department to admit and fund athletes who met either the standardized testing requirement or GPA requirement. Partial qualifiers can sit the bench for a year until their college GPA’s and core course progression is considered. Well-funded and athletically dominant schools could recruit athletes who were added to the roster and stockpiled until which time they could meet college-level eligibility requirements. Far from ensuring that these Black athletes were provided the best opportunity for education and a career post-college, Richard Lapchick, the director of the Center for the Study of Sport in Society, affirmed that, “...Black athletes are kept eligible by taking courses unlikely to lead to a degree” (Lapchick, 1986, p. 159).

The eligibility debate became more contentious with the later passing of Proposition 16 in 1992, which increased the number of core courses required for eligibility to sixteen and then once again in 2003 when Proposition 16 was extended to include a sliding scale of core course GPA and standardized testing requirements (Smith, 2011). As Smith (2011) pointed out, the federal government inserted itself into the world of collegiate athletics following the news that athlete Kevin Ross of Creighton could not read after four years of college (p. 160). The NCAA was out of control and under the threat of extreme federal intervention if they did not begin to make information public regarding graduation rates of athletes by race, sex, and sport (Smith, 2011).

Proposition 16's amendment to Proposition 48 in 1992 was a first step in increasing academic standards while allowing for more flexibility in the prioritization of either standardized testing requirements or core course GPA (Smith, 2011). Feeling as though the sliding scale did little to address the larger racial inequities within sport, the Black Coaches Association (BCA) pushed back by citing the lack of coincidence in the group of "eugenics-favoring psychologists" responsible for Proposition 16 passing the amendment at the exact same time the number of basketball scholarships dropped from 15 to 13--all while the NCAA negotiated a new \$1 billion TV basketball tournament dominated by Black male athletes (Smith, 2011). In response, the BCA threatened to organize a massively disruptive boycott of the March Madness tournament with the help of the NCAA's Black basketball players. The NCAA ultimately conceded to place greater opportunities for all minorities within NCAA governance and held off implementation of Proposition 16 for an additional year (Smith, 2011). The most recent

NCAA sliding scale for academic core GPA and standardized testing eligibility is based on a 16-core course requirement.

The NCAA's assumption that all potential student athletes have access to the opportunities to complete the core course requirements and achieve a high enough standardized testing score to balance a high school GPA means that Black students and those from low-income school districts have less access, as a whole, to meet basic academic requirements that would ultimately lead to their eligibility. From a recruitment perspective, this means that unless a college coach identifies an athlete early in their athletic career and can track their progress towards meeting NCAA eligibility standards, many potential athletes may never have the chance to compete at the collegiate level regardless of their athletic talent or skills. Additionally, the involvement of the federal government in issues related to race and socioeconomic inequity is representative of yet another area where reform comes from threat and force from a national level. For revenue sports like football and basketball, the lure of profit forces coaches to identify recruits earlier in the high school careers. Early identification can ensure that students are meeting eligibility requirements as they navigate high school and move into college. For female athletes, on the other hand, the lack of revenue and profit from women's athletics means that early identification does not happen as often. For a sport like rowing where athletes do not typically begin until high school, students who attend low-income and underperforming schools can often fall through the cracks. What is more, even female athletes who choose to walk-on in college--meaning that they begin rowing for the first time after they have already been admitted to the institution--may find themselves academically ineligible based on NCAA standards and their judgement of the

core course requirements stemming from approved courses that were offered in their respective high schools.

Black Female Athletes & Collegiate Athletics

While the history of NCAA eligibility standards and the exponential growth of revenue generating sports for Black male student-athletes shows a trend of discrimination and exploitation on the part of many larger athletic institutions, the history of Black female student-athletes is one of almost total invisibility. Emmett L. Gill Jr. (2007), cofounder of the Alliance of Social Workers in Sports (ASWIS) wrote, “If you had the chance to watch the NCAA women’s basketball championships in April, you probably noticed that 80 percent of the starters for Rutgers and Tennessee were non-White.” He went on to state, “Don’t be fooled this apparent diversity is representative of collegiate sports, because the prevalence of Black females in collegiate sports is just an illusion” (Gill, 2007).

With the exception of basketball and track and field, Black women in Division I athletics are nearly non-existent. Though it is important to note that the number of Black females in collegiate sports has risen since the passing of Title IX legislation in 1972 mandated equity and opportunity for females in federally funded educational establishments (including athletics), only ten percent of the Black females in Division I programs played a sport other than track or basketball (Gill, 2007). The lack of diversity and representation are most stark in the three sports that experienced the most growth since the passing of Title IX--soccer, lacrosse, and rowing. The 2019 NCAA Demographic Database shows 149,673 White female student-athletes compared to 19,857 Black female student-athletes across all sports in PWI’s (NCAA, 2019). When

looking at women's soccer, the ratio of White females to Black females is 2101 to 181, women's lacrosse has a ratio of 3,079 White female student-athletes to just 65 Black female student-athletes, and women's rowing is sitting at 3,896 White athletes to just 125 Black athletes (NCAA, 2019).

Numerous factors contribute to the inequities between Black and White female student-athletes. The first comes from the fact that those involved in passing and regulating Title IX legislation are predominantly White. Furthermore, the financial costs to push and advocate for increased Black participation in collegiate sports have been deemed far greater than the benefits (Gill, 2007). The second factor comes from the much larger, pervasive systemic inequities and the role of poverty in Black female sports participation before college (Gill, 2007). These two factors combined with the barriers discussed earlier regarding NCAA academic and eligibility requirements shows just how forcefully Black women have been excluded and silenced in the collegiate sports world--despite the data that shows athletics' inherent benefits. Not the least of which is the strengthening of identities and increased academic success. In 2017, Black female student-athletes graduated college at a rate of 67 percent compared to just 49 percent of Black female non-student-athletes (Hosick & Durham, 2017).

Though the moneymaking sports of football and basketball have significant minority representation--due largely to the early identification process during recruitment--Black female rowers and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who choose to participate, fall victim to discriminatory NCAA legislation at a much higher rate. In 2019 women's rowing numbers across all three athletic divisions showed 5,524 female rowers in the United States. Of that number, 73 percent identified as White, 24

percent identified as a race other than White, and just 2 percent (just 168) identified as Black (NCAA, 2019). Access to and knowledge of the sport, geographic location and affordability all play a part in the recruitment of young Black female rowers. If junior rowing lacks diversity, then, collegiate rowing also lacks diversity. The larger social justice issue becomes even more salient with the knowledge that a fully funded Division I women's rowing program has access to 20 full scholarships to be handed out at the coaches' discretion--and that no previous rowing experience is needed to be able to thrive in the collegiate environment. Because rowing is virtually the only collegiate sport that has a novice walk-on component, young athletes who have never been exposed to the sport before college suddenly have the opportunity to benefit from the effects of being part of a supportive and driven environment--not the least of which are more networking opportunities and increased hiring through a demonstrated ability to work effectively within a team environment.

When referring back to NCAA eligibility requirements it is imperative to refer back to the fact that being admitted to a college or university does not necessarily mean that a potential student athlete will be eligible or be able to maintain eligibility standards. If a current first year student at Founding Father University gets admitted with an exceptional GPA and standardized test score but went to a high school that did not offer four NCAA approved English courses, that student will lose an entire year of eligibility before they can participate. This means that even if coaches promote diversity and inclusion efforts through rowing education and 'learn to row' events to target potential athletes who do not have access to the sport, many Black and low-income students remain ineligible.

Founding Father University: A Different Kind of Collegiate Rowing Program

Founding Father University is a private university in suburban Pittsburgh with an average enrollment of 5,500 graduate and undergraduate students. Founded in 1921, Founding Father served primarily women interested in secretarial work and business. The school expanded in 1935. By 1969, the school was granted permission to offer full baccalaureate degrees in Business Administration, thereby permitting the school to achieve junior college status. Master's programming followed in 1978, doctoral programs in 1999, and by 2002 the school had reached full university status.

As mentioned before, despite its humble roots, rowing has become an elite sport. It went from being a spectator sport popular among the working class to a sport reserved for mostly White-collar participants. As one can imagine, the universities and colleges who tend to focus the most on their rowing programs are similarly structured. They are the high-level elite institutions that admit predominantly wealthy students that perpetuate the status quo. The *New York Times* released an interactive study in 2017 that profiled institutions of higher education across the country as they relate to parental wealth and opportunities for financial mobility. It comes as little surprise that colleges that have more students from the top 1% of familial income (more than \$630,000 familial income a year) than from the bottom 60% (less than \$65,000 a year) have some of the most competitive rowing programs (2017). Knowing that race is inextricably linked to class, diversity on the most elite college campuses is minimal-- meaning that their rowing programs are predominantly White and will most likely stay that way for the foreseeable future.

Founding Father is not an elite university. The vast majority of students come from local, middle class households averaging \$86,500 a year--some of the lowest in the region (*New York Times*, 2017). The school tends to cater to lower income students and, instead of forcing prospective students away with excessively high admissions standards, hosts what they call an Early Success Program (ESP) for the summer before a student's first year of school. The rationale and belief behind the ESP is to ensure that incoming first year students are truly prepared for college-level coursework, without passing judgement on the factors that youth cannot control--like where they attended high school and access to SAT/ACT tutoring and academic supports. Students can enroll cost free, move in early, and participate in a variety of workshops, attend a speaker series on a variety of topics, study hall sessions, and team building activities before jumping into their first semester of classes.

The overall setup of the university suggests that it would be an ideal place for a more diverse and inclusive Division I rowing program--one that could change the face of the sport on a national and international scale. If a NCAA rowing program embraces inclusion and diversity at its core and shows exceptional success in athletic growth and speed, there is an increased incentive for other programs to follow suit. Founding Father University's rowing program puts an emphasis on inclusion and the lifelong lessons that rowing can teach, but more importantly, we have a rowing team composed of tremendous young women who embrace and advocate for inclusion on a much larger scale. As it currently stands, Founding Father rowing hosts a roster size of 49. Of the 49 women, five identify as Black, two identify as Latinx, one identifies as Egyptian, and one athlete identifies as Asian American.

At the core of this movement is a group of young Black women working to change the face of the sport and create an environment where young women who look like them can thrive regardless of their previous circumstances or the innumerable barriers that stand in their way. Rowing is a gateway to college, but more than that, for Black women, this sport can strengthen consciousness and identity. By taking a step back and affording young Black women at Founding Father University the tools and platform to share their collective experiences rowing at a PWI, we can introduce a discourse that up until this point has not existed in collegiate rowing. If this movement can be successful at Founding Father, it is this coach's belief that it can lead to widespread change across the collegiate rowing world.

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“Let the circle be unbroken” in the words of the spiritual, so that no one is lost or excluded. (Bateson 2000: 4)

The Barriers to Collegiate Rowing: Critical Race Theory & Critical Feminist Theory

In Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic’s (2012) book, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, the authors engage in a dialogue over race and racism in America and how the very structure of our society is built on a foundation of oppression in order to ensure that the dominant White population is able to maintain power. As an ever-evolving intellectual debate, Critical Race Theory (CRT) acknowledges race as central to how laws and policies are created, enacted, and enforced in the United States. Furthermore, the CRT movement has broadened the examination of relationships between race, racism, and power dynamics to include a much deeper discussion of economics, history, setting, both self and group interest, conscious emotions, and unconscious behaviors. In short, race permeates every fiber of American society. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) wrote, “First, racism is ordinary, not aberrational--” normal science,” the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country.”

When discussing CRT, it is crucial to recognize that racism is a daily reality for every person of color in the United States and that those who have the privilege and luxury of never having to experience racism very rarely acknowledge its existence because their actions tend to inherently benefit their own well-being (Delgado &

Stefancic, 2012). White people from all sides of the economic and class spectrum inherently benefit from racism; therefore, there is little desire to act to do anything to eliminate it. Whereas White elites benefit from racism for materialistic reasons, working-class Whites benefit from the psychological belief that they, despite their circumstances, are still superior to people of color. This fuels the theory that race is a social construct designed and manipulated to ensure the continued oppression of the minority group.

When thinking about how CRT relates to collegiate rowing it is important to consider the biases--either intentional or unintentional--that exist within federal regulations like Title IX, the NCAA's eligibility standards, and recruiting strategies and policies that prevent coaches from recruiting or targeting athletes in low-income, more diverse areas. On one hand, it is much easier for a coach to pursue athletes from the most prosperous and successful rowing clubs. These athletes are normally a safe bet--they are established in the sport and there is often little work to be done in getting them up to speed to handle the athletic rigor of collegiate athletics. The issue comes from the fact that if coaches acknowledge that there is little representation of women of color in junior rowing due to the lack of access these young women have to the more prestigious clubs, then it comes down to a very intentional move on the part of the coach to seek out a more diverse population and begin the conversation with young athletes of color. As the recruiting coordinator for Founding Father University, this dialogue brings to the forefront of my own mind the biases that I have that affect our team's push towards promoting diversity and inclusion within our own program as well as the aspects of our sport that overtly marginalize minority groups before the conversation between student-athletes and college coaches even begins.

Delgado and Stefancic (2012) continue the discourse further by acknowledging that the dominant race has continued to racialize different minority groups at different periods throughout history--a concept the authors call “differential racialization.” They go on to elaborate on this idea of differential racialization by stating, “Not objective, inherent, or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality; rather, races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient” (2012). Even within policies that historically have been acknowledged to further racial equity, the dominant race often still reaps the majority of the benefits. Derrick Bell (2012) brought up *Brown v. Board of Education* as a key example. Long touted as a triumph of civil rights litigation, *Brown v. Board* very well may have resulted more from the self-interest of elite Whites than from a desire to help Blacks.

In many cases, the Supreme Court has blocked the possibility of political, economic, and social redistribution that could have disrupted systemic racism through efforts of being “colorblind” and deferring to state and local legislatures (Harris, 2012). In the case of *Brown v. Board*, the desegregation of schools did little to combat the racist ideals behind segregation, and, in many cases, have left students of color with fewer opportunities to learn and thrive than they had in their segregated institutions. Angela Harris (2012) emphasizes this fact in her work, *Critical Race Theory*, by stating, “Accordingly, critical race theories attempt to show how contemporary law--including contemporary antidiscrimination law--paradoxically accommodates and even facilitates racism.”

The exploration of CRT through the lens of the legal system focuses on why--both intentionally and unintentionally--the period of reconstruction following the Civil

War inherently, not only failed to eliminate racism, but also actually played a part in systematically inserting racism into the American justice system (Harris, 2012). Angela Harris (2012) conducted a crucial study examining both the argument that racism is a permanent feature of American society and the counterargument that implicit bias theory can play its part to reshape antidiscrimination laws into being a more effective tool to combat racism. Harris (2012) argues that simply putting a focus on conscious prejudice is not enough. Rather, there is an urgent need to place a larger focus on how structural incentives within both social and economic practices continue to perpetuate racism. As she put it, “Critical race theory can thus be understood as a study of ‘hegemony’: how domination can persist without coercion” (Harris, 2012, p.5). This brings Harris to an even larger and more painfully rooted question of whether or not eliminating racism from society is even possible.

Harris’ work expands the conversation on recruiting policies in collegiate rowing. As mentioned earlier, the NCAA recruiting policies and standards put in place point to larger systemic socioeconomic inequities that marginalize young women of color before they even begin the conversation with college coaches. There are societal and legal systems in place that prevent young women of color from being given the opportunity to live, go to school, and work in areas with access to a variety of after school programs and athletic clubs. If where you are born truly dictates where you can go in life, then there are huge populations of young athletes--both male and female--who are never going to be eligible for collegiate athletics without an intentional move by coaches, educators, and institutions of higher education to counteract and target the structural biases that prevent opportunity for youth of color.

Another essential point that Harris (2012) brings out in her research is that limiting CRT to discussions of the Black/White divisions within society isolates other non-White groups. The racialization of all non-White groups is equally important to CRT. Additionally, race is interlocked with gender, sexuality, and class oppression--to focus on one without the other would be a foolish venture. Ultimately, people, not necessarily legislation, need to change. There have been numerous loopholes found within legal doctrine that have allowed people to continue their discriminatory practices either out of fear of their own social inequity or to seemingly preserve their own self-interest. One woman who wrote an astounding account meshing together CRT, Critical Feminist Theory, and Critical Legal Theory is Patricia J. Williams. In what Angela Harris deemed, "judicial storytelling," her work, *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, is a beautifully tragic and haunting autobiography of the life of a Black, female, Harvard law professor.

Patricia Williams (1991) uses the narrative and contemporary popular culture to trace the workings of everyday racism throughout society--including the causal and often unintentional microaggressions--specifically in detailing the flawed relationships between race, law, and human rights. Through her studies and lived experiences, Williams (1991) asserts that judges tend to make decisions based on their own learned personal, political, and social biases. If we take law as politics, then that would mean that legal decisions are, in fact, political decisions. This, in turn, would indicate that there are few distinctions between the judicial and legislative processes, making the universally accepted system of checks and balances false. Thus, Williams (1991) contends that critical legal studies view human rights as entities that protect elite Whites.

What makes Patricia Williams' work so incredibly powerful is her ability to utilize the power of her own personal narrative to have a relatable discussion with her audience about the deeply rooted racial biases present in American society and the American justice system. Where critics have questioned the validity of her ideas due to the lack of concrete "evidence," her lack of evidence just further serves to strengthen her argument. After all, the *discussion* piece of both critical race theory and critical legal theory is the most crucial part. Her "schizophrenic" responses to everyday events in her life just goes to show how difficult and almost undefinable notions of "right" and "just" can be and her allegories and use of metaphor make her emotions relatable and her use of legal jargon more understandable to the readers.

Patricia Williams gets to the very heart of this research--giving young women of color on Founding Father' rowing team the platform to be seen. To be visible and in control of their own narrative. To discuss not only their experience of being a collegiate rower in a sport with very little representation from women who look like them, but to speak on the barriers that they face in accessibility to higher education, in mental health, academic, and mentoring support from allies on campus who are invested in their success. They need to know that their voices are powerful.

Williams shows her readers that our own blend of personal experiences could, if we let them, produce new understandings that subvert the rationalized status quo that has become comfort in our day-to-day lives. In a powerful assertion, she wrote:

It does no one much good, however, to make race issues contest for some Holy Grail of innocence. In my own lifetime, segregation and anti-miscegenation laws were still on the books in many states. During the lifetimes of my parents and grandparents, and for several hundred years before them, laws were used to prevent Blacks from learning to read, write, own property, or vote; Blacks were, by constitutional mandate, outlawed from the hopeful, loving expectations that

come from being treated as a whole, rather than three-fifths of a person. When every resource of a wealthy nation is put to such destructive ends, it will take more than a few generations to mop up the mess (Williams, 1991, p.)

Williams' bravery and vulnerability to promote discussion of racial justice enhances the work of Derek Bell (1987) and his book, *And We Are Not Saved: The Elusive Quest for Racial Justice*.

Bell (1987) himself wrote that the purpose of his book was, "...mainly to provoke discussion [regarding racial equality] that will provide new insights and prompt more effective strategies" (p. 3) Despite the number of Civil Rights laws and precedents that have been put into place throughout history, the concept of racial justice eludes American society. Civil rights laws are often poorly enforced, require standards of proof that are too difficult for groups to prove, and are deemed nearly irrelevant when looking at race-related advantages and high social class. At the heart of the issue is that the stated deeply held beliefs of America are in contrast to her daily behavior.

Within these deeply held beliefs is the understanding that there are basic contradictions in the United States Constitution--mainly that the ideals of liberty and individual rights were unintentionally designed to guarantee that neither the people nor the government would be able to interfere with the property of White males (in this case, slaves) (Bell, 1987). The words and actions of the original Framers directly influence Blacks today in that there continues to be a widening gap of inequality between Black and White citizens, growing numbers of unemployed Blacks, and the disappearance of Black men from Black families for a multitude of socio-economic reasons. Furthermore, as was also discussed by Delgado, Harris, and Williams, Supreme Court decisions on Civil Rights are conservative and mainly used to diffuse discontent--which means that

they still favor and benefit White Americans. Bell (1987) posits that real change will come with an increase in Blacks and allies who continue to advocate for racial justice-- such as through increased participation and access to voting.

Bell's assertion that true change can only come through advocacy from all people involved brings the focus back on athletic departments and the leadership within. If the entirety of Founding Father athletics is truly invested in providing equal opportunity to our current and future athletes, regardless of their background, then how are they ensuring that their young athletes of color have all of the resources they need to be successful both academically and athletically? Furthermore, what does racial equity at Founding Father University as a whole even look like and will those with administrative power stand up to racist NCAA policies or continue to seek comfort in their own self-interest?

Bell's book is told through the viewpoint of two fictional characters with opposing views to various Supreme Court Rulings--with both fiction and fact blending together to create useful and provocative ideas regarding why it remains true that various social reforms have continually failed to achieve racial justice. He provokes a deeply provocative discussion of the efforts of both Black and non-Black Americans who have worked to seek racial and economic justice for Blacks and demonstrates recurring trends throughout history from the Colonial Period, through both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, Reconstruction, Populism, the Civil Rights Movement, and to present day. Despite fact and fiction being blended together throughout the book, Bell does a fantastic job of allowing the readers to engage in both CRT and critical legal theory through traversing a long history of civil rights and legal reform in America that forces all of us to continue to

ask questions about how, and if, we can continue to work towards racial equity. As he put it:

Racism in America is much more complex than either the conscious conspiracy of a power elite or the simple delusion of a few ignorant bigots. It is a part of our common historical experience and, therefore, a part of our culture. It arises from the assumptions we have learned to make about the world, ourselves, and others as well as from the patterns of our fundamental social activities (Bell, 1987, p.11)

This book, once again, forces all of us to consider the extent to which the country can embrace her original ideals of, “liberty and justice for *all*.”

When applying CRT and critical legal theory to the context of collegiate rowing, specifically within the context of Founding Father University, it brings to light the biases--both intentional and unintentional--that almost certainly exist within collegiate rowing recruiting that prevent coaches from recruiting athletes in low-income and more diverse areas. First of all, it would be entirely remiss to not acknowledge the societal and legal systems in place that prevent women of color from being given the initial opportunity to live, go to school, and work in areas with access to a variety of after school programs and athletic clubs--not to mention the accessibility of higher education. Furthermore, the role that systemic and institutional racism play in influencing the social and emotional health of young women of color create an additional barrier to their inclusion in collegiate athletics. It brings to light the question of how rowing coaches do our part to counteract these structural biases that isolate women of color from even having access to the opportunity to row. The intersectionality of gender, education, identity, social justice, and their relation to the sport of rowing are further discussed within Africana critical theory.

Africana Critical Theory & Intersectionality

Magnus O. Bassegy (2007) defines Africana critical theory (ACT), or Black existential philosophy (the two terms he uses interchangeably throughout his writings) as philosophical questions premised upon concerns of freedom, anguish, responsibility, embodied agency, sociality, and liberation. Unlike early European Renaissance philosophers who often focused primarily on the identity of the self as an individual utilizing others as a means of building upon current successes (career advancements, reputations, family, etc.) Black philosophers like W.E.B. DuBois and Franz Fanon recognized that individual consciousness is fully and completely linked to the collective. Sudhi Rajiv (1992) articulated this point by stating that the, "...White concept of self can exist independent of the larger community whereas the Black self is deeply entrenched in the collective experience of his race (p. 32). Like other branches of philosophical thought, ACT is a multi-faceted discourse on existence and meaning in life. When applying this philosophical and existentialist lens to ACT and its relevance to people of African descent, then the focus on the empowerment of Black people from around the world and the urgency of liberating all Black people from oppression is center stage.

Ultimately, ACT scholars have come to the consensus that the overarching sense of a collective and communal identity of being Black outweighs any individual notion of self. Rajiv (1992) emphasized this point further when discussing the style of Black autobiographers who, "...do not confine themselves merely to a personal reminiscence [but] move on to the treatment of the community as a whole" (p. 32). On the opposite end of the spectrum, "...the White autobiographer confines his experience to the development of the self, in (most) cases unrelated to the community" (Rajiv, p. 32). She

brings it home when she compares Black and White writers by firmly stating that, “Black writers offer a model of the self which is different from the White models, create in response to a different perception of history and revealing divergent often completely opposite meanings to human actions” (Rajiv, p. 32).

This theory of consciousness, existence, and the liberation of the collective whole is crucial when looking at the involvement of Black women in the sport of rowing. Rowing, by its very nature, forces an interconnectedness. The very wellbeing of the individual is tied to the success of the whole. The actions of one rower can lift the spirits and lighten the load and burden of the entire shell. Conversely, those same actions, if not taken lightly, can weaken and weigh down the whole crew. Rowing is a sport where the individual is invisible, but the crew--the collective community--can achieve nirvana on the water. This control, ownership, and physical and mental autonomy that rowing provides is a vehicle and tool to allow women the freedom to construct a solid identity. For Black women, who have long been denied a voice and identity, a sport like rowing could very well be a life changing experience.

W.E.B. DuBois took this discussion about Black identity and the struggle for equity stemming from the diaspora deep into what he referred to as double-consciousness (DuBois, 1994). In his work, *The Souls of Black Folk*, DuBois (1994) spoke about a duality of identities for an oppressed people living in an oppressive world. Setting forth a framework to discuss gender, xenophobia, and colonialism as it pertains to race, DuBois (1994) wrote:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two

warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife – this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He does not wish to Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He wouldn't bleach his Negro blood in a flood of White Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face (p. 2).

Black rowers in the City of Pittsburgh see a convergence of double-consciousness within its rivers. As a predominantly White sport with roots in European tradition, the ability to use such a collaborative and healing sport to celebrate not only the Black experience, but also the Black *female* experience shifts the focus to triple-consciousness.

Just as DuBois introduced double-consciousness as a conflict between Blackness and Whiteness, Black feminist scholars have added the third component of gender to form triple-consciousness. For Black women, it is not enough to view and be viewed through the lenses of Black and White. The added dynamic of being a Black woman in a patriarchal society pushes the existential lenses of race and gender even further. When this theory first came to prominence during the civil rights movement, many Black women felt as though they were forced to choose between a movement for racial equity that would primarily benefit Black men or a women's movement that fought predominantly for the rights of White women (Beale, 1999). The burden that Black women took on during that critical struggle in many ways undermined their very existence. Frances M. Beal (1999) in her work, *Black Women's Manifesto*, wrote:

Certain Black men are maintaining that they have been castrated by society but that Black women somehow escaped this persecution and even contributed to this emasculation. Let me state here and now that the Black woman in America can justly be described as a "slave of a slave." By reducing the Black man in America to such abject oppression, the Black woman had no protector and was used, and is

still being used in some cases, as the scapegoat for the evils that this horrendous system has perpetrated on Black men. Her physical image has been maliciously maligned; she has been sexually molested and abused by the White colonizer; she has suffered the worst kind of economic exploitation, having been forced to serve as the White woman's maid and wet nurse for White offspring while her own children were more often than not, starving and neglected. It is the depth of degradation to be socially manipulated, physically raped, used to undermine your own household, and to be powerless to reverse this syndrome. (para. 1)

Malcolm X (2020) reaffirmed Beal's thoughts during his speech at the funeral of Ronald Stokes in 1962. In a speech now titled, "Who Taught You to Hate Yourself?" "The most disrespected woman in America, is the Black woman. The most unprotected person in America is the Black woman. The most neglected person in America, is the Black woman" (para. 1).

We live in a world, and city, where Black women are constantly embattled in what Patricia Williams (1991) terms the "other." This threatening otherness of being born Black, of not being born White, labels Black women as a living being to be feared, controlled, and contained, makes the argument for diversity in collegiate athletics--especially rowing--even more important. The convergence of identities and community theory in the rowing shells on the rivers of Pittsburgh is nothing compared to the ownership and control young women feel over their own bodies--of the celebration of strength and power and the connection with the other women in the boat. When considering the longstanding oppression and neglect that women of color have experienced throughout the history of collegiate athletics, we can finally see where race, gender, education, and college athletics intersect.

Crenshaw (1989) originally used the term "intersectionality" to recognize how the experiences of Black women fell between varying discourses of gender and race. Since Crenshaw's (1989) definition, the interpretations of what intersectionality actually is and

should be is both varying and vast. In fact, Kathy Davis (2008) pointed out that the flexibility in allowing for vagueness and openness is key to intersectionality's success in critical feminist thought. By allowing for such flexibility, the experiences and stories of insubordination felt by all women are validated and have a place. For the purposes of this research in honoring the stories of Black women rowing for a predominantly White university, intersectionality will be viewed as a theoretical foundation for narrative discourse.

According to Davis (2008), intersectionality pulls together critical race theory and critical feminist theory and notions of consciousness into two specific points of feminist thought. The first focuses on the impact of race, class, and gender (and other intersections) on women's lives and how power dynamics are constructed and shift through interactions with their experiences (Cole, 2006). The second is that intersectionality offers support for, "...the deconstructing of binaries, normalisation theories, and homogenising categories while simultaneously offering a platform that can address the concerns of all women" (Cole, 2006, p. 566). In this particular case, the other intersections include educational policies and institutions as well as collegiate athletics. Furthermore, not only does intersectionality as a theory lay the groundwork and support for narrative discourse as a methodological approach, but also it allows this female researcher to use my own social location as an analytic resource while highlighting the voices of the Black female student-athletes rowing for Founding Father University (Cole, 2006).

The narrative stories and discourses of black collegiate women are narratives that do not presently exist within Founding Father University, collegiate rowing as a

whole, or the NCAA. The “storying” of the lived experiences of the women of color rowing for Founding Father University do not only amplify the voices of these young women, but also challenge the dominant discourses by pushing narratives towards individuals and groups that shake up the perceived notions of education, gender, race, and sport.

A Note on Discourse Theory as a Methodological Framework

The historical contexts of Black women in collegiate athletics, CRT, feminist theory, consciousness and intersectionality build the theoretical framework for a narrative approach to research. For the purposes of this study and its focus on the discourses of women of color rowing for Founding Father University, the narrative is viewed in a context that involves resistance against existing structures of power (Andrews, 2013). Furthermore, if we accept the narrative as socially constructed, interpreted, and therefore reinterpretable in honoring the discourses within individual narratives, we can also accept the humanist conception of the singular lens of these same discourses pertaining to the Black female experience rowing at a PWI (Andrews, 2013). This framework is best viewed through the lens of a Foucauldian approach to narrative. Michel Foucault’s work focused on narrative as understood through the structures and forces of discourse, power, and history (Tamboukou, 2013). The history race and education traced through the evolution of collegiate athletics combined through the viewpoint of a feminist lens all converge to highlight the unheard and never-before seen discourses and narratives of four young Black women rowing for Founding Father University.

CHAPTER III

THE RESEARCH METHOD

“I stand here knowing that my story is part of the larger American story.” -Barack Obama
in his 2004 Democratic National Convention Speech (Obama, 2004)

Overview

As mentioned in the introduction, the purpose of this study is to amplify the voices of Black female rowers at a predominantly White institution. It is my intention as the researcher, and their coach, to give these young athletes from diverse backgrounds a platform to discuss their journey and evolving identities throughout their undergraduate careers. Their experiences as students at Founding Father University comes with the addition of rowing--a sport that has historically been and remains a starkly White and upper-class athletic endeavor within a school that is, likewise, predominantly White. The stories and narrative discourse these young women bring to the collegiate rowing space are an essential platform in a larger system of education and sport that will assist key stakeholders in better understanding how to create more equitable rowing programs that serve students from diverse backgrounds. As the coach of these young women, it is my intention to not only hear their stories, but also give weight to their lived experiences and, by doing so, seek to support the legitimization of the discourses and narratives of Black female rowers. In this section, I discuss the research methodology, the participants, the context, and the process of analysis.

Methodology

For the methodological approach of this study, I combined critical race theory (CRT) with critical discourse analysis (CDA) to utilize what Felisha M. Briscoe and

Muhammad A. Khalifa (2013) refer to as critical race discourse analysis (CRDA). Critical race discourse analysis fuses Foucault's discourse analysis with critical race theory to show how race and racism operate in PWI's and collegiate athletics--in this particular case, within the narratives of four Black females rowing in a PWI. CRT is used as a discourse of liberation as a means of combating institutional racism and racist policies that have been deeply embedded within collegiate athletics and institutions of higher education for decades (Briscoe & Khalifa, 2013). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) examines ideologies of power and power structures embedded within language (Briscoe & Khalifa, 2013). When looking at how the two meld together to discuss racism, gender, and sport as CRDA, we see a fusion of racialized complexes that disproportionately act to oppress certain racial groups.

Patricia Hill Collins (2000) reaffirms the above assertions about complex power structures within CDA by writing, "Domination operates by seducing, pressuring, or forcing Black women, members of subordinated groups, and all individuals to replace individual and cultural ways of knowing with the dominant group's specialized thought--hegemonic ideologies that in turn justify practices of other domains of power" (p. 287). CRDA proposes that such in depth examinations of female athlete discourses can lead to social transformations and more equitable practices within rowing, collegiate athletics as a whole, and within the larger structures of PWI's by expanding our views of how we see the world and ourselves within the larger picture of equity and sport.

In Lynda Tredway and Gretchen Generett's (2015), *Community Story-Mapping: The Pedagogy of the Griot*, the authors emphasize the importance of narrative storytelling to community discourse. In relation to the community of the rowing program

at Founding Father University, narrative inquiry as it relates to CRDA serves two purposes. The first is that sharing stories and experiences allows space to relate to and build deeper relationships with one another (Tredway & Generett, 2015). The four athletes on this team have known each other for a minimum of a year but being in the same space and engaged in critical discourse over similar topics will help them honor, recognize, and build on each other's experiences as Black female rowers. The second is that the experiences and stories told by these young women can serve as a catalyst of growth for others--specifically their teammates and the larger rowing community (Bruner, 1994). For their teammates in particular, the stories Jaz, Wakesho, Emilia, and Aleah tell are critical in ultimately aiding in the development and implementation of larger team culture changes that will enhance and support advocacy and allyship from White rowers on Founding Father's team.

Participants: The Athletes

At the time of this study will take place, there will be nine women of color on a team of 49 athletes, comprising 18% of the rowing program. Five of these women identify as Black, one as Egyptian, two as Latinx, and one athlete identifies as Asian American. Since this study focuses predominantly on the experiences of Black female rowers, four of the women on the team identifying as Black have volunteered to share their experiences of being a Black woman rowing for a PWI. Of the four, two athletes were recruited to Founding Father University with prior rowing experience and two were novice walk-ons who had a series of eligibility issues through the school and NCAA. All athletes are between the ages of 18 and 21 years old, with one athlete being at each grade

level of their collegiate career. A brief introduction to each young woman is below (with pseudonyms):

Emilia: Emilia began her rowing career as a freshman in high school with an inner-city rowing program in Eastern Pennsylvania. Her former rowing program is a program created specifically for inner-city public-school students with the intention of offering academic support, nutrition education, mentoring, and team building through athletics. Emilia was a student of the city public school system and alternated between being raised by her aunt and grandmother. She has a strong relationship with her father, but her mother was murdered when she was eight years old. Emilia is passionately studying criminal justice, a first-generation college student, and aspires to go to law school to be able to advocate for racial equity on a larger scale. At the time of this research, Emilia will be in her junior year of college and her seventh year of rowing.

Jaz: Jaz is a local rower who began the sport in her sophomore year of high school. Like Emilia, Jaz was recruited to Founding Father University. Though she attended a suburban public school, Jaz rowed for a club program just outside the city. Her mother is African American, and her father is Ghanaian. Like Emilia, Jaz hopes to pursue a degree in criminal justice to better be an advocate for racial equity. She was the president of the Black Student Union in her high school and is also a drum major in the university's band. At the time of this research, Jaz will be in her first year of college and her fourth year of rowing.

Aleah: Aleah walked onto the rowing team in her first year of college with no previous formal athletic experience. Though she primarily attended a public school in a small, rural area outside in Eastern Pennsylvania, Aleah spent the first few years of her

life moving around to different parts of the country with her mom. She is the first person in her family to attend college and began her studies as a biology major with the intention of going pre-med. After a semester of struggling academically, Aleah switched her major to media arts to pursue a second subject area that ignites her passion. She was a key player in helping the second varsity eight boat to their first medal at the conference championship in program history during her sophomore campaign. The year after, Aleah found herself academically ineligible to compete in the fall semester of her junior year due to red tape surrounding summer academic credit hours. At the time of this research, Aleah will be in her senior year of college and her fourth year of rowing.

Wakesho: Wakesho walked onto the rowing team in her first year of college. Though born in Maryland, Wakesho grew up in Kenya with two Kenyan parents and her younger sister. Like Aleah, Wakesho spent her first semester ineligible to compete due to a variety of eligibility issues within the university and the NCAA. She is currently pursuing a degree in English with the hopes of eventually going into policy. Her end goal is to play a part in creating educational policy that will help young women like her sister--young women of color with autism. At the time of this research, Wakesho will be in her sophomore year of college and her second year of rowing. I introduce the participants and who they are within the larger context of discourse identity as a means of setting the groundwork for the importance and power of the stories that follow in this work.

Discourses constitute our collective sense of reality in addition to our own sense of self (Kavoura, Ryba, & Chronicle, 2015; McGannon & Busanich, 2010). Instead of viewing our identities as fixed, Foucault (1980) subscribed to the idea that our identities

continue to shift, and change based on the discourses we have available. As these discourses continue to influence and determine the way we view the world, they likewise have larger implications of how we view power and power structures (Willig, 2013). Inevitably, certain discourses will become dominant--regardless of the fact that we acknowledge that there are multiple truths present within those same discourses. Willig (2013) for one asserts dominant discourse(s), "legitimate and reinforce existing social and institutional structures, [while] these structures in turn also support and validate the discourses" (p. 130). The voices of the women above will add to a discourse that largely does not exist in college athletics, thereby allowing for a wider view of being and knowing that decentralizes power and dismantles institutionally oppressive racist ideologies that have become the status quo (Foucault, 1995).

Participants: Athletes as Interviewers and Interviewees

When given the option, the athletes elected to engage in four semi-structured peer interviews with each other as opposed to having the interview done by myself as the researcher and their coach. Recognizing my role in perpetuating the dominant discourse in women's collegiate rowing, I worked with them to create their interview protocol, and then took a step back to give them the space to own their stories without the direct influence or impact of their coach listening in and interjecting myself into their storytelling circles. The athletes participated in four separate storytelling sessions every two weeks from October 16th to December 4th in the fall season of 2020. Similarly, to sports like track and field and cross-country, rowing is a year-round athletic endeavor with the most competitive competitions occurring in the spring. The focus on the late fall is to allow them the freedom and flexibility to reflect during a semester that lacks the

stress of a championship season. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, two of the interviews were able to take place in-person while the final two had to take place virtually via Zoom due to university closures approaching Thanksgiving.

The overall goal was to allow the interviews to take on a conversational tone as peers, amplifying each of their own individual lived experiences within their shared identity of being Black rowers on the same team attending the same PWI. They were given the space to discover how their individual stories intersect with each other in Founding Father's rowing community and within the larger rowing community by utilizing their voices as a tool to identify and think deeply about systems and structures in which inequity exists in the spaces around them (Tredway & Generett, 2015). By the end of their story-telling experience, all four athletes decided that they wanted to alter the interview protocol and add a fifth storytelling circle--one where they could interview me before we all collaborated on what steps we should all take to utilize their individual and collective discourse towards future advocacy within our team, at Founding Father University, in collegiate athletics, and in the larger rowing community (Tredway & Generett, 2015).

Preparing for Storytelling: Interview Preparation & Protocol

After consulting with Emilia, Wakesho, Jaz, and Aleah, we all decided to integrate interview and narrative story-telling protocols into our entire team's current cultural humility curriculum which traditionally begins in August of each year and concludes right before our conference championship in mid-May. The most important protocol, Patricia Hughes and Bill Grace's (2010), "Gracious Space," is grounded in building trust with members of the group in order to utilize and celebrate each person's

individual power as well as the collective power of the group. Gracious Space, by definition aims to create a, “spirit and setting where we invite the stranger to learn in public” (Hughes & Grace, 2010). This sentiment reinforces a sense of trust in community that will inspire athletes to take more risks, continue to push outside of their comfort zones, and work through difficult problems and adversity in a way that produces sustainable, long-term solutions (Tredway & Generett, 2015). Since the trust required to create gracious space is so inherently similar to the trust and vulnerability required to move together in a rowing shell, building this culture team-wide will only serve to strengthen the whole community and create a space where the whole team can embrace discomfort in a way that leads to both individual and collective growth.

The first step in creating a gracious space is to, “Pay attention to spirit” (Grace & Hughes, 2010). Similar to the idea of mindfulness, paying attention begins with listening--truly and empathically listening. Here we utilize the *Pedagogy of the Griot* and constructivist listening protocol (Tredway & Generett, 2015). The team pairs up with a random teammate (preferably a rower they do not know as well) and shares a story with their partner that connects them personally to the prompt given by the facilitator (in this case, coach). The partner who is listening refrains from the instinctual desire to ask further questions or make comments. Instead, they sit knee to knee with their partner, engaging in eye contact and allowing silence to exist in the space as a time of reflection and thoughtfulness, therefore giving the speaker their fullest attention. When the timer goes off after two minutes, the partners switch roles (Tredway & Generett, 2015).

As modeling is important, the coaching staff models this type of listening activity before expecting the athletes to fully engage in the process. Furthermore, each athlete is

reminded to assume the best and listen without judgement to their teammates. As the partners cycle through and the process is repeated, the immediate discomfort often eases. The team always takes time to debrief the experience at the end. As this activity has been repeated year after year, the process has become more normalized and ingrained in team culture.

The other major protocol and tenants of creating a gracious space involves creating intentional spaces where diverse perspectives are welcomed with the recognition that we gain a wealth of knowledge and empathy from people who have different lived experiences than our own. Four years ago, the discomfort felt in being openly vulnerable and asking questions would have made this protocol virtually impossible. Now, there is a general recognition that discomfort leads to growth, just as discomfort in the boat and in training leads to overall speed. As the team has embodied this notion year after year, they have also seen direct performance results. Gracious space is almost certainly directly related to boat speed and competitive success.

Because of natural power imbalances that exist within spaces, the final protocol we utilize as a team to create an environment for dialogue is the use of circles in discussion (Tredway & Generett, 2015). As Tredway and Generett (2015) wrote, “Circles create a sacred space that lifts the barriers between people, opening up fresh possibilities for connections, collaboration, and understanding” (p. 18). Furthermore, the shape creates a natural and continuous space of trust, which can, “...hold the tensions and emotions that contribute to healing” (Generett & Tredway, 2015, p. 18). As Tredway and Generett (2015) also emphasized in their work, “The [circle] process is not about changing others but rather is an invitation to change one’s relationship with oneself, to

the community, and to the wider universe” (p. 18). The use of the circle as a part of creating a gracious space is crucial to reinforcing the building of trust by reflecting on ourselves as we find ourselves simultaneously connected to each other (see Appendix A for team storytelling activity).

The Interviews: Athletes as Storytellers

The very essence of the Griot comes out of the Africana tradition. According to Tredway and Generett (2015), “Griots are West African historians, praise singers, and storytellers who have a repository of knowledge--usually oral--and through repeating the stories, weave the past into the present” (pg. 1). Just as Africana Critical Theory emphasizes the community over the self, the Griot holds a place of trust, support, and voice in the community, and, as a result, offers a critical eye of support to do good for the community (Tredway & Generett, 2015). In this space, Jaz, Wakesho, Emilia, and Aleah are the storytellers of Founding Father Women’s Rowing. They chose to engage in these narrative storytelling circles to discuss their personal experiences growing up and engaging in the sport of rowing in a White space. These stories are the critical look we all need to interrogate the flaws and limitations of our rowing community in order to work together to create a curriculum that will serve the betterment of the whole team. If one of us is suffering, we all suffer. Our humanity is bound together. Though they are not yet at the status of the Griot so early on in the process, their engagement in the storytelling experience, recognition of the history of their rowing program, and commitment to the future generations of Black rowers puts them in a unique position in their journey to develop into their own version the all-knowing and wise Griots of the West African tradition in this space (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

In the center of the storytelling circle process is the athletes themselves as the storytellers.



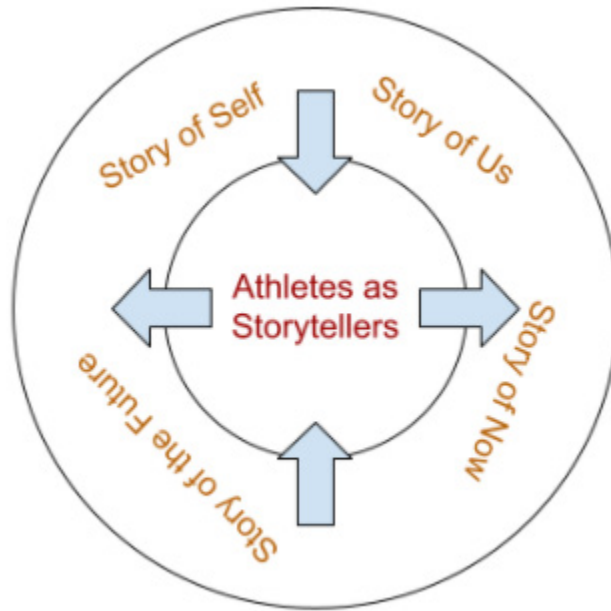
Once the space and protocols were established, Wakesho, Aleah, Emilia, and Jaz jumped right into their storytelling circles once every two weeks, resulting in four circles over the span of two months. Since this is a semi-structured peer interview process, we worked together to create a broad outline of talking points and topics to push conversation. Once the storytelling began, however, they were able to get lost in the conversation and let their stories develop freely and organically. We collectively decided that we should encourage free and unstructured dialogue and sort through the themes within the stories at their conclusion.

Each session fused parts of Marshall Ganz's (2007) "Story of Self, Story of Us, and Story of Now," together as part of building on the narrative of being a Black female athlete rowing at Founding Father University. As Ganz (2007) writes, the Story of Self is a personal story that shows, "...why you were called to what you have been to" (para. 3). For these four young women, it is the culmination of the people, places, events, and choices that have led them to this team at Founding Father University. From there, the second session launched into the Story of Us--the, "...shared purposes, goals, and vision," of the team and the community we are building and the reciprocal impact of the

community on these young women as well as their impact on the community (Ganz, 2007, para. 4). The third session focused on the Story of Now as a means of looking ahead at the challenges our school, team, and rowing community faces in terms of racism and the push for social justice as well as discussion on where we go from here (Ganz, 2007). The fourth session fused the three together with the recognition that while the Story of Self is unique to each individual athlete, the Stories of Us and Now connect the athletes together through a common community, though they may express them and view them through different perspectives. The fourth storytelling circle encouraged the women to look to the future and discuss how the whole team can get to a place where we are proud of the work that we are doing socially and athletically, utilizing our voice and platform as athletes to push for equity, and live our collective values openly and honestly. It is important to note that these narratives can, and most likely will, change over time. Ganz (2007) writes of narratives being a process, “by which you can generate that narrative over and over and over again when, where, and how you need to” (para. 8) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

With the athletes as storytellers sitting in the middle of the storytelling circle process, the continual engagement of the Story of Self, the Story of Us, the Story of Now, and the Story of the Future fits around that center circle. Furthermore, as the arrows indicate, and what we will continue to see as we build off this circular process, is that the content of each circle moves freely into the ones both outside and within it.



As for the direct topics of being Black female rowers at Founding Father University, we chose to loosely utilize an interview guide outlined by the NCAA that measures athlete satisfaction (NCAA, 2007; Sato, et. al, 2011). The overall prompts will focus on the academic, athletic, and social experiences of the rowers at Founding Father (see Appendix B for the storytelling circle discussion guide).

The National, Community, and University Contexts of Discourse Production

A brief recap of the contexts is important to the methodology owing to the fact that context influences participants and the discourse they produce (Rogers, 2004). This section will touch on the national, community, and university contexts of the sport of rowing.

USRowing is the governing body for the sport of rowing in the United States. According to their mission statement, “USRowing serves to promote the sport on all levels of competition, including the selection and training of those who represent the

US on a national level” (USRowing, 2020). Sponsoring over 185 regattas a year and boasting a membership of 14,000 individual members in addition to 1,050 organizational members, USRowing is the sounding board for athlete development from the junior level to the master’s level as well as the top authority in coaching education and development (USRowing, 2020).

Alongside USRowing on the national level is the Collegiate Rowing Coaches Association (CRCA). The CRCA is an organization that encompasses every women’s collegiate rowing program in the country and, as such, not only promotes women’s rowing as a collegiate sport, but also serves as the liaison between USRowing and the NCAA in terms of athlete welfare, sport knowledge, and ensures rowing’s representation in legislative arenas (CRCA, 2020). The discourses happening on this level are limited to those between the current rowing coaches and NCAA liaisons.

The community context surrounds the discourses of those involved in the larger rowing community within the City of Pittsburgh. Though Pittsburgh’s rowing history was briefly discussed earlier in this work, it is important to note the importance of the three rowing clubs, seven scholastic rowing programs, two collegiate clubs, and two Division I collegiate rowing programs that make up the current rowing community within the city. Pittsburgh’s size and tight-knit nature has played a critical role in bridging the gap between the junior level, collegiate level, and master’s level of rowing and forced collaboration between coaches and athletes from all three arenas. While the four athletes participating in this study have not directly interacted with USRowing or the CRCA, they have all been a part of the community-rowing context throughout the City of Pittsburgh.

The University context was explained in much more detail in the first chapter of this work, but Founding Father is a mid-sized, private university located right outside of the City of Pittsburgh. The average combined household income of students attending the school is a little more than \$80,000 a year. The vast majority of the student population is local and come from rural areas of Pennsylvania. There is a definitive blue-collar feel. With the university president being a Black male, there was an intentional move towards a more diversity, equity, and inclusion focus four years ago with the goal of creating a larger system of social, academic, and emotional support to directly address minority student retention. The rowing program in particular has been working towards aligning with larger university diversity initiatives in a way that creates a more inclusive space for Black women and women of color in a sport that has historically lacked diversity. This upcoming year will be the fifth year of cultural humility and cultural competency programming and the responses of the athletes reflect various experiences within the space. All four of the athletes have been integral in helping to write the cultural humility curriculum as well as working with the coaching staff to revamp recruiting efforts to reflect a more equitable identification process.

Trustworthiness and Data Analysis

The semi-structured peer interview approach to qualitative research is both thematic and illustrative. The interviews were transcribed and coded for recurring themes present within the responses. For the purposes of this study, a theme should be defined as a "...pattern found in the information that at the minimum describes and organizes possible observations...or interprets aspects of the phenomenon" (Boyatzis,

1998, p. vii). It is the hope that the interview design and responses will create a foundation upon which future research can be built.

In order to establish a level of trustworthiness to the data analysis, I used member checking (Merriam, 1998). Member checking is a concept defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) involving testing of, "...data, analytic categories, interpretations and conclusions" with members of the stakeholder group(s) from whom original information was collected. Because information is discussed directly with the participants in the qualitative study, it is one of the most reliable and credible methods of data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

A second rationale for the use of data checking in this study is because the process enhances reflexivity. In this type of qualitative research, I, as the researcher was--and still am--an active participant in the data collection process and the analysis of that data. The self-reflection process took place not only when I listened to the storytelling circles from my own athletes, but also when they incorporated me and my story into their discourse. This self-reflection piece is inherently reflexive (Finlay, 2002). Malterud (2001) points to the importance of a commitment to reflective practice and reflexivity when conducting qualitative research due largely to the fact that bias, while not inescapable, is managed and explained through a discussion of the impacts on the research to the researcher.

A Shift in Methodology & the Member Checking Framework

When Jaz, Wakesho, Emilia, Aleah and I initially went into this narrative storytelling process, we had anticipated using a combination of member checking, triangulation, and peer debriefing. As the storytelling circles progressed, however, the

four athletes decided to switch up the methodological approach. At the end of their fourth circle, Emilia texted me and asked me to come back to their Zoom session because they had a few questions. They asked if we could add a fifth storytelling circle where they could ask me questions directly, discuss a few topics that had come up in their stories, and interview me about my thoughts and experiences. They concluded that when it came to discussing where our team, school, and sport should go from here, that my story and identity and how they intersected with theirs in this particular space was needed before we could come up with a collaborative plan of action. We planned a fifth circle and decided that we would keep the thematic approach to coding the data between the five of us and discuss the larger themes as part of the fifth circle with the intention of fusing their experiences as Black female athletes with my experiences as a White female head coach to collaboratively create a cultural humility curriculum that could better serve the whole team. This informal method of member checking allowed for the five of us to dissect, discuss, and modify the themes from their narrative storytelling circles while actively navigating my experiences and story as their coach into the discourse.

From a methodological framework perspective, Lincoln and Guba (1985) cite several benefits to the member checking approach:

1. Member checking provided athletes with an opportunity to confirm accurate interpretations of data, correct any errors, and challenge what they consider incorrect interpretations by myself as the researcher.
2. Member checking provided an opportunity for the athletes to reassess and reflect on their comments through a process of listening to their storytelling circles, reading the transcriptions, and then debriefing with the researcher. This process

of revisiting information stimulated additional information and brought further questions to the forefront of their discussions. This reflection ultimately is what led to the decision by the four athletes to add a fifth storytelling circle where they could interview me.

3. It lessens the risk of participants reporting later that there was misunderstanding in their contributions or investigative error.
4. Member checking enables an assessment of what the athletes or individual athlete intended by making specific comments or taking specific actions.

A visual representation of the methodological process, illustrating the cyclical nature of narrative discourse is shown below in Figure 3.

Figure 3

The cyclical nature of the storytelling process and the fluidity of moving from the circle to circle throughout the three tiers of the narrative discourse is shown through the three circular layers below and the arrows that indicate the ease in which storytellers can move from one to the other.



What we see in the center is the Black female rower as the storyteller. Surrounding her is the dual identity of interviewer and interviewee within their experiences leading and listening in their narrative storytelling circles. The third ring is the perpetual and ongoing process of engaging with the Story of Self, the Story of Us, the Story of Now, and the Story of the Future. Each individual athlete took a critical and deep look into their identity and story, sharing openly with their teammates. Each teammate listened intently and empathically, giving the space necessary for storytelling. Once each woman finished their story, they turned their stories into critical and honest dialogue, exploring their shared experiences and identities through their Story of Us. The Story of Now considered those shared experiences and placed them within the space of their team and school in the moment of the storytelling experience. They explored, questioned, debated, cried, laughed, and ultimately reflected on where they want the team and school to go in this work in the future. The final, outer ring reflects the member checking process and, within it, the fifth interview between the athletes and myself. We explored the themes present within their four storytelling circles, they asked me questions about my story and myself and together we created an outline of a cultural humility curriculum that replicates this narrative storytelling process in order to honor each athlete and ground ourselves in the intersection of our diverse identities within the space of Founding Father rowing. We chose to turn our methodology into a form of intervention that can be repeated each year as part of an intergenerational cycle.

CHAPTER IV

THE STORIES THEY TELL

“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.” -Maya Angelou
(Angelou, 1970)

Storytelling Circles

The beauty of the circle is that once it begins, it has no end. The narratives that Jaz, Wakesho, Emilia, and Aleah began over the course of their storytelling circles is just the beginning of a larger narrative of race, sport, gender, and the intersection of identities focused within their experiences as student-athletes rowing at Founding Father University. Their stories will continue to evolve and enrich those around them as they continue to grow and experience the world through their own lenses. The relationships and trust that they have built in this space through this particular sport simultaneously created a lens that fused their experiences together through both the “self” and “us” (Ganz, 2007).

Over the course of two months in the fall of 2020, Jaz, Wakesho, Emilia, and Aleah held four storytelling circles every other Friday lasting from an hour and a half to two and a half hours. They were given semi-structured interview guides to initiate conversations and were encouraged to give their conversations the freedom to ebb and flow as organically as they pleased. In their first session, they were encouraged to begin by diving deeply and bravely into their Story of Self (Ganz, 2007). They opened up about how they came to be an athlete at Founding Father University detailing the people, places, and experiences that have guided them along the way. That initial vulnerability and deep embrace of their true selves jump-started what led into their second circle--their

Story of Us--the intersection of their combined identities as Black female rowers at a PWI (Ganz, 2007). The Story of Us fused seamlessly into their third interview of the Story of Now, a detailed analysis of where they and their teammates are in their personal, athletic, and professional lives framed within the larger academic institution of Founding Father University. Furthermore, they situated their personal and combined experiences within the context of collegiate rowing at the national level. By the final interview, Aleah, Jaz, Wakesho, and Emilia were reflecting on the feeling of liberation and power of the narrative process and offered a beginning discussion of where we can go from here as a team with a powerful platform to influence social change through our sport.

Though all four women chose to outline a storytelling protocol that did not directly involve me as both their coach and researcher, at the conclusion of their fourth and final storytelling circle, the athletes asked to hold another circle where they could interview me as well. Information from the final circle we held together will be the focus of the next chapter. In the meantime, this chapter will focus solely on the voices and narratives of the four women leading the session as storytellers.

The themes that follow in the analysis were recurring throughout all four storytelling circles and served as a catalyst for continued storytelling circles including the whole team. As a researcher, I was initially interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the experiences of Black female athletes rowing and attending our PWI. What I got was a much more complex look at the impact of deeply rooted racial inequity that exists--both intentionally and unintentionally--in educational institutions, and, as a byproduct, the legacy of collegiate sport. More importantly, I gained a much deeper relationship with four of my remarkable young athletes who have just begun to understand how

transformative and powerful their words, actions, and advocacy are and will continue to be.

Analysis

The four storytelling circles were audio recorded using Zoom and transcribed through Microsoft 365 prior to descriptive and interpretive analysis. The first two circles were held in person. The four women chose to meet in their boathouse for the first session and my office for the second session. The impact of COVID-19 meant that the third and fourth circles were held completely virtually as the University found itself back in a lockdown nearing Thanksgiving break. The semi-structured storytelling circle methodology led to a decision to analyze their responses holistically. Though each storytelling circle had a larger theme (Story of Self, Story of Us, Story of Now, etc.) there were aspects of each segment in all of their sessions. Furthermore, as mentioned above, I initially set out to learn about the specific experiences of Black female athletes rowing at a PWI. Due to the much larger discussion that arose, it was important to adopt Glaser & Strauss' grounded theory approach to analysis and allow themes and categories to arise organically as I sorted through responses (1967). No a priori codes were used. Instead, the researcher created thematic codes and developed a codebook through discussion with the athletes as peer de-briefers. This occurred after their storytelling circles had concluded to ensure the themes were reflective of their narratives (Merriam, 1998). Once those thematic codes were established, Atlas TI software was used to sort through the four transcribed storytelling circles to pull out specific dialogues and quotes surrounding the themes throughout the narratives. Any disagreements were resolved through member

checking with athletes and the researcher. The themes that emerged from the storytelling circles are listed below:

1. Constructing/Deconstructing Race and Racism in White Spaces
2. Code-switching
3. Advocacy
4. Belonging

For the purposes of this study, the theme of constructing and deconstructing race and racism in White spaces revolves around the way each athlete discusses race and racism through interactions with other people of color in America, through interactions with White teammates, peers, and professionals, and through the lens of African parents. Since race is socially constructed, the four athletes deconstructed their individual notions of what it means to be Black in a White university and predominantly White sport and discussed how to discuss multiculturalism with their non-teammates of color.

For code-switching as the second theme, this research uses the loose definition given by Courtney L. McCluney, Kathrina Robotham, Serenity Lee, Richard Smith, and Myles Durkee (2019) of, “adjusting one’s style of speech, appearance, behavior, and expression in ways that will optimize the comfort of others in exchange for fair treatment, quality service, and employment stereotypes” (para. 3). As the storytelling circles continued and grew, it became more and more apparent that code-switching was something that each of them had been conditioned to do in certain settings. Most of the time the athletes were unaware that they were doing it.

The third theme of advocacy is defined as, “public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy” (Merriam-Webster, 2021). Each athlete expressed on multiple occasions their collective responsibility to their race in every area of their lives at school. Not only do they feel responsible for the future generations of Black rowers that will come after them, but they are hyper-aware in classes and within interactions around the University that one misstep will not be viewed as a detriment to them as an individual, but as a judgement on their entire race.

Belonging as the fourth theme speaks more to what draws them back to the team and sport of rowing than any of the other themes. Aleah, Emilia, Wakesho, and Jaz all talked about the pull to the boat, the water, and the team on numerous occasions but seemed to struggle to find the exact words. Here, I choose to leave the definition of *belonging* a little more abstract and once again refer to this particular quote from Daniel J. Boyne (2013) in his interview of former University of Washington rower and Olympian, Joe Rantz in an effort to express the feeling of being in a boat.

Finally, watching Joe struggle for composure over and over, I realized that “the boat” was something more than just the shell or its crew. To Joe, it encompassed but transcended both—it was something mysterious and almost beyond definition. It was a shared experience—a singular thing that had unfolded in a golden sliver of time long gone, when nine goodhearted young men strove together, pulled together as one, gave everything they had for one another, bound together forever by pride and respect and love. Joe was crying, at least in part, for the loss of that vanished moment but much more, I think, for the sheer beauty of it (p. 2).

Themes

The following four themes arose from Aleah, Emilia, Wakesho, and Jaz’s shared stories and reflected on both their personal and collective experiences as Black female athletes rowing at Founding Father University as well as the shared intersection of identity with their teammates and the larger academic community of Founding

Father. While I had anticipated that larger systemic inequities would play a large part of their experience, I seriously underestimated the complexity of constructing and deconstructing individual narratives within the context of such a larger pre-prescribed dominant power narrative that exists within a White educational institution and sport. Interestingly enough, all four themes had both strong individual and collective components simultaneously. This only further emphasizes the incredible complexity of the systems from which the athletes begin to make meaning.

I. Constructing/Deconstructing Race and Racism in White Spaces

Earlier discussions of CRT acknowledged that race, racism, and power dynamics play a direct role in nearly every fiber of American society--including economics, history, setting, self and group interest, conscious emotions, and unconscious behaviors (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The overarching theme of race, including how each athlete chooses to construct and deconstruct notions of race, was present in each storytelling circle. For four young Black women attending a school that is itself a predominantly White space, making sense of race, racism, and power dynamics is a daily occurrence for each of them.

For Jaz, growing up in a predominantly White neighborhood and attending a predominantly White high school, Founding Father was actually a more diverse space than she was used to. There were suddenly more people of color on campus than she saw as the only Black female in her high school.

When I came here [Founding Father University], I actually felt the opposite to what Emilia felt because I came from a school where I was one out of the 400 of us that graduated. I was the only Black female, so when I came here, I was like, Oh! there's so many people of color here! Like, I saw the football team and was like, Oh my God! Look at all the Black people!

Growing up, Jaz had primarily focused on playing soccer and running track and field-- sports that she acknowledged had more diversity than rowing. Having a father that grew up in Ghana, soccer (“football”) was the sport of favor in their household. She played soccer for many different teams and even earned a spot on the Riverhounds development team. What ended up turning her off the sport as she got older was the realization that, the more advanced the opportunity to develop her skills became, the fewer people of color she saw. Olympic Development Programs (ODP) are the traveling elite soccer teams where most collegiate recruiting occurs. Once Jaz had made it to the ODP level, the diversity that had been present on her smaller teams was suddenly gone. She joined a rowing program her sophomore year of high school to try something new, but instantly became aware that the lack of diversity existed in this space as well: “I remember thinking, why do I have no Black people on my team?” As such, much of her experience getting to know her African and African American identities came from home and through the intentionality of her parents. Knowing that her opportunities would be greater in these White spaces, Jaz was brought up to acknowledge and think critically about race and racism while learning early on how to operate in predominantly White spaces.

Like Jaz, Wakesho has African roots. Unlike Jaz, Wakesho spent the majority of her high school years going to school in Kenya. The eldest daughter of two Kenyan parents, Wakesho speaks of being more in-tuned to colorism than racism and the devastating effects of colonialism as opposed to slavery and having to dive deeply into African American history alongside her White teammates.

Being Black and from Africa, we don’t experience racism. We experience colorism. And then coming here, and, like, I had to learn a lot about how Black

people associate here in terms of like, race and everything. Because here, like racism is a thing and colorism is a thing within the Black community itself. So I understood that part. I guess that's the main difference between the two struggles... We were colonized within Kenya, so we weren't really removed and taken somewhere else, so there's very little talk of slavery.

She went on to talk about the history she was taught in high school.

I only learned history when I went back for high school. I don't remember history before then and we only talked about history from the British perspective. And it's funny because there were Black people that were involved in it, like the Mau Mau fighters that were fighting against the British colonizers helped get Kenya its freedom. That was like, 1963--not that long ago.

During the protests in the summer of 2020 after the murder of George Floyd and so many other Black lives, Wakesho discussed how she had to educate herself along with her teammates about Juneteenth, Black Lives Matter, and Black history. She struggled to find a balance between being a resource for her teammates by encouraging them to reach out and ask questions and her own feelings of burnout and exhaustion.

The word "Juneteenth" isn't part of their [African] history, right? You know? So I, so I also felt like kind of overwhelmed because a lot of people, especially from the team, would send me like text messages. And I'm like, I'm learning literally just as much as you are. Great, like, I don't know all the answers. These are the resources that I've read, and that's all I can give you because I don't know. I'm trying my best.

Emilia jumped in at this point of Wakesho's story of trying to help her teammates while simultaneously being a student herself by acknowledging the duality of responsibility when it comes to discussing race and racism in a predominantly White space.

It's the reality of the situation when you're a Black woman and surrounded by a majority of White people and they look to you for the answers. And I don't know about you guys, but I feel really uncomfortable speaking on behalf of all Black people. So I have started to make it clear before I say anything that these are just my opinions so I don't like, persecute anyone else for what I'm saying right now.

For someone who grew up in a majority Black neighborhood and attended a predominantly Black, urban high school, Emilia had quite a shock attending a PWI in a suburb. Though she consciously knew and had discussions with the coaching staff about the lack of diversity on the team and campus, making the shift from a Black rowing team and Black high school to the exact opposite has been an adjustment. These adjustments have led to deeper discussions about power dynamics, identity, and how much give and take is reasonable and/or fair in these spaces. She spoke about her White English teacher in high school having a discussion with her majority Black students about using the “n” word in Mark Twain’s, *Huckleberry Finn*.

We were reading the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and my AP Literature teacher so badly wanted to say it [the “n” word] and read it because she thought it would take away from the story if we didn’t because it was in his [Jim] name. Everyone was like, girl, you don’t have to. Twain says it 256 times--and like, we know it’s satire, but still. Some of us were like, “hard no.” Some people were like, sure, yeah, if it’s in the context of the text and you’re reading it out loud.

Social justice advocacy was something that was ingrained into her high school curriculum, and she was used to being present and using her voice to speak up for others.

...when Marjory Stoneman Douglas got shot up when that kid killed his classmates in his high school, my school had a walk out. And my AP Government teacher was like, that’s your First Amendment right, so be safe, stick together, and go exercise your rights. And my principal wasn’t going to penalize anyone and teachers couldn’t penalize anyone from being absent for going to protest. Nothing was said by the school district, so we went to City Hall.

When Emilia began her first year at Founding Father, the other recruits in her recruiting class were taken aback by how vocal and passionate she was about social justice and equity to the point where she found herself a bit of an outsider. She was encouraged by

another coach not to, “come on too strong,” because her passion made her teammates uncomfortable.

I feel like my class sort of made me the scapegoat until the last of my sophomore year because they knew they could get a reaction out of me. I was coming from a place where I was surrounded by a lot of Black people and people of color, so I never had a problem with people not telling you how they felt or people not sharing when they were mad at you. And like, I was brutally honest, and so it was something they didn't experience and their reaction was something that I didn't experience and so we didn't know how to effectively communicate and work from the same places.

Much of the structure of Founding Father as a PWI and the educational systems from which the majority of students--including athletes--come from show a distinct lack of focus on a comprehensive history that incorporates a critical discourse on race, racism, class, and systemic inequities within the United States. For those who didn't have the privilege of growing up in spaces where their livelihoods and wellbeing could be sustained without a deeper understanding of socioeconomic inequalities and the structures that perpetuate them, finding common ground and forming trusting and meaningful relationships with teammates and classmates who are uncomfortable with engaging in deeper and difficult conversations is frustrating and hurtful.

Aleah, as a senior athlete, has had the most experience with the school, team, and the cultural evolution of athletics. Aleah's mom was born in Jamaica. Aleah describes her mom as very open and has an incredibly strong relationship with her. She, herself, was born in Brooklyn, New York, but wouldn't consider herself a city girl. Though she can remember her childhood in Brooklyn, her mom moved her to Florida for a while, then to her grandparent's house in Georgia before finally landing in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. She tells people that: “I'm from everywhere and in the middle, so I've never really had a strong sense of belonging anywhere.” She attended multiple middle

and high schools--some predominantly Black and others majority White. Similarly to Emilia's point, she was only taught Black history when she was in a predominantly Black school. As someone who was bullied when she was younger, a large part of Aleah's journey to Founding Father was an opportunity to be on her own for the first time in her life and participate in extracurricular activities that she had never had access to before.

For a while I did hate the neighborhood I came from because of how heavily I was bullied. Like, I'll never forget how this group of boys, a White boy, smacked my glasses off my face and, like, that was the one time I stood up for myself and I got in trouble. My family had been reporting them for months at this point and the school just never did anything.

When she was approached during Founding Fathers activities fair about walking on to the rowing team, she was instantly intrigued by being part of a team in a sport that she had never had access to before.

I did try to join the track team once [in high school] but I had to watch my younger brother until my mom got home, so I couldn't stay after school. That's also part of the reason why I came to Founding Father because, like, it was away from home and I wanted to know what it was like to be out on my own. And the reason I row is because, like, it gave me the opportunity to experience a sport that isn't widely offered at many other schools in my opinion.

What is fascinating about the discussions each of the four women engaged with on identity, race, and sense of belonging is that they are still struggling to make meaning of their day-to-day experiences with systems and structures that affect the way they build relationships with their professors, classmates, and teammates. Similarly to Patricia Williams' (1991) work, there is a distinct presence of everyday racism in the everyday lives of these young women--most blatantly in the casual and often unintentional microaggressions of faculty, staff, and students (Williams, 1991). What is perhaps even more relevant to Williams' (1991) work is the almost erratic nature of their narratives in fully understanding the roles that race and racism play in their identity formation--

especially given the added intersection of gender and sport--in a space where the dominant power structure still very much favors the White elite. The struggle between what is “best” and what is “right” adds a very real and complex dynamic to larger identity formation.

II. Code-switching

Along with constructing and deconstructing race and racism in predominantly White spaces, code-switching is another theme that sits as an almost constant undertone within each of the storytelling circles. Courtney L. McCluney, Kathrina Robotham, Serenity Lee, Richard Smith, and Myles Durkee (2019) loosely define code-switching as, “adjusting one’s style of speech, appearance, behavior, and expression in ways that will optimize the comfort of others in exchange for fair treatment, quality service, and employment stereotypes” (para. 3).

Code-switching behavior has long been a strategy for Black people and people of color to navigate interactions in White spaces to optimize their well-being and economic advancement (McCluney et. al, 2019). In some cases, code-switching is necessary for physical survival (McCluney et. al, 2019). For Jaz, Wakesho, Emilia, and Aleah, code-switching is something that either has had to be learned or, in some cases, has been taught to each of them from a young age. In many cases, all four women were unaware of the fact that they code switched so often. In a PWI like Founding Father University--as well as in a sport that is a predominantly White sport in a larger White space--the ability to code switch has become an automatic behavior. When I mentioned code-switching as a common theme before the fourth storytelling circle, Emilia mentioned to her teammates, “You know, I never realized code-switching was a thing until really recently. Probably,

like after I graduated high school I realized I had been doing it my entire life. And it's weird. It's really automatic."

Code-switching ties directly to discourse theory as an underlying theoretical framework and methodological approach for this work. If we remember from the second chapter, Michel Foucault's work focused heavily on the power of the narrative discourse as it is understood through various structures and social forces (Tamboukou, 2013). In the case of Aleah, Emilia, Wakesho, and Jaz, the fact that code-switching has become so deeply embedded in their daily behaviors is indicative of how they make meaning in the current structure of being students and athletes in a PWI given the forces of discourse, power, race, gender, and a long-standing history of systemic oppression and marginalization (Tamboukou, 2013).

For Jaz, growing up Black in a predominantly White space meant that she learned early on what it meant to have to adjust her behaviors to meet the status quo. After one altercation in school, she quickly realized that support and advocacy from faculty and staff was going to be limited:

We had no teachers of color in any position at all in my school. When you had to talk about racial problems, you went to a White person and they didn't do anything about it. I remember in high school I got spit on by another student and nothing happened to them. There was a video of a kid calling me the "n" word. It was shown to the principal and they didn't do anything. I was called dirty. I got into my first and only fight in second grade because this kid on the bus wouldn't stop calling me "brownie." I threw his candy out the window and we both got detention.

She went on to discuss how she realized that it was hard for her to form trusting relationships with White students, teachers, and administrators in high school and that a lack of support and diversity contributed to issues of self-esteem. Though Founding

Father University is still predominantly White, having a larger and more diverse population has done wonders for connecting with people.

But, I think I've definitely gotten to trust them [White people] more now because not everyone thinks that way. And being at Founding Father actually has been better for me because [high school] was such a small White conservative town. And even though this is still majority White people, it's a lot less. There's more people of color and there are more liberals. There's just a wider variety of people.

The reputation of the school district Jaz attended when compared to the previous school's she went to in the southern portion of the United States when she was younger was the motivation of her parents to send their two daughters there. They knew they would ultimately have more opportunities for success, so her mother and father raised their daughters to honor and appreciate both their African and African American heritage at home while teaching them how to interact with people in authority so that they could capitalize on what could be offered to them. She mentioned, "I'm not sure if I do that [codeswitch], but it's because from such a young age I was groomed to speak like White people." As a result, Jaz spent a significant amount of time as the only Black woman in her graduating class, the first Black woman to be a drum major in the school band, and the only Black woman in her high school rowing club. The experience she has now being around people who look like her has allowed her the safety and freedom to begin to feel comfortable in her own skin.

Wakesho, on the other hand, who had not only attended a predominantly Black school, but one in an African country, navigating White spaces and White relationships was strange, difficult, and uncomfortable for her. She spoke about her hesitation to join rowing:

I will say that I was super nervous when I started training and everything because there was one other girl trying out. She was also Black, but she ended up not doing it and joining rugby. But I got really stressed when she left because I was really excited. Like, OK, there's somebody else that's like me, that's going to be doing this with me and then she left and I was like, "Oh no." But I kept doing it because I enjoyed it.

She went on to talk about the immediate sense of relief she felt when she met her other teammates.

Then I met Emilia. And then I saw Aleah when you came in and slowly and slowly I started feeling more and more comfortable because, again, I feel like it's almost traumatic going from being in a big group of African, not African Americans, and then coming here and there being just a lot of White people. I was stressed.

Furthermore, being part of a predominantly White team made her realize that she was changing her personality to fit the people she was surrounded by.

...the personality switch is real. When I was switching, oh my goodness. I never noticed I did that until I came here because I would talk to some of my White friends and it's in a completely different manner than I would talk to any of my Black friends.

Wakesho's realization that she never realized that she instinctively switches her behavior and personality to match the group that she's surrounded by instantly resonated with Emilia. Earlier in her Story of Self, Emilia had mentioned feeling like an outcast within her recruiting class because her teammates had trouble relating to her and vice versa. As a junior, she is much more aware of code-switching. In response to Wakesho's statement on personality switches, she mentioned that she too behaves differently in front of her White friends than she does surrounded by her Black friends.

The split like when I had my Black group of friends over here and like I left my White group of friends to talk to my Black people, friends, it's not like, "Oh, which do you like more," it's like, just so much more relaxed. You feel so comfortable. With your White friends your shoulders are up all the time. Then when you see your Black friends it's just like, you can be yourself and not be judged or thought of as being ratchet.

She went on to talk about how she has a really close group of White friends on the team and on campus, but sometimes there's a disconnect in conversation because there are experiences she has gone through that her White friends will never understand.

Sometimes [White] people just look at you and stare because they can't really relate and it's just like when you meet a Black person no matter where they're from or like you have certain cultural things that you've all experienced.

What Emilia came to realize after the trouble she had with her first year recruiting class was that her peers, coaches, and professors put a lot of the onus on her to "fix" her behavior. The expectation was that she altered her personality and outspoken nature to make everyone else around her more comfortable.

I feel like I have good relationships with the faculty, but I do feel as though I have to justify any time I make a mistake and an assignment is five minutes late. I'm like, this is not reflective of me as a student, but I feel like I have to do that and mend it immediately for them [faculty] not to be like, "She doesn't care."

The intersection of her identity as a female in addition to being Black contributes to how conscious she is of her behavior and how she's perceived.

As a [Black] female, I think that people think I'm very loud. I'm very honest and so it's like the typical angry Black woman stereotype. Which I was slapped so hard with my freshman year on this team because I would simply confront people. Because that was what I was taught. You have a problem you say it. You fix it. You get over it.

Furthermore, the psychological, emotional, and even physical toll code-switching to constantly meet the expectations of the dominant group has on these four young women came crashing to the surface by the fourth and final storytelling circle. Emilia said:

It's exhausting. It's exhausting your energy. I'm exhausted as a Black person from feeling like I have to go the extra mile for every aspect. I have to be perfect. The first thing [staff member] told me when I was struggling to build relationships with those [recruiting class] girls was that as a friend and ally, I had to earn the team's trust back. And you know, I was the only one who she had that conversation with. You have to be hidden away so you aren't a burden. It's

exhausting having your family members and your people and yourself constantly feel like a burden to other people when you are simply here and didn't even ask to be here.

As the longstanding senior member of the group, Aleah expressed her discomfort with building relationships with those who make you feel "other"--whether they consciously meant to or not. She brought up an activity done during the team's first diversity and inclusion seminar during her first year on the team that made her hyper aware of her feelings of isolation and marginalization.

It's hard when you're different. Like, they had this game. They didn't do it after you [Jaz and Wakesho] got here, but there is this game where you have to take ...they ask you a series of questions. This was an icebreaker and I felt so alienated after it because there are questions like, "Step backward if you have a single mom." The diversity walk. I was the only person in the way back of the room, but everyone was told to look around to see where they were standing. And we didn't even discuss it. So what was the point of exposing myself?

Even more so, from faculty and the campus academic community at large, Aleah has felt targeted, labeled, and "othered" on more than one occasion.

Professors have definitely thought that I just don't care...I had a professor come up to me and say that they thought I was mentally retarded because I was quiet during class and she just reached that conclusion on her own...in the most innocent way. And when [former Founding Father rower] was still on the team, she had a professor ask her to take her hat off. The hat was her hair.

Each of the athletes at various points have felt isolated and alienated on campus from the classroom to athletics and every place in between. They have had to navigate how to "be" in these spaces with the additional stressors of professional advancement, finding a sense of belonging, and even physical and psychological safety. Navigating the nuances of what it means to be a Black, female, student, and athlete in a PWI creates this push-pull effect of what is best and what is right for their general well-being. This having to view the world through both a Black and White lens, with the added dynamic

of being a female in a patriarchal society is exactly what Francis M. Beale (1999) discussed in her theory of triple-consciousness. Their experiences with code-switching and constructing and deconstructing race and racism in White spaces has led all four of these tremendous young women towards the third theme: advocacy.

III. Advocacy

In the second storytelling circle, Emilia mentioned that, "... [Activism] is the responsibility that we [Black women] have no choice but to take on." When we look back to earlier discussions of Africana Critical Theory, Bassey (2007) wrote of how ACT speaks of how deeply connected Black philosophy is tied to the collective--especially when looking at responsibility, sociality, and liberation. All four women spoke repeatedly of a larger responsibility of being activists and powerful voices for young Black men and women who come after them. This first showed up in discussions of their choice of major. Both Jaz and Emilia are at Founding Father University to study criminal justice. When discussing her choice, Jaz said:

...it [criminal justice] was just something I was really interested in. I knew I wanted to help other Black people because I never got that opportunity in my [hometown]. There were no Black people to help me. And I really wanted to be a police officer because I wanted to make the system better, but with all the Black Lives Matter stuff...I don't want that to be my career. I don't want people to have that first perception about me because...I don't want a little Black girl or a little Black boy to look at me and be afraid.

As a junior, Emilia is in the criminal justice program with the intention of going to law school after graduation. Like Jaz, she has an overwhelming sense of responsibility to change the system for people of color like her who have been victims of a justice system designed for them to fail.

I wanna be a lawyer so badly because I want to change the system, right? The system that we live in, I think it's unfair. I think I didn't choose to be at this place

in the system, so I'm going to change the stuff that I can change. I'm trying to track down Black men being sent away for years and years for such a small amount of marijuana while White women in California are profiting off of it. I'm sick of Black people being over policed...being judged constantly. Having fear. I don't feel safe and I'm very interested in policy and want to be a politician. I'm going to be President. Mark my words. I'm going to be President and change a lot of shit and people.

Just like Jaz and Emilia, Wakesho's choice of major is shaped by a need to advocate for a group of people who are frequently overlooked. Wakesho's younger sister is autistic. She began college with a fiery desire to study political science and then move on to law school with the intention of influencing larger policy decisions that negatively impact young Black women like her sister.

I chose political science because I want to go to law school and I want to go to law school because...my sister is autistic and I feel like she's a forgotten minority. You know, people with disabilities. And not only people with disabilities, but people who are Black and have disabilities are very often overlooked. And that's why I wanna go into law school, because I feel like the criminal justice system is bad towards Black people. It breaks my heart every single time I see someone who cannot stand up for themselves get manipulated by the system. I don't want to keep seeing that happen and I want to make a safe space...even now for my sister in her classes. They're basically training them and teaching them to be grocery store baggers.

Aleah brought the conversation around the responsibility of advocating for people of color throughout academia and into the world post-college back to the discourse surrounding sport. In their current environment, there is a shared mission and responsibility to continue the work to build a rowing program that is fully dedicated to redefining what it means to be a truly inclusive space. For a sport that has historically lacked diversity, each woman acknowledges a feeling of responsibility to leave a legacy that brings more women of Color to Founding Father's rowing program. Simultaneously, there is an underlying fear that their efforts won't be enough to keep future generations of Black female rowers safe. In the second storytelling circle, Aleah discussed the pressure

of being a model for future generations. As only the second Black female rower to stay through four years of rowing at Founding Father, Aleah's beautiful and kind heart combined with a furious work ethic is a large part of the reason that Emilia, Wakesho, and Jaz came to this team.

I don't know if you guys ever felt this pressure, right? I don't want people to look at me and think, "Oh, she's just another Black athlete who left the team." It also really gets me in the heart when I hear people here say that they rely on me.

Emilia backed up Aleah and emphasized how much of an inspiration she's been for other rowers of color. She also expressed a concern for what will happen in the future if there are no athletes left to advocate for women of color.

You [Aleah] spent four years with people just counting you out and being against you, and you're still on top of that speed chart, pulling for those people and making our team faster in general. It's insane to me. I struggle with that a lot when recruiting Brown girls onto this team because I feel okay doing it when I'm here, but it's like...what happens to the people after Jaz's class when I leave? When I'm just here for the year and then I go? I'm terrified of what's going to happen.

At this point Wakesho interjected and talked about the importance of the work and advocacy that they've been doing in influencing long-term change--not only within the rowing program at Founding Father University--but in changing the larger community of collegiate rowing and NCAA policies in general. The larger sense of working for the greater good of the whole community with the realization that their actions have a direct impact, not just on the current state of the team and the hearts and minds of their teammates, but on the future young Black women who will have greater opportunities ahead of them because of their work.

...like, it may not seem like it, but we are going to impact athletics. The amount of women of color that don't think they can do something like this, or maybe even some girls that have come onto our team and thought that they couldn't do it and left. Like, maybe we'll have them look back and be like, maybe I should have stayed? This is insanely powerful, yeah?

ACT speaks of the overarching sense of collective and communal identity of being Black outweighing any notion of an individual self. In nearly every decision that Jaz, Emilia, Wakesho, and Aleah make, there is a conscious consideration of the larger impact their actions will have, not only on the people around them, but for other women of color within the sport of rowing. Creating meaning through the intersection of their multiple identities of what it means to be Black, female, and an athlete in a PWI is further complicated by the knowledge that every action, choice, and behavior will reflect on other female athletes of color within a system where the power structure favors the White majority. While there is a sense of empowerment that comes with being influential and having the power to influence large-scale change, there is added stress and conflict with having to constantly be under scrutiny and forced to forego their authentic selves for the perceived betterment of other young Black women like them. As Emilia put it, "I believe Black people are born into activism. Whether we want it or not is irrelevant. We have to do it because...who else is going to do it?"

This same notion of Black consciousness, liberation, and the betterment of the collective whole is critical when looking to why these four young women have continued to dedicate so much of themselves to the sport of rowing. Rowing, as has been discussed, is a sport more than most where the success of the whole is tied to the well-being of the individual and vice versa. The amount of vulnerability, trust, and connectedness required to propel an eight-oared shell across a powerful body of water is a unique and beautiful

experience. Women have flocked to the sport at the collegiate level, not only because of the educational and financial opportunities that Title IX have given young female athletes through rowing, but because of the prolific sense of purpose, strength, and belonging that comes from being part of something greater than yourself. For Jaz, Wakesho, Emilia, and Aleah, this sense of purpose, power, control, and above all, belonging, has kept them fighting to give other Black women the same opportunities that they have been given.

IV. Belonging

We have already discussed that ACT is deeply entrenched in the belief that the Black self and individual consciousness is directly linked to the collective whole of the race (Bassey, 2007). While each theme that emerged throughout the four women's storytelling circles reinforced the complexity of the intersection of identity formation in a predominantly White, male dominated space and sport, there remained an underlying theme and comfort in utilizing rowing as a space of support, power, and ultimately, belonging. For women who so frequently feel conflict and isolation in White sport and university, having control over the athletic piece of their identity--and knowing that, as a byproduct, that control has a direct and immediate impact on their coaches and teammates around them--is an incredibly liberating experience.

For Emilia, who of the four has been rowing the longest, finding the sport of rowing was a lifesaving experience in the midst of a childhood rife with trauma. Emilia's mother was murdered by her stepfather in front of her while she held her younger brother at the young age of eight. She spoke openly about the experience and how crippling anxiety and PTSD settled into her day-to-day life as a byproduct of that experience, coupled with the stressors of not having a strong female figure while growing up.

I row for my team. I row because rowing was there for me when nothing else was. I row because it makes me feel strong and it makes me feel good most times. And I really love the second family and having rower friends...and it's always constantly been there. Because I have experienced a lot of death. Like, my grandpa passed, my great grandma passed, my cousin who I was really close to...the only consistent thing was practice. I knew every day at 4:00 where I would be until 6:00. I knew who was going to be there. I knew what we were going to do. It was very consistent. It was very comforting. Because, you know, for people with anxiety...it's like, if you don't know something you get really anxious. So just having that knowledge and knowing that rowing will always be there in one form or another helps with my anxiety.

Aleah, similarly, has found the sport of rowing and feeling of belonging as a source of comfort throughout the chaos of her university life and the traumas that she has continued to work through from her childhood. She spoke of losing a part of her identity following a change in major after a rough first year of academic performance.

I went through so much with switching my major. I felt like I lost my identity. I was going through a genuine identity crisis because my whole life I've been focusing on biology. And I was good at biology too. I'm still good at it. I helped my mom study for her certification course to become a phlebotomist even though I switched.

For a young woman who had never had the opportunity to join a team in high school or feel what it meant to have complete control over her body in high intensity workouts, the experience allowed her to unleash a part of her identity that she often represses.

I enjoy the high intensity workouts. I know that makes me sound crazy, but I do. I like being intense as a person, because in my daily life, I'm pretty mellow and quiet. It [rowing] was something I wanted to put myself through. I wanted to grow as a person and meet so many different types of people.

Furthermore, the knowledge that her teammates rely on her and believe in her gives her a sense of purpose and comfort that also doubles as a form of escapism from other stresses.

I hear my teammates say things like, "We need you." And that really gets me in the heart because I feel like I have people here who still rely on me. Like I feel like I'm needed in some respects with the team dynamic. I also think I'm using it as a sort of weird scapegoat for having to face the harsh reality of the situation I'm living in right now. Maybe I just love being punished? I don't know.

This sense of purpose and belonging coupled with an intense responsibility for bettering the whole team transfers over to advocacy within the team. Founding Father's rowing program is unique when compared to other NCAA rowing programs in that a cultural humility program and social justice advocacy has been embedded into team culture and training for the previous five years. While far from perfect, empowering athletes to have the confidence to first examine their individual identities, then explore how their identities intersect with their teammates to form a collective identity as rowers in this particular space has meant that creating a gracious space where we can learn from each other and engage in critical discourse is as important--if not more important--than physical training in rowing shells. This shared identity and purpose has meant that Jaz, Emilia, Wakesho, and Aleah feel a greater sense of self and belonging within their team than they do in the wider university community. A new collaborative approach to cultural humility programming for Founding Father's rowing program is a larger discussion in Chapter V.

This past year, Emilia was appointed as the Diversity and Equity Chair of the Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC). SAAC is a NCAA leadership group meant to give student-athletes voice within the larger organization and their policies at the campus, conference, and national level (NCAA, 2020). According to the NCAA, "The mission of the National Student-Athlete Advisory Committee is to enhance the total student-athlete experience by promoting opportunity, protecting student-athlete welfare, and fostering a positive student-athlete image" (NCAA, 2020, para. 2). At the beginning of the fourth storytelling circle, Emilia explained to her teammates that she has been

struggling with the rest of SAAC and the faculty advisors to come up with diversity and inclusion programming that is not performative.

I told them we need something of substance. I think we should, even if it's just an hour, have some sort of training or informative meeting where we have people come in and speak about different topics that we think our allies should be knowledgeable on. And I said, like the rowing team, how we're focusing on racism, feminism, sexism, ableism leading up to intersectionality.

Jaz then piped up and commented that, "It sounds like they [the athletic department] are just trying to show other people what they're doing instead of actually fixing the problem from the inside, you know?" Emilia responded with a deeper insight into how the work they have been doing within the team should be translated into the larger athletic community.

Learning and growth realistically happens at your own pace, so do it. You need to do it [learn and grow] in order to actually improve for your student-athletes. If everything you write and everything you say is true and you're telling us that you're genuine and you're real and all of that stuff...and that you actually care about our well-being and our welfare then do it right? You don't have to rush and keep up with these other schools. Really listen to people you appoint to do these things [diversity initiatives] and be completely transparent. In sports like basketball and football you are exploiting these men and hurting them. You're not setting them up for success after like rowing is trying to set us all up for success afterwards.

When examining aspects of belonging around the rest of campus, Wakesho reflected that she is not a part of many other groups on campus other than the political science club, and that her motivation for joining that particular club was purely so that she could engage in conversations that would improve her grades in class. She mentioned that the club is primarily White males and that she deliberately avoided going to any meetings over the summer because she was too uncomfortable and terrified of how the conversation over George Floyd and Black Lives Matter would go with that particular population.

They [the political science club] held conversations about the injustices that were happening [over the summer] and I refused to go to any of them because I was too scared about what I was going to hear or what takes or perspectives they were going to have. So I think that played into me just not being encouraged to go to any of them over the summer or the beginning of this school year.

When moving on to a discussion of a feeling of belonging on the team and within athletics, Wakesho acknowledged that she doesn't have much perspective on what the cultural climate was like years ago having only rowed for a little over a year. She joined the team when discussions of social justice advocacy and cultural humility had already been happening, so this culture is something that she naturally felt a part of. Reflecting on a diversity and inclusion seminar she attended with the rest of athletics, she commented that rowing is more involved than other teams, but mostly because of the people on the team. While not everyone is showing up yet, the fact that rowing is the most represented sport in larger discussions regarding advocacy is comforting.

I think right now we're ahead of a lot of teams, and I think that's a really, really great thing. I was talking to some girls from women's soccer when we had that inclusion thing, and they haven't had any conversations with each other or with their coaches. And they said that they would be interested in talking about it. But, if the coaches don't initiate it then they probably won't either. But I think the fact that we have people on the team willing to talk about it and a coach that is willing to talk about it means that everyone else will follow. That is really, really important.

Rowing in Color

A large part of discourse theory deals with power and power structures and understanding our individual and collective roles within those structures. Jaz, Wakesho, Emilia, and Aleah found a truly safe space to share openly with each other in an environment where the women surrounding them, though having come to this university from different lived experiences and reasons, share a collective identity. Through their

storytelling circles, they parsed out what it means to be Black and African in White spaces and discussed the psychological toll that constantly being forced to adapt and code switch to a dominant culture that is not their own takes on them in classes, within their sport, and in the larger campus community around them. They selflessly turned their stories into one focusing on their collective responsibility to not only help their teammates grow but creating a team culture that will be safe and welcoming to future Black women rowers like them. Through it all, they spoke of an underlying sense of belonging that has evolved through their advocacy to the point where the power that they have to influence change within this team and this space gives them a much larger sense of purpose that far exceeds sport.

Foucault (1980) believed that our identities are not fixed--they ebb and flow based on the people we meet, the events we experience, and, most importantly for this research, the discourses we have available to us. Discourses allow us the freedom not only to critically examine our own sense of self, but also to explore our collective realities (Kavoura, Ryba, & Chronicle, 2015; McGannon & Busanich, 2010). The four storytellers above leading their own narrative storytelling circles found a cathartic and powerful space to critically examine their identities as Black women within our collective identity of female athletes rowing for Founding Father University. They peeled back layers of complex social and racial narrative discourse common to predominantly White educational institutions across the country that have for years perpetuated systemic inequities in pursuit of maintaining power structures that benefit the status quo. These narrative discourses not only influence the way we see the world and our relationship within it, but they also influence how we view power and power structures (Willig,

2013). More importantly, they have begun a much larger conversation that will continue into the next chapter about how the entire rowing program at Founding Father can begin to dismantle these systems of oppression not only within the team itself, but also within the athletic department, the larger university, and the sport of collegiate rowing on a national level.

The Fifth Circle

“Carol, why is it that you’re working so hard to be an ally? I mean, why do you care?”

Jaz kicked off the fifth circle in direct fashion. As mentioned earlier, the four storytellers were ¾ of the way through their final circle--the Story of Future--before Emilia texted me and asked me if we could add a fifth circle. They had questions in regard to looking to the future of the team and the sport and wanted to interview me. They had heard each other's stories. Now they wanted to hear mine.

I feel as though I’m a pretty open and transparent person. I tend to trust easily, and I don’t usually have much trouble owning my vulnerability and imperfections thanks to years of therapy and a master’s degree that incorporated a lot of mediation, peace studies, and conflict resolution into its curriculum. The fact that I was nervous to be this open in this space was a fascinating experience--and one that I consciously had to sit and reflect on. I have to admit that this is the very last section of this work that I wrote. It was simultaneously terrifying and liberating at the same time. This just proves how incredibly strong and brave Aleah, Emilia, Wakesho, and Jaz are. As it turns out, it’s not easy to own your story. But once you have, you find that you suddenly feel a lot more loved and connected than ever before.

I chose to study social history in my undergraduate career because I took an introduction to African American history course in the first semester of my freshman year and realized that in my pursuit of high academic achievement and advanced placement courses in high school, I had never been taught any Black history. Aside from Martin Luther King Jr., even Malcolm X had been absent from my history curriculum growing up. I remember feeling incredible guilt combined with a burning desire for the truth. This was also when I met Professor LP--a fiercely passionate historian who was the kind of educator that knew exactly when to push her students and when to openly love them. At 4 feet 11 inches, LP had grown up in Oakland, California and had been a member of the Black Panther Party. Her preferred area of research was prison and punishment, she encouraged us all to be as radical as possible in our research (as long as we could back it up with credible evidence), she smoked a pack of cigarettes a day, and I remember her constantly telling me in office hours, "You are an academic. You THINK. You do NOT FEEL."

LP was my adoptive mother during my undergraduate career. She and the courses she taught were critical to helping this lost soul find her own identity. I felt out of place at my small liberal arts university because of the economic issues that plagued my family (refer to Chapter I for more details) --especially compared to my teammates. I felt as though I was constantly on display. I even won the athletic department's "diversity" award during our senior banquet--not because I had won four conference championships in the top boat or had broken two school records--but because I had battled back from malaria (twice) after studying abroad and had to work multiple jobs to help support my struggling family and pay for school. Yes. You read that correctly. I

got an award for having a job during my undergraduate career and for paying my own tuition. How privileged can you be?

The point is, the more I dove into the intersections of race and class in America, the more I began to understand myself and what had led my parents to the point of struggle they had reached. I tactfully learned to redirect my anger from my family and what I had perceived as their “failures” to the societal policies that had, in fact, failed them. I understood the city I grew up in on a much deeper level. I gained a tremendous amount of empathy towards everyone around me. Most importantly, I began to question the systems I had always trusted to be fair and equitable.

This work has gone into great detail about the lessons one can learn from the sport of rowing. One of the most important lessons I learned early on in my collegiate rowing career was that discomfort will, in most situations, lead to tremendous growth. By my junior year I had filled my course schedule with African American and African history courses. I was obsessed with social movements, with African American critical thought, with the stories and the lives of Ida B. Wells, W.E.B. DuBois, and Frederick Douglass. I had added Professor RDW to my inner circle of adoptive parents and was introduced to the role of Pan-Africanism, Ghana, and Kwame Nkrumah to the American Civil Rights movement. When my junior year rolled around, RDW suggested that if I really wanted to understand the history and cultures of the Diaspora, I should go to where the slave trade had begun. While my teammates and classmates spent the semester running around Prague, Amsterdam, and Europe, I packed my single bag and moved to Cape Coast, Ghana to fully immerse myself in the culture. LP and RDW were there to guide me from afar, encouraging me to, “Stop trying to make sense of

everything. Just allow yourself the time to be beautifully and hopelessly overwhelmed by the world around you.”

And beautifully and hopelessly overwhelmed I was. My four classmates and I ventured to the Cape Coast and Elmina Slave Castles and solemnly looked through the, “Door of no return,” horrified by the fingernail marks still etched in the stone walls of the dungeons situated underneath an ornate and beautiful church. From Cape Coast we journeyed north, stopping in Kumasi to learn about the Asante on our way to Tamale where we switched our focus from the Trans-Atlantic slave trade to the Trans-Saharan slave trade. We compared the effects of British colonialism to French colonialism as we traveled to Benin and Togo, venturing into sacred python temples, meeting with voodoo priests, and taking in the ancient palaces of the former Dahomey Kingdom. We spent Thanksgiving in W.E.B. DuBois’ home and final resting place with the African American Association of Ghana in Accra and decided to spend the last month of our trip living on a Rastafarian compound right outside of the capital. I still remember spending my last night on the compound laying on our backs around the fire with Ras Nana Kwame and Ras Nana Agyeman staring at the millions of stars in the inky black night, listening to Ras Nana Kwame tell us about the origins of the Earth, the Queen of Sheba, and the magic of Ethiopia. It was almost as though I could feel the Earth’s heartbeat in the ground beneath me. It was an out of body experience.

My trip to Ghana put my world and privilege into heightened perspective and it was then that I decided to throw myself into the fight for educational equity. At the time, I didn’t realize that the pursuit of educational equity was going to come from collegiate

athletics and sport, but as I've gotten older, I've realized that every part of my current's life journey has intersected better than I could have ever imagined.

Jaz, Emilia, Wakesho, and Aleah laughed at my stories from undergrad. Wakesho and Jaz, having been to Ghana and Kenya commented on how "strange" it was for them to think about a White woman running around parts of Africa with braids (a whole other conversation and learning experience in itself). The most hard-hitting part of our conversation came when Emilia asked about the times I felt like I had failed at being an ally and where I thought I could improve.

This section is going to show the epitome of white fragility. To be completely honest, I didn't originally include this section because I don't want this work to become about me--the whole point of this research is to highlight the voices of my wonderful Black rowers. The last thing I want to do is pull the focus towards another White woman's discussion about how hard it is to navigate race, class, and power structures when my experience doesn't even BEGIN to touch what my athletes have to go through and navigate on a daily basis. What I've come to realize more than any other part of my privilege is that when allyship and activism get too uncomfortable, I can retreat to safety. Wakesho, Aleah, Jaz, and Emilia can't do that.

I accepted a teaching position with Teach for America after a year spent with KEYS AmeriCorps serving with the Homewood Children's Village--a full-service community school nonprofit modeled after the Harlem Children's Zone. Through the Village, I worked closely with the teachers and second grade students at Pittsburgh Faison K-5 in one of Pittsburgh's more impoverished neighborhoods. My job was to help identify the social issues that prevented students from being able to learn in the

classroom and work to eliminate them. When I moved to the rural Louisiana Delta into my own classroom, I realized that the same social issues that prevented the students in Faison from reaching their full potential were also present in the rural south.

I taught second grade my first year in the classroom and third grade my second year at Tensas Elementary School in St. Joseph, Louisiana. Tensas Parish is the smallest parish in the state. This town was the last in the state to desegregate their schools as recently as 1974. When I taught there, the state department still had the all African American high school (Davidson High School) listed in their registry instead of the desegregated Tensas High School. The Louisiana Delta has poverty like I didn't know existed in America. My students lived in trailers so decayed and broken down it's amazing they could still stand. The water in town was not safe to drink. Corporal punishment was still legal and the largest income to the parish was the privatized prison system that filled its beds by sitting in the parking lot of the public high school, just waiting for young Black men to get into fights. One night after having our school custodian, Mr. Davis, over for tacos, our landlord showed up at our door, pulled me outside, and told me how unacceptable it was for a group of White women to be alone with a Black man. It was also at this moment that I found out that he came from a long line of Klansmen that are still extremely active in the region.

Suddenly, navigating power structures became ten times more important and difficult than I could have imagined. Instead of denouncing those who I wholly and morally disagreed with, I had to work with them in order to help my students. My privilege meant that I could move freely through both communities in the parish. The resources and support that I needed to provide for my students had to come directly from

those who had continued to oppress them. I began my teaching tenure by vocalizing my vehement disagreement to “traditional” views of southern pride and race relations until one night when I was physically threatened by a White male staying in the cabin next door for the weekend. As he told me to, “know your place,” I, for the first time, wasn’t sure what my place actually was.

I told my athletes all of this. I didn’t tell them because I wanted their sympathy. I told them because my experience is no different than so many other women, including my former students. The only difference was that after two years, I could leave. My students couldn’t and still can’t. I also told them that I now tend to view victimization and trauma through a much wider lens. I mean, how could I argue that my attacker wasn’t also a victim? What events and experiences in his young life led him to feel so threatened and frightened in that moment that he thought his only course of action was to turn towards violence? When circling this conversation back to our team and our collective discussion of where we should go from here, I told them where I believe I still fall short is finding the balance between creating that gracious space where our White teammates who have never had the opportunity to engage in conversations like this can learn in a public setting, and putting entirely too much pressure and stress on our rowers of color who have lived this injustice for their entire lives. What follows from here are two designs for action that are the product of a collaborative effort from the five of us following our five storytelling sessions.

CHAPTER V

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

DESIGNS FOR ACTION

“My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up in yours.” -Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Tutu, 1999, pg. 31)

Chapter Introduction: Rationale for Design

This chapter is a collaborative discussion of two designs for action. Through the researcher’s personal experiences of listening to and transcribing the four narrative storytelling circles from Jaz, Wakesho, Emilia, and Aleah, and through a collaborative storytelling session between the four athletes and myself as their coach, the five of us worked through two designs for action that tackle issues of inclusion and opportunity in collegiate rowing at PWI’s. The first design is specifically designed to address coaches and athletes on our team at Founding Father University on the micro-level of the sport. It is the belief of the athletes and researcher that by creating a model for our specific rowing program, that model, in turn, can be adapted and restructured to meet the needs of other collegiate rowing programs across the country who have made the pledge to work towards more equitable and culturally relevant practices. It was mentioned earlier that the rowing program at Founding Father University has been intentionally engaging in cultural humility programming and placing a heavy emphasis on creating a team culture that embraces a gracious space and allows people to learn together in a public setting for five years. The first design is a collaborative amendment to the existing curriculum.

The second design offers a conceptual diversity initiative that Founding Father’s athletic department--and other administrators working in athletics at PWI’s--can consider

supporting Black female student-athletes from all teams within the school. It offers a working discussion on how to utilize the formation of an equity audit to first interrogate the systems in which we operate, then follow the guidance of a mutual accountability framework grounded in the principles and continued development of inclusive leadership ideology to create a space that shares leadership responsibilities and values the voices and perspectives of the diverse experiences, skills, and ideas of everyone within the department.

Design 1: The Team

Cultural Humility Curriculum: Revisiting Identity & Intersectionality

The National Institutes of Health defines cultural humility as, "...a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby the individual not only learns about another's culture, but one starts with an examination of her/his own beliefs and cultural identities (Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2013). Though cultural humility was originally coined by Melanie Tervalon and Jann Murray-Garcia as a means of creating a tool to help healthcare professionals work with patients across the United States from different ethnic, cultural, and racial groups, the essential concepts and frameworks are vital to all spaces where people and communities interact (Sufrin, 2019). Incorporating cultural humility into sport is no exception. Athletes come together to form a team from a variety of different identities, experiences, and cultures. In order to build the trust and cohesion necessary for athletic success, athletes must first spend time reflecting on their own identities and then experience how their individual identities intersect with the identities of their teammates. Furthermore, especially at the collegiate level, student-athletes are simultaneously prepping to head off into the workforce where they will surely find

themselves interacting with people with identities that are different from their own. For the student-athletes rowing for Founding Father University, investing in an even more intentional cultural humility program will help build the social-emotional relationships skills that will not only create a team space that fosters trust and inclusivity, but will also give them the tools to be able to work with and interact with people from different backgrounds in their workspaces that they otherwise would never usually interact with.

According to Julia Sufrin (2109) of the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, there are three major aspects of cultural humility to keep in mind. The first of those aspects revolves around the idea that we move between several different cultures, often subconsciously, each day (Sufrin, 2019). This is the idea that a person's home culture may differ from the culture of their workspace, classroom, or even athletic team. Furthermore, those we surround ourselves with shape our own individual identities and beliefs. As Sufrin (2019) writes, "Because the overall purpose of practicing cultural humility is to be aware of one's own values and beliefs, it is important to understand that those notions come from the combination of cultures that people experience in their everyday lives" (para. 3). Furthermore, Sufrin (2019) acknowledges that, "A person cannot begin to understand the makeup and context of another person's life without being aware and reflective of their own background and situation first" (para. 3). When creating a more tailored cultural humility curriculum for the rowers at Founding Father, it is vital to incorporate activities in the space that emphasize personal identity and reflection. Jaz, Wakesho, Emilia, and Aleah all asserted that public narratives and creating Ganz's (2007) Story of Self is an activity that would be hugely beneficial to do with the entire team. They also acknowledged that, since our identities are fluid and will

continue to change; this is an activity that we could repeat at the beginning of each academic year. This will give incoming first year recruits and walk-ons a holistic picture of the cultural environment and expectations of the team while honoring each individual's evolving identities as they navigate their way through collegiate athletics at Founding Father.

The second point that Sufrin (2019) examines is almost more of a warning than a foundational component. Sufrin (2019) spends time discussing the differences between developing cultural competency and reflexivity and evolving through cultural humility. She writes of how cultural competency is more often a way of viewing other cultures through the underlying assumption and lens of Whiteness as the social norm (Sufrin, 2019). Reflexivity revolves around acknowledging individual experiences while putting oneself in the shoes of another (Sufrin, 2019). Both cultural competency and reflexivity fail to acknowledge self-reflection as a lifelong process, and, perhaps more importantly, both practices can further emphasize power-imbalances within systems (Sufrin, 2019). The storytelling circles and narrative discourse shared by the athletes showed the deep power imbalances and structures present within the team, the athletic department, the university, and society at large. In order to create a cultural humility program that works to equally distribute power and furnish a gracious space in which to celebrate each individual's unique identity and voice while embracing the intersection of our identities as a platform for continual growth, constant feedback and self-reflection is vital. As the team changes and grows, it is important to recognize that, while the framework of the programming can stay the same, the individual activities and

discussions will have to ebb and flow to meet the needs of the student-athletes that make up the team each year.

The last and perhaps most important and nuanced approach to cultural humility that Sufrin (2019) discusses is the need for historical awareness. As Sufrin (2019) writes, “It is not enough to think about one’s own values, beliefs, and social position within the context of the present moment. In order to practice true cultural humility, a person must also be aware of and sensitive to historic realities like legacies of violence and oppression against certain groups of people” (para. 5). Where our team’s cultural humility programming has fallen short is within making assumptions about the historical knowledge that athletes bring to the discussion and how to bridge that gap of knowledge and understanding. All four athletes spoke at length about the failure of their educational systems in teaching Black history throughout their high school careers--it would be foolish to assume that their teammates have had substantial classes about race, class, and socioeconomic inequality and oppression.

What Jaz, Wakesho, Emilia, and Aleah suggested was that we create a curriculum focused on self-reflection and the intersection of our identities by incorporating the narrative storytelling process with the entirety of the team. While acknowledging that it can be psychologically and emotionally exhausting to have to continue to meet people where they are in order to get them to show up and engage, they suggested that we utilize subject areas that are relatable to encourage reluctant teammates to the table so that we can intentionally and strategically intersect race and racism into the discussion in a manner that others can understand. Wakesho, in particular, used Martin Luther King Jr. as an example of how to “trick” people into caring:

Right, I think what needs to happen is, like, relating understanding people's stories and then relating it to people of color or Black people and trying to find some sort of connection. When MLK had some marches, he marched with the working class because they were both going through the same kind of struggle. Not necessarily discrimination, or racism, but they had similar struggles and that's what brought them together. They kind of forwarded his agenda because they were concerned with their own struggle. So, I feel like if we can find a way to, not trick people, but find something that connects that maybe they'd be more interested.

In our combined storytelling circle, we brainstormed a method of incorporating all of the “isms” into our cultural humility programming. If we're going to reinforce the importance of reflecting on our own individual identities in order to think critically about how our identities intersect, then we need to have more in-depth discussion and framing around different aspects of identity. When we focus on racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and sexuality, we not only acknowledge and celebrate a much wider spectrum of identity, but we can also give the historical context within each to encourage further thought and empathy towards inequities that we can see on our team, school, sport, and in the community. All four athletes acknowledged that they have seen tremendous growth within the team after intentionally programming activities and discussions loosely framed on the above topics. Now we have to strategically scaffold the content and give the whole team the tools they need to be able to embrace and engage with their own identities in order for them to see how their identities intersect within the team.

A Note on Critical Mass and Affinity Groups

Jaz, Wakesho, Emilia, and Aleah all mentioned that not having a person of color in a position of authority in the coaching staff, or even in athletics at large, is something that causes them to feel isolated. They believe that part of the reason the narrative storytelling experience was such a cathartic experience for them was because it was the

first time in a very long time that they were able to be in a space where only Black females surrounded them. Though their experiences are and have been different, the shared experience of being Black, female athletes instantly made them feel safe. As a note on trying to create a space where they can be involved in the cultural humility programming and discussions but are not constantly put out in front of their team as the experts on race, they suggested that we incorporate affinity groups into some of our discussions.

The four women feel confident that they could moderate conversations with each other and the other rowers of color, while the White majority of the team can unpack White privilege with their White coaching staff in a separate space. They believe that infusing those affinity group discussions into the mix will not only take the stress and load off of them from time to time, but will also give them space to speak on topics that they otherwise would not feel comfortable speaking about under the scrutiny of the larger group. They also believe that the White affinity group, on the other hand, might get more out of the conversation if they were able to discuss and ask questions openly without the fear of offending the athletes of color. Ultimately, while we all recognize the need for patience, humility, and collaboration, we know that when it comes to discussions about race and racism, the White athletes and coaches have the majority of the work to do and that we cannot rely on our athletes and friends of color to bear our load (Lorde, 2012).

From a theoretical perspective, the feelings these four young women have in the safety of affinity groups are more than well-founded. Claude Steele (2010) wrote in his book, *Whistling Vivaldi*, about the dangers of stereotype threat and identity threat. According to Steele (2010),

[Stereotype threat] means that whenever we're in a situation where a bad stereotype about one of our own identities could be applied to us--such as being old, poor, rich, or female--we know it. We know what "people could think." We know that anything we do that fits the stereotype could be taken as confirming it (pg. 5).

This threat is directly tied to identity in that it follows people into any situation in which they may find themselves. Just as the four athletes spoke about advocacy for those who came before them and after them, they each acknowledged the overwhelming responsibility they feel to be "good representatives of their race." It is in every one of their choices and actions on a daily basis. When they can spend time in a group that shares aspects of their same identity, they immediately feel a sense of belonging and safety that they would not be able to find otherwise. For them, finding a space with "critical mass" means they can find comfort (Steele, 2010, pg. 135). Steele (2010) defines critical mass as, "...the point at which there are enough minorities in a setting, like a school or workplace, that individual minorities no longer feel uncomfortable there because they are minorities--in our terms, they no longer feel an interfering level of identity threat" (pg. 135). Here, the importance of creating affinity groups for the rowers of color at Founding Father can and will give them the comfort of being a majority--something they rarely ever get to experience in a PWI. Furthermore, the fact that none of these young women is the "only" rower of color on the entire team means that they actually can create a space with nine other women of color to foster belonging, safety, and open discussion.

Claude Steele (2010) wrote about how groups and spaces can work together towards what he calls, "identity integration" (pg. 151). According to him, "If identity threat were rooted in an internal psychological trait, a vulnerability of some sort, then it

would be harder to remedy. But environments, at least some of the time, can be changed. And the degree to which they are perceived as threatening can be changed as well” (p. 151). The environment that Steele (2010) refers to can easily be translated into the rowing program at Founding Father University. If we can work together to change the environment of the team to one that fully and completely embraces cultural humility and the essence of what it means to be truly inclusive, then we can continue to create a space and environment where minorities within our sport will feel safe and welcomed to take advantage of what could very well be a life changing and transformative opportunity.

Cultural Humility Programming for Rowing

Below is the collaborative outline for a cultural humility program for the student-athletes on Founding Father’s rowing team. Coaches and athletes have worked together to create a program that will incorporate the individual and shared identities of the current athletes on the team while fusing together subject areas reflecting their passions and interests. As acknowledged many times throughout this writing, our identities--and the identities of the athletes on the team--will continue to ebb and flow with our shared and individual experiences, through the people we meet, and through the spaces we occupy. As a result, this curriculum will continue to evolve to meet the needs of the population of young rowers with whom we work. As with any research, periodic member checking with the athletes is critical in order to maintain as much of a collaborative space as possible and to ensure that everyone is working towards meeting the needs of the team.

Curriculum Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate awareness of individual athletes’ culture and unique beliefs (i).
- Demonstrate empathy in interactions to create a sense of community and partnership geared towards collective growth (ii).
- Facilitate participatory problem solving with athletes (athlete-led) (iii).
- Define one's own individual background, culture, beliefs, and values and the impact these factors may have on interactions with teammates (iv).

Curriculum Goals

- To increase athlete awareness of the beliefs, values, and biases that they bring into each practice.
- To increase athlete ability to interact well with fellow teammates and members of the Founding Father community
- To enhance the overall athlete experience by effectively weaving together an attitude of respect and humility about cultural differences in day-to-day encounters
- To gain an approach to team and relationships that is “other” oriented.

Month	Major Focus (Required)	Major Focus (Supplement)
August	Introduction to Curriculum	Introduction to Curriculum
September	Story of Self :Identity Wheel (iv); Hispanic Heritage Month (i, ii)	Community Walkabout (ii)
October	Story Mapping (iv, i)	Book Study: <i>How to be an Antiracist</i> , Ibram X. Kendi (ii)
November	Advocacy & Taking Action: Erg for Equity benefitting the Pittsburgh ACLU (ii, iii)	Book Study: <i>How to be an Antiracist</i> , Ibram X. Kendi (ii)
December	Story of Us : Relationship-Centered Interviews (i, ii, iii)	International Food Festival (ii, iv, i) Green Dot Training (i, ii, iii, iv),
Winter Break	Midterm Data Reflection	Midterm Data Reflection
January	Unconscious Bias Training (i, iv); LGBTQIA Panel (i, ii, iii, iv)	Film Study: A Hero for Daisy (ii, iii)
February	Trauma Informed Care (ii, iii, i); Women in Sport-On the shoulders of giants alumni event (i, iii)	Film Study: A Hero for Daisy (ii, iii)
March	Intersectionality: The intersection of race and class in America (i, ii, iii, iv)	Spring Break Service Project: Facing History & Ourselves (i, iii, ii)
April	Story of Now : Identity: Public Narratives & Story-telling Circle (iv)	Community Walkabout (ii)
May	Final Data Reflection	Final Data Reflection

A Couple of Notes on Rules, Regulations, Recruiting, and Limitations

The NCAA allows coaches to require athletes to participate in practice activities up to twenty hours a week when they are in-season. It is the recommendation of the researcher and the athletes participating in this study that coaches utilize some of those required hours for cultural humility programming. A welcoming and inclusive team culture will, inevitably, lead to better harmony, trust, and speed in a boat. Furthermore, it may be necessary to make these sessions mandatory in order to ensure that everyone shows up. As the culture and norms begin to shift towards one that is more “other” oriented, and conversations on the topics are normalized, then it may be possible to hold sessions that are completely optional and don’t count towards hours of practice. The above curriculum for Founding Father University rowing strives to achieve a balance between mandatory and optional. While the vast majority of the team shows up to voluntary and optional events, there are still some athletes who avoid conversations that push their comfort zone. As a result, we have settled for a program that requires a mandatory cultural humility session once a month with additional supplemental activities for those who would like to challenge themselves further offered every other week.

When it comes to ensuring that this culture continues, it must be noted that recruiting practices should mirror the expectations of the current athletes. Full transparency of the expectations of incoming rowing recruits to push themselves socially as well as athletically through this particular kind of programming should happen before the athlete commits to the team. As Jaz asserted, “If recruits don’t like the programming or cultural expectations, they won’t choose to come to Founding Father University.” This ensures that athletes who have bought into this culture before coming

to the rowing program will continue to build its legacy of social justice practices and advocacy.

Design II: The Department

Interrogating Systems

The first step in working towards creating a department-wide curriculum to promote cultural humility within athletics at Founding Father University is to critically interrogate the systems in place that are meant to serve our student-athletes. This research has talked at length about power structures and power dynamics within systems and the long-standing systemic inequities that exist within the collegiate governing body of sports--the NCAA. It is the recommendation of this researcher and coach--as well as her athletes--that sport administrators, staff, and coaches meet to critically examine the systems in which we operate and how they impact our student-athletes. In the case of Founding Father University, it is pertinent to spend time analyzing demographic data and trends to see how they compare to national averages. This means critically examining the demographics of student-athletes who enroll in the institution, their graduation rates, popular student majors, retention, and how their participation in athletics influences their overall academic experience.

As Emmett Gill (2007) referenced in his writings, it is especially important to take into consideration the role of Black female athletes within our athletic department. According to Gill (2007) in sports other than basketball and track and field, Black female athletes are nearly non-existent in collegiate athletics--making up only 10 percent of every other sport offered to women combined. Consider the three sports that showed the most growth after the passing of Title IX legislation (soccer, lacrosse, and

rowing), and the lack of representation of Black women is even more bleak. At Founding Father, the story is not much different. With only five Black women on the rowing team out of a roster of 45, Founding Father has one of the most racially diverse collegiate rowing programs in the country. Our women's soccer team, and our women's lacrosse team have not been able to retain any women of color to date. Interestingly enough, at the time of this research, the Founding Father women's basketball program, while internationally diverse, has no Black women on their current roster either. There are no Black women on the volleyball, hockey, or softball rosters. The only other Black women in sports at Founding Father at the time of writing are on the track and field team.

This is the part where we as coaches, staff, and administrators have to ask, "Why?" Why are there so few Black female athletes in our athletic department? What factors are preventing Black women from either having the opportunity to be a part of our department or are creating an environment that does not openly welcome Black women? We need to interrogate the much larger systems that prevent access to collegiate sports for Black women, the policies in place that often silence and discourage Black women, and the amount of attention we choose to place on female sports at the collegiate level given the fact that women's sports are often non-revenue generating as opposed to the money-making sports of men's football and basketball. Furthermore, we need to interrogate ourselves and the culture that we build within the department to ensure that this environment is one that is viewed as both safe and welcoming for young women of color.

Equity Audit

According to the *Beloved Community*, a non-profit consulting firm focused on implementing regional, sustainable solutions for diversity, equity, and inclusion, an equity audit is a, “...comprehensive benchmarking tool that assesses diversity, equity, and inclusion for schools, nonprofit organizations, and companies” (Beloved Community, 2020). The equity audit is a necessary first step in understanding where the athletic department sits within the larger university system in terms of focusing equity in plans and decision-making. It is the belief of the researcher that engaging in an equity audit with all levels of leadership within the athletic department is critical before any sort of larger diversity, equity, and inclusion plan implementation.

The *Beloved Community* (2020) poses three guiding questions to be asked in the audit before implementation. When transposing these questions to the context of an athletic department within a university, these questions are still relevant:

- Diversity: To what extent are the diverse identities and perspectives of our administrators, coaches, staff, and student-athletes reflected in the demographics of those impacted by decisions?
- Equity: To what extent are the outcomes and results of these decisions predictable by demographics or identity markers?
- Inclusion: To what extent are the diverse identities and perspectives of our administrators, coaches, staff, and student-athletes included in this decision-making process that will impact their lives?

These questions require input from each level of athletic department leadership-- administrators, coaches, staff, and student-athletes. The essence of the success of

diversity, equity, and inclusion programming that comes out of an equity audit functions on a deeply held belief in and commitment to shared leadership and mutual accountability. This theme of responsibility of our role in the betterment of the collective whole has permeated throughout this entire study--and there is no exception here. Our collective success as an athletic department within a larger institution relies wholly on the success of our athletes, peers, and administrators. We are tied to each other. The *Beloved Community* non-profit organization provides an equity audit framework modeled after Martin Luther King Jr.'s notion of the "Beloved Community," a, "...global vision in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger, and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry, and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood" (The King Center, 1968). These themes will continue to grow throughout the rest of the designs for action at the meso-level of leadership, just as they were grounded in the micro-level of leadership for the rowing program.

Mutual Accountability Framework

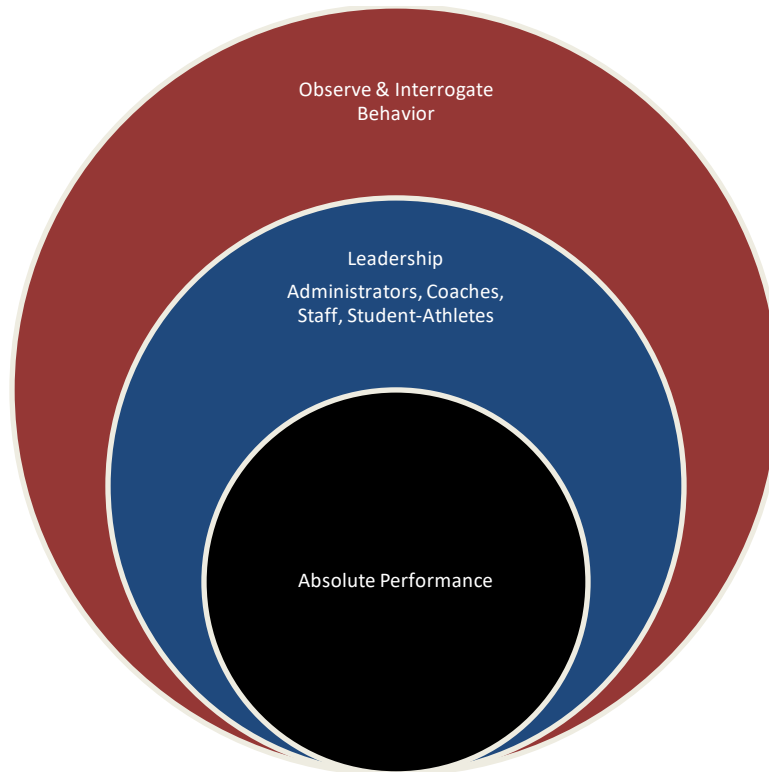
Staying with the overarching framework created by the *Beloved Community*, mutual accountability is defined as a, "...process by which two (or multiple) partners agree to be held responsible for the commitments that they have voluntarily made to each other" (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2019). By taking that framework and once again adapting it specifically for an athletic department within a larger university setting, we can see three layers within each other, lying within a large circle. The circle, as a symbol of continuity in itself, means that this multi-tiered process

will continue indefinitely. Just as our identities continue to shift, change, and evolve based on the people, places, and experiences around us, the same is true for the growth and identity of an athletic department. The needs of the department and the people within it are bound to shift, adapt, and change as well to meet the needs of the communities within it.

Below is the three-tiered mutual accountability framework created by the *Beloved Community* (2019), adapted to the context of collegiate athletics.

Figure 4

Performance Metrics: Absolute Outcomes
Leadership & Culture: Administrators, Coaches, Staff, Student-Athletes
Process Metrics: Observe and Interrogate Shifts in our Behavior



Building a Mutual Accountability Framework Grounded in Inclusive Leadership Practices

The first step in the mutual accountability framework is to develop process metrics--to interrogate policies, practices, behavior, and values of the department. This is exactly where conducting an equity audit comes into play. The first step in moving the culture of a group towards one more focused on equity and inclusion is to spend the time critically examining the trends in culture, programs, operations, finance, and overall governance (*Beloved Community*, 2019). Once the overall picture of where the department is beginning in their work towards becoming a more inclusive and equitable space comes into focus, then the work on the culture shift towards shared inclusive leadership practices can take center stage. The majority of the work resides (and will continue to reside) in the middle sphere of inclusive leadership development. As discussed throughout this research, this work dedicated to equity and inclusivity is a lifelong commitment and will continue to grow and develop throughout the lifetime of both individuals, teams, and organizations. Furthermore, this work is grounded in the belief that the outcomes--or absolute performance of the athletic department--are mutually tied to each person in the department. The successes and failures of each athletic team directly influence the successes and failures of the entire department--and every person within it. Once every administrator, coach, support staff, and athlete recognizes and embraces this reality, the work and continued growth can happen in a more collaborative manner. This intersection with the recurring symbolism of the circle throughout this work is imperative to illustrating that this is a continuous learning

process. Every member of the department will continue to learn and grow throughout their entire tenure at Founding Father University--and long after they leave.

For the purposes of this research, we are going to align our definition of inclusive leadership with that of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. According to the Declaration (Bortini, Paci, Rise, & Rojnik, 2016):

This [inclusive leadership] approach builds on the belief that everything is connected and that inclusive leaders need to be aware of the world in which they live and its resources. Practicing inclusive leadership can contribute to solving both small and big challenges in our complex world. Inclusive leaders appreciate everyone's contribution and inspire innovation by involving people at risk of being excluded from society. They are prepared to give up power, share responsibility, and tap into the wisdom of the group in order to benefit everyone--the leader, the follower, and the society" (pg. 5).

In the case of this research, the acknowledgement that power and leadership needs to be shared and distributed throughout the entire athletic department due to the overarching fact that our individual successes and failures are inextricably linked to the successes and failures of every person in the department. That shared leadership, perspective, and presence of voice needs to include administrators, coaches and support staff, and student-athletes when building culture and engaging in difficult decision-making processes. Furthermore, the working definition of inclusion within the context of the Founding Father athletic department is going to function through a larger, shared commitment to creating a space that embodies fairness and respect for everyone within it, a shared feeling of value and belonging, and a dedication to creating the conditions for shared creativity and collaboration (Bourke & Dillon, 2016).

In their framework for building a culture of inclusive leadership at the business level, Juliet Bourke and Bernadette Dillon (2016) asserted that there are six specific traits that inclusive leaders routinely have and continue to develop. These traits include

cognizance of bias, curiosity, cultural humility, collaboration, commitment to the work, and courage (Bourke & Dillon, 2016). The beauty of these listed traits is that, while many leaders come to the table with some of these mindsets and behaviors already in place, anyone and everyone can develop and continue to develop each of these attributes throughout their careers and lives. While Bourke and Dillon created their framework through the lens of a large corporation, the same themes and concepts can hold true when narrowing the scope of focus to an individual athletic department. While universities-- and athletic departments--are also businesses, there is less separation between those at the top (administrators) and those performing at the ground level (student-athletes), meaning that the need to find a balance between the development of these traits from a personal values perspective as well as a business opportunity perspective is even more necessary. Especially considering that the business aspect of an athletic department involves the monetization of the performances of young people. Below is Bourke and Dillon’s (2016) table of the six signature traits of inclusive leaders, as well as the elements that make up those traits modified to fit the space of the athletic department at Founding Father University.

Table 1: The six signature traits of an inclusive leader

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Six Traits	Commitment	Courage	Cognizance of Bias	Curiosity	Cultural Humility	Collaboration

I. Commitment

Bourke and Dillon (2016) wrote, “Highly inclusive leaders are committed to diversity and inclusion because these objectives align with their personal values and because they believe in the business case” (para. 21). This is where the ongoing paradox

of altruism versus personal gain comes into light. From a personal perspective, leadership grounded in inclusivity requires an embodiment of the values listed above and a commitment to lifelong growth with the recognition that the work will never end. Inherently, continued work in inclusion also means that this commitment will only benefit everyone involved--from the individual to the organization. Diversity of thought, diversity of perspectives, and, in terms of athletics, diversity of athletic talent. Commitment to the work now with the deeply rooted belief that it will pay off personally and professionally in the long term is essential to building a culture of inclusive leadership.

II. Courage

It takes courage to continue to challenge the status quo and the inequitable systems that continue to marginalize large groups of people. It requires a willingness to embrace discomfort and be openly vulnerable to pushback, criticism, as well as perceived and actual risk. Furthermore, it requires leaders to be open and humble about their strengths and weaknesses (Bourke & Dillon, 2016). Not only will this level of vulnerability help seed deeper connections throughout the department, but it will aid in helping to distribute leadership and responsibility by leveraging the diverse strengths of the individuals within athletics.

III. Cognizance of Bias

Building awareness of personal and professional blind spots is essential for the development of inclusive leadership. In the sphere of an athletic department, there are a myriad of other power structures (the university, the NCAA, individual conferences, etc.) that further complicate the ability to build an inclusive space. Recognizing and

acknowledging the levels of bias and complicated power structures at play is, and will continue to be, necessary. According to Rohini Anand, CEO of Rohini Anand LLC (2016), “At the individual level, they [inclusive leaders] are very self-aware and they act on that self-awareness. And they acknowledge that their organizations, despite best intentions, have unconscious biases, and they put in place policies, processes, and structures in order to mitigate the unconscious bias that exists” (para. 1). Constant individual and group reflection to unearth and understand bias is a lifelong endeavor.

IV. Curiosity

In short, inclusive leaders are curious about the lives and stories of others. This research has shown how incredibly powerful personal narratives and embracing each other's stories can be in building empathy, but more so, in building deep and meaningful human connection. Embracing this fact means that we all have an incredible wealth of human capital that we can continue to learn and grow from.

V. Cultural Humility

In the beginning of this chapter, we defined cultural humility as, “...a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby the individual not only learns about another’s culture, but one starts with an examination of her/his own beliefs and cultural identities (Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2013). In addition to the above traits, cultural humility is equally as important to building relationships across power structures, teams, and departments. Constant individual work through self-reflection and a commitment to embracing and learning from those around you is the very essence of creating an inclusive culture.

VI. Collaboration

Collaboration is the sixth trait here because each of the above traits scaffold and sequence personal and professional growth to the point where true collaboration can occur. This means taking full advantage of the strengths and skills of coworkers, athletes, coaches, and senior leadership in order to create a culture and cooperate on decision-making processes in an effort to ensure policy and practices will benefit the entire group. Group intelligence will usually overshadow the intelligence of the individual.

Conclusion

The model above is not a one-size-fits-all approach to inclusive leadership. Nor is it completely revolutionary. What this researcher and coach has learned through the storytelling process with her athletes is that when you acknowledge your strengths and weaknesses, put an emphasis on forming deep relationships with the people around you, and do your best to distribute power in an open forum for group collaboration, the empowerment present in our diverse perspectives and experiences fuse together to create a model of growth that benefits everyone. The dominant power structure of the United States--and in this subset of research, collegiate athletics--has, and continues to emphasize the individual over the group. For those of us who are members of that dominant group, the more we can work together to recognize our biases, question policies, understand the histories of ourselves and those around us, and commit ourselves to the work with the beautifully radical belief that the ties that bind us together through our shared humanity are always more powerful than the individual, the more inclusive the spaces we occupy will become.

Limitations & Recommendations for Future Research

This research was conducted in a tiny subset of collegiate athletics, in a very specific region of the country, with only four young Black female women participating in the sport of rowing. As they so eloquently discussed in their narrative discourse, their stories are not representative of every Black female rower in the world. They are unique to their own experiences and identities as individuals and as members of Founding Father's rowing team in the fall of the year 2020. Furthermore, their perspectives and stories will continue to change and evolve as they grow and continue to learn from the people, places, and experiences that surround them.

It is also pertinent and necessary to discuss the current COVID-19 pandemic that is raging throughout the country. This pandemic further complicates every discussion regarding power, policy, equity, and pathways towards inclusion. The decisions being made by leadership of Founding Father are much more complex. The more dire the financial situation becomes, the more those leaders are forced to make decisions that will favor the majority in the hope that we can all re-evaluate our space once we've come out the other side of the pandemic. Furthermore, this research that has emphasized and acknowledged the incredible need for human connection did not anticipate that connection being forced to come from Zoom meetings and Google hangouts during a period of time where groups are more dangerous than solitude. The added difficulty of building an inclusive culture in a time where teams, employees, and athletes cannot physically be together in the same space cannot be overemphasized.

It would be fascinating to hear the stories and engage in deeper conversations with other Black female rowers from larger PWIs to see how and where their journeys have differed and where they have overlapped with the women at Founding Father. Furthermore, the narrative experiences and leadership journeys of other rowing coaches across the country in our collective work towards making our sport more inclusive and equitable would give invaluable insight to not only the Collegiate Rowing Coaches Association (the governing body of collegiate rowing in the United States), but the NCAA as well.

REFERENCES

- Andrews, M. (2013). Introduction: What is narrative research? In Andrews, M., Squire, C., & Tamboukou, M. (Eds.) *Doing narrative research* (pp. 1-26). SAGE Publications.
- Angelou, M. (1970). *I know why the caged bird sings*. Random House.
- Beloved Community. *Equity audit*. Retrieved on 14 December, 2020 from <https://www.wearebeloved.org/equity-audit>
- Bassey, M. (2007). What is African critical theory or Black existential philosophy? *Journal of Black studies*, 37(6), 914-935. Retrieved March 4, 2020 from www.jstor.org/stable/40034961
- Bateson, Mary C. (2000) *Full circles, overlapping lives: Culture and generation in transition*. Ballantine.
- Beal, F. M. (1999, August 29). Black women's manifesto: Double jeopardy; to be Black and female. *Duke university archives*. Retrieved April 23, 2020 from https://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01009/#double
- Bell, D. (1987). *And we are not saved: The elusive quest for racial justice*. Basic Books, Inc.
- Bell, D. (2012). *Silent covenants: Brown v. board of education and the unfulfilled hopes for racial reform*. Oxford University Press.
- Boeije, H. R. (2010). *Analysis in qualitative research*. Sage.

- Bortini, P., Paci, A., Rise, A., & Rojnik, I. (2016). *Inclusive leadership: Theoretical framework*. European Commission. 2016-1-PL01-KA204-026768
- Bourke, J. & Dillon, B. (14 April, 2016). The six signature traits of inclusive leadership: Thriving in a diverse new world. *Deloitte insights*. Retrieved December 14, 2020 from <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/talent/six-signature-traits-of-inclusive-leadership.html>
- Briscoe, F. M. & Khalifa, M. A. (2013). ‘That racism thing: a critical race discourse analysis of a conflict over the proposed closure of a Black high school. *Race ethnicity and education*. 18:6, 739-763, DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2013.792798
- Brown, D. J. (2013). *The boys in the boat: Nine Americans and their quest for gold at the 1936 Berlin olympics*. Penguin Books.
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Sage Publications.
- Cole, B. A. (2009). Gender, narratives, and intersectionality: Can personal experiences approach to research contribute to “undoing gender?” *International review of education*. Retrieved April 23, 2020, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40608078>
- Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Routledge.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1989. Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 14; 538-554
- Davis, Kathy. 2008. Intersectionality as buzzword: A sociology of science perspective on

- what makes a feminist theory successful. *Feminist theory*, 9; 67-85.
- Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. (2012). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. New York University Press.
- DuBois, W. E. B. (1994). *The souls of Black folk*. Fine Creative Media, Inc.
- Durham, M. & Hosick, M.B. (2017, November 8). *DI African American athletes graduate at record rates*. NCAA. <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/media-center/news/di-african-american-student-athletes-graduate-record-rates>
- Durkey, M., Lee, S., McCluney, C., Robotham, K., & Smith, R. (2019, November 15). *The costs of code-switching*. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2019/11/the-costs-of-code-switching>
- Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (2 ed.) Vintage Books.
- Ganz, M. (2007). *What is public narrative and how do we use it?* Working Narratives. <https://workingnarratives.org/article/public-narrative/#:~:text=A%20story%20of%20self%20is,involved%20in%20a%20given%20cause.>
- Garran, D. K. (2012). *A history of collegiate rowing in America*. Schiffer Publishing.
- Generett, G. & Tredway, L. (2015). *Community story-mapping: The pedagogy of the griot*. Institute for Educational Leadership and Duquesne University.
- Gill, E. L. (2007, May 31). *The prevalence of Black females in college sports*. Diverse issues in higher education. <https://diverseeducation.com/article/7384/>

- Glaser, G.B., & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine.
- Goodsor, I. F. (2013). *Developing narrative theory: Life histories and personal representation*. Taylor and Francis
Group. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/duquesne-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1039297>
- Guess, T. J. (2006). The Social Construction of Whiteness: Racism by Intent, Racism by Consequence. *Critical Sociology*, 32(4), 649-673.
doi:10.1163/156916306779155199
- Harris, A. P. (2012). Critical race theory. *International encyclopedia of the social & behavioral sciences*. Retrieved April 23, 2020 from
https://works.bepress.com/angela_harris/17/
- Hill, J. (2019). It's time for Black athletes to leave White colleges. *The Atlantic*. October, 2019. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/10/Black-athletes-should-leave-White-colleges/596629/>
- Hoerr, J. (1988). *And the wolf finally came: The decline of the American steel industry*.
- Hughes, P. & Grace, B. (2010). *Gracious space: A practical guide for working better together, second edition*. Center for Ethical Leadership.
www.communitylearningexchange.org/page/gracious-space.
- The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport. (2018). NCAA college sport association racial and gender report card. <https://www.tidesport.org/college>
- The King Center. (1968). The King philosophy. Retrieved on December 14, 2020 from
<https://thekingcenter.org/king-philosophy/#sub4>

- Kavoura, A., Ryba, T. V., & Chroni, S. (2015). Negotiating female judoka identities in Greece: A Foucauldian discourse analysis. *Psychology of sport and exercise*, 17, 88-98.
- Lapchick, R. (1986). *Fractured focus: Sport as a reflection of society*. Lexington Books.
- Lorde, A. (2012, August 12). (1981) Audre Lorde, "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism." BlackPast. <https://www.Blackpast.org/african-american-history/1981-audre-lorde-uses-anger-women-responding-racism/>
- Maclean, N. (1976) *A river runs through it*. Chicago Press.
- Malcolm X: Who taught you to hate? Speech excerpt*. (2020). Alexander street: A proquest company. Retrieved April 23, 2020 from https://search.alexanderstreet.com/preview/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cvideo_work%7C2785586
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco. Jossey-Bass Publisher.
- National Collegiate Athletic Association Eligibility Center. (2019, September). *Division I Academic requirements*. http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/Student_Resources/DI_ReqsFactSheet.pdf
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2007). *Division II student-athlete experience*

- evaluations*. Retrieved from www.ncaa.org/library/membership/d2_s-a_experience_evaluation/2006_d2_s-a_experience_evaluation.pdf
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2020, March). *NCAA demographics database*.
<http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/ncaa-demographics-database>
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2020, December). *NCAA student-athlete advisory committees (SAAC)*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/ncaa-student-athlete-advisory-committees-saacs>
- National Collegiate Athletic Association. (2020, January). *Title IX frequently asked questions*.
<http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/inclusion/title-ix-frequently-asked-questions>
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2019). *Mutual accountability: Emerging good practice*. Retrieved on December 14, 2020 from <https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/49656340.pdf>
- Pollak, S. (2019, May 12). Who has loved you into being? Retrieved April 15, 2021, from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-art-now/201905/who-has-loved-you-being>
- Rajiv, S. (1992). *Forms of Black consciousness*. Advent Book.
- Rosner, S. & Shropshire, K. (2011). *The growth of NCAA women's rowing: A financial, ethical, and legal analysis*. Jones and Bartlett, LLC.
- Sato, T., Hodge, S. R., & Burge-Hall, V. (2011). International student – athletes'

- academic, athletic, and social experiences at a historically Black university in America. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education*, 5(1), 45–71.
- Smith, R.A. (2011). *Pay for play: A history of big-time athletic reform*. University of Illinois Press.
- Spectre, P. (2006). *The mariner's book of days 2006*. Sheridan House.
- Steele, C. (2010). *Whistling Vivaldi*. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Steinbeck, J. (1939). *The grapes of wrath*. The Viking Press.
- Sufrin, J. (2019, November 5). 3 Things to know: cultural humility. Retrieved December 6, 2020, from <https://hogg.utexas.edu/3-things-to-know-cultural-humility#:~:text=The%20National%20Institutes%20of%20Health,first%20coined%20in%201998%20by>
- Tamboukou, M. (2013). A Foucaudian approach to narratives. In Andrews, M., Squire, C., & Tamboukou, M. (Eds.) *Doing narrative research* (pp. 88-108). SAGE Publications.
- Trei, L. (2004, April 21). Black children might have been better off without Brown v. Board, Bell says. Retrieved August 21, 2020, from <https://news.stanford.edu/news/2004/april21/brownbell-421.html>
- Tutu, D. (1999). *No future without forgiveness*. The Easton Press.
- Williams, P. (1991). *The alchemy of race and rights: Diary of a law professor*. Harvard University Press.
- Willig, C. (2013). Foucaudian discourse analysis. In C. Willig (Ed.) *Introducing qualitative research in psychology* (3rd ed., pp. 129–142). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education.

Working Narratives. (2013). *What is public narrative and how do we use it?* Retrieved from <https://workingnarratives.org/article/publicnarrative/#:~:text=A%20story%20of%20self%20is,involved%20in%20a%20given%20cause.>

Wulf, S. (2020, March). *Title IX: 37 words that changed everything.* https://www.espn.com/espnw/title-ix/story/_/id/7722632/37-words-changed-everything

Yeager, K. A., & Bauer-Wu, S. (2013). Cultural humility: essential foundation for clinical researchers. *Applied nursing research : ANR*, 26(4), 251–256. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apnr.2013.06.008>

APPENDIX A

Storytelling Circle Protocol

“Circles, like the soul, are never-ending, and turn round and round without a stop.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Step 1: Invoking a Gracious Space

- Patricia Hughes and Bill Grace (2010) coined the concept of “Gracious Space” to discuss creating a setting and place where we can invite the, “...stranger to learn in public.” This means that we seek to build trust with members of the group in order to utilize and celebrate each person’s individual power as well as the collective power of the group. By embodying this spirit, we ensure that we are actively honoring ourselves and each other in this space.

Step 2: Developing Your Story

- What specific experiences have shaped you and guided you to this team and this university? What is it that has brought you to this sport? What personal story can you tell that will help others understand your “why” for being here?

Step 3: Sharing Your Story

- The first tenant in creating a gracious space is to, “Pay attention to spirit” (Grace & Hughes, 2010). This means being present in the story of others—truly and empathically listening to your teammates.
- Situate yourself in a circle. The circle ensures that everyone in the storytelling group is visible and power is equitably distributed.
- One at a time, go around the circle and share your story.
 - Storytellers: Own your story and embrace your vulnerability. There is incredible power in your lived experiences.
 - Listeners: Listen and pay attention to how each of your teammate’s stories resonates within you. What details do you want to hear more about? What connects with you (choices, feelings, values, experiences, images, etc.)?

Step 4: The Circle Remains Unbroken

- Debrief your experience with your storytelling circle. One of the most beautiful things about circles is that they have no end. For us as a team, each of our individual stories combines into our collective narrative—one that we will continue to write and tell as we strive and learn together. This is an activity that we will repeat each school year with each new group of athletes. What a wonderful way to immortalize the power in each of us!

APPENDIX B

Storytelling Circle Discussion Guide

Session I (Story of Self)

- What is your “Story of Self?” What people, places, and events have led you to this city, university, and team?
- Academics
 - Relationships with faculty
 - Perception from faculty as an athlete? As a female? As a Black female?
 - Satisfaction with major area of study
 - Has your major changed? Why?
 - Has being an athlete influenced your choice of major?
- Impact of athletics on overall academic success and GPA

Session II (Story of Us)

- The Story of Us invites each other to be part of the community. What are the shared visions, goals, and purposes of this rowing program within the context of the University and the larger rowing community?
- Athletics
 - Thoughts on the amount of time practicing and competing
 - Rationale for joining the team
 - What is your “why?”
 - Overall satisfaction
 - Likelihood of recommending other Black women to row at a PWI
 - Progress within the team
 - Building a culture of inclusion
 - Choice of college and other recruitment factors
 - Mental and physical health and wellbeing

Session III (Story of Now)

- What are your thoughts on the challenges our team, school, city, and rowing community face in terms of equity and inclusion and social justice initiatives?
- College Social Experience
 - Sense of belonging
 - As a student
 - As an athlete
 - As a Black female

- Community involvement outside of the University
- Coaching
 - Encouragement/lack thereof of being involved in other organizations/activities around campus
 - Cultural climate of the team
 - Trust/ethical and moral compass of the coaching and support staff
 - Leadership development

Session IV (Story of the Future)

- Where do we go from here? As a team, sport, and University?
- What are your thoughts on the narrative storytelling experience?
 - Are you changed within this work?

APPENDIX C



DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

600 FORBES AVENUE ♦ PITTSBURGH, PA 15282

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE:

Different Strokes: A Critical Race Discourse Analysis of the Experiences of Four Black Female Student-Athletes Rowing at a PWI

INVESTIGATOR:

Carol E. Schoenecker
Graduate Student
schoeneckerc@duq.edu

DISSERTATION CHAIR:

Gretchen Givens Generett, Ph.D.
Interim Dean; Professor
Director of the UCEA Center for Educational Leadership and Social Justice
Noble J. Dick Endowed Chair in Community Outreach
School of Education
Department of Educational Foundations & Leadership
107 Canevin Hall
(412) 396-1890
generettg@duq.edu

SOURCE OF SUPPORT:

This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in the School of Education at Duquesne University

STUDY OVERVIEW:

This is a Critical Race Discourse Analysis (CRDA) of the experiences of Black female Division I collegiate rowers studying and competing at a predominantly White institution (PWI). Utilizing a semi-structured narrative storytelling approach to peer interviews, participants will engage in conversations surrounding their own personal experiences and identity formation as Black, female athletes attending a PWI as well as how their shared experiences intersect to introduce a new perspective and voice to the larger collegiate rowing narrative. It is the intention to introduce a discourse that does not largely exist in

either collegiate rowing or collegiate athletics as a whole—that of the Black female athlete.

PURPOSE:

You are being asked to participate in a study to examine the experiences of Black female collegiate athletes rowing at a predominantly White institution (PWI).

In order to qualify for participation, you must be:

- An adult, aged 18+
- A Black female collegiate rower at a Founding Father University

PARTICIPANT PROCEDURES:

If you provide your consent to participate, you will be asked to engage in a semi-structured qualitative storytelling circle for four separate circles every two weeks over the course of two months. The researcher will not be present for your storytelling circles; however, I will transcribe your audio recorded sessions and work with you to verify accuracy. You will work with the researcher to create and modify the interview protocols to create a gracious space that invites each other to share freely and openly in a communal setting and to address subject areas surrounding your experiences as Black female student-athletes in the discussion prompts. The interview will take place in your boathouse to allow for a familiar and private setting with the knowledge that the Zoom virtual platform could be utilized if necessary to do the unpredictability of the COVID-19 pandemic.

RISKS AND BENEFITS:

The research is designed to benefit society by introducing a narrative discourse into collegiate athletics that is rarely heard and seldom amplified—those of the Black female rower. There may be no direct benefit to you as a participant in this study, however, I hope to give you as the participant and athlete the platform to share your experiences and stories with the larger athletic department and collegiate rowing world.

There are risks involved in all research studies. Certain discussion points may evoke a variety of emotions. I ask that you let them come and flow through you as you share your story. A minimal amount of personal time will need to be dedicated to the process. You should report any problems to the researcher so adjustments can be made to further limit discomfort on your part.

COMPENSATION:

There will be no compensation for participating in this study.
Participation in this project will require no monetary cost to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Your participation in this study and any personal identifiable information that you provide will be kept confidential at all times and to every extent possible.

Your given name will never appear in the storytelling circle summary and all recordings will be kept secure and private.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:

You are under no obligation to start or continue this study. You can withdraw at any time without penalty or consequence by alerting the researcher via phone or email.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS:

A summary of the results of this study will be provided to you at no cost. You may request this summary by contacting the researchers and requesting it. The information provided to you will not be your individual responses, but rather a summary of what was discovered during the research project as a whole.

FUTURE USE OF DATA:

Any information collected that can identify you will have the identifiers removed and will not be used for future research studies, nor will it be provided to other researchers.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT:

I have read this informed consent form and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, for any reason without any consequences. Based on this, I certify I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that if I have any questions about my participation in this study, I may contact any of the researchers listed above. If I have any questions regarding my rights and protections as a subject in this study, I can contact Dr. David Delmonico, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at 412.396.1886 or at irb@duq.edu.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date