“BLACK, SET, SPIKE:” AN ANALYSIS OF THE RACIAL EXPERIENCES OF BLACK FEMALE VOLLEYBALL PLAYERS IN EUROPE

By

Jen Fry

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Geography–Doctor of Philosophy

2022

ABSTRACT

"BLACK, SET, SPIKE:" AN ANALYSIS OF THE RACIAL EXPERIENCES OF BLACK FEMALE VOLLEYBALL PLAYERS IN EUROPE

By

Jen Fry

Sports and geography each profoundly impact the lived and professional experiences of Black female athletes. These experiences also significantly shape their personal and professional identities, as both deal with the occupation of space and the way people move and interact in geographic spaces. Little attention has been paid by the academic and athletic communities to the lived experiences of professional athletes who play abroad. Currently, minimal research has been conducted on the experiences of Black female volleyball players (BFVPs) who have played in Europe and how race, gender identity, space, and sports affected their lived experiences abroad based on their identities. This dissertation utilized qualitative methods to analyze the racial experiences of Black women who have played professional volleyball in Europe and whose experiences have not been documented within studies of geography—or, more specifically, within perspectives of Black feminist thought, Black geographies, and theory of racial space.

The goal of this dissertation was twofold: (a) explore how intersecting racial and gendered identities, place, and space influenced the racism encountered by U.S. BFVPs in Europe; and (b) provide a source of information for future Black female college athletes who want to play professionally but do not know what they do not know. By developing a body of literature within sports geography on the overlooked and unresearched experiences of professional Black female athletes (BFAs), I contributed to the ever-increasing body of literature on BFAs across various disciplines.

Some of the discoveries from my research were that BFVPs experienced racism in ways similar to what they experienced within the United States, such as being oversexualized, expected to play up racially stereotypical views of Black women, and having their hair touched without their consent. They also experienced racism in wildly different ways, such as being spit on, teammates withholding English skills, and accusations of prostitution. When conducting my research, a qualitative approach of a brief demographic survey of 15 questions was sent to over 100 current and former BFVPs; I used these data to narrow down participants. There was a response rate of more than 50%, which resulted in 60 women filling out the survey; of that population, 51 checked *yes* to interest in being interviewed, and nine checked *no* to denote no interest in being interviewed. Based on criteria of the number of years played, countries played in, and teams played for, I narrowed the sample to 18 participants willing to participate in qualitative interviews. The theoretical frameworks of Black feminist thought, Black geographies, and theory of racial space were used to understand the experiences of the participants and helped me create a new conceptual framework called critical Black feminist sports geographies.

Keywords: sports geography, Black female athlete, critical Black feminist sports geographies, Black feminist thought, theory of racial space, Black geographies, volleyball, professional athlete

Copyright by
JEN FRY
2022

My dissertation is dedicated to my mom, Carol Fry, who passed away in June 2020 right before the start of my 2nd year of coursework. She never finished high school or went to college, but had an insatiable appetite for learning and reading, which I am so lucky she passed on to me. The support she gave me when I decided to leave coaching, pursue a professional speaking career, start my company, and start my PhD was unwavering, and gave me the freedom to feel confident in my decisions. She also was a complete badass who had no mercy for her favorite daughter when playing Monopoly. This is for you, Carol Fry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Deciding to do a PhD is difficult; you apply to programs that you think will be perfect and hope that the program you get accepted into and accept their offer will help you get your degree and take care of you. I feel with that in mind, I succeeded. Going to Michigan State University and getting my degree in geography was one of my best decisions. I will always be indebted to the program for taking a chance on me and what I wanted to study. The MSU Geography program took care of me and treated me far better than I could have imagined. I want to first start by thanking my mom, Carol Fry, for always supporting my decisions, allowing me to be my authentic self, and telling me to always keep my happy face on.

I thank Danielle Johnson-Webb for pushing me into having a great conversation with alumna, Karen Johnson-Webb, who ultimately got me started on this journey to MSU. I thank Dee Jordan for recognizing the ability to transfer my ideas to a geographical framework and show me MSU was the place for me to be. I thank Dr Alan Arbogast, Dr. Moore, and Dr. Shortridge for really taking care of me in ways I did not realize I needed when I decided to go to MSU. I could not have asked for more help. Dr. Moore was always a willing ear to discuss school and life and helped me in many ways to pursue my dreams with my degree and my business; I really cannot thank you enough. Dr. Kyle Evered, thank you for not only being on my committee and then being willing to take over as chair, but wanting to be on my committee. When I asked you to be on my committee, your comment of, “I have been waiting for you to ask me” will always stay in my head. I know you do not want me to say it, but thank you for your kindness. Your kindness and understanding of my life will always stick with me, as well as

Emine's willingness to feed me amazing Turkish food whenever I was in town. I feel so lucky to have an understanding chair who wanted to learn more about my topic and support me.

I thank Dr. Shortridge for being willing to be a sounding board for ideas of all kinds and presentations, and Dr. Arbogast for seeing how I could fit into geography and being willing to support me in all ways possible—including starting as my chair and realizing that Dr. Kyle Evered would be a great fit to continue as my co-chair. Thank you, Dr. Akilah Carter-Francique, for agreeing to serve on my committee as co-chair. I appreciate your willingness to help me with this idea I had. Thank you, Dr. Billy Hawkins, for being on my committee and challenging me in all the ways I needed; your kind words are always so appreciated. Thank you, Dr. Sylvia Bettez, for starting me on this journey and showing me what a classroom can look like that is empathetic, loving, courageous, and truth-telling. I cannot say how much I appreciated my journey at UNCG with you. Thank you, Dr. Brian McGowan, for allowing me to get to know you and letting me be in your amazing course just full of Blackness. Thank you to all my UNCG fam who completely brought me in for those cultural foundation classes and gave me all the love.

Thank you to my partner, Daniel Fitzpatrick, for literally letting me take my laptop everywhere we went to finish this degree. He put up with the long nights, the stressing out during comps and my proposal, and made sure I had food and went to sleep at a decent hour. Being the partner of someone doing a PhD can also be challenging, and I appreciate you in more ways than you will ever know.

Now, onto my friends. I cannot thank you enough for keeping me accountable and on track for this degree; the hounding and terrorizing have paid off. Thank you, Joy Gamble, Ingrid Wicker-McCree, Geno McCree, Ariel Germain, Esther Freeman, Jay Hampton, Sarah Bernson,

Jenn Hunter (mediocre compass), Victoria Farris, Jack, Wells, Dre, Dawn Snyder (manager of my life), Lenika Vazquez, Nicki Holmes, Robert Rios (for being my safe space), Brian Lackman (my Duke husband), Valerie Glassman, Ashley Baker, Nicole Eoon, Jessica Inman Reynolds, Shonte Kenney, Ryan Westman-Eoon, Katie Charles, George Matthews, Karen Murphy, Marlon Bankhead, Chanelle Smith-Walker, Brandon William Jones, Brittany Kelly, Keisha Bentley-Edwards, Meg Sunga, and all my other friends who I bounced ideas off of, cheered me on, and helped me through this degree. I am forgetting people with this list, and I am sorry, I will buy you a drink—but know that I appreciate and love you for your support. Thank you, Dr. Tomika Ferguson, for your article, "Safe Spaces for Black Women Student–athletes." Thank you, Dr. Nalani Butler, for writing your dissertation that served as part of the foundation of this dissertation, and thank you everyone else who sent me books, articles, or dissertations; they were tremendously helpful. Thank you to my Black Student–athlete Summit family, as the folks I met there gave me tremendous support for my degree and my company. I went to learn and found a family.

I thank all the other friends who were on my comps and dissertation defenses. You took time out of your days to listen to me talk about my research and cheer me on. I appreciate you so much. Thank you to all my other friends who always cheered me on and supported me. You know who you are. A PhD is difficult, but when you have folks cheering you on every step of the way, like I did, it becomes a tad bit easier. Your love and assistance will always be remembered. I cannot say enough about the support you gave me. Holy shit. I couldn't have asked for a better cheer squad. Thank you, Pete Wung and Dan Mickle, for the continued harassment and terrorizing whenever I posted on any social media asking if I should be writing. Those comments helped keep me on track whenever I would procrastinate.

Thank you to my cohort family: Veda Hawkins and Angie Sanchez. I cannot describe how much you meant to me while I lived in Michigan. I appreciated the time we had together and cannot wait to celebrate your graduation. You kept me sane during those classes and laughing all the time. I literally could not have asked for a better group of friends. Thank you, Keith Tate, for being a Day 1. You literally went from showing me houses to making sure I had a place for Christmas—you were not going to let me be alone. You made sure I knew what events or parties were going on, even though I was never in town. Thank you for taking care of me. I appreciate you. Thank you to my geography graduate student family. Even though I was rarely in town, you all gave me a family. I knew I always had a place to go, people to eat with, and answers to questions.

Thank you to my participants: Legz, RevolutionaryBitch, Diamond, Kennedy Jones, Sloane, Mini, African Queen, Sexual Chocolate, CeCe, Sasha, Goldie Carnousty, Carmel Delight, Half-Pint Hottie, Bianca, Slim, Snickers, Crystal, and Sharon for the fantastic conversations that did not feel like research but felt like a family reunion. I appreciate your vulnerability, truth-telling conversations, gossip, stories, and openness. You are the true MVPs of this dissertation. I hope I did your stories justice and told them in a way that will help Black female volleyball players who want to play professionally.

Thank you, Heartful Editors, Megan Bell and Gillian Foss; you all were so amazing to work with. If anyone reading this dissertation needs editing, please hire them. They are fabulous humans. Thank you for your help, Dr. Lisa-Marie Pierre, Eilis Flynn, Fiona Maguire, and Brian Lackman for all your editing assistance. Brian Lackman was instrumental in bringing up the idea of the Language Guide: thank you for pushing me. Without everyone in my corner, my dissertation would be a chaotic mess of ideas and comments and not the fleshed out, well-written

document that can assist future researchers who want to study Black female athletes. Thank you to my family: Laurie, Taylor, Shraddha, and Ida. I appreciated having your support during this degree. I could not ask for better family members, but please only refer to me as Dr. Fry. Lastly, I want to thank Sharon Ruggles and then Joni Burns for their support in all administrative things that helped create a smooth transition for me throughout my time at MSU. Doing the administrative work for so many graduate students is difficult, but they have both assisted in all ways possible. Sharon is sorely missed with her retirement.

PREFACE

This dissertation combines the love of my community of Black female volleyball players and my love of travel. It is a love letter to my community of Black female volleyball players: those who came before me, those who were with me during my journey while playing and coaching, and for all those who will come after me. This dissertation served as an opportunity to have our voices and experiences centered in ways that many articles, research projects, or stories have not. The stories within this dissertation are personal—not only to those I interviewed, but also to myself, because many times, Black female athletes have not had the opportunity to speak up about the positive and negative experiences they have endured.

My hope is these conversations will show not only Black female volleyball players, but all the people who support them (e.g., coaches, agents, teammates, friends, and family members) what a career in professional volleyball in Europe looks like, feels like, and can be for a Black female athlete. The intersection of being Black and female was critical to this dissertation because that intersectionality is what creates experiences not lived by white women nor Black men. I wanted to shed light on what a Black female athlete could experience when playing in Europe to help them make an informed decision that solely centered their experiences. Butler's (2015) dissertation assisted me greatly throughout my journey, as it was a document that closely mirrored what I wanted to write about, and she stated it best:

> I hope this dissertation empowers young women athletes to pursue their dreams in sport, and to move beyond their comfort zones to explore the world and all it has to offer. I hope this current study does justice to the stories of the women who participated in it and creates dialogue about women and their experiences in sport. I believe that the most

> valuable insight the findings from this current study offer are that sport can be used as a vehicle for empowerment that can create unimaginable opportunities and experiences for both its participants and its spectators. (p. ix)

I hope my participants know how greatly I appreciated the dialogue, stories, gossip, laughter, and truth telling. Although this dissertation contributes to academia in some ways, in more ways it is only meant for Black female volleyball players. Thank you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES xviii

LIST OF FIGURES xix

CHAPTER 1: LANGUAGE GUIDE 1
- African American/Black 3
- Agency 3
- Black Feminist Thought 3
- Black Geography(ies) 4
- Bridgehead 4
- Cisgender 4
- College Athlete 5
- Colorblind 5
- Country 5
- Critical Race Theory (CRT) 5
- Ethnicity 5
- Exploratory Case Study 6
- Female 6
- Gender Identity 6
- Geography 7
- Intersectionality 7
- Lived Experiences 8
- Nation 8
- Nationalism 8
- Oppression 9
- Overseas/International 9
- Pejoration 9
- Personal Aspirations 10
- Prejudice 10
- Privilege 10
- Race 10
- Racism 10
- Sex Assigned at Birth 11
- Sport Labor Migrant 11
- Sport Migration 11
- Socialization 11
- State 11
- Structure 12
- Student–Athlete 12
- Transgender 13
- Whiteness 14
- Summary 14

Chapter 2 14
Chapter 3 15
Chapter 4 15
Chapter 5 16
Chapter 6 16

CHAPTER 2: INTRODUCTION 18
Contributions of Black Female Athletes 23
Researchers in Sports Geography 24
Statement of Problem 27
Purpose and Significance 30
Research Question 32
Delimitations 33
Limitations 33
Spatial Frameworks 33
Global Racial Experiences 36
Background 39
Women's International Professional Sports 42
Volleyball History 46
Justification 50
Summary 51

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW 54
Sports Geography 59
Five Themes of Geography 66
Spatial Frameworks 70
Space 73
Place 74
History of Black Female Athletes 77
Black Female Athletes (BFAs) 79
Professional Black International Female Athletes 85
Professional International Black Male Athletes 91
Black Male College Athletes 92
Volleyball 93
Sport Migration 95
Critical Race Theory in Europe 97
Race and Racism in European Countries 99
Belgium 104
France 106
Germany 108
Italy 110
Spain 113
Sweden 115
Norway 117
White Gaze 118
Nationalism 120

Summary 126

CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODS 129
Circumstances and Challenges of Research 131
Circumstances for College Volleyball Coaches 131
Circumstances for Professional Volleyball Players 134
Theoretical Frameworks 135
Black Feminist Thought 135
Black Geographies 142
Theory of Racial Space 148
Methodology 151
Methodological Perspective 152
Design of Study 162
Methods and Procedures 163
Survey 163
Participants Interviewed 165
Interviews 167
Reliability and Validity 169
Triangulation 170
Member Checks 170
Trustworthiness of Data 171
Transcription 172
Subjectivity Statement 173
Epistemology and Positionality 174
Epistemology 175
Positionality 175
Research Limitations 177
Summary 177

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS 178
Participant Biographies 180
Slim 182
African Queen 183
Mini 184
Sexual Chocolate 185
Legz 185
Kennedy Jones 186
Carmel Delight 186
RevolutionaryBitch 187
Half-Pint Hottie 188
Snickers 189
Goldie Carnousty 189
Bianca 190
Crystal 191
Diamond 191
Sasha 192

CeCe 193
Sloan 194
Sharon 196
Analysis of Themes 197
Racial Obstacles 197
Appearance 214
Social Struggles 227
Difference 238
Agents 243
Thematic Discussion Summary 252
Summary 253

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION 256
Theoretical Frameworks 258
Black Feminist Thought 258
Black Geographies 264
Theory of Racial Space 265
Critical Black Feminist Sports Geographies 266
Broader Implications 267
Information the Players Wished They Could Have Known 268
Contracts 269
Packing 275
Mindset 277
Professionalism 279
Questions to Ask 284
Racial Experiences 285
Just Do It 287
Cultural 293
Communication with Other Black Females 295
Critical Black Feminist Sports Geographies 297
Gender Identity 303
Race 305
Sport 306
Space 307
Humanizing 309
Sporting Experiences of BFAs 310
Intersectional Oppressions 311
Unequal Space 320
Future Implications 324
Future BFVPs 324
Academia 325
Sports Geography 325
College Coaching Staffs 327
Agents 328
Current Professional BFVPs 329
Conclusion 331

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research 332
Research That Examines Professional BFAs..... 333
Research That Examines Professional Female Athletes Globally..... 334
Research That Examines Sports Geography Through a Race-Based Lens 334
Research That Examines Sports Geography Through a Socioeconomic Status and Class Lens..... 335
Application of the Critical Black Feminist Sport Geographies to Other BFAs Employing Their Athletic Skills, e.g., Track and Field, Basketball, or Cycling..... 335

APPENDICES 337
APPENDIX A: Semistructured One-On-One Interview Questions 338
APPENDIX B: Introduction Survey..... 340
APPENDIX C: Participant Demographics Table 341
APPENDIX D: Participants' Playing Experience Demographic Table 342
APPENDIX E: Invitation to Survey Recipients 343
APPENDIX F: Facebook Invitation to Potential Participants 344
APPENDIX G: Instagram Invitation to Potential Participants 345
APPENDIX H: Informed Consent Form 346

BIBLIOGRAPHY 349

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Countries Participants Played In 182

Table 2 Participant Demographics 341

Table 3 Breakdown of Participants' Playing Experiences 342

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework 17

Figure 2 Participants' European Professional Club Locations 181

Figure 3 Critical Black Feminist Sport Geographies Graphic 323

CHAPTER 1: LANGUAGE GUIDE

Language is a rapidly growing area of focus, and definitions of words can shift due to the lens of those who have created the words and those affected by the words (McWhorter, 2020). This language guide assists those reading this dissertation with definitions of commonly used words throughout the document to understand how these terms were used and defined. This language guide is similar to the style guide created for the *1619 Project*[1] to "ensure they would be mindful of the language used" (Pineda, 2021, para. 2). Being mindful of the language used was essential in this study, as some words have multiple definitions and words may be defined in multiple ways by a variety of people. Definitions developed by the most marginalized and the most affected populations were chosen, rather than the most well-known definitions, which, many times, has been created by those in power. As McKesson (2019) stated:

> Definitions are a critical part of social justice as definitions are acts of power. The words we use shape the way we think about the world. The more we understand that the act of definition is *always* an act of power, then we realize that part of our work is to change the very definition itself. It is why we push on what is a crime and not a crime, it is why we push on how people define words, because words are not *simply* ways to describe what is happening in front of us. Words and language use description to also decide who has power and who doesn't. (Pod Save the People)

How words are defined is important—not only to my dissertation, my field of study, or sport geography, but how we define Black cis or trans female athletes.

[1] According to Hannah-Jones (2021), "The 1619 Project, created by Nikole Hannah-Jones is an edited book which reframes American history, and retells history by placing slavery and the continued effects of it at the center of the retelling of the national narrative on history (p. preface x).

Understanding how language is flexible and malleable and changes through the times is critically important. Although there are words to define identities, communities, abilities, ethnicities, and gender identities, it should be acknowledged each definition takes "a different angle on a complex concept" (Zheng, 2022, para. 5). Many times, people want to know the perfect word to describe Black women; yet, as Zheng (2022) stated, "There isn't one. No one word or phrase speaks to the lived experiences of all the groups it describes, makes sense in all contexts, avoids problematic associations or implications and is accessible enough to use in everyday speech" (para. 4). Over time, the terms societies use to describe Black women have changed in response to social movements, attitude shifts, intergroup relations, and demographic trends (Zheng, 2022). Linguists call this phenomenon pejoration, which Zheng (2022) defined as "the deterioration of a term that originally had positive connotations over time, falling in popularity and being replaced with a newer one" (para. 7). By understanding how language has changed over time, researchers can track how humans came by the terms used today—not just for race, but for many other social constructs as well (Zheng, 2022).

This language guide was developed for both myself and others who come after me who, while writing, face an internal battle of what words to use and why to use them. Language matters, not only to explain the participants in my dissertation, but for those who come after me and use this language guide as a method to assist them with clarifying their use of certain words. As Zheng (2022) so eloquently explained, which fit into my why:

> [Language guides] aim to take a pragmatic approach to language, using the terminology already common in our lexicon but augmenting it with guidelines heavily informed by the spirit of the many alternatives that have proliferated. Ideally, it will be able to incorporate new developments in language without requiring complete revision and help us break out

of the cycle of adoption, distrust, and reinvention that so stymies conversations about race. (para. 46)

This language guide should be used to understand how these terms are defined and interact with the topic.

African American/Black

The U.S. Office of Management and Budget's (OMB, as cited by Rastogi et al., 2011) has made the distinction that:

> "Black or African American" refers to a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. The Black racial category includes people who marked the "Black, African Am., or Negro" checkbox. It also includes respondents who reported entries such as African American; Sub-Saharan African entries, such as Kenyan and Nigerian; and Afro-Caribbean entries, such as Haitian and Jamaican[2]. (para. 1)

The term African American was used interchangeably with Black throughout the research, writings, and interviews.

Agency

Agency is the ability of an individual to act independently in which the individual's actions shape their experiences (Butler, 2015).

Black Feminist Thought

D. F. Collins (2000) developed Black feminist thought because "suppressing the knowledge produced by any oppressed group makes it easier for dominant groups to rule" (p. 3).

---

2 Rastogi et al. (2011) also noted:

> Sub-Saharan African entries are classified as Black or African American with the exception of Sudanese and Cape Verdean because of their complex, historical heritage. North African entries are classified as White, as OMB defines White as a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. (p. 2)

Black feminist thought centers on lived experiences of Black women, and those studying feminist geography pedagogy have explained "everyday space as a site of feminist struggle, resistance, and negotiation, and of potential liberation, freedom, and transformation" (Pavlidis, 2018, p. 345).

Black Geography(ies)

Allen et al. (2019) noted:

> Much like Black feminist thought, Black geography focuses on the lived experiences of Black people. Black geography calls for scholars to open up multiple ways of knowing while highlighting the unique experiences of Black people to shape spatial visions and practices. (p. 1012)

Bridgehead

Bridgehead comprises sport labor migrants who do not need agents because they can migrate internationally through their network of personal contacts (Butler, 2015; Maguire, 1996).

Cisgender

VandenBos (2015) defined cisgender as:

> Having or relating to a *GENDER IDENTITY* that corresponds to the culturally determined gender roles for one's birth sex (i.e., the biological sex one was born with). A **cisgender man** or **cisgender woman** is thus one whose internal gender identity matches, and presents itself in accordance with, the externally determined cultural expectations of the behavior and roles considered appropriate for one's sex as male or female. Also called **cisgendered**. (p. 188)

College Athlete

A term used throughout this dissertation to replace the performative term of student–athlete[3] and is a more "fitting descriptor, given the demanding dual roles they juggle" (Clarke, 2021, para. 2).

Colorblind

Delgado and Stefancic (2012) defined colorblind as, "Or 'formal' conceptions of equality, expressed in rules that insist only on treatment that is the same across the board, can thus remedy only the most blatant forms of discrimination" (p. 8).

Country

See *State*.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Delgado and Stefancic (2012) explained:

> Critical race theory (CRT) movement is a collection of activists and scholars engaged in studying and transforming the relationship between race, racism, and power. The movement considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses take up but places them in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, setting, group and self-interest, and emotions and the unconscious. (p. 3)

Ethnicity

As Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) argued, ethnicity "refers to a group of people bound by a common language, culture, spiritual tradition, and/or ancestry. Ethnic groups can bridge national borders and still be in one group" (p. 45).

[3] See student–athlete.

Exploratory Case Study

An exploratory case study is a form of case study that aims to develop ideas and propositions for future research and/or examine a phenomenon that has not yet been examined (Butler, 2015; Yin, 2009).

Female

Although Merriam-Webster (n.d.) considers a woman a "an adult female human being" (para. 1), there is not a clean consensus among dictionaries of *woman* as an adjective of *female*. Sturgis et al. (2021) explained:

> Historically, "female" has been widely accepted as the adjective form of "woman." However, this usage is not only exclusionary, but frankly inaccurate. Not everyone who was born female is a woman, and not every woman was born female. The term "female" has a biological connotation, typically referring to sex assigned at birth based on anatomy and is also used to describe non-human animals who can bear young or producing eggs. (paras. 2–4)

Because this dissertation researched cisgender women who have the same sex assigned at birth and gender identity, the words *woman*, *women*, *female*, and *females* were all used interchangeably. It should also be noted that the conceptual framework developed from this dissertation specifically included gender identity to be more inclusive for trans athletes.

Gender Identity

Gender identity has been extensively described, but there are certain similarities and differences between definitions. VandenBos (2015) explained gender identity as "[H]aving or relating to a gender identity that corresponds to the culturally determined gender roles for one's

birth sex (i.e., the biological sex one was born with)" (p. 188). Mosier (n.d.) described gender identity as:

> One's deeply held core sense of being a woman, man, some of both, or neither. One's gender identity does not always correspond to biological sex. Awareness of gender identity is usually experienced very early in life, but may also shift over the course of one's life. (para. 28)

Geography

As McKittrick (2006) stated, geography should be viewed as "traditional geography which points to formulations that assume we can view, assess, and ethically organize the word from a stable (white, patriarchal, Eurocentric, heterosexual, classed) vantage point" (p. xii).

Intersectionality

Crenshaw (1989) developed intersectionality to describe the experiences of Black women who faced racism and sexism simultaneously. She stated:

> Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender. These problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including Black women within an already established analytical structure. Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sex-ism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated. (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140)

The term intersectionality has become more of an umbrella term used to explain the intersecting experiences of race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity, national origin, ability, and

citizenship consistently overlapping within geographical locations, place, and space. Due to migration, people do not have only one identity; rather, they have multiple identities that intersect to create their experiences. These intersections can create sites of oppression that a single identity may not (Crenshaw, 1989).

Lived Experiences

Lived experiences explain how people experience life in real settings (Butler, 2015; Hatch, 2002).

Nation

Flint (2006) clarified:

> The term nation has a very specific meaning that, if we focus on the definition, should not be used in this way. A nation is a group of people who believe that they consist of a single "people" based upon historical and cultural criteria, such as a shared language. In some contexts, membership of a nation will be granted only if inheritance, or blood ties, to members of a particular group can be established, but most nations do not require such blood ties. (p. 106)

Nationalism

A term defined by Kohn (1994) as:

> Nationality is a state of mind corresponding to a political fact, or striving to correspond to a political fact. This definition reflects the genesis of national- ism and of modem nationality, which was born in the fusion of a certain state of mind with a given political form. (p. 162)

Oppression

As Sensoy & DiAngelo (2017) explained, oppression:

> Describes a set of policies, practices, traditions, norms, definitions, and explanations (discourses), which function to systematically exploit one social group to the benefit of another social group. The group that benefits from this exploitation is termed the dominant (or agent) group, and the group that is exploited is termed the minoritized (or target) group. Oppression is different from prejudice and discrimination in that prejudice and discrimination describe dynamics that occur on the individual level and in which all individuals participate. In contrast, oppression occurs when one group's prejudice is backed by legal authority and historical, social, and institutional power. (pp. 61–62)

Overseas/International

Both overseas and international were used interchangeably to reference persons or things related to all countries and continents outside North America, and specifically, the United States.

Pejoration

A term considered by Finkbeiner et al. (2016) as "a semantic property of verbal expressions triggering negative or derogatory connotations. Often, pejoration is characterized as a type of lexical semantic change" (p. 1). Dictionary.com (2022) defined pejoration as "a lessening in worth, quality, etc., or semantic change in a word to a lower, less approved, or less respectable meaning" (para. 1). Zheng (2022) added a more nuanced definition with, "Terms that may have initially carried positive connotations may attract more negative or problematic connotations over time, fall in popularity, and be replaced with newer terms—a process that linguists" (para. 7).

Personal Aspirations

Personal aspirations refer to athletes who migrate to play at the highest level to see how far they can go professionally. These participants are motivated by personal goals and personal satisfaction (Butler, 2015).

Prejudice

As Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) explained, prejudice is "learned prejudgment about members of social groups to which we do not belong to. It is based on limited knowledge or experience with the group. Simplistic judgments and assumptions are made and projected onto everyone from that group" (p. 227).

Privilege

As Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) noted, privilege is:

> Systemically conferred dominance and the institutional processes by which the beliefs and values of the dominant group are "made normal" and universal. Although, in some cases, the privileged group is also the numerical majority, the key criterion is social and institutional power. (p. 80)

Race

Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) defined race as "a socially constructed system of classifying humans based on particular phenotypical characteristics: skin color, hair texture, and bone texture" (p. 45).

Racism

Love (1998) described racism as an entrenched system that, due to various factors (e.g., behaviors, norms, laws) sustains a hierarchy of one race over another).

Sex Assigned at Birth

Mosier (n.d.) stated sex assigned at birth is "the sex that is assigned to an infant at birth, usually by a doctor or medical staff, based on the infant's visible sex organs, including genitalia and other physical characteristics. Classifications made are most often male, female or intersex" (para. 43).

Sport Labor Migrant

Maguire and Falcous (2011) defined sport labor migrant as "athletes who travel around the world for sporting opportunities and encounter varying circumstances, barriers, and incentives based on athletic skill, marketability, and other varying factors" (p. 138).

Sport Migration

Vaicaitis (2021) coined this term, which "consists of athletes, coaches, managers, and other sport-related individuals who migrate due to sport-related activities" (p. 12).

Socialization

Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) noted that socialization "refers to our systematic training into the norms of 'our' culture. It is the process of learning the meanings and practices that enable us to make sense of and behave appropriately in that culture" (p. 36).

State

The term *state* is confusing when used interchangeably with countries in relation to the United States, "where the term state is used to refer to the fifty separate entities that comprise the country" (Flint, 2006, p. 105). But in reality, when discussing countries and geopolitics, Flint (2006) added:

> It is more precise to refer to countries as states. Hence, the United States is actually a state, as is Great Britain, Kuwait, France, or Nigeria. States are defined by their

possession of sovereignty over a territory and its people. States are the primary political units of the international system. A state is the expression of government control over a piece of territory and its people. The geographic scope of the governmental control exists in a series of nested scales. (p. 105)

Structure

A structure is a system that constrains and regulates a person's movements without regard to the individual's choice in the matter (Butler, 2015; Carter-Francique, 2013).

Student–Athlete

The term student–athlete is one that was formed to assist the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in fighting worker's compensation claims when injured playing. Walter Byers (as cited by Kalman-Lamb et al., 2021), the first executive director of the NCAA explained that they "crafted the term *student–athlete* and soon it was embedded in all NCAA rules and interpretations" (para. 6). The term came into play in the 1950s, when the widow of Ray Dennison, who had died from a head injury received while playing football in Colorado for the Fort Lewis A&M Aggies, filed for workers'-compensation death benefits. Did his football scholarship make the fatal collision a "work-related" accident? Was he a school employee, like his peers who worked part-time as teaching assistants and bookstore cashiers? Or was he a fluke victim of extracurricular pursuits?

Given the hundreds of incapacitating injuries to college athletes each year, the answers to these questions had enormous consequences. Critically, the NCAA position was determined only by its member institutions—the colleges and universities, plus their athletic conferences—as students themselves have never possessed NCAA representation nor a vote. Practical interest turned the NCAA vigorously against Dennison, and "the Supreme Court of Colorado ultimately

agreed with the school's contention that he was not eligible for benefits, since the college was 'not in the football business'" (Coates, 2011, para. 3). The term student–athlete was deliberately ambiguous. College players were not students at play (which might understate their athletic obligations), nor were they just athletes in college (which might imply they were professionals). That they were high-performance athletes meant they could be forgiven for not meeting the academic standards of their peers; that they were students meant they did not have to be compensated, ever, for anything more than the cost of their studies. According to Branch (2014) "*Student–athlete* became the NCAA's signature term, repeated constantly in and out of courtrooms" (paras. 2–4).

Transgender

Transgender was described by Moser (2021) as:

> Often shortened to trans. A term describing a person's gender identity that does not necessarily match their assigned sex at birth. Transgender people may or may not decide to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically to match their gender identity. This word is also used as an umbrella term to describe groups of people who transcend conventional expectations of gender identity or expression—such groups include, but are not limited to, people who identify as transsexual, genderqueer, gender variant, gender diverse, and androgynous. (para. 47)

Furthermore, The Human Rights Campaign (n.d.) defined transgender as:

> An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc. (para. 5)

Whiteness

Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) defined whiteness as "the academic term used to capture the all-encompassing dimensions of white privilege, dominance, and assumed superiority in society. These dimensions include ideological, institutional, social, cultural, historical, political, and interpersonal" (p. 229).

Summary

In this chapter, I emphasized the importance of language within the dissertation and how crucial it is that words are defined through the lens of the most marginalized and underrepresented, not through the lens of those who have always had the power to define words. The language guide was meant to be used as a two to assist the reader on setting the groundwork on how words will be used, how words may be used interchangeably, and lastly, to uplift the less commonly used definitions created by those who have been intentionally silenced. It is imperative that language, the nuance, and the flexibility around is being discussed not just within dissertations, journals, or classrooms, but also by people in power, amongst children, by parents, and when discussing topics that have consistently been considered hot topics or social unacceptable to discuss.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 introduces the topic of the dissertation, outlined the problem, and introduced preliminary literature on how geography, gender identity, race, and sport intersect. A solid description of the background, personal history, epistemology, and positionality to give a clear understanding of the relationship to the topic is included. Lastly, the research question is stated, which explains how this dissertation adds to numerous independent fields and helps connect various fields in ways not previously recognized.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 provides a detailed literature review on topics surrounding sports geography, gender identity, race, and sport. This review of the literature includes topics on:

- Sports geography
- Space, place, and their intersections and fluidity
- History of Black female athletes
- BFAs
- BFVPs
- Professional Black international male athletes
- BMCAs
- Volleyball
- Sport migration
- Critical race theory in Europe
- Race and racism in European countries
- White gaze
- Nationalism

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 discusses the theoretical frameworks of Black feminist thought, Black geographies, and theory of racial space. Prior research has excluded these athletes from the primary discipline of geography. Chapter 3 provides further details on using surveys and interviews to gather the information and data and the methodological approaches used to answer the research question.

Chapter 5

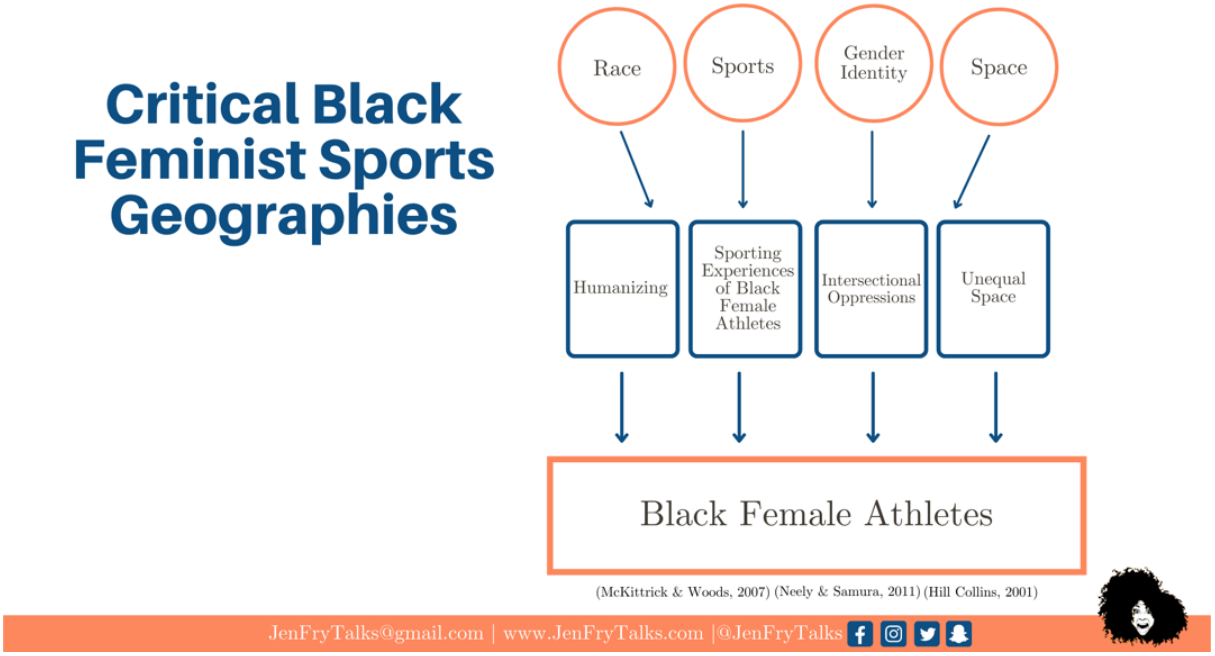
Chapter 5 analyzes the findings from survey data and interviews with current and former professional BFVPs; namely, how their experiences can be explained when coupled with the theoretical frameworks, experiences through a theoretical lens that centers the nuances that come with being an athlete.

Chapter 6

In Chapter 6, I present the results of the findings, possible confirmations, or contradictions to the research question, and cover how knowledge gained from the dissertation helps further the intersection of geography, gender identity, race, and sport. The conclusion explains how these findings could have implications not only for practitioners and scholars in academia, but also for future and current collegiate BFVPs, current college coaches, club coaches, parents, family members, agents, and anyone else who assists BFVPs in their quest to play professionally. Lastly, I created a new conceptual framework called critical Black feminist sports geographies. Critical Black feminist sports geographies can be used as a theoretical framework to help the researchers and scholars understand the relationship among concepts for BFVPs in relation to the real world by linking concepts, ideas, and experiences. Figure 1 provides a visual of the conceptual framework.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



I created this conceptual framework to describe how the four theoretical frameworks intertwined in this study (see Figure 1). Their common themes integrate typically unconnected lines of academic inquiry from multiple fields to establish how to center the experiences of professional BFAs.

CHAPTER 2: INTRODUCTION

> I am walking to the market, and I hear this little boy screaming "Africa." I was like, "I know he's not trying to get my attention," so I kept walking. He gets close, and he's like, "Africa, Africa, Africa," and I'm like, "Okay, he's talking to me." I turned around, and he has a book, and he's like, "Africa, Africa." He opens the book, and it's a Black man hanging from a tree.
>
> —Mini, *Participant*

Mini's market experience was unexpected but holds many similarities to my own when traveling in Europe. Experiences shape how humans perceive and interact with the world. Mini's experiences shaped her, just as mine have shaped not only who I am, but also the type of research I conduct. By identifying with these perspectives, I formulate my questions, develop my approach, and most importantly, work to elevate the voices of Black female volleyball players (BFVPs). As an individual traveler and member of a variety of multiracial and multiethnic groups who traveled for sports and personal enrichment, my subjectivity has developed through years of travel outside the United States. Just as with spatial frameworks, my subjectivity is one that is constantly changing, shifting, and never stagnant. My subjectivity is one developed from growing up with a background in athletics—specifically as a former collegiate-level, Black,[4] female coach—which has been an asset that informed and influenced my doctoral studies and research projects.

---

4 According to AP News (2020):

> AP's style is now to capitalize Black in a racial, ethnic or cultural sense, conveying an essential and shared sense of history, identity and community among people who identify as Black, including those in the African diaspora and within Africa. The lowercase black is a color, not a person. AP style will continue to lowercase the term white in racial, ethnic and cultural senses. After a review and period of consultation, we found, at this time, less support for capitalizing white. White people generally do not share the same history and culture, or the experience of being discriminated against because of skin color. In addition, AP is a global news organization and there is considerable disagreement, ambiguity and confusion about whom the term includes in much of the world. (paras. 1–3)

I was a three-sport student–athlete in a small town in Arizona.[5] As a first-generation student, I received a volleyball scholarship to play at a community college and then a 4-year institution. During college, I coached young women between the ages of 12 and 16, which cemented my love of using volleyball as a vehicle to assist during some of the most challenging and transformational years of their lives. I was a collegiate volleyball coach for 15 years and coached in two of the prestigious Power 5 Conferences[6], the PAC-12 and the BIG 10. This experience allowed me to coach for a national championship while at the University of Illinois[7] in 2011. Though I left coaching in 2015, my past coaching experiences and continued engagement in the community, affords me virtually unrestricted, worldwide access to many past and present BFVPs and I am still firmly entrenched in the world of collegiate athletics. Due to my company[8] I am regularly invited to present to collegiate athletic departments, staff, coaches, and college athletes.[9]

Through my doctoral research, I focused on understanding the situatedness of BFVPs. I examined how place and space created inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics among teams as well as how place and space affect the racial experiences of these players when playing in Europe. I investigated the roles of diversity, inclusion, sensitivity, and otherness from athletes' perspectives. This dissertation specifically focuses on and centers the experiences of both

---

5 I am a naturalized U.S. citizen who carries dual citizenship of both the United States and Canada.
6 In Division I athletics, there are five conferences considered the Power 5: Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Big Ten Conference (Big 10), Big 12 Conference (Big 12), Pac-12 Conference (Pac-12), and Southeastern Conference (SEC; Dodd, 2020). *Power 5* was an informal title given to these conferences that started in the mid-2000s; and "the 65 schools [within the Power 5] combined to generate approximately $8.3 billion in athletic revenue last year" (Broughton, 2020, para. 2).
7 Please do not look this match up. We lost to University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in four. Yes, I am still angry about it.
8 I own JenFryTalksLLC, a social justice firm that focuses on educating and empowering those in athletics through an antiracist lens.
9 Student–athletes is replaced throughout the dissertation with college athletes, as student–athletes is thought to be an oppressive term that puts limits on an athlete's ability to monetize themselves.

collegiate and professional Black female athletes (BFAs) to explore how their time as collegiate athletes was shaped by the intersection of race and gender identity. My role as an educator, mentor, and former coach allowed me to network with collegiate volleyball programs, staff, alumni, and current players to build a database of over 100 BFVPs who play internationally—some who played decades ago but have since retired, some who have recently retired, and others who currently play on a European professional team.

As a Black female in the United States, I looked for confirmation through existing studies to see if my experiences as a collegiate coach, player, and solo traveler when traveling Europe were similar or different to what was experienced by professional BFVPs while in Europe. I realized there was a gap in literature on experiences of BFVPs in both the United States and Europe that centered on space, gender identity, race, and sport. Throughout my research, I did not find any information on what BFVPs encountered on their professional teams, including relationships with team owners, living situations, social and dating lives, and contract negotiations as BFVPs. Participants in my dissertation discussed their experiences with covert and overt racism as BFAs in predominantly white European countries, issues they dealt with during their teenage years in club ball, and experiences in college. Participants of the study understood, consciously and subconsciously, how to navigate the United States as BFVPs, but they had not thought about what it would be like to navigate Europe (Willis, 2015).

Discussing their past experiences in club volleyball and college with racism assisted participants in considering how racism was perpetuated in different manners while they played professionally. The racism they experienced in Europe had additional layers of (a) being from the United States and away from home; and (b) facing a lack of safety, language barriers, and cultural barriers (Sweeney, 2014; Willis, 2015). Once I began speaking with the former and

current professional BFVPs, I realized many of them did not have access to resources during the process of becoming professional volleyball players in Europe; there was limited information on the internet, an unsureness of who to discuss the experience with, and virtually no academic literature available to assist them. These racial aspects of playing professionally in Europe as a Black woman were not communicated to them as something to potentially expect. Many did not receive information when considering if they wanted to play and where in Europe was the best place for them to play.

Unfortunately, the professional BFVPs in this study have experienced the same difficulties I encountered over 20 years ago when I first considered playing professionally, as well as what I encountered through the decades of traveling throughout Europe. In this dissertation, I focused on BFVPs due to being a Black woman, my background in the sport, and the growing popularity of volleyball in the United States and abroad. As a player and coach, I saw many BFAs who were the only BFVPs on their club teams, in the entire club, or on their collegiate teams. Sadly, BFVPs playing professionally are still plagued by this issue (Butler, 2015). They are often the only Black athlete on the team, and without a close support system, they must independently deal with covert and even overt racism shown by fans, teammates, and coaches.

The experiences of professional BFVPs born in the United States who compete in Europe have not been widely explored through a geographic lens that focuses on the spatial frameworks of place and space. Researching this demographic and sport is essential due to the importance of more research and literature on BFAs, as well as due to the influx of BFVPs playing professionally in Europe. Although there is no accurate number on how many BFVPs have transitioned from college to professional ranks, there are negligible opportunities for BFVPs to

gain needed experience at what is considered a high level if they do not play in college. College volleyball prepares BFVPs for professional play. One of the last BFVPs to play at a professional level straight from high school was Keba Phipps. Phipps started playing on Team USA at age 16 and went on to play in events such as the 1988 Summer Olympics, 2003 World Cup, and 2004 Summer Olympics (Phipps, 2021). She also had a professional playing career that spanned over a decade with stops in Brazil and Italy.

Due to the importance of collegiate play on professional volleyball aspirations, I focused my research on BFVPs within the last three decades who have played in a college or university volleyball program. I initiated this inquiry to specifically target race and gender, but research of BFVPs can be expanded to other parts of the world, extended to other sports, or broadened to include those who identify as religious, parents, LGBTQ+[10], Native, Indigenous, Asian, Hispanic or Latina. To understand the wide variety of experiences that identity creates for people, it is essential to broaden the research to include other nondominant groups and identities. Specifically, researching BFVPs was important because of their nuanced experiences with the intersection of race and gender identity within sport. Sport is the ultimate paradox, as there is a long history of the intersecting ways racism and sexism are felt in nuanced and specific ways by BFVPs. A dichotomy exists where athletic identity can carry a sense of privilege, whereas racial and gender identity do not (Harmon, 2009). Sport is also where crucial upward mobility and opportunity can occur for BFAs; thus, sport has been used for many decades by Black women to gain opportunities and experiences not offered to them within the United States (Lansbury, 2014).

[10] This acronym stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning or Queer.

Contributions of Black Female Athletes

The contributions of BFAs have been considerable both internationally and domestically, not only with their successes in their sport, but also in the notoriety they gained as BFAs competing in very hostile locations (Lansbury, 2014). Research has started to gain momentum; historically, scholarship has been limited to discourse on female athletes' experiences in college. Although BFVPs' worldly contributions have been written about, no researchers have added the spatial element of place and space to their studies, despite considerable professional opportunities for BFAs who have finished their college eligibility. Professional Black athletes—such as Althea Gibson, Wilma Rudolph, Alice Coachman, Dominique Dawes, Florence Griffith Joyner, Debi Thomas, Jackie Joyner-Kersee, and Serena and Venus Williams—have played internationally and excelled (Simien et al., 2019). Yet, according to Simien et al. (2019), notable athletes have received little attention in academic literature. Researchers who study BFAs have focused on a variety of aspects of collegiate experiences, such as institution type, sport, institutional location, team demographics, and the composition of athletic staff and administration (Carter-Francique, 2013; Carter-Francique & Richardson, 2016; Simien et al., 2019; Withycombe, 2011). Ferguson (2021) has started adding space to her research on BFAs and safe spaces on campuses to understand how important it is to critique space through the lens of geography.

In Divisions I–III, data from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA, n.d.-a) show between 2012–2021, BFVPs constitute the second-largest racial/ethnic group of female volleyball collegiate players at 11%, behind white at 70%. Observationally, they also comprise the second-largest group of volleyball players from the United States who play in Europe. As such, it was important to research and better understand the proportion of BFAs migrating to

Europe for volleyball. Although parallels exist with BFAs who play tennis, football,[11] track and field, and basketball, there are some nuances and experiences unique to volleyball players due to the predominately white coaches and staffs who have not previously interacted with BFAs. All BFVPs born and raised in the United States experience some aspect of overt and covert racist norms based on the country's foundational history of slavery, genocide, racialized violence, and oppression as property (Hill Collins, 2000; Jordan, 2010; McInnis, 2019; Price, 2010). European involvement in the transatlantic slave trade and colonization of predominately Black countries, such as Suriname, the West Indies, the Bahamas, and Barbados, led to a different history with race than countries in Latin America, Asia, or around Australia, the latter of which holds similarities to the United States (Essed & Hoving, 2009; McKittrick, 2006; Nimako, 2020).

Because of these racial similarities, the considerable number of professional volleyball clubs at all skill levels in Europe, and all the dissertation participants having had experience playing in at least one European country—Europe was an ideal location to use to research the racial experience of BFVPs. Though other countries on different continents have professional volleyball leagues, many of those volleyball leagues are catered toward more elite volleyball players or prefer to have volleyball players from local regions in close proximity to the teams instead of having athletes from other countries. Considering the overwhelming percentage of my participants who played at least one professional season on a European team, it made sense to narrow the scope to Europe for this study.

Researchers in Sports Geography

Researchers in sports geography have not yet studied aspects of place and space in relation to the challenges of race and gender that BFVPs navigate in their professional careers. Racism is

[11] Football in Europe is referred to as soccer in the United States. The words are used interchangeably.

inherent in both the foundation of the United States and Europe, which affects BFVPs. The countries within these Europe have defined racism differently due to slavery (Harmon, 2009; Nimako, 2020). Professional BFVPs understand what it means to be Black in the United States—to be concerned about policing, healthcare, education, and stereotypes (Burley et al., 2007; Ferguson, 2021). Being Black in Europe is a different experience that many professional BFVPs were unprepared for because they did not know their Blackness would be viewed and treated differently. This intersection of racism and sexism affects BFVPs when they cross borders to play professionally in Europe due to navigating new rules, norms, cultures, stereotypes, and systems (Butler, 2015; Sweeney, 2014; Willis, 2015). Dibosa (2019), British art historian, illuminated many BFAs' feelings when entering and moving around Europe. In an interview, Dibosa (2019) shared what his Blackness meant to him in Europe and how the spaces he operated in often do not feel as if they are meant for him:

> David Dibosa: As soon as I cross a border, I'm black in a different way.
>
> Bilal Qureshi: Shereen, that's the British art historian David Dibosa, whose work is focused on black modern artists. And he says while race is a political fact, it's also a social and psychological construction. And the way it shifts across borders can be the source of creative freedom, especially for artists of color.
>
> Dibosa: One actually feels it. It's not just something that one has to think about. One feels it. You know, it comes from the airport or wherever and starts to move around a different city. When it's looked at in a different way, people come close or don't in a different way. And people address one in a different way. So, the ways in which these formations shift and change according to context are significant. They're subtle, and yet, they're palpable in every move that we make. (paras. 21–23)

Participants in this study largely agreed with Dibosa and echoed similar feelings as BFAs when entering and moving around Europe through their experiences of being othered, including the ways they were looked at, treated, and micro-aggressed. These feelings included being looked at as different, or alien—or, as participant Sharon stated, "Who I am physically is such an anomaly and so like alien, literally alien, that I create a sensation, like it was definitely interesting." As shown by the scarcity of research on this topic, professional BFVPs have been consistently excluded in the context of sports geography, and their stories and experiences have been omitted in mainstream narratives. Europe was also an excellent place to research women's sports because there is a history of creating opportunities for women to play professionally and semi-professionally (Butler, 2015; Galardini, 2020; Garcia, 2021). There are leagues in Europe for all skill levels—for professionals dedicated to the game, working moms who do not practice much but play in games, athletes who work a second job as janitors, or English teachers during the season (Volleybox, 2021). By understanding more of the constraints, feelings, and thoughts experienced by BFVPs playing in Europe, researchers can recognize how the place and space of Europe directly affects how players compete. Targeted research on these experiences can also assist people proximal to these athletes by creating an area of research that interrogates other women's sports and the athletes who compete professionally in Europe.

BFVPs who have encountered racial interactions while playing in Europe have demonstrated racism is a global problem—not just a problem in the United States (Carrington, 2013; Flores, 2015; Keaton, 2010; Nimako, 2020). Racism has been studied across multiple disciplines, and the "experiences of Black women are grouped either together based on their gender (with white women) or their race (with Black men) without considering that their realities and circumstances are distinctly different from both of the aforementioned groups" (Simien et

al., 2019, p. 412). Due to a gap in scholarly research on the dimensions of race and gender within sports geography, an intersectional approach was critical to this research, which aimed to significantly alter how future researchers think about BFAs as gendered and racialized humans—who also happen to be athletes (Bruening et al., 2005; Cooper, Porter, et al., 2017; Harmon, 2009). An intersectional mentality inclusive of multiple identities that include race and gender also paves the way for compelling research that puts the perspectives and experiences of BFAs at the center of sport and education research, rather than in their historically marginalized positions (Bruening et al., 2005; Simien et al., 2019).

I sought to understand how place and space affect the racial experiences of the U.S.-born, BFVPs in Europe. I explicitly centered those experiences using racial and geographical theoretical frameworks: Black feminist thought, Black geographies, and theory of racial space. These racialized frameworks have infrequently been considered together to uplift and center stories from BFAs. The goal of this research was to provide BFVPs with the space for their voices to be heard, as too often, they have not been provided such a space. In this study, BFVPs discussed navigating their lives, stories, and experiences in a system that does not recognize the importance of their perspectives, nor their lived experiences (Stratta,1995a).

Statement of Problem

In recent years, the study of race and geography has gained momentum. Little is known about the specific experiences of professional, U.S.-born, BFAs worldwide (Etzel et al., 2002). Thus, finding any research on the intersection of gender identity, geography, and race in sports geography or any sports literature is rare. Sports geography lacks theoretical frameworks that employ a more nuanced examination of how geography, gender identity, race, and sport affect professional BFVPs. Bale (1996) explained, “One thing that geography of sport has lacked is a

distinctive conceptual framework. All too often, 'sports geography' reflects the mentality of a 'yet another thing to be mapped' syndrome" (p. 164). Sports geography is more than mapping. Unfortunately, there exists only a scarce amount of research and frameworks within sports geography that adequately illuminate how geography, gender identity, race, and sport intersect to better describe lived experiences.

In some literature, the combination of race, sport, gender identity, and space has been addressed, but never in relation to Black women athletes. Heiskanen (2014) drew connections between boxing and the spatial organization of racialized, class-based, and gendered bodies within particular urban geographies in relation to Latino athletes. Heiskanen's book focused on the *Latinization* of boxing and included women and men boxers, but Black boxers were left out. van Ingen (2003) explored geographies of gender identity, sexuality, and race in sport, just to "unpack what space is, how it is produced, and how it informs geographies of gender identity, sexuality, and race" (p. 201), but left out an in-depth description of the racial component. The sociologist Carrington (2013) published much work on race and sport with a geographical lens but missed addressing the gender identity component and the intersection of race and gender identity on athletes. A. Coleman (2006) explored how socially constructed ideas of race have affected the assumptions of Black athletes in relation to space, media, and society. These constructs, she noted, have led to the idea of stacking Black athletes in specific positions in sports alongside the use of systemic racism and forms of eugenics. A. Coleman's article focused solely on Black male athletes through centuries and decades, excluding how BFAs have been affected by the same factors as the Black male athletes.

Sports geography researchers have overlooked professional BFAs in their studies and have neglected to include their experiences within and beyond the United States. Conversely,

sport geography researchers have focused on maps, patterns, stadiums, and landscapes for decades (Bale, 1990, 1994; Mason & Robins, 1991). Furthermore, when Black male athletes have been studied, their experiences have often been assumed to represent both men and women (Bruening, 2005; A. R. Carter, 2008; Engh et al., 2017; Harmon 2009; Simien et al., 2019). Similarly, when white women have been studied, their experiences have been assumed to represent Black women (Adjepong & Carrington, 2014; Simien et al., 2019). The aspect of place and space on BFAs has not been examined as much as other more traditional topics within the geography discipline. Because of this limitation, BFA voices and experiences remain virtually unknown.

Although research exists on women's professional sports in Europe, sport migration, race, and gender identity, understanding these topics through a geographical lens remains missing. In the research that does exist, the focus has not been on geography, gender identity, sport, nor race in respect to BFAs from the United States; rather, "the experiences and motivations of [U.S. female] athletes as sport labor migrants have received limited attention" (Butler, 2015, p. 1). As Bairam (2017) explained using the specific context of soccer, previous "studies on soccer from a geographic perspective are relatively isolated and demonstrate a tendency to favor male professional athletes . . . there is no similar research to examine the origins of female professional soccer players" (p. ii). The lived experiences of Black athletes have interested researchers, but, as Engh et al. (2017) found, "Many studies of sport and race had previously focused on men, perpetuating the construction of Black sportsmen as universal subjects . . . studies of gender and sexuality in sport, have tended to focus on experiences of white women" (p. 69).

This dissertation explored how racial experiences affect professional BFAs in intricate ways to provide a comprehensive picture of what it is like to play professional volleyball in Europe. These components have been frequently ignored in conversations about European professional women's volleyball. Analyzing how place and space affect playing and living experiences in Europe allowed professional BFVPs to develop a common language to discuss the possibility of playing volleyball professionally in Europe with other BFVPs. More research can also lead to increased resources for professional BFVPs. As it stands, there are only a small number of documented resources on how to get into professional volleyball, how to navigate systems and contracts, and how to recognize what the experience entails; thus, these discussions are essential and warranted this research.

Purpose and Significance

The first purpose of this research was to elevate and uplift stories of racial experiences as recalled by professional BFVPs who have played or currently play in Europe. As BFVPs, their unique experiences and voices have not historically been deemed worthy of research within the geography discipline. These lived experiences and perspectives are needed because scholars have rendered Black women racialized and gendered experiences invisible or obscured their complex, intersectional race and gender identities (Simien et al., 2019). BFVPs' stories—particularly when focusing on space, place, and sport within geography—are nonexistent and deserve to be told.

The second purpose of this research was to equip those who support professional BFVPs with knowledge of their treatment in Europe. It is critical that support systems understand how to assist professional BFVPs in navigating how race and racism manifest in Europe. The support systems athletes have should better understand how place and space affect athletes' decisions on the best and safest locations to play in Europe as Black women. Furthermore, the study also

raised the voices of a group of professional athletes whose experiences differ from those of Black male athletes or white female athletes.

Lastly, this research assists BFVPs themselves. I aim to help collegiate volleyball players currently playing or considering professional play through various factors of that decision. These factors include how environment, place, space, and the intersection of geography, race, gender identity, and sport impact their experiences in Europe. This research helps prepare these athletes to be proactive and prepared versus reactive and unprepared with their ventures into professional play. In an interview, Gale (as cited by Anderson, 1998) noted, "The interaction between culture and the environment is fundamental to geography" (p. 368). This research supplements the scarce body of knowledge on how place and space impact the racial experiences of BFVPs in Europe. Moreover, researchers like me—who are former BFAs and who study BFAs—create valuable research by understanding the nuance of centering the voices of BFAs. There are complexities and nuances to experiences as a BFA that only other BFAs can understand without explanations. This understanding then aids Black women in the research, as we can enter spaces others cannot and speak from empathy versus sympathy due to similar lived experiences.

Furthermore, studies like this one have the potential to provide insights other researchers are unable to give due to myriad reasons, including (a) the identity of the researcher, (b) lack of others' experiences playing collegiate volleyball, and (c) a lack of others' experiences coaching collegiate volleyball. These factors gave me the ability to enter spaces other researchers could not. Understanding the lived experiences of participants was essential in gathering the research and building relationships to facilitate access to such personal and vulnerable conversations. I situated this topic within my area of expertise in geography and doing so allowed me to think

boldly about how the intersection of race, gender identity, sport, and geography affected BFAs' experiences, both domestically and in Europe.

Research Question

In this dissertation, the theoretical frameworks of Black feminist thought, Black geographies, and theory of racial space were employed to inform the creation of my conceptual framework, called critical Black feminist sport geographies. By solely centering on the experiences of BFVPs, this overarching framework can help future researchers better understand how place and space affect the racial experiences of professional BFAs in Europe. In addition, I employed surveys and interviews to study how the intersections of geography, gender identity, sport, and race affect all aspects of professional BFAs' experiences. The following question grounded the research:

> RQ: How do intersecting racial and gendered identities, place, and space influence the racism encountered by U.S. Black female professional volleyball players in Europe?

This question assisted me in investigating the different ways BFVPs from the United States experienced social constructs of race and racism. I focused on athletes who played on teams in homogenous countries with a low percentage of Black people in the surrounding population. The surveys and semi-structured interviews helped me understand participants' experiences with race and racism throughout their volleyball careers through club, college, and ultimately, professional play. Gaining a more holistic understanding of how these BFVPs have experienced the intersection of race, racism, and volleyball on consistently predominately white teams in Europe—and the ways their volleyball careers and personal lives have been affected as a result—was critical (Butler, 2015).

Delimitations

The study was delimited to current or former cisgender or transgender women who identified as Black or African American professional female volleyball players over the age of 21 who played at least one season in one European country on one European team. The investigation was aimed at an underrepresented group representing an essential and often silenced demographic (A. R. Carter, 2008). Data collection methods included a demographic survey and were delimited to personal semi-structured interviews through the Zoom platform (A. R. Carter, 2008; see Appendix A).

Limitations

The research design was restricted to current or former professional volleyball players who self-identified as cisgendered or transgendered women, Black and/or African American, and citizens of the United States, thus limiting the generalizability of the findings and conclusions. As a result of the small size of the sample, generalizability of the research was also limited (A. R. Carter, 2008). In the treatment group, it was not possible to measure the individual effects of each country, teammates, skin color, or coaches (A. R. Carter, 2008).

Spatial Frameworks

Both place and space are constructed ideals, as they are the result of people's perceptions, experiences of place and space, and their perspectives, agendas, and understandings of these experiences. Space and place and not passive or static; instead, they are active, ever-changing, and dynamic, which coincided with the phenomena researched and ways of seeing and interpreting. It is too often assumed by people outside of traditional geography that place and space are separate entities that do not interact with each other, when they are in fact social constructs that interact with each other and, in some ways, influence each other. Place and space

can be defined differently by each individual and can be confused for each other when there is not a full understanding of the situatedness of each of them. Place in traditional geography is defined in both broad and narrow terms that affect individual people, land, communities, and urban and rural areas.

In this dissertation, *place* was defined as a combination of two definitions. Place begins with how Duncan (1996) "defined [it as] the arrangement of public institutions, to relations of domination and subjugation, or the political construction of race" (p. 134). Place also includes "not being a physical, fixed location; rather, place represents a location of intersecting relationships and social structures that have been developed over time" (Ferguson, 2021, p. 14).

There can be confusion of place with space; for instance, space is many times not fully defined, defined by people as empty, or not even thought to exist, as people do not think they experience space. There is an idea that "space 'just is,' and the illusion that the external world is readily knowable and not in need of evaluation" (McKittrick, 2006, p. xv). In this dissertation, *space* was defined as "an abstract term for a complex set of ideas and that it is 'formless"' (Tuan, 1977, p. 34) with an understanding that bodies create space. Black women, with their intersection of race and female gender identity, are misunderstood in space through negative stereotypes developed for them, but not by them (Ferguson, 2021). It is important that place and space are understood both as separate entities and concepts that play off each other in intricate ways. Place and space in Europe can look different depending on the country, the location of the country (i.e., east, west, south, or north), the percentage of Black people within the respective country, and lastly, the country's connection to slavery.

To understand the geographies of BFAs living and competing in Europe, it was helpful to consider their situatedness in space and place. Space and place have not been integrated into

inquiries focused on athletes and their racial identities within geography. As dual-sport geography topics, space and place should be interrogated to understand how they affect athletes, both in their places of competition and when living their daily lives. Eichberg (1990) expounded on the relationship sport has to space and place when he stated, "Sport has always been an interaction between body and environment to some extent, been determined by place and space, and that it has itself produced specific forms of place and space" (p. 245).

The idea of place and space is understood at quite a young age by BFAs, especially those in majority-white sports, such as volleyball, tennis, lacrosse, football, or field hockey (Pavlidis, 2018; Puwar, 2004; Withycombe, 2011). As stereotypes are pushed upon Black athletes, they attempt to determine how much space they take up in their sport and how they should act due to their size, personalities, loud laughs, or movements (Ferguson, 2021). Such a response emerged in Harmon's (2009) study, in which a participant discussed how she never felt comfortable in the space around her head coach, who had seemingly never coached a BFA; he would make comments that she "wasn't as aggressive or loud as they had expected" (p. 69).

All BFAs, knowingly or unknowingly, feel the effects of place and space during their athletic careers; therefore, understanding space and place in these contexts is essential to understanding how space and place affect the experiences of professional BFAs from the United States who played or play volleyball in Europe. Even though sports geography is a global discipline, researchers in the United States have often viewed racism through their U.S. sociopolitical lens; for example, "the Scandinavian countries (Norway, Sweden, and Denmark) tend to appear as essentially 'colorblind' and innocent as far as the history of colonial conquest and expansion goes" (Engh et al., 2017, p. 67). This view renders researchers unprepared for European countries' social, political, and colonial histories and how they affect BFAs in different

forms of covert and overt racism. This dissertation focused on professional BFVPs and geography (i.e., place, space, and Europe) which allowed me to engage with a narrative that identified and drew upon Black sporting history and BFAs to make visible social lives and experiences that are often displaced, rendered invisible, and thought to be ungeographic (McKittrick, 2006).

Global Racial Experiences

Racial experiences across countries and continents can be both overt and covert. In the United States, these experiences have included the touching of hair, name calling, mispronunciation of names, accusations of talking "Black" or talking "white," racial slurs, and experiencing over policing and oversurveillance (Chavez, 2020; Harmon, 2009; Simien et al., 2019; Stratta, 1995a). In European and Asian countries, these experiences have been similar; yet, some unique situations have emerged, such as the petting of Black skin, assuming BFAs to be prostitutes, or expecting Black teammates to do stereotypical Black "things" (e.g., being loud, a great dancer, a big jumper, or using overt hand gestures; Butler, 2015; Engh et al., 2017; Scraton et al., 2005; Simien et al., 2019). More generally, BFAs have experienced others making huge generalizations about Black people, oversurveillance in stores, consistent interactions with police or customs, being spit on, having things thrown at them, exclusion, or name calling (Butler, 2015; Sweeney, 2014; Willis, 2015). Limited research has been conducted on the specific experiences of BFVPs, including how place and space are intimately intertwined with how they experience life abroad based on their identities (Butler, 2015; Willis, 2015). Bale (2003) stated, "Space and place are two basic concepts that are central to both sport and geography" (p. 19). Place and space are fundamental links between sport and geography. Both space and place consider human movement and interactivity to emphasize the importance of regions to most sports; they are also

used to identify teams and fans. Sport and its athletes, coaches, and fans are affected by economic, social, and political factors, just as the towns, cities, and countries where sports franchises are located (Bale, 2003). Sports geography comprises the human interaction, climate, and location that contributes to a place, thereby affecting competitive outcomes and anchoring fans and communities (Bale, 2003).

This centrality of place and space within sports geography affects all aspects of a Black female's experience playing a professional sport. Such an impact affects both their professional and personal identities, as "each is concerned with space and the way it is occupied and they both focus on the way people move and interact in geographic space"[12] (Bale, 2003, pp. 12–13). Research on the intersection of professional and personal identities is even more important to understand for professional BFVPs when playing in Europe. Meisterjahn and Wrisberg (2013) noted, "There is less research attention devoted to the athletes who play their sport professionally in foreign countries" (p. 252). Due to the lack of research on professional BFAs in Europe, the experiences are very similar across the board, with no understanding of how identity creates different experiences.

Professional BFVPs have not yet appeared in sports geography literature, nor in geography more broadly. Due to the intersection of race and gender identity, BFVPs have a unique position within the place and space paradigm, which has not been researched as much as Black men and white women. Anderson (2015) situated the experience of BFAs by stating they navigate terrains of different countries, where space can "reinforce a normative sensibility in settings in which black people are typically absent, not expected, or marginalized when present" (p. 10). Daley (2020) asserted, "Most geographers are white, and most feminist geographers are

12 Geographic space is a triplet consisting of a set of locations: (a) L (topos), the set of spatial relations; (b) R (choros); and (c) the topology, T (geos; Smirnov, 2016).

white women, [and because of this], questions of race and the distinct experiences of black women have been marginal to mainstream feminist geographical thought" (p. 795). Hawthorne and Heitz (2018) described the lack of intersectional geographies that include complex, interesting, and multidimensional Black women, noting:

> It seems in geography, all the women are white, and all the black people are men, and the feminist geographers most frequently found on course reading lists are invariably white. When black scholars are referenced, they are often (deceased) men, most commonly Frantz Fanon and Stuart Hall. (p. 13)

Although geography researchers have understood how bodies spatially interact with other people and with their environment, McKittrick (2018) argued many have lacked the "Black geography lens [which] uncovers how the social identity of one's body can operate as a spatial indicator" (para. 3). Identity is heavily intertwined with sport and geography, as "race, class, gender, and sexuality determine patterns of habitation wherein Black people must negotiate places and spaces of denial and resistance" (McKittrick, 2018, para. 3). BFAs have intersectional identities and lived experiences not automatically negated because of their status as professional athletes. Because geographers have not studied those identities and experiences in depth, sport geography researchers have ultimately struggled to understand both "Blackness and Black people's humanity" (McKittrick, 2018, para. 17). BFAs' experiences have subsequently been left out and viewed as the exception to the rule. For so long, Black female bodies have been thought to be out of place or in the wrong place by those in society who defined place and space to fit the standards of whiteness, as well as those who defined who was included and who was excluded. Work on Black geographies and professional BFVPs signals there are alternative understandings of place and space that traditional geography has left out due to the assumption that Black

femininity is unknowing, expendable, and out of place (McKittrick, 2006). The research in this dissertation adds to the place–space paradigm by acknowledging the complex and layered relationships professional BFVPs have with geography and that they are worthy of research as an individual entity.

Background

Discussions of space and place have been absent from overall conversations on athlete experiences in sport. Considered the godfather of sports geography by those in the field, Bale (1988) stated, "The use of sports to provide insights into geographical questions has tended to be the exception rather than the rule and the focus of most sports—geographic study has been to further our knowledge of sports" (p. 518). Seminal sports geography literature by Bale (1988, 1994, 1996) and Rooney (1974, 1980) was written between the 1970s and 1990s, when many European countries did not have women's football leagues, nor did they allow women to play professionally. Sport has always been described as a melting pot, as athletes from all different identities, backgrounds, cultures, and so on converge for the common goal of winning. Simril (2019) explained, "Sports enable students to develop a sense of affiliation to their teams and school, and also create positive social networks that can help them navigate many potential problems" (para. 11). Unfortunately, as sport is a microcosm of society, it also has the biases and problems humans bring with them. Sport brings along with it the racism and hatred shown toward Black athletes, just as it is shown toward Black people both in and outside of the United States (Jones, 2002; Jordan, 2010; Llopis-Goig, 2013; McClendon, 2021).

The study of sports geography has not typically focused on people and their experiences; rather, it has mainly focused on location, landscapes, and fans (Bale, 1994, 2000; Rooney, 1974).

In his seminal book, Bale (2003) explained three themes that have been the focus of sports geography thus far:

1. The exploration of sports activity on the earth's surface and how the spatial distribution of sport has changed over time,
2. The changing character of the sports landscape and the symbiosis between the sports environment and those who participate in it, and
3. The making of prescriptions for spatial and environmental change in the sports environment. (p. 16)

Absent from past sports geography literature has been any interrogation of how the interplay of race and gender identity produces unique experiences for professional BFAs (e.g., Butler, 2015; Laws, 2012). Researchers of international sports have studied Black athletes, primarily concerning basketball or football (i.e., soccer), and have only researched Black men (King, 1988; Meisterjahn & Wrisberg, 2013; Ungruhe, 2013). Researchers who have consistently employed a geographical lens on sport have mainly considered men, focusing most studies on football. As cited by Bairam (2017), Bale researched professional male football players, analyzing where they originated from, where they migrated to, and how they changed over time. Bale's research (as cited by Bairam, 2017) found:

> How these variations were a direct reflection of changes in economic, cultural, and social situations; however, there were no studies of data (similar to Rooney [1974]) for professional female football players, entirely because they did not exist during that time period. (pp. 6–7)

Geography,[13] then, is a seemingly perfect context to situate how researchers look at the migration of sports—and sports facilities, athletes, and fans—and the various effects on sport on the athletes themselves. Unfortunately, most researchers have taken a spatial or landscape lens instead of focusing on the intersection of sport and geography from a cultural or racial lens (Bale, 1994, 2000, 2003). BFVPs have consistently moved through international place and space via environments that unknowingly or subconsciously have "particular sets of rules we intend to govern society, seeking to establish what and/or who is inappropriate or 'out of place' particular spaces" (Allen et al., 2019, p. 1010). The places and spaces professional BFVPs have tiptoed throughout their professional careers are worthy of research in many disciplines.

Massao and Fasting (2010) noted, "Sport should not be taken for granted as a level playing field, where different racial groups are allowed to enjoy the same privileges" (p. 157). Contrary to the popular ideology of sport held in U.S. society, there is no level playing field; sport is not the "great racial equalizer" (Hartmann, 2000, p. 231). Professional sports and the ideals of sport as a tremendous racial equalizer is a "paradox for Black female athletes" (Etzel et al., 2002, pp. 2–3) who have experienced both racial and sexual harassment. At the same time, these athletes get to play a sport they love and from which they receive benefits, such as living abroad, celebrity status, a salary, and travel. This dichotomy of experiences puts professional BFVPs in a conundrum of coping with racism to play the sport they love and enjoy. By investigating race as it pertains to sports geography, a greater understanding can be gained of the whole experience—not only of sport, but of the athletes as well.

13 As McKittrick (2006) stated, geography should be viewed as "traditional geography which points to formulations that assume we can view, assess, and ethically organize the word from a stable (white, patriarchal, Eurocentric, heterosexual, classed) vantage point" (p. xii).

Women's International Professional Sports

Though once sparse, research has begun to focus more on the experiences of professional BFVPs from the United States who play in Europe, even though European professional women's basketball leagues have a long and storied past. Butler (2015) explained women's basketball has been played overseas since the late 1930s with International Basketball Federation (FIBA) EuroBasket Women, which has since been renamed the European Basketball Championship Tournament. Due to World War II, international basketball competitions paused until the 1950s. Competition eventually resumed, and "for almost six decades in various guises [with the introduction of the Euro League Women], the competition was first established in 1958–1959, as the inaugural women's club competition on the continent" (FIBA.basketball, n.d., para. 5). Women's basketball within Europe has a long, storied history of playing, being successful, and facilitating the sport migration of women from the United States to play during their WNBA offseason or fully play and live in Europe (Butler, 2015).

Research specifically on women's professional basketball is limited, but women's football in Europe has increasingly received much attention and research, especially concerning the migration of professional female African athletes (Adjepong, 2020; Agergaard & Botelho, 2014; Saavedra, 2011). Football in Africa has slowly progressed in comparison to Europe, as women's football development in Africa varies greatly from region to region. Since the early 1990s, when the first qualifying tournament for the FIFA World Cup (i.e., Women's African Cup of Nations) commenced, more continental championships throughout the continent have been held. At least 30 countries in Africa have organized women's football within the last few decades—because of that effort, both championships and leagues have sprouted across the continent (Pelak, 2006; Saavedra, 2003, 2011). Engh (2014) provided insight into the mobility of

African female football players and how such mobility is shaped by complex intersections of ethnicity, race, gender identity, and nationality. These intersections present both opportunities and challenges for athletes to navigate different cultural, linguistic, and spatial spaces.

Certain countries in Europe have a stronger history of women's professional football in the 20th century compared to countries in Africa, but other countries have had similar progressions to Africa. Italy has a rich football history, and men's professional leagues have top teams, including Juventus, AC Milan Italy, and SSC Napoli Italy (LivItaly, 2018). The women's side is different, as there have only been amateur leagues since their inception in 1968 (Galardini, 2020). The women's leagues are consistently treated as second class because of their lack of access to world-class facilities, sponsors, and pay the men enjoy (Galardini, 2020). The top league, which went professional in 2020, only paid their women's soccer players "as little as $67 per week and a match bonus of $86" (Galardini, 2020, para. 14) until 2020. Spain's and Italy's women's leagues have had the same problems due to their lack of professional status. La Liga Femenina, the top women's league in Spain, does not have professional status; however, the league will earn professional status in the 2022–2023 season. Garcia (2021) explained, "Being considered a professional league will allow the Liga Femenina to be independent, to get better resources and improve conditions because it will be the clubs that will organize the league" (para. 6). The treatment of professional women's soccer teams in Italy and Spain demonstrates a consistent disparity across regions and countries.

Many Scandinavian countries have led the world in women's football. Norway started its women's league in the 1920s through show matches that were not necessarily professional matches, but were instead more reflective of novelty (Skogvang, 2008). Throughout the decades, as women playing football gained not only more popularity, but respect, the Norwegian women's

league gained "commercialisation and professionalisation of the clubs and [established] the Women's Elite league from 2007 and on" (Skogvang, 2019, p. 212). Sweden introduced women's soccer in the early 1900s; the country gradually progressed from just having friendly matches to better organization, more athletes, more interest, and more sponsors (Clark, n.d.). Such success ultimately led to formation of one of the most well-known women's professional soccer leagues, the Damallsvenskan, in 1988 (Clark, n.d.).

Lastly, another comparable population of migrant BFAs would be those of the track and field world. Athletes within track and field are even more migratory than volleyball players as they only arrive in their country of competition for days and or weeks to compete in their events. They are not part of a team with a coach situated within a country or city; instead, they either coach themselves or bring their coach with them. Still, the shortness of their competition within European countries does not absolve them of having similar racial experiences to other BFAs in sports with longer stays, such as basketball, football, or volleyball.

Despite considerable research on professional women's football and, more recently, professional women's basketball, there is still a significant gap in studying professional women's volleyball leagues, including the migrations that occur and players' experiences, identities, hardships, and successes. Much remains unknown about professional women's volleyball in comparison to other sports, even though:

> Volleyball is now one of the big five[14] international sports, and the Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB), with its 220 affiliated national federations, is the largest international sporting federation in the world . . . and has witnessed unprecedented growth over the last two decades. (FIVB, n.d., para. 1–2)

14 Big Five international sports: Soccer/football, cricket, field hockey, tennis, volleyball (Sports Venue Technology, 2021).

Studying volleyball is critical due to its extraordinary growth, both internationally and in the United States. As my participants mentioned, there is not yet an established professional league within the continental United States and Canada; professional volleyball players must travel to Puerto Rico or outside of the United States to play, making it a highly transient sport that results in migrant athletes.

In South America, U.S.-born professional BFAs have experienced similar racial experiences when playing their respective sports (McClendon, 2021). Most South American countries do not have professional volleyball leagues, though they have youth and national teams. One of the top professional leagues for women is *SuperLiga* [Super League], considered the top professional women's volleyball league in Brazil (Olympics Sporting 99, n.d.). SuperLiga is one of the top leagues for U.S. volleyball players to play in after college eligibility ends. BFVPs—such as former University of Texas volleyball player, Destinee Hooker; Olympian, Danielle Scott-Arruda; and former Penn State standout, Deja McClendon—played in this league (Torres, 2019; World of Volley, 2018). Even though Brazil is a top location for volleyball, professional BFVPs from the United States still encounter issues with race, something McClendon (2021) discussed. While playing for the Minas Tênis Clube team in Brazil in 2019, McClendon (2021) explained a comment on social media by a viewer watching her game; they wrote, "'Minas, sub the bald monkey off'" (para. 5). No matter where they play, BFVPs are not exempt from race and racism, though it might look different depending on the country.

Sport migration is nothing new to European sports; Maguire and Stead (1998) declared such migration is "in part, a reflection of pre-existing social, political and economic power arrangements in sport" (p. 60). Sport migration has been studied extensively in men's football, and research on the migration of women's football has steadily gained more traction; however,

despite such research, sport migration within professional women's basketball leagues has rarely been researched (Butler, 2015). Butler (2015) noted, "Sports labor migration research allows us to see the global fluidity afforded to those involved in the sporting world and to critically analyze global sport migration patterns of sport labor migrants" (p. 1). Sport migration has numerous studies connected to understanding sports geography and place and space through the lived experiences of professional athletes, but with some of the identity pieces not involved (Adjepong, 2020; Banet-Weiser, 1999; Butler, 2015; Stambulova & Henriksen, 2021). Sport migration must be studied as more athletes migrate within the United States while in college and later as professional athletes from the United States to Europe. In researching sport migration, volleyball is particularly interesting due to the sport's rapid growth, its diversity of athletes, and the transient nature of its athletes, which contributed to the dissertation's focus on this athlete population.

Volleyball History

Volleyball's popularity continues to grow worldwide. As a result of this growth, many different countries have organized professional leagues where foreign players are recruited to play in their professional leagues with the best players; however, foreign players are limited, which severely constrains the number of U.S. athletes who can play with each other (Chapple, n.d.). Professional indoor volleyball within the United States has a fascinating past. Many attempts to start leagues emerged in the 1970s with the International Volleyball Association. Major League Volleyball tried to take hold in the late 1980s but only lasted a few years (Academic Kids, n.d.; Missildine, 1978; Waldner, 1974; Walker, 1974). In 2002, there was a significant push for a professional women's league called the United States Professional Volleyball League; yet, as quickly as it started, it folded like the other leagues due to financial issues (Merkin, 2003). In 2021, Athletes

Unlimited Volleyball (AUV) was founded as a league run by female athletes. This league has a very different format than standard leagues, which ordinarily have teams that play each other. AUV is based on weekly athlete drafts and directs focus on individual and team performance (Athletes Unlimited, n.d.). AUV has excelled because many top professional volleyball players stayed home due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. AUV grants professional volleyball players from the United States and South America the opportunity to play and make some money while waiting for their professional seasons to start up.

Because of the painful pattern of short-lived professional volleyball league attempts in the United States, volleyball players have often gone outside the continental United States to play professionally. At present, no league within the continental United States can compete with professional volleyball in other countries. Puerto Rico has excellent professional volleyball leagues, including many BFVPs (Volleyball World, 2021). The shorter seasons allow athletes to play in Puerto Rico and other countries throughout the year.

The professional volleyball leagues and teams outside of the continental United States are not like professional sports leagues in the United States. In the United States, there is a comfort that both male and female athletes in the NBA,[15] NFL, WNBA, MLS, NWSL, and NHL know they will earn their salary, have protections, and receive excellent medical care, benefits, financial management support, and pensions (Kennedy, 2020; Young, 2020). In 2020, the WNBA Players Association was able to create significant changes to their salaries, performance bonuses, "paid maternity leave, fertility and adoption services, marketing, and improved travel conditions" (Young, 2020, para. 2). Notably, the NBA assists their male athletes during and after

15 National Basketball Association (NBA), National Football League (NFL), Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), Major League Soccer (MLS), National Women's Soccer League (NWSL), and National Hockey League (NHL).

their playing careers. After an NBA athlete has played for at least three seasons and retired, they receive a monthly pension payment and access to lifelong healthcare coverage and college tuition reimbursement (Kennedy, 2020). Other professional leagues also take care of their players, who receive benefits similar to those of the NBA and WNBA.

This benefits landscape is very different for professional contracts in Europe. In the United States, players either participate in a professional league or in a minor league. That divisional hierarchy is not the same as professional volleyball. For professional volleyball players, there are large spectrums of skill levels and play, and "contracts can range from $15,000 to $1 million. In addition to a salary, players usually get an apartment and car included in their contracts. Then there are bonuses for signing and winning league or tournament championships" (Hail Varsity Staff, 2017, para. 6). Professional volleyball players can also ask for single apartments, paid roundtrip flights, kitchen appliances, or free meals from sponsors. Watten (2020) explained, in his experience on the men's side, how:

> Almost every league and team will provide in the contract an apartment that they will pay for. Some teams and leagues will provide lunch tickets at local restaurants. As you climb up the ladder of professional leagues, you are almost guaranteed to have a car provided by the club. If you are in Poland, you might even have a car with your name on it. (para. 16)

For female volleyball players with smaller salaries, there are often additional roles they can take on to make more money, such as teaching English, housekeeping, or coaching the teams of younger athletes. Unfortunately, many female volleyball players have experienced teams folding or going bankrupt, sometimes midseason, which means they do not get paid (Watten, 2020). Even more so, some countries are on the "be wary of playing in" (Watten, 2020, para. 48) list,

such as Brazil, Turkey, Slovenia, Poland, and Italy, who have teams that have been unable to pay players their complete contracts.

Professional volleyball across all levels in Europe should not be compared in empirical research with the highest levels of the U.S.-based professional leagues, which have player associations, steadier incomes, ownership, fanbases, benefits, and contracts. The U.S.-based professional leagues also have player associations that fight for players' rights. Professional volleyball players in Europe do not have player associations, a factor adding to the transient nature of the sport. As Watten (2020) said, "One of the worst things about professional volleyball is the lack of guaranteed money when signing contracts" (para. 48). Due to these concerns, professional volleyball players must be more cautious when picking teams to play for reasons such as (a) not being able to afford to stay, (b) expired visas, (c) inability to break the contract and find another team, or (d) inability to afford a plane ticket home.

Alas, both the highest level of professional women's volleyball overseas and the lower levels do not have the benefits professional men or women's leagues in the United States have, even though the pay certain professional women's volleyball players receive internationally is on par with U.S. professional leagues. In reality, the transient experiences of professional volleyball players in Europe, and their little-to-lack of benefits, is more comparable to the U.S. minor league baseball players and the NBA G-League players, though recently, the G-league created a union to protect the athletes (National Basketball Players Association, 2020). Although many aspects are comparable between minor league baseball and the NBA G-League and professional volleyball in Europe, volleyball players uniquely had to contend with the glaring issue of a lack of stability in protections. The discussion on women's sports is at the forefront of major sports channels, whether it be (a) pay inequities (Change et al., 2021; Galardini, 2020; Garcia, 2021);

(b) the activism of professional women's teams, such as the WNBA (Perry, 2020); (c) female athlete mental health and self-protection (Park, 2021); (d) standing up against the sexual assault of female athletes (Méndez, 2020; Wellman et al., 2021); or (e) BFAs using their voices on college campuses (Blinder & Witz, 2020; Bradshaw, 2020).

Justification

Researchers have long overlooked conceptualizing race, gender identity, geography, and sport through the lens of the BFA experience, especially volleyball players (Adjepong, 2020; Butler, 2015). BFAs have had hypervisibility as one of the few people of color on sports teams; this glaring visibility is often accompanied by negative consequences to the player and their lived experiences, especially in Europe (Adjepong, 2020; Adjepong & Carrington, 2014; Agergaard & Botelho, 2014; Agergaard & Ryba, 2014; Butler, 2015). Certain countries with low populations of Black women have developed stereotypes from harmful media portrayals, leading to dangerous situations for Black women (Adjepong & Carrington, 2014; Douglas, 2005). Sports geography is an underdeveloped area of geography, and researchers have been concerned "with societal impacts and how sports contribute to space and place meaning. How we understand the sport and recreational approaches in different places aligns with the continued transformation of space and attitudes towards sport" (Wise & Kohe, 2020, p. 2).

The race and place conundrum comes full circle for many BFAs who pursue a professional career in Europe. Geography offers a unique lens through which to view multiple dimensions of this landscape. Although more scholarship on BFAs by Black women has emerged due to increased global mobility (Butler, 2015; Willis, 2015), a huge necessity to explore their experiences abroad remains. As a Black female coach still very embedded in the collegiate volleyball community, I had the unique ability to capture the immediate effects of

being a Black woman in a predominately white sport and the long-lasting effects of race and racism on both players and coaches. Lack of understanding how place and space can affect a BFA's experience impacts the preparedness of Black athletes to travel and live outside of the United States. A glaring lack of research exists that dissects the experiences of Black athletes in different countries and continents—such a dearth of literature—has done athletes a disservice by not articulating how these differences could affect both their physical safety and mental well-being. I planned to become the first Black female sport geographer to bring light to these issues.

Summary

In this chapter, I detailed information on how studying the racial experiences of professional BFVPs through integrating typically unconnected lines of academic inquiry from multiple fields helped center the experience of those most silenced athletes: BFAs. The purpose of this dissertation may provide impact to the field of sports geography by using multiple geographical theories to center the experiences of place and space on BFVPs. This topic has been inadequately studied within the geography discipline; thus, there is minimal existing literature. Place and space have not been previously discussed concerning geography, gender identity, sport, and race, which are four factors that directly affect an athlete's experience wherever they play in the world. Although place and space have been examined in terms of (a) home court or field advantage, (b) the effect of fans, (c) locations where stadiums are built, or (d) how these places create spaces that have excluded athletes, there has been a noticeable lack of research on U.S. BFAs. This dissertation is one step toward trying to add more information to that academic space.

Research on BFAs who migrate to Europe has been heavily focused on African female athletes and U.S. white female athletes (Adjepong, 2020; Agergaard & Botelho, 2014; Botelho &

Agergaard, 2011). Any research on U.S. BFAs has fallen to the sideline, as if their experiences will naturally fall into the two aforementioned categories. This research majorly contributes to sports geography because it exposes the lack of information on how geography, race, gender identity, and identity are interwoven within the tapestry of sport, both in the United States and in Europe. Research on Black women who study abroad has started to develop more recently with articles written on microaggressions, racism, the affordability of traveling, and being Black while abroad (Willis, 2015). This dissertation similarly adds to the literature on sport migration, but through a different lens—one that does not include playing for money or status, but, instead, includes playing for cultural experiences in different countries. White female professional soccer players from the United States who have competed internationally have said the salary is not why they continued to play professionally (Botelho & Agergaard, 2011). Instead, they choose to go to other countries, travel for free to numerous countries in Europe, and use the experience as almost a gap[16] year to enjoy the world before returning to the United States and starting careers or families (Botelho & Agergaard, 2011).

This dissertation adds to a body of literature to the sizable amount of research across academia on the experiences of BFAs. This dissertation also helps researchers understand that experiences are intersectional and cannot be expected to be the same just because one identity is shared (e.g., race, sexuality, gender identity). Interpreting the experiences of BFVPs adds to literature on Black women who study abroad because there are many universal experiences, even for those who are not athletes. Lastly, the contribution of a new conceptual framework—critical Black feminist sport geographies—was instrumental in bridging gaps in theory and literature that

16 *Grand tour* or *gap year* is the time in which students use the time to travel, work, or volunteer to mature themselves before they start college (Botelho & Agergaard, 2011).

do not thoroughly interrogate the voices, needs, wants, and experiences of not only U.S.-born BFVPs, but those who play internationally.

BFVPs have been part of a quickly growing sport, yet there remains a disappointing lack of research. My dissertation was a labor of love for a community whose experiences, thoughts, voices, and accomplishments have been silenced far too long: BFVPs. I studied them because I am a part of that community, and it is a privilege to have been entrusted by those within the community to help tell their stories in a way that does not paint them as a victim, but instead illustrates some of the many obstacles they have had to hurdle in the United States and Europe.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

> [My college professor] was Hungarian, he wanted me to go because not a lot of Hungarians knew black people. This is actually why he wanted me to go. He's like, "They've never experienced a Black person." He was like, "I think you being Black, this will open up your world and just have other experiences." That is why, that's exactly. Because I asked them after I came back, I was like, "Why were you pushing so hard?" "It's because you're Black." That's what he said to me. No word, that's not even a line.
>
> —Sloan, *Participant*

Representation matters. It matters not only within sports and having the ability to see a person who visually looks comparable; it also matters within academics to see oneself represented among literature. Moreover, it is critical to see similar or comparable ideas, experiences, concerns, and accomplishments named and explored. Just as with Sloane being pushed into experiencing a country and the country's residents who had potentially never been around Black people, my research and this literature review pushed together information, experiences, and knowledge through a geographical framework that was, initially, seemingly unrelated.

Existing research that focuses on BFAs has focused principally on Black female college athletes (BFCAs); only recently there has been research on other areas of existing scholarship specifically focused on BFAs. Research on these experiences only recently began to increase with attention given to the accomplishments, racial identities, and voices of the U.S.-born professional BFAs, both in the United States and overseas (Butler, 2015). Given these foci and omissions in existing scholarship, my review centers on the experiences of BFCAs because of consistent parallels that do exist in racial experiences in college and in Europe. Moreover, the considerable research on BFCAs that does exist insightfully informs the many ways that racial

identities intertwine with athletes' dual experiences as athletes and students (Birrell, 1998; Bruening et al., 2005; A. R. Carter & Hawkins, 2011; Carter-Francique, 2013, 2018; Carter-Francique & Richardson, 2016; Ferguson, 2021; Gabay, 2013; Simien et al., 2019). Thus far, existing literature on BFCAs has established that researchers have demonstrated that identity is inextricably linked with how athletes experience their sport, including:

- How they are silenced or are invisible in academia; namely, sports geography (Edwards, 1999; Ruggiero & Lattin, 2008; Stratta, 1995a);
- How their experiences with the team shape and formulate their identities (A. R. Carter, 2008; Cooper et al., 2020; Outlaw & Toriello, 2014);
- What it means to be a Black female at a predominantly white institution (PWI) and an historically Black college or university (HBCU; Cooper & Newton, 2021; Harmon, 2009);
- Identity in relation to transitioning after playing (DuBose, 2020);
- The effects of mentoring and being mentored by BFAs (A. R. Carter & Hart, 2010); and
- How Black female bodies are surveilled and controlled (Foster, 2003).

In the same way that there is a glaring lack of research on professional BFAs, this oversight is evident in the presence—or lack thereof—of professional BFVPs' experiences in geographic literature. Other gaps in the research include how place and space affect athletes' understanding of their identities, and how identity and geography are interwoven with their college experiences. Place and space are critical to an athlete's experience, spanning the locker room, the practice facility, travel to and from the site of competition, the competition site, and the coach's office. Each place has a space created from the people in it. For BFAs, place and

space feel differently compared to how they feel for white female athletes, and this feeling can affect their performance.

In addition, an urgent need exists for further investigation into the geographical nature of migration; not just for college athletes, but in all aspects of collegiate athletics related to sport migration. Rosbrook-Thompson (2016) questioned why sociologists of sports have not looked at the competition sites through a new lens, particularly:

> [As] sites for the accommodation of and/or resistance to superdiversity, given that sport and sporting institutions have long been used as a way for people to get to grips with patterns of migration and resulting demographic changes at a national and local level. (p. 640)

Players migrate to schools of their choosing for their education and/or sport. This decision may lead them to a school close to home or on the other side of the world, in the case of international college athletes. Research on college athlete migration in relation to college athletes has focused mainly on Black male football and basketball athlete migration, including (a) those who have been recruited and played at a PWI, and (b) the experiences of those who have transferred from a PWI university to a HBCU (Cooper & Hawkins, 2015; Hawkins, 1999, 2010). The migratory aspect of college sports was an ideal place to situate a geographical lens because of how much movement occurs with student–athletes. Some aspects researchers should interrogate are (a) international student–athletes who move places outside the United States, including the effects of the U.S. culture on the athletes' identities; (b) how receptive places (e.g., athletic, academic, and living) have been to them; and (c) finally, how space has been created to be inclusionary or exclusionary. Although the experiences of BFCAs enrolled at PWIs have been studied more

frequently, the interaction of race, place, and space has not yet been studied through the lens of geography (Ferguson, 2021).

Although research on BFCAs and professional BFAs has gained momentum, and scholars of geography have gained interest in sport migration of BFAs, research on professional BFAs through an identity based geographical lens has not increased, even though their visibility as professional athletes throughout the world has continued to grow (Butler, 2015). Some of the best-known professional female athletes around the world are Black, such as Serena and Venus Williams, Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, Paola Egonu, Naomi Osaka, Sloan Stephens, and Simone Biles. Although these BFAs are well known around the world, further analyzing how their locations are experienced in regard to identity through spatial frameworks would be beneficial. More recently, literature has emerged about the racial experiences of BFAs, both in the United States and internationally—including on those who compete for their national teams (Adjepong, 2020; Bairam, 2017; Berlin, 2016; Lansbury, 2014). Although there exists the widespread phenomena spanning the social sciences and humanities of what many refer to as "the spatial turn," researchers at the intersection of racial identity and status of professional athletes, specifically BFAs, have yet to employ what we might regard as a geographical lens (Adjepong, 2020; Adjepong & Carrington, 2014; Bairam, 2017; Berlin, 2016; Butler, 2015; Douglas, 2005; Engh et al., 2017; Myrdahl, 2008; Waller et al., 2016).

Professional BFAs must toggle between hypervisibility and invisibility within sports (Duncan, 1996; Edwards, 1999; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017; Simien et al., 2019; Withycombe, 2011). Black women consistently have existed in a juxtaposition between their identities. Black women and their sporting experiences are often overshadowed and ignored in favor of the experiences of Black men and white women (Bruening et al., 2005; A. R. Carter,

2008; Harmon, 2009). Because of this overshadowing and overlooking, the purpose of this dissertation is to examine and uplift the racial experiences of professional Black volleyball players competing in Europe to gain a better understanding of how they develop meanings of interactions that occur amid life as professional athletes in a foreign country. While solely situating the unique experience of Black women, this research question was cultivated to better understand their multifaceted racial experiences as professional athletes in Europe:

> RQ: How do intersecting racial and gendered identities, place, and space influence the racism encountered by U.S. Black female professional volleyball players in Europe?

In this literature review, all topics are not comprehensively covered related to professional BFAs, nor to professional BFVPs. Instead, Simien's et al. (2019) explanation of how critical "intersectionality-type research [is to inform a more nuanced] analysis of Black female athletes" (p. 412) is highlighted. I work through a major endeavor of integrating typically unconnected lines of academic inquiry from multiple fields to situate the experiences of professional BFVPs in Europe. My research supplements the currently nascent body of knowledge on how spatial frameworks affect the racial experiences of BFAs as they compete abroad.

Studies by Black women, for Black women, facilitate valuable research by centering the voices of Black women to provide insight that others, unknowingly, are unable to give. Birrell (1989) explained, "Those supporting the outsider view frame their arguments around objectivity and fresh insight; insiders argue about authenticity, trust, and access" (p. 223). A. R. Carter (2008) detailed the importance of "examining African American women's experiences from their unique standpoint has the potential to elucidate forms of empowerment, self-expression, and political activism" (p. 64). Because the BFAs are in Europe, a more complex understanding of both the construct and stereotype of what it means to be a U.S. Black female is needed; this

standpoint is one that intertwines race and gender identity. In this chapter, I introduce and examine literature in the following areas to provide context for this study:

- Sports geography
- Five themes of Geography
- Spatial Frameworks
  - Space
  - Place
- History of Black female athletes
- Black female athletes
- Professional Black international female athletes
- Professional Black international male athletes
- Black male college athletes
- Volleyball
- Sport migration
- Critical race theory in Europe
- Race and racism in European countries
- White gaze
- Nationalism

Sports Geography

In some ways, sports geography is a longstanding field, and in other ways, it is relatively new. The field has been one that was and is mainly white, male, cis-gendered, and viewed through the lens of traditional geography. The main academics within the field have been white men. Only recently has research created about and by researchers of marginalized backgrounds started to

occur, but many of those researchers are from fields other than sports geography. As far back as the late 1800s through the mid-1960s, sports geography was purely researched using quantitative methods based on mapping and statistical analysis (Bale, 2003; Gaffney, 2014). Several authors published studies on sport and geography, but they mostly focused on mapping athletes to better understand geographical location, landscapes, and migration patterns (Burley, 1966; Hilderbrand, 1919; Jokl et al., 1956; Lehman, 1940; Réclus, 1879). Bale and Dejonghe (2008) explained words like sports and geography were challenging because they lacked a concrete, agreed-upon definition. These terms were "floating signifiers" (Bale & Dejonghe, 2008, p. 1) that anyone could use when they wished; thus, for scholars, it has been and currently is virtually impossible to review work that falls under the category of sports geography.

Despite the lack of definition, there is a significant gap in the literature written during that time frame that failed to explore how geographic patterns and migration affected the athletes themselves; the little literature available focused more on where athletes moved and why they moved than on identity and space (Bale & Maguire, 1994; Butler, 2015; Maguire, 1999; Maguire & Falcous, 2011). The significance of place in sports drew attention to researchers' potential contributions of geography to sports studies (Bale, 1988). For most of the early 20th century, sports geography and the history of sport were separated into two subdisciplines and it was not until around the 1960s globally that these subdisciplines started to merge. U.S. sports geography was initiated in the mid-1970s by Rooney (1974), who sought to address the question of the need of sports geography when he stated, "there is a need for a geography of sport as geographical variations in sport preferences and game involvement require explanation" (p. 3).

Rooney's (1974) interest was not so much focused on the experiences of the athletes themselves; rather, he wished to gain a spatial understanding of games, organizations, locations,

and landscapes. Even though the questioning of space and sport was created out of Rooney's love of sport, it generated the development of a subfield focused on something of great importance to those across the United States: sports geography. Rooney saw sports geography as having the ability to question so many aspects of sports, from the spatial element to the environment, and the effects of space on the behaviors of an athlete, coach, or fan. Through Rooney's metaphorical steppingstone, researchers from the United States began to think about sport beyond leisure and recreation in a more competitive way.

Though sport in the 1960s and 1970s was not often thought about within the context of geography, it was still considered from a scientific lens. Rooney (1974) devoted himself heavily to promoting sports geography. He published in the sports geography journal, *Sport Place: An International Journal of Sports Geography*, which lasted from 1987–2000, and pushed other academics to publish articles on sports geography at the American Association of Geographers. During this period, Loy and Elvogue (1970) became interested in how space influences all aspects of the game and the people watching, playing, and organizing the games, and added the lens of race. Sage and Loy (1978) researched sports through the lens of sociology. They asked humanistic questions intertwined with questions of place, race, movement, and discussed in what ways these factors affect people within landscapes, organizations at large, and sports migration.

After Rooney (1974) started focusing on the U.S. geography of sport, Bale (1981, 1988, 1989, 1993, 1994, Bale & Maguire, 1994; Bale & Moen, 1996), considered the father of sport geography in international application, explored sports geography on a broader scale. Bale (1988) pointed out, "Geography arrived relatively late on the sport studies scene—especially in the United States—and is at least growing despite not being fully legitimized" (p. 507). Bale studied sports geography in a more nuanced way by looking at more than just maps; he studied

professional teams, locations, arenas, populations, stadiums, fans, migration, large sporting events, and how all of these elements of sport intersect. Regardless of the speed of sports geography's development, it is still heavily skewed toward viewing place through cartography, geographic information system (GIS), mapping, migration patterns, and landscape lenses, rather than through humanistic, identity based, socialization, or racialized lenses. Harley and Woodward (1987, as cited in Mac, 2008) stated:

> All sport geography studies are based on the map which, through specific execution methods and means, reflects the local, regional or international impact of sport. Maps are graphical representations which facilitate the understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes or phenomena in the human world. (p. 13)

Bale (1988) realized how little attention place received within sports geography and believed there should be more significant consideration on how it affects those who play, watch, and coach sports; moreover, place should be a "central focus of the present review—which aids an understanding and appreciation of the significance of sport in modern society" (p. 510).

Although Rooney (1974) and Bale (1994, 2000) focused on migration patterns of teams and athletes, Maguire (1999) added a global perspective by looking at international migration, global process, and sport processes (Bale & Maguire, 1994). Koch (2016) recently published an edited book featuring articles from a variety of authors on sports geography, but Bale's (1994, 2001) writing is still considered the go-to resource for the vast variety of topics covered by sports geography. Sports geography is a subfield of geography and falls under the heading of geography; however, it has yet to be systematically analyzed from a critical viewpoint that situates power and investigates its nuances. According to Bale and Dejonghe (2008):

> Unlike larger subdisciplines, sports geography does not have its own journal nor an association. It is made up of a diffuse group of scholars who rarely, if ever, meet. Most scholars who have written on sports would not regard sports as their specialism. (pp. 1–2)

Currently, sports geography is not a field that can stand alone as a repository of knowledge if other fields are not involved.

Sport has been known to tear nations, families, and communities apart, but also to bring them together. In the United States, athletes are perceived as more powerful than some politicians with their ability to "continually bring together and engage a community of experts and advocates in the field to understand what would effectively sustain the change" (Yellen, 2016, p. 15). In Europe, athletes can unite nations or fans or stop a merger, as with the end of the European Super League (Hamilton, 2021). It seems somewhat remarkable that sports geography is not a better-known field due to the power sport has around the world. Sports geography classes are not taught in universities around the world, and there is no sports geography minor or major, nor is there a degree solely available to become a sports geographer. As popular as sport is within the United States, sports geography is not treated as an academic discipline in the United States; sports geography programs at the undergraduate or graduation levels in the United States rarely exist. As a subfield, rarely an academic—either inside or outside geography—would claim to be a sports geographer. Many professors in the United States and in other countries study sports as a hobby, but not in full-time teaching positions, and indeed, not in tenured positions; they are instead academics who dabble in sports geography (Wise & Kohe, 2020). Wise and Kohe (2020) believed because "many academics writing in the area of sports geography come from a range of disciplines, [this will] allow for the papers to be disseminated widely given the readership of sports scholars" (p. 7). Much scholarship on the geographies of sport has been

written by nongeographers; they have instead been written by sociologists, economists, urban planners, political scientists, psychologists, or anthropologists (Bale & Dejonghe, 2008).

Researchers have long overlooked the understanding of race, gender identity, geography, and sport through the lens and experiences of BFAs, especially volleyball players. In reality, geography looks at sports—not through a humanistic, social identity, and racialized lens, but through a cartographic, mapping, or landscape lens. Consequently, as Bale (1988) stated, "Geographers have arrived relatively late on the sports studies scene . . . especially in the United States—and is at least growing, if not yet fully legitimized" (p. 507). Sports geography is a fascinating subdiscipline, considering how many other academics from a variety of disciplines publish literature through a geographical lens. Ilies et al. (2014) explained, "All sports geography studies are based on the map which, through specific execution methods and means, reflects the local, regional or international impact of sport" (p. 13). Sports, regardless of realizing it, live and die by mapping. They map the distance of games, divide up recruiting by regions, move athletic conferences to have better access to support from fans, donors, and sponsors, decide where to place stadiums based on geography, and will occasionally hire coaches based on their connection with the region. Mapping matters.

Ilies et al. (2014) stated maps "are graphical representations which facilitate the understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes or phenomena in the human world" (p. 13). Bale (1988) realized how little attention place received in sports geography by the few sports geographers who have taken up research in the field. He also believed there should be more significant consideration on how sports geography affects those who play, watch, and coach sports. Because of the scant attention that place receives even with its importance within sports geography, Bale (1988) understood place needs to also be a "central focus of the present

review—which aids an understanding and appreciation of the significance of sport in modern society" (p. 510).

Although more scholarship on BFAs by Black women continues to emerge, there is a huge necessity to explain the experiences BFAs have abroad due to increased global mobility. Non-Black Europeans and people from the United States have lacked the understanding of how the spatial frameworks of place and space can disturb a BFA's experience of living and traveling outside of the United States. A glaring lack of research exists that dissects the experiences of BFAs in different countries and continents. Such a gap in literature does the athletes a disservice by not articulating how the difference could affect both their physical safety and mental well-being. Situating geography as critical to the experience of BFAs can help researchers think boldly about how the intersection of race, gender identity, sports, and geography affects experiences of BFAs, both domestically and internationally. Morris and Monroe (2009) explained:

> Geography also influences how people come to understand notions of race and ethnicity, how their lives unfold, how they interact in and across various subgroups, and how individuals become identified. Place, therefore, has important consequences for individuals' social . . . opportunities. (p. 24)

Understanding how geography creates experiences is essential to understanding all aspects of a BFA's life, both inside and outside of the gym, and can better help those who support athletes moving to Europe to play. Race, place, and space affect many BFAs who choose to pursue a professional career in Europe. Geography offers a unique lens through which to view how these athletes are affected—not only amid their playing experiences, but also when traveling, living, dating, and raising families in spaces that make Black women *other*. Alternatively, as Puwar

(2004) explained, Black women as *other* reflects how minority populations are consistently considered to be space invaders in places situated with histories of colonialism, imperialism, and whiteness. Being considered a space invader is a stereotype for both populations: (a) Black residents and citizens of European countries, and (b) U.S.-born BFVPs who come to Europe to play professionally. The idea of U.S.-born BFVPs being space invaders is useful when making sense of their positions, as their "bodies are perceived as belonging and not belonging within certain spaces" (Adjepong & Carrington, 2014, p. 284). Some researchers have also noted how white bodies can move across the world and occupy spaces without question, and sometimes, the added layer of being from the United States helps with their occupation of said space (Adjepong & Carrington, 2014). Black women do not get the immediate acceptance to take up space; they are expected to either not be there or to be as small as possible. Adjepong and Carrington (2014) stated, "If we consider that, as Black women, [Serena] Williams and [Taylor] Townsend are 'space invaders'" (p. 284). It is easy to see how Black women playing in predominantly white or pro-white spaces are considered only there for entertainment or work, rather than actually living in the country as a full person. According to Adjepong and Carrington (2014):

> No matter the achievements of Black sportswomen, they are often both verbally and nonverbally framed as "space invaders." These women experience resistance to their right to be on the court, in the country they are playing in, or just to even exist. (p. 289)

Five Themes of Geography

In geography, there are five themes: location, human–environment interaction, region, movement, and place. The theme location can be either an absolute or relative (Nag, 2017). The absolute location of a volleyball arena has both an address or longitude and latitude coordinates; for example, George Huff Hall in Champaign, Illinois, on the campus of the University of

Illinois, has the coordinates of 40.1036° N, 88.2327° W. The address is 1206 S 4th St., Champaign, Illinois, 61820 (University of Illinois Division of Intercollegiate Athletics, n.d., para. 2). The address, or these coordinates, is the volleyball arena's *absolute location* (Nag, 2017). The *relative location* of George Huff Hall is what the hall is in relation to, which could be across the street from the University of Illinois Armory or next to the College of Applied Health Sciences. A location, such as Champaign, Illinois, is objective. Although one location might house a variety of businesses or organizations, the location itself does not have a personal connection.

The second theme, human–environment interaction, entails working toward understanding the relationships between people and their environments and how they are interrelated. This theme has three key features to it:

- Humans depend on the environment: Humans depend on the natural environment for their basic needs; food, shelter, and clothing.
- Humans modify the environment: People modify the natural environment to meet their needs. They build houses, schools, and shopping centers on land.
- Humans adapt to the environment: Humans have settled in virtually every corner of the world by successfully adapting to various natural settings. The ways people choose to adapt to their settings reflect their economic and political circumstances and their technological abilities" (Joint Committee on Geographic Education, 1984, para. 14).

This theme is human centered and focuses on human interaction with the environment to live and thrive.

The third theme, movement, centers on the question of "how and why are places connected with one another" (Joint Committee on Geographic Education, 1984, para. 16). Movement looks at how migration and movement of people create relationships between people in different places and is shaped by the constant travel of people, ideas, materials, and physical systems (Joint Committee on Geographic Education, 1984). The world is more migratory than ever before, especially in professional sports. Athletes and athletes move to different teams; teams move to different conferences; stadiums move to different cities, states, or countries; and fans follow their favorite teams and favorite athletes all over the world to cheer them on while they play. Movement describes the connection between people, locations, and places, such as transportation routes or how ideas, innovation, or culture migrate from one area to another. The migration of volleyball offenses, defenses, or training techniques from different countries is a prime example. There are very distinct training methods connected to specific countries, such as Japanese or Chinese defensive training methods. These methods originate in a country, and coaches from other countries learn those methods and take them back to their home countries to use. As shown in the past, after a few years, a certain training method will be used all over the world.

The fourth theme is region, which is a "basic unit of geographic study that is defined as an area that has unifying characteristics" (Joint Committee on Geographic Education, 1984, para. 16). Studying regions can help geographers better understand how regions are similar and different to one another. Even though most regions vary significantly from neighboring areas, all regions share certain characteristics. Because the regions are located somewhere on Earth's surface, they all have an area and a location. In addition, they all have boundaries, which may be clear or vague (Joint Committee on Geographic Education, 1984). Regions are not just socially

constructed areas; they are defined by characteristics given by both people who live within them and people who live outside of them. An example of regional characteristics would be the characteristics given to the South or the West Coast, and the defining features that people in those areas are known for, including accent, type of food, clothing, music, or drink name (e.g., soda, coke, or pop). Regions can be big and small, and they can be an area that covers multiple states, a park, or a classroom.

The last theme, and the one most relevant to this dissertation, is place. Within the themes of geography, place is thought to "address the question of 'What is it like there?'" (Joint Committee on Geographic Education, 1984, para. 6). Within the discipline, place is viewed on a wider scale—one that looks at place, both physical and human, as considering the "characteristics that make one location different from all other locations on Earth" (Joint Committee on Geographic Education, 1984, para. 6). Within place, physical characteristics are the factors thought to make up the actual natural environment, such as bodies of water, mountains, animals, forests, or vegetation. Place, in relation to humans, is more nuanced and complex; it is socially constructed and developed through a person's thoughts, actions, assumptions, and stereotypes. Place can include cultural attributes such as "people's lifestyle, values, beliefs and traits" (Joint Committee on Geographic Education, 1984, para. 8), as well as structures, land use patterns, population densities, and political systems, among others. According to Joint Committee on Geographic Education (1984), "Culture is complex and made of interconnected parts" (para. 8), and these complexities include aspects that tend to be grouped together, "such as ethnicity, language, religion and other cultural elements" (para. 8). In this dissertation, I specifically narrowed down discourse on how culture and other social constructions are used to create the ideals of what place is, how it affects BFVPs, and how it can

both include and exclude, as place can signify many different emotions, feelings, thoughts, or beliefs for each individual in a given location.

Spatial Frameworks

As McKittrick (2006) observed, "Space and place give Black lives meaning in a world that has, for the most part, incorrectly deemed Black populations and their attendant geographies as 'ungeographic' and/or philosophically undeveloped" (p. xiii). Spatial frameworks of place and space play a crucial role for BFVPs—many times, for instance, if there is a low number of Black people in the area, people assume there must be no harassment nor racism (Garland & Chakraborti, 2006). Puwar (2004) brought to light the difficulties faced by Black people in their struggles to be visible in places and spaces; namely, difficulties where their identities fall outside the norm, or when they are thought to be intruders invading areas where they do not belong. This visibility "is a process not all that different from the way in which racialized minorities are visible on the street, and especially in locations heavily demarcated as white places" (Puwar, 2004, p. 49). Within academics and athletics, past research or the lack of research has created the tendency to ignore and refrain from naming problems affecting BFAs by means of combining BFAs with Black men or white women (Bruening, 2005; A. R. Carter, 2008; A. R. Carter & Hawkins, 2011; Harmon, 2009; Simien et al., 2019). This lack of acknowledgment means the problems still exist, but remain unaddressed (Patton & Ward, 2016). Social interaction is critical to place and space, as researchers have used the concepts to describe factors thought to be objective but are socially contested on a consistent basis (Allen et al., 2019).

To be a BFVP is to be both visible and invisible, to be critical and disruptive, to be expected to be loud and chastise, and to be quiet (Ferguson, 2021). On college campuses, athletic venues, and European locations, Ferguson (2021) noted:

> How Black women . . . experience [the world] is influenced by how institutional relationships and social structures are designed to support them (place), how their race and gender are understood by their community, and how their physical presence impacts the environments they inhabit (space). (p. 23)

This experience is duplicated for Black women who go to Europe to compete professionally, because social structures and norms can differ depending on the country. BFVPs enter white spaces that seem inviting because they are athletic spaces, but these spaces are still exclusionary in covert ways. As Massey (2013) stated, "Place is not synonymous to community" (p. 153). Not only do Black women have a heightened awareness of self, but they also have a heightened sense of who they are not, even if they are told who to be by society. Duncan (1996) explained the sense of awareness BFAs have is because they consistently must negotiate standards of beauty, size, color, ugliness, good, bad, and intelligence in a society not built nor maintained for them.

BFVPs have a sense of awareness that goes a step further when in predominantly white countries; they must contend with stereotypes forced on Black people in a profession that spotlights them and puts their Blackness on a stage. Ferguson (2021) stated, "The history of Black women is dominated by narratives they did not write for themselves. Many of these narratives harness negative images and stereotypes about Black women, depicting them as . . . unattractive, aggressive, loud, strong and animalistic" (p. 5). BFVPs on the court or in white spaces can be viewed as a revolutionary act because they disrupt the status quo by their presence. They actively dismantle the standard ideals of beauty, education, and what it means to be a BFA (Duncan, 1996; Ferguson, 2021; Massey, 2013).

Many locations of professional volleyball clubs are small towns; Garland and Chakraborti (2006) explained the locations, noting, "Rural communities are often more cautious,

conservative and essentially 'circumspect' in nature than many residents like to admit, and incomers from the city, and indeed even those from neighbouring towns and villages, are viewed with distrust and suspicion" (p. 163). These rural areas tend to be more homogeneous spaces and lack Black residents, or Black residents are few and far between and not well known around the area. When BFVPs move to play in places that treat them as invaders, they are immediately considered outsiders and face questioning of their intent—sometimes not only in their clubs by coaches and teammates, but also during travel to and from practice and games (Garland & Chakraborti, 2006). Even when recognized as a professional athlete, the athletes may be told in one way or another, due to the homogeneity of the surrounding area and the uninviting space created by residents, that they are not welcome (Puwar, 2004).

Both place and space can create a safe haven for one athlete, and at the same time create a space for another athlete that is toxic, violent, and unsafe; these spaces may be one where an athlete has to keep their guard up. Eichberg (1990) explained, "Sport has always been an interaction between body and environment. It has always, to some extent, been determined by place and space and it has itself produced specific forms of place and space" (p. 245). Sport creates the dichotomy of both a welcoming environment and an uncomfortable place for BFAs where, if not constantly aware of place, they face "operating in the white space and be subject to social, if not physical, jeopardy" (Anderson, 2015, p. 12). Place and space are consistently interwoven as it is impossible to have one without the other. Tyner (2012) made the connection between place and space and stated as "we understand that space, far from being an inert stage upon which people act, is itself an active participant. And it is through this working of 'space' that we derive an understanding of 'place'" (p. 18). Location is an objective place given meaning by people. Tyner (2012) stated:

> "Place" like "space" means many things to many people. For some, "place" may suggest ownership or an emotional connection or attachment between a particular person and a particular location (i.e., a home or an apartment). Conversely, "place" may suggest privacy and belonging (i.e., this is *my* place, not yours), or a position in a social hierarchy (i.e., putting someone in their "place"). (p. 18)

Bale and Vertinsky (2004) emphasized, "Place and space are not 'static arrangements, but topics continually being constructed, negotiated, and contested'" (p. 148). Place and space are consistently constructed and then reconstructed at the same time, depending on the person doing the construction. Places do not become living and breathing things until people decide they are. Bale and Vertinsky (2004) explained, "It is in that use that place becomes space, a productive opening for actual living, becoming, desiring. Space emerges when practices are imposed on a given location, when forms of human activity impose meanings on a particular location" (p. 148).

Space

Space is viewed differently by different people. When researchers examine how space has been described through the decades and centuries, there are both major similarities and crucial differences. Neely and Samura (2011) expanded on John Locke and explained, "Until the 1970s, 'space' was considered an objective, descriptive and neutral term" (p. 1416). Space was thought separate from social reactions by geographers, but it was not until other disciplines started to better understand the idea of space that the discipline of geography started to study space as both separate from society and its unequal structures, and a critical part of societal development (Dear & Wolch, 1989; Massey, 2013; Neely & Samura, 2011). Wilkins (2007) used the ideals of space developed by Locke (1690) when he explained space is "essentialized, visible only by the

position of points, objects, or bodies within it" (p. 1). To Locke, bodies create space; Black women, with their intersection of race and female gender identity, are misunderstood within space through negative stereotypes developed for them, but not by them (Ferguson, 2021).

Tuan (1977) also wrote about space. Although part of society, he considered space "an abstract term for a complex set of ideas and that it is 'formless.' People of different cultures differ in how they divide up their world, assign values to its parts, and measure them" (p. 34). Duncan (1996) explained space is used when relating to the physical body. Although a different perspective, Knowles (2003) argued, "Space is an active archive of the social processes and social relationships composing racial orders. Active because it is not just a monument, accumulated through a racial past and present" (p. 80). Many definitions of space lack an understanding of the effects of race. Researchers in Black geographies have focused on this idea.

Many researchers have looked to define space in a way that moves away from Western, modern understandings of what it means to exist in space and who inhabited it, while exploring and reimagining the politics of place (McKittrick & Woods, 2007). Many spatial areas have not historically welcomed BFAs. Spaces such as arenas, gymnasiums, and lockers are not neutral and objective, but instead deliberately attempt to express stereotyped gender roles and race in their spatial arrangements (Bale & Vertinsky, 2004).

Place

Multiple people can be in the same location at the same time and have extremely different perspectives of place. Tyner (2012) also understood place, as with space, means many things to many people. Place is created by people. Wilkins (2007) paraphrased John Locke, who viewed "place as the point where these bodies are at rest, determined by the relative position of two or more bodies" (p. 11). Tuan (1977) explained this concept as "'a sense of place' which creates

sites possessing meaning and memories" (p. 73), but he also described space as "a type of object, as . . . places and objects define space, giving it a geometric personality" (p. 17). Duncan (1996) gave a different viewpoint; he used a lens "where place is defined the arrangement of public institutions, to relations of domination and subjugation, or the political construction of race" (p. 134). The personal connection is created by place. Bale and Vertinsky (2004) stated:

> Clearly there is no single "sense of place" which everyone shares when gymnasiums are brought to mind—we each build our own and create our own theatres of memory by reading and experiencing sporting landscapes in very personal and often contradictory ways. (p. 24)

It is important to understand how power is also involved in the creation of place. Bale and Vertinsky (2004) explained that power:

> Constructs the rules, which define the boundaries; these boundaries are both social and spatial. They mark belonging and exclusion—who belongs to a place and who may be excluded—as well as the location, site and nature of the particular sporting experience. (p. 9)

Place is only able to exist within the minds of people as it "is not a physical, fixed location rather place represents a location of intersecting relationships and social structures that have been developed over time" (Ferguson, 2021, p. 14). Without place involved, it can only be a location. Cresswell (2004) explained places, in short, do not exist without people and connection to the world. People construct place through their actions, and because of reiterative social practice, place is consistently made and remade daily through societal norms, stereotypes, and practices. A place needs people to exist because it cannot exist without emotions, feelings, ideals, or attached baggage. Place normalizes all emotions on a spectrum to the extent that, many

times, fans, athletes, and coaches do not realize that their experiences, feelings, and memories of a location are both unique to them and at the same time have similarities with those of others in the same place.

Place in sports is created by the athletes, coaches, media, and fans. Sport has a way of making a location a place. Bale and Vertinsky (2004) chronicled this idea and explained how:

> The sense of sight is strongly privileged in modern society and we generally talk of going to "see" or "watch" a game of football. However, in the stadium, sound, smell, touch and nostalgia are evoked, making a place out of what is potentially a sterile space. (p. 3)

Memories that go with an actual location exist, but how place makes the location memorable is the key. Place can take a field and make it someone's best or worst memory. Place can take a gym and make it a safe space for kids, where balls and basketball hoops are a welcome addition, but not needed to create a sense of safety. Sport and the feelings attached can make people love a team so much they become diehard fans or hate a team so much that a rival team's jersey is not allowed in a bar. Sport makes a place memorable and creates the ability to build family around where a team has made its home (Bale, 2003; ESPN, n.d.).

The fierce rivalry between the University of Michigan and The Ohio State University in "The 'Border Battle' . . . [which] including both the fierce rivalry between the university football teams and the divided team loyalties among local residents, sometimes differing even within the same household" (Kruger et al., 2018, p. 343) is one example of the effects of sports. Sport creates identity. The Raiders football franchise exemplifies how a team can develop an identity that captures a city. The migration of the Raiders from Oakland to Los Angeles in 1982 "captivated a large number of Black and Hispanic fans in L.A. and morphed into a worldwide brand as the team's colors, swagger and antiestablishment ethos became linked with the hip-hop

scene that was permeating South Central Los Angeles" (Cube, 2020, para. 2). The Raiders created place and space with their identity because it changed the dynamics of their fan base, the type of fan or business to associate with them, the type of support they wanted, and what a Raider fan looked like, dressed like, or the type of vehicle they drove. Although the physical location of the stadium was essential to Raiders fans, the place that was made was even more crucial.

As previously discussed, place and space are intimately intertwined with sport, because without place and space, an arena or a stadium is just a location. Bale and Vertinsky (2004) showed how:

> Places are made through power relations, which construct the rules, which define the boundaries; these boundaries are both social and spatial. They mark belonging and exclusion—who belongs to a place and who may be excluded—as well as the location, site and nature of the particular sporting experience. (p. 9)

The power relations of the Raiders were immense as they created their fanbase, because those with money and power were involved in their uphill climb to success; when the team and organization moved, it showed the lack of importance of fans as decided by the owners (Cube, 2020). Bale and Vertinsky (2004) summed it up when they stated, "Sport has always, to some extent, been determined by place and space, and that it has itself produced specific forms of place and space" (p. 9). Sport is created through the spatial frameworks of place and space which in turn gives meaning to a location.

History of Black Female Athletes

Not only have BFAs consistently played sports throughout the world since the 1920s, but they have also excelled in them. Sport was a way for many women of low socioeconomic status to

escape their hometowns, receive an education, travel around the country or the world, and experience life; sport was their way out (Lansbury, 2014). Black communities wanted Black women to play sports and succeed, just as much as the Black women themselves, and such support was demonstrated in a number of ways. Even though BFAs have been successful throughout the decades, Simien et al. (2019) explained, "They remain conspicuously absent from the literature. Black women, such as Althea Gibson and Wilma Rudolph, were legendary icons on account of their extraordinary ability on the tennis court and track, respectively" (p. 410). All current BFAs, from high school to the professional level, have access and opportunity and can pursue their athletic dreams because of what past BFAs endured. Past BFAs truly laid the foundation for current BFAs with little in return, as many former BFAs struggled with not finding a job nor living a quality life after retiring from sports, even though they had an education, broke barriers, and had sports-related successes (Lansbury, 2014).

Tennis stars, such as Ora Washington and Althea Gibson, set the stage for the Williams sisters, Naomi Osaka, Sloane Stephens, CoCo Goff, and other Black female tennis stars who have had considerable success domestically and internationally (Lansbury, 2014; Shivers, 2019). Tennis is one example of these legacies and how they affect the modern BFA experience, which provides important context despite the lack of historical literature on volleyball players. In sport, representation other than in women's basketball and track and field has been incrementally slow.

Literature on Black women in track and field has started to gain more traction. Information on Alice Coachman, Wilma Rudolph, the Tuskegee Flash, Wyomia Tyus, and the Tennessee State University Tigerbelles forged a path for Black female track athletes as they competed at the highest levels in college, at the Olympics, and professionally (Lansbury, 2014). These women had to consistently "come to terms with what it meant to be *Black* women athletes

both in the African American community and white society, negotiating issues of race, gender, and class in both places" (Lansbury, 2014, p. 231). BFAs possess a consistent concern of making sure one presents as feminine and of class. They relentlessly contend with white feminine standards and the hypersexuality of their bodies (Bruening et al., 2005; Cooky et al., 2010; Schultz, 2005). BFAs must always worry about societal pressures as well as playing their sports. Bruening (2005) stated, "When attempting to step beyond gender role socialization to examine research on the socialization of African American women in sport specifically, the issues become more complex" (p. 336). The public has been socialized to frame the body of Black women through a lens of hypersexuality which creates certain ramifications in the space that Black women occupy (K. L. Coleman, 2021). Due to lacking critical analysis on the intricacies of a professional BFA's experience, others who do not share those identities might have trouble imagining and understanding how BFAs face issues caused by societal views and devalued intersections of their identities (Crenshaw, 1989, 2016; Hill Collins, 1990, 2000; Walkington, 2017).

Black Female Athletes (BFAs)

BFAs have been concerned with the circumstances that Beale (1972) referred to as double jeopardy. In this situation, *double jeopardy* describes the multiple layers of oppression caused to a BFA's identities due to racism and sexism (King, 1988). BFAs consistently have experiences that white female athletes do not understand because of their race, nor do Black male athletes understand because of their gender identity. Porter and Dean (2015) explained how these layers of oppression lead to BFVPs becoming invisible and lacking a voice.

> BFAs have not been voiceless—they have been silenced. Bruening et al. (2005) wrote: "Silencing" is both a metaphorical lack of voice and a functional and symbolic description of the underrepresentation experience by African American women as they exist on the "margins" of their social realities in the white and male dominated world of sport. (p. 84)

According to Simien et al. (2019), "Scholars set out from the start to make visible what their colleagues had failed to notice and/or deliberately rendered invisible, namely, Black female athletes in sport" (p. 412).

Research sole focused on BFAs has incrementally increased. Past resources focused on the experiences of Black women athletes have fallen short after tending to be, as Bruening et al. (2005) explained, "Autobiographical materials, published analyses, and unpublished studies" (p. 84). A. R. Carter (2008) explained, "BFAs have been fixtures in U.S. sports, but they have also been marginalized. Suffering similar experiences, as Black men, the efforts of BFAs have been discounted and often forgotten" (p. 11). Going even further, Simien et al. (2019) argued, "Black females in sport were silenced primarily because of a void in the literature resulting from a principal focus on either white women or Black athletes, not the point of intersection for these two groups (read: BFAs)" (p. 412). In her dissertation, Stratta (1995a) understood BFAs were tired from consistently traversing two different ways of living, especially when these two lived experiences are drastically different. BFAs consistently feel because of their intersecting identities of race and gender identity that they were consistently stereotyped, discriminated against, and tokenized—not only by their teammates, but also by faculty, staff, and coaches (Harmon, 2009).

These frustrations result from a lack of research on Black women throughout the last few decades, and a lack of curiosity on the part of researchers as to where the voices of Black women fit in sport scholarship (Birrell, 1989; Carrington, 1998; Douglas & Jamieson, 2006). Bruening (2005) stated, "African American women have been marginalized or even completely excluded in the sport literature based on both gender and race" (p. 331). This complete exclusion means not only does silencing occur, but also a lack of an in-depth analysis of their issues, both domestically and globally (Bruening, 2005). Scraton et al. (2005) specifically interviewed minority identifying athletes because they took issue with existing accounts of women in sport:

> Women playing football are entirely concerned with white women's experiences. White research participants are rarely defined in relation to "race" and ethnicity and the knowledge produced from their lived experiences is often used to theorize all women's experiences of the game. (p. 73)

Researchers throughout the decades have consistently failed to "consider Black women apart from Black men or white women in sport . . . [and this] approach guarantees the uniqueness of their 'doubly bound' situation will be ignored" (Simien et al., 2019, p. 411). Bruening (2005) explained this concept well, stating:

> There is no one Black female experience that encompasses race, gender, class, and the experiences those social constructs influence. Research, sport research in particular, has failed to acknowledge this. Black women's experiences have been assumed to be similar to white women or to Black men. (p. 331)

Interrogating the experiences of Black women playing professional sport internationally is needed as more opportunities arise for Black women to play professionally in a variety of sports. A. R. Carter and Hawkins (2011) noted, "For African American women, marginalised by their

racial and gender status, their sporting experiences were often invisible and overshadowed by those of Black men and white women" (p. 64).

When interrogating sport, interrogating race and gender identity is also important, as they are always intertwined. Carter-Francique et al. (2017) noted:

> African American women's social locations at the margins of sport and society require readdressing, yet the failure to effectively acknowledge their realities has the potential to minimize deeper understandings of their everyday lived experiences, devaluing their social contributions, and perpetuating exclusionary practices and forms of discrimination. (p. 78)

BFAs have always had to be concerned with myriad stereotypes about their skills, intelligence, and femininity, as the quintessential female athlete has always been a white woman (Adjepong & Carrington, 2014; Butler, 2015; A. R. Carter, 2008). Adjepong and Carrington (2014) stated:

> The invention of the idea of the natural BFA . . . means that when Black women participate in sport, they often face a different set of assumptions than that when Black women participate in sport, they often face a different set of assumptions than white women about their femininity (or lack thereof) and their sporting ability. (p. 284)

Not only are all aspects of a Black woman's experience frequently compared to a white woman's experience, but they are expected to be identical. Because of this expectation, some researchers have not added BFAs to their datasets or included so few of them, their experiences were considered outliers (Bruening, 2005).

bell hooks (2000) suggested the best people to research and examine how Black women feel about being considered an outsider in sports or similar institutions are other Black women. Many nuanced experiences are hard for someone other than a Black woman to describe or

understand, nor do they have the right words. The experience of being an outsider—or, as Puwar (2004) described it, "the other" (p. 8)—is complex and can have layers directly affecting each other. Outsiders and "the other" can understand the language spoken by each other. Without going in depth or in detail, they can explain the looks they give, the looks they receive, the unasked-for touches, or treatment in a store.

For many decades, sports were off limits to Black people, especially BFAs. The opportunities available were for Black men or white women, especially internationally (Bale & Maguire, 1994; Lansbury, 2014). In the 1940s and 1950s, international basketball in Europe and Asia was still not available to Black women, nor was volleyball until the 1970s and 1980s. This time period saw one of the first research studies inclusive of volleyball players (Bale & Maguire, 1994; Heinonen & Lahtinen, 1990; Olin,1984).

The lived experiences of Black athletes have interested researchers, but as Engh et al. (2017) explained:

> Many studies of sport and race had previously focused on men, perpetuating the construction of Black sportsmen as universal subjects . . . studies of gender and sexuality in sport, have tended to focus on the experiences of white women. (p. 69)

As a result, there has been little examination of the experiences of professional BFAs in their collegiate athletic lives and subsequent transition to their professional lives abroad (Simien et al., 2019). Singer et al. (2017) explained:

> We must also commit to research with BFAs, a group that has too often been neglected, disrespected, and undervalued when it comes to the important contributions, they could bring to the discourse on athletes' rights and college sport reform. (p. 42)

The encounters that BFAs have had in Europe show racism is a worldwide problem, not just a problem in the United States (Willis, 2015). Across multiple disciplines, the "experiences of Black women are grouped either together on the basis of their gender identity (with white women) or their race (with Black men) without considering that their realities and circumstances are distinctly different from both of the aforementioned groups" (Simien et al., 2019, p. 412). Simien et al. (2019) explained when Black women are included in research studies, their experiences sometimes contradict results, which unfortunately means they too often are left out of findings and overall literature. With findings such as these, scholars have perpetuated the exclusion of Black women in academic research, thereby excluding their voices and the voices of those being researched.

Bruening et al. (2005) rightly stated, "Lack of research on these women [Black women] has created an attitude that their lives are not worth researching and their stories not worth telling" (p. 85). BFAs continue to be on the margin of all discourse surrounding athletes, with their stories and experiences being not only deemed unvaluable, but also unworthy of study as other athletes are. Bruening et al. (2005) stated, "If research on African American female athletes is not conducted and its results made known, then sport continues to be a site for exercising dominant group privilege, and African American women continue to have their ideas and opinions ignored" (p. 85). Many scholars who have focused on the domestic and international experiences of Black women are other Black women who have not seen themselves in the literature; these researchers have made it their life's work to voice their opinions and experiences so Black women can see themselves included in academic or athletic contexts (Bruening, 2015). As Sellers et al. (1997) stated, "Without the words, experiences, and meanings behind the statistics, it cannot be assumed that the life experiences of African American female athletes do

not differ in meaningful ways from either African American male athletes or white female athletes" (p. 700). Simien et al. (2019) argued although scholarship focused on BFAs has not been extensive, it has recently grown and has important implications for all sport and education scholars.

More recently, research on BFAs has increased with a large variety of literature being developed, whether it be on how the experiences of BFAs within their team shape and formulate their identities (A. R. Carter, 2008; Cooper et al., 2020; Outlaw & Toriello, 2014), what it means to be a Black female at a PWI or a HBCU (Cooper, Porter, et al., 2017; Cooper & Newton, 2021; Harmon, 2009; Person et al., 2001), identity in relation to transitioning after playing (DuBose, 2020); the effects of mentoring and being mentored by BFAs (A. R. Carter & Hart, 2010); race, gender identity, and the media in relation to BFAs (Douglas, 2005; Zenquis & Mwaniki, 2019), or BFAs thought to invade space (Adjepong & Carrington, 2014). All of these topics on BFAs have assisted with developing a foundation on topics BFAs have been left out of in the past when focusing on Black athletes or female athletes.

Professional Black International Female Athletes

Although there remains a lack of professional sport opportunities in the United States for women with only professional women's soccer, professional tennis, and limited volleyball and track and field opportunities, other countries have a large variety of professional sports for women to participate in (e.g., volleyball, soccer, handball, track and field, cricket, tennis, badminton, rugby). Moreover, each sport within European countries has a variety of levels, from higher to lower skilled, pay, and additional benefits. Because of the severely limited professional opportunities for BFAs within the United States, many professional BFAs look at international opportunities to continue their careers.

When BFAs decide to continue their careers in Europe, geography becomes a critical component to how they experience their sport, Europe, their teammates, coaches, venues, and European fans. Unfortunately, existing literature and research available on professional Black athletes have focused on African male athletes and more recently, African female athletes, whereas very scant literature has been conducted on U.S.-born professional BFAs through a geographical lens (Adjepong, 2020; Adjepong & Carrington, 2014; Agergaard & Ryba, 2014; Ungruhe, 2013). The stories of BFAs have been left out of sports geography. Without the stories of BFAs, there can be no recognition of how racism affects their experiences in Europe, including findings that the location of where they lived and played affects perceptions of the salience of racism in their lives (Yull, 2014). The location where these athletes play and the connection of place and space are essential to learn about because of the more consistent migration of BFAs from the United States to Europe to play professionally. Some athletes use moving as an opportunity to develop their skills in hopes of moving back to the United States to play professionally, and others move because there are not professional opportunities in the United States for their sport. Scraton et al. (2018) acknowledged that their research about professional female football players lacked diversity. They stated, "All the players interviewed were white. This reflects the under-representation of Black and minority ethnic women in football in all the countries studied" (Scraton et al., 2018 p. 23). Authors of other books and articles on professional female football players have left out the voices of BFAs. Many times, they only focused on African female football players migrating to Scandinavian countries to get out of Africa, rather than BFAs from the United States who go play professionally for vastly different experiences (Adjepong, 2020; Adjepong & Carrington, 2014; Agergaard & Ryba, 2014).

Whatever the reasons for BFAs playing professionally, it is essential their racial experiences be researched more in academia through a geographical lens to create a fuller picture of how race can affect all facets of their careers. Athletes must lean on each other, regardless of identity, because "sport is the only institution that can cross barriers of gender, race, nationality, political views, and religion to reach all people on a common plane" (Bruening, 2005, p. 341). There is an emergent body of literature on the racial experiences of professional BFAs who play internationally, but "less research attention has been devoted to examining the lived experiences of athletes who play their sport professionally in foreign countries" (Meisterjahn & Wrisberg, 2013, p. 252). Professional BFAs have historically viewed racism through their U.S. sociopolitical lens and are unprepared for the social, political, and colonial histories of Europe. Participants in my dissertation recalled experiencing similar forms of racism in these European countries, such as the nonconsensual touching of their hair or store owners following them around the store; there were also different forms of racism, like their Black skin being stroked in awe or being asked by children if their skin color could be rubbed off (Meisterjahn & Wrisberg, 2013).

Still, there is little knowledge of how gender identity, race, and ethnicity are interwoven in the lives of sportswomen and how these elements affect their experiences on the teams they play on, the cities they live in, and how they experience their lives outside of sport (Scraton et al., 2005). The experiences professional BFAs have faced in Europe are often not as overt as those of professional Black male athletes; for instance, professional Black male football players have been the recipients of violent and harmful comments and gestures, and even more so if they do not score a goal or are thought to have cost their team the game (Antonish, 2019; Beydoung, 2021; Dorsett, 2019; Goldblatt, 2021). Beydoung (2021) provided examples, such as "'[T]hree

f*****g n*****s missed! Stick BLM up my arse,' one English fan wrote on Twitter" (para. 9) or the onslaught of the images of monkeys, bananas, and gorillas under many athletes' Instagram pictures. Professional men's volleyball does not have the history that football does, but instances of overt racism have still occurred, as with Byron Ferguson, who played for Iraklis Volleyball Club; in this instance, "A fan walked over to our bench, spit in my face and said 'F--- you, I'll f--- your mother you monkey'" (Dorsett, 2019, para. 5). Overt racism in the professional men's game has occurred in the past and will continue to occur with very little accountability and consequences—not only for the fans, but for all teams involved.

The racial abuse experienced by Black male athletes in person, through social media, and in written media is far more overt and ugly in comparison to BFAs. Scraton et al. (2005) discussed some of the shared experiences "Black men have reported while playing football . . . racist abuse. Men players have had to put up with monkey chants, banana throwing, racial slurs, objects being thrown at them, and sometimes physical violence" (p. 81). When the English men's football team lost in the European Cup there seemed to be a consistent rain of racial slurs, violence mentioned, and aggression toward the three Black players on the team who played the most. The racial slurs and violence were so overt that the English team and others made statements about racism (Sullivan, 2021). Although there have been some experiences of BFAs internationally having slurs said to them online, such as "bald Black monkey" (McClendon, 2021, para. 3) or a female athlete who had pictures of monkeys held up in the stands when she played, these experiences are fewer and far between.

Professional BFAs experience covert racism more than overt racism, but overt racism has still occurred. McClendon (2021) discussed her experiences as a professional athlete when a viewer watching her game in Brazil commented in the chat box, '"Minas, sub the bald monkey

off'' (para. 5). Desiree, a Nigerian female professional football player, detailed her experience in a Scandinavian airport, during which she was not believed to be a professional football player and security had to call the president of the soccer club to get confirmation of her position (Engh et al., 2017). Unfortunately, analyses of racism in sport have not been discussed and instead "have been virtually silent about the experiences of Black and South Asian women in sport in England, and sport as a racialized and gendered arena" (Scraton et al., 2005, p. 72).

In previous studies, researchers have spoken of the experiences of Black and white male professional athletes with little information on how playing abroad created a host of problems for BFAs. These problems include but are not limited to: (a) lack of stability, (b) adjustment issues, (c) professional performance pressures, (d) economic pressures due to a single-parent income, (e) stress of family relocation, (f) cultural isolation, (g) a lack of job opportunities for the spouse, and (h) other personal issues (Meisterjahn & Wrisberg, 2013; Mitchell & Crontsen, 1987). Many of these studies did not include the racial and gendered dynamic of being Black and female in white areas where residents espouse colorblindness. Singer (2005) explained colorblindness is a tenet of CRT in which "many whites, as well as some people of color, have embraced as a race-neutral perspective" (p. 472) and believe everyone, regardless of their skin color, have the same experiences. Such a view claims it is only meritocracy, not race, that provides opportunities. Colorblind beliefs create national issues and concerns of being able to discuss racism and nuances for Black women.

Additionally, White spaces within Europe have not been welcoming for Black women, as "the arrival of a Black female body triggers a racialised 'shameful livery put together by centuries of incomprehension'" (Fanon, 1986, p. 14) due to both a negation of colonization and its current effects. For countries not directly involved in colonialism, such as Finland, Norway,

Sweden, and Azerbaijan, Black athletes were both verbally and nonverbally told to stay within bounds, go back where they belonged, or behave in ways that allowed residents of the country to feel comfortable (Fanon, 1986). Many locations of volleyball clubs are in small towns that have very few Black women, and many times those Black residents are refugees, sex workers, or undocumented (Engh, 2014; Engh et al., 2017).

Professional BFAs have been rarely spoken about in terms of intelligence and having a great work ethic. All their skills have tended to be only referenced in regard "to their natural capacities, rather than hard work and intelligence" (Engh et al., 2017, p. 75), which furthers racial stereotypes and expectations for athletes to always run faster, jump higher, or have innate athletic skills. Limited research on professional volleyball players exists, though none on BFVPs, which has been the same for BFAs who play football in Europe. To date, information about "race" (Scraton et al., 2005, p. 74) and ethnicity have been missing from their sport. Similarly, Scraton et al. (2005) explained, "Despite the emerging and highly detailed analysis of men's experiences of 'race' and racism in the football context . . . little is known about women players' experiences" (p. 76).

Carter-Francique et al. (2017) explained that when non-Black people attempt to tell the stories of those who are Black, they may wrongly interpret stories, situations, cultural nuances, language, feelings, or clothing. Scholars have conducted a few studies in previous decades of white and Black female athletes' feelings, attitudes, and experiences about their participation in sport (Harrison et al., 2002; Lawrence, 2005), but more Black scholars have started publishing literature on the experiences of BFAs in a variety of academic and athletic situations. Intersectionality researchers have focused on multiple identities and how those intersecting identities interact. This research significantly alters how researchers, coaches, and even athletes

think about Black women as athletes. Such scholarship has also paved the way for a compelling research agenda, putting the perspectives and experiences of Black women at the center of sport and geographical research rather than in their historically marginalized positions (Crenshaw, 1991; Simien et al., 2019).

Depending on the country, there are a variety of ways in which race and racism have been contextualized; some researchers have considered "the complexity and diversity of racisms and their often-contradictory character [which] supports the assertion that 'there is no-one monolithic racism but numerous historical situated racisms'" (Bradbury et al., 2018, p. 314). Jones (2002) discussed concerns about the literature on race and sport from the 1990s, which tended to "ignore certain questions regarding power relations and arrangements within society" (p. 48) and failed to consider whether sport reinforces or challenges racist values of various groups (Jarvie, 1991).

Racism is usually viewed as unintentional by white people, but its effects are overt when coaches and athletes must deal with a variety of gestures, verbiage, and institutional racism affecting those of minority racial, ethnic, religious, or cultural identities (Bradbury et al., 2018; Massao & Fasting, 2010). The consequences of this perspective are that only overt and obvious intentions are considered racist, leaving out any type of covert racism or implicit bias that can have long-term effects on athletes' career paths, awards, contracts, or position choices.

Professional International Black Male Athletes

In countries such as Spain, Italy, France, and Norway, race has started to be discussed in sports in more nuanced ways because of overt racist attacks on professional Black male athletes (Ghiglione, 2020; Llopis-Goig, 2009; Massao, 2016; Massao & Fasting, 2010). Notably, however, race is not typically discussed explicitly; rather, these discussions emerge through a

geographical lens in the view of who has a work ethic, is hardworking, athletic, or intellectually understands the strategic aspects of their sports (Engh et al., 2017; Hylton, 2009; Massao & Fasting, 2010). The stereotyping of Black athletes as less than white athletes was evident in Engh et al.'s (2017) article, in which a professional football club coach showed an interviewer a ranked list of countries they recruit from. Scandinavian countries were at the top, and South American and African countries were at the bottom. Rationales behind football recruiting have a more geographical lens because of the correlation between country of origin, proximity, and style of play. Engh et al. (2017) explained coaches have often thought:

> European and North American are "more similar" to Scandinavian players than African and South American, by drawing on common football stereotypes of African and South American football as being childish and amateurish, and European football as disciplined and tactical. (p. 73)

Stereotypes were also given to Black athletes, such as the strong untrained football player. Ungruhe (2013) noted, "Africa regularly romanticizes it as childish and unspoilt, qualities which distinguish it from professional European football" (p. 201). Carrington and McDonald (2001) wrote, "A 'culture of racism' is deeply ingrained in sport, and a great deal of research has explored aspects of race relations and racial discrimination in sport." (p. 2)

Black Male College Athletes

Black male college athletes are a highly researched group, but there remains only limited information on how certain factors—such as the type and location of the higher education institution, sport, and athletic team, staff, and administrator demographics—affect their daily lived experiences. Much research on athletes excludes BFAs unless they are explicitly mentioned (Adjepong, 2020; Adjepong & Carrington, 2014; Agergaard & Botelho, 2014; Bruening et al.,

2005; Edwards, 1999; Engh, 2014). Because of this exclusion, most research has covered Black men, and more specifically, football and basketball players. Black bodies have been used through time within college athletes as property, for those in power to use as they see fit (Dancy et al., 2018; Hawkins, 1999, 2010, 2017).

Volleyball

Volleyball has a history of BFAs who played at the highest level and won awards (Kaplon, 2016). The U.S. Olympic volleyball teams have consistently had two or three Black women on the roster who not only started, but have led the teams to victory. In 1984, the silver medalist team included Flo Hyman, Rita Crockett, and Rose Magers, who led the team to the medal stand (Kaplon, 2016). Future BFVPS were inspired by these Olympians because they represented them in ways they had not seen before. These Olympians had their hair in afros or braids which looked like the young Black volleyball players (Kaplon, 2016). The Olympians were representative of what the future could look like.

Volleyball has since continued to grow in popularity throughout the United States and abroad. There has been an upsurge in the number of women playing volleyball in the United States, as volleyball has become the number one indoor sport for girls in K–12; 452,808 athletes participated in 2018–2019 compared to 399,067 who played basketball (National Federation of State High Associations, 2019). These numbers show a drastic change from the 2011–2012 academic year, in which basketball was the number one indoor sport, with 435,885 participants; volleyball followed behind with 418,903 participants (National Federation of State High Associations, 2019). In the most recent National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) diversity report for 2012–2019, BFVPs represented over 15% of Division I–III volleyball players, in comparison to just 10 years ago, when Black volleyball players represented only 12%

of volleyball players (NCAA, n.d.-a). Although the number of volleyball players has increased, the number of Black players is still low, which accounts for why many collegiate volleyball teams have typically had only one or no Black volleyball players on the roster. As detailed by the NCAA's (n.d.-b) diversity research data between 2012 and 2019, there are 132,792 NCAA volleyball players in Divisions I–III; of those players, 17,389 (i.e., 13%) are Black women.

Numbers of BFVPs have also consistently increased in the college realm; thus, so have numbers of BFVPs continuing their volleyball careers and playing internationally. Unfortunately, the number of BFVPs competing in Europe is not fully known due to the lack of a comprehensive database, Bring It USA (BIU; Ptaschinski, 2019), one of the best-known agencies has noted in their database of male and female professional volleyball players. Further, ever since BIU started in 2003, they have been known to represent a large majority of professional male and female volleyball players from around the world—not just those from the United States. Out of the small number of professional volleyball players who identify as Black, many of them have gained their knowledge of the nuances and intricacies of playing a professional sport in Europe through navigating the challenges of playing professional international volleyball on their own. Many professional BFVPs playing abroad have not had knowledge of the intricacies of being a professional volleyball player passed down to them. A sentiment shared by my survey participants was that they have had to worry about racist encounters many white volleyball players never have to worry about.

There are no professional women's indoor volleyball leagues in the United States, Canada, nor Mexico (Voepel, 2020); however, many players from the United States played in the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico, known to have high-level professional volleyball leagues because the seasons last around 3 to 4 months compared to seasons in Europe, which are 6 to 9 months.

This length of time allows athletes to play on multiple teams and in multiple countries and continents in one season. With Puerto Rico having the only league in the United States, many Black women do not have the ability to stay in the United States, which is why the only other available opportunity to continue playing professionally after college is outside of the United States.

The earliest research on foreign volleyball players playing internationally included ice hockey and basketball and was conducted by Olin et al. (1990), who studied foreign athletes playing in Finnish leagues, but included no Black volleyball players participants. The 13 foreign volleyball players interviewed for this study were all white and from Eastern Europe. Simien et al. (2019) noted, "Many empirical research studies in sport and education have traditionally excluded Black women as athletes and rendered them invisible (or silenced)" (p. 411).

Sport Migration

Very rarely have BFAs been researched on how their identities affect their international professional sports careers through a sport migration lens. Butler (2015) explained, "Women's sport labor migration has received limited scholarly attention. The majority of data on sport labor migration, including existing typologies, is based on the experiences of males" (p. 5). Because of the lack of material drawing on the racial experiences of BFVPs in Europe, there is a lack of knowledge available to BFAs playing collegiate sports who are interested in ultimately playing in Europe. Along with moving to a new culture or country or playing on a team with athletes and coaches who do not speak the same language and have limited experience with Black people, the ways in which BFVPs experience racism can be completely different from what they have experienced in the United States.

Managing racial experiences in addition to other noteworthy stressors of playing international sports can result in feelings of otherness, discomfort, and anxiety for Black women athletes. Dealing with racism is an additional stressor for "this growing trend of . . . relocated athletes working within exciting, yet culturally complex, interpersonal environments" (Schinke & McGannon, 2014, p. 65). These complex environments can mean many things—not just learning new languages, but also (a) new offenses and defenses, (b) decisions of when training occurs and how long it goes, (c) expectations, or (d) navigating teams that have a variety of ages. Schinke et al. (2013) stated:

> In addition, from the vantage point of the immigrant athlete, acculturation challenges might entail an unfamiliar approach to training (e.g., more or less regimented), and a radically different relationship dynamic between athletes and coaches from what she/he is accustomed to (e.g., consensus and egalitarian when athletes accustomed to their coaches positioned above them in a hierarchy). (p. 65)

The global sports labor market within Europe is one that needs to be research through the lens of identity; as Butler (2015) explained, "Sport labor migration is a reflection of dynamics within our broad social sphere and a microcosm for understanding how politics, economics, and culture are intertwined" (p. 2). Sports migration is critical to understand because this "international acquisition of players has brought up several issues including amateurism, citizenship, and national identity as athletes have been migrating to various countries around the world to play their sport" (Butler, 2015, p. 2) and for different reasons. All the athletes migrating to Europe to play sports come from different cultures and identities and "encounter varying circumstances, barriers, and incentives around the world as they search for sporting opportunities" (Falcous & Maguire, 2005).

Critical Race Theory in Europe

The critical race theory (CRT) framework fits within the construction of race in the United States, which has been historically based on enslaved peoples. Europe's relations to race are very different due to the countries' relationships to enslaved people, imperialism, and colonization, in comparison to the United States. In the United States, there is a relationship to slavery due to the use of enslaved labor, where European countries have had more of a role in transporting enslaved people as well as colonializing countries around the world (Keaton, 2010; Nimako, 2020). CRT scholars have rarely stepped outside the constructs of race within the United States to give attention to how CRT can be applied to European legal circles. A comprehensive search of contemporary French, German, Italian, and Austrian legal literature yielded very limited results; even on a broader scale, CRT seems to have gone practically unheeded in Europe (Möschel, 2011).

As a result of World War II and Nazi Germany's science-based genocide based on race, CRT has gone unnoticed in Europe (Harris, 2011; Möschel, 2011). Backlash from the scientific use of race and the Holocaust has now caused countries in Europe to consider themselves colorblind and subsequently not in need of evaluating how race creates inequalities; this propensity toward claimed colorblindness has prevented many countries from even collecting race-based data other than the United Kingdom and Ireland (Shendruk, 2021). Understanding the experiences of Black women from the United States who play professionally in Europe can be enhanced by using CRT, keeping in mind the ideals of race from the United States and Europe. Many countries, such as France, Belgium, Austria, Netherlands, and Finland, have taken the complete opposite view when it comes to collecting racial demographical data statistics and

instead do not collect any racial demographic information (Mielants, 2006; Safdar, 2017; Shendruk, 2021).

Even though CRT is a framework from the United States that analyzes race, it can be employed in Europe to start deconstructing their legal systems by recognizing how the lack of acknowledging race affects what is considered racism, how it is perpetrated by people, and how the government can penalize it. Understanding how colorblindness affects the experiences of professional BFAs through both a United States and European lens is critical to understanding how they navigate their moves to different teams and different countries. European ideals of colorblindness do not stop people of different ethnicities or races from having different experiences; it just stops those experiences from being acknowledged.

Because of France's foundation of pushing against naming race (and, therefore, racism), it is unlikely a theoretical framework like CRT has been developed. Banton (2011) explained:

> For anyone, either of French ancestry or of immigrant descent, to base an action on an assumption that humans belong in races would be to defy one of the republic's founding principles . . . which is not so differently in Germany or Sweden. (p. 157)

Although this argument sounds great in theory, the reality has been that these countries still in some ways have racialized categories. Because of that categorization, CRT would be a great theoretical framework to implement; yet, unfortunately, as Hylton et al. (2011) explained, "Banton also argues that CRT is unlikely to gain much purchase outside the USA with France, Germany and Sweden expressly challenging the notion that people belong to races" (p. 17). Salmi (2011a) elaborated on a few key benefits of CRT:

> Contribute to understanding racial discrimination in France, and thus promote a better anti-discriminatory agenda, is by posing a theoretical challenge to

> aspirations to an unquestioned universalism as guarantor of equality in France, . . . taking into consideration the role played by the concept of race in France in the construction of national identity and political culture, . . . expand the overall understanding of how racism functions, . . . contributing to widening the analysis of racism to uncover more insidious forms of systemic, institutional and, most important, state racism, which remains to be seriously condemned. (pp. 188–191)

CRT as a theoretical framework looks differently when applied to other countries without slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, or the brutal past of the United States; however, the question is what aspects of CRT can be applied to help acknowledge racism and start institutional change. Although CRT is best known for its theoretical usage within the United States, the application of it to laws and policies within Europe provides a more thorough understanding of how race and racism manifest, regardless of whether the countries want to acknowledge that it occurs.

Race and Racism in European Countries

Racism within European countries has always had a connection to colonialism as "colonial racism within Europe was a major element in that conception of 'Empire' which attempted to weld dynastic legitimacy and national community" (Anderson, 2006, p. 142). Their attempt to control the nationalist communities were done on the ideas of "innate, inherited superiority on which its own domestic position was (however shakily) based on the vastness of the overseas possessions" (Anderson, 2006, p. 142). The overseas possession of lands and people also correlated to how Black people, regardless of citizenship, were treated on European land. In the larger European context, Blackness has often been viewed as incompatible with being European (Samples, 2019).

Flores (2015) stated, "In Europe, researchers often look with skepticism at the emphasis in the United States on race, instead highlighting the capacity of culture, especially religion, to explain native opposition to immigrants" (p. 237). Racism across the world is looked at very differently; for example, Massao (2016) had difficulty identifying who was Black through the Norway census. In Norway, there is no population census that divides populations by race or ethnicity—even though the country has an increasingly divided population and a racial history from the 17th century with colonialism, trade, and missionary activities. Racism manifests itself in different and more complex ways within Europe, ways that professional BFVPs from the United States might not be prepared for.

The European Union (EU), an alliance of 28 countries, "emerged out of the ashes of World War II and formed part of an attempt to deal with some of the challenges that revolved around nationalism, communism and decolonization" (Nimako, 2020, p. 3). Many countries in Europe have been reckoning with their sordid past relationship with slavery, colonialism, or genocide. This reckoning has taken place in various ways; for example, in England, protestors "used ropes to pull down the bronze statue of Edward Colston, a prominent 17th Century slave trader, who has been a source of controversy in the city for many years" (BBC News, 2020, para. 14). The mayor of Amsterdam, Femke Halsema (as cited by Schaart, 2021) gave a formal apology on July 1, 2021, during the city's Keti Koti ceremony in Amsterdam, during which she stated:

> On behalf of the city's administration, I apologize for the active involvement of the Amsterdam city council in the commercial system of colonial slavery and the worldwide trade in enslaved people. . . It is time to embed the great injustice of colonial slavery into the identity of our city, through broad and unconditional recognition. (para. 8)

European countries and its residents are clearly not colorblind, "even though powerful Europeans insist on colorblindness in Europe" (Nimako, 2019, p. 4). Black Europeans are a group who often feel like foreigners in their own countries, consistently battered by racism and racial discrimination. As Bruce-Jones (2017) explained, there are two main bodies of law affecting racial discrimination in European countries: primary and secondary legislation, and case law from the EU and the European Convention on Human Rights. Unfortunately, "In the overwhelming majority of Member States [European Union], however, the concept of race or racial origin is not used in data collection" (Farkas, 2017, p. 6). Professional BFVPs cannot report racism and discrimination because of the lack of data on race and racism.

Because of the connection between colorblindness of countries and few racial discrimination laws, there is not only a lack of protection for Black Europeans, but also Black athletes from the United States who are in European countries. The countries in the EU have discretion on what defines discrimination and how it is handled. At present, the only country in the EU that collects racial data on a national level is Ireland, with some countries gathering data on ethnicity (Shendruk, 2021). European governments "rarely pledge support for equality data collection on or including the ground of ethnic and racial origin. Ministries more often commission data collection on ethnic origin as compared to racial origin" (Farkas, 2017, p. 7). There is a different legacy of colonialism and imperialism in Western European countries compared to Eastern European countries. The legacy is different due to "the colonization of Africa was designed at a conference in Berlin by major European states in 1884–85" (Nimako, 2014, p. 57). German colonialism treated the continent of Africa as if it was a prize to divide up to their liking. Frankel (1985) explained this issue decades ago, noting:

> African famine is again on the front page and when the West is viewing the continent and its daunting problems with a mixture of sympathy, horror and disdain, it is instructive to recall those days when Europe carved up Africa like a Christmas turkey, with each participant fighting for his favorite piece. Many of the problems that haunt Africa today have their origins at that diplomatic table. (para. 3)

Craven (2015) explained, "The overt purpose of the Conference was to 'manage' the ongoing process of colonisation in Africa (the 'Scramble' as it was dubbed by a Times columnist) so as to avoid the outbreak of armed conflict between rival colonial powers" (pp. 31–32). This "scramble" colonized most of Africa and allowed Europe to divide up African countries—not by natural boundaries, but by boundaries decided by officials in Berlin. Davies and M'Bow (2007) explained, "Drawing up borders and claiming and creating nations and thereby destroying preexisting geographical and cultural and natural boundaries [which caused the] entire continent [to be] thrown into confusion" (p. 28). It was a race to own land with no consideration to the natural borders that were already in place by the countries and their residents.

Craven (2015) also noted, "Berlin 'transformed Africa into a conceptual *terra nulius*,' silencing native resistance through the subordination of their claims to sovereignty, and providing, in the process, an effective ideology of colonial rule" (p. 33). Even though colonization ended for many of the countries between 1945 and 1960, effects of colonization on Africa and those who migrated to these colonizing countries were still felt (Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe, n.d.; Office of the Historian, n.d.)

Nimako (2020) illustrated, "European nations have several things in common, such as notions of geography, religion and race, [but also] they also have differences, such as their historical relationship to colonialism, and the constitutional arrangements prevalent in each

nation-state" (p. 2). More important, EU nations have the commonality of anti-Blackness, regardless of if the Black person is a citizen, legal resident, refugee, asylum seeker, or undocumented immigrant. Nimako's (2020) point of anti-Blackness was evident when they stated:

> Even mentioning the issue of Black Europeans evokes strong emotions among those who equate "Europeanness" with "race" or whiteness. It can also evoke strong—and ambivalent—emotions among some Black people who question whether they will be allowed to be fully European. (p. 1)

As with the United States, Europe has always had a love of sports and Black people who can help them win. Carrington (2010, as cited by Doidge, 2015) explained, even with a level of anti-Blackness, when the United Kingdom was in the EU:

> How the notion of the "sporting Black Atlantic" to illustrate the role of empire and colonialism in the development of the Black sporting body and suggests the parallel development of sport during the great imperial expansion of nations such as France, Britain and the Netherlands helped shape national identity. (p. 252)

Certain studies inclusive of Black and African female athletes focused on African female athletes traveling to predominantly white countries. In their research, Engh et al. (2017) found athletes many African female athletes migrated to "Scandinavian countries (Norway, Sweden and Denmark) which appear as essentially 'colour-blind' . . . and innocent as far as the history of colonial conquest and expansion goes" (p. 67). Race as a concept has been consistently questioned within the different countries by the government and its citizens, particularly the Black citizens. The history of slavery, colonialization, genocide, and imperialism changes the

way the ideas of how to define race, who the definition includes, and how the definition affects people.

It is critical to explore European countries and their relationships to race and racism, particularly in understanding that the effects of George Floyd's murder and the subsequent racial uprising around the world have greatly influenced global conversations, potentially changed past legislation, and introduced new more up-to-date policies (Kirby, 2020; Westerman, 2020). George Floyd's murder on May 25, 2020, by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin and the subsequent recording started a global reckoning with anti-Blackness in policing through Black Lives Matter (BLM, n.d.) protests over the murders of Black and Brown people in their countries around the world (Kirby, 2020; Westerman, 2020). People in Colombia, South Africa, the United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands, Indonesia, and many others protested because they felt "'[T]here is a George Floyd in every country,' South Africa–based journalist Lynsey Chutel told National Public Radio (NPR)'s David Greene during a recent roundtable interview" (Westerman, 2020, para 2).

Belgium

Belgium is a historically white country with a past of violently colonizing the African country of the Congo, which resulted in millions of deaths, amputations, and mutilations (Stanard, 2014). The history of Belgium is a little different from other countries who colonized historically Black and Brown nations due to the extent of the violence and persecution. During the time of King Leopold II's reign from 1885–1908, Belgian soldiers burned villages, shot or mutilated Africans, chopped off body parts, kidnapped women and held them as hostages, and depopulated vast stretches of land by murder or the flight of terrified natives (Weisbord, 2003). There was no record keeping of the violence in the Congo, and unfortunately, "[T]here are not accurate

statistics on the number of deaths due to lack of historical records, but some Belgium historians estimate the death toll to have been 6 to 8 million, perhaps even 10 million" (Weisbord, 2003, p. 36).

In the opinion of post-World War I Belgian scholar Vansina (as cited by Weisbord, 2003), "The Congolese population was reduced by 50% over a 40-year period beginning in 1880" (p. 36). This violent history was also shown by Ceuppen (as cited by Mielants, 2006), a former colonized person and expert on the history of the Democratic Republic of Congo who "traced a direct line between how Blacks were treated by whites in the Belgian Congo, to how immigrants and 'colored' minorities are discriminated against and patronized in today's post-colonial Belgium" (p. 319). The experiences of Black people in Belgium have quietly been developed since the 1800s and they live today amid largely colorblind attitudes.

Mielants (2006) explained that Belgium subscribes to the colorblind attitude and pushes it through the linguistic assimilation mentality, as "it requires immigrants to graft themselves onto previously existing networks and organizations . . . especially within the French-speaking south there are policies that are unwilling to recognize other ethnic-cultural groups" (pp. 314–315). This assimilation mentality has a big effect on residents, as they are boastful of having types of policies that draw all aspects of a person's culture out of their life and force them into a very Eurocentric way of life—one devoted to all their history, culture, and upbringing. Some public opinion polls showed in the past that over half the Belgian population labeled themselves as some level of racist (Rea, 1998). Rea (1998) wrote 22% of all Belgians labeled themselves very racist, and 33% labeled themselves as fairly racist.

France

France, another very popular destination for professional BFVPs, was developed as a secular nation in 1789 with a "color-blind mentality" as their legislators declared that all men (i.e., humans) were free and equal with the statement that "social distinctions may be based only on common utility" (Banton, 2011, p. 155). This colorblind mentality has also been caused by what Salmi (2011a) explained as the idea that "race, as a concept and referent, continues to hold an extremely taboo position in French society" (p. 177). The French have also gone further to exemplify the ideals of colorblindness in the "data protection law of 1978 which specifies that data on racial origins may not be stored electronically without the express agreement of the persons concerned" (Banton, 2011, p. 155). France also does not allow the codifying of race or ethnic minorities in any demographic data or legal documents, which then pushes against what has continually occurred in academic spaces. Célestine and Fila-Bakabadio (2017) explained:

> Blackness and Black experiences have been in academic and intellectual debates for decades, although they were never at the forefront of public and national discussions. Thus, the country continues to struggle with its slave, colonial, and postcolonial past, while discussions about memory regularly arise in the public space. (p. 96)

The main reason race and, subsequently, the ideas of racism, are not able to be codified legally is laïcité (Salmi, 2011b). Salmi (2011b) explained *laïcité* as corresponding:

> To the French articulation of public neutrality. However, as Laborde rightly states, French secularism has gone beyond the original definition as ordained by the 1905 law, with the expansion of the definition of public neutrality beyond the separation of the private and public spheres to include "the condition both of access of all to the public sphere and of respect for differences, which must remain private." Gradually, laïcité has

> come to be perceived as a regulating principle imposing complete neutrality from any particular identity in the public sphere. (p. 28)

Due to secularism being the focus of *laïcité*, "it [*laïcité*] is hardly ever problematised in relation to racism within France" (Salmi, 2011a, p. 190), but the term is used as a method to avoid discussing racism in any public way. The troubling spot the French are in results from having worked so hard to be colorblind, becoming a secular nation not divided by identities, and now "[T]hey are being forced to confront a 'race' question that [they] can no longer avoid" (Keaton, 2010, p. 105). France's ideals of being colorblind took a blow in 2007, when Keaton (2010) noted:

> An astounding 61% of self-recognized 'Black' and mixed-race (*métis*) responded to a first-ever survey and indicated they had experienced at least one racist incident within the past year which increased to a reported 75% in the Paris region (Ile de France). (p. 104)

Finally, France has gradually come to terms with its role in creating anti-Blackness through the colorblind or race-blind ideology; just as in the United States, such an ideology "harbors an unspoken recognition of 'white' normativity" (Keaton, 2010, p. 121). Keaton (2010) stated:

> In the French context, as I have described it, "race" is indeed everywhere but nowhere at the same time, and "race-blind" discourse in a racialized society is blind only to itself and to the racial discrimination that it seeks to conceal. (p. 124)

Many countries where Black professional volleyball players play proudly subscribe to an ideal that their government and citizens are colorblind. In France, racial data have not been allowed to be collected because government officials believe more in universal citizenship, and other countries, such as Germany and the Netherlands, have not even mentioned race, as it is nonexistent in country politics. Instead of race being collected as demographic data, some

European countries collect data on ethnic or national identities (Alba, 2005; Amiraux & Simon, 2006; Flores, 2015; Koopmans et al., 2005; Weil, 2002).

Germany

Many countries within Europe remain hesitant about adding language regarding race to their constitutions due to the Nazis' use of scientific racism and its application during the Holocaust (Hendrick, 2005; Lipphardt, 2012). Lipphardt (2012) explained how "two aspects of German race science that were doubtless hazardous and dangerous: eugenics and scientific racism" (p. S70), which created the problematic ideals that race was a biological concept and therefore could be studied. Bruce-Jones (2017) stated:

> Similar to France, German officials do not collect or utilize racial statistics when assessing how public duties are conducted or for examining patterns of discrimination. Unlike in France where there is an actual restriction on collecting the data, they just have not instituted the ability to do it and therefore lack of collecting racial statistics. (p. 28)

Germany had a more tender relationship with race even before the Holocaust, when the Nazi regime was based on racialization, separation by race, and murder by race[17]. Germans have consistently been concerned with skin, even if they do not verbalize it. Germany has an unacknowledged relationship with skin color, as it "is often the determining factor of establishing identity and hierarchy: 'color is not seen as value-free.' 'White,' the 'abstraction' of all colors, is equated with purity (hygienic and moral), with wholeness" (Wiedenroth, 1992, p. 224). The experience of racism has caused Germans to be a little more hesitant on national

---

17 According to BBC (2022):

> Hitler and the Nazis had firm views on race. They believed that certain groups were inferior and were a threat to the purity of the Aryan race. There were many groups who were targeted for persecution, including Slavs (Eastern Europeans), gypsies, gay people and disabled people - but none more so than the Jews. (para. 1)

To Hitler, the Aryan race was superior as it included "people of European descent, not Jewish- often with blond hair and blue eyes" (BBC, 2022, para. 5).

discussions of race, and in some spaces having race-based conversations was looked at as taboo. Because of the views on race, conversations about the collection of race-based data are warily viewed.

Because Germany is wary about discussions around race and the effects of racism, the country's painful relationship with Blackface continues to visually illustrate the racial stereotypes. Samples (2019) explained how "Blackface and another recurring image, the colonized African native, [which] are products of German imagination, [that] both affirm and perpetuate the power dynamics of white superiority and Black inferiority" (pp. 224–225). Their connection to race is one that ties Blackness to difference, otherness, and exoticness. These ideals of difference due to skin color are not overt; they are instead hidden behind concepts such as Blackface. Blackface allows thoughts of the inferiority of Black people to exist for Germans attached to fun, entertainment, political, or good or benevolent causes and negate their overt fascination with exotic and difference (Baum et al., 1992; Samples, 2019; Wiedenroth, 1992).

Racism in Germany is not verbalized; racism just codes Blackness as different and then codes Blackness akin to alien status, which is so different from Germans' white, privileged experiences (Samples, 2019). Blackface in Germany is usually used for politics or entertainment, as explained by Samples (2019), when in "March 2016, an amateur German soccer team was the object of a great deal of social media interest because the white members of the team appeared together in a group photo, wearing Blackface" (p. 230). This usage of Blackface ignores the effects on Black people in Germany and the subsequent stereotyping it can cause. Even though Germany attempts to be colorblind or nonracial, visual celebration of overt Black stereotypes and the exoticness of Black features, bodies, and culture that create hostile and violence spaces for

Black people still occurs. The German government has delusions of grandeur that Samples (2019) described as:

> The passage and implementation of anti-discriminatory laws will improve the condition of people of colour residing in Germany. Unfortunately, these laws cannot fully work until the German people "rethink their attitudes about people of African descent as well as those of other ethnicities." (p. 239)

Italy

For many decades, Italy has attempted to ignore the multicultural identity it has gained through migration, as well as the country's past ties to colonization. Due to Italy's lack of explicit involvement in the slave trade like other European countries, their citizens do not view the colonialization of African countries with the same lens. Italy was at the Berlin Conference of 1885 with other European countries when Africa was divided up and colonized. Even though Italy was present at the dividing of the African continent, they did not start colonizing Africa until the early 1900s. Italy spent time and energy colonizing the African countries of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Libya, and the European country of Albania; Ghiglione (2020) stated, "It's estimated that during the 60 years of Italian colonialism, almost 1 million people died due to war, deportations, and internment" (para. 12). Italy has managed to create a narrative that separates them from other countries. They were considered the good people, which Ben-Ghiat (2009) explained then fed into:

> Sustaining the myth of Italian colonial exceptionalism [which] manifested [itself] in government policies that severely restricted scholars' access to important colonial archives for most of the postwar period, and in a general rejection of alternative framings of the histories and legacies of Italian colonialism. (p. 263)

Because of this narrative, it has been difficult to talk about Italy's connections to race and colonialism.

The focus of many conversations and research on colonization have seemingly left Italy out. Because of that omission, "the history and consequences of Italian colonialism were until very recently little known in Italy and abroad, despite the lasting legacies of Italian imperial possessions that stretched from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean to the Adriatic" (Ben-Ghiat, 2009, p. 263). During the colonization time, Mussolini, then the leader of Italy, was "strongly against sexual relationships between Italian men and African women, and even more strongly stigmatised the birth of mixed-blood children" (Podesta, 2011, p. 6). This belief was for numerous reasons; one reason was he felt Italian soldiers would look weak and lose respect in the eyes of natives (Podesta, 2011). Mussolini was very opposed to mixing races. Podesta (2011) explained:

> The fascist regime's racial policy, directly inspired by Mussolini, was aimed at preventing "the procreation of half-castes in the most totalitarian way possible" by issuing a series of laws that tried to prevent and punish sexual intercourse between Italians and Africans: "It is proven by biological law that half-castes inherit the mother's physical characteristics more than the father's; it is proven that they are generally and permanently useless for the purposes of any creative occupation; it is proven that half-castes are inclined to degenerative forms of various kinds; it is proven that they despise their coloured ancestors and, generally speaking, hate their white ones." (p. 6)

These types of policies created problematic views on race and migrants, especially those migrating from countries that had been colonized by Italy throughout prior decades. What some scholars have noticed is Italians still employ colonialism methods, and memories of colonial rule

still affect modern legislation; for instance, Andall (2008) noted, "In relation to the issue of citizenship, the current immigration policy approach might be classified as a continuum of former colonial approaches" (p. 289). These effects on immigration policy make it more difficult for those migrating from former colonized countries; as Andall (2008) stated:

> The law not only made it more difficult for non–European Union citizens to acquire citizenship (extending the residence period from 5 to 10 years) but it also prioritised the blood route to citizenship, leaving access open to the third generation of Italians abroad. (p. 289)

In modern times, Italy has been a country with an increasing migration of Black and Brown people, and that migration has created increasing covert and overt racism occurring toward immigrants, residents, citizens, and their professional athletes. In Italy, many names of Black people are used interchangeably with Black and African, such as *seneglese* [Senegalese], *marocchini* [Moroccan], and *albanesi* (Albanian; Doidge, 2015; Foot, 2001). Regardless of the names used to describe darker skinned residents, Doidge (2015) explained, "It does not diminish the way that 'race' is socially constructed by groups. The Black–white dualism can still be utilized by groups wishing to differentiate outsiders" (p. 253).

Migrants of African descent are terrorized in numerous ways, with one example in the "southern Italian town of Rosarno in 2010, when Italians fired air rifles at African immigrants who were employed in fruit picking" (Doidge, 2015, p. 252). Many migrants who reside there are both invisible and visible (Foot, 2001). They are highly visible in public spaces, often selling contraband, but are invisible to the authorities as they work in low-paid primary industries, such as fruit and vegetable picking, which are shunned by Italians (Doidge, 2015). Migrants—specifically, Black migrants—are only there to be useful to Italians and to be seen, but not heard.

Professional Black footballers in Italy consistently experience racial abuse, which became more pronounced "after the Bosman ruling, which ensured that national or club control over players' contracts was rescinded and players were free to move to any club" (Doidge, 2015, p. 252). Many of these Black athletes had little-to-no protection from racial abuse. Doidge (2015) described what these athletes endured, recalling:

> Frequently abused with "buu buu" monkey noises, booed every time they touch the ball or become targets of chanting which in 2005 led Marco Zoro, the Ivorian striker who was playing for Messina against Inter, to pick up the ball and try to walk off the pitch . . . AC Milan midfielder Kevin-Prince Boateng received widespread attention when he walked off the pitch in protest after being the victim of racist chanting from Pro Patria supporters during a friendly [football game] . . . and lastly Samuel Eto'o was abused by Cagliari fans. (p. 252)

This type of racial abuse has been normalized in some respects in Italy, especially toward Black men from fans and those who work for professional clubs. Antonish (2019) explained how Carlo Tavecchio, former president of the Italian Football Federation, described foreign players as those who "previously ate bananas" (para. 8). Instead of being ousted, he was actually elected as the president of the Italian Football Federation and cleared of any wrongdoing by the Italian football authorities, even though both Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) and Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) issued a temporary ban on him (Antonish, 2019).

Spain

Spain also continues to reckon with their racial history, "where the elites have long denied racial differences, to understand how the reported salience of boundaries based on race, nationality, and religion change with acculturation" (Flores, 2015, p. 237). Spain has operated similarly to other

European countries. Morales et al. (2008) rejected the notion of race because Spaniards want to believe the country they live in abides by democratic ideals of citizenship. In Spain, a country known for their high-level professional volleyball leagues, there is the enduring belief that "the practice of racial classification is often associated with 'ethnic cleansing,' the Spanish government forbids officials to collect racial data" (Flores, 2015, p. 42). To discuss race in Spain entails discussing a topic that divides the country rather than unites it. Llopis-Goig (2013) stated, "Contrary to what is sometimes supposed, racism is not a phenomenon of the past. In fact, it is one of the major challenges of the present and future in Europe and Spain" (p. 262). Racism has consistently shown up in professional sports in Spain. Llopis-Goig (2009) explained, "Many football players have been the victims of verbal aggression, xenophobic chants and denigrating gestures, although Black and ethnic minority players suffer these to a disproportionate degree" (p. 35). This racism has emerged in many ways including (a) chants by fans, (b) monkey sounds, (c) cups and water bottles thrown, (d) bananas tossed on the field, or (e) non-Black athletes saying racially charged comments to Black athletes (Corrigan & Crafton, 2021; Goel, 2021; Morse, 2020; Winterburn, 2021).

Spain has a history of racial abuse from fans toward Black athletes who play for Spanish clubs or against Spanish clubs that date back decades and have gone virtually unpunished. Football player Pape Diop (as cited by Corrigan & Crafton, 2021) discussed his experience of being harassed by the fans:

> They should have punished the Atletico Madrid fans who you could see in the images were making those gestures with big fines and life bans from stadiums. There could also be a fine for the club itself, but those kinds of serious consequences were lacking in my case. (p. 20)

The lack of accountability for racial acts toward Black athletes means these issues may never stop and will certainly continue because they are not perceived as harmful.

In her dissertation about Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) players who play overseas, Butler (2015) collected data via semi-structured interviews on how Black women felt when playing in Spain and other European countries. One professional athlete in Butler's study (2015) stated:

> Not only being American, but being Afro-American. So you would get a lot of stares, especially in my earlier years . . . especially in Spain. The town that I played in was a small town, so you get like a lot of stares and people would say "look look look!" [in Spanish]. (p. 165)

As a country with one of the top women's professional volleyball leagues in the world, many volleyball players have wanted to play there; yet for decades, many professional athletes "have been the victims of verbal aggression, xenophobic chants and denigrating gestures, although black and ethnic minority players suffer these to a disproportionate degree" (Llopis-Goig, 2009, p. 35). These harmful and potential experiences can both stop professional BFAs from accepting contracts in the country or cause them to live in a state of fear they will be targeted.

Sweden

Sweden has a very interesting racial history. Sweden began the Swedish State Institute for Race Biology (SIRB) in 1921; Ericsson (2015) stated the SIRB originally was formed to:

> Assist in providing solutions for social problems such as pauperization, alcoholism and psychiatric diseases. However, the institute initially gave scant attention to these issues, instead launching projects charting the racial traits of the Swedish population and measuring and photographing human bodies. (p. 125)

During this same time, researchers used racial science to separate groups—eugenics and sterilization was used on those considered Romas, Gypsies, and Travelers (Kotljarchuk, 2020). Between the 1960s and the 1990s, Sweden saw a different mentality, where the parliament wanted no mention of race at all. Banton (2011) explained this mentality was exemplified in 1999, stating:

> The Swedish parliament declared that there is no scientific justification for dividing humanity into distinct races and from a biological standpoint consequently no justification for using the word race with reference to humans . . . the government in international connections should try to see that usage of the word race with reference to humans is avoided in official texts so far as is possible. The five groups acknowledged as national minorities in Sweden are: the Sámi, who are also an indigenous people; the Swedish Finns; the inhabitants of Tornedal (a valley in the far north where many speak Finnish); the Roma; and the Jews. In Sweden, the expression ethnic minorities as a designation of immigrants and their descendants have been dropping out of use because it is seen as distracting attention from the differences between individuals assigned to such categories. (p. 157)

This action by parliament caused Swedish people to assume colorblindness. Hübinette and Tigervall (2009) argued Swedish people have given themselves a self-image based on social justice, gender equality, and presence in a post racial utopia, which has muted public and academic engagements with discussions of race and racism. Many people of color, or those deemed nonwhite within Sweden, were subjected to several different types of racism, discrimination, and segregation. In addition, Hübinette and Tigervall (2009) maintained, "Recently new qualitative Swedish migration research has come out indicating that a nonwhite

body is a factor to be considered when it comes to being exposed to discrimination in contemporary Sweden" (p. 337).

Norway

Norway is a very racially homogenous country. Norwegians understand and discuss race in theoretical, not practical, terms, which does not affect how they view race relations. Massao (2016) explained a practical way in which Norwegians work to understand how race and racism is viewed, discussed, and ultimately experienced:

> The concept of race [in Norway] acquired an historical negative connotation, especially after WW2 . . . which led to the rejection and almost absence of race and race-related concepts in public and academic discourses, even when a race concept is acknowledged to be a sociohistorical rather than a biological construct. (pp. 21–22)

With a normalized rejection of all things race related in Norway, "racialized prejudices against minorities, especially nonwhite minorities, are defended as normal and harmless" (Massao, 2016, p. 20). Massao and Fasting (2010) acknowledged stereotyping, direct, and overt racial comments, and subtle or indirect comments facilitated discriminatory practices regardless of the intention. Massao (2016) presented an example, noting, "In Norway, Gullestad (2004) reprimands the Norwegian scholars regarding their colorblindness to the effects of racialization processes on the everyday racial discrimination and constructs of the racialized Others" (p. 22).

Instead of focusing on the harm caused by racism on Black people and other ethnic minorities, those in Norwegian academia have focused more on the "'intention' and the 'consequences' in analyzing the racialization . . . of the racial minorities" (Massao & Fasting, 2010, p. 150). Norway is a country of people who like to brag about how multicultural its residents are, as illustrated by Massao and Fasting (2010), who noted, "Not putting race at the

centre of analysis [they are actually], systematically silences the voices and experiences of racial minorities in a society which privileges dominant racial majorities" (p. 150). Racism happens in well-documented ways in Norway, including persistent discrimination toward ethnic minorities in the labor market, educational system, and with second-generation immigrants—despite typically speaking the language fluently and having the proper educational qualifications (Dankertsen & Kristiansen, 2021). Understanding European countries and their histories with slavery, race, and racism are important to not only the research of my dissertation, but also to the safety of the professional BFAs I study. The nuances of each country are critical to explore in relation to race, space, sport, and gender identity because the more the intersections are investigated, the more information can be relayed to those traveling to play professionally in Europe.

White Gaze

The white gaze is something BFAs have always had to be aware of and manage. Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo (2017) explained:

> The black body in white space has always been constructed as a problematic difference to whiteness: an inferiority and an "other." Blackness is thus not merely about skin color, but rather it is a social construct persistently conceived of as an opposition to whiteness: It is not only that which defines whiteness but is also inferiorized by it. (p. 1)

The Black body has been constructed throughout history as an inferiority and as other, a social construct continuously conceived as an opposition to whiteness. Blackness, therefore, is not only a social construct, but it has always been considered as a problematic difference to whiteness (Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017). Fanon (1967) explained, "The Black man is unaware of it as long as he lives among his own people; but at the first white gaze, he feels the weight of

his melanin" (p. 108). The white gaze is a feeling that follows BFVPs throughout their lives. The feeling is one they often become accustomed to a certain degree; yet, still, Fanon (1967) noted, "We shall resort to the obvious fact that wherever [she] goes, a Black [woman] remains a Black [woman]" (p. 119). This gaze consistently follows a BFVP wherever they are located to remind them that they are not only unwelcome, but also invading the space. When BFVPs compete in foreign countries, they have an understanding that they are not supposed to be there and are perceived to be an immigrant, refugee, undocumented, or beggar (Engh, 2014; Engh et al., 2017). Black athletes are not assumed to be in the countries legally with a job. Because Black people are perceived as undocumented immigrants, they are then over surveilled with a gaze on them at all times. Douglas (2005) maintained, "Because the application of various formations of power [are] such that surveillance has become an important method of social control. Surveillance refers not only to the practice of observing people in public spaces" (p. 128).

To watch the movements of a BFVPs is to attempt to control them. Douglas (2005) explained, "Surveillance is significant precisely because it currently functions as a sophisticated form of suppression and control in multiracial and multicultural societies" (p. 128). The gaze is always upon them, not allowing them the freedom given to others who either live there or are white, so they are unable to blend in more than the BFVPs. The experience of the white gaze on BFVPs is often not one that specifically has a name, but one many players must explain in detail, hoping they will be believed by white teammates and coaches. The presence of BFVPs in many European countries cannot go unnoticed, because even if they are polite, quiet, and respectful, they are still visible and viewed as another whose body can be dangerous to those around them (Douglas, 2005). Dominant identities do not perceive that among similar identities there can be an unacknowledged and unsaid understanding of who belongs in that space and who invades the

space. Many times, Black bodies, and especially Black female bodies, are made to feel as if they do not belong in many of the spaces in European countries (Adjepong & Carrington, 2014; Puwar, 2004). Adjepong and Carrington (2014) illuminated what has been understood as "the 'somatic norm' as those bodies that can occupy spaces without question" (p. 172). Many times, white bodies are those who can fully occupy spaces without concern to being watched, over surveilled, or perceived as invading the space.

Sport is a dichotomy, because on one hand, there is an expectation to be watched as athletes perform for those who watch. Athletes want more fans to watch their games, and sports are funded by those fans, sponsorships, media contracts, tickets, concessions, and depending on the location, local government involvement; however, it is a double-edged sword because BFVPs want the fans on and off the court, and there is an oversurveillance of BFVPs while they compete that creates a viewpoint situated within "the gaze of dominant White media [which is] 'racialized' such that 'the seeing eye [is] white,' and its object is Black" (Douglas, 2005, p. 135). Because the dominant gaze is white, how BFVPs are viewed, discussed, and treated can be wildly different when compared to white female volleyball players. This treatment can have a direct effect on how they are perceived where the players live or visit. Regardless of how popular, successful, accomplished, or kind the BFVPs are, they will still be treated as outsiders and unwanted immigrants who are in that country for undesirable reasons.

Nationalism

Nations, nation-states, nationalism, and the communities developed because of those identities are socially constructed. These identities are created through what Anderson (2006) referred to as print capitalism, which illustrates that nationalism is a very modern kind of identity. Print capitalism was how modern communications started through the published word, which required

societies to be literate. According to Anderson (2006), "Print capitalism, made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways" (p. 40). Widespread literacy throughout countries occurred with not only a variety of written languages, but with a larger percentage having the ability to read; thus, widespread literacy and widespread distribution of printed matter transpired. Throughout the nation building within the last few centuries, literacy campaigns created for the purpose of teaching people to be national citizens became essential for leaders and states.

This new identity of being part of a nation was essential to reach everybody who considered themselves members of the nation in ways it was not for other kinds of identities. In earlier times, people would consider themselves citizens of a country. The shift in identity assisted people in making statements of beliefs that they were members of a nation, which also entails belief in citizenship and national identity. This national identity facilitated widespread nationalism, which assisted people in throwing themselves into an identity that allowed them to determine how people locate themselves, how they position themselves, and how regressive these kinds of identity are constructed to become exclusionary and chauvinistic. Those nationalistic identities have been used by exclusionary groups to determine who is part of the nation and have the needed nation-ness through "skin-colour, gender, parentage and birth- era – all those things one cannot help" (Anderson, 2006, p. 137). These views of exclusion affected the view of Black athletes and Black fans, regardless of citizenship, social economic status, or position on a team. Even though sport has long been considered the great connector—a way to bring people and nations[18] together, it does not have the power of community and identity that nationalism created. Sport has been used in the past to mend relationships between nations, as a

[18] Nations and countries are used interchangeably.

"tool of diplomacy, to break the ice of frigid relations between countries" (Cha, 2010, p. 4), or help continue the friendly relationship between countries. "Nationalism is a state of mind" (Kohn, 1994, p. 162).

Sport has been a powerful connector tool, but it also has the power to divide, suppress, and oppress due to what it conjures. Arnold (2021) gave three reasons as to why sport can produce nationalism, stating:

> First, sport is a vehicle or mechanism for nationalism, having the ability both to impress cognizance of the nation and to take responsibility for the spread of nationalism. Second, sport continues to play an important role in nation-formation under conditions of globalization, particularly so in the case of Sporting Mega Events (SMEs), such as the World Cup or Olympics. Finally, sport can go a long way toward superimposing the civic and ethnic definitions of nationalism on a society. (p. 4)

The ability to produce nationalism is due to what Cha (2010) illuminated, as "Sport evokes emotion and unity in a way that no other form of politics, art, or music can accomplish" (p. 4).

Sport has been used as a method for developing a loyalty to a country and promoting nationalism. This strategy was indicative in Kazakhstan amid development of the Astana Professional Cycling team used to promote nation building (Koch, 2013). In Russia, the government recreated similar sports programs to promote nationalism, borrowing heavily from the Soviet past (Arnold, 2021). A variety of national sports such as volleyball, takro, and Gerak Jalan were tied to nationalism. In Indonesia, nation building was a method to politicize sport to "change the bodies and minds of individuals and to bind the populace through creating a national consciousness" (Moser, 2010, p. 54). Governments have used sport to perpetuate nationalism and

historically understood how critical sport has been to the reshaping and entrenching national identity (Arnold, 2021).

Governments have used sport to push forward nationalism to create unity among groups of people who would ordinarily never socialize together. Sport can create a bond in fans over their common love or hatred of a team or country, and this bond can have them act in ways they would not if by themselves. Arnold (2021) stated, "By creating an (ideally) non-violent arena where national and ethnic identities can be negotiated and reified, sport provides opportunities for the spreading of the nationalist worldview" (p. 4). Steeped in this unity over sport can be a love for country or team. Arnold (2021) stated, "A tactile opportunity to instantiate the concept of the nation onto which individuals can simultaneously consume and reproduce national culture" (p. 2). Nationalism is a concern for professional Black athletes because of the decision by the dominant identity of who can and cannot reproduce national culture, who is deemed to belong in the country, and who is forever a foreigner, even if born in the country or by gained citizenship. It is a concern for professional BFAs because nationalism and support for the country has a relationship to racism and othering in some sports that can be a danger to the athletes. Mosse (1984) explained the connections racism had to nationalism:

> Racism strengthened both the historical and the visual thrust of nationalism; it emphasized the stereotypes of superior and inferior races, while the distinctive history of each people was said to determine their superiority or inferiority for all time to come. (p. 133)

Racism allowed nationalism to flourish, as it helped people use the visible differences of race to determine if athletes belonged in the nation—not even as a citizen, but as a member of the team.

Bonding over sports and the support for their country of birth or residency, nationalism can create intense emotions as "sport and nationalism are arguably two of the most emotive issues in the modern world" (Bairner, 2001, p. xi). As Arnold (2021) expounded, "Sport offers a tactile opportunity to instantiate the concept of the nation onto which individuals can simultaneously consume and reproduce national culture" (p. 2). Sport and nationalism can develop intense loyalty and frequently have resulted in violence (Bairner, 2001). Nationalism is a very difficult word to define, as there have been many disagreements between scholars of what nationalism looks like, how it is formed, what it encompasses, and who is involved (Bairner, 2001; Canovan, 1996; Dunn, 1994). When discussing the ideas of both nation and nationalism, Bairner (2001) explained there can be a distinction between "the 'nation,' membership in which is secured through birth ties, and the 'state,' for which we require legal membership" (p. 3).

When discussing nationalism, researchers many times have described it in respect to the nation, meaning citizenship is through birth of people of that same ethnicity and skin color rather than through other methods of citizenship. According to Mosse (1984), "Racism branded the outsider, making him inevitably a member of the inferior race, wherever this was possible, readily recognized as a carrier of infection threatening the health of society and the nation" (p. 134).

This nuance is important because many times, those who are Black and have gained citizenship legally are still not considered to be part of that nation; rather, they are considered outsiders. This division due to race or skin color is critical to those who are Black and live in those countries but are still considered to be outsiders and in some ways are not welcome where they live or were born. Sport facilitates these ideals of Black people being outsiders within the countries they live in or where they were born; as Bairner (2001) stated:

> Sport is frequently a vehicle for the expression of nationalist sentiment to the extent that politicians are all too willing to harness it for such disparate, even antithetical, purposes as nation building, promoting the nation-state, or giving cultural power to separatist movements. (p. 3)

The relationship between sport and nationalism has been pushed forward due to the intricate connection to globalization, which is a method governments use to promote nation-states. The relationship has also been seen, as Houlihan (1994) described, as "most evident and significant in providing governments with a further medium through which to conduct international politics" (pp. 200–201). Although sport is supposed to be enjoyable, fun, and relaxing, it can be far from it, due to governments, nation-states, and countries using sport as a method for control of both their residents and the residents of other countries. Bairner (2001) agreed: "Sport for a variety of purposes, including enhancing prestige, securing legitimacy, compensating for other aspects of life within their boundaries, and pursuing international rivalries by peaceful means" (p. 18).

Even though sport adds this jovial aspect, athletes' race and ethnicity are lightning-rod issues—not only in homogenous countries like Russia (Arnold & Veth, 2018), but even those that are diverse, such as France, Portugal, Belgium, and the Netherlands. As a result of the ethnic composition of the national team and its performance in major competitions, a team may become the target of pro- and anti-migration politics, or civil and ethnic versions of the nation at times (Goldblatt, 2021). Race and ethnicity have had connections to sport and nationalism for decades because sport was used as recruiting grounds for neo-Nazi and far-right organizations in countries such as England, Russia, or Germany based on their ideals of national "ethnic exclusivity" (Arnold, 2021, p. 7). As Mosse (1984) explained, "Racism emphasized certain distinctions between the normal and the abnormal which we have met before, but which served

to nail down still more firmly society's preconceptions and prejudices about looks and behavior" (p. 135).

Sport as the breeding ground for these types of organizations coincided with the violent harassments that Black athletes have had to face on a consistent basis both from the opposing fans and their own (Arnold, 2021). There can be no interest from fans, sports, organizations, or even teammates in Black athletes being on the teams, even if there is an opportunity for them to help their favorite teams win (Arnold & Veth, 2018). Black athletes are only expected to be there to help teams win, for if the Black athlete makes a mistake, fans accuse them of costing the team a victory, followed by violent racist harassment rained down on the athlete (Antonish, 2019; Ghiglione, 2020; Goldblatt, 2021). Black bodies are only looked at as being used for their bodies and not as people who are a valuable part of society.

Summary

This literature review provided a comprehensive overview of the topics forming the foundation of exploring the racial experiences of professional BFVPs within Europe, including:

- Sports geography
- Five themes of geography
- Spatial frameworks
    - Space
    - Place
- History of Black female athletes
- Black female athletes
- Professional Black international female athletes
- Professional Black international male athletes

- Volleyball
- Sport migration
- Critical race theory in Europe
- Race and racism in European countries
- White gaze
- Nationalism

The large variety of topics reviewed assisted with developing a full understanding of myriad factors that affect professional BFVPs' racial experiences. Research on race and racism within European countries was critical to my dissertation research as it showed the similarities and differences of how racism can be experienced by professional BFVPs. Understanding how European countries view race and racism in their countries can help professional BFVPs navigate how racism will manifest. Because I undertook a major endeavor to integrate typically unconnected lines of academic inquiry from multiple fields, it was critical that I provided a nuanced understanding of the literature surrounding and centering BFVPs.

Chapter 3 is a mixture of several different elements together that are oftentimes not put together. Academics (i.e., Black geographers) outside of traditional geography in recent times have looked at the intersections of Black feminist thought and Black geographies due to the obvious connections in terms of the analysis of how Blackness is "intertwined with space, race, and gender" (Hawthorne & Meche, 2016, para. 36), how space is viewed through a "white-masculinist cartographic gaze" (Hawthorne & Meche, 2016, para. 36), and how that creates what Hill Collins (1990) described as "partial perspectives, situated knowledges, and . . . subjugated knowledges" (pp. 234–235). But other connections are sometimes not addressed, but were very relevant for this study, such as the connection of racial space Neely and Samura (2011) explained

as “both explicitly racial spaces, that is spaces in which we would expect to see racial processes occurring, and less expected racial spaces . . . which check and challenge our assumptions about how racialization and racism currently operate” (p. 1946).

Three frameworks (i.e., Black feminist thought, Black geographies, and theory of racial space) were used to guide the interviews, create the foundation the research stood on, and plan how the data would be collected for this dissertation. The frameworks helped me “challenge what counts as knowledge and redefine what types of research are considered rigorous and sound” (Hawthorne & Meche, 2016, para. 34). Chapter 4 details the methodology and methods used to conduct research for this dissertation.

CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODS

> I think the only negative experience I had with it was, we were at a tournament, and we were in the Canary Islands. I was standing next to my teammates and some random girl from another team ran up, petted my head, and then ran away.
>
> —Legz, *Participant*

Theoretical frameworks are so important because it assisted me in giving an objective reconstruction of life to the participants, instead of a rendition of how life is perceived as it is based on the respondent's life and experiences and details the parts of the chosen parts of their life. Legz's quote resonated with me because as Black woman with an afro, in European countries my hair tends to not be a part of my body, but instead, an item for public consumption. Because society's views of natural Black hair are negative, Black women have been taught to hate their hair; natural is bad, straight is good (Hill Collins, 2000). Their hair is viewed as an oddity, which in turn allows others to feel they have unfettered access to doing what they want with it. Such a misperception results in an uncomfortable feeling many Black women have had to navigate, especially in spaces where they cannot vocalize their feelings.

The purpose of this dissertation was to better grasp the racial experiences of professional Black female volleyball players (BFVPs) in Europe, particularly those experiences that many are not able to speak about when playing in Europe because of the lack of protection. To gain the information needed to understand those experiences, "a qualitative research design was developed to answer the research questions of this study" (Pierre, 2019, p. 36), based on a methodology of humanizing research. Qualitative research is an essential "orienting lens for the study of questions of gender, class, and race [and] becomes a transformative perspective that shapes the types of questions asked, informs how data are collected and analyzed, and provides a

call for action or change" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 120). It was my purpose to write this dissertation to elevate the voices of BFVPs and help their supporters better understand how to support them when playing in Europe—this objective required choosing methods, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks with intent. The methods, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks chosen are ones that vocalize BFVPs' experiences. The way racism shows up in professional sports is a microcosm of society. Even though professional BFAs are paid, and some paid well, there is still a power dynamic situated due to race that shows up in ways that will be acknowledged and discussed.

I discuss the theoretical frameworks of Black feminist thought, Black geographies, and theory of racial space and how they were employed in this study to understand the racial experiences of professional BFVPS who played within Europe. I then go into detail regarding my methodology of humanizing research, which, as Paris (2011) described, is "a methodological stance, which requires that our inquiries involve dialogic consciousness-raising and the building of relationships of dignity and care for both researchers and participants" (p. 137). I used narrative inquiry as my method to conduct the interviews. Narrative inquiry was the best method, as it allowed me to record "human experience through the construction and re-construction of personal stories [and] it is well suited to addressing issues of complexity and cultural and human centeredness" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 1). There is a lack of literature and research on Black female athletes (BFAs) at any level—be it club, college, or professional—perpetuated either through the silencing of the researchers or the athletes themselves. Using narrative inquiry was critical to study BFVPs, as "narrative is not an objective reconstruction of life—it is a rendition of how life is perceived. As such, it is based on the respondent's life experiences and entails chosen parts of their lives" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 3). As evidenced by the quote

from Legz, who explained her personal experience, the other participants also use this forum as a method to illuminate their feelings on the experiences they have had. Finally, I conclude this chapter by detailing my methods and providing rationale for why surveys and interviews were critical to gain a more accurate level of data analysis and collection.

Circumstances and Challenges of Research

The COVID-19 global pandemic exacerbated frantic timelines in 2021 for participants who were either club volleyball coaches, college volleyball coaches, professional athletes, or players on the U.S. National Team. In a typical year (i.e., one not disrupted by a pandemic), the high school volleyball season lasts from August to November, and club volleyball takes place from November to June or July. With a normal schedule, it would have been easy to know when the participants could be interviewed and when they would be too busy with practice, games, or recruiting. The COVID-19 global pandemic changed that schedule and created some unusual limitations, as some participants who were contacted were preparing for competitions that should have been played in the prior year and were unable to be interviewed or had to move interview times to best fit their training schedules.

Circumstances for College Volleyball Coaches

I sent out the surveys in May 2021. In normal times, May is a dead period[19] for the entire month until June 1, and this period is usually when coaches take their vacations and rest because June and July are heavy camp and recruiting periods. Because 2020 was an irregular year, volleyball recruiting had been in a 15-month NCAA dead period since March 2020, during which all evaluations were conducted online and not in person. On-campus visits were also halted.

19 An NCAA dead period is the most restrictive of all recruiting periods, as during the dead period coaches may not have any in-person contact with recruits and/or their parents. This period extends to a coach's campus, the grocery store, or a tournament (Next College Student Athlete, n.d.).

Between these two limitations, recruiting for future classes was difficult, as coaches use in-person evaluations and campus visits to make scholarship offers to freshmen through seniors in high school. The official end of the extended dead period was June 4, 2021; club recruiting camps and showcases[20] happened during the weekend of June 5–6, 2021, which also kicked off the first round of in-person recruiting.

Because of the aforementioned recruiting issues, May 2021 was a tough time for those in college volleyball. Many former players-turned-coaches did not have time to fill out the surveys, as they were preparing themselves and their staffs to recruit in 2021. Recruiting is an extensive process with volleyball staffs, and within certain divisions (e.g., NCAA, NJCAA, or NAIA) there are a certain number of coaches allowed to be out recruiting at the same time. Some divisions have a certain amount of recruiting days to be concerned about and must do a large-scale calendar of all the tournaments or camps that the coach will attend, and how long they will attend, as they might not stay at a location the whole time. Instead, they will go to multiple locations on the same trip to maximize their recruiting days and see as many athletes as possible.[21] This process can be important, difficult, and time-intensive during a normal recruiting season, but amid the COVID-19 global pandemic, recruiting in June 2021 was even more important because of all the missed recruiting opportunities of the previous year.

It was important to understand the timing of the survey distribution. As a result, different methods were used to contact potential participants other than their college email accounts

---

20 College recruiting camps and showcases are camps in which college volleyball coaches work the camp to meet and work with recruits in close proximity. These are usually big events, because coaches work with top talent for a few days intimately as opposed to their own schools' volleyball camps, where they are more likely to be the director and must manage the activities of a number of coaches, staff, and hundreds of athletes.

21 Volleyball coaches receive 80 NCAA recruiting days for in-person recruiting. Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, there were many tournaments and camps in which cameras were set up on each court and the coaches were able to "recruit" virtually and watch as many courts as they wanted. This virtual format also used up part of the coaches' 80 recruiting days, even though they were at home.

which, depending on their level of play, could receive 30–50 emails a day about upcoming recruiting events. The interviews were planned for June, July, and August 2021, which coincided with the recruiting schedule, camp season, and preseason. Some participants were new head coaches, which further complicated logistics, as they did not have a typical 1st-year head coach experience. Asking for a large time commitment, such as a 2-hour time block for an interview, proved difficult and sometimes meant rescheduling.

Understanding that aspect and being flexible helped. Flexibility assisted with the participant Snickers, as it helped in finding a time for her to be in the study and fostered trust for her participation:

> Snickers: Hi, I am looking at the sign up. Will the interview take 2 hours? If so, I won't be able to participate. We are in the heart of recruiting season. Please let me know.
>
> Me: Hey, it really depends on how long we chat for and how in-depth you go. Also, would July or August work for you? If so, we can move it to then!
>
> Snickers: No, those months won't work, camp heavy and preseason. I am signing up for next week.

I focused on having an open calendar that worked with their schedules while also respecting that asking for 1.5 to 3 hours might be difficult during June to August of an unconventional sporting year.

Circumstances for Professional Volleyball Players

Some volleyball players I interviewed were playing in the Spike O' Rama[22] in Italy in 2021 and preparing for the Sporting Mega-Event (SME[23]). For these athletes, I was cognizant of their schedules, the time change from the Eastern U.S. time zone to the time zone they were playing, and the rest they needed. Asking for 2 hours while they were in the middle of Spike O' Rama was not acceptable; thus, I worked with them to schedule interviews after Spike O' Rama was over, but before they left for the SME. Understanding and working around their schedules helped deepen the researcher–participant relationship because I made it clear to them that although the interview was important, making sure the time worked for them and their lives was more important. I interviewed them because of their experiences as professional athletes, but also as individuals, because their stories were important to be recorded, not just told orally. Throughout this process, my goal was to center them as people, which is shown by one Twitter conversation in my direct messages with a participant:

> Diamond: I was just wondering if you have a deadline in mind for when you want your interviews to be done. I am asking this because I'm currently competing in Italy and would love to do this interview while I'm over here but want to find a time that isn't too crazy for either of us. Right now, it seems like the available times you have are later at night here/early in the morning. We're currently playing 3 days on and 3 days off, with our off-day schedules having a lot of unpredictability.
>
> Me: Yaaaa, friend so happy to hear you are killing it in Italy. Great to hear from you. My deadline is like August honestly and whatever works for you. You are in Italy now and

22 Pseudonym for a large volleyball sporting event.
23 According to Guilianotti and Klauser (2010), "SMEs such as the Olympic Games or football's World Cup finals are global spectacles that, for host nations, impact directly on urban regeneration, tourism, and international standing" (p. 34).

you all play until June 25th. We can wait til [*sic*] after you get done as I know your schedules are crazy, and I don't want to take 2 hours from you that you could be resting and relaxing.

Diamond: Thank youuuu! Lol this schedule is kicking my ass not going to lie. I appreciate the gesture, after June 25th works for me too. I should know our schedule upon return as soon as next week actually, so I'll circle back and let you know about possible dates.

Other professional athletes lived internationally, which meant the time change had to be considered for them and for me. I focused on humanizing my participants, not just due to the COVID-19 global pandemic and racial unrest from the murder of George Floyd[24], but as a standard practice. Understanding constraints affecting the participants during that time was instrumental in supporting those who were assisting me for my dissertation.

Theoretical Frameworks

Black Feminist Thought

According to Newby et al. (1992), "Black feminist thought is a synthesis of a body of knowledge crucial to putting in perspective the situatedness of Black women and their place in the overall struggle to reduce and eliminate gender, race, and class inequalities" (p. 508). Black feminist thought is capable of use as a geographical framework when combined with other theoretical

---

24 George Floyd was murdered by police on May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. E. Hill et al. (2020) noted the murder occurred:

> After a convenience store employee called 911 and told the police that Mr. Floyd had bought cigarettes with a counterfeit $20 bill. Seventeen minutes after the first squad car arrived at the scene, Mr. Floyd was unconscious and pinned beneath three police officers, showing no signs of life. (para. 1)

This murder, which occurred during the COVID-19 global pandemic, was streamed over social media, television, and by news stations and served as a lightning rod for the Black community, who felt these type of violent assaults and murders by police were occurring with no accountability. The video of Floyd being knelt on and, ultimately, murdered was traumatizing. As a researcher, it was important I understood the effects of the murder and the subsequent protests on my participants and how it could affect their level of engagement.

frameworks, such as Black geographies and theory of racial space. The theories interlock to account for the interrelationships that geography has with "race, class, gender, and sexuality . . . [and] nation" (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 83). Hill Collins (2000) developed Black feminist thought and is a framework that solely centers the voice and experiences of Black women. This theoretical framework is broken into "three main key features of Black Feminist Thought: (1) Black women's lived experiences and how they define themselves; (2) intersecting systems of oppression and Black women's lived experiences; (3) the significance of Black women's culture" (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 24).

Key features of the Black feminist thought framework allowed for a better understanding of the intersecting oppressions that Black women "face that create a dynamic of race, gender, nationality, social class, and other identities that impact their agency, this is known as the matrix of domination" (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 273). Most theoretical or conceptual frameworks are developed, both consciously and unconsciously, with a white male or female consistently centered at all points through the framework, which then pushes Black voices to the margins. For far too long, the knowledge and experiences of Black women have been oppressed; dominant groups mistakenly feel as if those groups accept their own subordination and victimization when knowledge by marginalized groups is suppressed (Hill Collins, 2000). A. R. Carter and Hawkins (2011) stated, "[T]he foundation of this theoretical framework envisions a standpoint which promotes a counternarrative and emancipates and empowers African American women through voice" (p. 69). Black feminist thought was developed because Hill Collins (2000) believed "suppressing the knowledge produced by any oppressed group makes it easier for dominant groups to rule because the seeming absence of dissent suggests that subordinate groups willingly collaborate in their own victimization" (p. 3). Black feminist thought centers on the lived

experiences of Black women, and according to Pavlidis (2018), feminist geography pedagogy identifies "everyday space as a site of feminist struggle, resistance, and negotiation, and of potential liberation, freedom, and transformation" (p. 345). Relatedly, Ferguson (2021) noted, "Black women occupy a unique intersection between race and gender. They can relate to some experiences of Black men and some experiences of white women. However, their space, Black womanhood, is often misunderstood" (p. 5).

Black women enter all white spaces constructed on the idea of colorblindness, which subsequently forces them to "redefine the spaces they enter into, their presence deconstructs and reshapes the images and definitions about them that they did not create" (Ferguson, 2021, p. 6). Athletics can seem like an inclusive space because of the variety of identities that come together for one goal; however, Ferguson (2021) stated: "[T]he inclusion of athletics further complicates discourse about spaces for Black women. Athletics is a microcosm of society; a place where race and gender have not always been celebrated outside of athletic success" (p. 6).

Furthermore, discussing the intersection of being Black and female is critical, as Black women deal with both racism and sexism. Crenshaw (1991) argued, "[B]ecause of their intersectional identity as both women and of color within discourse that are shaped to respond to one or the other, women of color are marginalized within both" (p. 1244). Simien et al. (2019) made a valuable point when they stated Black feminist thought was formed because there needed to be a space where researchers understood and nurtured issues and experiences of oppression felt by Black women. Ferguson (2021) argued Black feminist thought "is a theoretical framework which argues that unique standpoint of Black women is valid and necessary to reject White, masculine viewpoints of the Black woman lived experience" (p. 24). Gabay (2013) discussed how Black feminist thought was conceptualized by Hill Collins (2000) to show

commitment to social justice and the empowerment of Black women, a view traditionally lacking from other theoretical models. Moreover, A. R. Carter and Hawkins (2011) showed how "coupling Black feminist thought with CRT[25] provides a framework in which African American female students can become empowered and emancipated through CRT's tenets of social justice" (p. 70).

Black feminist thought grapples with the notion of whose experiences, cultures, traditions, and voices should be uplifted in geography to help tell the full story of the experiences of Black women—not just their trauma. Black feminist thought fully centers how Black women experience life and uplifts their voices when they speak and write about those experiences. The centering of Black experiences and the telling of unique stories[26] reveal similarities between Black feminist thought and critical race theory (CRT); such distinction is essential to geography, as it helps researchers gain an understanding of how place and space affect the lived realities of Black people "because critical race theorists purport that without the voice of Black people contextualizing their daily lived experiences with oppression, a clear and critical understanding of their struggles with race and racism . . . would not be possible" (Yull, 2014, p. 3). Black feminist thought and CRT challenge the colonial mindset of geography by focusing on what geography looks like and whose voice should be listened to. My dissertation focused on Black professional U.S. female athletes and explained what their experiences have looked like, depending on the continents and countries they played in.

---

[25] Critical race theory is a theoretical framework that originated from critical legal studies (CLS). CRT is grounded in tenets that are generally agreed upon but not universally subscribed to (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The premise of this framework is to gain an understanding of the "distinctive realities and lived experiences of Black people" (Yull, 2014, p. 2) and as Lynn and Adams (2002) illuminated, to analyze the many ways that "race and racism were fundamentally ingrained in America . . . hence shaped U.S. ideology, legal systems, and fundamental conceptions of law, property, and privilege" (p. 88).

[26] Unique storytelling is also known as "notion of a unique voice of color" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 10). This is a unique voice or what others have described as the voicing of Black experiences and their encounters with racism.

CRT is threaded within Black feminist thought because of similarities in the grounding and centering of Black people; for both, storytelling "comes from its powerful, persuasive, and explanatory ability to unlearn beliefs that are commonly believed to be true" (Hartlep, 2009, p. 10). If storytelling did not exist, many experiences and stories of Black and Brown people would not be heard in research. As Milner (2007) stated, "Dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen can emerge for researchers when they do not pay careful attention to their own and others' racialized and cultural systems of coming to know, knowing, and experiencing the world" (p. 388). By using CRT and Black feminist thought in sports, researchers can "shed light on issues related to power, hierarchy, controversies and history, which privilege some racial groups over the others" (Massao & Fasting, 2010, p. 151).

Hill Collins (2000) found the Black feminist thought framework has been used to reveal a variety of overlapping oppressions experienced by Black women that have not been faced by other genders and racial and ethnic groups. Including the identities of Black women furthered the ideas of Howard-Hamilton (2003), who explained their identities create an "'outsider within' status, in which Black women have been invited into places where the dominant group has assembled, but they remain outsiders because they are still invisible and have no voice when dialogue commences" (p. 21). Black feminist thought helps create a structure considered by Ferguson (2021) as:

> An appropriate framework to understand how safe spaces for Black female [volleyball players] can be an act of resistance. Black Feminist Thought is an asset-based framework which allows Black [female volleyball players] through their knowledge and lived experiences to resist the ways in which they have been excluded within social institutions. (p. 24)

As Howard-Hamilton (2003) stated, this Black feminist thought framework is critical to understanding the experiences of BFVPs because it allows the experiences of Black women to shape the narrative, as opposed to someone else shaping the narrative of their experiences. Black feminist thought scholars have shown there is an intersection of experiences among Black women (Brock, 2010; Crenshaw, 1991; Ferguson, 2021; Hill Collins, 2000). The multiple identities of Black women, both in their commonalities and their differences, provide context of how they experience their lives. Black feminist thought scholars have redefined narratives of Black women through their own words in a society that does all it can to define the narrative and force Black women into stereotypes made for them (Hill Collins, 2000).

According to Bruening et al. (2005), Black feminist thought assists Black female student–athletes in finding their voices and ways to express themselves by sharing their perspectives, experiences, and opinions on life. It also helps researchers understand how to elevate Black female student–athlete voices when they have been silenced for so long. Stratta (1995b) also recognized the voices of BFAs were silenced and gave suggestions on ways administrators could best support BFAs and elevate their voices. Carter-Francique (2013) used Black feminist thought to better understand the experiences of Black female student athletes in culturally relevant, cocurricular leadership programs and what they gained from participating. Relatedly, Ferguson (2021) used Black feminist thought in her analysis of safe spaces for Black female student athletes; she explained, "Black women student–athletes can experience both oppressions simultaneously as the only Black woman in the classroom wearing athletic clothing" (p. 25). BFAs, regardless of their positions of power or financial positions, will consistently experience inequalities that cannot be fully explained to people not of those identities (Douglas, 2005).

According to A. R. Carter and Hawkins (2011), Black feminist thought envisions advancing a counternarrative through emancipation, empowerment, and inclusion of Black women. Many women I spoke to in this study were excited to have their stories told because many of them did not have someone to discuss their options with when deciding whether or not to play overseas—especially those coming from smaller schools. The women who had someone to talk to often did so with someone white and did not gain an understanding of the differences in experiences that Black women might have. Lawrence (2005) noted BFAs throughout many disciplines have been silenced because "others have usually spoken for them" (p. 110). The silencing can also occur within sports geography and geography disciplines if they are even mentioned at all. Black feminist thought strengthens with the notion of whose experiences, cultures, traditions, and voices should be uplifted in geography to help tell the full story of the experiences of Black women, not just their trauma. Black feminist thought fully centers how Black women experience life and uplifts their voices when they speak and write about those experiences.

Mowatt et al. (2017) used Black feminist thought to analyze the persistent paradox of invisibility Black players face in leisure studies, society, and academia, and the hypervisibility they face in body politics and microaggressions that confront their bodies differently than white women. By combining Black feminist thought with a geographic lens, Okafor (2018) examined homeplace and activist spaces for Black queer people regarding "positive identity formation and healing from a toxic, homophobic context" (p. 373). This article was written from a place of love for Black women and an understanding of the importance of centering their experiences, both positive and negative, so they could tell their stories the way they felt was best. Black feminist thought illuminates the experiences of Black female faculty, who are often the only ones in a

department, and needed a framework that could contextualize their experiences (Davis & Brown, 2017; Fields, 2020). Using Black feminist thought is important because, according to Walkington (2017), "Intersecting power systems lead to a socially constructed and complex set of social inequalities, like Black women faculty and graduate students" (p. 51). Black women, regardless of their position of power, will consistently experience inequalities that cannot be fully explained with their other identities.

Staying with a geographical lens, Daley (2020) looked at the study of Black women within West Africa and other countries and saw how most white geographers and white feminists have created an idea of "what normal is for women, gender, and household, [but that] idea still excludes and marginalizes Black/African women's experiences" (p. 798). In this respect, Black feminist thought is crucial to centering Black women's experiences, because if geography has a white or Eurocentric lens, what is considered normal will consistently leave Black/African women on the margins and be looked at as strange or different.

Examining research on professional BFVPs in Europe assisted in filling the gaps created by either focusing on experiences of international Black football (i.e., soccer) players, Black male collegiate football or basketball athletes, or white female collegiate athletes. Researchers have not investigated what space and place mean to a professional athlete—especially a Black female—how it affects them as an athlete or as a person, and what it is like to feel like an outsider in countries where they are not expected or wanted.

Black Geographies

Similar to Black feminist thought, Black geography researchers have largely focused on the lived experiences of Black people. This framework "calls for scholars to be open to multiple ways of knowing while highlighting the unique experiences of Black people to shape spatial visions and

practices" (Allen et al., 2019, p. 1012). Resembling Black feminist thought, Black geographies have central themes that situated this dissertation. According to McKittrick and Woods (2007), these themes:

> Cut across the study of Black geographies and broadly examine:
>
> 1. … [T]he ways in which essentialism situates Black subjects and their geopolitical concerns as being elsewhere (on the margin, the underside, outside the normal), a spatial practice that conveniently props up the mythical norm and erases or obscures the daily struggles of particular communities.
> 2. … [H]ow the lives of these subjects demonstrate that 'common-sense' workings of modernity and citizenship are worked out, and normalized, though geographies of exclusion …
> 3. … [T]he situated knowledge of these communities and their contributions to both real and imagined human geographies [as] significant political acts and expressions. (p. 4)

Studying the impact of race on Black people through a geographical lens is essential so researchers view them not as "mere victims of geography, [but] sophisticated geographical thinkers engaged in creative processes of world-making" (Hawthorne & Meche, 2016, para. 12). Black people are intricate parts of geography who have been silenced because their experiences have been viewed as monolithic. Research on Black people deserves not only its own research, but also its own framework, as in many projects focused on race, the experiences of Black people have been merged with those of other races and ethnicities. The lack of their own frameworks may give the assumption that Black people are not worthy of their own research (Jordan, 2010; Mwaniki, 2017). Black geographies scholars have developed an ability that Allen et al. (2019) described as Black agency in space-making and emphasized Black geographic experiences in

society. Just as important, within this focus on agency, Black geographies researchers actively "seek to highlight the relationship between race and geography in the social and material production of our world, addressing themes and issues of significance across and beyond our discipline" (Allen et al., 2019, p. 1002).

Experiences of Black people are not monolithic compared to what is experienced by people of color, because there are so many factors that go into creating an experience a person has; many of those experiences are developed through their identities (Allen et al., 2019; Cooper & Jackson, 2019; Yull, 2014). Because of this, Black geographies is "not as a catch-all for all geographies of race but instead as a term encompassing works that emphasize black experiences, and alternative visions and articulations of space drawn from these experiences" (Allen et al., 2019, p. 1002). Black geographies researchers focus on centering Black people; as Allen et al. (2019) explained, "it actively seeks to highlight Black agency in the production of space and Black geographic experiences in the articulation of Black geographic visions of society" (p. 1002) in a discipline that has consistently either sidelined or silenced the Black experience, deeming it nonexistent.

Black peoples' voices and experiences have been viewed in relation to whiteness rather than situated by themselves in the discipline. McKittrick (2011) noted that Black geographies "specifically, calls for an 'analytics of race based not in suffering, but on human life,' expressing a vision of Black Geographies that need not be based explicitly on Black suffering or set directly in contrast to whiteness" (p. 948). Academics and society have rendered Black knowledge, Black excellence, and Black lived experiences invisible, and instead have elevated Black death, Black suffering, and Black bodies (Allen et al., 2019). A goal of Black geographies researchers is to integrate place into scholarship on Black experiences, understanding race alone cannot explain

experience; there must also be layering of space and place in that experience. Allen et al. (2019) discussed how Black people are affected by "place-making [as it is] an existing geographical process in which everyone participates during experiences and interactions" (p. 1010). Finally, and more important, Black geographies researchers are not just meant to elevate the experiences and voices of Black people, but are also meant to be seen as a method of "social justice: a political, social justice project within the academy and society, focused on Black lives" (Allen et al., 2019, p. 1003).

Black geographies helped me situate and center the Black experience on its own, not one in relation to whiteness. McKittrick (2011) looked to Black geography "for an 'analytics of race based not in suffering, but on human life,' expressing a vision of Black Geographies that need not be based explicitly on black suffering or set directly in contrast to whiteness" (p. 948). Much of the literature on Black bodies within geography focused on the disenfranchisement of Black bodies and the pain and suffering that has occurred (Edwards, 1999; McKittrick, 2006). Within geography, what Black bodies have is "invisible in the academy and society, the Black knowledges, Black excellence, and Black lived experiences" (Allen et al., 2019, p. 1004).

Although research on professional BFVPs discusses experiences potentially traumatizing and harmful, they get to tell their stories the way they want to, and center their experiences. I centered telling their stories through narrative inquiry, which is set in human stories of experience. It provided a way to understand and investigate how they experience their world through their own stories (Webster & Mertova, 2007). It is important that with this research I focused on staying "human centered as it captures and analyses life stories" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 13). Centering storytelling presented professional BFVPs the opportunity to be the tellers of their stories and affirmed their Black identity as an aspect central to the story.

Storytelling was similar to Black geographies, as both Black geographies and narrative inquiry provided what Allen et al. (2019) explained as an "opportunity for a focus on affirmative Black identities and affirmative Black Geographies that celebrate Black life" (p. 1004). When professional BFVPs tell their stories situated within geography—specifically, place and space—they have the ability to tell a more complex story of their lives and how their movement through place and space has greatly affected how they experience the world.

BFVPs consistently move through place and space internationally in places that unknowingly or subconsciously have "particular sets of rules we intend to govern society, seeking to establish what and/or who is inappropriate or 'out of place' within particular" (Allen et al., 2019, p. 1010). According to van Amsterdam et al. (2017), this sense of awareness arises because bodies are constantly analyzed because they are a representation of culture and a way to present themselves (e.g., size, ability, gender, ethnicity, and health). There may be one, two, or three BFVPs on teams with 100% white or homogenized personnel, but they never constitute a majority. The presence of BFVPs in white spaces can be seen as a revolutionary act because they dismantle standard ideals of beauty, education, and what it means to be a Black athlete. In predominantly white countries, BFVPs face even more difficulties with stereotypes about Black people, and the realization they are over there for a job in which their Blackness is on display. The history of Black women is dominated by narratives they did not write for themselves.

In these narratives, Black women are portrayed as Ferguson (2021) noted, "unattractive, aggressive, loud, strong, and animalistic" (p. 5). In places without a large Black population or many immigrants of color, stereotypes can be the only idea residents have regarding Black people due to mass media influence. As Hill Collins (2000) noted, "Resisting by doing something that 'is not expected' could not have occurred without Black women's long-standing

rejection of mammies, matriarchs, and other controlling images" (p. 98). Although these white spaces seem like inviting places for Black players, they can be inextricably linked to racial exclusion. Ferguson (2021) noted when discussing place that "individuals and their relationships in a particular environment influence the arrangement of power and social structures within a social institution like higher education" (p. 15). Allen et al. (2019) elaborated on how Black geographies seek to "highlight Black agency in the production of space and black geographic experiences in the articulation of Black geographic visions of society" (p. 1002). Grasping the awareness of place from a geographer's and a Black geographer's perspective can be two different things. McKittrick (2006) illuminated the importance of using Black geographies to describe a Black person's lived experiences as it is discussed:

> [The] relationship between black populations and geography—referring to geography as space, place, and location in their physical materiality and imaginative configurations—allows us to engage with a narrative that locates and draws on black histories and black subjects in order to make visible social lives which are often displaced, rendered ungeographic. (p. preface x)

Making the ungeographic visible is key to Black geographies and to Black women, because these are the groups that have been historically silenced and undervalued—both their knowledge and their bodies.

How Black women experience college is influenced by (a) how institutional relationships and social structures are designed to support them (i.e., place), (b) how race and gender identity are interpreted by their campus communities, and (c) how their physical presence affects spaces they inhabit (Ferguson, 2021). In many cases, professional BFVPs also experience the same phenomenon when in a foreign country playing their sport, and they rarely speak about those

experiences because of their minority status. According to Patton and Ward (2016), "[W]hen problems [of Black women] are not named, they do not become visible or addressed" (p. 331). BFVPs are expected to be both visible and invisible, to be critical and disruptive, to be loud and chastise, and to be quiet (Ferguson, 2021). As Mowatt et al. (2017) clarified, "Black women exist in a state of systemic invisibility or problematic visibility" (p. 648). There is a history of Black women being hyper visible, and their bodies having been "historically been considered grotesque, animalistic, and unnatural, bodies that were overly sexualized which created further consequences for sexual commodification and violence" (Mowatt et al., 2017, p. 650).

For geographers, it is critical to examine how space affects Black women. Space is too often looked at as something that creates problematic experiences, and as something concrete and immovable. Duncan (1996) explained the sense of awareness BFAs have because they constantly negotiate standards of beauty, size, color, ugliness, good, bad, or intelligence in a society not built nor maintained for them. I chose Black geographies as a framework for this dissertation because it is a "call for scholarship to engage with and explicitly acknowledge the contribution of racially marginalized peoples to the theorizing, envisioning, and production of society and geographies" (Allen et al., 2019, p. 1012).

Theory of Racial Space

Neely and Samura (2011) developed the theory of racial space framework to make connections between race and space to "build on the analysis of CRT by including the lens of space" (p. 14). In CRT, Delgado and Stefancic (2012) explained race is a socially constructed idea; race is the product of society and not bound in biology but is simply a function of science and the way society operates. Taking these clarifications of race into account, Omi and Winant (2014) explained although race is a durable concept in society, it must be understood not as a fixed

entity, but as an unstable, fluid, and contested "complex of social meanings" (p. 110) with tangible effects. Relatedly, Neely and Samura (2011) argued, "Space is one component of the creation and maintenance of social inequality, the tangible manifestation of systemic racial inequalities [via] residential segregation, global displacement, and land theft" (p. 1940).

Based on the connections between race and space, the theory of racial space framework seeks to develop a theory of racial space that may help researchers better understand and more clearly articulate the ways in which race and space operate (Neely & Samura, 2011). In her work on the social analysis of race, Knowles (2003) held, to understand race and space, one must understand how space and place affect and many times create race making[27] and how it teaches aspects about race that cannot be learned any other way. Through a solid understanding of the theory of racial space, researchers have been able to understand how race and racism shift and change over time and space and how that shift affects the ways in which time, space, and place are perceived by different people (Neely & Samura, 2011). Neely and Samura's (2011) theory situated race and space in four ways, including: "(1) they are contested, (2) they are fluid and historical, (3) they are interactional and relational, and (4) they are defined by inequality and difference" (p. 1938).

Researchers can better understand the effects of racism on peoples' lives when spatial awareness is included in equations. Considering race from a spatial perspective may be useful for understanding racism and explaining its persistence in geographical settings (Burrell-Craft, 2020). Many theoretical frameworks in geography have not fully explored race in relation to space, as this "emerging field of racial and spatial studies has highlighted for us the fact that the

[27] Race-making is "the processes through which race and racial categories are reproduced and contested in daily life" (A. E. Lewis, 2003, p. 283).

ways we think about and conceptualize space mirror the analytics we use to study race" (Neely & Samura, 2011, p. 1934).

Time, context, and location can drastically change meaning and experiences when race and space are intertwined. Processes and the interactions of race, such as conflicts and inequities, also make or remake spaces that humans inhabit over long periods of time and in an ongoing contestation (Neely & Samura, 2011). Numerous factors, some within and outside one's control, are constantly transforming spaces and racial identities. The concepts of race and space constantly shift and change depending on time and place. Theory of racial space is a framework for examining how spatial constructions illuminate racial constructions and vice versa (Neely & Samura, 2011). The concept of space has always been about control and power, inclusion and exclusion, and domination itself; as Nelson (2008) explained, "it revolves around how 'groups deemed racially inferior' have been defined, confined, regulated, and eradicated through the control of space" (p. 28). Space determines who belongs in a location and who is an outsider or other; understanding this distinction can help explain the racial differences BFVPs have within the United States and Europe (Puwar, 2004). The outsider can become an insider in certain locations, or they can remain a perpetual outsider allowed to spend a certain amount of time in the area.

As Said (1979) explained, race and space develop in relation to each other, because someone must be in, and someone must be out. Black men and white women are the most researched within sports and experience sports in very different ways compared to Black women. Their intersection of race and sports gives them a particularly specific view and experience that cannot be understood by those of the same race or gender identity. An overlap of spatial theories and racial theories can help researchers think more clearly about the spatialization of race and the

racialization of space (Lipsitz, 2007; Neely & Samura, 2011). Because of that overlap, Neely and Samura (2011) "suggest that a spatial approach to examining issues of race is particularly useful since the primary characteristics of space are shared by the primary characteristics of race" (p. 1941).

Through a geographic lens, the theory of racial space explains what a Black female experiences no matter where she is in the world, with the understanding that all space is racialized (Neely & Samura, 2011). This racialized space, as Neely and Samura (2011) described, is "defined by inequality and difference and that . . . power relations are often inscribed into material spaces and played out through racial interactions" (p. 1945). The concept of race and space is understood by BFAs at an early age, especially in majority white sports such as volleyball, tennis, lacrosse, soccer, and field hockey. They learn that they take up more space than white people because of their size, their personality, their loud laugh, or their movements; they learn that all space they inhabit is racialized. Professional BFVPs can both consciously and unconsciously see place and space interact with their identity, as it can be a place that is welcoming or a place that is violent and unfriendly. Both race and space vary across time and location, involve political contests over their meaning, and emerge from the interplay between materiality and culture. Racial interactions and processes (e.g., identities, inequalities, conflicts and so on) also reflect how the spaces professional BFVPs inhabit are collectively made and remade, over time and through ongoing contestation (Neely & Samura, 2011).

Methodology

The purpose of this dissertation was to gain a better understanding of the racial experiences of professional BFVPs playing in European countries through a qualitative approach of interviews based in narrative inquiry. In this section, I describe humanizing research and how it was applied

to the participants I interviewed and the ones who could not make the interviews due to a variety of limitations. I discuss the usage of the theoretical frameworks of Black feminist thought, Black geographies, and theory of racial space to explain the methodology used for the dissertation and subsequent findings. I describe the conceptual framework I developed—critical Black feminist sports geographies—and the components pulled out from each of the aforementioned theories to create a framework that allowed me to fully center the experiences and stories of professional BFVPs. At the end of this chapter, I discuss the qualitative approach of a brief demographic survey used to narrow down the participants, and how the research method of narrative inquiry assisted with subsequent interviews to help create a dialogue with the professional BFVPs that was centered on uplifting their stories.

Methodological Perspective

Humanizing research is crucial for the experience of both the researcher and the participant. To humanize research is to consider all the ways that people—especially people of color and especially Black women—have been consistently dehumanized and used throughout time. As Blackburn (2014) noted, *dehumanizing* involves making a person "less human by having their individuality, creativity, and humanity taken away, as when one is treated like a number or an object" (p. 43). This research was not only about the people being interviewed, but also about their knowledge and the insights they brought. Yull (2014) noted it is vital to understand how "the positionality of the researcher will influence how the data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted for meaning" (p. 5). Many do not recognize how research can tell stories that oppress participants as well as uplift the participants. This can be done through how the data are disaggregated, what parts of the participants' stories are chosen, and then how the stories are told by the researcher.

It is critical that the researcher, nor the participants within their studies, are dehumanized, but instead are treated as people who both have much to gain and offer. If this is the work that researchers want to do, they must be willing to "build networks, train ourselves, and reframe what counts as scholarship" (Diaz-Strong et al., 2014, p. 17). So much of the work about Black women is not looked at as true academic scholarship; instead, it is looked at as a side project or hobby. The ability to sit in the back and write up observations without adding in personal elements does not make the research more objective; it makes it more judgmental without empathy and care (Paris, 2011; Winn & Ubiles, 2011). When researchers become vulnerable and allow themselves to give as much as they get, they enter a more personal aspect of their research participants that "objective" observations would never have allowed entry into (Paris, 2011; Winn & Ubiles, 2011). When giving that part of self, the researcher will have a more vested interest in both the research and the people because they have become reciprocally humanized (Paris, 2011; Winn & Ubiles, 2011).

Humanizing research includes developing relationships with the athletes in ways that are more time consuming than sending out surveys, and no longer views participants as just a dataset needed to fill out surveys. Their experiences, feelings, and emotions are centered throughout the work and are especially taken into consideration when the researcher exits the project. The participants should also have the ability to decide if they want to stay in contact with the researcher or find out what occurred with the project. The goal of Yull (2014) and myself was to study BFVPs and arrive at some "'truth' which is representative of the researcher and participants' voices, perspectives, and narratives, while not privileging my voice" (p. 5).

When considering and planning out my research, I had to give myself guiding questions that considered where the Black women were in life during the time of their interviews:

- What was the location of the participants during the interview period?
- Were the participants back at home in the United States with family?
- Were the participants stranded internationally due to the COVID-19 global pandemic?
- Were the participants in the middle of their professional season during the interview time period?
- Were the participants playing on the U.S. Olympic team or attempting to qualify for the Olympics during the survey and interview period?
- Were the participants college coaches in the middle of their unorthodox COVID-19 season?
- Were the participants college coaches in the middle of preparing for the new recruiting season starting June 4, 2021?
- Were the participants college coaches in the middle of preparing for an unorthodox camp season?
- Were the participants college coaches in the middle of the new recruiting season starting June 4, as recruiting had been on hold since March 2020?
- Were any of the information discussed or the interview questions triggers for painful events due to racism?

These questions were critical for me to ask myself when sending the surveys to participants, asking them to respond, and then scheduling interviews. I had to be very mindful of the college coaches I contacted to keep in mind they had not been able to recruit for over 1 year and that would affect when they would be able to be interviewed and for how long.

Finally, I also wanted to use some reflective questions to think about how I was humanizing this project as a whole, even if the participants were not people I knew or people who shared the same identities as mine. According to Nieto (1994), researchers can acquire truth within research when they focus on the relationships and listen not to themselves, but also the participants.

Diaz-Strong et al. (2014) developed some reflective questions that helped me keep humanizing the research:

- Why am I engaging in this research project, whose lives will it impact, and how and why will these lives be impacted?
- Who will I collaborate with to engage in this research and how will these relationships be established?
    - When and how throughout this process will I talk about race, gender identity, sexuality, and other relationships between identity and power?
- How have my emotions shaped how and what I am researching?
- What emotions are produced through my research, in the researchers, and in the participants?
- How are these individual emotions linked to a wider circulation of public feelings?
- How have my emotions shifted throughout the research process?
- After I complete the research what are my ongoing commitments to this goal I identified as important in this research?
- What are my ongoing commitments to my participants and the research itself? (p. 18)

I consistently considered these questions while setting up the surveys and interviews and during the interviews because this dissertation is not just for me; it serves to help those whose voices and experiences have been consistently silenced and undervalued. My job and responsibility as a researcher are, as Kinloch and Pedro (2014) noted, "to listen—closely and carefully—to *what* young people are saying, and *how* and *for what* reasons they are saying it" (p. 26), and to gain a full appreciation of what experiences participants have had. I was lucky in many ways because I am a part of the community I interviewed, which created some comfort and helped me understand that "during interviews, the participant's comfort level with the researcher and the questions asked might have influenced the extent to which a participant shared their experiences, especially in matters they perceived as sensitive or too personal" (Yull, 2014, p. 6).

In the professional athletic world, the value has been placed on Black male bodies and white female bodies, with Black female bodies not even valued when they are at the highest levels. Waller et al. (2016) explained it best, stating:

> The position of Black women in America has often been one of constant struggle to find her voice and for it to be heard. Black women's issues of race are enveloped with the race issues of Black males, while their issues surrounding gender are either masked under the umbrella of issues pontificated by White women and/or subsequently ignored by White women. (p. 62)

Professional BFAs consistently find ways to navigate the constraints of being both Black and female. These two marginalized identities which have historically been shown to hold no power (Waller et al., 2016). Those two identities, Black and female, are the foundation of this research and why there is such a focus on hearing their voices and humanizing their experiences.

In humanizing research, emotions are not only expected, but are also wanted. Black women do not get to have strong emotions, express emotion, or have feelings. The more a Black woman expresses how she feels, the more likely she will be looked at as an angry Black woman. Paris and Winn (2014) noted "that displays of 'outlaw emotions' will be used against those who are marginalized" (p. 9). The feelings discussed are those that tend to show up when one feels disrespected, wronged, or denied what others have gotten. They show up as emotions like anger, rage, or resentment—emotions that have always been considered wrong, especially when coming from a Black female (Paris & Winn, 2014). It is very important that emotions are allowed to show when discussing topics such as race and racism; yet, in many other instances when Black women talk about themselves, they must talk about it while showing no emotion, remaining silent or calm.

No one has asked researchers, "[H]ave we—in both our own opinion and the opinion of the participants—fulfilled the commitments we made at the beginning of our study?" (Paris, 2014, p. 125). When student–athletes are not considered fully human, researchers do not ask questions that show they can be affected by people leaving their lives. Figueroa (2014) stated:

> [The] failure to account for how researchers leave the field—how they can responsibly extricate themselves from an ethnographic situation that binds the researcher and researched through ongoing processes of "colonialism, imperialism, missionization, [and so on]"—is a troubling area of silence. (p. 129)

My research was made more accurate by my place in the community rather than if I was an outside observer; being a part of the community meant I had to be willing to give a part of myself to whomever I researched. This topic started while I traveled through Europe, and I had experiences as a Black woman that I did not think white women nor women of other ethnicities

were having. The intersection of being Black and female is a space that Ferguson (2021) explained as unique, because Black women understand some experiences of being a Black man and some experiences of being a white woman; however, their space is truly never understood by either of those mentioned and is often misunderstood. I felt, when explaining my experiences, the totality of what it felt like to be a Black woman had to be explained so much that it was not worth explaining at all. Because of these thoughts, I wondered if I was the only one experiencing it, and if Black women who played volleyball in Europe and had something of a celebrity status would have these same experiences.

I began exploring this topic wondering what their experiences were like overseas, but I quickly realized that most, but not all, volleyball players who play professionally start their careers in Europe. Europe is large enough to have a variety of experiences, but also small enough that athletes can migrate quickly from one professional club to another when traded or a new season starts. Additionally, the athletes can visit other countries on their off day,[28] which adds to their racial experiences—they can go in and out of different cultures and languages throughout their season. It was also important while interviewing the participants that I did not interject with my experiences in Europe to lead them to potentially think differently about their experiences.

One strategy I used was to not discuss my experience until the participant had fully described their own experience. When I did, it was crucial that I did not lead with my racial experiences as to not contextualize a particular experience as racial that they potentially had not thought of beforehand. Even though I was conscious of my racial experiences when I shared, I did still share, because as Paris (2011) eloquently stated:

[28] Day off from playing or practicing volleyball.

> I resist the notion that sharing about ourselves during interviews attains less genuine and valid responses. In many research contexts, the opposite is often true: we must share of ourselves as we ask people to share of themselves. This is especially true when we are asking our participants to share things that are close to the heart, private, and sometimes painful. (p. 142)

Humanizing research means that the researcher makes the participants and themself more human, transcending beyond just a participant-and-researcher type of relationship. When a researcher integrates themselves into the lives of those they research, there must be some understanding that the exit can be painful for all involved when they leave.

This practice becomes more distinct when athletes are expected to fill out numerous surveys—not because their opinions or experiences matter, but because researchers want information in the easiest way possible. Surveying has tended to be most widely used because researchers then do not have to spend time on human interaction, but instead can focus on the quantitative information they receive. To start eliminating this dehumanizing practice, researchers would need to start changing a few aspects, one of which is to treat survey participants as more than simply participants. Researchers should start understanding their identities and "what the intersecting identities that researchers bring to the research context, and what are the multiple roles and shifting orientation that a researcher may experience during the research process" (Green, 2014, p. 149). Finally, researchers should include the participants in the process of running the project, from development to results.

Many times, researchers have been more interested in what they can gain from Black athletes than researching Black athletes; yet many had never played collegiate sports and had no prior relationship with the student–athletes. I, as a researcher, have become more protective of

athletes who graciously give me their time and tell me their stories because it has been shown that those who want to research athletes are often unwilling to build long-term relationships. Researchers want to do their research, many times on vulnerable topics that might make the athletes relive trauma, and then, as Paris (2014) stated, use problematic terms such as "exiting the field or participant observation" (p. 125) that creates distance between themselves and the athletes. Athletes are expected to be vulnerable for research and news reports, but not to be retraumatized by the stories they keep retelling. Although Black athletes are not considered as vulnerable a population as children, pregnant women, or those in prison, they are nevertheless powerless in the stories they tell, the personal information revealed, or the expectations they can have from the research. When working with other athletes over long periods, Black athletes will get used to having a person who is not a coach or who works for the athletic department in their lives that they can be real with, or someone with whom they can bounce questions, concerns, and problems off to help get solutions.

Leaving a research project does not mean sending a goodbye and thank-you email to survey participants; instead, it means disentangling your life from theirs. It means the researcher must stop whatever aspects of involvement they have had in their participants' lives. As Figueroa (2014) explained, "I recount my own exit experience, demonstrating how silence about exit denies the complex forms of interrelation that we must confront if we are to humanize our research" (p. 130). This notion led me to consider:

- How long it takes for a researcher to disentangle their life from that of the participant;
- how, as a researcher, to end a relationship that has taken a lot despite giving;
- the boundaries for researchers who become confidants and develop personal connections to the participants;

- how to stop being a friend to the professional Black women whom I have grown to know so well and have been able to have open conversations with and gain new and thought-provoking perspectives;
- the propriety of answering texts or phone calls after dissertation interviews are finished; and
- remembering that my goal is not to harm, but to perpetually consider whether or not I actively created harm.

These were considerations I honestly never thought about previously, but they helped me gain perspective on how the assumption that I can exit a participant's life faster than how I had entered could negate my research usefulness, especially to a group already marginalized and consistently used for research.

BFAs are so much more than their sport; they are Black Girl Magic. Despite challenging odds, they still manage to do amazing things with their lives both during school and once they graduate. But even though they do amazing things, they still are humans who can recognize when they are being used. It is time to start centering humanizing the BFA instead of centering the information they can give and the papers they can help get published. I thought critically about myself when researching BFAs, and even though it is my identity, I questioned whether I truly left them better off than they were before I started my research. Asking this question meant I focused on:

- how I entered the project;
- how I picked my dataset;
- how I interviewed participants;
- when I scheduled the interviews;

- understanding their schedules;
- asking about the location where they wanted to be interviewed;
- how I exited the research with the Black female athlete;
- what being available now means to them;
- how, if at all, to keep in contact;
- what keeping in touch mean;
- what to do with this information;
- how will it reach the people who need to see it the most; and
- ensuring this research helps the Black female athlete experience

Design of Study

By using surveys to collect demographics data and identify those interested in being interviewed using purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002), I completed 18 interviews of professional Black volleyball players to gain a better understanding of the racial experiences of professional Black volleyball players in Europe. During the years of 2017–2019, I developed a database of BFVPs who played or currently play professional volleyball throughout the world and would be interested in being interviewed in the future. The database was developed intentionally, and I made sampling decisions to focus on specific people because they offered a distinctive, information-rich perspective (Rapley, 2014). This dataset was then narrowed down to a sampling of a group of BFVPs who met certain criteria of years and locations played. The sampling was key to collecting data that were rich in content; as Patton (2002) stated, "[T]he logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting *information-rich cases* for studying in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of inquiry" (p. 230).

Once the database was set from either contacting them myself or the snowball approach (Patton, 2002) to gather additional names, I then narrowed the list down to 60 professional BFVPs players interested in being interviewed. From that number, 18 professional BFVPs fit the criteria of playing at least two seasons, in at least one country, and for at least one professional volleyball club to be interviewed and/or followed through with their interest to be interviewed. The variety of experiences had by professional Black volleyball players was important to the dissertation due to the variety of factors (e.g., the team location, level of play, notoriety, and country) because "studying information-rich cases yielded insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations" (Patton, 2002, p. 230).

Methods and Procedures

Survey

I had previously developed a dataset of more than 120 professional or retired BFVPs who had played internationally. This dataset was the foundation of my dissertation; I had created it before entering a doctoral program because I had the knowledge of how critical it was to elevate the voices of BFVPs and their experiences overseas. This list was cultivated through reaching out to friends in person, through social media, through college coaches, and "Run, Hop, Skip Agency"[29] to gauge interest in being interviewed about their experiences overseas (see Appendix B).

From that cultivated list I then sent out the IRB-approved survey to the Black professional volleyball players from my dataset for demographics and interest throughout May and June 2021. The survey was 15 questions for demographic information sent out through email, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. It was also sent to those who were in the database and

[29] Pseudonym of volleyball agency.

to people who were not Black, but had friends, ex-teammates, athletes they coached, or knew BFVPs in the United States who were current or former professional volleyball players. Contacting former or current professional Black volleyball players was done to gather a robust dataset of BFVPs—who either played professionally or were currently playing professionally—to interview through purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). Because I used "former playing colleagues, coaches, and managers who had direct or indirect contacts with senior professional clubs . . . this type of investigation adopted a friend-of-a-friend strategy" (Magee & Sugden, 2002, p. 423).

I used purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) and snowball approach (Butler, 2015; Doss, 2016) to gather information and determine who should be interviewed, based mainly on how many years they played professionally, the number of teams they played on, and the number of countries they played in. Athletes who had previously indicated interest and/or filled out the survey but had not made an interview appointment were contacted through social media, through common friends, or through those who were previously interviewed. Because the group of BFVPs is small, many of those interviewed had played with each other in college or professionally. As Yull (2014) stated from her interviews:

> [T]he same thing occurred during my interviews as the participant's comfort level with the researcher and the questions asked might have influenced the extent to which a participant shared their experiences, especially in matters they perceived as sensitive or too personal. (p. 6)

If there were some athletes I knew had great stories but could not directly connect with—either because they did not check their social media regularly or I could not find ways to connect—I

employed the snowball effect, which Butler (2015) stated is useful, as it "allows for access to more participants through referral and recruitment from initial participants of the study" (p. 95).

Also focusing on the length of time the survey participants played gives more breadth and depth to their experiences, as all the BFVPs interviewed played on at least two teams. The survey was specifically used to narrow down participants to interview, as not all could be interviewed, and to see who was interested in being interviewed. There was a response rate of more than 50%, which resulted in 60 women filling out the survey, and of that, 51 checked *yes* to interest in being interviewed and nine checked *no* to denote no interest in being interviewed. Many responses were from BFVPs who had played one season or less professionally, some in the middle of their first season when the COVID-19 global pandemic hit, which meant that it immediately ended, and they had to go home. I wanted a participant list that had more experience playing in Europe and met the criteria of years played, number of professional teams played for, and number of countries played in.

Participants Interviewed

I interviewed 18 professional BFVPs who met the following criteria:

- Black
- Female
- Played overseas for:
    - 2–4 years
    - 4–6 years
    - 6–8 years
    - Over 8 years
- Play in x number of countries:

    - 1–3
    - 4–6
    - 7–9
    - 10–12
- Played for x number of professional clubs:
    - 1–3
    - 4–6
    - 7–9
    - 10–12

The interviews took place over Zoom, lasted from 1.5–3 hours, and were transcribed once through webcaptioner.com and an additional time by me. The deciding factor about whom to interview was the number of years of playing, as I wanted them to have a variety of experiences within Europe to be able to speak about. The athletes had to have played at least 2–4 years professionally overseas to qualify as a person to interview, regardless of how many clubs played for or countries played in. The rationale for this selection was I wanted professional BFVPs who had experience in a few different countries or cities, because the 1st year of any new athletic program, professional or collegiate, can be overwhelming; they have a large variety of new experiences, both on the court and off the court. The participants played in a large variety of countries ranging from Austria to Poland to Ukraine. Their career length ranged from two seasons to 14 seasons, with many having played in a minimum of one country to a few participants having played in over five different countries on over 10 different teams (see Appendices C and D).

After the interviews had taken place, word spread that other people had similar experiences; either because they had the same experiences from playing on the same team or discussing similar situations that occurred within Europe. Word of mouth is considered "snowball sampling, a researcher starts with a few participants, and those participants recommend other individuals to the study" (Pierre, 2019, p. 46). Doss (2016) explained the snowball approach to collect "data when you can identify a fixed number of people to participate in a study and use the relationships that these individuals have with others to recruit them to share their narratives as well" (p. 46). This word of mouth occurred with those interviewing directly contacting people they know through text, calling, or Facebook groups (see Appendices E, F, and G). Many of them stated their surprise of not only enjoying the conversation, but how long the conversation lasted, and the memories that ended up emerging that they had not thought about in years.

Interviews

Narrative inquiry was the method used for my one-on-one interviews with the participants as the sole method of data collection other than demographic information. Narrative inquiry "allows researchers to present experience holistically in all its complexity and richness" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 10). Creating a space where professional BFVPs felt validated in relaying their stories and insights was essential to me, as Webster and Mertova (2007) explained "powerful insights offered by stories have often been ignored" (p. 14). The questions were used as a launching point into the stories so that the professional BFVPs were able to talk about their experiences. Webster and Mertova (2007) described this step accurately when they said narrative inquiry helps researchers understand how "stories allow us to watch what an experience can do to people who are living that experience" (p. 20).

It was very important the participants were sent semi-structured interview questions when asked to sign up for the interview, so they knew what exactly we would discuss and also to engage their memory on experiences they had had. The interviews were scheduled through an online service called Acuity, which allowed the participants access to my schedule to find times that worked with their schedule. This forum was an excellent method of scheduling, as it accounted for time zones and produced a Zoom link for the interview. The interviews ranged from 1.5–3 hours long. Throughout the interview the participant was given the option to pause the recording if they wanted to discuss a topic or people known to the researcher, so it was not on the record. Parts of the transcription were deleted, as they were parts of conversations that were not recorded as requested by the participants. The semi-structured interview questions gave some guidance to the conversations but did not rigidly force the conversation in one direction. As Butler (2015) stated, "[U]sing a semi-structured interview protocol enabled open discussion around questions and allowed the participants to give more in-depth responses to the questions being asked" (p. 95).

I cultivated many questions for demographics, understanding their racial and playing experiences in club ball,[30] their racial and collegiate volleyball experiences, and ultimately, their professional volleyball careers. Some of the semi-structured interview questions, however, came from Butler's (2015) dissertation, in which she "interviewed participants [who] held U.S. citizenship and were on the roster of both a women's professional WNBA team and a women's professional overseas team" (p. 93). These questions translated to volleyball. Finally, as many of those interviewed were either friends, colleagues, or associates who travel in the same circle, there was the potential for the interviews to veer deeply off topic and lose focus on the interview

[30] "Club ball" refers to USA Volleyball, AAU, or JVA sanctioned volleyball athletes play from 8 to 18 years old.

questions. At times when this occurred, the recording was paused to allow for some privacy when discussing past experiences in club or college volleyball and revealing names of people being discussed.

Because there was a level of immediate trust between the interviewer and participant due to shared identities, people in common, and knowledge of volleyball, the conversations were more in-depth and personal. The interviews were uploaded to a Dropbox folder with the video, audio recording, and transcription the participant was able to access for 1 month. Throughout this dissertation, pseudonyms were used not only for the participants, but also for people, businesses, schools, and locations they discussed. The names used for the participants were names that they chose themselves. Some chose pseudonyms for fun, whereas others chose a name that meant something to them.

Reliability and Validity

As part of my dissertation study, I used a variety of approaches to ensure reliability and validity during the data collection and interpretation stages, such as triangulation and member checks. Qualitative researchers are known for studying humans and their experiences through interviews with individuals or groups, as in-depth interviews are "one of the most powerful tools for gaining an understanding of human beings and exploring topics in-depth. . . and can elicit rich information about personal experiences and perspectives" (N. Carter et al., 2014, p. 545). This dissertation used a demographic survey to gain information on the participants' careers to narrow down the list to a smaller group to be interviewed through semi-structured interview questions as the method for data collection (A. R. Carter, 2008).

Due to the invasive nature of interview questions and the information asked of the participants to reveal (see Appendix H), I needed to ensure the data were valid and reliable

through triangulation. As Butler (2015) clarified, “as the researcher, I had an obligation to be ethical so that I could minimize any misunderstanding or misrepresentation when I analyzed the data” (p. 89). The reason I used triangulation to address both validity and reliability was that “triangulating measures from different sources strengthens the validity of a study through countering bias that may arise from single measures and so contributes to establishing ‘facts’” (Farquhar et al., 2020, p. 161).

Triangulation

N. Carter et al. (2014) explained triangulation as “the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena” (p. 545). In addition, triangulation is a qualitative research technique used to test the validity of information obtained from multiple sources (N. Carter et al., 2014). Of the four categories of triangulation; data/source, method, researcher, and theory (Farquhar et al., 2020), data/source is the triangulation method I used. The use of data/source triangulation was a key component of my research. It assisted me in centering the participants’ experiences and always considering them to be humans first and participants second.

Data/source triangulation creates an analysis of qualitative data gathered from a wide range of sources, such as interviews with different informants at different points in time or observation of different situations or contexts. As a result of having multiple data sources varied by time, place, or another variable, the study has convergent validity or enhanced confidence (Farquhar et al., 2020).

Member Checks

Member checks were a key component of validity in the participants’ responses to ensure their “words and experiences were accurately represented through the transcription” (A. R. Carter,

2008, p. 68). Statements by participants can be misinterpreted by researchers disaggregating and analyzing the information. To ensure the misrepresentation does not occur, the participants could view their transcribed interviews to correct any miscommunications or incorrect interpretations in the transcriptions, add additional comments, or delete any comments they felt were not appropriate (A. R. Carter, 2008). Although reliability and validity were essential, trustworthiness was also crucial for my dissertation, which is why member checks were necessary for analyzing the data. The participants had the opportunity to analyze the content of their statements to make sure what they said aligned with how they wanted to be viewed by readers. It was a part of humanizing the dissertation study and the experience of being interviewed.

Trustworthiness of Data

The trust of the participants was not only essential to gather for the interviews to occur; it was also important for the participants to have a trustworthiness of the data. The use of triangulation assisted with increasing the validity of the findings, trustworthiness, and reliability (Farquhar et al., 2020). According to Connelly (2016), "*Trustworthiness* of a study refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study" (p. 435). Using humanizing research as my epistemological method assisted in situating how I not only handled the data, but from when I contacted the participants, scheduled the interviews, and gave the access to their transcripts at the beginning of the research,. Trustworthiness is built throughout the whole process in small increments and at any time can be destroyed. One way trustworthiness was built was when gathering more names of knowledgeable BFVPs who had played professionally. I used the snowballing technique, which Patton (2002) described as "asking a number of people who else to talk with, the snowball gets big, and bigger as you accumulate new information-rich cases" (p. 237). The snowball technique was essential, as trust

had been developed with the current participants, and they felt comfortable in "recommending other individuals to the study" (Pierre, 2019, p. 46). Trust was a key factor in this dissertation due to the limitations of time for most participants. Recommendations from other participants, along with my race and gender identity, gave an aspect of safety for the participants when telling their stories.

Black people have a history of their stories being told about them, but not by them. Due to this problem, some participants felt it was important that I was Black when telling their truths. Bianca noted:

> My son before the interview, he's like, "Mom, are you going to comb your hair?" I was like, "Uh, no, I'm not going to comb my hair." I didn't comb it today. I look all right. I was like, "Well, I hope she's Black." They were like, "Well, I hope she's Black." I'm like, "Yes, she's Black." "I don't want you to offend her because I know you're going to have to tell the truth." I'm like, "Yes." I was like, "She better be Black."

Once there was an underpinning of trust between myself and the participants, with the additional aspect of being a part of the community I was researching, the participants were willing to give names of friends with whom they played college or professional volleyball. Using the snowballing technique assisted with gathering the names of BFVPs who were a generation older than me, or I did not know because they had not been college volleyball coaches during my time coaching.

Transcription

Transcription was done twice—once through a Zoom add-on service called webcaptioner.com, which created a transcription immediately during the interview. This transcription service was free, and though it was able to show some of the main concepts discussed, there were many parts

of the conversation the service was unable to understand, creating a very jumbled transcription. The other transcription service used was a paid one called GoTranscript.com, which was much more detailed and able to transcribe the conversation with more accuracy and detail. Once the transcriptions were received, they were sent out to each of the participants, who had 1 month to look through the conversation and change or add anything they felt was missing. Once the transcriptions were deemed acceptable by the participants, different points from the interview were pulled out for the discussion section.

Subjectivity Statement

My subjectivity is one developed from growing up with a background in athletics as a Black female. From playing in every park and recreation league or summer camp, to being a three-sport high school athlete in Arizona, to a junior college athlete who transferred from Arizona to Alabama to finish out her eligibility, and lastly, to experience as a veteran, informed and influenced my doctoral studies and research projects. I was an athlete who always played on diverse teams, who after coaching for many years realized that although I intentionally made my program diverse when I was a head coach; conversely, the teams I was an assistant with were not diverse nor inclusive. Those teams did not allow BFVPs to show up as their authentic selves, nor did they create inclusive spaces that they felt they belonged. I left coaching in 2015 because I felt that I could create more change doing diversity, inclusion, and equity (DEI) work than I could coaching, as coaching was starting to leave me feeling resentful for all the personal events I was missing for games.

Working in DEI allowed me to gain an in-depth and critical lens to view how both college and professional BFVPs experience playing on teams that comprise all white teammates except for the BFVP. On numerous occasions the BFVP did not have a coach or staff member of

color to lean on, which made their college experience even more isolating. This experience can be isolating due to the lack of community they have around them that allows them to be authentic in who they are, how they dress, how they talk, and how they move through space. Gaining an understanding of the nuances of college BFVPs' experience forced me to then to ask the questions regarding professional BFVPs' experiences in Europe, which can be even more exclusionary because of the lack of Black people and acknowledgement of the impacts of colonization. As a world traveler, and someone who has traveled consistently to Europe, I wondered if the professional BVFPs' had similar experiences to me.

Embedding my subjectivity statement into my research was crucial; as A. R. Carter (2008) elaborated, "All researchers bring certain biases and assumptions to a study" (p. 69). The acknowledgement of my biases, both implicit and explicit, was essential to my research as it was an admission to what other lenses were used when analyzing the data from the interviewees.

Epistemology and Positionality

Hill Collins (2000) developed Black feminist thought because she believed "suppressing the knowledge produced by any oppressed group makes it easier for dominant groups to rule because the seeming absence of dissent suggests that subordinate groups willingly collaborate in their own victimization" (p. 3). Black feminist thought centers the lived experiences of Black women, and Paylidis (2018), a scholar of feminist geographer pedagogy, explained, "everyday space as a site of feminist struggle, resistance, and negotiation, as well as of potential liberation, freedom, and transformation" (p. 345). In this dissertation, it was critical only the experiences of U.S.-born Black female professional athletes were moved from the margins and centered.

Epistemology

Toni Morrison (as cited by Yam, 1999), expressed, "I stood at the border, stood at the edge, and claimed it as central . . . claimed it as central and let the rest of the world move over to where I was" (para. 4). Similarly, my goal was to claim the experiences, thoughts, ideas, hurts, joys, or loves central to my analysis. I also acknowledge Black people are not monolithic, and many factors can affect a person's racial experience. During my research, I considered how to keep my study humanized, and part of that process meant not just listening, but deeply listening. Kinloch and Pedro (2014) explained how humanizing "takes shape from our recognition that there are multiple worldviews that often get negatively positioned in conflict with one another student of being treated as different and diverse" (p. 27). Expecting that other people who share similar identities would then share the same experiences and use that lens when analyzing data came easily. Understanding my positionality helped me lessen bias while maintaining the knowledge that it never entirely disappears.

Positionality

I entered this research study and dissertation understanding that I am mixed race (i.e., Black and white) but fully identify as a Black woman. I understood, as Hatchett and Schuman (1975) noted, "The race of the interviewer is significant when assessing subject's responses to topics such as education" (p. 525), which assisted me in understanding my own biases and how they could potentially have affected and influenced this study. As Butler (2015) stated, "I [too] entered this current study by first acknowledging that my past experiences have influenced the questions I asked in the interviews, how I interpreted the collected data, and how I presented the data" (p. 11). Unlike most researchers, I am intricately part of the community I researched, as I was a college volleyball player and a college volleyball coach for 15 years. Access is such a critical

part of these interviews. Powell and Lovelock (1991) explained how critical access is to research because, without being able to get access and sustain it, research will not reach the quality able to contribute to the discipline. A researcher accesses participants' knowledge and experiences and accessing their schedules during very busy recruiting and playing seasons was challenging, which meant even more that they were willing to give their time.

I acknowledge my views have been influenced by how and when I have experienced racism in the United States and the world. Because of my background as a college volleyball player, a college coach, and a Black female, when I asked for people to interview and conduct interviews, I held positions of "overt insider to the context" (Dandelion, 1995, p. 182). I have personal friendships with many of the professional Black female players I interviewed or had multiple friends in common. These relationships and my experiences when traveling through Europe influenced specific questions I asked in this study. I found it critical to conduct my research to study people who have not had their voices lifted, unlike Black male and white female athletes.

As one participant, Carmel Delight, stated, "Interviews done by like another sister out there that's out there trying to convey a message and stuff like that. I think it is important for us to be connected and be able to have these conversations." Interviewing people who moved in the same circles as I did, with many common friends who also shared identities, helped make the participants feel a little more at ease. These factors also assisted with the "free flow of information . . . and being an overt insider, coupled with the access methods used, provided lucid and quality information, particularly as some of the respondents were top international players" (Magee & Sugden, 2002, p. 423). Without previous established relationships, the length of time

commitment I received from participants and the quality of information from the interviews would have been challenging.

Research Limitations

The qualitative interviews have their own limitations, as they were of a small sample size of professional BVFPs who responded to requests to be interviewed and/or were in my network. These BVFPs available were also limited by time as college recruiting was coming off of an 18-month hiatus and professional volleyball seasons were starting to compete again. The experiences of the BFVPs represented are unique, but they cannot be representative of all BFVPs. It is essential that the experiences from the participants are not generalized to all BFVPs who have played in Europe or any other country outside of the United States (Butler, 2015; A. R. Carter, 2008).

Summary

In this chapter, I summarized how Black feminist thought, Black geographies, and the theory of racial space were used together to center the experiences of professional BFVPs. I explained my methodological approach of humanizing research as my foundation, which informed my approach to contacting and interviewing participants. This approach focused solely on the participants as Black women and differed from what Simien (2004) explained, when "scholars have used survey items for Black women that were designed to tap feminist consciousness among white women" (p. 86). Intertwining these theories to center Black women assisted me in navigating experiences and interpreting their stories. To clarify Black female experiences, not only does the literature need to center Black women, but the ways in which they are interviewed need to do the same.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

I've been stopped and asked if I was a prostitute, and how much do I offer a few times.

—Half-Pint Hottie, *Participant*

Half-Pint Hottie's experience resonated with me because I have been in that position before and was concerned about my safety. In one particular memory from my time abroad, I sat at a café in Istanbul, Turkey, in a t-shirt and yoga pants. The hostess told me they need my four-top table, and the man sitting next to me told the host, "She can sit with me." I told the host it was not a problem because I was almost done with my drink and would gladly move over. An argument occurred in Turkish between the host and the man. I did not understand their exchange, but it seemed peculiar. When the host left, I asked about the cause of the argument, but the man would not answer. Eventually, he informed me the host assumed I was a prostitute. My mind was blown; never in a million years would I think I would be considered a prostitute, especially in my yoga pants.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the findings of the participant interviews. Eighteen current or former Black female volleyball players (BFVPs) who played at least 2 years overseas were interviewed. The questions asked during the semi-structured interviews focused on my research question. The following question grounded my research:

RQ: How do intersecting racial and gendered identities, place, and space influence the racism encountered by U.S. Black female professional volleyball players in Europe?

This question guided me in investigating the different ways professional BFVPs in the United States experienced social constructs of race and racism. Many BFVPs interviewed had similar experiences while playing overseas and traveling to different countries and teams. Some of the

players may have played in the same city, country, or team; yet, they had vastly different experiences. According to Keaton (2010):

> "Blacks" in and of France or (anywhere), to be sure, are not a monolith, and even the very use of the term "race" and "Black" is not readily embraced by all people of African origin in France [or the United States] to name their exclusion and their self. (p. 107)

Although Black people—especially Black women—are not a monolith, there is a consistent pattern of comparable experiences. Each BFVP had a breadth and depth of experiences in different countries and the same country.

Two professional BFVPs at the same professional volleyball club, potentially even while playing together, may have drastically different negative and/or positive experiences. This difference is not a result of either athlete being misguided in their perceptions; rather, different perceptions may be a byproduct of their different life experiences. In this study, I honored all of their experiences as truth telling. I affirmed these experiences were real and valid, as "centering Black women in this analysis is my effort to amplify the truth, their truth; truths often denied" (Haynes et al., 2021, p. 7). As Butler (2015) discussed in her dissertation on migrating WNBA players, "The stories of the participants were told through their own words, using quotes from the participants who were interviewed" (p. 100). This chapter focused on the participants' lived experiences while grounding them through examining theoretical frameworks. Moreover, I focused on honoring the experiences of each participant interviewed. Due to racial trauma, some participants may have subconsciously pushed racist memories to the back of their minds, only to recall them during the conversation.

The research question was intentionally broad and provided little direction to participants to give them space to contemplate their experiences concerning race. Many of the interviews

spanned over 2 hours as participants elaborated on the details of their lived experiences. I used the interview data to explore emergent themes from the comparable experiences participants shared, along with individual experiences they had while playing volleyball professionally in Europe. CeCe stated now that she looked back on experiences with a wiser lens, she noticed how race and racism have been more connected to her experiences than previously thought while in the situation.

As Butler (2015) did with information gathered from her interviews, I sparingly used citations from relevant empirical and theoretical works to allow for a narrative flow. Participants' stories are told in their own words, allowing for their experiences to be shared in their voices without a change in the language, tone, or topic.

Participant Biographies

I interviewed 18 current and former professional BFVPs who played at least one season in Europe, although this metric does not necessarily mean they played a whole year; in Europe, many professional volleyball players can play multiple seasons in 1 year. The criteria for the participants were that they had to have played at least one season in any European country. An entire season was not required for participation, as some participants may have gotten injured during their season, transferred to another team, or were forced to go home due to the immediate end of their season beset by the COVID-19 global pandemic. All participants were over 18 years old and were either born in the United States, had gained a green card, or received their U.S. citizenship. Demographic information on participants can be found in Appendices C and D. Figure 2 provides a cumulative map of where all participants played in Europe, and Table 1 expands on this information with specific information about the players' locations during their careers. All participants were on an official roster of a professional European team at one point

in their careers. In this study, participants played in 21 countries: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and Ukraine.

Figure 2

Participants' European Professional Club Locations

Note. Figure was created on Google Maps using location information shared by participants.

Table 1

Countries Participants Played In

Pseudonym	Countries Played in
Legz	Full seasons in Austria and in Spain, tournaments in Vietnam and Croatia
RevolutionaryBitch	Sweden and Puerto Rico
Diamond	Poland, Turkey, and Italy
Kennedy Jones	Germany, Ukraine, and France.
Sloane	Spain, Finland, Austria, Netherlands
Mini	France and Thailand
African Queen	Finland and Sweden
Sexual Chocolate	Switzerland, Germany, and Italy
Sasha	Hungary, Thailand, Peru, Philippines, Turkey
Goldie Carnousty	Italy, Turkey, Japan, and Germany
Carmel Delight	Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, Puerto Rico
Half-Pint Hottie	Holland, Belgium, Russia, Italy, Azerbaijan, and Puerto Rico
Bianca	Italy
Slim	Puerto Rico, Austria, Poland, Italy, Azerbaijan, Turkey
Snickers	Puerto Rico, Indonesia, Turkey, Spain, Italy, Romania, Austria, Greece, Korea, and the Netherlands
Crystal	Spain, Slovenia, German, Indonesia, Turkey, Italy
Sharon	Spain
CeCe	Cyprus, Denmark, and Slovakia

Slim

Slim was a former professional volleyball player from the West Coast who frequently moved. For 10 years, she was a professional who played on six different teams in Puerto Rico, Austria, Poland, Italy, Azerbaijan, and Turkey. She originally got into volleyball because she was bored, and one of her friends asked if she wanted to try out for the high school volleyball team. What Slim loved the most about volleyball was blocking, as it was the most fun; as she said:

> You have your pins[31] that help you set a block, but if you can read it well enough, it's a lot of views and how you're manipulating. The feeling of doing that, it's just—nothing describes it. It's better than even a kill.

Her club experience involved playing a sport dominated by white people; she would "just walk into gyms and think, 'Well, I'm the only Black person here today."' Her college experience on the West Coast was utterly different, as she had a more diverse team. There were a plethora of Black girls and, her senior year, they had a Black front row.

African Queen

African Queen was a former professional volleyball player from the West Coast who was a professional volleyball player for 2 years and played on two professional teams in Finland and Sweden. She began playing volleyball when she was in high school but was originally a basketball player when she first started playing sports. When she started high school, she had a class with one of the volleyball coaches and recalled that coach saying, "I know you want to get good grades, and the only way you're going to get an A in my class is if you start playing volleyball." What African Queen loved the most about volleyball were the relationships—some of her most important relationships are still with people she played with, people she met playing, and people she played with overseas.

Her club experience was interesting, as she was the only Black girl on her teams consistently for most of her club experience. She also faced microaggressions that she now wishes her parents were more educated about so she could have talked to them about these experiences. She also wished she was more educated at the time so she could have at least spoken up for herself. Her experience playing college volleyball on the West Coast was similar

[31] Refers to the volleyball players who play on the left or right side of the court in front of the net, next to the antennas. Called a pin hitter, pins outside hitter, right side hitter, power side, left side, or right side.

to her club experience; she was the only Black girl on the team for most of the time until her senior year. She also faced microaggressions in the collegiate setting.

Mini

Mini was a former professional volleyball player from the East Coast who played professionally for 3 years; she played in France and Thailand on three separate teams. She was passionate about tennis, which was a spring sport, and her mom forced her into participating in something that kept her in shape until spring. Her mom said, "Sign up for one of the spring sports. I don't care." The available options were swimming and cross country, which she did not want to do, thereby leaving volleyball as the only option. A couple of her friends were in volleyball, so she signed up. She believed the team needed tall people, so they bumped her up to varsity and then she just kept with the sport after that—to the point that she dropped tennis. She noted:

> My offer was with volleyball. I was like, "Oh, it's going to get me to college. It's going to get my school paid for." Let me just go this route versus my professional tennis dreams, which are like one in a million of being the next Serena [Williams]. I was like, go where the money is immediately.

Mini loved the team aspect and the fact she does not think a person can play volleyball mindlessly, as a person must be constantly engaged. Her club experience involved playing with all-white teammates, but within the club league there were a few other Black girls playing on different teams. This experience was similar to her life experience, because she went to predominantly white schools. Her college experience on the East Coast was different because she wanted to play on a diverse team.

Sexual Chocolate

Sexual Chocolate was from the East Coast and has played professionally for 5 years on three different teams in three different countries: Switzerland, Germany, and Italy. She got involved in volleyball because her sister started playing, a similar trend from when she started playing basketball earlier in life because her brother played it. Throughout high school she played basketball, volleyball, and track, but in college had to pick one sport, and chose volleyball. Sexual Chocolate loved that volleyball is a finesse game that requires a lot of technique. Her club experiences echoed other participants' experiences, as she was usually the only Black girl playing on her club teams. In high school, there were possibly one or two Black players, even though her high school was probably about even as far as students of color and white students. Her college experience in the Midwest reflected her high school experience; she was one of two Black players on the team.

Legz

Legz hailed from the East Coast and was a professional volleyball player for 2 years who played on three teams in two countries: Austria and Spain. She was on the dance team in high school but outgrew it. She got involved in volleyball on a bet in the 10th grade by one of her friends, the captain of the volleyball team, who came to watch her perform and said, "You're just doing the wrong thing. You need to try volleyball." She decided to go to a summer high school camp, where she ended up trying out and making the varsity team with no experience. She loved the fact that in volleyball, every person matters. It is a sport where everybody must be engaged, and everybody plays a role; a person cannot hide. She played on both a club and college team that was about 25% diverse.

Kennedy Jones

Kennedy Jones came from the Midwest and played professionally for 3 years on three different teams in three different countries: Germany, Ukraine, and France. Kennedy Jones grew up in an athletic family that had a lot of college athletes. She got involved in volleyball because everyone else in her family played basketball; for her, it was refreshing when she would play volleyball and her parents could not throw in their two cents because they did not know as much about the sport. She loves volleyball for the teams and sheer competitiveness, and really enjoys competing at a high level. In her experience playing club volleyball, she was always the only Black girl on the team, and was subsequently subjected to questions or offhand statements like, "Can I touch your hair?" Or, when coming back from spring break, she recalled teammates saying, "Oh, I was in Florida and now, I'm just as dark as you." Her club experience mirrored her school experience because she lived and went to school in a city where the population was 90% white. As a result, her status as the only Black girl on a club volleyball team was not anything she was unaccustomed to experiencing in her everyday upbringing. Kennedy Jones went to a college in the South and focused on schools that had diverse teams. As she said:

> I think I was thinking that I wanted diversity, but I just wanted other Black girls, to be honest. Compared to what I was coming from, I was like, "Oh, yes, this is excellent," to not have to be the only one and to have a small group that understood. Or even something just so comforting as like, someone makes a comment, and you just have someone else to look at to be like, "Okay, you heard that too?"

Carmel Delight

Carmel Delight grew up on the West Coast and had been a professional volleyball player for 7 years on six different teams in five different countries: Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, and

Puerto Rico. She grew up in an athletic family and played a variety of sports through elementary school but started playing volleyball because of her family members. What she loved most about volleyball was the adrenaline rush and that the sport provided a way to express herself athletically. During her club experience, she was one of only two Black girls on predominantly white teams, which was tough—the location of where the majority of these girls came from were in wealthier areas, and some schools these girls attended were in higher end communities and generally indicated high socioeconomic status. Carmel Delight went to college on the West Coast to be closer to home and was the only Black girl on a mostly white team.

RevolutionaryBitch

RevolutionaryBitch was from the South and was a professional volleyball player who played for 1 year, but on two separate teams in two separate countries: Sweden and Puerto Rico[32]. She got into volleyball because her older sister played and wanted to get involved because it looked fun. RevolutionaryBitch loved volleyball—not only because it was fun and a great sport, but because of the teammates and friendships she maintained over the years with other players. Her club experience opened her eyes a lot to class dynamics. It was very eye-opening for her to play with a lot of private school kids and more privileged kids. She also played on all-white teams, which helped her think more about where she wanted to go for college, because she wanted more diversity. She went to a more diverse college in the South, and it was wonderful because her teammates had common experiences, common stories, and shared stories that helped them really form camaraderie and bond.

[32] Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory.

Half-Pint Hottie

Half-Pint Hottie was from the East Coast and was a professional player for 12 years, or 12 seasons. She played in Holland, Belgium, Russia, Italy, Azerbaijan, and Puerto Rico on 10 different teams. She got into volleyball by serving as a "guinea pig" for her sister at home because her sister had skills she needed to work on; thus, Half-Pint Hottie would pass with her and pepper[33] with her. She would work with her sister on their spike approaches and the high school coach allowed Half-Pint Hottie to go to practice. As a result, she practiced with the varsity team every day while in elementary school. Half-Pint Hottie loved being part of a team because the high school girls were really encouraging with her as the younger person and as the little elementary school kid who came to practice with them. They were very welcoming. She did not feel any animosity or "'Why is that little kid here? Get her out of here. I do not want her in my group,' or, 'she might be a drill killer.'" Half-Pint Hottie felt they really cheered for her and made her feel comfortable, and she really liked that. She recalled feeling:

> This is what it means to be part of a team. You have each other's backs, no matter what, whether you make a mistake or not, and there's nobody looking and pointing fingers at you. It was just a really great atmosphere. It made me like team sports. I was like, "This is great. If this is how team sports are, this is amazing."

When she was growing up, there were only a few volleyball clubs, and there might have been two Black players within the entire club across her entire tenure as a player. Half-Pint Hottie ended up going to college in the Midwest that had a diverse team and allowed her to feel comfortable while far away from home.

[33] Bartiuk (2021) noted, "For the uninitiated, the traditional game of 'pepper' is when two players take turns playing the ball while trying to keep the rally going without losing control" (para. 2).

Snickers

Snickers was from the West Coast and was a professional volleyball player for 10 years in 10 different countries—Puerto Rico, Indonesia, Turkey, Spain, Italy, Romania, Austria, Greece, Holland, and the Netherlands—totaling at least 10 different teams. It was difficult for Snickers to remember, as she sometimes played a double season. She got involved in volleyball because her sister did; relatedly, because her sister played, her coach pursued Snickers because she had been the same height since turning 14. One aspect Snickers loved most about volleyball was the team atmosphere, as every move does not fall to the individual player. Even as the "star player," there is always someone there for backup. She had a great club experience with a coach who genuinely cared about the team and getting players to the next level—not necessarily to a Power Five institution but getting them to where they could attend college on a full scholarship. Being from the West Coast, Snickers was used to playing on all-white teams. She was the only Black girl on her club team, the only Black girl after her junior or senior years in high school and was the only Black girl on her college team the whole time she played at her college in the Midwest.

Goldie Carnousty

Goldie Carnousty was from the Midwest and played professionally for 3.5 years and counting; her 4th year started September 2021. She played on five teams in four countries: Italy, Turkey, Japan, and Germany. Goldie Carnousty got involved in volleyball because her sister played, and one of the times Goldie Carnousty was at her practice, a coach of a younger team came up to her and said, "Hey, listen. We don't have enough players for one of our teams. You're tall, and you're literally always here. What do you say?" Goldie Carnousty described responding, "'Yes, sure. Why not? I'll do it.' I've never looked back. I stopped playing basketball, and I picked up volleyball really quickly. I got really good, and now here we are." Goldie Carnousty loved the

sisterhood of volleyball, as she is a self-described "people person." Getting to know people living in different countries and getting to really understand their points of view was important to her—not only Americans, but also Black Americans, volleyball players, and U.S. volleyball players. Her club experience involved predominantly white clubs and teams with a few mixed-race players of Black and white heritage on a team. When recruited for college, she ultimately ended up at a school on the East Coast and wanted to play with girls who looked like her. When getting recruited, she recalled saying:

> I need to go to a place where I can see and meet and have girls who look like me all the time. I don't want to have this experience again of being the only Black girl and being like a toy for them. I'm like, "Don't touch my hair. Don't look at my butt. I don't want to do that anymore. I did that for years and I'm sick of it."

Bianca

Bianca was from the West Coast and played professionally for 14 years in one country, Italy, on seven different teams. She got involved in volleyball because in high school, the high school teams needed somebody to play volleyball. She recalled thinking:

> "No, I'm not playing that, because only white girls play that. I'm not doing that." At the end, my coach is like, "Either try out or you're not going to be playing basketball." I actually believed him, but I'm sure it wasn't the truth at the time, and so I started playing volleyball.

What Bianca loved the most about volleyball was the competition. She played on a predominately white club team with one other Black girl, but it was difficult at the beginning because she had not been around many white girls. She noted, "They were trying to touch my hair, they would dress different, act different, eat different. It was . . . I'm like, 'I'm not eating

that.' It was just a whole new world." Bianca went to college on the West Coast and had an experience that was problematic at the first school she attended, but when she transferred schools, she found a place more diverse and welcoming.

Crystal

Crystal was from the East Coast and was a professional volleyball player for 11 seasons, or 11 years, in seven different countries and on 13 different teams: Spain, Slovenia, Germany, Indonesia, France, Turkey, and Italy. Crystal started playing volleyball because of her sister and her athletic family. She started as a basketball player, but as she said, "Volleyball just opened up the door, like OK, this is what people are playing right now. Let's do it." She had a vastly different experience in relation to the other participants, as she played on a predominately Black team with a Black coach. What she loved most about volleyball was it was not contact, but a player could still make contact by being highly aggressive. She also loved the camaraderie with the team and the technique that a player can just learn. Crystal went from a predominately Black team to a college on the West Coast with a predominately white team and staff.

Diamond

Diamond was from the Midwest and had been a professional player for 3 years, in three different countries, on four different teams: Poland, Turkey, and Italy. She got into volleyball when she tried out for the seventh-grade team solely because her best friends also tried out, and noted, "It was at the time where we were allowed to try out for athletics and have this as a credit." She was already participating in basketball and track at the time and had never touched a volleyball, but her friends were trying out, and she did not want to be left out. Diamond loved the team aspect of it all, and that in volleyball, the burden does not all rest on one player's shoulders. She noted:

> I like the fact that you could share the responsibility and the burden with other people around you and then the celebration part when something cool happens, or when you win games, you have people to celebrate with. I thought that was cool.

Diamond had the club experience of playing on a team as the only Black player, and also played on a team with a diverse coaching staff and team. She went to a school in the Midwest where she was surrounded by diverse teammates she loved, but also noted the staff embraced diversity, encouraged it, and always sought out to recruit diverse players, which she appreciated.

Sasha

Sasha was a former professional volleyball player from the West Coast who played for 6 years in five countries and on eight teams: Hungary, Thailand, Peru, Philippines, and Turkey. Sasha started in volleyball due to my cousin. In high school, Sasha was cut from her freshman volleyball team; her cousin was playing club and said, "You should play club. Come to this tryout." The tryout allowed her to play club and not only get better for high school volleyball, but also for club volleyball. She loved the sense of community and bonding with teammates. She noted:

> I feel like it's really special. Volleyball is very much a team-oriented sport. We can't have Kobe [Bryant] go out and score 80 points in the game and win. We have to all play together. I think that cohesiveness is something that I really needed as a kid coming from a broken home. I think that's why the sport resonated with me at a young age.

She played for a majority white club with the only two Black kids on the team being in the middle position as a middle hitter. She also recalled:

> [I] always felt less than, like I didn't belong, because I was in a wealthy white sport and everyone's parents were traveling to tournaments and games, my parents were never

> there. I'm seeing, I guess, white privilege at a very young age in that regard, and kids are having sweet 16s, they're getting cars and all this type of stuff, and I'm lucky to get a birthday party. It was a lot. I think it was really overwhelming for me as a kid, but at the same time, I was very quiet and shy. I just observed stuff and never really spoke on things. I don't know, that's how my experience was.

Sasha went from the West Coast to the East Coast to play college volleyball where she had, for the most part, a good experience despite spending a majority of time as the only Black person on the team.

CeCe

CeCe was a former professional volleyball player from the Midwest who played for 3 years on three different teams in three countries: Cyprus, Denmark, and Slovakia. She started playing volleyball in grade school, liked it, and then started the progression of attending camps. She loved the fact that volleyball is dynamic, with a lot of jumps, fast movements, and hard hits to the ball. She played for clubs that were predominately white and in some cases she, her friend, and their sisters were the only Black players on the club team. As CeCe explained:

> It had its moments of like, "Okay, I don't really fit in here." I'd felt that way with other things, too, already, so wasn't like, "Oh, my gosh, I went from rarely being the only one." It's like, "No, I'm used to being one of a few, but now I'm the only one."

Cece also noted feeling in some instances when they "went to some of these bigger tournaments, there's times where it's like, 'Maybe I'm one of three in the whole gym, too.'" CeCe went to school on the East Coast and went to a school where the coach who had committed her had not had an athlete of color on any of her teams—she was the first Black athlete for the coach.

Sloan

Sloan was a former professional volleyball player from the West Coast. She played professionally for four seasons for four teams in four countries: Spain, Finland, Austria, and the Netherlands. Sloan got involved in volleyball because of her dad's high school basketball coach, who was the high school volleyball coach when she was in school and wanted her to play; originally, she had no interest in it. She noted:

> He pretty much bullied me into playing, so I played my sophomore year of high school. He wouldn't talk to me until I played, and he didn't, until I did. He was the PE [physical education] teacher; he was, like, the fun teacher that everyone wanted to be around.

What Sloan loved the most about volleyball is the competitive aspect and working with somebody else, as she is truly a team a team player. She stated:

> You could be as aggressive as you wanted to, and you didn't have to apologize for being a woman that's a competitor. You were just looked at as a competitor that has the freedom to do that. I did in a sport that was continually evolving, I liked that it was fast paced because I didn't really understand the sport. A game completely changed throughout my years. It changed every single year. I feel like I was one of the trailblazers of the sport.

Sloan played club, but it was not a big nor nationally based program. She decided to play college volleyball on the East Coast, but at a predominately white school, with a predominately white team. The experience was interesting to her, because as she said:

> In my hometown, if there was racism, it wasn't something that I outwardly knew or experienced. I grew up with these people, my dad's from there. These people were my family, if they had any prejudices, I guess, it's something that I could feel, but I didn't

understand because it was never anything ever talked about, understand racism like that. There were prejudices because there were no men that were attracted to me. I felt like people that would come in from the military, they would actively talk about race, but how I grew up, I didn't identify with them. I just felt like something was amiss, but I didn't know exactly what it was, put my finger on it, was it racial or not? Then at my college, that was a first experience that I felt palatable racism. No one had to say anything for me to know that it was there. I could walk, and I feel it. It's something you just feel, and that's where I would hear passive-aggressive comments, microaggressions about race, where I never experienced that before, or if I did it's just, say, someone said it in my hometown, which it's hard to remember.

I never looked at it as racial, I just looked at it like I have an athletic body type. It was more about my physique than my race now, and that's how I interpreted it then, but it could have been racial. How I was interpreting it then, it was more like, "Your body can do this," but it's not like, "You're Black, you can do this." I think my understanding and my own experience being a Black person is like, it's a lot of things that are unsaid that we all know. Even though I'm from far-off lands, no one had to educate me about that's not right, that's wrong. That feels wrong, although I've never experienced it before. It was more I felt like I was an object. I was definitely objectified 100%, but like, I was someone that was like an animal in the cage, it's very curious. A lot of these people at the school had limited experience with someone that didn't look like them and because in their mind I sound like them, instead of sounding like an American because that's been a fucking country where this is how we all speak. I felt like I identified with them, that they felt like they are comfortable saying things that are incredibly inappropriate. That

> weighed on me a lot because I didn't know, I've never experienced it before, so after my 1st year, I wanted to leave. I actually went to the AD [athletic director] and said that "I need to get the fuck out of here. This place is fucking crazy."

Sharon

Sharon was a former professional volleyball player from the West Coast who played for 1 year in Spain on one team. She got started in volleyball because her mom dragged her to volleyball camp, as her dad had just passed away and she was not taking it well; her mom knew she needed to get out of the house. As Sharon stated:

> She tricked me, she said we were going to the bookstore, and she took me to a volleyball camp. I had on jean shorts and nonathletic shoes. She signed me up, pushed me into the camp, and then went home and got me actual tennis shoes. I did my whole 1st day of camp in jean shorts.

Even though she was tricked into volleyball, she loved the collaboration of a team. She noted:

> I really found that I work better when it's not just me solo. That I work better with a team and because the outcomes are arbitrary. You don't have somebody subjectively deciding whether or not what you do is good enough. It's either gets the point or it doesn't. It's not like gymnastics where it has to be evaluated through somebody else's opinion and rubric. The ball hit the ground or didn't. It's like you get that team aspect, plus it's like, you got the job done. It's a metric nobody can skew with, I love it.

When Sharon played club volleyball, she was always the only Black person on every club team. Sometimes, she was only one of two Black players in the whole gym. When she went to college, she chose a school in the Midwest that had another Black girl; yet, as she said, "People got us confused all the time. We look nothing alike."

Analysis of Themes

From the in-depth interviews with the 18 participants, five major themes emerged: Racial Obstacles, Appearance, Social Struggles, Difference, and Agents. Race and gender were often intertwined in the athletes' stories, as many of their racial experiences had less to do with their status as athletes and more to do with their status as Black women. Even though there were very few other Black women where these participants were located overseas, they were routinely perceived by locals as refugees, immigrants, or undocumented. Rarely were they considered athletes unless they wore their uniforms or identified themselves as professional athletes.

Racial Obstacles

Questions and comments around the participants' experiences with racism, hyperawareness, stereotyping, and microaggressions played a significant role in my conversations with the BFVPs. Their comments on these topics were constant, whether participants discussed their experiences with club volleyball, college volleyball, or their professional volleyball careers. I first started off asking participants their definitions of racism to get an understanding of how they viewed racism. Participants had different views of what racism was, ranging from personal, to structural, to systemic. Understanding their views of racism was helpful in then understanding why they would deem certain experiences abroad as racist. The definitions of racism each participant gave come from their respective interpretations of racism and how it manifests. I did not put a spin on what they are saying by performing this analysis as I should not alter their responses to assume what they meant. I am also acknowledging that their understanding and definitions fell into respective qualitative categories which also allowed me to build connections with other literature.

The following section comprises participants' definitions of racism:

- **Slim:** My definition of racism would be the hate of someone else because of their color, their religious background, but mostly the color of their skin.
- **African Queen:** My definition of racism. I would say just discrimination, judgment towards people of a different race. My dad jokes all the time that Black people can't be racist. I'm like, "I mean, we could." My definition of racism is white people. It's not very elongated.
- **Mini:** The use of a specific race to oppress other races through systems, institutions, beliefs.
- **Sexual Chocolate:** Almost like looking down on someone because they're just of a different race. In a nutshell, that's what I would define it as in my own words. Almost just thinking, "Hey, I'm better because I've got a different color of skin than you," or whatever it is.
- **Legz:** I would say the differential treatment of others based on their skin tone.
- **Kennedy Jones:** I would just say that the discrimination and prejudice based on race and race alone.
- **Carmel Delight:** Ignorance. It's an ignorant act or behavior or dialogue towards somebody that is of a different race than you.
- **RevolutionaryBitch:** My definition of racism would be structural and—I would say racism is structural and power dynamics that are used to oppress Black people namely. I think Black needs to be named and also people of color more broadly. I think there is a special anti-Blackness that does inherently go into racism, especially in America.

- **Half-Pint Hottie:** Not understanding that and being—I wouldn't say ignorant, but just not understanding the differences of others.
- **Snickers:** I think treating anyone differently based on what they look like, what their race is, what their ethnicity is, and treating them differently in a good or bad way.
- **Bianca:** My definition of racism is—it's not the first time I was asked that question. I would define it as not knowing.
- **Crystal:** Well, anything that someone can discriminate or say, "You can't do this because of your race, because you are this."
- **CeCe:** Definition is definitely just seeing and treating persons differently, whether it's outward aggression. Limiting inclusivity, limiting resources as well as treating a person as other based off just their skin color or their ethnic background. That's definitely how I view it.
- **Diamond:** I think I would define racism as one race believing or thinking that they're superior over another and those things playing out systematically, those things playing out all across the board, all walks of life.
- **Goldie Carnousty:** I think my definition is having prejudice toward specific. . . . Having prejudice toward minorities, or people of color within your community if you're white. I personally don't believe that Black people can be racist. I believe that Asian people can be racist. I believe that Indian people can be racist. I believe that white people can be racist. I do not believe that Black people can be racist.
- **Sasha:** Racism. I guess my definition of racism would probably be about discrimination against a person based on their skin or their ethnicity. That's probably

what I would say. Racism is discrimination, like negatively change someone bad based off their skin and their appearance.

- **Sharon:** For me, it's the systems that are put in place. There's also a tangible loss there and it's not necessarily quantifiable but it's something where it's, the opportunities aren't necessarily available. The ability to contribute as a full citizen of America, like racism to me is where there's a separate standard or that caste aspect is how racism presents to me. I know that's not like, as an even individual, that's not as clean cut and dry. That's how racism presents as well. It's not just what you see on TV, it's not *Mississippi Burning*. It's the job you don't get. It's the cute guy who won't talk to you. It's getting offered a salary that's less, it's the people being mad, it's people being upset when you're just like, "Well, no, that doesn't make sense. That offer doesn't make sense." It's the little things like that. That's why the definition as an individual, for me, is a little fuzzier because the experience of it is a little fuzzier.
- **Sloane:** I think racism is really hard to describe. I think that racism is independent with each individual. I think it's all about what your experience is with racism. I don't know. I think someone said it like this, which makes sense to me. Everyone knows what the itch is, and they know what itch feels like to them, when you got it and you scratch it. If I were to explain what the itch is to you, it's different for you. You know what I'm talking about because it's an itch, but I can't really explain the sensation because it's only independent to myself. I think for me, racism can be being mistreated just based on things that are outside of your control. The color of your skin, where you're from—the color, that to me is racism. Anything that has to do with that, if it's microaggressions or outwardly expressing your disdain because of the

> color of your skin, or just by separating, like, people are Black over here. Any sort of categorization based on race, I think, is a form of racism.

All these definitions of racism show how difficult it is to fully identify. Each participant came with their own understanding of what racism looks like, how it shows up, how it affects Black people, and lastly, how it can be covert and difficult to explicitly name. The participants' responses ranged from concepts in medicine, to coaches' comments, to social media. People might look at a single comment made toward a professional BFVP and not realize it was compounded with experiences they have already faced when merely walking around town or when engaging with their teammates.

When playing a sport, an athlete's coach is important to their experience, as they are the person in charge of the team and wield undeniable power. The coach decides who plays, for how long, in what position, and if the athlete stays on the team. This power is why it is difficult when a professional BFVP has a coach who makes racist remarks, and Kennedy Jones and Slim shared being subjected to these remarks by their coaches. Kennedy Jones discussed a time she felt like racism was involved when preparing for a match and had to deal with problematic actions and comments from her coach, saying:

> One time, there was a Black girl who was outside. One of our assistant coaches was being her on the scout team and he's like, "Oh, you know, Val is so and so," whatever the girl's name was. He did this gesture on his face as if he needs to paint his skin a different color to be her, because he's white, and she's Black. Those things happened. I was like, "OK, that was definitely racist."

Many times, the power dynamics of coaches would make players hesitate in calling out racial language because of the potential for retaliation. When a coach uses harmful, racist language,

there may be very little recourse available for the professional BFVPs. The racism from coaches to players also was not limited to just the professional BFVPs; Slim also had to worry about a coach who made racist comments about his Colombian athletes, noting:

> My coach was honestly racist. He didn't speak a lot of English, either, but it would be through certain little phrases he would say. We had some Colombians on our team, and he would always make jokes about Pablo Escobar, which was obviously super offensive.

In Europe, as some participants noted, a player could complain about racial issues, but usually nothing would or could be done. After the complaint was left unaddressed, the player was then forced into the situation where they had to continue being coached by a problematic person. Some countries and areas may be more racially challenging than others; for instance, Snickers explained her thoughts and feelings on how racism is perpetuated in Europe, stating:

> Like, it's just racism isn't the same for them, but it's there and it's unconscious. It's like an unconscious racism and unconscious bias for them, because they didn't have slavery to the extent that we do. Those are my experiences there in Spain. It was cool being there, but there were times where you knew where you were. That was the one where the guy almost got an accident. We were walking down the street. There, that's where I felt it [racism] a little bit more because they don't have as many Black people there. The coaches were Italian. They were lighter skinned Italians.

Snickers's comments about racism showed even though the BFVPs understood that citizens in European countries viewed racism differently and had biases, these biases were created because of a lack of interaction and knowledge of people with different ethnicities and races.

How racism is perpetuated in different areas can show up differently, especially in deeply homogenous areas. Slim shared her experiences in Poland, whereas Snickers described her

experiences in Italy. Slim's negative racial experience in Poland was layered not only by comments from the coach, but also by medical issues, of which she felt race was one reason she was treated so badly. The professional BFVPs discussed the stories they heard about with professional volleyball team officials in Europe notoriously lying to the athletes about medical professionals' evaluation of injuries, or what the injury even entailed. Slim's experience in Poland was problematic because of the racial components added to it as the only Black person, the racial stereotypes of laziness or not having a work ethic, and the myth of high pain tolerances. These racial myths are perpetuated when those working in healthcare do not interact with Black people on a consistent basis, do not have access to literature that includes Black patients, nor do they interrogate their beliefs about Black people or acknowledge the effects of race on medical care (Hamed et al., 2020). Slim continued:

> It was just like, I know they're treating me this way because I'm Black, and it's very hard to describe to people who are not Black because the next thing, I'm being too sensitive. In Poland, I think that was the worst I had, because I was the only Black person, and certain things, like I tore my meniscus out there, but for a whole month they just said I was being lazy, I wasn't working hard enough. I'm just like, "The way I'm being treated, there is no way if I was any other race that it would go down." Then they tried to rush my surgery. They lied and tried to mix up the dates. They were spreading rumors and all this stuff. I think that was one time, that's where I felt the Blackest, that my skin was an issue, but every other country, no. I had no issues. But Poland, that's where I really felt it. I felt it and there were certain incidents where I was like, "I know this is it," but I couldn't really explain it to certain people because they were just like, "You're being too much." I'm like, "I'm not, I promise." Yes, Poland was the worst. To Poland, I was like, "I'm

> never going back here again. Never. I would never. You couldn't pay me enough to go back there."

While she was injured, the treatment Slim was provided was made worse by racial comments made by the medical staff that not only made her feel unwanted and unwelcome, but that the country might be an unsafe place for her. This sentiment was also demonstrated in the way she was treated when injured, as taking care of her was not a priority. CeCe also approached the medical issues that could play out for her as a BFVP when in contract negotiations. She noted:

> Understanding who the teams have on medical staff can let a professional Black female volleyball player know what support they would have if injured. Knowing how to ask and see about what sports medicine is associated with the team, if any.

The media and social media can be violent and harmful spaces, as media allow people to make stereotypical and racial comments easily and anonymously. Before the emergence of online media, racial comments would be made in person or through the mail, but now racist comments can flood a person's personal or private social media pages (Hopkins & Carter, 2000; WFMY Staff, 2005). As Naomi Osaka and other professional Black female athletes (BFAs) throughout history have experienced, being thrust into the spotlight of the court often comes with enough cons to turn even one's dream into a nightmare (Antonish, 2019; Komonibo, 2021; McClendon, 2021). Even the best players cannot protect themselves from being picked apart. The fact that they are Black women makes them prime targets for abuse and harassment even after winning medals, trophies, and world records (Komonibo, 2021). Diamond discussed her experience in Turkey and the treatment BFAs had to deal with, saying:

> Like, Turkish fans are brutal. They'll be in your DMs [direct messages] calling you monkey, calling you the N-word up and down, saying very obscene, racially motivated

> things. I had another Black teammate on my team, and we would laugh about it most of the time because we were just like, "This is nuts." I think there were definitely times where I was just like, "They have to know that this is not okay and they're doing that because of that." That, to me, made me uncomfortable also because you never really know who's talking to you. I think that moment, or those little things, made me feel a little unsafe. For those reasons it's why I don't wear club gear when I leave the house because that's another reason to be targeted along with being a Black woman.

The vile comment made in a professional BFVP's social media inbox can be just as harmful in many ways as violence committed against them face to face. Social media lends an air of anonymity because people can hide behind a fake name or a faceless profile picture. Due to coverage of sports in the media, fans have the ability to know who the professional athletes are without the professional athletes knowing them. Professional BFVPs tend to stand out when in European countries and because of that, they may be easy targets. Self-protection is critical for professional BFVPs, as there has been an uptick in racial violence due to racial uprisings against refugees, undocumented people, and other Black people deemed as perpetual foreigners (Adjepong, 2020; Adjepong & Carrington, 2014; Botelho & Agergaard, 2011).

The hateful comments made against the professional BFAs on social media have forced them to be concerned for their safety. Participants described struggling to know whether an insult would stop at harsh words or whether it would morph into physical violence against them. Bianca and Snickers were both attacked physically by being spit on. Bianca had to worry about these attacks when playing, and stated:

> I played a couple of years ago in the south of Italy and the court was really down, the people were all above us, and they were spitting. When I would go to serve, they would

> spit. Yes, it was bad. I don't think I ever—I was like, "Okay." I remembered all my Italian bad words that day. My ex-coach would remind me, "Do you remember the time we played in Palermo when they were spitting on you?" I was like, "Yes. I was about to run up them stairs." It was pretty bad. Yes, that was the only time that I really had a problem playing.

This anecdote provided an example of the global lack of safety for BFVPs. When players compete, the arena and the court are supposed to be a safe place for athletes. Athletes in every sport have discussed how they cannot leave these worries and concerns outside the site of competition, as sport has not created protection for professional Black athletes (Antonish, 2019; Lalani & Zafar, 2021; McClendon, 2021). When coaches choose to take no action to protect their players, this concern of violence toward BFVPs increases. Furthermore, violence is not restricted to when these players compete, but also in everyday life. Snickers illustrated this violence with her painful and unsettling racial experience in Romania, sharing:

> I have told one person this story. I was at a stand across the street from my apartment getting a phonecard or something to drink or something, and there was a kid, these three kids standing next to me at the stand, shouting, whatever, obviously, I don't speak Romanian. I do what I did, ignore them. There was one little girl standing there and I just kept talking to the woman and the woman was actually continuing in English. I turned to look at them and the little girl spit in my face. I don't even remember how, because she ran, but I caught her and I must have shook the crap out of this kid, and a police officer saw me and I'm screaming at the police officer. I'm like, "She spit on my face." I'm like, "Just shit." The kid couldn't have been more than 12 but it's one of the little street Romanian kids. I don't know if the cop saw it or what? I'm in a foreign country. I could

> have got arrested, I don't know, but when I say that I saw red and I almost killed this kid? That's what almost happened. I was just shaking the—it's just—I've never had that happen. It hadn't happened before that, it didn't happen after it, but it was the most—I don't even, I can't even, I have no words but just like, to this day, I am still pissed. I'm still just like, if I saw that kid now. She almost lost her life that day, it would have been "12 years old, here lies Romanian street kid." She's lucky the cop came because—he must have thought she stole something from me, and he spoke English, so he understood. There wasn't anything he could do but I'm like, "If I ever see this kid again, it's going to be a misunderstanding."

A professional BFVP in Europe cannot let her guard down at any time. Due to the potential racial and gendered violence they can be exposed to, her guard has to stay up. This violence is even more unsettling given they sometimes cannot protect themselves from it. Bianca and Snickers highlighted how harm manifests in a variety of forms and is made societally acceptable when people believe violence against Black people is perfectly appropriate.

As BFVPs in Europe, the participants recalled being hyperaware of their Blackness. As they moved through different countries and cities, there was always a sense of being different, and because of that difference, they were hyperaware of how they stood out and the many ways standing out occurs. One way Kennedy Jones felt she stood out was because of how much her all-white teammates questioned aspects of her identity. Kennedy noted:

> I was hyperaware of being Black all the time, especially around my teammates, because they were all white Germans, so they would have questions about my hair. I remember one time my mom was coming to visit, and this girl was like, "Oh, can I see a picture of your mom?" She was so shocked when she was white. She didn't say that, but you could

> tell. She was like, "Oh, I didn't know your mom to look like that." I'm like, "Yes." My mom's a pale, white, blonde woman with green eyes. Naturally, that's probably not what she thought my mom was going to look like.

When people live in homogenous areas or are surrounded by people who look like them all the time, there is no understanding of racial difference, especially when it comes to mixed race families of similar nature to Kennedy Jones's family dynamic.

People may have two separate thoughts in these types of situations. They can assume a person who identifies as Black has two Black parents, as did Kennedy Jones's teammates. This assumption contrasts with the experience of a lighter skin Black person in countries where there are more interracial couples; many assume, as Goldie Carnousty's teammates did, a parent had to be white or else she was not Black. Goldie Carnousty noted:

> As a Black woman in Europe, a lot of people don't even think that I'm African American. They think I'm French, they think I'm Hispanic, they think I'm basically anything but Black. They're like, "Which one of your parents is White?" I'm like, "Neither, both my parents are Black, I just have lighter skin." I've had that question so many times, even when my mom was living with me in Italy. I remember we were at a farmer's market, I believe, and someone just comes up to us as like, "Parlez-vous Français?" I'm like, "No, no we don't." Unfortunately, no is universal, so they thought I was just speaking in French as well [laughed]. Everyone thinks I'm something different than what I am, and as a Black woman, I think that—for me that's hurtful, because I take pride in who I am, and I take pride in my heritage. Being an African American woman, and to have people not even associate me with being Black because I don't "look the part," is frustrating, and hurtful sometimes.

The professional BFVPs have skin colors that run the gamut from dark to light. These different skin colors contributed to hyperawareness of their differences amid the homogenous white communities they played in throughout Europe, as they are not white nor all able to pass as white. Goldie Carnousty was peppered with questions about identity because her teammates had to find somewhere to place her.

In Slovenia, Crystal was always hyperaware of where she was, no matter where she was going or what she did. As she described, there was an air of being different:

> In Slovenia and at that time, too, because it's around 2004, being Black and being different completely, it was just hyperaware. I did feel like I almost would hate just riding my bike around the streets because I know that everyone would go, "Whoa, where'd this person come from," because they have never seen the person. They're not, at that time, now they're more, they're into you, and they're like, "Oh, people are coming in, there's a lot of tourists," but before, no, it was like, "Who is this?" You were just tagged, you're already different, they know. That's one person. It's definitely being Black; I could feel that.

Despite hypervigilance as a Black female, it was impossible for Crystal to feel secure or comfortable in her own skin at any time. Diamond also said she was always conscious that her safety could be affected at any time, noting:

> I'm definitely always conscious, especially in a country that I played in that I am Black first and not American first when I'm in these countries. I have to accept the fact that like, because of that, it [being an American Black woman] gets paired up a lot more. I might get talked to crazily, granted, another language, but I can read cues. I know that they're talking crazy. Just be very hypervigilant of my surroundings. It makes you aware

> of your surroundings, but also aware that at any given moment, something could happen just because you're a Black woman. I had to be very obviously aware of that.

Professional BFVPs knew they must remain cautious to maintain their safety. Safety is a necessity Black women do not have the luxury of having. Language added an element where not speaking the same language compounded that hyperawareness, because there was an unsureness of what people around them were saying. This unsureness led participants to consistently worry about having to physically defend themselves in spaces where they did not know what was said. The ability to somewhat understand the language and what occurred around them gave professional BFVPs the ability to move around with a little bit more freedom and less apprehension.

Throughout the conversations with participants, it was clear the professional BFVPs were expected to act in a stereotypical, Black female way by their teammates. These stereotypes included being loud, a good dancer, knowing all the rap songs, or communicating in an overtly expressive manner. J. A. Lewis et al. (2016) explained, these assumptions are widespread, "including that they are loud and use nonverbal expressiveness in their communication style, such as rolling their eyes and neck, and shaking or waving their hands and fingers" (p. 771). Sharon explained her experience in Spain when her teammates had the wrong idea, saying:

> [That] the Black person being the life of the party, the best dancer. Their conceptualization of me as a Black person was that I fit that role and I didn't. I absolutely didn't, because when I'm getting the lay of the land, I am very much to myself, I'm more observational, I'm very much like, "This what I'm willing to do. I'm not willing to go outside of it. I'm not necessarily here to entertain you." I've always had that feeling, if

> I'm having fun, I'm having fun, but it was very clear, my teammates weren't interested [laughed].

Even though she tried to explain to her teammates that she was not going to be the Black person they thought she would be, it did not matter to them. Sharon recalled expectations from her teammates, commenting:

> To do all the fun stuff and teach new dances and bop to the music and be fun like that and I just was uninterested. I could sense the disappointment that I was a volleyball player and not a volleyball player. Their chance to have a Black American, be a Black American in front of them so that they could go tell those stories later.

Many Black women fear people who are not Black will want them to be the stereotypical women they have seen on television or social media to tell stories about their actions (Douglas, 2005; Hill Collins, 2000; J. A. Lewis et al., 2016). They want to see or hear the stereotypical snapping of the neck, the hand gestures, or the accent—the ways they think Black women are ghetto or hood.

Lastly, many of the professional BFVPs spoke about the consistent microaggressions[34] that came from not only their own teammates and coaches, but also opposing teams and civilians of the cities they traveled in and through. Many of the microaggressions the professional BFVPs experienced were easily excused by coaches, staff, and those who managed the club; these microaggressions were largely minimized as (a) not intended as harmful, (b) not borne from negative intent, or (c) they were mistakenly positioned as positive statements. The

[34] Microaggressions are considered "the everyday slights and insults that minoritized people endure and that most people of the dominant group that notice or take seriously" (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, p. 226). These microaggressions against Black women can be "Projected Stereotypes (expectation of the Jezebel, expectation of the Angry Black Woman), Silenced and Marginalized (struggle for respect, invisibility), and Assumptions About Style and Beauty (assumptions about communication styles, assumptions about aesthetics)" (J. A. Lewis et al., 2016, p. 758).

microaggressions ranged from comments on their hair, skin color, body part size, accent, and more. J. A. Lewis et al. (2016) explained typical themes of microaggressions Black women are often subjected to include assumptions about their body size, hairstyles, and facial features. As an example, Black women are assumed to have larger and curvaceous bodies (Adjepong & Carrington, 2014; R. J. Bell, 2008; Edwards, 1999; Hill Collins, 2000; Withycombe, 2011). Goldie Carnousty recalled that regular microaggressions she experienced involved people touching her hair without her consent, or teammates saying they were getting as dark as her because of tanning. They also made statements such as, "My lips look big like yours. My butt's getting as big as Goldie's." The stereotypes of Black women created the idea that Goldie Carnousty was the standard of everything Black. Any body parts larger in size were then deemed "Blacker." Goldie Carnousty stated:

> When I was in Turkey, I had a few teammates who have had plastic surgery. Smaller noses, bigger lips, bigger butt, bigger boobs. The whole 9 yards, and they're like, "Oh look, I want my butt to look like [Goldie's] when I'm finished," or like, "I want my butt to" . . . I'm just like, "How about you just want a bigger butt? If you want a bigger butt, just say you want a bigger butt. I don't want to be a part of this. Don't bring me in this. I don't want this."

This idea of difference was a big part of the microaggressions felt by Goldie Carnousty; namely, her teammates announcing that if they were going to get any type of surgery enhancement, it would be an enhancement like a Black person. Snickers noted microaggressions did not just happen to her, but to other people of color as well:

> The team was cool, but they did certain things that were microaggressions, but they didn't see it that way because racism isn't seen the same in Europe as it is over here, but

> there was a Chinese player on the team, and they called her Cheena. I'm like, Spanish for Chinese. Then there was two Cubans, and they were Afro-Cuban and any Spanish-speaking country that I was in, when they were speaking about you to someone else and they weren't speaking to you, they would call you *la nigra*. It's like, really? They weren't speaking to you, but they're speaking about you, even if you're standing there, instead of just saying your name and which is weird because most of them have, most of these countries that I'm talking about have an indigenous Black population.

Microaggressions have been considered death by a thousand papercuts.[35] They are comments that may have seemed innocent when using them in interactions with the professional BFVPS; however, the consistent negative impact they had on the BFVPs was significant, as they forced stereotypes about Black women as depicted by social media or television onto the participants as individuals. These microaggressions created an unhealthy and unsafe team dynamic for professional BFVPs.

Amid the interviews, there was an aspect of expecting BFVPs to be a show or an act for other people. Because many people in Europe have seen racial stereotypes for Black women in TV shows, movies, music, and social media, there is an assumption that professional BFVPs know how to and want to dance to rap music (Douglas, 2005; Zenquis & Mwaniki, 2019). Kennedy Jones recounted a similar memory when her teammates "would say things like, 'Oh, you must know how to twerk. You should teach us how to twerk.'" This stereotype reinforced the notion Black women exist to entertain people. Another stereotype frequently discussed was the idea that Black people only date Black people. Because of this impression, teammates

[35] Microaggressions are "everyday slights or indignities experienced by people of color as 'death by a thousand cuts.' Far from being harmless and benign, microaggressions have a macro impact on targets" (Sue, 2021, para. 13).

sometimes pushed their Black teammates to only date other Black people. Kennedy Jones discussed this issue, noting:

> The basketball team there had a couple of Black Americans and they're like, "Oh, you should talk to so and so. You guys would be cute." It's like, "I don't know this man. You're just saying that because I'm a Black woman and he's a Black man, so naturally, you think that we should hit it off." It's like, "Jesus."

These microaggressions were brief, everyday interactions that intentionally or unintentionally sent messages suggesting the BFVPs did not belong. Because microaggressions are at times both verbal and nonverbal, they are often very subtle, cunning, and leave victims feeling confused, distressed, and frustrated, whereas the perpetrator remains unapologetic and unaware that what they have done has caused harm (Massao, 2016; Sue et al., 2007). Still, microaggressions are hard to describe as harmful because of how innocent they may seem.

Appearance

Skin color and hair was an ever-present topic many participants discussed. It was a common theme—not just emergent when the professional BFVPs were on the court, or during interactions with their teammates, but with people they encountered. Sharon acknowledged differences in how people view Black people through a European context compared to an U.S. context, noting:

> Then when it comes to being Black, it's an idea of—in Europe, there's a lot of homogenous towns, countries, places that have never, for hundreds of years, everyone—people look like them, they have the same religion as they have had, they speak the same language. There's no expectation of this multicultural experience that we have here in America. Even if you're the most southern, have white southern people and live in your white southern town, they're still in America; when you get outside of that, there's this

> idea of multiculturalism that's not necessarily true [laughs] in some European countries, that's not an idea that they have. There was a lot of, especially being a Black person, is there was this town that we were in, I think it was—I can't quite remember the country off the top of my head, like my instinct is telling me it was some small town in Austria.

Sharon's understanding of multiculturalism in Europe and the United States gave her insight into how homogeneity in parts of Europe sometimes creates negative and harmful experiences for professional BFVPs. These experiences may occur because people are largely unaware of Black culture beyond stereotypes.

The situations that occurred because of the lack of Black people in referenced areas meant the professional BFVPs were put into positions where they were consistently stared at or watched. Teammates, coaches, and residents of the town were unsure of who the professional BFVPs were or how to interact with them. CeCe explained this type of experience when she and another professional BFVP were on a train, and she was not sure if the situation was safe for them, saying:

> Then I'm sitting on a train, there's people who would stare because then, at that time as well, my teammate was Black and there was two of us, only Americans on the team, but people would look at us on the bus, just because they'd never seen Black people before. It was what one of the girls was saying, is there are no people of color often around. It was more that they're just like, "Oh." It was a sight to be seen of like, "Oh, I've never seen a Black girl, seen someone's hair like this before." That was at least something where it didn't happen all the time. It was just like, "Why are they staring at me?" Once I figured it out, I was like, "Okay, I see why. At least I feel better knowing why they're staring," as

> opposed to it being something where they're angry that we're there or something like this.

Though pedestrians and travelers would stare at the professional BFVPs, they largely maintained their distance and did not speak with the players about their skin. This experience for the athletes happened frequently and was continually recalled as uncomfortable. Relatedly, the teammates of the professional BFVPs felt comfortable making comments without concern for the impact they had on them. Kennedy Jones, for instance, discussed the frustration she had when her teammates talked about her darker skin as if it was something to something to cherish because of what other people would think about it, saying:

> One of my teammates, who I just freaking hate, she was the worst. She was like, "Oh yes, all the boys here are going to love you because you are mocha chocolate," or some weird crazy thing that only a white woman would come up with. It was like I was some sort of exotic commodity and that's why these white German men were going to like me, is because I'm mocha chocolate and I'm different and I'm this and that. It was so weird. I would just go, "Ha-ha," and walk away. I think those instances made me aware.

These types of situations made Kennedy Jones even more aware of not only her skin, but how different she was to her teammates and the residents of the country they were visiting. Goldie Carnousty had to deal with cringe worthy comments about her skin as well—comments that, though guised as jokes, were disrespectful, harmful, and made the professional BFVPs have to protect themselves. Sadly, these comments were not limited to coming from their teammates but would also come from the coaching staff. Harmful comments similarly reflected McClendon's (2021) experience in Poland, which she explained in her interview:

> [There was] an incident that occurred early in my professional volleyball career while I was in Poland that really stands out. I was one of two professional Black players on the team and the coach, whenever he had a request, would refer to us as "the chocolates." (para. 8)

The professional BFVPs in this study recalled dealing with similar comments on a consistent basis and had to decide which comments they responded to, and which comments they chose to not acknowledge. The time, place, and manner in which the athletes chose to respond to these racist comments significantly impacted their experiences.

How they reacted to the comments determined if the professional BFVPs became the stereotypical angry Black woman or the Black woman who knew how to take a joke. The participants adeptly described this thin line many professional BFAs must toe because they understand their contract may be at risk if they are too vocal about the comments. On the other hand, their mental health may be at risk if they allow such comments to persist. Goldie Carnousty discussed her experience with teammates who would make fun of her skin and made explicit that the longer they went uninterrupted, the more frequent and targeted the comments became. Goldie noted:

> My teammates would call me, "You're dark." I'm like, "What?" They're like, "You're dark." I don't know if that was funny. First of all, it's making me cringe. This is weird. They're just, "Oh, you're just so dark." I'm like, "I am not." The more I say it, the more I absolutely hate it. Just things like that. I'm like, "You guys think this is like a funny thing, or you guys think this is an okay thing to say?" Again, touching my hair. I just don't appreciate it. I had to sit them down. I'm like, "Don't say that to—" I told them straight up, I was like, "Translator, translate this." I was like, "You wouldn't want me just

> being like, 'Yellow. You're just so yellow. You know, yellow.'" Anyway, it was like a little stint for like 2 weeks. I just had to put a stop to it. At first, I was like, "Hahaha, very funny." Then it got to be like, "Dark, pass the ball." I'm like, "Woah, woah, woah. We're not going to do that. You're pushing it. Not in practice. Not ever, especially not in practice. Not in a place of work."

These comments served as a prime example of the space professional BFVPs sit in—the space where they understand how jokes can become harmful statements based on racial and stereotypical tropes. Participants also understood if they called out these jokes too much, they would become viewed as a problematic member of the team. The perception of being unable to take a joke may have resulted in their removal.

African Queen and Goldie Carnousty had to deal with racial comments when their teammates would go tanning, including comments such as, "Oh my, your skin is so dark, how?" then the comparison, "Oh I'm just as dark as you," or "Oh, I'm almost as dark as you." These comments were challenging and hurtful because their teammates ignored that African Queen and Goldie Carnousty were actually Black women, which gave way to greater damaging comments. African Queen and Goldie Carnousty had similar responses to these comments. African Queen would say, "No, you're not Black," and Goldie Carnousty would say, "Well I'm Black, so I can't change this, this is real. This is me." It was clear to participants that non-Black people reveled in pretending to be Black after tanning. Teammates enjoyed saying their skin was as dark as a Black person and thought it connected them to a Black person, but failed to realize these were problematic statements, especially because of the specific experiences BFVPs face due to their Blackness.

Occasionally, the professional BFVP was the first Black person their teammates or other people in the city had ever been around. Being the first—and many times, only—professional BFVP can make for uncomfortable situations, and participants noted that teammates often treated their Black teammates like an oddity. Goldie Carnousty explained what it felt like to be treated, as she described, as "a toy to a dog," noting:

> A lot of my teammates had either only seen Black people on TV or had never seen a Black person in real life, or never met a Black person and played with them, obviously, and it was just a very different experience for them, because they've never done this before. It's like when you introduce a toy to a dog. They're like, "What do I do with this? Why is it here? You're going to keep it here? Okay great. Now let me sniff around it and figure it out. Let me touch its hair." You know?

These situations become more difficult when comments are publicly made by fans because, as a professional volleyball player, there is a level of professionalism expected around fan interactions. Players are not allowed to react emotionally or in ways that could be perceived negatively by passersby. Goldie Carnousty recalled:

> Just having to just be so polite because you're in public and be like, "No, sorry, you can't take a picture with me. Don't." I remember one time someone thought I was Serena Williams. I want you to look at my face, Jen [the researcher]. Look at my face. Now pick your head up Jen, look at my face. Where? Where is Serena [Williams]? I was literally lighter than, than I am that right now, so I'm confused. They're like, "Serena [Williams]." I was like, "I'm here in the Volleyball Convention Center playing volleyball. I want you to just put two and two together, and it equals four."

Goldie Carnousty expressed frustration because this interaction reflected the assumption that all Black people look the same—these people confused her with Serena Williams, an athlete of a completely different size, skin color, and height.

Sharon also felt similar to Goldie Carnousty; that is, her Blackness stood out so much that she felt like she walked around as a "green person." She felt because kids around her had never seen someone Black, it was almost as if they saw an alien. Sharon noted:

> Literally, I remember getting off the bus, and the little kid's eyes were huge, people wanted to touch me. Some people were terrified because they just don't have Black people in this town. It's just not a thing that they have and so everybody was just like, "Hey, Sharon, are you okay?" I just remember my teammates being like, "Hey, are you fine?" I'm just like, "Well, I guess it's the idea. If you were walking down the street in America and somebody who's fully green walked by, you'd have a reaction." Moving in the world as if I'm also a green person, it's weird [laughed]. It's weird that I have to process that, or at least give myself that analogy so that my emotions don't get involved because I still have a job to do. It's weird that I have to process that, or at least give myself that analogy so that my emotions don't get involved because I still have a job to do. I have to do work in a town where not only is the culture not mine, not only is the language not mine. Also, who I am physically is such an anomaly and so, like, alien, literally alien, that I create a sensation, like it was definitely interesting. I don't know that beyond that massive shock to my femaleness that I even got to what layer of my femaleness would have played within that role.

Professional BFVPs had to put their feelings aside when thrust into these negative situations. If they showed strong feelings, the focus would likely not be on the harm done to them, but on the

reactions they exhibited. In the media, there have been examples of celebrities or athletes in the United States or Europe having seemingly adverse reactions to fans; they are subsequently fined by organizations, looked down upon by the public, thought to reflect the racial trope of an angry Black woman, or ultimately removed from the team. They are expected to not have those types of reactions (Antonish, 2019; Komonibo, 2021; McClendon, 2021).

The professional BFVPs I interviewed who played in Poland had very specific experiences with their skin color and racism. Slim had a distinct and negative interaction with the athletic trainers assigned to care for her due to her Blackness. Athletic trainers[36] are important fixtures in professional sports and tend to work with a wide variety of athletes at all levels. In this instance, when Slim was in Poland, one of her trainers had never worked with a Black athlete before. Slim explained:

> I was the first Black person she had ever saw. When I went to go get my ankles taped, she's touching me, like petting and caressing me. She's like, "You are so soft." Mind you, there's someone else there, so translating, and she tells one of my teammates, she was like, "You're the first Black person she's ever seen," and I was just like. . . That, that blew my mind. Then another one where I realized I was Black.

This comment was shocking to Slim because despite the many Black professional athletes in Poland and Europe more broadly, this athletic trainer had never interacted with a Black athlete. The homogeneous population in Poland was not only notable, but also caused harm.

Slim's experience in Poland seemed to focus considerably on her race. This heightened racial focus prevented her from settling in and living her life, a stark contrast to white athletes

---

[36] According to National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA, n.d.):

> Athletic trainers [ATs] are highly qualified, multi-skilled health care professionals who render service or treatment, under the direction of or in collaboration with a physician, in accordance with their education, training and the state's statutes, rules and regulations. (para. 2)

who do not endure these challenges. According to Scraton et al. (2005), "Skin colour appears as significant in defining players' difference, a difference that is created because White remains unmarked. For example, in this research, players do not shout 'I've got the White one'" (p. 83). Race affected the professional BFVPs in this study on and off the court. The BFVPs, unlike their white teammates, had to constantly worry about race in relation to their personal safety. Slim discussed another problematic experience in Poland when walking down the street as a Black woman, recalling:

> I knew I was Black, but other people realizing I was Black was, again, in Poland, I'm walking to the market, and I hear this little boy screaming "Africa." I was like, "I know he's not trying to get my attention," so I keep walking. He gets close and he's like, "Africa, Africa, Africa," and I'm like, "Okay, he's talking to me." I turned around, and he has a book and he's like, "Africa, Africa." He opens the book and it's a Black man hanging from a tree. He's like, "Africa," and he's pointing to the book and then he's pointing to me. I was like, the only thing that you can reference is a Black man hanging from being lynched to a Black person, so when he sees that and he sees me, he's like, "Oh, this is too one and the same." I know it's a little kid, so I know there's no malice intent to what he's doing, but at the same time it's just like, "Holy fuck." My mind is just blown and I'm like, "This is the only reference you have of a Black person, and you seeing me is just blowing your mind."

The pain was apparent in Slim's voice when talking about this experience. Being a Black woman in Europe meant it was necessary to keep a guard up, even for simple experiences such as going to the gym or running errands. These types of experiences would frequently appear difficult for non-Black individuals to fully understand the effect they had on the BFVPs. Citizens and fans

would make excuses for others when incidents happened, without understanding the effect it had on their sense of safety—especially for a Black woman thousands of miles from her home.

Mini also experienced questions about her skin color being dark; however, it did not have the same degree of impact, as she perceived these questions to come from natural curiosity. Sloane felt like people in some parts of Europe had not been "introduced to Western culture," and recalled:

> I was in France somewhere, like gypsy country. They don't have TV, they don't know like—I was in Romania, middle of nowhere, and people thought that I was burnt by the sun. There was more of a, they really didn't know where to categorize it because they had never seen or had any idea that people out there look like me. Again, it was more of a curiosity, not about, "Oh, this person is, argh." It's more like, "Wow, do you see this? I've never seen that before." People would come up and touch my skin. For some reason that didn't bother me because I knew that they were just truly curious. It was more like wonderment.

Because Sloane did not view their questions or invasions of personal space as a concern, she too was OK with comments about her skin or people touching her skin—like Mini, she perceived it as a curiosity. Mini's and Sloane's experiences reiterated the important point that professional BFVPs are not monolithic and can view similar experiences in different ways. There is no right or wrong definition—just the understanding of how important it is to create definitions from a wide variety of experiences and perspectives.

Hair was a common racial experience among the participants interviewed. Due to the unique texture and multitude of hairstyles Black women possess when compared with the hair of homogenous populations in Europe, hair became a central focus both within the participants'

teams and outside of them. CeCe discussed similar experiences to other professional BFVPs regarding her hair that she believed came from a good place but were still microaggressions. She noted, "Just some of the microaggressions that come commonly where it's like, 'Oh, can I touch your hair? What is that?' Questions kind of thing. Just different like, 'Oh, I love your skin.'" Diamond talked about the problems she had with her hair because she could have different hairstyles, stating:

> When I'm overseas, I'm usually rocking braids for the most part, and then I'll be natural for a month or 2 here and there. I have to explain to teammates like, "You cannot just come up and touch my hair. You need to ask me for permission. I won't do the same for you." Understanding the history of Black women and their hair and how it's not a sensitive subject, but it's definitely not a toy to be played with.

African Queen had to deal with the same issues as Diamond, because people would touch her hair without her consent. To establish a boundary and establish her safety and comfort, she had to educate people on why they were not allowed to touch her hair, in addition to the names of the different hairstyles Black women wear. African Queen stated:

> I stood out, obviously. I would say I got a lot of the "Oh my god, your hair, can I touch it?" I got a lot of those. The hair one drives me crazy. It drove me crazy. Everyone's like, "Oh my god, your dreads." They're not dreads. Not dreads. My hair's braided. They're called box braids if you ever, you know, just throw it out there. That was a big one for me.

Legz had a range of experiences regarding her hair compared to the other professional BFVPs. Legz said a "couple, few times, a girl loved my hair. They loved my hair. I would do little twists and stuff and they just loved it. It was funny." Although in those moments she was

not negatively impacted by these encounters, she also had negative situations with a person touching her hair without her consent, and recalled:

> I think the only negative experience I had with it was, we were at a tournament, and we were in the Canary Islands. I was standing next to my teammates and some random girl from another team ran up, petted my head, and then ran away. I was just like, "What on earth?" At that moment, my teammates were looking and they're like, "She's so weird. What on earth? What did she just do?" At the same time, it didn't click that that was like a race thing, but they're like, "Why is she petting your head?" You know, it's because they have never seen hair like that. I do think my teammates in Spain, they were very interested.

Participants described a lack of understanding that a Black woman's hair is a part of her body, and because of that, consent should always be asked for. Many times, non-Black people never consider asking for consent and demonstrate entitlement to touch a Black woman's hair whenever a person wants (Harmon, 2009; Hill Collins, 2000; Simien et al., 2019; Willis, 2015). Goldie Carnousty discussed the concerns she has had as a Black woman, saying:

> Being a Black woman overseas is right on top of my head. This is it, the having 4C[37] hair overseas is like, "Can I find products? Will my teammates want to touch my hair?" I have a short afro underneath this, not really short, but a short enough afro. When I first started playing overseas, I had just recently got a haircut. My hair is buzzed in the back, buzzed on the sides, the whole cute little shave to my head, the whole thing. First thing my teammates did, "Hi, I'm Goldie Carnousty, it's nice to meet you. I'll start practice

[37] According to Abraham (2021):

> 4C hair is a tightly coiled curl type in which the hair strands can be very fine to super coarse. . . . While type 4C natural hair can range and vary in terms of the tightness of the curl, coils are a major indicator that you have 4C hair. (para. 7)

> tomorrow." I'm just meeting everyone, introductions. No handshake, no bow, right to the head. Just, "Oh, your hair." I'm like, "I don't want to be your entertainment, that's what I don't want to be." I had to sit my teammates down, and I had to be like, "Listen guys, you cannot just come up to me, and touch my hair, that's not a thing that I appreciate. I don't think anyone really appreciates it." They were like, "It's just so different." I'm like, "I know it's different, but you can observe from afar, you can ask me questions about my hair." All those different things. To just come up behind me, or just sneak up on me and start touching my head because you think my hair looks different than yours is really not—that's not it fam, it's not it.

For Goldie Carnousty, it was uncomfortable that her teammates were more concerned with her hair than with meeting her as a teammate. These types of racial experiences were a consistent concern for the BFAs when going to Europe because they were unsure of how their hair would be perceived. Concerns about hair is also an added stressor many white women do not have to worry about, thereby enabling them to focus more on volleyball and less on their personal experiences.

During their interviews, the professional BFVPs who discussed hair discussed how important it was to obtain consent when people wanted to touch it. They desired a sense of autonomy in deciding whether or not someone touched their hair. The consistent need to educate people on why they could not touch their hair by explaining Black hair textures and types of styles was tiring, emotional labor. Black women often have to serve as educators to keep themselves safe, and it is exhausting; yet, if these women did not spend the time educating their teammates and coaches, they may have put themselves in positions where people felt entitled to touch them and their hair without their consent when it best suited their desires.

Social Struggles

Dating, prostitution, and unconsented picture taking were all interesting topics participants considered social struggles, as they were issues the participants had to consistently worry about when in Europe. Dating was an interesting topic because of the wide variety of experiences had by the participants. Some participants would never date in Europe due to how they were exoticized; as J. A. Lewis et al. (2016) similarly explained, Black women experience gendered racial "microaggressions based on the expectation of the Jezebel, which includes exoticization and/or sexualization by men" (p. 773). Other professional BFVPs, after dating in Europe, only date Europeans, and some found their husbands in Europe. This topic had many layers, but the racial component was central to their collective experiences. Professional volleyball is a very transient sport; rarely do athletes stay with the same club for over two seasons, and because of that, athletes constantly move (Butler, 2015). They either move teams or move back to the United States when the season is over. Another layer is the immigration aspect. Participants noted some teams do not sponsor visas, so some athletes may potentially play undocumented and get paid under the table. The migratory aspect of professional volleyball can make for potential issues if the professional BFVP dates a citizen of the country or another professional athlete.

Mini did not really date while in France or Thailand. Many times, professional volleyball players date other professional volleyball players if there is also a men's team or league in their area. Dating can be more difficult if there is no men's league, especially for professional BFVPs. Mini explained:

> We went out, but anytime we'd socialize, we would try to find other Americans. Towards the end of my 1st year, I met some other American volleyball players that were Black in Thailand, and so I hung out with them a couple of times, but nothing really romantically,

> no. We talked for a little bit, and I think we both realized that's not a thing. It's going to be a friendship that will crumble and send random text every once in a while, but that's about it.

It was difficult for professional BFVPs who wanted to date in the country they were in, but it was sometimes even more difficult for professional BFVPs in relationships with people still in the United States. This predicament meant players would not see their partners for months at a time. Diamond commented:

> Ghetto. I would not recommend, don't do it. I don't know. I have a different perspective. I was in a long-term relationship before I went overseas, before I started my pro career, sorry. I recently got out of that, and I think for anyone, it's difficult to be in a relationship and do what we do. It takes, in my opinion, a very special person to be able to put up with our lifestyle, because it's crazy. I'm living out of a suitcase essentially for 12 months out of a year. More so like 8 to 9 months out of a year overseas. It doesn't leave a lot of room for dating if you're single overseas, but then if you're in a relationship, it obviously complicates things. Then, add on COVID to that, I don't know if anyone is dating this past pro season. I can't imagine how you could have done that, but again, would not recommend.

Relationships with professional volleyball players from the United States who play in Europe is difficult because of the inability to see each other regularly. This challenge is made additionally tough if one's partner is in Europe due to the possibility of having to constantly move if released from a team. Sexual Chocolate's view was different because she held the idea of being looked at as different or exotic due to her Blackness in otherwise homogenous environments. She shared:

> You're definitely exotic over there. Switzerland, for sure. I talked to these two guys, one of them had dated a Black girl before, and one hadn't. After the one who hadn't, he was like, "Oh, this has been different," and stuff. I was like, "Okay, well, if I was just an experiment, why don't you just come and tell me that?" He's like, "No, no, like, I like you." I was like, "No, no, like, this is an experiment for you. I'm going to be upset, but I'm just going to move on." I had one guy who sent me a message. He was like, "I've never dated a Black girl before, I would love to try it." I'm not going to be your experiment. I was like, I don't understand what that means, but sure, no. You know. Yes, just stuff like that. They see you as exotic, which is nice to a tee, obviously but then they're like, "Oh, I want to try dating you."

This idea of Black women being different meant men did not pursue them for who they were; instead, participants felt similar to something they wanted to try out, which was hurtful and insensitive. Snickers had a similar experience to Sexual Chocolate, as she felt they were more interested in her being Black than who she was as a person. Uncomfortable situations where race was more of a factor than she as a person led her to just date people she connected with through a mutual friend. This way, someone she knew could vouch for why they wanted to date her. Sexual Chocolate noted:

> No, I can't say just in Spain, period, but overarching any—over all the countries that I was in, the dating thing, there was guys who are attracted to you because you're Black or they want you to be their experience. It's like, "What is it that you think I'm going to do?" That was not cool or fun. Me, personally, I always had to be careful because I'm just like, "I'm not going to be somebody's experience or whatever." Most of the countries that I was in, I dated someone of that, not race, but nationality. It was cool because it was

> generally somebody that either knew me or a friend of a player on my team. It didn't feel different from being here. I got to see more of an inner view of that country. Like where, places to go, what it was, life was really like this. As a foreigner, and you're an athlete, you get the day-to-day information but you don't get real information because you're still not in the inner circle. Like I said, I was always really careful about who I was talking to, who I was doing, whatever, because you just don't want to be somebody's experience. "Oh, I want to date a Black girl," or "Oh, I want to have sex with a Black girl," or whatever, I don't want to be that.

The recurring theme of worrying about being pursued as an oddity in the dating scene kept coming up as a worry that distanced BFVPs from dating; they did not want to have to worry about the reason someone dated them.

Conversely, Carmel Delight's experience was one where she will never date an American again. How she has been treated by European men made her realize what she was missing when dating U.S. men. She noted:

> [Laughed] Well, let's say dating's been interesting. He's right here. Let's put it like this. We don't date Americans anymore [laughed]. An executive decision has been made. There will be no more American men till I die [laughed]. One thing I don't mind saying out loud is, and I was talking to a couple of friends. I love talking about so many different types of things. We were just talking my friend, he was like, "You need to talk about dating while overseas as an athlete. The shit's hard."

Dating as a professional athlete when playing overseas was difficult due to all the layers mentioned and more. Half-Pint Hottie took a different approach; she was there for business, noting:

> I didn't date anybody. I just didn't feel comfortable dating anybody else while I was—my focus was playing and being the best volleyball player I can be. My contracts kept coming in, and I kept performing and being a good teammate. My focus wasn't to have a love life.

Although she dated two men while she played, one of the men was a blast. The other man turned out to be more trouble than she anticipated. She noted:

> I did not date anybody overseas. I take that back. I had one Italian boyfriend. He was half Italian and half Egyptian. I dated him. He was great. He was like a bouncer at all the clubs, so that was fun. He was cute to look at. When I was in Puerto Rico, I dated one of the soccer coaches. He was Peruvian. He had played a little bit of professional soccer, and then went down to Puerto Rico, and he was coaching. That turned out to be a disaster. He tried to take me for all my money. That's another story. I was like, "That's another doggone podcast, you want to talk about relationships."

All BFVPs had a different idea of what they wanted to get out of their experiences, professionally and personally. To some, dating overseas would get in the way of their contract and their work. For athletes like Half-Pint Hottie, she was focused only on performing well to get the next big contract.

CeCe only sought out entanglements or friends with benefits. She, like Half-Pint Hottie, understood how tough relationships were when playing professional volleyball. Her preference allowed for a more relaxed relationship with no commitment; rather, it was one in which they enjoyed each other's company without feeling obligated. CeCe stated:

> I never had boyfriends when I was overseas, but I did have some guys that I would hang out with and have unique relationships with. Mostly it was with the understanding of like,

> "Look, I'm going to be gone in 6 months, so we're not going to be dating or anything like that," which worked out. It was more of a friend-with-benefits type of situation. Yes, an entanglement. That was easier for everything, too, because it was like, "Look, I just want to meet people and friends, I'm not looking to be hooking up with a bunch of guys or something. I prefer to have a really great friend that I trust, someone I'm happy to spend time with, and then I can be seeing them." That was nice because I did find in each place that I was able to pursue someone if I wanted to.

Some participants wanted to have a very relaxed dating life, one where they would meet people, but not be exclusive. Some participants, such as Bianca and Crystal, met their husbands while playing professionally. Bianca met her husband in Italy, as he was initially her assistant coach. But prior to that relationship, she had a great time dating, and recalled:

> Actually, [dating] was pretty good because they're curious, that's how that is. I think every Italian wants to date a Black woman. That's how that was. It was like, you dress up and take you out and stuff like that. Because the first couple of years like, "Oh, I don't need a boyfriend. I don't want to do all that. I just want to play, have fun, and go out and stuff like that." I dated my 1st year in Rome, I probably dated five guys, nothing serious, I was just dating, and my team manager's like, "You can't date five guys." I'm like, "They're not my boyfriends. I'm just going out, having dinner." One day it was my birthday, and at the gym that we practice in, the florist arrived, had about six bouquets of flowers, about this big [gestured]. They were all for my birthday and I was like, "Oh my God." They're like, "Where are all these flowers coming from?" I'm like, "Admirers." After that, all these flowers after the game, everybody try to talk to you and everything, and take you out. Some of them were cool just to go hang out with. The curious part, and

> that was that, and they still are curious. Even though I'm married, they are still curious because you are Black, you're a Black girl.

Bianca still understood that, married or not, where she played there was curiosity toward Black women. As a Black woman, people were intrigued by how she acted or spoke.

Lastly, Crystal met her husband while she played, and she connected with him by friends able to help protect her. She noted:

> I was with my teammates who were very open, very good, very nice. I got to meet other people through that way instead of a straight-on, like, in-the-bar situation. We just met friends, so that's how I met my husband. That was different and I felt a little bit more protected because it was within the group, definitely going out later on.

Protection was important to her because she knew she could trust those around her. When on a team or in an area as the only Black female around, protection is very critical. Black women received a lot of attention, which Crystal explained as:

> At first, you're getting a lot of attention. That's for sure, and, or that you are being remembered. You're more spotted out, I felt like in some countries, so that's something you're aware of more so it's, you're not just blending and going in just like anybody else, now you're coming in and being oh, you drank the shop or something they're going to remember. Oh yes, that was the girl, or the Black girl that did that.

Depending on the person, dating was easier than in the United States or tougher. Each of the participants had their own dating stories or lack thereof. Each opinion was essential to providing the full picture of what it felt like for participants to date as a professional BFVP in Europe. Many, if not all participants mentioned the racial element they always had to consider, whether they focused on where they would physically meet people to date or questioned the motives or

perceptions of dating a professional BFVP. Dating in Europe proved tough, so protection was essential for them to feel comfortable. There was also an element from some participants of understanding the reason they were in Europe and attempting to keep their experiences more businesslike. The professional BFVPs did date, but it was more casual, with the understanding they would not be there for long. Due to the transient nature of professional volleyball in Europe, there was a high possibility they would have to change teams, and having a long-term relationship across countries was subsequently more difficult.

When the professional BFVPs were the only Black person in many environments where white people do not have to have the same awareness (e.g., walking around the city they live in, tourist locations, stores) they experienced numerous attempts by residents to take pictures with them. Sometimes, even if the professional BFVP players did not consent, pictures were still taken of them, causing them to feel stress and angst. Sharon explained professional BFVPs often do not know the intent of these pictures, which may differ from pictures the same residents want to take with white people:

> You express it when you saw those pictures being taken, we don't know the intent of the person, we don't. We make assumptions based on the experiences that we've had. In the experience that we've had is somebody taking a picture with the blonde, white girl is because they're going to go home and just be like, "Oh my God, she's so pretty, she looks like the Disney princess. Oh, we got a picture with her that's so cute." It wasn't like that at all. Our experience was that that photo would end up beside a monkey or like, "Oh, the fun groove girl, she was so this," or, "Look at how big her butt is." All of those things, so you end up being sexualized, you end up being degraded and dehumanized, is what our experience is for those. Being overseas and having my difference amplified in a

> way that I couldn't translate and I couldn't manage after having decades of experience in America, learning how to translate and manage those differences, it did feel threatening because that was my expectation. That was my history, is that if I couldn't translate my experience in a way that the majority could understand, things wouldn't go well.

The worry that the pictures would be used in a dehumanizing way made professional BFVPs nervous when people wanted to take pictures with them, especially when pictures were taken without their consent. Sasha had the same feelings as Sexual Chocolate; that is, people consistently reinforced the exoticization of Blackness by asking her to take pictures specifically because she was Black. She recalled:

> I think the second one would probably be Turkey and Thailand. I feel like they're used to foreigners, so it wasn't as big of a difference, but I got more people surprised to see me and wanting to take pictures with me in Thailand. I'll be walking and the kids would just want to take a picture with me because I'm Black. It's just different, but I didn't take it negatively. Some people do. I was just like, "Oh, okay. They don't know any better." I didn't really take it like that, but I definitely knew the reasoning behind it, though.

Safety was an added layer to this issue because of how close people were willing to get to take pictures. As professional athletes, particularly for those easily recognized, participants faced pressure of taking pictures with people whether they wanted to or not. Participants mentioned stories that have emerged from fans angry that professional athletes did not want to take pictures with them, leading to the professional BFVPs feeling potentially unsafe or unable to say no.

Prostitution[38] was the last racial experience, and the most surprising experience that came up consistently by participants. Europe has been a breeding ground for African women being

[38] In this study, the words prostitute and sex worker were used interchangeably.

human trafficked into sex work. Brabant (2016) found Nigerian woman fleeing for a better life across the Mediterranean were routinely forced into slavery, noting, "Eighty percent of all Nigerian women who survive the trip to Italy end up coerced into prostitution by 'Madams,' who are often former sex slaves themselves" (para. 1). Because of this influx of Nigerian and other African women forced into sex work, there is a strong assumption throughout European countries that all women with dark skin are sex workers. This assumption, then, creates uncomfortable and potentially dangerous situations for professional BFVPs who are automatically thought to be sex workers.

Snickers was even warned by her then-boyfriend about being considered a sex worker because she was Black, and he stereotyped all Black women who arrived in Spain from Africa as sex workers. This harmful statement, she realized, reflected the assumption that all Black women were engaged in sex work. She noted:

> When I was in Spain, I was dating a Spanish guy who was like, "You got to be careful, because the Black woman from Africa come here, and they become prostitutes." The way he said it was like, all of them, every Black person that ever comes from Africa, which is not true, because I saw them on the streets. They were working regular jobs like anybody else.

This assumption came to fruition when Snickers was in Spain and her potential safety was put in jeopardy. A stranger followed her to her apartment floor because he assumed she was a sex worker. Snickers recounted:

> I was going back to my apartment from practice, and I was walking by myself, and I think I had my headphones in that day. Out of the corner of my eye, I see this guy. Because you have to open the gate, you have to open the apartment complex with the key

> because it's gated to the outside, and then you have to open the door to get into the apartment complex with a key as well. I didn't think anything about it. This guy is walking in behind me, so I get an elevator, I push my floor, and I'm looking at him, thinking he's going to push his floor, and he's just looking at me, and I'm like—I go all the way up to my floor, and I'm getting off, and I just happened to turn around to look at him, and he's like [gestured] and I was like—I got closed the door. I went to my apartment. That's what my ex was talking about. Like, that's how they did it. The guy sees you on the street, thinks you're a prostitute, he will follow you to wherever you're going, and there you go.

This predicament quickly became a safety issue for Snickers, as she had walked alone and had no means to protect herself if something dangerous had occurred. Prostitution was a topic many of the professional BFVPs were not warned about—so when incidents like Snickers's occurred, it made them feel uncomfortable and unsafe. Goldie Carnousty explained a moment when she and her mom unknowingly were thought to be sex workers when dressed up in a location where a lot of sex workers congregated, sharing:

> When I was in Italy. Where I specifically lived, African women came, and a lot were women of the night. If you will. I will never forget this. My mum and I go out, and we're wearing these cute black outfits, put on red lipstick. We're feeling ourselves. We're going shopping. We're like, "We're going to be like the locals today," and men are waving money to us while we're sitting and eating our lunch in the park. We're like, "What are you doing? What's going on?" We look to our left or our right or something, and there's like, darker skinned women, African women who were wearing very close and very similar outfits to what we're wearing. Who are indeed women of the night. My mum and

> I were like, "Oh my gosh, we're sending the wrong message. Oh my gosh, this is so embarrassing. What are we doing?" In that instant, Blackness was, our Blackness was all coupled together. We were wearing very similar things. We didn't really look the same, but it didn't really matter, they were going to give us money regardless. Someone's like, "Shoot, you should've just taken it and left," but a whole other thing.

Professional BFVPs had to consider so many additional circumstances when playing in Europe, and one of them was the potential they would be considered a sex worker. This issue was something the participants had not ever considered as a possibility; however, because of the dangerous incidents that occurred, it became an issue that made them more intentional about what they wore, where they went, or who entered buildings after them.

Difference

As professional BFVPs playing in homogeneous areas of Europe, there were consistent feelings of difference. This sense of difference was unique compared to when the professional BFVPs lived in homogeneous spaces in the United States. Sharon explained how the intersection of language and Blackness created very uncomfortable feelings, saying:

> Just the idea of language because your language as a Black person is absolutely different depending on the environment that you're in and going overseas, where now there's levels of, it's the actual language, and not being able to translate my differences in a way that the majority around me could understand felt threatening, and I felt vulnerable. Being overseas and having my difference amplified in a way that I couldn't translate, and I couldn't manage after having decades of experience in America, learning how to translate and manage those differences, it did feel threatening because that was my expectation. That was my history, is that if I couldn't translate my experience in a way

> that the majority could understand, things wouldn't go well. When we get in those situations, our instincts are that the stakes are higher, this might not go well. Being overseas and not being able to translate does create a little anxiety, a little anxiousness [chuckled]. That is another one of the things you're managing when you're trying to do your job, which is play volleyball [chuckled].

The intersection of place, space, and race was very apparent in the reasons Sharon felt vulnerable and worried about her safety. Her ability to perform as a professional BFVP was negatively influenced, as she had to worry about her safety, both physically and emotionally. The same feelings of concern with safety were affirmed by RevolutionaryBitch, who noted she had to remain on high alert because she was unsure what would happen in situations where she was the only Black person in the area or on the team and did not know how she would be treated. She stated:

> I'll speak for myself. I am aware of when I am the only person of color in the space because sometimes that does mean my safety, because I had my safety be threatened in those situations before. I carry that with me no matter where I go. I'm not on high alert. I'm not paranoid but it is a little bit of like, "Hey, you're surrounded by white folks. Let's just be aware of your surroundings." I don't know if I would say I have felt threatened, but it's just that awareness is there, whereas I didn't feel, I don't remember feeling that way in Puerto Rico.

Participants cited feelings of discomfort as one of the most difficult things to explain to someone who is not Black nor a professional female athlete. Others who do not have these unique pressures do not view nor consider space in the same way, and too often they assume professional BFVPs make issues out of something that is not actually an issue. Remaining on

alert has become part of a normal experience for professional BFVPs in homogenous areas, because they understood they could be physically or verbally attacked by someone for being Black at any time.

Mini added to that feeling of being different and needing to protect herself when she discussed her height and Blackness as something that has made her standout. These traits were not only notable when playing in countries that had an average height shorter than her, but also when trying to move safely without harassment. She was the only Black person near her, no matter if she was in the gym, the mall, restaurants, etc., and it was a constant reminder of being different. Mini described:

> The Blackness and the height. I always feel like it goes back to that Jolly Green Giant Ogre syndrome. I just feel like I'm always this anomaly walking amongst crowds that don't look like me. I think because of my Blackness—because I had a girl, a white Canadian on my French team, but I feel like because she was white, she is some way a lot more English. She's 6'5" versus me who's 6'1" and Black. The Blackness, I definitely felt I stood out, because there weren't hardly any Black people in either of the countries I played in, so constantly only one in the room, constantly only one in the mall, constantly only one in the gym. It'd be very rare to see another dark face, Black face in the crowds at all. I don't even know if I saw a Black person in any of our stadiums in Thailand. Yes, very hard-pressed. Again, having grown up my whole life navigating the only-one-in-the-room syndrome, it was to be expected. There was one other girl on my team who was Asian. She was American, but she had Hawaiian in her, so she looked a little bit ethnically diverse. Like you said, it's always just that uncomfortable feeling, but it's that uncomfortable feeling that never goes away, but it stays comfortably uncomfortable, if

> that makes sense. It was always just that. It's like, "Okay, we're walking into a new gym. Okay, we're going into a new city. I just know I'm going to be the only Black person."

Sloane elaborated on this discomfort and difference. For Sloane, difference was something she always had to deal with and was something she could not escape. Sloane talked about difference as something that affected her every day, so much so that it became very normalized, saying:

> That's every day. This is why I'm thinking it's hard to answer that question, because I think that you become numb, just self-preservation, because you're always being stared at. Because you don't look like someone else. Were there awareness of it? Yes. I mean, but I feel like there's a same awareness as in any country. I didn't feel like it felt different from being in Europe than it is from being in the United States. The only difference that I had is the way that they thought. I know that how I felt the racism that was rooted in America, a lot of it had to do with slavery. Things we talk about, it's constantly being inundated with us. In Europe, it was more that you just look differently than me. Then me being a Black female, again, it goes back to the "I want to try you because I've never had you."

Snickers had the experience of playing in a small town; she would watch people almost get into car accidents because they were so unused to seeing Black people. She recalled:

> We were in a little town, and there were no Black people except for me and the other Black girl on the team and the Brazilian who was also, her ethnicity was obviously Afro because of what happened in Brazil, so me and a teammate. Her and I were walking down the street one day, and these guys were in a car, and they almost got into a car accident looking at us because they had not seen Black people.

Although the staring Sexual Chocolate had to tolerate did not almost cause car crashes, it was unnerving and made her feel different. This experience was distinct when encountering people in Germany, noting, "There's a lot of kids that stare a lot more than adults do. They all stare, and they'll talk and I'm like, "Yes, that's what's happening right now, cool, nice. Keep moving." Understanding they would get stared at as a BFA in Europe helped participants refrain from reacting when they started to see and feel themselves as the center of attention due to their Blackness. Half-Pint Hottie explained they should be prepared as a professional BFVP, saying:

> Be prepared to be stared at a lot. I wish somebody said that because I'm oblivious to some stuff. I didn't really know how to be immersed in. . . . Being on the national team and traveling is a lot different than being somewhere by yourself without any teammates. I wish I would have had a little bit of heads up of like, "You're going to be stared at. You need to pay attention a lot more than you would normally would if you're walking down the street."

Participants noted the staring that occurs within the United States is very different than in Europe. Due to the lack of Blackness in Europe, stares may feel different and potentially more unsafe. Mini explained:

> Other people feel differently. I used to get bothered by the stares. I got stared at a lot in Asia more so than France, but Asia and a lot of the countries we would travel to, like Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Belgium, even, there's times where it's going to bother you where you get that, "I'm a Jolly Green Giant or an ogre walking around in this foreign land." It'd just be a little mentally tough to not have that just completely derail you. There were definitely times where that was wearing on my patience heavily.

Staring made professional BFVPs uncomfortable and unsafe. The participants explained both how they felt about the staring and the ways they managed it. Some of them learned to live with the staring, because they knew it was a result of the homogenous area they were in and a reality they had to manage despite the discomfort and uneasy feelings it created.

Agents

The discussion on agents was a passionate one with the participants. Agents have a large effect on an athlete's experience, the teams they play on, the structure of their contracts, or the amount paid (Culf, 2006; European Commission, 2009; Kroichick, 2001). Cece explained how important it is to ask questions and vet agents. She said it is important to ask about "what agents to work for and which ones not to, which ones to avoid. What questions to ask."

Participants also noted it is critical to understand (a) who has their best interests in mind, (b) who will talk about topics on identity that are important to professional BFVPs, and (c) who understands the teams those certain agents push players toward. Only one participant mentioned an agent talking about race issues and how important that was to her. Other participants talked about their positive and negative experiences with agents and how they truly affected their experience. The extent to which they were treated determined if they stayed with the agent. Negative experiences with agents caused them to not only leave the club they played for, but also fly back to the United States because the agent did not give them needed assistance. This lack of assistance included a variety of issues, such as living conditions, unfulfilled payment, lack of communication, or no knowledge of transportation to the playing and practice facility.

Participants found their agents in a multitude of ways, whether through personal research, suggestions by coaches, advice by former teammates and alumni, contacts by the agents themselves, or just by reaching out to the agents themselves. Agents are the primary means by

which athletes find teams, get and or renegotiate contracts, or move up to higher level teams and leagues. There are a few agencies that work with professional volleyball players, both male and female, and there are a few individual agents who are not part of agencies but have a good reputation, especially if they have played in the countries the athletes were headed to play (European Commission, 2009; M. Hill, 2021; Kroichick, 2001; Pro Sports Group, n.d.).

When asked how the participants found their agents, they described various methods. African Queen went with Run, Hop, Skip Agency [pseudonym], one main agency in the sport; they are the most well-known agency for U.S. volleyball players who want to play professionally. African Queen went with Run, Hop, Skip Agency because her college coach had a prior relationship with the agency, and they had a reputable reputation due to the tours in Europe they run. Mini also went with the Run, Hop, Skip Agency, because they were the first to contact her. Though Mini explained, "I didn't really do my research, but I think a lot of other players in the States, kind of that mid-tier [worked with Run, Hop, Skip Agency]." Mini did admit, however, that this agency had a reputation for reaching out to volleyball players if they were thought to be decent enough, and they would, as she noted:

> Try to place people wherever they can get a check [chuckled], so a lot of their players go to Puerto Rico, they go to France, they go to Spain. Not the best leagues, but they can still make money and they can sell it as exciting.

The Run, Hop, Skip Agency and their reputation came up again with Snickers, who went with Herbert [pseudonym] another main agent; yet, Snickers felt it seemed that Herbert was not working for her, but for the team. She commented, "He wasn't working for you, the athlete. He was just placing you wherever, no matter your skill." There were other negative comments from

participants about the Run, Hop, Skip Agency, such as Sloane's comments about her negative experience, which she noted was:

> Terrible, [Run, Hop, Skip Agency] was garbage, awful, awful. He double dipped, he's taking it from them, he's taking it from me. I ran into an issue; he didn't help me with it. He just got me out of the team. I think that their money was tied into doing tours and that's all that they really cared about. I feel like he's always about business. His mind is always business related. Part of it, and I hate saying this, it's also at their defense or maybe their limitations, I don't know what's worse.

Sasha also had a negative experience; it was not as bad as Sloane, but was an experience where she did not feel her type of skill was considered valuable. She felt this issue was especially concerning with her accomplishments coming out of college—not only with her statistics, but also with her awards. She noted:

> What I realized is Europe is pretty traditional and they want middles to fit in their box and I didn't really fit in that box. I also think that my agent could have sold me better. I ended up going to a club where they didn't pay me, but they were in the championship, but the team was very young. I think it was their 1st year there. I remember seeing a middle and thinking, "Why am I in Hungary if she's in France?" I was like, "I'm taller than her. I'm better than her, what the heck." I was so upset. That's why I started reaching out to find different agents. What I started to realize is the opportunity comes from your agent and how your agent values you. I stuck around with him for one more season and I ended up in Peru, and I was getting paid pennies as well.

Agents are the people who mainly broker deals with the clubs, and these deals often depend on how invested the agent is in the athlete. This investment can make or break details of the

athlete's contract, how much they are paid, what benefits are given, and what future opportunities are available (European Commission, 2009; M. Hill, 2021; Kroichick, 2001; Pro Sports Group, n.d.).

Lastly, Crystal had a good experience with the Run, Hop, Skip Agency, even though they were relatively new when she signed with them. She mentioned it was a straightforward process and when she signed, they told her she would be on a team, get paid for playing, and get basically everything for free, which was the payoff to signing with them. Crystal noted, "I got my house and everything else [for free], and then got some money for it every month when I played. It was pretty straightforward." The experiences each athlete had with agents or individual agencies were unique, which is why it is imperative for athletes to ask the right questions and understand that their skill levels, accomplishments, and future opportunities can affect the teams interested in them.

If agents do not work to understand the aforementioned factors (i.e., who the athletes are and what they fundamentally want out of their professional experiences), it may be time for the professional BFVPs to look for another agent. This notion is especially true if the agent places the athlete in a location that does not conform to their wishes. Snickers explained that she "wanted to be placed in places where I was going to have a good life, and that my skill was going to match where I was at." She then found her next career agent, Welch Johnson, through introductions by a friend.

One difficulty, however, was the agent's (i.e., Welch Johnson's) use of the angry Black woman trope (Hill Collins, 2000). There is a history of this trope's use against Black women, regardless of athletic status, when they complain or express frustration (Carter-Francique &

Richardson, 2016; Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 2005; Massao, 2016). Snickers explained her frustration with that trope:

> Because there were just times where I was upset about things and my [Black female] teammate was with him as well. We're strong personalities. If we don't like something we're going to tell you, especially if you're the person close to us. I think sometimes he would get upset with us because he's just like, "Angry Black women."

An agent used this trope against her when he told her that "nobody wanted to work with her because she was difficult," something Snickers still carries with her to this day.

Many other participants used agents or agencies other than the Run, Hop, Skip Agency. Sexual Chocolate found her agent through her former college coach:

> [Who] played in France for I think, a year or so, and he was my agent. I'm not really sure. I know three current, maybe one former, and we're all Black and we're on top which is cool. Yes, I think he's got a healthy mix of everyone.

Kennedy Jones's method of finding an agent was similar to Sexual Chocolate's, as her friend also used him and made the connection. The agent was a Black male, which Kennedy Jones appreciated, as she was able to have conversations with him about racial injustice and protests occurring around the world. This conversation would not have likely happened with a white agent in the same way. Kennedy Jones noted her agent stated at one point:

> Yes, I know, I understand why it's hard for you to think about volleyball, or you don't want to take the time to think about volleyball or. . .. We've talked about it as a club, with all the signed players and agents.

It is important that agents have conversations with athletes about worldly factors that can affect their playing experience, such as race, sexuality, or gender identity; their emotional,

psychological, and physical safety is just as important as helping them secure the right team or league to play.

Carmel Delight explained why she decided not to go with the most well-known agency, Run, Hop, Skip Agency, but with Fire Bumpers Agency and the owner, Bob, which was smaller but still retained high-level athletes. Carmel Delight said:

> [Bob] didn't have so many players at the time, but I sent him a book-long of a message and was like, "Listen." I saw that he had a couple of players that were playing in Azerbaijan and Italy, stuff like that. At that time, I knew that he's got some pretty high-level players. I was just like, "Give me a shot. I know that I've got a lot to work on. I've never played in the [Division I NCAA Volleyball] Tournament. I'm not an All-American or anything, but I want to play and I'm willing to work." It stuck. I've been with him for—sounds like I'm in a relationship—for 7 years. It's true. It was him who took a chance on me, and he was just like, "You remind me a lot of myself, a young female version of myself." He saw how driven I was, and he saw how much I was willing to just leave it all up to him. All I needed to do was do the work. He put me in Denmark, and then he was in contact with a couple of people, a couple of Black women that he knew, with one being one of my mentors now. Just over the years, I've grown my network while I was overseas. Bob's put me in contact with some Black women, some non-Black women, just women that could show me the ropes or give me some guidance into this life of being a pro. How to improve my professionalism, improve my game, how to be prepared for the next season and stuff like that. Even diving into the psychological game.

Respect and trust with their agent enabled Carmel Delight to focus on their game and enjoy their experience. Carmel Delight did not have to worry about being taken advantage of by their agent or the club, and they knew their best interest was the focus.

Using all resources available to an athlete is important—especially now, when information and people are accessible—because they can hear a variety of perspectives. Goldie Carnousty and Kennedy Jones understood the importance of research, which is why they talked to former teammates who played professionally and alumni to gain insight on their experiences with professional play and agents. Goldie Carnousty direct-messaged people on Instagram and Twitter. She wanted to research what professional volleyball entailed before she decided to pursue it. Conducting research and reaching out to alumni helped her a lot; as she noted:

> They mentored me into making this decision and helped me figure out what it all entails. I really am appreciative of it, because I think I would have gone in like a chicken with their head cut off if I hadn't asked all these questions and gotten this information, solicited or otherwise. My agent is Italian, and the clients he represents are Italian, Turkish, Japanese, American, German, I want to say, and I think there's a few others. He runs a very well-organized agency, and he has agents who work underneath him, and with different countries.

Diamond also researched her agents. She had only had one agent, who is Italian. Because of the school she attended, she interviewed numerous agents while at the Division I Volleyball Final Four tournament. As she recalled:

> [I] cross checked with the girls that he also represents, and they had nothing but good things to say about him. I had a couple conversations with him back and forth, and it felt like the recruiting process all over again, honestly, talking to agents, which is stressful. It

> just felt right, and I trusted what he had to say, and I've stuck with him. He is, to me, a great agent because he truly cares about us as people. That's something that I had to be careful of, knowing which agent was just there too obviously for the money. Which agent actually wanted to see a career develop and also care about me as a person and know what I would and wouldn't put up with on the teams.

Other participants did not share the most positive experiences, especially those who had retired. Half-Pint Hottie explained when she played, it was extremely difficult to find an agent who she could trust:

> We didn't really have someone sitting us down and saying, "Okay, so here's the agents that you need, that are going to do you right because there's a lot of creepy, crappy people out there who just want to take your money or won't work for you, or will give you the crappiest overseas contracts then tell you that's all you can get." Because I had friends who [had agents like that]. I was blessed to have good ones [agents].

Good agents helped Half-Pint Hottie have a long career, during which she knew she was going where they would take care of her and pay her what she was worth.

Bianca's experience was not unique, as it also happened to many other professional BFVPs or professional volleyball players in general. Professional volleyball players would fly to different countries to play with no protection, zero communication from the organization, or a complete lack of knowledge about the location or organization. Bianca noted:

> Actually, what happened was I got in contact with [a BFVP] who was already over here, and she was like, "Well, just get that agent [Smoke and Ashes]," but that didn't work. What happened was, this agent that I had, he just said, "Okay, I'm in contact with—" I don't know, an Italian agent. He said, "I'll fly you out for a trial?" It was bad. It was all

> bad. I was in this apartment, abandoned. There was nobody there. Girl, it was crazy. I was like, "What is going on?" I didn't speak the language, didn't have anything to eat. It was just bad. Then, a couple of days later, somebody knocks on the door, they're like, "Oh, we're having a practice, do you want to come practice?" I was pissed off and I was like, "I don't know what's going on." I ended up getting back on the plane, coming home. I met a girl, I met an Italian girl who spoke a little bit of English and I said, "I'm trying to get back over to Italy, but I don't want to come there. I just want to send a cassette." I sent a tape with one of my best games, obviously, and I ended up booking a year in Rome. They paid my flight out and everything. I had $300, I just left. My mom was like, "You're crazy." I'm like, "It don't matter." I'll make it work. I left. $300. I got on the plane, and here I am. That's how that happened. Just wanted to see the world and have a different experience.

Although Bianca played in a different era and was in her 50s at the time of this study, it is important younger BFVPs understand what happened to their predecessors and how this same experience can happen to them. Although there are resources on the internet available to research teams, there are still many teams for which other athletes have not yet played. Some teams may quickly spring up, and there may be no information on them these players could review.

Kennedy Jones's discussion with her Black agent was the only conversation mentioned about race in relation to Kennedy as a person and how racial unrest could affect her. Participants recalled having a noticeable lack of racial conversations with their agents. Agents were mainly racially white, but ethnically Greek, Japanese, or Turkish. Because many of the countries the BFVPs played in considered themselves colorblind or immune to racial issues, agents were often hesitant or unequipped to engage in conversations or consider these issues; instead, emphasis

was placed on agents sending their athletes to locations regarded as "safe." As such, Agents can directly influence athletes, and amid racial unrest worldwide (Kirby, 2020; Westerman, 2020), there needs to be conversations around race and safety to ensure athletes are not sent to spaces that could be potentially dangerous for them.

Thematic Discussion Summary

In summary, the following emergent themes emerged from the interviews: Racial Obstacles, Appearance, Social Struggles, Difference, and Agents. BFVPs who play in Europe must consistently live and work under conditions that can be mentally or physically harmful to them. The places many participants played in were very racially homogenous; because of that lack of diversity, there was an infatuation with Black skin. This infatuation made it very uncomfortable for BFAs, as their skin was consistently touched or talked about. Each participant used their definition of racism to better understand the experiences that affected them racially, including: (a) treatment by others when they went to the store or doctor, (b) overt comments by teammates, (c) being spit on by fans or kids, or (d) being called names. Their definitions gave them a lens from which they worked to understand the experiences they had and discuss the value in responding the way they wanted or responding in ways that allowed them to simply keep their jobs.

The aforementioned findings, along with the theoretical frameworks of Black feminist thought, Black geographies, and theory of racial space, informed the creation of a new and innovative conceptual framework: critical Black feminist sports geographies. I crafted this framework to solely center the experiences of BFAs through a geographical lens. I conceptualized, developed, and implemented a conceptual framework that assisted in understanding how to "contemplate, plan, implement and conclude my research project"

(Kivunja, 2018, p. 47), to elevate and, more importantly, center the racial experiences of professional BFVPs in Europe through a geographical lens. This framework also "provided an opportunity for a focus on affirmative Black identities and affirmative Black Geographies that celebrate Black life even as Black communities resist a racist society" (Allen et al., 2019, p. 1004).

Summary

BFAs have to consistently remain hyperaware of their surroundings at all times, and participants in this study discussed the intersection of being Black and women more than they solely discussed being women. Participants made explicit that their skin made them stand out more than any other social identity they possessed. The BFVPs had to worry about the stereotypes people thought about them and chose to act upon. The professional athletes who moved to Europe had to worry about microaggressions from their teammates, from residents of the communities they lived in, and from their coaches who held positions of power over the players. The microaggressions participants cited most included the obsession by people in Europe with their hair. Teammates, fans, and passersby wanted to consistently touch their hair, discuss it, or mock it. This obsession with the BFVPs' hair led many to have their hair touched or exoticized without their consent. This experience was one of many ways BFVPs had to consistently worry about how fast they lost their bodily autonomy and the ability to tell people no.

The BFVPs in this study also provided an interesting dichotomy with their anecdotes of dating in Europe. Some participants hated dating while abroad and would not recommend dating this way because they were overly sexualized, thought of as exotic, and had experienced people wanting to date them just because they were Black. Others said they would never date a U.S. man after dating European men, and a few met their husbands. Just as they were thought to be

exotic or oversexualized, participants also recalled being mistaken as prostitutes simply for being Black women. Because of the large number of African women who are sex workers in Europe, many passersby or locals assumed the BFVPs were also sex workers, no matter what they wore or where they traveled. This assumption caused a safety issue when a man followed one BFVP into her apartment hallway because he thought her to be a sex worker. The variety of stories showed the range of experiences that can occur for a BFVP in Europe.

BFVPs seem to be a rarity in parts of Europe—because of that uniqueness, people wanted to take pictures with them, regardless of if they had the consent of the BFVPs. Being photographed caused many BFVPs to worry because they were not sure what would be done with the pictures and if they would be used in a negative or harmful manner. The use of these pictures in a negative way spoke to the differences the BFVPs described feeling when in these different countries. Their size and skin color made such differences feel more apparent when compared to white female athletes. There was rarely a time they did not feel different and, as a result, hyperaware of their safety within these spaces.

Finally, participants cited agents as a significant factor in their racialized experiences, because the agents were the ones who placed them on teams in these countries. Some BFVPs had great experiences with their agents, and others felt as if their agents did not work for them but instead worked for other people or teams. Agents play the largest role in figuring out where an athlete plays and gets a contract. If agents do not pay attention to the identity of the athlete, those athletes may be placed in harmful spaces.

These aforementioned factors all served as layers affecting the racial experiences of professional BFVPs in Europe and were reflective of experiences many BFVPs consistently have lived in one capacity. Not all 18 participants had the same experiences, but many participants

had numerous racial experiences that reflected the same themes. Lastly, I illuminated how concepts of the aforementioned theories were disaggregated to assist in developing my conceptual framework discussed in chapter five, critical Black feminist sports geographies. I created this conceptual framework to center the racial experiences of BFVPs. As explained by Webster and Mertova (2007), "[S]tories are constantly being restructured in the light of new events and because stories do not exist in a vacuum but are shaped by lifelong personal and community narratives" (p. 2).

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

> That was important to me, to be a positive role model for the little girls in my family, and then eventually be able to come back home to some of the young girls in my community and just say, "Look what I've done. You can do it too if you want."
>
> —Carmel Delight*, Participant*

This dissertation was developed to study the racial experiences of current and former professional Black female volleyball players (BFVPs) overseas and to uplift the voices of those who have been historically silenced, disenfranchised, or just plainly ignored within the geography discipline. The study served as a mirror of what Carmel Delight wanted to show young girls within her community. I wanted to show other Black women that not only can they earn a PhD, but they can write their dissertation in the way they want, even if the methods are thought by some as unorthodox. Research around geography, gender, sport, and race remains limited; relatedly, there is a dearth of studies on place and space in relation to Black female athletes (BFAs) because many experiences have been assumed to be universal among Black female, Black male, and white female athletes. This universalism has created a false narrative around what BFAs experience while playing professionally in Europe. The goal of the study was to gain a better understanding through the theoretical frameworks of Black feminist thought, Black geographies, and theory of racial space, which all contributed to the development of the critical Black feminist sports geographies conceptual framework. I sought to understand the racial experiences of professional BFVPs in Europe. Grounding the interviews and participants' responses within those frameworks allowed for their experiences to be centered and away from the margins, compared to with other research studies that were heavily centered on white experiences.

The goal of the study was to gain a better understanding through the theoretical frameworks of Black feminist thought, Black geographies, and theory of racial space, which all contributed to the development of the critical Black feminist sports geographies conceptual framework. I sought to understand the racial experiences of professional BFVPs in Europe. Grounding the interviews and participants' responses within those frameworks allowed for their experiences to be centered and away from the margins, compared to with other research studies that heavily centered on white experiences.

Sport is a microcosm of society; because of that lens, it makes sense that the experiences of Black women have been the least frequently researched—they are the experiences researchers have historically been least interested in pursuing. Even though there are many sports that are dominated by Black men or women, most coaches, support staff, or administration remain white. Those conducting the research and publishing remain predominantly white. Research is often dependent on previous research and datasets, which may add another layer of silencing, as those with long histories of publishing tend to be the loudest voices.

This dissertation only focused on exploring the voices and experiences of professional BFVPs and what affects their racial identity had on their playing careers in Europe. Voices of those on the margins tend to remain unheard, or else are silenced or invalidated. This dissertation served to highlight those whose voices have not been documented sufficiently in empirical research and have only been able to persist orally. These voices deserve a platform that is solely theirs. This dissertation provided such a platform by using the lenses of Black feminist thought, Black geographies, and theory of racial space, and lastly, after the findings have been revealed an explanation of the conceptual framework, critical Black feminist sports geographies, developed to situate the experiences of BFAs in a framing that solely focuses on them as well as uplifts and

validates their experiences. Within the last 10 years, more Black academics have researched Black women within sports and set the foundation for young Black researchers like me. I hope my dissertation contributes to such progress for those who come after me and want their voices to be heard, valued, and respected.

Theoretical Frameworks

There are a variety of ways in which race and racism are contextualized within theoretical frameworks, as there are some researchers who consider that as a result of the complexity and diversity of racisms and their often-contradictory character. We can conclude that racism is not a monolithic phenomenon, but rather is multifaceted and situated over time (Back et al., 2001). The frameworks used in this study assisted in developing a language to uplift the voices of study participants. It was critical that the intersection of being Black and female was discussed by Black women who had been subject to forms of sexism and racism specific to their intersecting identities as Black and female (May 2015). Merging these unrelated theoretical frameworks assisted in developing a place where the issues and experiences of oppression faced by Black women were understood and nurtured. The intersection of marginalized identities for the Black women meant they have had to deal with race and racism at all times through their daily lives, whether through work, hobbies, traveling, parenting, or any other minor or major interactions they have had with others (A. R. Carter & Hawkins, 2011).

Black Feminist Thought

Because there are no existing frameworks developed for women in general, let alone Black female athletes, I prioritized using a theoretical framework that focused on Black females. Black feminist thought was used to challenge how place and space have been viewed in traditional geography studies and to challenge those structures in terms of BFVPs' right to exist in

structures intended for them, yet actually exclusionary in their existence (Hill Collins, 2000). Other controlling images were the main theme that emerged from the findings (Hill Collins, 2000). In most cases, the information that the participants provided highlighted the aforementioned theme, as BFVPs shared many similar experiences in different parts of Europe involving stereotypes and images.

Participants experienced this theme in a variety of ways. Lewis et al. (2016) elaborated on controlling images, which they defined as “how Black women are marginalized and objectified by societal stereotypes and controlling images based on racist and sexist perceptions of womanhood” (p. 761). Black female athletes were expected to partake in these stereotyped behaviors in a consistent manner, such as dancing a certain way, showing off the latest dance moves, talking a lot, or having an angry attitude. This finding was evidenced by responses such as:

- Once I got going with my team in Spain, and you were in more Metropolitan areas where maybe I wasn't such a sensation, it was still, the idea of the Black person being the life of the party, the best dancer. Their conceptualization of me as a Black person was that I fit that role and I didn't. I absolutely didn't, because when I'm getting the lay of the land, I am very much to myself, I'm more observational, I'm very much like, "This what I'm willing to do. I'm not willing to go outside of it. I'm not necessarily here to entertain you.". (Sharon)

- I could sense the disappointment that I was a volleyball player and not a volleyball player. Their chance to have a Black American, be a Black American in front of them so that they could go tell those stories later. (Sharon)

These experiences made life for the BFVP a little harder because they were not able to move with freedom as their teammates could. This meant they could not dance, move, sing, or enjoy themselves because they were worried about who was watching them and whether they were being mocked.

Black women are continually criticized for their appearance and how they portray themselves and how Black femininity should be represented. As Adjepong and Carrington (2014), "The myths concerning Black femininity and the ways in which Black women contest stereotypes surrounding their blackness and their femaleness" (p. 281). The experiences of many of the participants were framed by how outsiders (e.g., coaches, fans, and teammates) viewed Black women through the lenses of stereotypical behavior or looks seen on TV and social media. Women's femininity and Blackness added layers to a foundation of stereotypes about how their bodies looked, how they took care of their skin, and how they styled their hair in ways that white women's bodies were not discussed. Hill Collins (2000) explained how "maintaining images of U.S. Black women as the Other provides ideological justification for race, gender, and class oppression" (p. 70). BVFPs were consistently described as the other in overt ways, whether it was mentioning the exotic color of their skin or touching their hair as if they had never seen something of that nature. According to Lewis et al. (2016), "Stereotypes of Black women are often perpetrated on the interpersonal level in the form of gendered racial microaggressions that objectify Black women and reduce them to their race and gender" (p. 772). Some of the experiences the participants vocalized occurred with their teammates, the one space they should have comfort. Examples of how they were othered were as such:

- One of my teammates, who I just freaking hate, she was the worst. She was like, "Oh yes, all the boys here are going to love you because you are mocha chocolate," or some weird crazy thing that only a white woman would come up with. It was like I was some sort of exotic commodity and that's why these white German men were going to like me, is because I'm mocha chocolate and I'm different and I'm this and that. (Kennedy Jones).

- My teammates would call me, "You're dark." I'm like, "What?" They're like, "You're dark." I don't know if that was funny. First of all, it's making me cringe. This is weird. They're just, "Oh, you're just so dark." I'm like, "I am not." The more I say it, the more I absolutely hate it. Just things like that. I'm like, "You guys think this is like a funny thing, or you guys think this is an okay thing to say?" Again, touching my hair. I just don't appreciate it. I had to sit them down. I'm like, "Don't say that to—" I told them

straight up, I was like, "Translator, translate this." I was like, "You wouldn't want me just being like, 'Yellow. You're just so yellow. You know, yellow.'" Anyway, it was like a little stint for like 2 weeks. I just had to put a stop to it. At first, I was like, "Hahaha, very funny." Then it got to be like, "Dark, pass the ball." I'm like, "Woah, woah, woah. We're not going to do that. You're pushing it. Not in practice. Not ever, especially not in practice. Not in a place of work." (Goldie).

- A lot of my teammates had either only seen Black people on TV or had never seen a Black person in real life, or never met a Black person and played with them, obviously, and it was just a very different experience for them, because they've never done this before. It's like when you introduce a toy to a dog. They're like, "What do I do with this? Why is it here? You're going to keep it here? Okay great. Now let me sniff around it and figure it out. Let me touch its hair." You know? (Goldie)

Because many of the controlling images which were used to objectify Black women as the other (Hill Collins, 2000) were the teammates primary source of information, the BFVPs' bodies were consistently thought of as other and treated as such.

There was no place a BFVP could go while they played professionally that could allow them the peace to be themselves and be without concerns, they were going to be objectified. As Hill Collins (2000), "The allegedly emotional, passionate nature of Black women has long been used to justify Black women's sexual exploitation" (p. 71). Black women are considered hypersexual and this dates back centuries of slaves being treated as fertile producers of workers. In current time, the stereotype of the whore or hoe is what Hill Collins (2000) considered "central in this nexus of controlling images of Black womanhood. Because efforts to control Black women's sexuality lie at the heart of Black women's oppression, historical jezebels and contemporary 'hoochies' represent a deviant Black female sexuality" (p. 81).

The other way this theme showed up was as the perception that they were prostitutes regardless of what they wore, where they were, and who they were with. The BFVPs' learned to be very aware of their surroundings, note who might have been potentially following them, or

who had these assumptions. Examples of being considered a sexually deviant person and a prostitute put their safety at risk. As Hill Collins (2000) noted:

> Within intersecting oppressions, Black women's allegedly deviant sexuality becomes constructed around jezebel's sexual desires. Jezebel may be a "pretty baby," but her actions as a "hot momma" indicate that she just can't get enough. Because jezebel or the hoochie is constructed as a woman whose sexual appetites are at best inappropriate and, at worst, insatiable, it becomes a short step to imagine her as a "freak." (p. 83)

The following passages demonstrate how participants were unknowingly in potentially dangerous situations.

- When I was in Spain, I was dating a Spanish guy who was like, "You got to be careful, because the Black woman from Africa come here, and they become prostitutes." The way he said it was like, all of them, every Black person that ever comes from Africa, which is not true, because I saw them on the streets. They were working regular jobs like anybody else. (Snickers)

- I was going back to my apartment from practice, and I was walking by myself, and I think I had my headphones in that day. Out of the corner of my eye, I see this guy. Because you have to open the gate, you have to open the apartment complex with the key because it's gated to the outside, and then you have to open the door to get into the apartment complex with a key as well. I didn't think anything about it. This guy is walking in behind me, so I get an elevator, I push my floor, and I'm looking at him, thinking he's going to push his floor, and he's just looking at me, and I'm like—I go all the way up to my floor, and I'm getting off, and I just happened to turn around to look at him, and he's like [gestured] and I was like—I got closed the door. I went to my apartment. That's what my ex was talking about. Like, that's how they did it. The guy sees you on the street, thinks you're a prostitute, he will follow you to wherever you're going, and there you go. (Snickers)

- When I was in Italy. Where I specifically lived, African women came, and a lot were women of the night. If you will. I will never forget this. My mum and I go out, and we're wearing these cute black outfits, put on red lipstick. We're feeling ourselves. We're going shopping. We're like, "We're going to be like the locals today," and men are waving money to us while we're sitting and eating our lunch in the park. We're like, "What are you doing? What's going on?" We look to our left or our right or something, and there's like, darker skinned women, African women who were wearing very close and very similar outfits to what we're wearing. Who are indeed women of the night. My mum and

> I were like, "Oh my gosh, we're sending the wrong message. Oh my gosh, this is so embarrassing. What are we doing?" (Goldie)

Hill Collins (2000) elaborated on how controlling images perpetuates the myth of hypersexuality, noting, "As a sexual freak, jezebel has one foot over the line. On this border, the hoochie participates in a cluster of 'deviant female sexualities,' some associated with the materialistic ambitions where she sells sex for money" (p. 85). Validating these experiences and couching them within provided the opportunity to use Black feminist thought as a framework and provided me with the chance to express the participants' personal experiences to shed light on the impact of race, gender, and professional status in Europe (A. R. Carter, 2008).

Just as Burrell-Craft (2020) stated, "Research needs more voices, more faces, more experiences, and more stories to capture, reach, and teach others to inspire systematic reform" (pp. 21–22). Accordingly, no change will occur unless a variety of stories and experiences are told, and marginalized identities are emphasized. Using a "race-based identity theory would encompass the full experience, the then and now, to better understand and explain the how and why of Black actions, thoughts, and mindset" (Burrell-Craft, 2020, pp. 21–22). Scholars must use the Black feminist thought concept more within geography as a discipline and particularly within sports geography when discussing BFAs. Frequently, theoretical frameworks developed by white people or white women have been used to explain BFAs' experiences, which does not consider the nuances of being both Black and female. The previous suppression of BFAs from mainstream research has led to the elevation of elite white female and Black male experiences, voices, and interests, consequently silencing Black women's ideas and interests in traditional scholarship (Hill Collins, 2000). The exclusion or silencing of BFAs has then led to stereotypical images of BFAs permeating society, including hypersexuality, masculinity, loud or obnoxious behaviors, aggressions, notable dancing skills, and so on.

Using Black feminist thought to explain the experiences of BFAs within the context of sports geography was another way to inform a complete story on athletes, rather than one that incorporated frameworks that are not appropriately designed for BFAs. As Hill Collins (2000) noted, "Black women's participation in crafting a constantly changing African American culture [has] fostered distinctively Black and women-centered worldviews" (p. 10). Professional BFAs may experience the professional world, new cultures, and new countries differently based on their racial, gender, athletic, socioeconomic, and sexual identities (Ferguson, 2021). All these identities are associated with systems of power with the potential to control BFAs' behavior, thinking, emotions, and actions (Ferguson, 2021). Professional BFAs may feel isolated from their professional teams and places of residence as racially gendered minorities. Moreover, Black feminist thought contends that a deeper understanding of the oppressions of Black women, including athletes, is necessary (D. F. Collins, 2000). BFVPs deserve to be themselves when situated within their intersectional identities while telling their stories without concern of judgement and misinterpretation.

Black Geographies

Sports was a prime area to use Black geographies as a theoretical framework due to the large number of Black athletes who play both professional and collegiate sports. As a result of the large amount of migration occurring in sport across the United States and globally, a Black geographies framework can be used to better understand not only athletes' experiences, but those of the coaches as well. Black head and assistant coaches are also part of the migration patterns seen within college athletics and it is critical to employ a geographical framework that focuses on the various experiences they face due to their race. Yull (2014) noted, "The positionality of the researcher will influence how the data is collected, analyzed, and interpreted for meaning and

when assessing subjects' responses to topics, race matters, especially when Black geographies is used" (p. 5).

When focusing on Black athletes, more clarity occurs when using Black geographies because "Black geographies redefine space in the sense that they move away from Western, modern understandings of what space is and who exists in it while exploring and reimagining the politics of place" (McKittrick & Woods, 2007, p. 6). Black athletes have a history of being used to win and make money but are still expected not to take up any space as individuals. As Duncan (2016) stated, when space is acknowledged for Black students, "The affirmation of Black people of their Black bodies—an idea and practice that contradicts dominant standards of beauty, goodness, and intelligence—is seen as a revolutionary act" (p. 137). Black athletes deserve inclusion in research in a way that focuses on their experiences and acknowledges the intricacies of how space and place create and impact their lives.

Theory of Racial Space

Findings from this study suggested that sports geography, place, and space intertwine with experiences of professional BFAs, who, many times, are "not expected to occupy certain places [but] do so . . . and take up 'privileged' positions which have not been 'reserved' for them, for which, they are not, in short, the somatic norm" (Puwar, 2004, p. 1). Using this theory may assist researchers in paying attention to both explicitly racial spaces (i.e., places where racial processes are expected to occur), and less expected racial spaces (Neely & Samura, 2011). In doing so, researchers can challenge assumptions about how racism and racialization worked in the past, the present, and also the future.

The theory of racial space suggests that space matters to race because all four characteristics are common to space and race; thus, what researchers may consider strictly a

matter of space may also hold association as a matter of race (Neely & Samura, 2011). Researchers studying this theory may better understand the fluid and historical nature of racial formation if they connect race with space explicitly. Race and space may also converge in terms of how differences and inequalities are organized in future studies. As this study suggested, the meanings of race and space are always constructed and reconstructed in relation to one another (Neely & Samura, 2011).

Critical Black Feminist Sports Geographies

The interlocking theoretical frameworks of Black feminist thought, Black geographies, and theory of racial space served as the basis of a new conceptual framework, critical Black feminist sports geographies, as there was no prior framework that centered geography, gender, race, and sport. It was important that these theoretical frameworks were all grounded in race, as Hawkins (2017) stated, because "sport has been and [will] continue to be a platform that reflects and reinforces ideas about race, as well a platform where resistance is forged against dominant racial ideologies" (p. 4). As such, I developed the critical Black feminist sports geographies framework specifically for BFAs. This development allowed me to have a more complex and nuanced analysis of participants' experiences in ways other frameworks independently do not allow.

Many times, when researchers study BFAs, they have to use a variety of frameworks to analyze their experiences, thoughts, feelings, or oppressions; for instance, one framework might not fully fit what is needed. I created critical Black feminist sports geographies to fill that gap and explore the concept that BFAs are not only worthy of their own theoretical framework, but are justified in deserving it. Past researchers have too often assumed that BFAs have similar experiences to Black males or white females, which has left them on the margins of research and without their own experiences valued and uplifted. I developed critical Black feminist sports

geographies as the theoretical framework specifically for BFVPs, but the framework can apply to any BFA in the United States as well as globally because of the components underpinning its scope. These components were developed intently not only for the female athletes of today, but also the athletes of tomorrow, whether they are cisgender or transgender.

I also designed this theoretical framework to be flexible versus stagnant, one that shifts with the athletes rather than forcing them into boxes not yet defined. Traditional geography, as with traditional academia, expects assimilation, not exploration or imagination. Geography was created by white men for white people on the shoulders of Black people, Brown people, indigenous people, and so on. Critical Black feminist sports geographies was formed to revolt against the status quo and center Black females; as Hill Collins (2000) stated, "The shadow obscuring complex Black women's intellectual tradition is neither accidental nor benign" (p. 3). The invisibility of BFAs within traditional geography and sports geography has not been accidental. Such invisibility is instead an intentional phenomenon, because:

> Maintaining the invisibility of Black women and our ideas not only in the United States, but in Africa, the Caribbean, South America, Europe, and other places where Black women now live, has been critical in maintaining social inequalities. (Hill Collins, 2000, p. 3)

Such limited focus on BFAs has been a way to maintain power at their expense; thus, critical Black feminist sports geographies provides a challenge to that power structure.

Broader Implications

This dissertation used qualitative methods to understand the experiences of 18 BVFPs. I conducted semi-structured interviews to provide guidance to the discussion but did not censor any conversation that seemed to go off topic. The participants decided what direction they

wanted the conversation to go, and because of that autonomy, it was possible for me to compile a comprehensive collection of narratives (A. R. Carter, 2008). In the next sections, I provide the information the participants contributed to answer the following research question:

> RQ: How do intersecting racial and gendered identities, place, and space influence the racism encountered by U.S. Black female professional volleyball players in Europe?

The information is separated into 10 topical areas:

- Information they wished they had known
- Contacts
- Packing
- Mindset
- Questions to ask
- Cultural
- Racial
- Professionalism
- "Just do it"
- Communication with other BFVPS

Information the Players Wished They Could Have Known

The potential of this research study extends beyond volleyball players to any BFA interested in continuing their sport globally—just as several of the participants stated, they had no one to help them navigate their professional playing careers. Some participants came from pipeline institutions that send numerous BFVPs to play professionally; other participants were the first from their schools to play professionally and did not have access to other Black females to ask about their experiences. Although asking white female professional athletes is always an option,

the problem was their experiences vastly differ from those of a Black female professional athlete. Though all the experiences of BFVPs were unique, there were enough similarities that improved information could help them prepare for myriad experiences.

Having information reflective of the experiences professional BFVPs had while playing in Europe is important for future BFVPs; however, it was even more important to identify what those who had played wished they had known prior to moving abroad. With that importance in mind, I asked the participants two last questions: (a) what are some things you wish you knew before deciding to play professionally, and (b) what type of advice would you give to a Black female who wants to play overseas? This information was important for the participants to discuss, as they articulated aspects they were not told before about what the experience of moving to Europe to be a professional athlete could be like.

Contracts

Contracts came up consistently with the participants because many times, their agents were the ones in charge of negotiating with the clubs on pay, bonus structure, or additional needs. Sometimes the agents negotiated in languages the participants did not speak, which left them in the dark in some respects. Many of the BFVPs had just graduated college or left mid-semester, so they had not learned to advocate for themselves when it came to benefits and pay. As of the writing of this dissertation, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) athletes on a full scholarship could only receive tuition, room, board, fees, and books (NCAA, n.d.-b). The NCAA has historically focused on their athletes remaining classified as amateurs and not receiving money for competing in their sport (NCAA, n.d.-b).

These financial parameters are longstanding. There is an extensive history of athletes, mainly male football and basketball players, who had received money or gifts and were

subsequently suspended, forced to sit out games, faced with demanded restitution, or had to give up their Heisman trophy[39] (The Atlantic Staff, 2021; ESPN, 2010). Other punitive measures entailed removal of championship banners, vacated wins, and loss of other awards (The Atlantic Staff, 2021; ESPN, 2010). As of July 2021, this predicament has all changed. The new name, image, and likeness (NIL) policy will allow all current and incoming NCAA college athletes from Divisions I, II, and III to benefit from using their NIL (Hosick, 2021). This policy shift will allow volleyball players to not only start profiting off themselves, but also to begin gaining the skillset and experience needed to navigate contracts—a skill many of the BFVPs in this study noted they did not have when they started playing professionally.

Some of the participants had helpful advice on contracts and suggested that prospective players know what to ask for and also how the contracts should be drawn up. Slim explained the problems that could occur by not asking questions. She said:

> In handling contracts, sometimes in the beginning if you don't ask, you don't know. I would've never known that they're supposed to make sure they paid the bills and do all that stuff. They're going to try to get away with whatever. I think that would be the biggest thing, and understanding that you are a business, you have to conduct yourself as such. Especially on the business side of handling just the paperwork and all of that jazz, that would be the biggest thing.

[39] According to Heisman (n.d.):
The Heisman Memorial Trophy annually recognizes the outstanding college football player whose performance best exhibits the pursuit of excellence with integrity. The winners of the trophy epitomize great ability combined with diligence, perseverance, and hard work. The Heisman Trophy Trust's mission is to ensure the continuation and integrity of this award. (para. 1)

If BFVPs do not ask questions, they will not get the answers they want, nor the compensation they deserve. Many times, clubs or leagues have baseline payments, as Crystal alluded to when she said:

> I think knowing that this is the baseline pay that you should be expecting to play in these countries because this is what they can pay. I think every player should know that. If you have liked to play on national teams and other things like that, you should be asking for more pay.

These baseline payments may also amount to more for athletes with accolades, such as playing on the U.S. national team—those who play and medal in the Olympics also receive more and are considered more valuable.

Athletes can also ask for more money if their positions are valuable. According to Crystal, "they are requesting for this type of player, and saying, they need a first center because their other center went down, you can be demanding more money."

RevolutionaryBitch explained she did not realize the power that she had, noting:

> I wish I knew the power that I had. I single-handedly turned the team around in Sweden and that was a horrible team and we made it to the championship, so I think [I could have had] that confidence in myself to ask for more money.

There is power in a player knowing their value and the skill they bring to the team. Many times, new players are just so excited to play professionally that they do not negotiate, which can lead to a lower level of compensation. As Diamond stated, "These clubs don't owe you anything and they're going to do whatever they can to get the most out of you with the least amount of effort and hopefully money for them." Athletes can want to have fun, but they can also expect to be paid as a professional. Crystal shared regrets for not advocating for herself more:

> Things like that I wish I knew because I just kind of went, "Oh, I'm just happy to play," and I just got whatever they gave me. Then I found out like some coaches were [going], "No, we're only giving her this. . . . You can't really ask for that much more," but then we found out other players got injured and still got their money, enough to buy an Audi. You're like, that is not even half a salary.

Diamond gave crucial advice that athletes must be willing to advocate for themselves; as she noted:

> There [are] going to be moments where you're going to have to stand up for yourself. It's been a learning process, learning to stand up for myself and to ask for things that I know I need, and to demand things that I know I need.

Part of self-advocacy is willingness to ask for more money, especially when performing well. Another part is demanding that the contracts are signed in English. Participants noted many clubs will give their foreign athletes contracts in their language only. This procedure was expected in some respects, as the players were working in countries that may have had national languages other than English; however, for protection, it was critical that the contract be in English. As Bianca stated, she would not sign a contract in any other language:

> The only thing I can say is I wouldn't sign a contract that, one, [is] not written in English. Mine was in Italian. That thing was crazy. Because in contracts, two words can change the whole [meaning]. I couldn't understand it, but the thing is now, they write them in English. Do some research on the team itself and get a contract in English and more so an agent that's a native speaker [who] knows what's going on and knows how it works.

Contract language can help a player have a great experience, or it can be one that creates a bad experience that is impossible to back out of. Many of the athletes spoke about having a

clause in their contracts that stated if payment was not received after a month, the athlete could back out of the contract with no repercussions and find another team. One athlete discussed how they found out about this clause the hard way when they were not paid for over 2 months. She could not leave, as she was still under contract, so she had to decide to either continue to not play in hopes they finally paid her or play in hopes that they paid her and find another team after the season because her statistics were so good.

Not only are contracts and amounts paid important to think about, but so too is saving money. Snickers had great advice when considering different methods of saving and investing the money made while playing:

> I know money is just paper, but you're going to need some of that paper when you get back. You might want to buy a house. If you are overseas, invest in a house and rent it out. . . . Rent the house out near your parents so they can take care of it while you're over there so that way you're making some passive income. There are so many little things that I wish that I would have known.

Thinking long term about money and different ways to invest and save is important, but taxes cannot be forgotten. As U.S. citizens, the athletes still had to pay taxes, and the more they stayed on top of the money they made with receipts and proper records, the fewer taxes they likely had to pay (L. Williams, 2021). Clubs do not take money for taxes, so it was up to the athletes to make sure they saved money for retirement as well as taxes.

Snickers described how she wished "that I would've made it even more, so save money" and suggested the athlete "gets receipts for anything that they're paying you . . . I tell the kids now, I'm like, 'Just make sure that you save a portion of whatever you make.'"

Contracts are important to an athlete, not only because they provide the salary needed to live on, but also because of the benefits that can be added to it, such as apartment, car, jewelry, food, plane tickets, and more. It is important for athletes to advocate for themselves to make sure they receive all they ask for and deserve.

Within the contract space, one element participants did not discuss was the required country visas to work and live in a European country as a noncitizen or nonresident. Sloan somewhat discussed this when she said:

> I think that because they don't know, because some of these teams are just popping up . . . how sustainable it's going to be, so how much are they really going to invest in getting the visa for you? They're putting it on to the teams to do that. If not, they're just telling us ways to be there legally, get your passport stamps, just go out for 3 months to come back, bullshit like that. I think it's because they were not well-versed in what is necessary in this country, and they didn't want to pay that money. They were putting it on the teams to do that and the teams were like, "We're not transferring that money either, so be here illegally."

Professional teams that are occasionally unwilling to process the legal immigration paperwork can mean athletes may have contracts and at the same time, receive payment under the table with no legal residence. Many athletes might not understand the immigration rules and regulations involved in playing in a foreign country, and this is also where a great agent should not only explain what is needed to play legally, but also make sure the club pays for visas and any paperwork needed.

Packing

The question of what things players wish they knew before deciding to play professionally brought up a lot of good information that could assist future athletes in having a better understanding of what to expect climate-wise and how to negotiate furnishing before they arrive. Players recalled stressing over decisions such as: what to pack, what to bring, whether or not to bring linens, what type of clothing to pack, how much clothing to bring, which toiletries to pack, what toiletries are available in Europe, what Black hair products are available, what is included in the apartment, and what will be in the apartment upon arrival? Again, it was essential that the athletes advocated for themselves in terms of what items they need in their apartments when they arrived after flying across the world, depending on what time they flew in, because many of the essential stores may be closed at that time. Snickers give great suggestions when she said:

> [Y]ou should tell them to put [bottles of] water in your apartment, to put a blanket and sheets and bedding and to put snacks in your apartment so that when you get there, you don't have to worry about being dehydrated, you don't have to worry about not having a snack. . . . Because it's not the same. Like here, I can go to Walmart at 11 o'clock. It's not the same overseas. They don't have those same convenience hours as we do.

Arriving to a few basic items in an apartment can help launch an athlete's professional career off to a great start, rather than arriving and having no linens nor food and having to figure out how to get requisite items when everything is closed.

Worrying about what clothing to pack was also a concern of the athletes. Snickers explained she wished she had known "how to travel because sometimes you take things, and you don't realize that you don't need them." Kennedy Jones made similar comments when she stated:

> I still haven't figured out, packing-wise, what to bring. I honestly feel like every year I'm like, "I should be better at this, but I still just continue to bring the wrong shit." This year, I bought so many cute dressy outfits. I'm like, "It's a pandemic. I'm not going anywhere."

It can be very difficult trying to figure out what to bring, as many times, the athletes are not sure what the weather is consistently like in the country they will live in, how long they will live there, or what country they might have to move to if they are released from the team.

Finally—and to Black women, sometimes the most important—was the advice for Black hair. Many times, the products they use in the United States are not available in Europe, and the cost to ship them from the United States can be astronomical. Also, the locations where they play might not have stylists who know how to work with Black hair and if they try unsuccessfully, they could inadvertently make their hair fall out. For some of the BFVPs, recognizing that it might be difficult to get their hair done in Europe meant learning how to do it themselves. Slim stated:

> [M]ake sure you bring your Black hair care products. Don't label anything "butter," because they will be stuck in customs. I was trying to get my hair butter, but they thought it was [edible] butter, so it was stuck in customs forever. Sometimes the water is hard, that will change how your hair turns out. That would be the biggest thing. If you can learn how to do your hair, learn, because you're sometimes going to be in places where they cannot do your hair.

Understanding what to pack and for how long can be difficult, especially when keeping baggage count and weight restrictions in mind. In addition, because of the highly transitional nature of professional women's volleyball, it can mean that whatever number of bags a player brings, they

will then be responsible for transporting them to different countries and apartments that may not have elevators. Asking a lot of questions can help an athlete decide what to bring and what to buy in Europe; however, it does need to be acknowledged that sometimes an athlete might be not only be the first Black player the club has ever had, but the first foreign player, meaning it may not be possible to ask questions to get the necessary information.

Mindset

Playing professional volleyball is difficult; it is very different from playing college volleyball. Teams do not have to keep athletes if they do not want to; they can release an athlete after a bad game, they do not have to pay athletes even though there is a contract in place, and there is a lack of focus on team building and getting to know teammates compared to college volleyball.

In college volleyball, athletes consistently move together in some way—not just to practice, but to meals, living situations, classes, social events, and more. That is not the same case with some professional teams. Some teams have athletes who have other jobs and families, and they only come to practice and games. Snickers stated to "make sure you have something to entertain you. I have audiobooks. I have downloaded movies, because the reality is, you're living a [different] life [from] . . . your teammates [who] might be working a real job, like a full-time job." Other teams will have athletes within the same age demographic that give the BFVPs friends and people to hang out with. Because of this, the mental aspect is very critical.

Carmel Delight explained she wished "that I had known how important the mind would be. I wish I knew how important the psychological side was." When in Europe, across the ocean away from all of their friends and families and in time zones 6 or more hours different, the loneliness can be difficult to handle. Legz explained this difficulty as well, saying, "Make sure

you are good with you, and you know yourself and [are] comfortable in your own skin before you take yourself out of your [comfort] zone and throw yourself somewhere else."

These feelings of isolation and discomfort can have a huge impact on the mental health of an athlete as well as their game. The feelings affect their performance by causing them to lose focus, make mistakes, get frustrated easily, or be overly emotional, as their main emotional support system is thousands of miles away. Diamond explained the feelings of adjusting to living far away from family:

> The sense you're gone for X amount of months overseas and you miss your family. . . . Being at home, having a community and that sense of community is something that I thrive off of, so that was really hard for me to adjust to overseas.

Many athletes, especially those who have not lived far away from home during their college careers, are even more affected when they move to Europe to play. Half-Pint Hottie explained these feelings as things she wished she had known before playing in Europe:

> I wish I knew how lonely it would be. I think telling somebody that you have to be very comfortable with being eating by yourself, going to a movie by yourself . . . but I got better at it. I wish somebody would have been like, "You know what? There's going to be some nights where you're going to be lonely because people on your team, they have families, they're married, they're doing other things. You're making way more money than they are. They may not be going out as much as you would like to, or whatever you like to do." I just wish somebody told me that.

Effects of loneliness can significantly impact a person if they have not prepared for it nor developed a way to manage. One way athletes can learn to cope with loneliness is to use social media to stay in touch with their friends and family. The downside is negative comments and

direct messaging can have a bigger effect on a person than they realize, because they have not fully started to understand themselves nor devised ways to manage destructive comments. Carmel Delight learned this the hard way, noting:

> [I] got so caught up in what the newspapers and Facebook were saying, and I just wish that I had known to leave that alone because that probably could have saved a whole half of a season. . . . [W]ho knows, but I just know that I wish I knew better than to . . . be focusing so much on what other people think . . . I don't get my check from them, but I just put so much importance on them and I wish I had known that.

Because she was looking for affirmation and validation, the negative effects of social media and paying attention to the news had a notable impact on Carmel Delight's mindset as well as her game. She honestly stated:

> If I could have learned to not seek validation from so many people . . . I feel like that took away from a lot of things. That took away from my performance and how I thought about myself as opposed to just playing. I had a slow start in my 1st year basically because I felt like I needed to fill the shoes of this player who just led this team to the championship.

Professionalism

Part of understanding the loneliness of playing professional volleyball is to have expectation management. Professional volleyball is not the same as it is in college. In NCAA collegiate volleyball, there is a 20-hour limit per week student–athletes can participate in athletic activities (Lever, 2022). Athletes must have a required day off. This time limitation is not the case for professional volleyball in Europe. Many clubs also do not have the same care for the body that professional sports in the United States have. That is not to say the professional athletes were

given wrong medical advice nor were expected to play while hurt, but participants noted there is more care for the body in the United States, as the large contracts, agents, and lawyers will all get involved to make sure the athletes are taken care of. They could not say the same for professional sports in Europe. Bianca explained she did not realize how serious the job was:

> Seriously, you have maybe a day off every now and then, you don't have any holidays. You don't have any sick days when you get sick. Well, even in the States, when you get sick, they're like, "Okay, just come to practice, let's see how you feel." You play until you can't play anymore then they'll send the doctor. If you call in, you say you're sick, they send the doctor to your house. You're treated like, "Look, I pay, you got to perform," and it's pretty bad. It's the level to where if you don't play, they don't want to pay you. . . . Whatever problems you have here . . . when my father died, I had an important game. It wasn't even the playoffs. It was just an important game, and my team didn't let me go. I was like, "I need to fly out." They're like, "Can you play the game? You play the game tomorrow night and fly out," my agent, and I was like, 'Are you kidding me?" He's like, I played the game and I had to play well, play at night and they took me to the airport the next day. Yes, the next morning. Yes, that's crazy. You feel like you're treated like a, I don't know . . . I'm human. To that point they don't care and all of them were like that. Not just one team, they're all like that. You don't get any days off until they tell you, you have a day off. Yes, normally 1 day a week after the game, games, or if they're on Saturdays, you get Sunday off and that's it. No sick days, no holidays and that's just how it is. It's tough for 9 months.

Having a better understanding of the working requirements and expectations can help a BFVP transition from college to the professional leagues. Gaining an understanding of the team's expectation for their athletes helps an athlete adjust to the training schedule and lack of time off.

Professionalism ties into expectations of what occurs when the athlete is an employee of the club. Some participants had very strong feelings about what it meant to be a professional in a country very different from the United States. Sasha explained how a better understanding of the professional climate would have been of tremendous help:

> I wish I [had known] that professional overseas isn't what professional here is in America. The levels are completely different, the attention to detail is different, the way they take care of their athletes is different. I feel like in America, we're very like, "This is how things go, it's like clockwork, we know what is expected." Then when I got over there and I was expecting that from them, it was like a complete disruption and that wasn't how it is. They're like, "Oh, you just have to get used to Europe. This is how we move, blah, blah, blah." I was just like, "Okay, I didn't like that," but for the most part, like my Turkish team, they were very good with money, all my money was on time, and I started learning how to kind of finesse the situation. I got really close with the president [of the club] and the VP as well. They liked me. I'm like, "I'm leaving. I'd like to get my money before I leave." They're like, "Okay, no problem." They started advocating for me and pushing to get the money for me before I left and stuff like that. That was because I was friendly with them. As I got older . . . I realized who are in positions of power, those are the people that need to be on your side. Even if it's not always the coach sometimes, it needs to be the people, the managers, and the owners.

Being a professional in Europe means different things compared to being a professional in the United States compared with the Eurocentric view of what professionalism means. In some countries, being on time is more ambiguous; athletes can arrive minutes or hours after a set time, and in other countries, any arrival after the set time is considered late. The culture determines what constitutes "on time." R. Lewis (2014) stated:

> In the Western Hemisphere, the United States and Mexico employ time in such diametrically opposing manners . . . Western Europe, the Swiss attitude to time bears little relation to that of neighboring Italy. In Madagascar it flows into the back of your head from behind. Spaniards, Italians, and Arabs will ignore the passing of time if it means that conversations will be left unfinished. (paras. 2–4)

Understanding how time is viewed within various cultures can lessen the friction created through having Westernized views of when events start, when they end, or how long they last. In the United States, being on time means being at least 5 minutes early and using time as efficiently as possible. Practices are scheduled down to the minute, pregame warmups are also timed, and very specific drills are planned. This structure is different than teams in some cultures where practices and warmups are not determined by the clock, but instead by how the players and coaches feel the drills or warm ups are going.

Being a professional as a Black woman can mean something different than being a white woman in the same situation. There are nuances of professionalism that disproportionately apply to Black women, such as making sure all emotion is suppressed as to not be too emotional or angry. Crystal explained:

> I would say . . . to be professional. Period. That's what I would be like, "Your job is to be a professional athlete and that entails you are on time, you work your butt off, you do

> everything else, and you expect if not the same or more of your counterparts." When you do that there's no way I think sometimes you come in and [assume] for any female athletes just coming in, "Oh, this is just secondary in the play." No, I would say you're playing professional sports . . . and it's like the NBA at the top of those tops. You have to be your best and be vocal, and be confident to call out being objectified, and not be like, "Okay, I can be that angry." Because I think a lot of times we're pegged as the angry Black female. When [athletes] get upset and they don't pay things and everything, but I would tell them first of all, "There's a lot of places that they're not going to pay you or this is not going to happen . . . you know, these things." You get to be professional until then [and] just like anybody else to go, "Okay, I now want my money and now I want this." I think sometimes before we just show up and it's so different for Americans to switch over to like thinking that this is professional, that then they may just demand and then we look really bad later because it's like you didn't offer anything. You didn't even . . . show like how professional you could be and how good you can be at this. I think that is something for just all Americans, but then also the Black girls need to come in and just go, "All right, I'm just like anybody else, I'm not going to falter to half of this crap like the other girls." Things like that, where they think they can get along, get away with [things] because you can't. You won't. They will peg that on you and that's what they want to do, because at the end of the day, they get to say, "That's why she left, that's why she pushed this girl, that's why she did this, and that's why we don't want to have the dark black American." That's what they'll . . . say afterwards.

Many of the teams may never have had a Black player; because of that, they may project all the stereotypes they have seen, heard, or watched onto that Black player. As Crystal alluded, if a

team has never had a Black athlete, they may quickly assume the racial trope of a Black woman advocating for herself means she is angry or aggressive. Asking questions can help a professional BFVP gain an understanding of the location and team dynamics before signing the contract.

Questions to Ask

Knowing the questions to ask can assist a professional BFVP to be better equipped to navigate the location they play in. Sexual Chocolate illustrated a potential professional volleyball player cannot be afraid to ask questions and do research:

> Don't be afraid to ask questions, especially if you're unsure about the area like Poland. I know I'm not going to go to Poland, but I also ask the questions going into that. I had done a lot of research too because there is a website that I went to. . . These are not some of the friendliest places for people of color. When I saw that list and I was like, "Cool. I'm not going here, not going here, not going here." Early enough, none of those places are on my bucket list. It worked out. Don't be afraid to research and don't be afraid to ask questions.

Conducting research and asking questions of all varieties are both important. The internet can help an athlete figure out where to live, what infrastructure is around both their playing facility and living facilities, restaurants, grocery stores, and transportation. CeCe took advantage of the internet to better understand where she would be living:

> It was really easy for me to navigate being abroad. Especially with technology, and internet, and phones, one of my contracts I already saw where I was going to be living before I even flew out there. I just Google searched it. I did some sleeping, but I was able to get the address from the club manager. I was already satellite street viewing it. I could

> see, "Okay, there's the grocery store around the corner, there's this. All right, I'll get this from here." Once I got there, I was like, "Oh, yes, that's what I saw online. Here's this. Cool, I'm good, I know where to go." It was not hard for me whereas others had some struggles because they didn't just take that. You got to do a little work to find that stuff.

Professional BFVPs recommended using the internet, resources, and asking the advice of other professional BFVPs to help create an experience that will reduce unwelcome surprises upon arrival in the country and on the team.

Racial Experiences

The racial experiences BFVPs encountered held many similarities to those some have had to deal with in the United States, but with major differences. In the United States, participants had an idea of places that might be unsafe for Black women. Within Europe, it is a little more difficult to know where these places are, and who to ask. Mini explained why:

> It's hard just with race relations. I don't know if it's a thing that I built up for myself just to make myself comfortable traveling overseas, but I guess you travel solo a lot, too, where it's just that annoyance of having to Google what places are safe for Black solo travelers. I don't know if you've ever Googled this, but like, "What countries are welcoming to Black travelers?" and stuff like that. Just knowing that you're always going to be in another [country], I mean other than our own country, but knowing that when I travel, I'm going to be in another. It's just annoying, but that's what you should prepare for if you want to pursue professional sports overseas as a Black player.

A web search can help these athletes make better decisions and at least assist them in understanding where they lived and better understand the culture. This search is especially beneficial if the BFVP is LGBTQ+. CeCe made clear the benefit of asking within the BFVPs'

teams about who to play for that can help BFVPs better acclimatize to where they live. Many times, BFVPs do not realize the power they have and what they can request. CeCe explained:

> More racially specific, you can find contracts or work with teams to be one of a pair, whether it's just you and at least another American. If that's what you want, you can get better, advocate for that. At the same time, depending on who's being brought in, you may always feel a little bit different. It's a different type of different because racism overseas is a little different as well. It's hard to prepare for everything but I think we're uniquely prepared because we always feel different. [laughs] I was ready. I was like, "Okay, just the language thing is the only thing different, now so I can live with that."

As CeCe said, it is difficult to prepare for an experience amid significant differences; however, what BFVPs can do is use their resources and ability to ask for contractual things to help give them a better experience in the areas they can control.

Participants also noted it can feel ostracizing to not only live in homogenous white spaces, but in spaces where Black people rarely go. Such an environment can make them feel as if they do not belong and that it is unsafe. African Queen explained it is so important for BFVPs to be themselves and to be proud:

> I would tell them to have an open mind, but to stand up for yourself. I know that may cause some tension, but you never want to go somewhere and feel like you're being lessened. Maybe it's just me, but I'm the type of person that if I'm going to go to a white space, I'm going to be loud and I'm going to be proud about it. I'm not going to sit there and just hide in a corner and not represent who I am and what my culture is. Be proud about who you are. I think it also depends on if you're looking for the money or if you're looking for the experience. I would say it definitely depends on the money aspect or the

> type of experience they want, so if I would say experience, definitely looking for someplace where the anti-Blackness isn't prevalent and if you're looking for money, you're going to have to be okay with being loud and proud where you are.

Finally, Kennedy Jones gave excellent advice to choose battles wisely. The BFVPs in this study had different experiences racially than they had in the United States, and if they did not pick their battles, it wore them down, mentally and physically. This advice provided important information because there may be many instances where a BFVP feels they must educate everyone, respond to all problematic comments, and try to protect themselves at the same time. Kennedy Jones explained what she learned in her personal experiences:

> Pick and choose your battles. That's one thing I had to do more so for my own mental health. Every time there's a comment, I want to shut it down or check it, but I'm not in the mood to give a history lesson. I shouldn't have to. I'm not here to educate everybody about race and politics and culture and everything else. I think that burden gets placed on Black people, Black women, specifically, a lot. I shouldn't have to tell you why this is wrong or why this is inappropriate. That's not my job. We're grown, and if you have questions, you should read a book or do a Google search or something. It's exhausting to always have to be the one to check somebody or educate somebody. It's really draining and . . . I'm the one who feels exhausted after that. I think just to preserve your own peace, you have to sometimes just not let things go, but understand that not everything can be taken personally. [Otherwise], you'll get worn down so easily.

Just Do It

When in doubt, do it; the BFVPs consistently articulated this sentiment. They discussed how much playing abroad helps people develop their sense of self, see and experience other cultures,

and mature. CeCe's advice was more proactive for those still in college to prepare themselves for planning professionally. For professional athletes, coaching is different; it is not technically coaching, because players are expected to have that knowledge at this level. Instead, coaching at the professional level is about strategy. CeCe understood the importance of getting feedback from college coaches on technical skills to assist in building value and worth to clubs, stating:

> It can be tough because when you're professional, you may not have a coach coaching you on the skills. Definitely in my advice as well for being a young, Black student–athlete looking to go professionally, soaking [up] a lot of stuff that your [college] coaches tell you in terms of some of the technical feedback. Writing things down actually is not hard, especially if you find things that really work, phrasings that work for you for passing, for hitting. Once you go overseas, your coach there, they're more team-oriented or they may not take the time to reinforce skills. . . . You're paid to have the skill already. Knowing that and understanding that, don't take your coaches for granted, [chuckled] it's cool because you won't have them overseas.

Goldie Carnousty discussed how not only did playing professionally overseas change her, but it also helped her make lifelong friends. Playing professionally also allowed college rivals to play on the same teams and help each other win. Volleyball is a small community, whether in a club, while growing up, or in college. Many of the volleyball players played with each other, against each other, or with someone's daughter, parent, or relative. The BFVPs shared stories of rivalries that had gone on for many years until they ended up playing on the same professional team. The person Goldie Carnousty discussed in the following passage and referred to as a friend was someone whom she played against on a consistent basis:

> Do it. What did Nike say? Just do it. It's so enriching in your life. You learn so much about different culture. You learn so much about people who don't look like you, who again, have never seen a Black person, or maybe they only have a certain visual of how Black Americans are. I think it's really important for you as your own self to experience something other than American culture. It's so important to know that, "Hey, American culture isn't the only culture." We have the opportunity to learn a different language, or eat different food, or go different places that you could have only dreamed of, but now you have the chance. Even if you're only going to do it for a year, do it for a year. Even if you're only going to do it for 6 months, do it for 6 months, it's going to enrich your life in so many ways . . . I have a friend and she's only ever played a single year when we all played in Turkey together. She still talks about it. She's like, "Oh, well, when we played in Turkey? Remember that one time in Turkey. We played this one time in Turkey?" because it was a great experience. Now she's like with her boyfriend, and she's coaching and she's doing all of those things. She has still has such fond memories of playing overseas and living that lifestyle. She can again say, "I was a professional athlete. This is what I did."

This advice from Goldie Carnousty can help future BFVPs understand that the experience not only helps with individual development, but also facilitates closeness with other people. Sloan felt the same way about how amazing the experience can be for people:

> Be open, expect a world that you don't understand, ask questions. I guess I would be like, there's a world out there that's not the world that you know, so don't assume that everyone will treat you a certain way based off of the experiences that you know because we're all from different parts of the world . . . I would just say, just be open, be

> inquisitive, don't judge, just listen, learn, and learn. I feel like I've grown so much in my life.

The personal growth came from not only living on their own in a new place, but also learning about other cultures. Sharon had the same view as other participants who said to absolutely do it:

> Do it. Get over there and do it. Absolutely. Ask for more money. Have a lot of fun. Keep track of your friends. Have phone numbers of all of your friends. Do more than just what's in your town, go out and see places, go meet up with people. Please date [laughed]. I think that part of the experience would have been wonderful. Please date, and I think, absolutely, just go do it. You got to do it. Don't be scared.

It can be scary to move across the world; yet, as the other participants said, just do it. RevolutionaryBitch agreed with Sharon to "just do it, have fun. Go live in another country. It's so cool to be able to do that." The ability to play overseas does not last for long. Many athletes want to play right after they graduate when their bodies are still in shape. These participants all felt the opportunity was worth it and to take advantage of playing professionally and having new experiences. Snickers gave advice on not just playing overseas, but some of the potential obstacles that can occur when playing. She also mentioned how essential it is for players to know where they want to play and where they will be most comfortable, even though that location might not be the best financially nor the most successful. She noted quality of life is very important:

> I would definitely say, go for it. I think that you get a very small window to do this and if you've been thinking about it, do it for at least a year and then you can decide what you want to do. Don't let shallow things stop you from continuing to play if that's what you

> want to do. "Well, they didn't treat me right." Were you at fault in any of that? Take a good step back and look at if some of that was your own fault. Also, take a look if the place was not for you. If you're going to Japan and they're practicing all day every day, and you like the money but you don't like that, then you're going to have to suck that up because the money is good but go somewhere where you can have a good life as well. Understand your first couple of years the pay probably isn't going to be great, but you might have a really good life. I always tell them for me, it was really important that I had a good life and that I wasn't in some small village, but I could suck that up for a year. I know myself, I don't want to be in snow, so Finland, Denmark, all those upper countries, that's not going to be for me. You have to know who it is that you are and what it is that's going to make you tick. If you know that you can't be somewhere where it's overly hot all the time, then don't go to Indonesia.

Playing overseas is also about learning lessons—learning lessons about where to live, how to handle different cultures, how to work within a team despite language barriers, or how to be successful even when far away from home. But most importantly, the lessons learned are about self—how to be alone, how to make new friends, and how to advocate for self. Sloan discussed all that she learned:

> I think that all the lessons that I've learned, I don't think anyone could have told me I had to experience them, so I really think that I had other opportunities to work with other people. . . . If someone were to tell me how to [find] internet coffee shops or how to seek out public transportation . . . it'd be like, okay, it wouldn't matter to me. I don't care because that's not something that's necessary in my life, so I wouldn't . . . There are

> certain things that no matter what, if someone were to tell me, I wouldn't have to experience it."

Experiencing the myriad parts of being a professional athlete and to have the opportunity to play in Europe can be exciting. CeCe's advice was more research based and focused on agents, as agents are what can really impact an experience. Research on the front end can help an athlete from having to do additional research because of a bad contract or a bad agent. CeCe said:

> I guess my advice would be, one, you could definitely do it. There are a lot of different . . . ways to go about it. Definitely do your research into agents. The last agent I had was actually foreign and I preferred it. See, among the U.S. agents but also international agents who can be the best advocate for you. Also thinking of what they want out of the experience because if it is to just make X amount of money, that's going to be a different type of team versus a team that might pay less, but then your experience might be really great. You can still be competitive and win and feel successful.

Finding an agent who can meet the needs of the BFVP is important, and research can help. When BFVPs use their network as part of their research, it can help them find the agent for them. Bianca loved her experience: "I would say go for a great experience. Times have changed a lot since we played here, and we've led the way." Yes, the experience can be filled with challenges, but it can also be filled with opportunities. Half-Pint Hottie explained how much the experience of being a professional BFVP affected her:

> I can tell you that being African American and being able to have the opportunities of doing something that I love is rare. I loved every single last minute of it. It was sweat, blood, and tears sometimes. It was loneliness. It was trying to figure out why am I doing

> this sometimes, but it was all worth it. If I had to do it over again, I, 1 thousand, 1 million % would do it all over again.

Taking advantage of the opportunity to play professionally was the biggest piece of advice participants had, even though they faced various obstacles. The experiences were life-changing for the participants.

Cultural

As the previous topic stated, take the leap; yet, when taking the leap, participants noted it is important that professional BFVPs gain some foundational knowledge of what to expect in Europe. The participants gave some great advice on this topic. Snickers explained:

> I wish I knew how different the food was going to be so that when you travel, you don't know. . . . There's no pre-game meal [like] we have in college, so make sure you have Tupperware or take Tupperware and make yourself things to take on the road.

Being a college athlete is very different from being a professional athlete in Europe. In college, most meals on game days are taken care of in some way. These meals may be delivered to the athlete, the athlete has to pick them up, or the team meets for a team meal that is paid for by the school. Snickers explained in her professional experience, she was responsible for her food before games, something other athletes might not expect going into the situation.

Snickers also explained how different the medicine might be when in Europe; it is critical to learn if necessary medicine is available outside of the United States or whether it is best to stock up, if possible. She noted:

> If there's an allergy medicine you like, if there is a headache pill medicine, if there is a soap that you like, because you're going to find these things over [in the United States], but if you can't live without certain small things, then you should take that with you.

Having these small comforts of home can help the adjustment to Europe become a little easier, especially when medicine is viewed in a different way compared to the United States.

Slim explained although professional BFVPs might have their comforts, they do not know what other items in Europe can help them as well. It can be easy to get stuck in the mentality that the United States is the best at everything, and there is always a comparison to the United States. According to Slim, however, this comparison can hurt the athletes' experiences:

> Another thing is try everything. Don't be so limited in what you've learned wherever you're from. Just be open. I think it just makes for such a beautiful experience and not . . . being so close-minded because you're like, "Well, in America it's like this." America is not the standard. There's so much more to this world, but then you also realize, I would tell them, as much as we're different culturally . . . and stuff like that, religion, very much the same. People just want to be happy; some want the love and the respect and just to come home safely. When you understand that common ground . . . it's just everyone is the same. That would be big. That would be a big thing.

As Slim said, differences that exist should be loved, respected, and embraced. Learning a different culture and language to gain a better understanding of where the professional BFVPs play should be the goal. RevolutionaryBitch explained how important it is to build community as well:

> It's always fun to learn a new language, and also it helps you build some community while you're there with people who may not speak English or whatever language you speak. . . Any other advice, eat the foods while you're there. Travel and go out, see the city, don't just be a homebody. Like I was in Sweden [laughs]. Even in Sweden, go explore, go see what you can. Yes, that would be my advice.

Yes, the BFVPs played professionally, but they were also tourists. As such, the athletes recommended enjoying the countries and towns while there. Because volleyball is such a transient professional sport, a player never knows how long they will play for any given team or area.

Communication with Other Black Females

The best way for current or future BFVPs to learn more about their experiences is to talk with as many professional BFVPs as possible. Many participants explained how important it was to talk to other professional BFVPs to get real insight. Mini explained she did not reach out as much as she wanted:

> Talk to other Black females that have played overseas. I did not do that enough. I don't think I talked to anyone Black. It was maybe deeper into my career. I talked to another Black female volleyball player who was playing in France or Germany at the time. She was the nice resource to reach out to, and I appreciate real Black females that'll give you the insight and how the experience is, but I felt a little bit lied and bamboozled too or like, "Oh, yes, it's great." Then, once I get in, and I talked to them and they're like, "Oh, yes, no, it's horrible. I hate it." It's like, "Well, why didn't you tell me that?" [chuckled]. Syncing up with another Black athlete that's been through it and just doing the research of really finding out what your comfort level is [recommended]. I knew that I didn't want a challenging program, so it's probably best for me not to go to those top-tier programs in Asia.

Carmel Delight commented that getting in touch with professional BFVPs can help an athlete receive proper care, because they understand how it felt to go to Europe and not know anyone:

Talk to us. Get in touch with as many of us as possible because we're out here, we're dealing with it, we have answers, we have experience. . . . We'll know how to help get you taken care of because we care. We understand what it's like—especially [if] you need to feel like you don't really know . . . what you're getting yourself into. You might have an idea, but you really don't. [The more research you do] going into this, the better off you're going to be psychologically, emotionally, mentally. As a BFA that's across the doggone world because you might be the only one, you might end up in a town that's racist as hell, who knows? Who freaking knows what's going to happen in these next years . . . especially with just how many jobs there are out there. You could end up in some Romanian town, where there ain't not one Black person in sight. I remember in Finland, the other BFVPs and I would go to lunch, and we would get stared at. It's just like, man, this is the tiniest town, you all have been to the games, why do you keep staring at us? It was just a simple fact, like, "Oh, they just think you guys look different, they think you're nice, they think you're great players." I'm like, don't stare at us, just come up to us. Why is it that they feel like they can't come up to us and speak? Are they afraid that we're not able to communicate well, or what? At the end of the day, just treat us like human beings. That was something that was the only time in Finland where I was just like, why every time we'll come in this same restaurant, we see the same damn people every day, and they just stare? I've seen them in the stands at the games, just come up and speak. Yes, it's just get your tribe going into this because going into it alone, you won't survive, you won't survive when you're alone. Get your tribe, get your people, whether players, ex-players, coaches, and keep them close, because times do get hard, and you just never know when they're going to need somebody that understands.

Put simply: Connect with people. Find people in Europe who grant the support professional BFVPs need while there, rather than solely depending on their personal network. Diamond gave the last bit of advice for professional BFVPs:

> Biggest piece of advice is talk to other American Black volleyball players because they are the only ones who are going to shoot at you straight. I am very grateful for that. I talked to some girls before I went to Poland, and they warned me about the things that would happen, and I still felt it . . . I've been able to help other Black American athletes in that sense. Who've been on the fence about Poland and somewhere else and I was just like, "I'm not here to block your blessings and tell you not to do something but just hear me out and listen to the experiences that I had." For sure biggest piece of advice is talk to other Black athletes. Especially ones that you know have played in countries that you're looking to play in.

Talk to professional BFVPs. As Diamond said, "It isn't about blocking anyone's blessings, but making sure that other BFVPs have the knowledge of playing in Europe and all the positive and negative things that can go along with that experience."

Critical Black Feminist Sports Geographies

The themes or concepts[40] pulled from each theoretical framework; as Deleuze and Guattari (1991) illustrated, "Every concept has components and is defined by them" (p. 15). Jabareen (2009) defined *conceptual framework* "as a network, or 'a plane,' of interlinked concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena" (p. 51). Gaining an understanding of how conceptual frameworks are defined by these themes or concepts is essential.

[40] In this study, themes and concepts were used interchangeably.

The conceptual framework I created, critical Black feminist sports geographies, developed using a geographical lens to center the experiences and oppressions of BFAs through better understanding the intersections of gender identity, space, sport, and race. During a review of existing literature and theoretical frameworks used to research BFAs, I noticed a notable lack of a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding their nuances, complexities, and experiences (Jabareen, 2009).

Research on BFAs has employed a variety of frameworks, though none have taken a distinctly geographical lens using elements of place or space. Researchers have mainly used Black feminist thought and critical race theory (CRT) to interrogate BFAs' experiences. Ferguson (2021) used Black feminist thought as a framework to discuss gender, space, sport, and race in relation to Black female student–athletes and their positionings on predominantly white campuses; namely, how space and place affected their safety on campus. Black feminist thought has been used to understand how (a) BFAs are both invisible and hyper visible (Edwards, 1999), (b) how BFAs have been silenced in sports and in sports literature (Bruening, 2005; Bruening et al., 2005), (c) to examine how stereotypes are experienced by BFAs (Ferguson, 2016; Withycombe, 2011), (d) how BFAs have been treated as space invaders (Adjepong & Carrington, 2014), (e) the experiences of Jamaican female track-and-field athletes (Doss, 2016), and (f) to raise questions for researchers on who is studied and how they are studied (Simien et al., 2019).

CRT has been used to also discuss how (a) BFAs remain invisible within research (Evans, 1998), (b) the mentoring of BFAs (A. R. Carter & Hart, 2010), (c) the experiences BFAs have at both HBCUs[41] and HWIs[42] (Cooper, Cheeks, et al., 2017), (d) the use of CRT to

[41] Historically Black Colleges and Universities.
[42] Historically white institutions also known as predominantly white institutions (PWIs).

"understand and address Black athletes' educational rights and college sport reform in the USA" (Singer et al., 2017, p. 11), (e) how BFAs develop skills to succeed when they have graduated (Simiyu, 2012), (f) the impact of microaggressions on Black athletes (Jordan, 2010), and (g) identity formation (A. R. Carter, 2008). Sports geography lacks any race-based geographical framework to view the experiences of racially minoritized athletes, much less the intersection of race and gender experienced by athletes. Pavlidis (2018) added a gendered element to sports geography through her development of feminist sports geography that "enables an analysis of the embodiment of women's and girls' sport that can account for its relations with infrastructural and environmental conditions" (p. 347). This analysis, though, leaves out the racial component, which seeks to understand how racially minoritized[43] female athletes are affected in different ways compared to those considered white. The only other attempt to incorporate geography and/or space regarding race, gender, and sexuality came from van Ingen (2003), but race was superficially mentioned with no race-based theoretical framework attached to it, and van Ingen mainly focused on sexuality.

Critical Black feminist sports geographies is a conceptual framework developed to assist with filling the gap of a framework that brought together unrelated theoretical frameworks and built on the ideals of completely centering BFAs through a geographical lens. This conceptual framework presented the logical conceptualization of this study and involved essential consideration of the research questions I asked and the concerns I had (Kivunja, 2018). I developed this conceptual framework to better understand how place and space have created or defined the experiences of BFAs. The themes that emerged from interviews pulled from each

[43] Racially minoritized was the term used as Pavlidis (2018) spoke of feminist sports geography within Australia, which is situated on indigenous land with a large indigenous population who have in some ways been treated the way Black people have been treated within the United States.

theoretical framework; as Deleuze and Guattari (1991) illustrated, "Every concept has components and is defined by them" (p. 15). Jabareen (2009) defined a *conceptual framework* "as a network, or 'a plane,' of interlinked concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena" (p. 51). The conceptual framework was developed to focus on use of a geographical lens to center experiences and oppression created by race. To accomplish this goal, I used discipline-oriented theories from areas such as sociology, psychology, sociology of sport, geography, and education that pulled the Black experience from the margins and centered it (Hill Collins, 2000; Jabareen, 2009; McKittrick & Woods, 2007). Gaining an understanding of how to define this conceptual framework within the themes was essential. Jabareen (2009) used definitions of concepts both he and Deleuze and Guattari (1991) created and explained there are a "number of aspects of the term *concept*" (p. 50). They included:

1. Every concept has an irregular contour defined by its components.
2. Every concept has a history.
3. Every concept usually contains "bits" or components originating from other concepts.
4. All concepts relate back to other concepts.
5. A concept is always created by something (and cannot be created from nothing).
6. Every concept is "considered as the point of coincidence, condensation, or accumulation of its own components."
7. Every concept must be understood "relative to its own components, to other concepts, to the plane on which it is defined, and to the problem it is supposed to resolve." (Jabareen, 2009, p. 50)

Based on these ideals of concepts that create the conceptual frameworks, it was important that each theme pulled from the individual frameworks to play an integral role. This role offers

readers an understanding of how the material—both individually and together from the discipline-oriented theories—supported, interpreted, centered, and explained how place and space created these nuanced and unspoken racial experiences of professional BFVPs in Europe (Jabareen, 2009).

The conceptual framework, critical Black feminist sports geographies, explained how intertwining seemingly different theoretical frameworks to frame the results and uplift the voices of BFVPs created a foundation to understand the interlocking oppression of race and gender that they faced in Europe. I combined Black feminist thought, Black geographies, and theory of racial space to create a framework that spoke specifically to the racial experiences both professional BFVPs and professional BFAs had when playing in Europe. These theories were used because they allowed me to center the knowledge and lived realities constantly endured by BFAs. I specifically used these theories to explain the critical nature of those experiences in the lens of what BFAs have endured as professional volleyball players in countries other than the United States. I also developed critical Black feminist sports geographies to center and nurture the voices of BFAs by lifting them up as holders of unique experiences. These ideals were based on the intersection of race and gender to better understand how BFAs are treated inequitably within places and spaces, and finally, to create a framework solely for BFAs' lived experiences (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Pedro & Kinloch, 2017).

Based on the components from Black feminist thought, Black geographies, and theory of racial space, which together created the conceptual framework (i.e., critical Black feminist sports geographies), it is important to highlight each theme as it pulled from the individual frameworks. Black feminist thought, Black geographies, and theory of racial space played an integral role in this study, as they offer the field of sports geography an understanding of how they individually

and together form “discipline-oriented theories” (Jabareen, 2009, p. 53). It was essential to merge the theoretical frameworks of Black feminist thought, theory of racial space, and Black geographies to create a new framework because separately, they did not sufficiently explain the phenomenon of the racial experiences of BFVPs in Europe.

Many frameworks that have been created have not included the experiences of BFAs nor BFVPs; their experiences were thought to be similar to Black male athletes and white female athletes (Harrison et al., 2002; Lawrence, 2005; Meisterjahn & Wrisberg, 2013; Scraton et al., 2018). I developed critical Black feminist sports geographies as a framework because it was important to elevate the experiences of BFAs and present them as equally important and essential to study as other athletes. Additionally, I created critical Black feminist sports geographies because the theories and frameworks already in existence for certain populations did not satisfactorily capture the complexity of the racial experiences BFAs or BFVPs had in Europe (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Critical Black feminist sports geographies and the intertwining of other theoretical frameworks fill in those gaps throughout multiple disciplines by not only expanding the ability of how sports geography is studied, but also who can be studied within sports geography. Critical Black feminist sports geographies can help the geography discipline continue to center the experiences of those who have consistently been on the margins, and, many times, even omitted. Tolia-Kelly (2010) espoused, “Omissions in worldly research agendas are, after all, political; they reveal as much about the orientation of the field as they reveal about the scholarship of the individual researcher or discipline” (p. 359). The omissions of how BFAs experience their sports and their worlds within sports geography exposed a glaring lack of research on BFAs.

In this study, I explained how intertwining these seemingly different theoretical frameworks to frame the results and uplift the voices of BFVPs created a foundation to understand the interlocking oppression of race and gender while they played internationally. It was important that I grounded the theoretical frameworks used for critical Black feminist sports geographies in how gender identity, space, race, and sport affect BFAs. Sport will always be a podium that uplifts, reflects, and reinforces ideas about race, lived experiences, and space (Hawkins, 2017). Creating this framework provided what Newhall and Buzuvis (2008) explained as a "unique opportunity to examine intersecting discrimination in the context of sport and contribute to the effort to pay greater attention to the multiplicity of identity and the need for practices and methodologies that reflect this lived experience" (p. 346).

From these four factors (i.e., gender identity, space, race, and sport) emerged topics that affect BFAs: humanizing, sporting experiences of BFAs, intersectional oppressions, and unequal space. To understand these topics, I used discipline-oriented theories from areas such as sociology, psychology, sociology of sport, geography, and education that pulled the Black experience from the margins and centered it (Hill Collins, 2000; Jabareen, 2009; McKittrick & Woods, 2007). Put simply: Black matters are Black female matters are spatial matters (McKittrick, 2006). Black matters and spatial matters are all embedded and intertwined with each other, as they are what create the racial experiences of BFVPs.

Gender Identity

In this study, gender identity is when oneself identifies as a female. The Human Rights Campaign (n.d.) defined gender identity as:

> [O]ne's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither—how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth. (para. 3)

VandenBos (2015) added to the *APA Dictionary of Psychology* the definition that "although the dominant approach in psychology for many years had been to regard gender identity as residing in individuals, the important influence of societal structures, cultural expectations, and personal interactions in its development is now recognized as well" (p. 350). Understanding the nuances of gender identity and language is important and the conundrum that Sturgis et al. (2021) explained as:

> Historically, "female" has been widely accepted as the adjective form of "woman." However, this usage is not only exclusionary, but frankly inaccurate. Not everyone who was born female is a woman, and not every woman was born female. The term "female" has a biological connotation, typically referring to sex assigned at birth based on anatomy and is also used to describe non-human animals who can bear young or producing eggs. (paras. 2–4)

Gender is a generally loaded term that has been rarely defined within literature as to understand what constitutes gender, especially in relation to women. Even the most widespread definition does not fully explain who is included within the female gender and why. Mahler and Pessar (2001) explained:

> [Gender], though not always explicitly stated, on the notion that it is a human invention that organizes our behavior and thought, not as a set of static structures or roles but as an ongoing process that is experienced through an array of social institutions from the family to the state . . . conceptualizing gender as a process yields a praxis-oriented

> perspective wherein gender identities, relations and ideologies are fluid, not fixed. And recognizing that gender also becomes embedded in institutions, lays the foundation as well for analyzing the structural factors that condition gender relations in addition to ideological factors. People are socialized to view gendered distinctions—as for example in the definition of male and female tasks—as natural, inevitable, and immutable. (p. 442)

Gender identity within this study encompassed those who are cisgender[44] and transgender.[45] In this study, I considered it important that gender identity include all those identities and not exclude those who identify as a woman. Being a woman in sport creates a different set of experiences, and many times, those experiences have not been researched at the same rate as those who identify as male (Botelho & Agergaard, 2011; Engh, 2014; Withycombe, 2011).

Race

Race is a socially constructed system that holds real-life repercussions on both Black and white people in a racialized world. The social construction of race has been a consistent factor throughout history; as Cobb (2021) tweeted, "Education, access to health care, quality of treatment, housing, employment, life expectancy, maternal mortality, lifetime earnings all conform in some way to the established hierarchies of race." The situatedness of race throughout these frameworks was critical to the experiences of Black people, as their race is a main factor affecting their experiences and the way people treat them (Ferguson, 2021; Hill Collins, 2000; McKittrick, 2006). Geography is undergoing a renaissance, in part thanks to theoretical advances

---

[44] According to VandenBos (2015), cisgender is "having or relating to a gender identity that corresponds to the culturally determined gender roles for one's birth sex (i.e., the biological sex one was born with)" (p. 188).

[45] Human Rights Campaign (n.d.) defined transgender as:

> An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc. (para. x)

fueled by the social sciences on topics of race and racism. Conversations on the hierarchy are critical to understand how racism is experienced (Price, 2009). How race is experienced by BFVPs can never equal how it is experienced by white female volleyball players, as race is defined by history and the differences it has created (Neely & Samura, 2011). Race was central to the theoretical frameworks used in this study as an acknowledgment of how essential race is to understand the experiences of BFVPs, because it explained concepts of who is excluded and who is included. The cultural and material "constructions of gender can then be examined as the sports world is fundamentally based on moving bodies, so analytical approaches must account for both gender's discursivity and physicality" (Engh, 2014, p. 177).

Sport

Sport is a word that is difficult to define, as different meanings have been given to the term by various stakeholders depending on their experiences with the term. Bale (2003) explained there are three concepts to think about when defining not only sport, but what aspect of sport applies to a person. Using volleyball as an example, the first concept would entail person holding a volleyball and playing with it for pure enjoyment and joy; there is no guidance. Sometimes, the person playing with the volleyball will not technically know what to do, so they just toss it around and attempt to play their version of "volleyball." The second concept would include people playing volleyball at a picnic or at the beach where there are very loosely defined rules, court parameters, and teams, and scores may or may not be kept. The third concept, and the one I focused on for this conceptual framework, is volleyball as a competition. Within this concept, scores are kept, rules are known, officials referee the games, there is an expectation from either team to win, and athletes know their positions. Under this framework, sport focused on the third concept and "almost invariably subjected to rigorously enforced spatial parameters" (Bale, 2003,

p. 9). The third concept also focused on the control of space for any competitive sport, as "virtually all sports are, in essence, struggles over space, but space that has carefully defined limits" (Bale, 2003, p. 11).

Space

Tuan (1977) considered space to be "an abstract term for a complex set of ideas and that it is 'formless.' People of different cultures differ in how they divide up their world, assign values to its parts, and measure them" (p. 34). Duncan (1996) explained how space is used when relating "to the physical body" (p. 134). Relatedly, Knowles (2003) noted "that space is an active archive of the social processes and social relationships composing racial orders. Active because it is not just a monument, accumulated through a racial past and present" (p. 80); yet many definitions of space have lacked understanding of how race affects space and creates inequality. This idea is something Black geographies researchers have focused on as they looked to define space in a way that moved away from Western, modern understandings of what it means to exist in space and who inhabits certain spaces, while exploring and reimagining the politics of place (McKittrick & Woods, 2007).

Black women have always changed the dynamics of the space where they arrive. The interaction of race and gender creates a dynamic in which "their presence deconstructs and reshapes the images and definitions about them that they did not create. The result of this reshaping is a form of reclamation within these environments for themselves; a representation of empowerment for Black women" (Ferguson, 2021, p. 6). This deconstruction of space has moved Black women from the margins that historical circumstances placed them in and positioned them front and center, insisting on recognition of how their race and gender affect space no matter the location (Hill Collins, 2000). The presence of Black bodies signifies the

importance of space, and the acknowledgement that Black bodies are present in athletic spaces is significant and encourages the achievements of BFVPs (Ferguson, 2021). As race and space overlap, professional BFVPs' presence within different European countries and teams places them in a vulnerable position (Ferguson, 2021).

I developed critical Black feminist sports geographies to bring together unrelated theoretical frameworks and build on the ideals of completely centering BFAs and professional BFVPs through a geographical lens. Through using the foundation of gender identity, space, sport, and race, these factors intersected in four ways. All four of these factors interacted in highly complex ways that situated the experiences of BFVPs in ways previous theoretical frameworks have not fully focused. Athlete experiences are difficult to explain to someone who does not have such an intimate familiarity with sports; there are other activities that involve teams and have some correlation, but it is not the same thing. Sport fosters ideas that racial harmony or colorblindness create a magical place unaffected by societal racial issues. Sport also promotes that although there is a gender difference between men and women, there is no difference between white women and Black women—problematic viewpoints that do not discuss the intersection of race and gender and the different experiences this intersection causes (Harrison et al., 2002; Lawrence, 2005; Meisterjahn & Wrisberg, 2013; Scraton et al., 2018; Schultz, 2005; Withycombe, 2011; Zenquis & Mwaniki, 2019). Schultz (2005) wrote about how "the purported color blindness of U.S. sport and the media often downplays or obscures direct discussions of 'race'" (p. 339). The lack of racial discussions does not allow for in-depth, intersectional conversations of how race and gender interact and affect BFAs within that interaction (Newhall & Buzuvis, 2008).

This conceptual framework suggested there are factors that need to be taken into consideration when examining BFAs, both domestically and internationally, and situated itself on Black feminist thought. Hill Collins (2000) developed Black feminist thought as a framework that solely centers the voice and experiences of Black women.

Humanizing

Throughout history, both Black male and female bodies have been used as property—ones to use how those in power have seen fit (Dancy et al., 2018; Hawkins, 1999, 2010, 2017). Newhall and Buzuvis (2008) explained how "Black female athletes are subject to the same sexualizing and dehumanizing comparisons to animals that justified slavery" (p. 352). Professional sports are considered entertainment for fans, a way for fans to get out of their real life—a moment of fantasy. Fans, therefore, believe athletes are there for their entertainment, rendering dehumanizing treatment of athletes acceptable.

Black athletes are treated as less than human, which causes them to straddle two worlds—one in which they are dehumanized and "denied humanness or likened to 'animals or machines'" (Larkin et al., 2020, p. 404)—and the other world, in which they are often treated as valued and respected representatives because of the money that can be brought into their organizations or even countries. Black athletes are positioned in a contradiction of making money for organizations but being dehumanized when they attempt to show themselves as human. Fox (2021) elaborated on this notion, stating, "Athletes become machines, means to victory for organizations and fans alike, and can become devalued as people" (para. 8). Humanizing athletes would not only have to occur for fans and coaches, but also for those who are research Black athletes. Humanization would have to "not be to a worship of the majesty of

science but rather, a concern for human beings and the self-actualizing potential of the institutional structures they create" (Melnick, 1992, p. 47).

Throughout history in research and the media, BFAs have been marked by stereotypes and stigmas based on race and gender (Zenquis & Mwaniki, 2019). Understanding the consequences of those racial and gendered stereotypes on BFAs and how they have been used to dehumanize them in research is critical to humanizing them. Humanizing BFAs is to recognize the ways they are dehumanized, understand their schedules, their limits, the pressures they have, and most important, the ways they have been degraded. To humanize BFAs is to center their needs above the needs of a researcher or a study; humanization requires willingness to go slower, change scheduling, or even lose participants if doing so is in the BFAs' best interest.

Sporting Experiences of BFAs

BFAs have lived experiences that are completely different compared to Black male athletes and white women athletes—experiences based on the intersecting of oppressions they have from being Black and female. The collective history of oppression experienced by BFAs in the United States has a distinctive standpoint. This standpoint is valid and necessary as it rejects the white, masculine, and patriarchal Western view in lieu of what is considered by many in society as the unique BFA experience (Ferguson, 2021). Because of how BFAs have been viewed by researchers and the general society, it is critical to use theories that understand the importance of race in shaping lived experiences and how sharing those historically suppressed and silenced experiences have aided marginalized Black women (Ferguson, 2021). Traditional geographies and subdisciplines such as sports geography have not effectively highlighted the need to research, study, or understand the lived experiences of BFAs; as a result, many of those experiences have been ignored and erased, leaving many stories untold.

Intersectional Oppressions

White supremacy and Eurocentric standards of whiteness have always shaped the intersecting oppressions that have perpetuated how the Black female body has "historically been depicted both as hypersexual and muscular with manly strength is in line with the dichotomous nature of stereotypes in general" (Withycombe, 2011, p. 479). This dichotomy has consistently been rooted in slavery and myths of the BFA experience, including:

> Racialized notions of the virile or mannish black female athlete stemmed from a number of persistent historical myths: the linking of African American women's work history as slaves, their supposedly 'natural' brute strength and endurance inherited from their African origins, and the notion that vigorous or competitive sport masculinized women physically and sexually. (Withycombe, 2011, p. 541)

These intersecting oppressions then led to specific experiences held by BFAs of being sometimes considered hypersexual, masculine, or both of those identities at the same time. Throughout history and more modern times, BFAs have always had to battle against the intersecting oppressions of race and gender while attempting to compete at the highest levels (Bruening, 2005; Carter-Francique & Richardson, 2016; Douglas, 2002; Hill Collins 2000; Morris & Perry, 2017). Crenshaw (1991) defined intersectionality as:

> How the experiences of women of color are frequently the product of intersecting patterns of racism and sexism and how these experiences tend not be represented and due to their intersectionality identity as both women and of color within discourses that are shaped to respond to one or the other, women of color are marginalized within both. (p. 1244)

According to intersectionality, complex inequalities result from overlapping systems of inequality along with stereotypes and oppression (Crenshaw, 1991; Hill Collins, 1990). These intersecting oppressions affect BFAs in nuanced ways, including ways where the BFAs understand inequalities that occur due to the intersection of race and gender and can never truly be separated. One is never just Black nor just female. Morris and Perry (2017) noted, "The meanings and effects of race occur only through gender, and in turn, the meanings and effects of gender occur only through race" (p. 128). In understanding the intersecting oppressions in relation to BFAs, intersectionality is crucial to understanding their experiences as largely defined by Black males or white women (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). These intersections bounced Black women between the stereotypes of hypersexuality and masculinity (i.e., manly; Hill Collins, 2000; Vertinsky & Captain, 1998; Withycombe, 2011; Zenquis & Mwaniki, 2019).

The hypersexuality stereotype experienced by BFAs was instigated by slavery and has continued through the centuries to modern times; this stereotype caused the media's hypersexual portrayal of Black women "as both hyper-sexualized and less feminine" (Cooky et al., 2010, p. 143). During slavery, Black women's bodies were considered deviant, overtly sexual, and deserving of all punishment inflicted on them. Yarbrough and Bennett (2000) explained how "the historical and social experiences of African women during slavery resulted in numerous images that defined Black women as deviant" (p. 633). This stereotype of deviance followed them throughout centuries and there was no avoidance of this stereotype as it morphed into the assumption that BFAs were hypersexual in all they did, in all they wore, and most worrisome—that it was who they naturally were. As Withycombe (2011) wrote, BFAs' bodies are viewed in sports, just as during slavery, with the Black body being marked "as inherently different from other bodies . . . thus, 'blackness' is used as a way of 'othering' male and female Black athletes"

(p. 480). As far back as the 18th century, pro-slavery writers spoke of the deviance and sexuality of the African American slaves—or, as Atlink (2005) called them, bondswomen.

Throughout the pro-slavery debate that occurred during slavery, many writings focused on the sexuality of the Black female slaves; for instance, during this debate, many writings spoke of "the sexuality of women slaves containing competing dominant representations of bonded females as both property and human beings: the scheming black Jezebel, that is the immoral and evil temptress" (Atlink, 2005, pp. 273–274). These stereotypes followed Black females through the abolishment of slavery and into their sport. Once these stereotypes moved into sport, BFAs not only had to deal with racism, but they also had to deal with a different type of sexism (Cooper & Newton, 2021; Douglas, 2005; Mowatt et al., 2017; Myrdahl, 2008).

After slavery, Black women were often contrasted with white women who were thought to embody true womanhood (P. H. Collins, 2004; Stetson, 1993; Yancy, 2017); white women were perceived to possess the highest moral character, whereas Black women were considered immoral and sinful (Yarbrough & Bennett, 2000). This label of immorality was often used to further the stereotype of Black women as "ignorant, crafty, treacherous, thievish, and mistrustful" (Yarbrough & Bennett, 2000, p. 635). Blackness has always been a weight on the shoulders of Black athletes and there has never been a time that race has not been at the forefront of their minds. BFAs have been continually told that their bodies are not their own, but instead something to be consistently shown and put on display (Hill Collins, 2000).

Black female bodies have consistently been stereotyped by the media through racial tropes. Part of what has been decided is the Black body is considered hypersexual; as McKay and Johnson (2008) explained, the perceived racial differences embodied by Black women continue to propagate within historical and cultural associations with grotesque and deviant

sexuality (p. 493). Racial, hypersexual tropes were a type of sexism white women did not have to deal with; if anything, white women played a considerable role in terms of perpetuating the stereotypes. Adjepong (2017) clarified the importance of better understanding how some sportswomen may be complicit in oppressing other women when they "'race to innocence' by attempting to distance themselves from oppression through emphasizing their own marginalization or asserting their investments in normative categories" (p. 211).

Landsbury (2014) noted, "Black women had to contend with racial stereotypes that white women did not, such as the hypersexualized black female or the natural black athlete" (p. 6). Racial stereotypes could be as overt as a BFA being characterized as having a "deviant sexuality" (Schultz, 2005, p. 339) due to their type of on-court attire, whereas a white woman may be considered "an attractive woman with a body that justified the outfit. The so-called average woman with the average body could not get away with such a fashion statement" (Schultz, 2005, p. 343). This emphasis on hypersexuality changed how BFAs were viewed and also actively treated in society and in their respective athletic careers.

Until recently, scholars have avoided delving deeply into how much the race of a female athlete affects how they are sexualized. White women are routinely sexualized with words like "cute," "pretty," "feminine," or beautiful," whereas Black women are sexualized with words like "deviant," "grotesque," "pornographically erotic," "inappropriate," or "ho" (Douglas, 2005; Hill Collins, 2000; Mowatt et al., 2017; Zenquis & Mwaniki, 2019). Female athletes of all races and ethnicities have always been considered overtly sexual by the media. Their performances and even successes have taken a backseat to what their hair looked like, if they wore makeup and how much, or what outfit they wore; additionally, as Martin (2010) noted, "Black female athletes are seen as potential commodities" (p. 213). This hypersexuality has caused BFAs be considered

sexual items in media and widespread discourse. BFAs and their sexuality do not get the benefit of the doubt to be considered innocent or virginal; instead, the media have equated hypersexual with "erotic," as Lorde (1984) named it, but the definition is not the same. According to Lorde (1984), "The erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling" (p. 53). Unfortunately, Lorde (1984) also noted:

> We have been taught to suspect this resource, vilified, abused, and devalued within western society. On the one hand, the superficially erotic has been encouraged as a sign of female inferiority; on the other hand, women have been made to suffer and to feel both contemptible and suspect by virtue of its existence. (p. 53)

This sentiment is no different than how BFAs' eroticism has been used as a method to oppress them.

A definition used in Heywood's (1998, as cited by McKay & Johnson, 2008) work that aligned with Lorde's (1984) description of erotic was "'athletic eroticism,' in which sexuality is 'one dimension of human experience, as a quality that emerges from the self-possession, autonomy, and strength so evident in the body of a female athlete'" (p. 492). The description is one and the same. Eroticism, or athletic eroticism, is only considered part of a BFA's identity, and because of that, negative connotations are attached to it. McKay and Johnson (2008) also noted, "The perceived racial differences embodied by black women continue to be propagated within historical and cultural associations with grotesque and deviant sexuality" (p. 493). The concepts of eroticism or athletic eroticism became considered deviant due to the race of the women who embodied the term.

The term “hypersexual” has also been framed with other words that hold a negative connotation. As noted by Cooky et al. (2010), “Rarely are Black women framed in media outside of ‘sexualized,’ ‘lascivious,’ ‘wild,’ ‘primitive,’ ‘animal-like,’ ‘unfeminine,’ ‘welfare queens,’ or ‘matriarchal’ frames” (p. 154). These words are never used when describing white female athletes. No matter how successful a BFA is, these stereotypical words may be used to describe them. Success is not a method media use to discriminate; as Cooky et al. (2010) noted, “Despite the Williams sisters’ unprecedented success in professional tennis, the mainstream sport media discursively positioned their bodies as simultaneously sexually grotesque and pornographically erotic” (p. 142). Because of BFAs’ bodies, they are immediately deemed as hypersexual, promiscuous, easy, or wanton (Douglas, 2002; Hill Collins, 1990; McKay & Johnson, 2008; Schultz, 2005). Often, there is an assumption that BFAs with those types of bodies and who wear certain outfits that make those attributes stick out more would naturally be more sexually inclined (Douglas, 2002).

The thought of BFAs having hypersexuality has then caused media to equate a BFA’s body with a deviance that white female athletes never have due to societal standards. Schultz (2005) noted:

> Hobson argued that by attacking Williams for her “tackiness” and “inappropriate” display of sexuality in the catsuit, the press reinvigorates “a racialized sense of aesthetics that position blackness in terms of grotesquerie while whiteness serves as an emblem of beauty.” (p. 346)

As said before, it does not matter what the BFAs wear when their bodies are already considered deviant.

This idea of hypersexuality has also been recognized to extend from media into college athletics. A student–athlete described her weight room experiences to Bruening et al. (2005) as "a lot of women athletes, primarily the Black women athletes, are basically associated with sex . . . you look good and you have a great body and you drive men crazy. Automatically the minute you walk into the weight room" (p. 95). These voices also play a role in perpetuating the idea of hypersexuality even when the media are not involved. These voices affect their workouts, performance, and education if heard enough.

Regardless of how dark or light a BFA's skin color is, the media have deemed that the athlete is hypersexual, subsequently furthering harmful stereotypes. Being closer to a white complexion does not necessarily appease the media; it just changes the framing of descriptions from the look of an animal to exotic. According to Carter-Francique and Richardson (2016):

> Framed as the exotic vixen, Christian, virgin of the 2012 London Games, [Lolo] Jones received an overwhelming majority of media attention based on this narrative which some found problematic because she did not earn a medal at the 2008 Games and barely earned a place on the 2012 team. (p. 11)

As Lolo Jones saw, status as a Christian virgin does not inherently soften media coverage (Carter-Francique & Richardson, 2016). Once a female athlete is deemed Black, they are likely hypersexualized. These stereotypes can lead to dangerous situations; in this study, the participants mentioned incidences when they were thought to be sex workers while in Europe. Men would follow them home, touch them inappropriately, or put them in dangerous positions because of these hypersexual assumptions.

BFAs also have to deal with being masculinized in ways that white female athletes never experience. This masculinization was forced upon them early on in history, when they were

“female slaves and followed by their continued subjection as sharecroppers and domestic workers, encouraged perceptions that they were masculinized by the vicious demands for their labor and were bred for physical qualities” (Vertinsky & Captain, 1998, p. 544). Even as time passed and slavery in its most overt forms were deemed illegal, stereotypes of slavery associated with BFAs still continued and persists into current times. These stereotypes have consistently been equated with the physical build of BFAs. Vertinsky and Captain (1998) demonstrated these ideas about the “Amazonian work capacity, and lack of physical and emotional sensitivity” (p. 545) of Black female slaves, equating to modern “notions about the natural strength and ‘manly’ athletic abilities of black women in running, jumping, and throwing activities” (p. 545).

The connection to slavery makes it more acceptable to discuss BFAs in animalistic terms by considering them as superhuman and then consequently treating them as such. Harris (1995) explained how these stereotypes bleed into relentless discussions of how Black women are always dicussed as strong and able to hande more than the average woman. Black women have carried the weight of being considered strong for centuries with a weight on their shoulder that entails “a stereotype creating a black woman more suprahuman than human, but also one with an implied ideology of domination, tyranny, and masculinity” (Vertinsky & Captain, 1998, p. 553). The connection of strength with masculinity has then impacted BFAs in terms of being considered “suprahuman, certainly more than female which means that often we have praised them for exhibiting traits that western culture has traditionally designated more masculine than feminine” (Harris, 1995, p. 123). The masculine traits given to them by society then bleed over into their defeminization of their bodies by also questioning their sex.

Questioning the sex of certain BFAs has been used as a tool to harm them and keep them from participating in events. One example occurred mid-20th century with Althea Gibson, who

was only allowed to participate in a national championship tennis match after she "took a chromosome test to confirm she was female" (Douglas, 2005, p. 129). More recently, the case of Caster Semenya has been an ongoing debate that has left her out of competition opportunities because of her appearance. In 2009, Semenya won the 800-meter event at the world championships; yet, as Zenquis and Mwaniki (2019) noted:

> [She was] publicly accused of being a man and underwent "gender verification" tests. Although the results of the test were never publicly revealed, it was reported that Semenya had to undergo some sort of 'therapy' to resolve whatever kind of "condition" she apparently has. (p. 27)

Even though the results of these tests were resolved and allowed Semenya to continue to compete and ultimately win at her events, she would go through another round of dehumanizing and defeminizing debates and comments from not only the media, but also those competing against her (Zenquis & Mwaniki, 2019). Very noticeable are the gender identities and races of those who have received such attention and arguments about their sex; as Zenquis and Mwaniki (2019) stated, it is "difficult to ignore the fact that the most recent allegations of 'women being men' have fallen on Black and Brown bodies from the global South" (p. 27). The intersecting oppressions then perpetuate Black women being manly and winning—not because of their skill, work ethic, or experience, but simply because they are men competing as women. These violent racist and sexist stereotypes then harm any cisgendered or intersex woman who has naturally higher testosterone, such as Dutee Chan, Caster Semenya, Aminatou Seyni, Margaret Wambui, and Francine Niyonsaba, all Black women (López, 2021; Macur, 2014).

One of the best tennis players in history, Serena Williams, has had to consistently deal with comments about her body, her buttocks, legs, clothing choices, hair, style of play, and

interactions with officials. Williams is a prime example of how one could be considered manly but at the same time hypersexualized, as her "physical build puts into question her status as a woman and quality/worth as an athlete, while her body is also hypersexualized in discourses about the size of her secondary sex characteristics" (Zenquis & Mwaniki, 2019, p. 27). The defeminizing threat shown to her has continued with other BFAs whose "bodies do not fit the White ideal of body type (limited musculature and athleticism), size (petite), and high voices, [and are] immediately rendered suspect and indeed criminalized" (Zenquis & Mwaniki, 2019, p. 27). With their bodies deemed unacceptable by standards of white supremacy, they then are not considered women at all, and instead are viewed as taking opportunities to play and win from other female athletes (i.e., white female athletes).

BFAs are subsequently discriminated against due to these intersecting oppressions, yet many still manage to find success. In this study, participants noted they lived consistently while perceived by those in society as hypersexual or masculine, regardless of skin color, height, sexual orientation, body size, hair, or clothing. These oppressions led to the consistent perpetuation of harmful and violent stereotypes that created unsafe spaces for them—not only when competing, but also when traveling to competitions.

Unequal Space

Research on BFAs through a geographical lens is woefully inadequate, and even more limited when considering the effects of space on both their competitive and personal lives. Bale (1998) noted, "The use of sports to provide insights into geographical questions has tended to be the exception rather than the rule and the focus of most sports-geographic study has been to further our knowledge of sports" (p. 518). To gain an understanding of the unequalness of space, one must understand that space creates feelings of being unwelcome or dangerous, something many

young BFAs are unable to verbally describe. Young BFAs are taught that they are not allowed the same access to space as other athletes, especially white athletes. Not only do they have a heightened awareness of self, they have a heightened sense of who they are not, but are told to be by others. Duncan (1996) explained the sense of awareness BFAs must maintain because they consistently have to negotiate standards of beauty, size, color, ugliness, goodness, and intelligence, all within a white supremacist society not built nor maintained for them. This negotiation goes a step further when BFAs in white spaces must contend with existing stereotypes of Black females that perpetuate the intersection of racism and sexism. According to Ferguson (2021), "The history of Black women is dominated by narratives they did not write for themselves. Many of these narratives harness negative images and stereotypes about Black women" (p. 5). In places that do not have many Black people, stereotypes may be the only thing residents have of Black people due to media influence.

BFAs enter into these white spaces that seem inviting because they are athletic spaces but can still be exclusionary; as Massey (2013) stated, "Place is not synonymous to community (p. 153). Rather, as Ferguson (2021) explained, "Individuals and their relationships within a particular environment can influence the arrangement of power and social structures within a social institution, such as higher education" (p. 15). BFAs entering historically white spaces reflects a revolutionary act because they disrupt the status quo by their presence and actively dismantle standard ideals of beauty, education, and what it means to be a Black athlete (Duncan, 1996; Ferguson, 2021; Massey, 2013). Many competition sites are considered white spaces—not only because of the race of most competitors, but because of the location, fanbase, expense of attendance, venue operations, and the rules, customs, or standards associated with the site. Just as with college campuses, Ferguson (2021) noted:

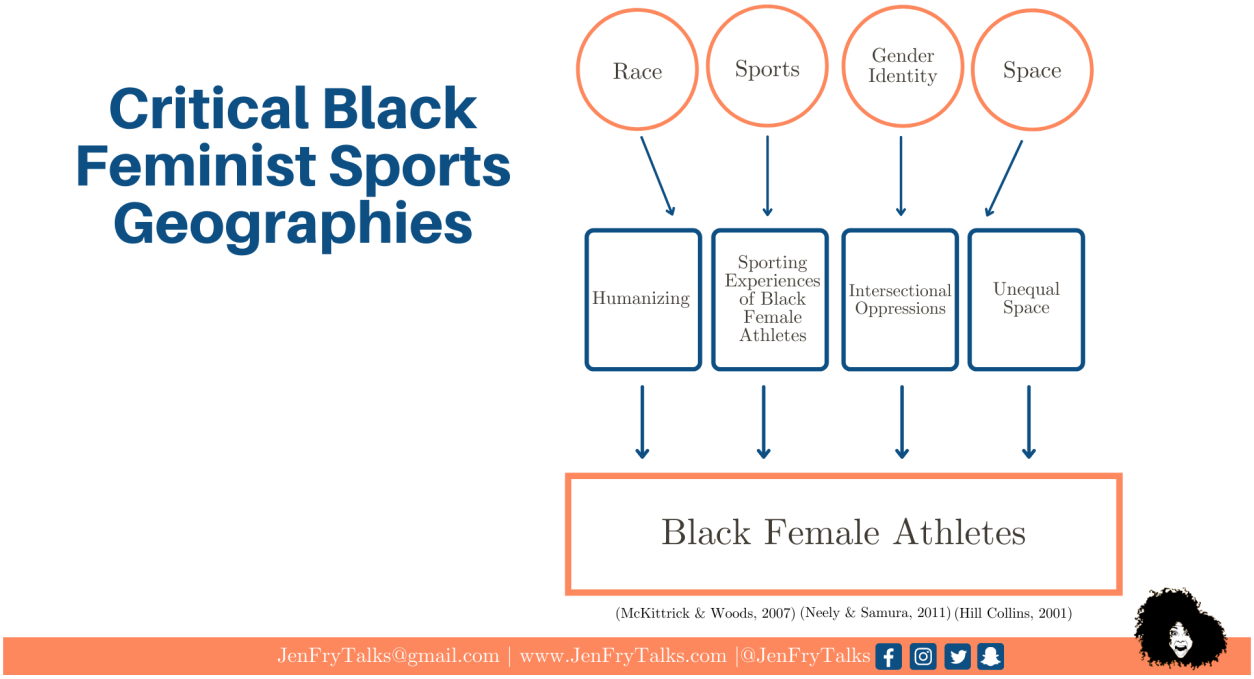
> [H]ow Black women student–athletes experience college is influenced by how institutional relationships and social structures are designed to support them (place), how their race and gender are understood by their campus community, and how their physical presence impacts the environments they inhabit (space). (p. 23)

So too does the same impact occur when BFAs compete in their sport. To be a BFA is to be both visible and invisible, to be critical and disruptive, to be expected to be loud and chastise, to be quiet (Ferguson, 2021).

Unequal space includes the space around the competition site where BFAs compete. These spaces can feel uncomfortable or anxiety-inducing to BFAs in ways other athletes cannot comprehend. Some of these competition spaces are rural and in small towns; as Cloke and Little (1997, as cited by Garland & Chakraborti, 2006) stated, these spaces "are often more cautious, conservative and essentially 'circumspect' in nature than many residents like to admit" (p. 163). There may be an unspoken understanding that BFAs are not welcome in those areas. Even though sports have gotten more diverse, many fanbases, coaching staffs, medical staffs, and teams are not yet equally diverse, thereby creating and sustaining unequal space (Cunningham, 2022; Lapchick, 2017, 2020; Mizoguchi, 2021; Nguyen, 2021; Pavlidis, 2018; Quinn, 2021). BFAs are expected to compete at the top of their game in spaces noticeably unequal, and in spaces so steeped in whiteness they can both experience covert racism and treatment as second-class citizens or explicit terrorization. Figure 3 assists in furthering these connections, both visually and conceptually, between race, sport, gender identity, and space.

Figure 3

Critical Black Feminist Sport Geographies Graphic



Critical Black feminist sports geographies is a conceptual framework developed to bring together previously unrelated theoretical frameworks and build on the ideals of completely centering BFAs through a geographical lens. This conceptual framework served as the logical conceptualization of this study and involved essential consideration of the research questions I asked and the concerns I had (Kivunja, 2018). This conceptual framework reflected what McDonald and Birrell (1999) explained as "mov[ing] beyond the confines of particular disciplinary boundaries" (p. 286) and worked to expand existing analyses of BFAs and the complexities of their identities and experiences. Following data collection, I revisited the conceptual framework based on the findings and adjusted to better understand how place and

space has created or defined the racial experiences of professional BFVPs when playing internationally—not just in Europe, but all over the world.

Future Implications

Future BFVPs

The life of a professional athlete can appear very sexy. Many people only see the social media side of the athlete's life, with the sponsors, glamorous photographs, and the ability to travel the world. Unfortunately, few know about the less glamorous, more chilling side; for instance, there is little protection for professional volleyball players if they are not paid by the club, or if the club goes bankrupt. Some participants in this study discussed not getting paid for months—if there is no stipulation within the contract to leave if not paid, the athletes have to decide between playing but not getting paid or just not playing professionally anymore. Bianca, one such athlete and a survey participant, discussed her decade-long lawsuit with a club to receive the rest of the contract that was promised to her.

Such stories are not unique; stories like Bianca's occur on a consistent basis. There is an immediate expectation to produce or be fired quickly, because contracts offer little-to-no protection for the athlete. Compounded is the possibility for an athlete's visa status to be included in her contract or if she works under the table. Issues with immigration can be exacerbated by loneliness and isolation BFVPs may feel when playing out of their country or far from home for the first time in their lives.

In addition, because these athletes are Black women, they will be fetishized in some countries when attempting to date. Some participants were thought to be sex workers, and the dangerous or uncomfortable situations their Blackness can put them in can be hard to fathom

even though dating as a woman just in general can be dangerous. Being considered a sex worker when wearing sweats or gym attire was the furthest thing from their minds.

Finally, it is important that future professional BFVPs understand the medical support issues they could run into when playing in Europe. There were many horror stories experienced by professional volleyball players while in Europe: (a) not being treated by the correct type of doctor; (b) not getting a truthful diagnosis, (c) not having the option to do physical therapy, (d) being expected to play while being injured, and lastly, (e) not being able to return to the U.S. for surgery. These are all situations that can have huge implications for someone's health and their overall experience while playing professionally.

Academia

As T. F. Carter (2011) stated, "There remains an enormous amount of research to be done on global sports and international sport migration. Research on both is still in their preliminary stages" (p. 78). Scholars should use these findings across numerous disciplines to show how intertwined geography and sports are to not only geography, but to many other areas of sports. This research meant to showcase the power of professional BFAs' voices—voices that have been consistently silenced within geography due to the lack of research in that area as well as a lack of focus on how place and space affect Black athletes specifically. With more and more Black athletes not only playing volleyball professionally, but also coaching at the various levels within the United States, it is paramount their voices are included in the research.

Sports Geography

Sports geography has historically focused on the more physical aspects of geography—such as cartography, statistics, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS)—to understand how landscapes, stadiums, fields, and location are affected by sport, affect sport, or are problematic to

sport (Bale, 1990, 1994, 2000). This focus on the physcial elements of sports geography has been marketed as studies on how landscapes affect athletes, rather than studying the athletes within these landscapes. Researchers such as Conner (20016) have more recently studied place and space within sports geography, especially related to the body, as there has been an attempt to use more humanistic methods to view sports. This humanistic view has led to more research completed on interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects of the intersection of sports geography and people.

A steady stream of researchers within and outside of sports geography have studied sport migration domestically and internationally, with emphasis on sport, regional variations, and athletes. There have also been consistent studies on global migration within sports geography through the lens of large-scale movements of athletes and coaches, with some scholars asking questions as to what causes their movements and how their movements affect sport (Bale & Maguire, 1994; Butler, 2015; Maguire, 1999; Maguire & Falcous, 2011; Maguire & Stead, 1998). In the last few decades, research under sports geography has started to cast a wider net at how sports geography is included in topical areas, such as globalization, diplomacy, international relations, geopolitics, nationalism and national identity, ethnicity and race, gender and sexuality, religion, fandom, and the economy (Conner, 2016).

Amid all of these physcial, human, and cultural geographical aspects of sports geography, there remained a gap in the literature on BFAs specifically and how intersecting identities of race and gender are named and researched through a geographical lens. Researching BFAs through a geographical lens can assist geographers by providing a starting point for examining larger social issues (A. Coleman, 2006). This entry point can assist with understanding how the intersection of gender and race have complex influences on sports geography.

College Coaching Staffs

Many college coaching staffs want their athletes to continue playing professionally. Not only does it reflect well on their program when those athletes do so, but it also is a huge recruiting bonus. Showing future Black collegiate volleyball players they have the opportunity to play professionally can be the difference between a top BFVP committing to their program or attending another, especially if the coaches have the contacts and knowledge about playing professionally on a global basis if they agree to attend those colleges. This knowledge can also help coaching staffs have more nuanced conversations with their athletes—not only about the opportunities they could have, but also the potential harm that could occur within certain countries in which they could play. Such conversations can be very helpful for athletes when making the decision of what contract to take.

In addition, this information can help prepare other BFVPs who are considering playing professional sport. These findings provide information about what things they need to prepare for—not only skills, but mentally. If, for instance, a player has never been out of the United States, this advice may help them navigate how to handle being in a different culture, how to live in places that may never have seen a Black person in real life, and how to manage feelings of isolation and loneliness. Finally, as seen by how many teams each participant has played for—with the exception of Bianca, who played in Italy for all 14 of her seasons—the athletes in this sport will see frequent relocation, sometimes within the same month or season, and sometimes within the same or different country or even continent. The more conversations coaching staff can have during the BFVPs' college careers to prepare them, the smoother transition they will have.

Agents

All participants described how important agents were in the process of placement, finding teams, managing contracts, contract negotiations, helping the participants get paid, and assisting with conflict that could occur between the participant and the team. As Butler (2015) stated:

> [A]gents will be able to use this information to place participants on the teams that would be the best fit, depending on where the client is in her career, her athletic ability, and how well she may be able to adjust to life outside of the U.S. (p. 210)

This research can help agents better understand and recognize teams that are in unsafe areas for BFVPs and consider having conversations with the athletes during contract negotiations about the potential hazards of where that team is located—be it in a place that is homogenous, rural, or has a history of rude and volatile fans. Many times, agencies receive concerns verbalized by the BFVPs but ignore or dismiss them, especially if they play on teams considered lower level and without large salaries.

The more information agents can give to athletes, the better. Amid the racial unrest occurring around the world, the racism Black athletes face is not only emotionally draining, but also can be physically dangerous. The previously described abuse targeted at Black male soccer players does not only stay with soccer; it may start to infiltrate volleyball. Volleyball agents should stay up to date on racial issues occurring within Europe and in the countries where they represent BFVPs. It can be easy to place a BFVP and only talk to them about contracts and team opportunities, but if agents do not also discuss things that personally affect them, a BFVP may feel like they are not viewed as human beings, only replaceable bodies. Agents should read about the experiences BFVPs have undergone—both those who were a part of their agency and those who were not—and ask if they attempted to solve the issues or they allowed them to continue.

Current Professional BFVPs

Some participants mentioned my research study was helpful to understand the experiences other U.S. BFVPs had in other countries. They found it advantageous to hear about those experiences, and to know they were not alone in the racial issues they experienced. Many participants noted they were consistently the only Black volleyball player on their team, and how isolating that experience could be, especially when in countries where they did not speak the language. They explained how excited they would get if they saw another Black female on the team they played against, even if that player was not from the United States, just because they had someone who shared their identity. Participants noted it was difficult to admit that consistent microaggressions or harmful interactions actually occurred, and people occasionally made them feel as if they made up what was said. Because of that, this research was validating; the BFVPs recognized they were not the only ones navigating these challenges. One participant said they would love to have a panel of BFVPs to talk with each other about their experiences.

It is also important that current professional BFVPs pay attention to who provides them with medical help. Bianca had a story in which a dentist was used in place of a medical doctor to take care of an injury, and the language barrier was used as a way to not get her the help that she needed:

> My knee was acting up, and my [first] team in Italy had me [go for] a medical visit and the doctor was like, "Oh, there's nothing wrong, you just have a little inflammation in your knee," and I was like, "Oh, okay." He was like, "Okay, just take some ibuprofen and ice it and everything." That night I got—this is how Italians work—I got an anonymous phone call at midnight. It was the voice of a lady that said, "Bianca, I wanted to tell you that the doctor that visited you today was a dentist." *He was a dentist* [Emphasis added].

> She said, "I just wanted to tell you that your knee needs to be operated on." [Then] my team sold me to the second Italian team, and I had to go. . . . When I got there, my knee was acting up… After a month, it got really bad, I couldn't play. I had my agent write in the contract to where if I couldn't play for the second Italian team, I would go back to the first Italian team, they had to pay me. [So] I went back to the other team. They had to pay me. Actually, I went back to the States to [have my knee operated] on . . . I could have done it here, but I was like, "I have my own insurance," and so [I was operated on] in the states. Weird stuff like that . . . I didn't know any better because my Italian wasn't that good, but I thought he was a doctor, but he was a dentist. That's crazy.

These types of stories may be shocking to people in the United States, because professional teams have the best medical staff available, and athletes' bodies are treated as expensive; the same could not be said for the experiences BFVPs had in Europe. CeCe explained it is important to "ask and see about what sports medicine is associated with the team, if any," because knowing ahead of time what type of sports medicine program the team has can alleviate any potential problems down the road of their injuries not being treated correctly and causing long-term debilitation. The athletes reported numerous horror stories in which they were misdiagnosed by the medical staff either on purpose or by accident; such misdiagnoses can cost significant time, money, and lasting effects on their bodies. Some clubs put in their professional volleyball players' contracts stipulations that the athletes were not allowed to go to the United States for surgery, and that any necessary surgery had to occur in the country of the club and by their medical staff.

Conclusion

This dissertation was designed to focus on and center BFVPs. This research was used as a place to uplift the voices and experiences of BFVPs, as they have been ones who have tended to remain on the margins of research. This dissertation not only adds to the sparse research on BFAs within sports geography, but also adds to the disciplines that have begun conducting research on BFAs. I intended to give current and future professional BFVPs advice to assist them in making better decisions on choosing agents, locations of play, contracts, and all other logistics that come with deciding to play professionally. As Simien et al. (2019) explained, there is little scholarship that has examined experiences of professional BFAs in their collegiate athletic lives and subsequent transitions to their international professional lives; thus, focusing on the experiences of BFVPs who have consistently been underrepresented in research and, especially within sports geography, was critically important.

When I started in pursuit of my doctorate, I knew I wanted to uplift the voices and experiences of those I knew—my friends, former camp coworkers, mentors, recruiting partners, travel roommates, or those whom I had watched play in college. This research was an opportunity to give space to BFVPs and exclusively center them. Conducting this research within the discipline of geography and the subdiscipline of sports geography was done to create space in a predominantly white space, something Black women have had to do their whole lives. Creating space for myself as a Black woman and for other Black women is all I have ever known to do. This dissertation assisted me in accomplishing this goal. The dissertation elevated how race and identity affects the experiences of professional athletes in Europe, or any other country outside of the United States. Many of the professional BFAs who participated in my research did not have people to talk to who would both empathize with them on their experiences but also give solid

advice to help find solutions. As Hill Collins (2000) noted, "Despite Black women always being considered outspoken and self-assertive speakers, the overarching theme of finding a voice to express a collective, self-defined Black women's standpoint remains a core theme in Black feminist thought" (p. 99). Hopefully, the collective, self-defined voice will include this document.

Writing this work and telling the participants' stories in a humanizing and easily digestible format was essential to me. I did not want the experiences to get lost in academic speak, written for people who would not understand it. I wanted those who read this research to have the sensation of bearing witness to a conversation between Black women, a conversation to which many are not privy.

The theoretical frameworks were chosen to help tell the story of the participants but also integrate easily into the critical Black feminist sports geographies conceptual framework I developed. I developed this framework that focused on gender, geography, race, and sports to explain the racial experiences of professional BFVPs. Once I realized there was not a framework that adequately told the stories of professional BFVPs, I decided to create one to use for research on professional Black athletes globally and, depending on the location of the few professional teams in the United States, domestically as well.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

This research attempted to illustrate to current or former professional athletes, college coaches, and student–athletes that there is an academic space that can showcase how their experiences of crossing borders, both domestically and internationally, to play sport and how those who travel to different places will create different experiences for them as BFAs. Sports geography is a field that has little research specifically considering race and its impact on athletes, fans, coaches, or

anyone involved in the sport. Because of this lack of research, there has been a gap in not only different identities being researched, but also who has conducted the research. My research focused on a specific group of BFAs; yet there is a large opening not only within sports geography to start researching the effects of identity on all things sports, but also using a geographical lens when researching sports. As sports is a subdiscipline not fully studied within geography, there is ample room to focus solely on all aspects of sport. The following areas can be researched with a geographical lens to explore how place and space are important parts of geography to consider. The few areas in sports geography that have been researched have rarely documented the experiences of BFAs and have often missed the nuanced understanding of race, gender, geography, and sports through an intersectional viewpoint.

Research That Examines Professional BFAs

There is a large gap in the research on BFAs through a geographical lens. More and more BFAs play sports internationally, whether it be WNBA players who also play in Europe (Butler, 2015), track athletes who compete in Europe as parts of the numerous qualifiers or championships in their event, soccer players who have the opportunity to play professionally in women's leagues, or other sports who have events in Europe throughout their career. Understanding the effects of space, place, and geography on these athletes can help add to a sparse field. This research can also uplift more experiences to show a variety of experiences, rather than just relying on Black males or white women. Black women have often been thought to be invading space—not only in a predominantly white sport, but also in predominantly white countries. Puwar's (2004) notion of space invaders was useful in helping to make sense of the position of the BFA. Puwar theorized the ways in which bodies are perceived as belonging within certain spaces. Research on BFAs

should include understanding how they interact with space, and how they have too often been percieved as constantly invading space as if they do not belong.

Research That Examines Professional Female Athletes Globally

Although there is more research on female athletes globally starting to take place, it still sadly lacks when in comparison to the research on men's sports. Some useful and insightful articles, however, have emerged about the experiences of female soccer players, both those of color and white (Adjepong, 2020; Adjepong & Carrington, 2014; Agergaard & Ryba, 2014; Botelho & Agergaard, 2011). These articles are important because they focus on a variety of experiences for female athletes globally. More can be done by diverse researchers with participants of diverse backgrounds by having their voices centered and uplifted—asking questions about parenting, having children while playing professionally, dating, relationships, or simply asking the same questions as male athletes are asked. It is important researchers ask the same questions to see if the answers are the same, and if not, how they differ. Women's sports have so much room for research, and when the research is performed, it is essential to ensure there are diverse participants.

Research That Examines Sports Geography Through a Race-Based Lens

Sports geography—not just that which comprises athletes or coaches, but also the landscape and the fans—should be researched through race-based theoretical frameworks and lenses. This focus should include those who identify as white as well as predominantly white spaces. Much of the existing research on sports geography has been viewed through frameworks that assume participants are white unless explicitly stated otherwise. These frameworks then center whiteness in ways that are not easily noticeable, because the ones conducting the research and the participants are usually white. There is an unspoken centering of white or Eurocentric ideals that

has left Black athletes and their experiences on the margins. Using race-based theoretical frameworks for sports geography can help researchers understand the nuanced and complex ways marginalization occurs to Black athletes.

Research That Examines Sports Geography Through a Socioeconomic Status and Class Lens

Within sports geography, socioeconomic status and class remains an overlooked opportunity that should be explored with incorporated considerations of race and gender. Socioeconomic status can play a large role in why some players cannot play in European countries or other countries worldwide, as well as potentially why athletes in countries around the world do play—the opportunity to help their support family members at home.

These recommendations for future research are complex due to sports geography not fully being considered a discipline within geography. Studying modern-day professional athletes of all gender identities, races, and ethnicities through a geographical lens can help promote how much geography is a part of sport, its migration, its effects on communities, and how it truly can change the world. Due to the intersection of racial, gendered, sexual, and classed oppression, Black sportswomen are faced with unique circumstances as they play professional sports (Adjepong & Carrington, 2014).

Application of the Critical Black Feminist Sport Geographies to Other BFAs Employing Their Athletic Skills, e.g., Track and Field, Basketball, or Cycling

Critical Black feminist sports geographies can be used as a theoretical framework on not only volleyball players, but all BFAs who play a sport—both team sports and individual sports. This framework helps researchers and scholars understand the relationship among concepts for BFAs in relation to the real world by linking concepts, ideas, and experiences. The application of

critical Black feminist sport geographies entails critiquing BFAs' experiences through a theoretical framework that centers the nuances that come with being an athlete.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Semi-Structured One-On-One Interview Questions

The following are examples of questions that might be asked during the interviews. Questions will be adapted to fit each individual participant and conversation.

Demographic questions

- Name
- Age
- Hometown
- Currently residence
- How long were you a professional player?
- What countries did you play in?
- How many professional teams did you play on?

College Volleyball

- How did you get involved in the sport of volleyball?
- What do you love most about playing volleyball??
- What volleyball clubs in the U.S did you play for?
- What was your experience playing club volleyball in the U.S.?
- What was the racial make-up of the U.S. volleyball clubs teams you played on?
- What was the racial make-up of your U.S. volleyball clubs?
- What was the racial make-up of your U.S. volleyball club coaches?
- What college(s) did you play for?
- What was your experience playing collegiate volleyball in the U.S.?
- What was the racial make-up of the teams you played on?
- What was the racial make-up of your college coaches?
- What was the racial make-up of your college or university?
- Any specific episodes in your college career in which race played an important role.
- Were there times when you experienced any racism in volleyball in college? What happened? Where was it?

Professional Volleyball

- What made you want to play professionally?
- What motivated you to go overseas to play volleyball?
- How did you find out about playing volleyball overseas?
- Do you have anyone who mentored you when you decided to play overseas?
- Who were the main people you got your information from?
- Did you have an agent and if so how did you find them?
- What was the racial make-up of your agent?
- How did you find the teams you played on?
- How is it similar to and/or different from playing in the U.S? How has your experience with fans been in all places?

- When playing professionally what role in your experiences did language have? How did this impact you?
- When playing professionally what language (s) did your coach speak? How did this impact you?

Race

- What is your definition of racism?
- Were there times when you were hyperaware of being an American? What happened?
- Were there times when you were hyperaware of being African American/Black? What happened?
- Were there times when you were hyperaware of being African American/Black female? What happened?
- Could you separate if you were treated differently to being Black or being Black female?
- Were there times when you were hyperaware of being "different" in (country)? What happened?
- What was your experience playing volleyball in _____ (will insert individual countries played in)?
- Were there times when you experienced any racism while playing professionally overseas?
- What was the racial make-up of your professional clubs teams?
- What was the racial make-up of your professional clubs team coaches?
- Did you have Black female teammates?
- If you did, how did you interact with them? Did you hang out together?
- How were you treated by your professional clubs team coaches?
- How were you treated by your professional club teammates?
- What was your experience outside of volleyball, what type of activities did you do outside of volleyball just for fun?
- How was dating as a Black female volleyball player overseas?
- What things are included in contracts?
- How do you advocate for yourself to get better contracts?
- How do you get more opportunities to play on teams in higher levels?
- What are some things you wish you knew when deciding to play professionally?
- What type of advice would you give to American Black female volleyball players who are interested in pursuing a professional volleyball career?
- Is there anything that you would like to add that you feel we haven't covered?

APPENDIX B

Introduction Survey

- Name
- Age
- Gender
- Race
- What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- Do you hold citizenship in any countries outside of the U.S?
- Hometown
- Did you play professional volleyball overseas?
- How many years did you play professional volleyball overseas?
- How many countries did you play professional volleyball overseas in?
- What countries did you play professional volleyball overseas in?
- How many clubs have you played professional volleyball for?
- Where were your clubs, please click the location on the map.
- What were the names, years, and levels of the teams you played on?
- Would you be interested in being interviewed for a research study that examines the racial experiences of current or former professional American Black female volleyball players who play or have played volleyball on an international professional team?
    - If so, please add your email and phone number

APPENDIX C

Participant Demographics Table

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant	Age Bracket	Highest level of education
Legz	18–25	Master's
RevolutionaryBitch	34–41	Bachelor's
Diamond	26–33	Bachelor's
Kennedy Jones	18–25	Bachelor's
Sloane	34–41	Bachelor's
Mini	26–33	Master's
African Queen	26–33	Master's
Sexual Chocolate	18–25	Bachelor's
CeCe	26–33	Bachelor's
Sasha	26–33	Master's
Goldie Carnousty	18–25	Bachelor's
Carmel Delight	26–33	Bachelor's
Half-Pint Hottie	42–49	Master's
Bianca	50–57	Bachelor's
Slim	34–41	Master's
Snickers	34–41	Master's
Crystal	34–41	Bachelor's
Sharon	34–41	Bachelor's

APPENDIX D

Participants' Playing Experience Demographic Table

Table 3

Breakdown of Participants' Playing Experiences

Participant	Years played professional volleyball overseas	Number of countries played professionally in	Number of clubs played professionally for?
Legz	2–4	1–3	1–3
RevolutionaryBitch	2–4	1–3	1–3
Diamond	2–4	4–6	4–6
Kennedy Jones	2–4	1–3	1–3
Sloane	2–4	4–6	4–6
Mini	2–4	1–3	1–3
African Queen	2–4	1–3	1–3
Sexual Chocolate	2–4	4–6	1–3
CeCe	2–4	1–3	1–3
Sasha	4–6	4–6	4–6
Goldie Carnousty	4–6	4–6	4–6
Carmel Delight	6–8	4–6	4–6
Half-Pint Hottie	over 8 years	7–9	10–12
Bianca	over 8 years	1–3	7–9
Slim	over 8 years	4–6	4–6
Snickers	over 8 years	10–12	10–12
Crystal	over 8 years	10–12	10–12
Sharon	2–4	1–3	1–3

APPENDIX E

Invitation to Survey Recipients

Hi (Blank),

Thank you for your willingness to be interviewed for my dissertation study on "Black, Set Spike: The Racial Experiences of Professional Black Volleyball Players in Europe!"

I am so excited to get to listen to your stories and give a voice not only to our experiences, to but also help those who are coming after us to know what they might potentially be getting into. The interview will be about an hour to 2 hours on zoom, depending on how much we chat. It will be recorded and transcribed. Once that occurs you will have access to the transcription in case there is anything you see that didn't transcribe the way you wanted it to. I have attached a document with the questions. It is a semi-structured interview with questions to guide us but not fully stick to. Below are two click through links, you can fill it out before we chat or I will put it in the chat box when we meet to fill it out. It will talk about 20 seconds to fill out. If you don't find a time that works, please email me, I can open up the later time on my calendar!

If you have any questions, please let me know,

I look forward to our conversation!

Jen Fry

xxxxx@msu.edu

XXX-XXX-XXXX

APPENDIX F

Facebook Invitation to Potential Participants

Hey friend! It is time!

I am starting the research part of my dissertation and gathering info. Would you be willing to fill this survey out and/or send this info to any black female volleyball players you know who play or played overseas. Survey will take them 2 minutes.

I have finally finished my classes for my PhD and received IRB approval to start the next phase of my PhD which is to start the research on my topic: The racial experiences of U.S. Black female volleyball players overseas.

Within this phase I am contacting Black female volleyball players who played overseas in a survey, once I have the results of this survey, I will narrow down the list to 10-15 people to interview. The survey should take 5-8 minutes max. Please fill it out, and if you have any friends that fit the criteria of being a Black female born in the U.S. or with U.S. citizenship/green card please forward them the link. If you have any questions please message me, email me at xxxxx@msu.edu, or call/text me at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Survey link: [Redacted]

Thank you so much!
Jen Fry

APPENDIX G

Instagram Invitation to Potential Participants

Hey friend! It is time!

I am starting the research part of my dissertation which is on the racial experiences of professional black volleyball players who played overseas and am gathering info. Would you be willing to fill this survey out and/or send this info to any Black female volleyball players you know who play or played overseas. Survey will take 2 minutes.

Within this phase I am contacting Black female volleyball players who played overseas in a survey, once I have the results of this survey, I will narrow down the list to 10-15 people to interview. If you have any questions please message me, email me at xxxxx@msu.edu, or call/text me at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Survey link: [Redacted]

Thank you so much!
Jen Fry

APPENDIX H

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form
The Racial Experiences of Professional Black Volleyball Players Internationally

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research project. This research study examines the racial experiences of current or former professional U.S. Black female volleyball players who play or have played volleyball overseas on an international professional team. The purpose of this research study is to understand:

- The racial experiences of current or former professional U.S. Black female volleyball players during their careers while playing on international teams.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

For this study I will survey current and former American Black female volleyball players to then narrow it down to 15 to 20 participants in which I will do semi structured one-on-one interviews with. You can have the possibility of participating in a semi structured one-on-one interview and discuss how your race affected your past and/or present experiences as an American Black female volleyball player playing professional volleyball overseas. The interview is expected to last about 60-120 minutes.

The interview will encourage open discussion. You will be encouraged to elaborate on your experiences as an U.S. Black female volleyball player playing in international professional volleyball leagues. A series of questions will be used to guide the semi-structured interview. Additional questions might arise as part of this more conversational interview style. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. Once the interviews are transcribed, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript for accuracy before it is analyzed.

CHECKING FOR ACCURACY

You will be offered the opportunity to review and revise the transcript of your interview. Once transcriptions are completed, you will receive transcriptions via email and will have one week (seven days) to review transcriptions and respond. If you do not respond, then it will be assumed that all interview transcriptions are accurate.

RISKS

There are minimal risks in this research study. The process of reflecting on past experiences may produce negative thoughts and emotions for you.

_____ Participant's Initials

BENEFITS
There are no direct benefits for the participants in this research study. The findings of this research study may help to increase knowledge of current or former professional U.S. Black female volleyball players who play or have played volleyball on an international professional team. It is hoped that the findings will also help those who support or work with American Black female volleyball players such as coaches, teammates, agents, families, friends, or managers in understanding the experiences.

CONFIDENTIALITY
All conversation in the one-on-one interview will be kept confidential. In order to protect your identity, you will choose a code name that will be used to reference your comments. In addition, any defining characteristic (university affiliation, hometown, previous teams, etc.) that can be linked to you will not be identified in the study.

Signed consent forms will be kept separate from transcripts in a secure location. Only the researcher and her faculty advisor will have access to information from interviews after transcriptions are completed. The audio recordings will be destroyed once the transcriptions are completed.

☐ If you are interested in allowing your videotaped conversation to be archived on a website for future volleyball players, please check the box. Also note that all anonymity will be gone and the defining characteristics (university affiliation, hometown, previous teams, etc.) can be seen.

CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have questions at any time about the research study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher Jen Fry or the researcher's advisor, Dr. Kyle Evered, at the following:

Jen Fry
Phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX
Email: xxxxx@msu.edu

Kyle Evered
Phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX
Email: xxxxx@msu.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at XXX-XXX-XXXX

_____ Participant's Initials

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the research study at any time

without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the research study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

You may refuse to participate in certain procedures or answer certain questions or discontinue your participation at any time without consequence.

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this research study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abraham, T. (2021, March 18). How to keep your 4C hair thriving, according to hairstylists. *Shape*. https://www.shape.com/lifestyle/beauty-style/4c-hair-type-care

Academic Kids. (n.d.). *Academic kids*. Retrieved September 8, 2021, from https://academickids.com/encyclopedia/index.php/Major_League_Volleyball

Adjepong, A. (2017). 'We're, like, a cute rugby team': How whiteness and heterosexuality shape women's sense of belonging in rugby. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 52*(2), 209–222. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1012690215584092

Adjepong, A. (2020). Voetsek! Get[ting] lost: African sportswomen in 'the sporting black diaspora'. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *55*(7), 868–883. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1012690219834486

Adjepong, L. A., & Carrington, B. (2014). Black female athletes as space traders. In J. Hargreaves & E. Anderson (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of sport, gender, and sexuality* (pp. 279–293). Routledge.

Agergaard, S., & Botelho, V. (2014). The way out? African players' migration to Scandinavian women's football. *Sport in Society, 17*(4), 523–536. https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2013.815512

Agergaard, S., & Ryba, T. V. (2014). Migration and career transitions in professional sports: Transnational athletic careers in a psychological and sociological perspective. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 31*, 228–247. https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.2013-0031

Alba, R. D. (2005). Bright versus blurred boundaries: Second-generation assimilation and exclusion in France, Germany, and the United States. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 28*(1), 20–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987042000280003

Allen, D., Lawhon, M., & Pierce, J. (2019). Placing race: On the resonance of place with black geographies. *Progress in Human Geography*, *43*(6), 1001–1019. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0309132518803775

Altink, H. (2010). 'An outrage on all decency:' Abolitionist reactions to flogging Jamaican slave women, 1780–1834. *Slavery & Abolition, 23*(2), 107–122. https://doi.org/10.1080/714005229

American Psychological Association. (2019, September). *Racial and ethnic identity*. APA Style Blog. https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/racial-ethnic-minorities

Amiraux, V., & Simon, P. (2006). There are no minorities here: Cultures of scholarship and public debate on immigrants and integration in France. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology, 47*(3–4), 191–215. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0020715206066164

Andall, J. (2008). Immigration. In P. Poddar, P. S. Patke, & L. Jensen (Eds.), *A historical companion to postcolonial literatures – Continental Europe and its empires* (pp. 287–289). Edinburgh University Press.

Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities.* Verso.

Anderson, E. (2015). "The White Space". *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity 1*(1), 10–21. https://doi.org/10.1177/2332649214561306

Anderson, K. (1998). Making a difference: a geographer's view from the top—An interview with Fay Gale. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education, 22*(3), 363–374. https://doi.org/10.1080/03098269885769

Antonish, M. (2019, November 11). Why racist abuse of Italian footballers goes way beyond the pitch. *The Local it*. https://www.thelocal.it/20191111/why-racist-abuse-of-italian-footballers-goes-way-beyond-the-pitch/

AP News. (2020, July 20). *Explaining AP style on Black and white*. https://apnews.com/article/archive-race-and-ethnicity-9105661462

Arnold, R. (2021). Nationalism and sport: A review of the field. *Nationalities Papers, 49*(1), 2–11. https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2020.9

Arnold, R., & Veth, K. M. (2018). Racism and Russian football supporters' culture: A case for concern? *Problems of Post-Communism, 65*(2), 88–100. https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2017.1414613

The Atlantic Staff. (2021, July 2). Heisman Trust will reinstate Reggie Bush's trophy only if NCAA restores records. *The Atlantic*. https://theathletic.com/news/heisman-trust-will-reinstate-reggie-bushs-trophy-only-if-ncaa-restores-records/SO3GmzYH10H9/

Athletes Unlimited. (n.d.). *How we play: Volleyball*. Retrieved January 10, 2022, from https://auprosports.com/volleyball/how-we-play-volleyball/

Back, L., Crabbe, T., & Solomos, J. (2001). *The changing face of football: Racism, identity and multiculture in the English game.* Berg Publishers.

Bairam, E. (2017). *The origins and spatial diffusion of female professional soccer players in the united states, 1991-2015: geographical and socio-cultural perspectives* (Publication No. 10604414). [Doctoral dissertation, Purdue University]. ProQuest Theses and Dissertations Global.

Bairner, A. (2001). *Sport, nationalism, and globalization.* State University of New York Press.

Bale, J. (1981). Geography, sport and geographical education. *Geography, 66*(2), 104–115. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40570338

Bale, J. (1988). The place of 'place' in cultural studies of sports. *Progress in Human Geography*, *12*(4), 507–524. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F030913258801200403

Bale, J. (1989). *Sports geography.* E. & F. N. Spon.

Bale, J. (1990). In the shadow of the stadium: Football grounds as urban nuisance. *Geography, 75*(4), 325–334.

Bale, J. (1993). *Sport, space and the city.* Routledge.

Bale, J. (1994). *Landscapes of modern sport.* Leicester University Press.

Bale, J. (1996). Space, place and body culture: Yi-Fu Tuan and a geography of sport. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography, 78*(3), 163–171. https://doi.org/10.2307/490831

Bale, J. (2000). Human geography and the study of sport. In J. Coakley & E. Dunning (Eds.), *SAGE handbook of sports studies* (pp. 172–187). SAGE Publications.

Bale, J. (2001). *Sport, space & the city.* Blackburn.

Bale, J. (2003). *Sports geography* (2nd ed). Routledge.

Bale, J., & Dejonghe, T. (2008). Sports geography: An overview. *Belgeo*, 157–166. https://doi.org/10.4000/belgeo.10253

Bale, J., & Maguire, J. (1994). *The global sports arena: Athletic talent migration in an interpendent world* (1st ed.). Frank Cass.

Bale, J., & Moen, O. (1996). *The stadium and the city.* Edinburgh University Press.

Bale, J., & Vertinsky, P. (2004). *Sites of sport, space, place, and experience.* Routledge.

Banet-Weiser, S. (1999). Hoop dreams. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues, 23*(4), 403–420. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0193723599234004

Banton, M. (2011). The sociological implications of demographic diversity. In K. Hylton, A. Pilkington, P. Warmington, & S. Housee (Eds.), *Atlantic crossings: International dialogues on critical race theory* (pp. 154–175). The Higher Education Academy Network.

Bartiuk, W. (2020, June 9). *Peppering in volleyball: The perfect training tool or a waste of time?* Get the Pancake. https://getthepancake.com/drills-and-tips/peppering-in-volleyball

Baum, L., Katharina, O., & Opitz, M. (1992). Three Afro-German women in conversation with Dagmar Schultz: The first exchange for this book. In M. Optiz, K. Oguntoye, & D. Schultz (Eds.), *Showing our colors. Afro-German women speak out* (pp. 145–164). The University of Massachusetts Press.

BBC. (2022). *Nazi economic, social and racial policy*. BBC. https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zw6s7p3/revision/7

BBC News. (2020, June 8). *Edward Colston statue: Protesters tear down slave trader monument.* https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-52954305

Beale, F. (1979). Double jeopardy: To be Black and female. In T. Cade (Ed.), *The Black woman: an anthology* (pp. 90–100). New American Library.

Bell, R. J. (2008). *Competing identities: Representations of the Black female sporting body from 1960 to the present* [Doctoral dissertation, Bowling Green State University]. ScholarWorks @ BGSU. https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/acs_diss/38/

Ben-Ghiat, R. (2009). Italy and its colonies. In P. Poddar, R. S. Patke, & L. Jensen (Eds.), *A historical companion to postcolonial literatures in continental Europe and its empires* (pp. 262–313). Edinburgh University Press.

Berlin, P. (2016, August 21). The Olympic color barrier. *Politico*. https://www.politico.eu/article/the-olympic-color-barrier-rio-2016-racism-sport/

Beydoun, K. A. (2021, July 13). *Win or lose, Black European soccer players can't escape racism*. The Undefeated. https://theundefeated.com/features/win-or-lose-the-racism-faced-by-black-european-soccer-players-seethes-just-below-the-surface/

Birrell, S. (1989). Race relations, theories and sport: Suggestions for a more critical analysis. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 6*(3), 212–227. https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.6.3.212

Black Lives Matter. (n.d.). *About.* Retrieved December 18, 2020, from https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/

Blackburn, M. V. (2014). Humanizing research with LGBTQ youth through dialogi communication, consciousness raising, and action. In D. Paris & M. T. Winn (Eds.), *Humanizing research* (pp. 43–58). SAGE Publications.

Blinder, A., & Witz, B. (2020, June 12). College athletes, phones in hand, force shift in protest movement. *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/12/sports/ncaafootball/george-floyd-protests-college-sports.html

Botelho, V. L., & Agergaard, S. (2011). Moving for the love of the game? International migration of female footballers into Scandinavian countries. *Soccer & Society, 12*(6), 806–819. https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970.2011.609681

Brabant, M. (2016, September 30). Sex trafficking of African migrants in Europe is a 'modern plague.' *PBS News Hour.* https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/sex-trafficking-african-migrants-europe-modern-plague

Bradbury, S., van Sterkenburg, J., & Mignon, P. (2018). The under-representation and experiences of elite level minority coaches in professional football in England, France and the Netherlands. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 53*(3), 313–334. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1012690216656807

Bradshaw, M. (2020, Spring). A conversation on activism with Nikiya Mitchell and Asia Goins. *TU Magazine.* https://www.towson.edu/magazine/spring-2020/conversation-activism-nikiya-mitchell-asia-goins.html

Branch, T. (2014, February 20). *How the myth of the NCAA "student–athlete" was born*. Deadspin. https://deadspin.com/how-the-myth-of-the-ncaa-student–athlete-was-born-1524282374

Brock, R. (2010). *Sista talk: The personal and the pedagogical.* Peter Lang Publishing.

Broughton, D. (2020, August 17). *Power Five: An $8.3 billion revenue powerhouse.* Sports Business Journal, https://www.sportsbusinessdaily.com/Journal/Issues/2020/08/17/Colleges/Revenue.aspx

Bruce-Jones, E. (2017). *Race in the shadow of law: State violence in contemporary Europe*. Routledge.

Bruening, J. E. (2005). Gender and racial analysis in sport: Are all the women white and all the Blacks men? *Quest, 57*(3), 330–349. https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2005.10491861

Bruening, J. E., Armstrong, K. L., & Pastore, D. L. (2005). Listening to the voices: The experiences of African American female student–athletes. *Sociology and Cultural Anthropology*, *76*(1), 82–100. https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2005.10599264

Burley, H., Marbley, A. F., & Bush V, L. (2007). *Apologia for K.W.: A brief tale of wounded love, schools, and being Black in America* (EJ784849). ERIC. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ784849.pdf

Burley, T. (1966). A note of the geography of sport. *The Professional Geographer, 14*(1), 55–56. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0033-0124.1962.00055.x

Burrell-Craft, K. (2020). Are (we) going deep enough?: A narrative literature review addressing critical race theory, racial space theory, and Black identity development. *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education, 19*(4), 9–26. https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/taboo/vol19/iss4/2/

Butler, B. N. (2015). *Women on the move: The migration of WNBA players to overseas basketball teams*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Tennessee, Knoxville]. TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/3494/

Canovan, M. (1996). *Nationhood and political theory.* Edward Elgar.

Carrington, B. (1998). Sport, masculinity, and Black cultural resistance. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 22*(3), 275–298. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F019372398022003004

Carrington, B. (2013). The critical sociology of race and sport: The first fifty years. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 379–398.

Carrington, B., & McDonald, I. (Eds.). (2001). *"Race," sport, and British society.* Routledge.

Carter, A. R. (2008). *Negotiating identities: Examining African American female collegiate athlete experiences in predominantly White institutions* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Georgia]. University of Georgia Libraries. https://esploro.libs.uga.edu/esploro/outputs/doctoral/Negotiating-identities-examining-African-American-female/9949334458602959

Carter, A. R., & Hart, A. (2010). Perspectives of mentoring: The Black female student–athlete. *Sport Management Review 13*(4), 382–394. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2010.01.003

Carter, A. R., & Hawkins, B. (2011). Coping and the African American female collegiate athlete. In K. Hylton, A. Pilkington, P. Warmington, & S. Housee (Eds.), *Atlantic crossings: International dialogues on critical race theory* (pp. 61–92). The Higher Education Academy Network .

Carter, N., Bryant-Lukosius, D., DiCenso, A., Blythe, J., & Neville, A. J. (2014). The use of triangulation in qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum, 41*(5), 545–547. https://doi.org/10.1188/14.ONF.545-547

Carter, T. F. (2011). Re-placing sport migrants: Moving beyond the institutional structures informing international sport migration. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 48*(1), 66–82. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1012690211429211

Carter-Francique, A. R. (2013). Black female collegiate athlete experiences in a culturally relevant leadership program. *The National Journal of Urban Education, 7*(2), 87–106.

Carter-Francique, A. R. (2018). Theoretical considerations in the examination of African American girls and women in sport. In A. Ratna & S. F. Samie (Eds.), *Race, gender and sport* (pp. 63–84). Routledge.

Carter-Francique, A. R., Gill, E., & Hart, A. (2017). Converging interests: Black scholar-advocacy and the Black college athlete. In B. Hawkins, J. N. Cooper, & A. R. Carter-Francique (Eds.), *Black athletic sporting experiences in the United States* (pp. 85–121). Palgrave Macmillan.

Carter-Francique, A. R., & Richardson, F. M. (2016). Controlling media, controlling access: The role of sport media on Black women's sport participation. *Race, Gender & Class, 23*(1), 7–33. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26529186

Célestine, A., & Fila-Bakabadio, S. (2017). Engaging in a transatlantic dialogue on race in France: An interview with Tyler Stovall. *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal, 10*(1), 96–101.

Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. (2005). *The empire strikes back: Race and racism in 70s Britain.* Taylor & Francis.

Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe. (n.d.). *The beginnings of decolonisation and the emergence of the non-aligned states*. https://www.cvce.eu/en/recherche/unit-content/-/unit/02bb76df-d066-4c08-a58a-d4686a3e68ff/0397bac4-10f2-4b69-8d1a-366ca4a08c34

Cha, V. D. (2010). Introduction. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, 11*(2), 3–5. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43133836

Change, A., Contreras, G., & Handel, S. (2021, June 29). The U.S. women's soccer team struggle for equal pay featured in new 'LFG' documentary. *NPR*. https://www.npr.org/2021/06/28/1011037722/the-u-s-womens-soccer-team-struggle-for-equal-pay-featured-in-new-lfg-documentar

Chapple, A. (n.d.). *The volleyball professional plays overseas in Europe, China and Russia*. Improve Your Volleyball. Retrieved September 8, 2021, from https://www.improveyourvolley.com/volleyball-professional.html

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory.* SAGE Publications.

Chavez, N. (2020, October 7). *What is the correct terminology: Black, African American or People of color*? University of Alabama, Hunstville. https://www.uah.edu/diversity/news/15567-which-is-the-correct-terminology-black-african-american-or-people-of-color

Clark, W. (n.d.). *Damallsvenskan – Swedish women's soccer league*. Duke University. Retrieved September 2, 2021, from https://sites.duke.edu/wcwp/tournament-guides/world-cup-2015-guide/womens-professional-leagues-in-notable-countries/damallsvenskan-swedish-womens-soccer-league/

Clarke, L. (2021, October 28). The NCAA coined the term 'student–athlete' in the 1950s. Its time might be up. *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2021/10/27/ncaa-student–athlete-1950s/

Coates, T.N. (2011, October 17). The shame of the NCAA. *The Atlantic*. https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2011/10/the-shame-of-the-ncaa/246775/

Coleman, A. (2006). Race and sports: How an historical construct continues to shape sports, space and society. In L. M. DeChano & F. M. Shelley (Eds.), *The geography-sports connection: Using sports to teach geography* (pp. 89–102). National Council for Geographic Education.

Coleman, K. L. (2021). Spaces of liberation and Black women's reclaiming of their corporeal bodies. *Journal of Black Sexuality and Relationships, 7*(3), 57–75.

Collins, D. F. (2020, October 1). *COVID-19 can damage hearts of some college athletes*. NIH Directors's Blog. https://directorsblog.nih.gov/2020/10/01/covid-19-can-damage-hearts-of-some-college-athletes/

Collins, P. H. (2004). *Black sexual politics.* Routledge.

Connelly, L. M. (2016). Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *MedSurg Nursing, 25*(6), 435–436.

Conner, N. (2016). *Geography of sports.* Oxford Bibliographies.

Cooky, C., Wachs, F. L., Messner, M., & Dworkin, S. L. (2010). It's not about the game: Don Imus, race, class, gender and sexuality in contemporary media. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 27*(2), 139–159. https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.27.2.139

Cooper, J. N., Cheeks, G., & Cavil, J. K. (2017). Critical race theory and intercollegiate athletics at historically Black colleges and universities . In B. J. Hawkins, A. R. Carter-Francique, & J. N. Cooper (Eds.), *Black athletic sporting experiences in the United States* (pp. 247–278). Palgrave Macmillan.

Cooper, J. N., & Hawkins, B. (2015). Athletic migration experiences of Black athletes. In B. Hawkins, J. Cooper, A. Carter-Francique, & J. K. Cavil (Eds.), *The athletic experience at historically Black colleges and universities* (pp. 107–126). Rowman & Littlefield.

Cooper, J. N., & Jackson, D. D. (2019). “They think you should be able to do it all:” An examination of Black women college athletes’ experiences with role conflict at a Division I historically white institution (HWI). *Journal of Women and Gender in Higher Education, 12*(3), 337–353. https://doi.org/10.1080/26379112.2019.1677250

Cooper, J. N., McGarry, J., Dougherty, S., & Davis, T. J. (2020). “Race . . ., sport type, and divisional classification matters:” An examination of Black female athletes’ experiences at National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) institutions. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics, 13*, 227–252. http://csri-jiia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/RA_2020_11.pdf

Cooper, J. N., & Newton, A. (2021). Black female college athletes’ sense of belonging at a historically Black college and university (HBCU). *The Journal of Negro Education, 90*(1), 71–83. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7709/jnegroeducation.90.1.0071

Cooper, J. N., Porter, C. J., & Davis, T. J. (2017). Success through community cultural wealth: Reflections from Black female college athletes at a historically Black college/university (HBCU) and a historically White institution (HWI). *Journal of Intercollegiate Sport, 10*(2), 129–156. https://doi.org/10.1123/jis.2017-0006

Corrigan, D., & Crafton, A. (2021, April 18). ‘Spanish football is 25 years behind on racism’ so will the Diakhaby-Cala incident change anything? *The Athletic*. https://theathletic.com/2520315/2021/04/18/spanish-football-is-25-years-behind-on-racism-so-will-the-diakhaby-cala-incident-change-anything/

Craven, M. (2015). Between law and history: The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 and the logic of free trade. *London Review of International Law, 3*(1), 31–59. https://doi.org/10.1093/lril/lrv002

Crenshaw, K. (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*, (1), 139–167. https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=uclf

Crenshaw, K. W. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*. *43(*6), 1241–1299.

Crenshaw, K. W. (2016). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color . In E. Taylor, D. Gillborn, & G. Ladson-Billings (Eds.), *Foundations of critical race theory in education* (pp. 357-383). Routledge.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design.* SAGE Publications.

Cresswell, T. (2004). *Place: A short introduction.* Blackwell.

Cube, I. (2020). *Straight outta L.A*. [Film]. ESPN 30 for 30. http://www.espn.com/30for30/film/_/page/straight-outta-la

Culf, A. (2006, January 6). Manager breaks rank and vows to expose sleazy world of bungs and parasitic agents. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/jan/13/football.andrewculf

Cunningham, G. B. (2022, January 24). Why 30 out of 32 NFL head coaches Are White – Behind the NFL's abysmal record on diversity. *Texas A&M Today*. https://today.tamu.edu/2022/01/24/why-30-out-of-32-nfl-head-coaches-are-white-behind-the-nfls-abysmal-record-on-diversity/

Daley, P. (2020). Lives lived differently: Geography and the study of black women. *Area, 52*(4), 794–800. https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12655

Dancy, T. E., II, Edwards, K. T., & Davis, J. E. (2018). Historically White universities and plantation politics: Anti-Blackness and higher education in the Black Lives Matter era. *Urban Education*, 176–195.

Dandelion, B. P. (1995). Insider dealing: Researching your own private world. In I. A. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Ethics, sport and leisure: Crises and critiques* (pp. 181–202). University of Brighton Press.

Dankertsen, A., & Kristiansen, T. G. (2021). "Whiteness isn't about skin color": Challenges to analyzing racial practices in a Norwegian context. *Societies, 11*(2), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.3390/soc11020046

Davies, C. B., & M'Bow, B. (2007). Towards African diaspora citizenship. In K. McKittrick & C. Woods (Eds.), *Black geographies and the politics of place* (pp. 14–45). Between the Lines/South End Press.

Davis, S., & Brown, K. (2017). Automatically discounted: Using Black feminist theory to critically analyze the experiences of Black female faculty. *NCPEA International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation, 12*(1), 1–9. https://www.ncpeapublications.org/index.php/volume-12-number-1-spring-2017/735-automatically-discounted-using-black-feminist-theory-to-critically-analyze-the-experiences-of-black-female-facult

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1991). *What is philosophy?* Columbia University Press.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2012). *Critical race theory.* New York University Press.

Diaz-Strong, D., Luna-Duarte, M., Gomez, C., & Meiners, E. R. (2014). Too close to the work/there is nothing right now. In D. Paris & M. T. Winn (Eds.), *Humanizing research* (pp. 3–21). SAGE Publications.

Dibosa, D. (2019, December 25). *The birth of a 'new negro.'* NPR. https://www.npr.org/transcripts/790381948

Dictionary.com. (n.d.). Pejoration. In *Dictionary.com*. Retrieved February 12, 2022, from https://www.dictionary.com/browse/pejoration

Dodd, D. (2020, October 13). Majority of Power Five schools favor breaking away to form own division within NCAA, survey show. *CBS Sports.* https://www.cbssports.com/college-football/news/majority-of-power-five-schools-favor-breaking-away-to-form-own-division-within-ncaa-survey-shows/

Doidge, M. (2015). 'If you jump up and down, Balotelli dies': Racism and player abuse in Italian football. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 50*(3), 249–264. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1012690213480354

Dorsett, R. (2019, April 10). 'Racists abused me with monkey noises'. *The Tribune*. http://www.tribune242.com/news/2019/apr/10/racists-abused-me-with-monkey-noises/

Doss, K. (2016). *Ready, set, go: A narrative study on Jamaican female track and field athletes who attended college or university in the U.S.* (Publication No. 10138104) [Doctoral dissertation, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale]. https://www.proquest.com/docview/1803939425

Douglas, D. D. (2002). To be young, gifted, black and female: A meditation on the cultural politics at play in representations of Venus and Serena Williams. *Sociology of Sport Online, 5*(2), 1–16.

Douglas, D. D. (2005). Venus, Serena, and the Women's Tennis Association: When and where "race" enters. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 22*(3) , 255–281. https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.22.3.255

Douglas, D. D., & Jamieson, K. M. (2006). A farewell to remember: Interrogating the Nancy Lopez farewell tour. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 23*(2), 117–141. https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.23.2.117

DuBose, B. (2020). *After the ball goes flat: An exploratory study on Black female former athletes and their transitions from college sports to professional careers* (Publication No. 28000549) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global. https://www.proquest.com/openview/9036945c620000bce40cbc1002d4987d/1.pdf?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=51922&diss=y

Duncan, G. A. (1996). Space, place and the problem of race: Black adolescent discourse as mediated action. *The Journal of Negro Education, 65*, 133–150.

Dunn, J. (1994). Crisis of the nation state? *Political Studies, 42*(1), 3–15. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1994.tb00002.x

Edwards, J. (1999). The Black female athlete and the politics of (in)visibility. *New Political Economy, 4*(2), 278–282. https://doi.org/10.1080/13563469908406401

Eichberg, H. (1990). Race-track and labyrinth: The space of physical culture in Berlin. *The Journal of Sport History, 17*(2), 245–260.

Engh, M. H. (2014). Bringing gender into sports labor migration research. In S. Agergaard & N. C. Tiesler (Eds.), *Women, soccer and transnational migration* (pp. 175–190). Routledge.

Engh, M. H., Settler, F., & Agergaard, S. (2017). The ball and the rhythm in her blood': Racialised imaginaries and football migration from Nigeria to Scandinavia. *Ethnicities, 17*(1), 66–84. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1468796816636084

Ericsson, M. (2015). *Exkludering, assimilering eller utrotning? 'Tattarfrågan' i svensk politik 1880−1955.* Lund University Press.

ESPN. (2010, December 23). *Ohio State football players sanctioned*. https://www.espn.com/college-football/news/story?id=5950873

ESPN. (n.d.). *Straight Outta LA*. Retrieved August 20, 2021, from http://www.espn.com/30for30/film/_/page/straight-outta-la

Essed, P., & Hoving, I. (2009). Dutch racism. In E. van Alphen (Ed.), *Thamyris/intersecting: Place, sex, and race* (pp. 9–30). Brill.

Etzel, E. F., Ferrante, A. P., & Pinkney, J. W. (2002). *Counseling college student–athletes: Issues and interventions.* Fitness Information Technology.

European Commission. (2009). *Study on sports agents in the European Union* [Report]. https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/sport/library/studies/study-sports-agents-in-eu.pdf

Evans, T. (1998). In the Title IX race toward gender equity, the Black female athlete is left to finish last: The lack of access for the "invisible woman. *Howard Law Journal, 42*(1), 105–128. https://scholars.unh.edu/law_facpub/289/

Falcous, M., & Maguire, J. (2005). Globetrotters and local heroes? Labor migration, basketball, and local identities. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 22*(2), 137–157. https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.22.2.137

Fanon, F. (1986). *Black skin, White masks.* Grove Press.

Farkas, L. (2017). *Data collection in the field of ethnicity.* European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/data_collection_in_the_field_of_ethnicity.pdf

Farquhar, J., Michels, N., & Robson, J. (2020). Triangulation in industrial qualitative case study research: Widening the scope. *Industrial Marketing Management, 87*, 160–170. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2020.02.001

Ferguson, T. (2016). *"I can do more things": How Black female student–athletes contend with race, gender, and stereotypes* [Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Ferguson, T. (2021). *Safe spaces for Black women student–athletes*. [Unpublished manuscript].

FIBA.basketball. (n.d.). EuroLeague women. Retrieved September 5, 2021, from https://www.fiba.basketball/euroleague-women

Fields, L. N. (2020). *A case study of the experiences of Black female faculty at research-intensive schools of social work* [Doctoral dissertation, Washington University in St. Louis]. Washington University in St. Louis University Libraries. https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/art_sci_etds/2185/

Figueroa, A. M. (2014). La carta de responsabilidad. In D. Paris & M. T. Winn (Eds.), *Humanizing research* (pp. 129–146). SAGE Publications.

Finkbeiner, R., Meibauer, J., & Wiese, H. (2016). What is pejoration, and how can it be expressed in language? In R. Finkbeiner, J. Meibauer, & H. Wiese (Eds.), *Pejoration* (pp. 1–18). Benjamins.

FIVB. (n.d.). *Volleyball*. Retrieved September 5, 2021, from https://www.fivb.com/en/volleyball/thegame_glossary/history

Flint, C. (2006). *Introduction to geopolitics.* Routledge.

Flores, R. D. (2015). The resurgence of race in Spain: Perceptions of discrimination among immigrants. *Social Forces, 94*(1), 237–269. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sov056

Foot, J. (2001). *Milan since the miracle: City, culture, and identity.* Berg.

Foster, K. M. (2003). Panopticonics: The control and surveillance of Black female athletes in a collegiate athletic program. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 34*(3), 300–323. https://doi.org/10.1525/aeq.2003.34.3.300

Fox, O. (2021, November 5). Sports and society: Humanizing a superhuman. *The Tufts Daily.* https://tuftsdaily.com/sports/2021/11/05/sports-and-society-humanizing-a-superhuman/

Frankel, G. (1985, January 1). How Europeans sliced up Africa. *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1985/01/06/how-europeans-sliced-up-africa/e11265e9-6cd3-461d-a9ea-f764455829fa/

Gabay, D. N. (2013). *Race, gender and interuniversity athletics: Black female student–athletes in Canadian higher education* [Doctoral thesis, University of Toronto]. TSpace Library. https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/43572/1/Gabay_Danielle_N_201311_PhD_thesis.pdf

Gaffney, C. (2014). Geography of sport. In J. Maguire (Ed.), *Social sciences in sport* (pp. 109–134). Human Kinetics.

Galardini, G. (2020, June 26). Italian Women's soccer to get professional status by 2022. *Forbes*. https://www.forbes.com/sites/giacomogalardini/2020/06/26/italian-womens-soccer-to-get-professional-status-by-2022/?sh=7711aadb6471

Garcia, A. (2021, March 12). Spanish government makes women's football professional, sorry for 'injustice'. *ESPN*. https://www.espn.com/soccer/barcelona-women/story/4336035/spanish-government-makes-womens-football-professionalsorry-for-injustice

Garland, J., & Chakraborti, N. (2006). 'Race', space and place: Examining identity and cultures of exclusion in rural England. *Ethnicities, 6*(2), 159–177. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1468796806063750

Ghiglione, G. (2020, July 30). *As Europe reckons with racism, Italy still won't confront its colonial past.* ForeignPolicy.com. https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/30/as-europe-reckons-with-racism-italy-still-wont-confront-its-colonial-past/

Giulianotti, R., & Klauser, F. (2010). Security governance and sport mega-events: Toward an interdisciplinary research agenda. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 34*(1), 49–61. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0193723509354042

Goel, V. R. (2021, April 4). Entire Valencia team walks off field after alleged racist abuse directed at teammate. *CBS News*. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/valencia-racism-team-walks-off-field-after-alleged-racism-directed-at-mouctar-diakhaby/

Goldblatt, D. (2021, June 6). It's not just football – it's a barometer of diversity. Bring on the Euros… . *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/jun/06/its-not-just-football-its-a-barometer-of-diversity-bring-on-the-euros

Green, K. (2014). Doing double dutch methodology: Playing with the practice of participant observer. In P. Django & M. T. Winn (Eds.), *Humanizing research* (pp. 141–160). SAGE Publications.

Hail Varsity Staff. (2017, December 5). *The lo-down: Exploring the world of professional volleyball*. Hail Varsity. https://hailvarsity.com/volleyball/the-lo-down-exploring-the-world-of-professional-volleyball/

Hübinette, T., & Tigervall, C. (2009). To be non-white in a colour-blind society: Conversations with adoptees and adoptive parents in Sweden on everyday racism. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 335–353.

Hamed, S., Thapar-Björkert, S., Bradby, H., & Ahlberg, B. M. (2020). Racism in European health care: Structural violence and beyond. *Qualitative Health Research, 30*, 1662–1673.

Hamilton, T. (2021, April 21). Super League collapses: How fan reaction, revolt helped end English clubs' breakaway. *ESPN*. https://www.espn.com/soccer/blog-espn-fc-united/story/4366927/super-league-collapses-how-fan-reactionrevolt-helped-end-english-clubs-breakaway

Hannah-Jones, N. (2021). *1619 Project.* The New York Times Company.

Harmon, N. S. (2009). *A study of the experiences of Black college female athletes at a predominantly White institution* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Iowa]. Iowa Research Online. https://doi.org/10.17077/etd.rbs0x6jq

Harris, A. P. (2011). *Foreword: Critical theories of race and racism in world perspective* [Unpublished manuscript].

Harris, T. (1995). This disease called strength: Some observations on the compensating construction of Black female character. *Literature and Medicine, 14*(1), 110–123. https://doi.org/10.1353/lm.1995.0003

Harrison, L., Jr., Harrison, C. K., & Moore, L. N. (2002). African American racial identity and sport. *Sport Education and Society, 7*(2), 121–133. https://doi.org/10.1080/1357332022000018823

Hartlep, N. D. (2009, October 11). *Critical race theory: An examination of its past, present, and future implications* (ED506735). ERIC. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED506735

Hartmann, D. (2000). Rethinking the relationships between sport and race in American culture: Golden ghettos and contested terrain. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 17*(3), 229–253. https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.17.3.229

Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in educational settings.* State University Press of New York.

Hatchett, S., & Schuman, H. (1975–1976). White respondents and race-of-interviewer effects. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 39*(4), 523–528. https://doi.org/10.1086/268249

Hawkins, B. (1999). Black student–athletes at predominantly White National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I institutions and the pattern of oscillating migrant laborers. *Western Journal of Black Studies, 23*(1), 1–9.

Hawkins, B. (2010). *The new plantation.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Hawkins, B. (2017). Interest convergence: A revolutionary theory for athletic reform. In B. J. Hawkins, A. R. Carter-Francique, & J. N. Cooper (Eds.), *Black athletic sporting experiences in the United States* (pp. 57–84). Springer Nature.

Hawthorne, C., & Heitz, K. (2018). A seat at the table? Reflections on Black geographies and the limits of dialogue. *Dialogues in Human Geography, 8*(2), 148–151. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F2043820618780578

Hawthorne, C., & Meche, B. (2016, September 13). Making room for Black feminist praxis in geography: A dialogue between Camilla Hawthorne and Brittany Meche. *Society and Space*. https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/making-room-for-black-feminist-praxis-in-geography

Haynes, C., Ward, L. W., & Patton, L. D. (2021). Truth-telling, Black women and the pedagogy of fake news in higher education. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2021.1955405

Heinonen, O., & Lahtinen, J. (1990). *Foreign professional athletes as migrants in Finland* [Unpublished thesis, University of Jyvaskyla].

Heiskanen, B. (2014). *The urban geography of boxing.* Routledge.

Heisman. (n.d.). *Heisman trust*. Retrieved June 20, 2021, from https://www.heisman.com/heisman-trust/

Hendrick, R. L. (2005). *From social improvement to scientific racism: The effects of World War I on the definition of racial hygiene in Germany* [Master's thesis, University of Tennessee, Knoxville]. TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_gradthes/2000/

Heywood, L. (1998). Athletic vs pornographic eroticism: How muscle magazines compromise female athletes and delegitimize the sport of bodybuilding in the public eye. *Mesomorphosis Interactive, 1*(1), 1–1. http://www.thinkmuscle.com/articles/heywood/eroticism.htm

Hilderbrand, J. (1919). The geography of games. *National Geographic Magazine, 32*(2), 98–143.

Hill Collins, P. (1990). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment.* Routledge.

Hill Collins, P. (2000). The social construction of Black feminist thought. In J. James & T. D. Sharpley-Whiting (Eds.), *The Black feminist reader* (pp. 183–207). Wiley-Blackwell.

Hill, E., Tiefenthäler, A., Triebert, C., Jordan, D., Willis, H., & Stein, R. (2020, May 31). How George Floyd was killed in police custody. *New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/31/us/george-floyd-investigation.html

Hill, M. (2021). *How to find your sports agent*. Sports Networker. http://www.sportsnetworker.com/2010/12/08/professional-sports-agent/

hooks, b. (1984). *Feminist theory from margin to center.* South End Press.

hooks, b. (2000). *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate politics.* South End Press.

Hopkins, N., & Carter, H. (2000, April 1). Three more athletes get racist hate mail. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/apr/01/race.world

Hosick, M. B. (2021, June 30). *NCAA adopts interim name, image and likeness policy*. NCAA. https://www.ncaa.org/news/2021/6/30/ncaa-adopts-interim-name-image-and-likeness-policy.aspx

Houlihan, B. (1994). *Sport and international politics.* Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Howard-Hamilton, M. F. (2003). Theoretical frameworks for African American women. *New Directions For Student Services, 2003*(104), 19–27. https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.104

HRC Foundation. (n.d.). *Sexual orientation and gender identity definitions.* Retrieved January 12, 2022, from https://www.hrc.org/resources/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-terminology-and-definitions

Hylton, K. (2009). *Race and sport: Critical race theory.* Routledge.

Hylton, K., Pilkington, A., Warmington, P., & Housee, S. (2011). Introduction: Critical race theory in the UK: What is to be learnt? What is to be done? In K. Hylton, A. Pilkington, P. Warmington, & S. Housee (Eds.), *Atlantic crossings: International dialogues on critical race theory* (pp. 1–13). The Higher Education Academy Network.

Ilies, A., & Olivier, D., Wendt, J., & Kozma, G. (2014). For geography and sport, sport geography or geography of sport. *Geosport for Society, 1*(1), 7–18. http://geosport.uoradea.ro/2014_1/GSS_Ilies_Dehoorne_Wendt_Kozma_01.01.12.001.pdf

Jabareen, Y. (2009). Building a conceptual framework: Philosophy, definitions, and procedure. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 8*(4), 49–62. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F160940690900800406

Jarvie, G. (1991). *Sport, racism and ethnicity.* Routledge.

Joint Committee on Geographic Education. (1984). *Guidelines for geographic education: Elementary and secondary schools* (ED252453). ERIC. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED252453

Jokl, E., Karvonen, M., Kihlberg, J., Koskela, A., & Noro, L. (1956). *Sports in the cultural pattern of the world: A study of the Olympic games 1952 at Helsinki*. Institute of Occupational Health.

Jones, R. L. (2002). The Black experience within English semiprofessional soccer. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues, 26*(1), 47–65.

Jordan, T. A. (2010). *The impact of racial microaggressions on Black athletes: Implications for counseling and sport psychology* [Master's thesis, Georgia Southern University]. Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1110&context=etd

Kalman-Lamb, N., Silva, D., & Mellis, J. (2021, December 8). 'This is a job': Why college players reject the insidious term 'student–athlete.' *The Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/dec/08/this-is-a-job-why-college-players-reject-the-insidious-term-student–athlete

Kaplon, M. (2016, June 6). *1984 Women's olympic volleyball team: Where are they now?* FloVolleyball. https://www.flovolleyball.tv/articles/5052108-1984-womens-olympic-volleyball-team-where-are-they-now

Keaton, T. D. (2010). The politics of race-blindness (anti) Blackness and category-blindness in contemporary France. *Dubois Review: Social Science and Research on Race*, 103–131.

Kennedy, A. (2020, March 2). *How NBA pensions work*. HoopsHype. https://hoopshype.com/2020/03/02/how-nba-pensions-work/

King, D. K. (1988). Multiple jeopardy, multiple consciousness: The context of a Black feminist ideology. *Signs*, *14*(1), 42–72. https://doi.org/10.1086/494491

Kinloch, V., & Pedro, T. S. (2014). The space between listening and storying: Foundations for projects in humanization. In D. Paris & M. T. Winn (Eds.), *Humanizing research* (pp. 21–43). SAGE Publications.

Kirby, J. (2020, June 12). "Black Lives Matter" has become a global rallying cry against racism and police brutality. *Vox*. https://www.vox.com/2020/6/12/21285244/black-lives-matter-global-protests-george-floyd-uk-belgium

Kivunja, C. (2018). Distinguishing between theory, theoretical framework, and conceptual framework: A systematic review of lessons from the field. *International Journal of Higher Education, 7*(6), 44–53. https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v7n6p44

Knowles, C. (2003). *Race and social analysis.* SAGE Publications.

Koch, N. (Ed.). (2016). *Critical geographies of sport.* Routledge.

Kohn, H. (1994). Western and Eastern nationalisms. In J. Hutchinson & A. D. Smith (Eds.), *Nationalism* (pp. 162–164). Oxford University Press.

Komonibo, I. (2021, July 28). Naomi Osaka & the uphill battle of Black women in sports. *Refinery29*. https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2021/07/10584486/naomi-osaka-netflix-black-female-athletes

Koopmans, R., Statham, P., Giugni, P., & Passy, F. (2005). *Contested citizenship: Immigration and cultural diversity in Europe.* University of Minnesota Press.

Kotljarchuk, A. (2020). State, experts, and Roma: Historian Allan Etzler and pseudo-scientific racism in Sweden. *Scandinavian Journal of History, 45*(5), 615–639. https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2019.1668476

Kroichick, R. (2001, March 11). Agents of influence/Massive conglomerates now wield tremendous power over the games you see on the field. *The San Francisco Chronicle*. https://www.sfgate.com/sports/article/AGENTS-OF-INFLUENCE-Massive-conglomerates-now-2943431.php

Kruger, D. J., Falbo, M., Blanchard, S., Cole, E., Gazoul, C., Nader, N., & Murphy, S. (2018). University sports rivalries provide insights on coalitional psychology. *Human Nature, 29*(3), 337–352. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12110-018-9316-4

Lalani, F., & Zafar, H. (2021, July 13). *Racial abuse of England players exposes deep societal fractures and the need for change*. World Economic Forum. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/07/racial-abuse-of-england-players-exposes-deep-societal-fractures-and-the-need-for-change/

Lansbury, J. (2014). *A spectacular leap: Black women athletes in twentieth-century America.* University of Arkansas Press.

Lapchick, R. (2017). *2017 college sport racial & gender report card.* The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport. https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server_files/media/2017%20College%20Sport%20Racial%20and%20Gender%20Report%20Card.pdf

Lapchick, R. (2020, June 3). *The 2019 racial and gender report card.* The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports. https://43530132-36e9-4f52-811a-182c7a91933b.filesusr.com/ugd/7d86e5_d69e3801bb8146f2b08f6e619bcddf22.pdf

Larkin, B., Dwyer, B., & Goebert, C. (2020). Man or machine: Fantasy football and dehumanization of professional athletes. *Journal of Sport Management, 34*(5), 403–416. https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2019-0106

Lawrence, S. M. (2005). African American athletes' experiences of race in sport. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 40*(1), 99–110. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1012690205052171

Laws, R. G. (2012). *South African & U.S. Black female athletes compared: A critical ethnography focused on image, perceptions, and narratives* [Doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University]. MSU Libraries. https://d.lib.msu.edu/etd/1498

Legal Information Institute. (n.d.). *Critical legal theory* .Cornell Law School. Retrieved November 8, 2021, from https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/critical_legal_theory

Lehman, H. (1940). The geographic origin of professional baseball players. *Journal of Educational Research, 34*(2), 130–138. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.1940.10880982

Lever, K. (2022, January 18). *Flaws of the 20-hour rule*. LRT Sports. https://www.lrt-sports.com/blog/flaws-of-the-20-hour-rule/

Lewis, A. E. (2003). Everyday race-making. *American Behavioral Scientist, 47*(3), 283–305. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0002764203256188

Lewis, J. A., Mendenhall, R., Harwood, S. A., & Huntt, M. B. (2016). "Ain't I a woman?": Perceived gendered racial microaggressions experienced by Black women. *The Counseling Psychologist, 44*(5), 758–780. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0011000016641193

Lewis, R. (2014, June 1). How different cultures understand time. *Business Insider*. https://www.businessinsider.com/how-different-cultures-understand-time-2014-5

Lipphardt, V. (2012). Isolates and crosses in human population genetics; Or, a contextualization of German race science. *Current Anthropology, 53*(5), S69–S82. https://doi.org/10.1086/662574

Lipsitz, G. (2007). The racialization of space and the spatialization of race: Theorizing the hidden architecture of landscape. *Landscape Journal, 26*(1), 10–23. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43323751

LivItaly. (2018, October 10). *9 Italian soccer teams you should know*. https://www.livitaly.com/9-italian-soccer-teams-you-should-know/

Llopis-Goig, R. (2009). Racism and xenophobia in Spanish football: Facts, reactions and policies. *Physcial Culture and Sport Studies and Research, 92*, 35–43. https://doi.org/10.2478/v10141-009-0030-0

Llopis-Goig, R. (2013). Racism, xenophobia and intolerance in Spanish football: Evolution and responses from the government and the civil society. *Soccer & Society, 14*(2), 262–276. https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970.2013.776461

Love, B. (1998). *Internalized oppression and the life experiences of Black people in the United States* [Unpublished manuscript].

Loy, J. W., & Elvogue, J. F. (1970). Racial segregation in American sport. *International Review of Sport Sociology, 5*(1), 5–24. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F101269027000500101

López, C. (2021, July 26). 4 top athletes barred from competing in their Olympic events because their natural testosterone levels are deemed too high. *Insider*. https://www.insider.com/intersex-olympic-athletes-barred-from-competing-in-preferred-olympic-event-2021-7

Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider.* Crossing Press.

Lynn, M., & Adams, M. (2002). Introductory overview to the special issue critical race theory and education: Recent developments in the field. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 35*(2), 87–92. https://doi.org/10.1080/713845285

Möschel, M. (2011). Race in mainland European legal analysis: Towards a European critical race theory. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 34*(10), 1648–1664. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2011.566623

Macur, J. (2014, October 6). Fighting for the body she was born with. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/07/sports/sprinter-dutee-chand-fights-ban-over-her-testosterone-level.html

Magee, J., & Sugden, J. (2002). "The world at their feet". *Journal of Sport & Social Issues, 26*(4), 421–437. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0193732502238257

Maguire, J. (1996). Blade runners: Canadian migrants, ice hockey, and the global sports process. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues, 20*(3), 335–360. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F019372396020003007

Maguire, J. (1999). *Global sport.* Blackwell Enterprises.

Maguire, J., & Falcous, M. (2011). Introduction. In J. Maguire & M. Falcous (Eds.), *Sport and migration: Borders, boundaries, and crossings* (pp. 1–12). Routledge.

Maguire, J., & Stead, D. (1998). Border crossings: Soccer labour migration and the European Union. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 33*(1), 59–73. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F101269098033001005

Mahler, S. J., & Pessar, P. R. (2001). Gendered geographies of power: Analyzing gender across transnational spaces. *Identities, 7*(4), 441–459. https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2001.9962675

Mapedzahama, V., & Kwansah-Aidoo, K. (2017). Blackness as burden? The lived experience of Black Africans in Australia. *SAGE Open, 7*(3), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F2158244017720483

Martin, C. H. (2010). *Benching Jim Crow: The rise and fall of the color line in Southern college sports, 1890-1980.* University of Illinois Press.

Mason, C., & Robins, R. (1991). The spatial externality fields of football stadiums: The effect of football and non football use at Kenilwortht Road, Luton. *Applied Geography, 11*, 251–266.

Massao, P. B. (2016). *Sport, race and gender: The experiences of Black Norwegian athletes* [Doctoral dissertation, Norwegian School of Sport Sciences]. NIH. http://hdl.handle.net/11250/2394759

Massao, P. B., & Fasting, K. (2010). Race and racism: Experiences of Black Norwegian athletes. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 45*(2), 147–162. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1012690210368233

Massey, D. (2013). *Space, place and gender.* John Wiley & Sons.

May, V. (2015). *Pursuing intersectionality, unsettling dominant imaginaries.* Routledge.

McClendon, D. (2021, February 26). Volleyball star Deja McClendon takes a stand against racism in her sport. *The Undefeated*. https://theundefeated.com/features/volleyball-star-deja-mcclendon-takes-a-stand-against-racism-in-her-sport/

McDonald, M. G., & Birrell, S. (1999). Reading sport critically: A methodology for interrogating power. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 16*(4), 283–300. https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.16.4.283

McInnis, J. C. (2019). Black women's geographies and the afterlives of the sugar plantation. *American Literary History, 31*(4), 741–774. https://doi.org/10.1093/alh/ajz043

McKay, J., & Johnson, H. (2008). Pornographic eroticism and sexual grotesquerie in representations of African American sportswomen. *Social Identities, 14*(4), 491–504. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630802211985

McKesson, D. (Host). (2019). *Pod save the people* [Audio podcast]. Crooked Media. https://crooked.com/podcast-series/pod-save-the-people/

McKittrick, K. (2006). *Demonic grounds.* University of Minnesota Press.

McKittrick, K. (2011). On plantations, prisons, and a Black sense of place. *Social & Cultural Geography, 12*(8), 947–963. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2011.624280

McKittrick, K. (2018). *Black geographies: Mapping Black spaces and places*. Black Feminisms. https://blackfeminisms.com/black-geographies/

McKittrick, K. M., & Woods, C. (Eds.). (2007). *Black geographies and the politics of place.* Between the Lines.

McWhorter, J. (2020, October 17). *Language changes: How they happen so quickly*. The Great Courses Daily. https://www.thegreatcoursesdaily.com/language-changes-how-they-happen-so-quickly/

Meisterjahn, R. J., & Wrisberg, C. A. (2013). "Everything was different": A qualitative study of us professional basketball players' experiences overseas. *Athletic Insight: The Online Journal of Sport Psychology, 15*(3), 251–270. https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2020.1737836

Melnick, M. J. (1992). Toward an applied sociology of sport. In A. Yiannakis (Ed.), *Applied sociology of sport* (pp. 41–54). Human Kinetics Books.

Merkin, S. (2003, February 1). USPV shuts down, eyes a 2004 return. *Chicago Tribune*. https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2003-02-01-0302010229-story.html

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Bigotry. In *Merriam-Webster dictionary*. Retrieved October 3, 2018, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bigotry

Mielants, E. (2006). The long-term historical development of racist tendencies within the political and social context of Belgium. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology, 47*(3), 313–334. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0020715206065786

Milner, H., IV. (2007). Race, culture, and researcher positionality: Working through dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen. *Educational Researcher, 36*(7), 388–400. https://doi.org/10.3102%2F0013189X07309471

Missildine, H. (1978, December 7). Next spring, the "heat". *The Spokesman-Review*. Retrieved from https://www.spokesman.com

Mitchell, G., & Cronson, H. (1987). The celebrity family: A clinical perspective. *American Journal of Family Therapy,, 15*(3), 235–241. https://doi.org/10.1080/01926188708250679

Mizoguchi, K. (2021, May 17). Lakers head athletic trainer talks about making history in the NBA: 'It's really been a blessing'. *People Magazine*. https://people.com/sports/lakers-head-athletic-trainer-nina-hsieh-talks-about-making-history-in-nba/

Morales, L., Anduiza, E., Rodríguez, E., & San Martin, J. (2008). Capital social, pautas identitarias, y actitudes hacia 'los otros': La incorporación cívica de la población de origen inmigrante en Barcelona y Madrid. *Panorama Social, 8*, 119–142.

Morris, E. W., & Perry, B. L. (2017). Girls behaving badly? Race, gender, and subjective evaluation in the discipline of African American girls. *Sociology of Education, 90*(2), 127–148. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0038040717694876

Morris, J. E., & Monroe, C. R. (2009). Why study the U.S. South? The nexus of race and place in investigating Black student achievement. *Educational Researcher, 38*(1), 21–36. https://doi.org/10.3102%2F0013189X08328876

Morse, B. (2020, January 26). Spanish soccer player Inaki Williams 'sad' after suffering alleged racist abuse from fans in league match. *CNN.* https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/26/football/inaki-williams-racism-athletic-bilbao-spain-football-spt-intl/index.html

Möschel, M. (2011). Race in mainland European legal analysis: Towards a European critical race theory. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 34*(10), 1648–1664. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2011.566623

Moser, S. (2010). Creating citizens through play: the role of leisure in Indonesian nation-building. *Social & Cultural Geography, 11*(1), 53–73. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649360903414577

Mosier, C. (n.d.). *Trans terminology*. Retrieved January 23, 2022, from https://www.transathlete.com/starthere

Mosse, G. L. (1984). *Nationalism and sexuality middle-class morality and sexual norms in modern Europe.* University of Wisconsin Press.

Mowatt, R. A., French, B. H., & Malebranche, D. (2017). Black/female/body hypervisibility and invisibility. *A Journal of Leisure Research, 45*(5), 644–660. https://doi.org/10.18666/jlr-2013-v45-i5-4367

Mwaniki, M. F. (2017). *The Black migrant athlete.* University of Nebraska Press.

Myrdahl, T. K. (2008). *Contested spaces of women's sport* (Publication No. 3313457) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota]. ProQuest Theses and Dissertations Global.

Nag, O. S. (2017, April 25). *The five themes in geography*. WorldAtlas.com. https://www.worldatlas.com/the-five-themes-in-geography.html

National Athletic Trainers' Association. (n.d.). *What is athletic training?* Retrieved December 23, 2021, from https://www.nata.org/about/athletic-training

National Basketball Player's Association. (2020, July 21). *G league players unionize with assist from the NBPA* [Press release]. https://nbpa.com/news/g-league-players-unionize-with-assist-from-the-nbpa

National Collegiate Athletic Association. (n.d.-a). *Sport sponsorship and participation research*. Retrieved June, 9 2017, from https://www.ncaa.org/sports/2013/11/20/sports-sponsorship-and-participation-research.aspx

National Collegiate Athletic Association. (n.d.-b). *Scholarships*. Retrieved April 15, 2021, from https://www.ncaa.org/student–athletes/future/scholarships

National Federation of State High Associations. (2019, August 29). *2018-19 high school athletics participation survey.* https://www.nfhs.org/media/1020412/2018-19_participation_survey.pdf

Neely, B., & Samura, M. (2011). Social geographies of race: connecting race and space. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 34*(11), 1933–1952. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2011.559262

Nelson, J. (2008). *Razing Africville: A geography of racism.* University of Toronto Press.

Newby, R. G., King, D. K., & Thorne, B. (1992). Review symposium. *Gender and Society, 6*(3), 508–517.

Newhall, K. E., & Buzuvis, E. E. (2008). (e)Racing Jennifer Harris: Sexuality and race, law and discourse in Harris v. Portland. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues, 32*(4), 345–368. https://digitalcommons.law.wne.edu/facschol/40/

Next College Student–Athlete. (n.d.). *What is the NCAA dead period?* Retrieved August 19, 20201from https://www.ncsasports.org/ncaa-eligibility-center/recruiting-rules/dead-period

Nguyen, T. N. (2021, July 14). Players believe a woman is ready to be an NBA coach, so why don't their front offices*? Los Angeles Times*. https://www.latimes.com/sports/story/2021-07-14/when-will-the-nba-hire-the-first-female-head-coach

Nieto, S. (1994). Affirmation, solidarity, and critique: Moving beyond tolerance in multicultural education. *Multicultural Education, 1*(9–12), 35–38.

Nimako, K. (2014). Location and social thought in the Black: A testimony of Africana Intellectual Tradition. In S. Broeck & C. Junker (Eds.), *Postcoloniality-decoloniality-Black critique: Joints and fissures* (pp. 53–62). Campus Verlag.

Nimako, K. (2019). Power, (mis)representation, and Black European studies. In N. Gregoire, S. Fila-Bakabadio, & J. M. (Eds.), *Black studies in Europe: Questioning the politics of knowledge.* Forthcoming: Northwestern University Press.

Nimako, K. (2020). *Black Europe and a contested European Union* [Unpublished manuscript].

Office of the Historian (n.d.). *Decolonization of Asia and Africa, 1945–1960*. U.S. Department of State. Retrieved October 12, 2021 from https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/asia-and-africa

Okafor, C. (2018). Black feminism embodiment: A theoretical geography of home, healing, and activism. *Meridians, 16*(2), 373–381. https://doi.org/10.2979/meridians.16.2.18

Olin, K. (1984). Attitudes toward professional foreign players in Finnish amateur basketball. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 273–282.

Olin, K., Lahtinen, J., & Heinonen, O. (1990, July 9–13). *Social intergration of foreign professional players into sport and society: A migration perspective* [Conference session]. International Sociological Assocation's 12th World Congress on Sociology for One World, Madrid, Spain.

Olympics Sporting 99. (n.d.). *Women's volleyball.* Retrieved May 28, 2021, from http://olympics.sporting99.com/olympic-records/volleyball.html

Omi, M., & Winant, H. (2014). *Racial formation in the United States.* Routledge.

Outlaw, K. R., & Toriello, P. J. (2014). The impact of coaches' behavior on African American female athletes' playing satisfaction: A cursory review of the literature. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 24*(5), 612–620. https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2014.914831

Paris, D. (2011). 'A friend who understand fully': notes on humanizing research in a multiethnic youth community. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 24*(2), 137–149. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2010.495091

Paris, D. (2014). The complex nature of power, relationships, and responsibilities. In D. Paris & M. T. Winn (Eds.), *Humanizing research* (pp. 125–127). SAGE Publications.

Paris, D., & Winn, M. T. (Eds.). (2014). *Humanizing research.* SAGE Publications.

Park, A. (2021, August 8). How the Tokyo Olympics changed the conversation about athletes' mental health. *Time*. https://time.com/6088078/mental-health-olympics-simone-biles/

Patton, L. D., & Ward, L. W. (2016). Missing Black undergraduate women and the politics of disposability: A critical race feminist perspective. *The Journal of Negro Education, 85*(3), 330–349. https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.85.3.0330

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Pavlidis, A. (2018). Making "space" for women and girls in sport: an agenda for Australian geography. *Geographical Research, 56*(4), 343–352. https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-5871.12302

Pedro, T. S., & Kinloch, V. (2017). Toward projects in humanization: Research on co-creating and sustaining dialogic relationships . *American Educational Research Journal, 54*(S1), 373S–394S. https://doi.org/10.3102%2F0002831216671210

Pelak, C. F. (2006). Local-global processes: Linking globalization, democratization and the development of women's football in South Africa. *Afrika Spectrum, 41*(3), 371–392.

Perry, A. J. (2020, September 4). How Black women athletes paved the way for the NBA strike. *NPR.* https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2020/09/04/909638021/how-black-women-athletes-paved-the-way-for-the-nba-strike

Person, D. R., Benson-Quaziena, M., & Rogers, A. M. (2001). Female student–athletes and student–athletes of color. *New Directions For Student Services, 93*, 55–64.

Phipps, K. (2021). *Keba Phipps*. Team Keba. https://www.teamkeba.com

Pierre, L.-M. (2019). *Entrepreneurial propensity: The constraining and enabling factors of institutional environments on women faculty in engineering* (Publication no. 2258718) [Doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global. https://www.proquest.com/openview/53c26134f1b103e5b9df024112319b37/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y

Pineda, D. (2021, December 8). Nikole Hannah-Jones dives into the origins, language of 'The 1619 Project'. *The Detroit News*. https://www.detroitnews.com/story/entertainment/books/2021/12/08/nikole-hannah-jones-dives-into-origins-language-the-1619-project/6438132001/

Podesta, G.-L. (2011). Colonists and "demographic" colonists: Family and society in Italian Africa. *Annales de Démographie Historique, 122*(2), 205–231. https://www.cairn.info/revue-annales-de-demographie-historique-2011-2-page-205.htmUR

Porter, C., & Dean, L. (2015). Making meaning: Identity development of Black undergraduate women. *NASPA: Journal About Women in Higher Education, 2*(8), 125–139. https://doi.org/10.1080/19407882.2015.1057164

Powell, J., & Lovelock, R. (1991). Negotiating with agencies. In G. Allen & C. Skinner (Eds.), *Handbook for research students in the social sciences* (pp. 128–139). Falmer.

Price, P. L. (2010). At the crossroads: critical race theory and critical geographies of race. *Progress in Human Geography, 34*(2)*,* 147–174. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0309132509339005

Pro Sports Group. (n.d.). *Athletes looking for agents*. Retrieved September 15, 2021, from https://www.prosportsgroup.com/athletes-looking-for-agents/

Ptaschinski, N. (2019, September 9). *Women's placements*. Bring It Usa. http://bringitusa.com/players/women/

Puwar, N. (2004). *Space invaders: Race, gender and bodies out of place.* Berg.

Quinn, E. (2021, February 21). *Paving the way for women in the NBA*. National Athletic Trainers' Association. https://www.nata.org/blog/elizabeth-quinn/paving-way-women-nba

Rapley, T. (2014). Sampling strategies in qualitative research. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis* (pp. 49–63). SAGE Publications.

Rastogi, S., Johnson, T. D., Hoeffel, E. M., & Drewery, J. M. (2011). *The Black population: 2010*. U.S. Census. https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-06.pdf

Rea, A. (1998). Le racisme Européen ou la fabrication du sous-blanc. In A. R. (Ed.), *Immigration et racisme en Europe* (pp. 167–200). Editions Complexe.

Réclus E. (1879). *Géographie Universelle La terre et les hommes*. L'Europe du Nord-Ouest, Librairie Hachette et Cie.

Rooney, J. (1974). *A geography of American sport.* Addison Wesley.

Rooney, J. (1980). *The recruiting game.* University of Nebraska Press.

Rosbrook-Thompson, J. (2016). Understanding difference amid superdiversity: Space, 'race' and granular essentialisms at an inner-city football club. *Sociology, 52*(4), 639–654. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0038038516660039

Ruggiero, T. E., & Lattin, K. S. (2008). Intercollegiate female coaches' use of verbally aggressive communication toward African American female athletes. *The Howard Journal of Communications, 19*(2), 105–124. https://doi.org/10.1080/10646170801990946

Saavedra, M. (2003). Football feminine: Development of the African game: Senegal, Nigeria and South Africa. *Soccer & Society, 41*(3), 371–392. https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970512331390925

Saavedra, M. (2011, June 15–18). *Women's football in the horn of Africa'* [Paper presentation]. 4th European Conference on African Studies, Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden.

Safdar, A. (2017, May 13). Rokhaya Diallo: 'France sees itself as a white country'. *Al Jazeera.* https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/5/13/rokhaya-diallo-france-sees-itself-as-a-white-country

Sage, G., & Loy, F. J. (1978). Geographical mobility patterns of college coaches. *Urban Life, 7*(2), 253–280. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F089124167800700208

Said, E. W. (1979). *Orientalism.* Vintage Books.

Salmi, K. (2011a). 'Race does not exist here.' Applying critical race theory to the French republican context. In K. Hylton, A. Pilkington, P. Warmington, & S. Housee (Eds.), *Atlantic crossings: International dialogues on critical race theory* (pp. 176–195). The Higher Education Academy Network.

Salmi, K. (2011b). *Exploring the mechanisms for challenging racial discrimination in relation to French political culture* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Sussex]. Sussex Research Online. http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/id/eprint/38593/1/Salmi,_Katya.pdf

Samples, S. (2019). Black is not beautiful: The German myth of race. In P. Essed, K. Farquharson, K. Pillay, & E. J. White (Eds.), *Relating worlds of racism* (pp. 223–244). Palgrave Macmillan.

Schaart, E. (2021, July 1). *The Netherlands told to apologize for slave trade past.* Politico EU. https://www.politico.eu/article/netherlands-slave-trade-apology-demand/

Schinke, R. J., & McGannon, K. R. (2014). The acculturation experiences of (and with) immigrant athletes. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 64–75.

Schinke, R., McGannon, K., Battochio, R., & Wells, G. (2013). Expanding acculturation in elite sport: A thematic analysis of athletes and coaches. *Journal of Sport Sciences, 31*(15), 1676–1686.

Schultz, J. (2005). Reading the catsuit. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues, 29*(3), 338–357. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0193723505276230

Scraton, S., Caudwell, J., & Holland, S. (2005). 'Bend it like Patel': Centering 'race', ethnicity and gender in feminist analysis of women's football in England. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 40*(1), 71–88. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1012690205052169

Scraton, S., Fasting, K., Pfister, G., & Bunuel, A. (2018). It's still a man's game? The experiences of top-level European women footballers. In G. Pfister & S. Pope (Eds.), *Female football players and fans* (pp. 19–36). Palgrave Macmillian.

Sellers, R. M., Kuperminc, G. P., & Damas, A. (1997). The college life experiences of African American women athletes. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 25*, 699–720. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1024691002055

Sensoy, O., & DiAngelo, R. (2017). *Is everyone really equal.* Teachers College Press.

Shendruk, A. (2021, July 8). *Are you even trying to stop racism if you don't collect data on race?* Quartz. https://qz.com/2029525/the-20-countries-that-dont-collect-racial-and-ethnic-census-data/

Simien, E. M. (2004). Black feminist theory. *Women & Politics, 26*(2), 81–93. https://doi.org/10.1300/J014v26n0204

Simien, E. M., Arinze, N., & McGarry, J. (2019). A portrait of marginality in sport and education: Toward a theory of intersectionality and raced-gendered experiences for Black female college athletes. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy, 40*(3), 409–427. https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2019.1614865

Simiyu, W. W. (2012). Challenges of being a Black student–athlete on U.S. college campuses. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics, 5*, 40–63. https://scholarworks.uttyler.edu/hkdept_fac/9/

Simril, R. (2019, September 12). Sports: Let's reimagine the great equalizer. *Forbes*. https://www.forbes.com/sites/renatasimril/2019/09/12/sports-lets-reimagine-the-great-equalizer/?sh=6715befa6946

Singer, J. N. (2005). Addressing epistemological racism in sport management research. *Journal of Sport Management, 19*(4), 464–479. https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.19.4.464

Singer, J. N., Weems, A. J., & Garner, J. R. (2017). Fraternal twins: Critical race theory and systemic racism theory as analytic and activist tools for college sport reform. In B. J. Hawkins, A. R. Carter-Francique, & J. N. Cooper (Eds.), *Black athletic sporting experiences in the United States* (pp. 11–56). Springer Nature.

Skogvang, B. O. (2008). The historical development of women's football in Norway: From 'show games' to international successes. In J. Magee, K. L. J. Caudwell, & S. E. Scraton (Eds.), *Women, football, and Europe: Histories, equity and experiences* (Vol. 1). Meyer & Meyer.

Skogvang, B. O. (2019). Scandinavian women's football: The importance of male and female pioneers in the development of the sport. *Sport in History, 39*(2), 207–228. https://doi.org/10.1080/17460263.2019.1618389

Sports Venue Technology. (2021). *Top 10 sports in the world*. https://www.sportsvenue-technology.com/articles/top-10-sports-in-the-world

Stanard, M. G. (2014). Violence and empire: the curious case of Belgium and the Congo. In R. Aldrich & K. McKenzie (Eds.), *The Routledge history of western empires* (pp. 454–467). Routledge.

Stetson, E. (1993). Studying slavery: Some literary and pedagogical considerations on the Black female slave. In A. Hull, P. Bell-Scott, & B. Smith (Eds.), *But some of us are brave: All the Women are White, all the Blacks are men* (pp. 61–84). The Feminine Press.

Stratta, T. (1995a). *An ethnography of the sport experiences of African American female athletes* [Doctoral dissertation, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale] ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Stratta, T. (1995b). Cultural inclusiveness in sport: Recommendations from African American Woman College Athletes. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance, 66*(7), 52–56.

Sturgis, I., Shahab, M., Lynch, M., Caudill, J., & Pfohl, P. (2021, March 31). *Stop using "female" when you mean "woman".* Golin. https://golin.com/2021/03/31/stop-using-female-when-you-mean-woman/

Sue, D. W. (2021, March 30). Microaggressions: Death by a thousand cuts. *Scientific American*. https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/microaggressions-death-by-a-thousand-cuts/

Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist, 62*(4), 271–286. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0003-066X.62.4.271

Sweeney, K. L. (2014). *Race matters: An examination of the study abroad experiences of African American undergraduates* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Denver]. UD Electronic Theses and Dissertations. https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/635/

Stambulova, N., & Henriksen, K. (2021). Professional migration from the United States to Europe: Composite vignettes of black male basketball players from underserved communities. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise, 54*, 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2021.101900

Tolia-Kelly, D. P. (2010). The geographies of cultural geography I: Identities, bodies and race. *Progress in Human Geography, 34*(3) , 358–367. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0309132509343378

Torres, G. (2019, November 12). *Americans Fawcett, McClendon, Wilhite, Felix ready for Brazilian Superliga*. Volleyball Mag. https://volleyballmag.com/brazil-pro-women-111219/

Tuan, Y.-F. (1977). *Space and place: The perspective of experience.* University of Minnesota Press.

Tyner, J. A. (2012). *Space, place, and violence.* Routledge.

Ungruhe, C. (2013). "Natural born sportsmen". Processes of othering and self-charismatization of African professional footballers in Germany. *African Diaspora*, 196–217. https://brill.com/view/journals/afdi/6/2/article-p196_4.xml

University of Illinois Division of Intercollegiate Athletics. (n.d.). *Huff Hall*. Retrieved November, 8, 2021 from https://fightingillini.com/facilities/huff-hall-gymnastics-volleyball-wrestling/11

Vaicaitis, I. (2021). Sport migration in a global world: A case study of Lithuanian swimmers migration to the United States [Master's thesis, Malmo University]. Digitala Vetenskapliga Arkivet Repository. https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1564494/FULLTEXT02.pdf

van Amsterdam, N., Claringbould, I., & Knoppers, A. (2017). Bodies matter: Professional bodies and embodiment in institutional sport contexts. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 41*(4), 335–353. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0193723517708904

van Ingen, C. (2003). Geographies of gender, sexuality and race. *International review for the sociology of sport, 38*(2), 201–216.

VandenBos, G. R. (2015). *APA dictionary of psychology* (2nd ed.). American Psychological Association.

Vertinsky, P., & Captain, G. (1998). More myth than history: American culture and representations of the Black female's athletic ability. *Journal of Sport History, 25*(3), 532–561.

Voepel, M. (2020, April 29). U.S. women's volleyball league to start in 2021. *ESPN.* https://www.espn.com/olympics/story/_/id/29113655/us-women-volleyball-league-start-2021

Volleyball World. (2021, May 25). *Hooker to star in Puerto Rican League*. https://en.volleyballworld.com/news/hooker-to-star-in-puerto-rican-league

Volleybox. (2021, September 12). *Women volleyball job offers (168).* https://women.volleybox.net/volleyball-job-offers

Waldner, M. (1974, September 19). Pro volleyball makes sense? *Daily News*.

Walker, H. (1974, December 9). Clubs clobbered on coast. *The Calgary Herald*. Retrieved from https://calgaryherald.com

Walkington, L. (2017). How far have we really come? Black women faculty and graduate students' experiences in higher education. *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations, 1*(39), 51–65. https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/hjsr/vol1/iss39/10/

Waller, S. N., Norwood, D. M., Spearman, L., & Polite, F. G. (2016). Black American female Olympic Athletes have not reaped the same social standing and economic benefits that their counterparts have since the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. *Sport Science Review, XXV*(1), 53–72. https://doi.org/10.1515/ssr-2016-0003

Watten, D. (2020). *Ready to go pro?* USA Volleyball. https://usavolleyball.org/resource/ready-to-go-pro/

Webster, L., & Mertova, P. (2007). *Using narrative inquiry as a research method: An introduction to using critical event narrative analysis in research on learning and teaching.* Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Weil, P. (2002). *Qu'est-ce qu'un Français? Histoire de la nationalité française depuis la Révolution.* Grasset.

Weisbord, R. G. (2003). The king, the cardinal and the pope: Leopold II's genocide in the Congo and the Vatican. *Journal of Genocide Research, 5*(1), 35–45. https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520305651

Westerman, A. (2020, December 20). In 2020, protests spread across the globe with a similar message: Black Lives Matter. *NPR*. https://www.npr.org/2020/12/30/950053607/in-2020-protests-spread-across-the-globe-with-a-similar-message-black-lives-matt

WFMYStaff. (2005, September 26). *Jeter received racist hate mail*. WFMY News. https://www.wfmynews2.com/article/sports/jeter-received-racist-hate-mail/83-403685858

Wiedenroth, E. (1992). What makes me so different in the eyes of others?. In M. Opitz, K. Oguntoye, & D. S. Adams (Eds.), *Showing Our Colors* (pp. 165–177). The University of Massachusetts Press.

Wilkins, C. L. (2007). *The aesthetics of equity: Notes on race, space, architecture, and music* (1st ed.). University of Minnesota Press.

Williams, L. (2021, June 4). *Pros and cons professional athletes need to know about earning international income and paying taxes*. Lauryn Williams. https://www.lauryn-williams.com/post/pros-and-cons-professional-athletes-need-to-know-about-earning-international-income-and-paying-t

Willis, T. Y. (2015). "And still we rise . . .": Microaggressions and intersectionality in the study abroad experiences of Black women. *The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 26*, 209–231.

Winn, M. T., & Ubiles, J. R. (2011). Worthy witnessing: Collaborative research in urban classrooms. In A. Ball & C. A. Tyson (Eds.), *Studying diversity in teacher education* (pp. 295–308). Rowman and Littlefield.

Winterburn, C. (2021, May 4). *Football's racism problem continues*. Marca. https://www.marca.com/en/football/spanish-football/2021/04/05/606b13bcca4741fb4d8b45b4.html

Wise, N., & Kohe, G. (2020). Sports geography: New approaches, perspectives & directions. *Sport in Society*, *23*(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2018.1555209

Withycombe, J. L. (2011). Intersecting selves: African American female athletes' experiences of sport. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 28*(4), 478–493. https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.28.4.478

World of Volley. (2018, May 23). BRA W: Hooker remains in Superliga but in… https://worldofvolley.com/latest_news/brazil/98702/bra-w-hooker-remains-in-superliga-but-in.html

Yam, K. (2019, August 6). Video of Toni Morrison calling out interviewer for 'powerfully racist' question goes viral. *Huffington Post*. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/toni-morrison-interviewer-racist-question_n_5d49baabe4b0d291ed07bc45

Yancy, G. (2017). *Black bodies, White gazes.* Rowman & Littlefield.

Yarbrough, M., & Bennett, C. (1999). Cassandra and the "sistahs": The peculiar treatment of African-American women in the myth of women as liars. *Gender, Race, and Justice, 3*, 625–657.

Yellen, E. (2016, July 29). *Athletes have more power than ever to change the world*. The Undefeated. https://theundefeated.com/features/athletes-have-more-power-than-ever-to-change-the-world/

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods.* SAGE Publications.

Young, J. (2020, January 20). WNBA agrees to 53% pay raise, maternity benefits for players in new collective bargaining agreement. *CNBC.* https://www.cnbc.com/2020/01/14/wnba-agrees-to-53percent-pay-raise-maternity-benefits-for-players-in-new-collective-bargaining-agreement.html

Yull, D. G. (2014). Race has always mattered: An intergenerational look at race, space, place, and educational experiences of Blacks . *Education Research International*, *2014*(1) 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1155/2014/683035

Zenquis, M. R., & Mwaniki, M. F. (2019). The intersection of race, gender, and nationality in sport: Media representation of the Ogwumike sisters. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 43*(1), 23–43.

Zheng, L. (2022, February 11). *What do you call people who aren't White?*. Medium. https://medium.com/@lilyzheng308/what-do-you-call-people-who-arent-white-f4e23993411