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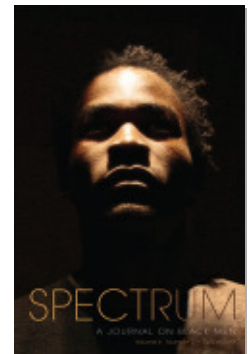
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I. S. Keino Miller, Jesse A. Steinfeldt, James G. Richter, Mary T. McKinley

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# Nyane: The Reemergence of Black Resistant Masculinity through Sport

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**I. S. Keino Miller, Jesse A. Steinfeldt,  
James G. Richter, and Mary T. McKinley**

**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this paper is to examine the origins and social construction of Black masculinity through sport and athletic competition, beginning with an examination of the role of sport on the African continent and contrasting that with its role within the system of chattel slavery in the Americas. Under this system of brutality and oppression emerged two different types of masculinity in relation to athletics: resistant masculinity used athletics to retain cultural memories and reaffirm identity, while marginalized masculinity used athletics to entertain slave owners to survive enslavement and oppression. This paper argues that resistant masculinity encouraged enslaved Africans and their descendants to use sport as a tool of resistance and reaffirmation of identity. This paper connects this legacy with the actions of athletes and other men of African descent using both historical and contemporary frames of reference.

Through centuries of enslavement and decades of racial oppression, athletic participation and identity have been essential to the lives—and sometimes survival—of enslaved Africans and their descendants (Griffith, 2010). Against the backdrop of slavery, sport and recreation provided escape from mental and physical bondage (Griffith, 2010). Additionally, enslaved Africans were forced to entertain White slave owners through sponsored athletic exhibitions (Lussana, 2010). These exploits signaled the beginning of the commoditization of Black men as athletes

(Bimper, Harrison, & Clark, 2013; Ferber, 2007). Despite marginalization, many learned that excelling athletically could present opportunities for advancement, favored status by Whites, and recognition among others within the slave community (Lussana, 2016). These benefits encouraged others to participate in the athletic socialization process: first as slaves, then as free men of color, and later as descendants of enslaved Africans in the Americas (Griffith, 2010; Lussana, 2010). The outcome of the athletic socialization process, whereby Black men learn to subjugate self and cultural identity to hopefully reap the recognition and rewards of being a male athlete, is marginalized masculinity (Speight, 2007). Marginalized masculinity has been inculcated through periods of episodic and intergenerational trauma (Vaughans, 2014) and may be defined as enmity toward one's cultural or ethnic origin (Speight, 2007).

While performing for White masters encouraged marginalized masculinity, intrepid members of slave societies used athletics to retain their ethnic identities, thus developing resistant masculinity. This was seen in the *maroon* and *quilombo* communities of runaway slaves (Assunção, 2003; Gordon, 2006). These individuals used sport to redefine the conditions of their bondage while building communities of resistance and resiliency. Such practices emphasized ethnic identity and cohesion over individual accolades and advancement. Furthermore, sport and athletic participation became enmeshed in an ethnic socialization process for the descendants of enslaved Africans that emphasized reestablishing African cultural and collective identity and pride (Cokley, 2005; Parham, 2002).

Over time, reconnecting with African culture through athleticism gave way to thoughts of celebrity and fame as a professional athlete. While Black communities often celebrate high school sports such as football and basketball (Beamon & Bell, 2006), scholars and journalists (Rhoden, 2010) have sharply criticized college and professional leagues for serving as modern-day plantations that continue the tradition of marginalizing Black men. Marginalized identities in contemporary sport are common and are often stereotyped as a Black athlete's self-centered presentation as athletically successful yet are negatively characterized by financial irresponsibility, criminal activity, and scandals involving paternity.

In contrast to this perceived self-centered presentation of marginalized identity, resistant masculinity promotes a collective emphasis, rooted in community and ethnic identity (Courtenay, 2000). Whereas to be marginalized is to seek survival through compliance and alignment with those institutions that commoditize and dehumanize Black athletes, to be resistant is to struggle to retain one's cultural identity and confront the entities and processes that seek to oppress and marginalize Black athletes (Courtenay, 2000). Examples of resistant masculinity can be seen in the careers of legendary Black athletes such as Muhammad Ali, Jim Brown,

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and Arthur Ashe, as well as unsung heroes like Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf, Craig Hodges, and the Syracuse Eight. In the 21st century high-profile athletes, such as Colin Kaepernick and LeBron James, have continued to use their voices and platforms to advocate for the rights of the oppressed (Griffin, Ward, & Phillips, 2013; Wyche, 2016).

This paper argues that while the expression of athletic masculinity for enslaved Africans was constructed both publicly (e.g., as entertainment for White slave owners) and privately (e.g., as rites and rituals promoting ethnic identity and resistance), these seemingly distinct and conflicting masculine athletic identities led to a dual construction of Black masculinity through athletic participation (Ferber, 2007). Throughout this paper, marginalized and resistant masculinities will be compared as responses to institutional dehumanization. In contemporary society, the two have been viewed as contradictory. These masculinities are not dichotomous but rather exist on a continuum, supporting the argument for continued culturally informed research on this topic.

This paper will next examine ethnic socialization and the social construction of identity, followed by a comparative analysis of marginalized and resistant masculinities, including the contrast between the negative perception of resistant masculinity as angry and anti-American and positive perception of marginalized masculinity as embodying meritocratic advancement singled out for “skill” (Carrington, 2010) and civility. Next, historical and contemporary depictions of the Black athlete will be explored through syntheses of relevant literature addressing Black masculinity and athletic socialization. To adequately frame this historical perspective, it is necessary to examine the contribution by the institution of slavery to intergenerational trauma for descendants of enslaved Africans in the Americas. Intergenerational trauma, or post-traumatic slave syndrome (DeGruy, 2017), helps describe the roots of ethnic socialization of these descendants of enslaved Africans, both in historical and contemporary presentations. Finally, an interdisciplinary approach to enhancing the model of support and understanding of Black male athletes throughout the African diaspora will be introduced.

## MASCULINITY AND THE LEGACY OF SLAVERY

For centuries, sport and athletic competition have been essential to the cultural expression of masculinity (Roberts, 2014). Contests were initiated as training for hunting, combat, worship of deities, and, most recently, rites of passage (Decker, 1992; Harvey & Hill, 2004). Among the varied ethnic groups in sub-Saharan Africa, young men are initiated into masculinity either by athletic competition (Crego, 2003) or through the practice of circumcision (Hambly, 1930; van Vuuren

& de Jongh, 1999). Like many aspects of Black life today, there are commonalities with peoples throughout the African diaspora, including the tradition of manhood initiation through sport and athletic competition.

For enslaved Africans, sport as a rite of passage and reconnection with one's cultural traditions transitioned into a mechanism for survival on the plantation through entertaining White slave owners (Blassingame, 1977). Former slave Will Adams recounted that during Christmas slave owners would get a few good male slaves to wrestle as family entertainment, noting that "our sports was big fun for the massa and his family ... [they'd] watch the niggers put it on brown" (Work Projects Administration, 1941, p. 7). While this depiction illustrates the exploitation of Black athletes as entertainers, another version of Black masculinity is instead highlighted by resistance and reconnection with one's ethnic identity. Through the pursuit of athletics in the face of racism and institutional barriers, Black athletes were socialized into sport as a means of both social mobility and protest (Carrington, 2010; Edwards, 1969; Zirin, 2005). In turn, athletic expression facilitated a sense of Black male empowerment.

Since the late 1800s, resistant masculinity in gender role development among the descendants of enslaved Africans in the Americas has been critical to providing a counter-narrative to the myth of White supremacy over African people (Bimper et al., 2013). Throughout the 20th century athletic victories for Black men individually were regarded as a collective victory for all oppressed and aboriginal people around the globe (Møller, Dickow, & Harris 1999). For example, when boxer Jack Johnson defeated the "Great White Hope" Jim Jeffries in 1910, descendants of enslaved Africans in the United States collectively swelled with hope (Carrington, 2010). Likewise, when Jesse Owens won four gold medals in the 1936 Olympics for the long jump, 100 meters, 200 meters, and 4 x 100 meter relay, Africans around the globe rejoiced with pride (Schaap, 2015). Sport and athletic participation continue to provide descendants of enslaved Africans individually with an avenue of physical and emotional expression and collectively with pride in one's family, community, and ethnic heritage (Lussana, 2016; Roberts, 2014).

## RESISTANCE THROUGH ETHNIC SOCIALIZATION

The impact of ethnic socialization has resulted in an emphasis on athletic participation as a cultural experience. This phenomenon has led scholars to inquire into the role of sport in bringing about change and progress for the descendants of enslaved Africans in the Americas (Carrington, 2010; Spreitzer & Snyder, 1990), questioning whether ethnic socialization has the capacity to reconnect African people throughout the diaspora. Enslaved African descendants express varied opinions

on what is “African” (Coetzee & Roux, 2004). Because the Americas are populated with descendants of various African ethnic groups (Martin & West, 1999), a monolithic African identity cannot be easily examined. However, enslaved Africans bound under the same system of chattel slavery converged to establish intersecting systems of kinship (Mintz & Price, 1976). For enslaved Africans, ethnic socialization promoted a means to retain cultural memories, rituals, and traditions (Eyerman, 2001) that carried the message of resistance, while for emancipated descendants of enslaved Africans in the Americas, the message became hope (Fischer & Shaw, 1999).

## BLACK MASCULINITY

### *Marginalized Identity*

While the descendants of enslaved Africans in the Americas have overcome many setbacks, their collective experiences in the Americas have shaped negative attitudes toward education, work, family, property ownership, self-worth, community cohesion, and color discrimination (Mphande & James-Myers, 1993; Parham, 2002; Wade & Rochlen, 2013). Missing from the literature is an examination of the historical legacy of slavery in relation to the ethnic socialization of Black men. While ignoring the influence of slavery, many attempts to examine the gendered racial experiences of Black males have been hindered by the adaptation of Eurocentric paradigms of masculinity and the long-term impact of systematic racism (Mphande & James-Myers, 1993).

Two major historical stereotypical representations of Black men—the brute and sambo—are rooted in the imagery of slavery and represent the opposite end points on a continuum of stereotypical images (Hawkins, 1998) found in marginalized masculinity that have shaped how society perceives Black men and how Black men view themselves. The “brute” (or savage) is a demonized, untamed, bestial, and highly sexed individual with superior physical abilities and a potential for violence. The 1915 film *Birth of a Nation* cemented the image of the Black male brute in popular society (White & Cones, 1999) as a hyper-masculine, lawless drunkard who lusts after White women. On the other end of the continuum, the “sambo” (or coon) image emerged later in history (Turner, 1977) as the domesticated savage, one who is subservient, acquiescent, naturally entertaining, and childish.

Parham (2002) argued that these labels have been ascribed in Western society through the media’s depictions of stereotypical character portrayals, such as the brute or *mandingo* in professional football and wrestling, the sambo in Walt Disney’s *Uncle Remus*, the token in *Our Gang’s* Buckwheat, the entertainer in *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air’s* Will Smith character (Thomas, 2007), the criminal in the character Ghost from the cable series *Power*, and the spiritual intermediary

in *The Green Mile's* John Coffee (Bjornstrom, Kaufman, Peterson, & Slater, 2010; White & Cones 1999). These images have had a deleterious impact on the acceptance of Black men into mainstream society.

Another contemporary stereotypical portrayal of the brute marginalized identity is the Black male socialized in the “streets.” Oliver (2006) proposed three masculine roles valued by Black men who are socialized in “the streets”: (a) the tough guy/gangsta, (b) the player of women, and (c) the hustler/baller. Oliver further suggested that these roles promote unscrupulous values and a strict adherence to profit and materialism. It can be argued that each of these labels is subsumed under the brute narrative of marginalized masculinity. These images have been sustained on screen in characters such as Lucius Lyons on the television series *Empire*, Huggie Bear on the television series *Starsky and Hutch*, or Denzel Washington’s role as Alonzo Harris in the Academy Award–winning film *Training Day*.

### *Resistant Masculinity*

Defined by their opposition to cultural oppression, enslaved Africans and free people of color worked to resist marginalization and the ideology of White supremacy (Booker, 2000; Eyerman, 2001). Men like Denmark Vesey and Robert Smalls of South Carolina (Hinks, 2001), Leonard Parkinson of Jamaica (Sheridan, 1976), Zumbi of Brazil (Orser & Funari, 2001), and John Horse the Black Seminole (Mulroy, 2003) are only a sample of historical figures who personified resistant masculinity (Courtenay, 2000; Lussana, 2016). Because most of our knowledge regarding this resistance has come from former slaves, the best subjects for examining 19th-century Black masculinity are those escaped slaves who became Black abolitionists. Unfortunately, there is a hole in the scholarly literature concerning Black men and how they resisted systematic racism and cultural oppression during and after the 19th century. We do know, however, that one form of resistant masculinity was achieved through what became known as “intellectual masculinity” (hooks, 2004; Vincent, 2006).

For most descendants of enslaved Africans in the Americas in the 19th century, enslavement and oppression shaped their construction of manhood (Booker, 2000). They sought to empower themselves through education, financial autonomy, physical escape from slavery, and, most important, protection of their family (Booker, 2000). Therefore, resistant masculinity can be conceptualized as both a physical and an intellectual pursuit. Examples of this conceptualization of masculinity include runaway slaves who became free men and Black intellectuals who would later become founders of the Black intellectual community.

Griffith (2010) and Lussana (2010) established narratives describing violence as the sole avenue for enslaved Africans and their descendants to demonstrate their manhood. One of the most widely cited examples is *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (Douglass, 1845/2011). In 1834, Thomas Auld, Frederick Douglass's master, leased him to the slave breaker Edward Covey. One morning Covey decided that he would whip Douglass, who refused. Covey attacked Douglass, inciting his resolve to fight back. They struggled for nearly two hours, with Douglass drawing blood and Covey drawing none. For the remainder of his time at Covey's farm, he did not lay a hand on Douglass. Douglass reflected that this fight was "my turning point in my career as a slave ... and revived within me a sense of my own *manhood*" (p. 63).

Some have described this act of violence as an example of Douglass's understanding of manhood defined through resistance (Harrold, 2015; Nudelman, 2015; Yarborough, 1990). Furthermore, there is a long discourse within Douglass's autobiography that implies that he, and Black men in general, could only attain manhood through the use of their bodies, namely through violent action (Douglass, 1845/2011; Lussana, 2016; Roth, 2007). Brown (2011) observed that Black manhood during the antebellum period was distinctly based in physicality, as it was "aimed at a bodily aesthetic that defied subordination" (p. 3). This sentiment was also expressed by Haitian revolution leader Toussaint L'Ouverture, who said "we have known how to face danger to obtain our liberty, we shall know how to brave death to maintain it" (James, 1938, p. 19). Despite the resolve of these leaders, Black masculinity during the 19th century required just as much intellect as it did courage.

Douglass and men like Henry Bibb (Green, 2014), William Wells Brown (Brown, 1863), Paul Edmondson, and Paul Jennings (Rohrs, 1994) also personified resistant masculinity as public intellectuals and freedom fighters. Those familiar with the body of scholarship on 19th-century American slavery know that much has been written about the ways in which slaves resisted the South's "peculiar institution" (Mellon, 2002). Enslaved Africans resisted slavery in both active and passive ways. Breaking tools, feigning illness, staging slowdowns, and committing acts of arson and sabotage were all forms of day-to-day resistance and expression of slaves' alienation from their masters (Blassingame, 1977; Lussana, 2016). For Black abolitionists, their resistance, or resistant masculinity, took many forms and expressions, such as language.

Du Bois published an essay in 1903 titled "The Talented Tenth," calling Black men to become leaders of their race through methods such as advancing their education, writing books, and becoming directly involved in social change. He strongly believed that Black people needed a classical education to reach their full potential as public intellectuals. Du Bois (1903) wrote that "[t]he Negro race, like all races,



is going to be saved by its exceptional men” (p. 12). It is evident from the historical record that 19th-century examples of exceptional Black men, the “Talented Tenth,” came not only from the ranks of those like Du Bois, who were born free, but also included former slaves like Frederick Douglass.

In today’s society intellectual masculinity continues to align with resistance. For the descendants of enslaved Africans, intellectual masculinity seeks to analyze society through its norms and its barriers. This importantly suggests that resistance is informed and sustained through intellectual development and collective identity (Cokley, 2005; Vincent, 2006). When studying the condition of enslaved African descendants, an analysis of the legacy of slavery may help address contemporary cultural oppression and systematic racism.

### *Athletic Socialization and the Black Athlete*

One of the most controversial arguments discussed among researchers of sport is athletic exceptionalism (Hoberman, 1997). Some scholars have inquired about the presence of a “sports gene” of athletic giftedness, passed down from one generation to the next (Epstein, 2013). Hoberman (1997) is more definitive when he argues that the descendants of enslaved Africans are more genetically suited for athletic performance than Europeans. A counter-narrative to this oft-made claim is that high levels of athletic socialization within Black communities account for the disproportionately higher levels of participation of Black athletes in some sports. For example, lack of interest from the enslaved African descendants in Canada may more accurately account for less participation in hockey than physiological differences between Blacks and Whites (Wilson & Sparks, 1999). This is certainly the case for decreased numbers of Black athletes playing baseball after increased exposure to football and basketball (Ogden & Hilt, 2003).

The shift in Black athletes’ interest might better be explained by Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory, particularly when added consideration is given to ecological and social forces that help shape human interaction (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) places importance on one’s observation of others in order to model behaviors and attitudes from the target of observation. The descendants of enslaved Africans modeled their own trajectories for success on how other Black athletes found success in sport (Bandura, 1977; McBrier & Wilson, 2004). Over time, as more Black men found success and visibility in certain professions, younger generations came to associate the advancement through the same or similar means (Hale, 1982).

In sports culture, this is often illustrated in the expectations placed on the kin of former Black athletes (Beamon & Bell, 2006). In the NFL, Hall of Famer

Kellen Winslow and his son NFL player Kellen Winslow II are such an example, as are Kobe Bryant and his father the “Black Mamba” Joe Bryant in the NBA, Bobby Bonds and son Barry Bonds of the MLB, and NFL player Calvin Hill and his son NBA star Grant Hill (*Sports Illustrated*, 2015). Beyond the examples given above, the family of NBA great Stephon Marbury exemplifies the importance of athleticism in masculine socialization as a strategy to escape the projects of Coney Island, Brooklyn. This was evidenced by cousins Sebastian Telfair and Jamel Thomas who were in the NBA, as well as his brother Zach Marbury who played professional basketball in Venezuela (Leflay, Griggs, & Biscomb, 2015).

To better understand athletic socialization, one must recognize the contradiction of sports for the descendants of enslaved Africans. As enslaved Africans sought refuge through sport and recreation, slave owners took advantage of games slaves would play during moments of respite (Blassingame, 1977). As slave owners coopted these games for their own entertainment, they fostered intense competition by rewarding enslaved Africans that performed well with favors or reduced their work responsibilities. Examples of these rewards and favors included time off, quality food, proper shoes, good clothing, liquor (as told by one ex-slave, Moses), or the most prized possession—a woman (Blassingame, 1977). Yet despite entertaining White plantation families, enslaved African families continued to embrace athletic contest as a means to promote traditional culture even while trying to survive enslavement (Blassingame, 1977; Griffith, 2010).

If the marginalized identity of enslaved African created by European slave owners is compared to that created by today’s NFL and NBA owners, similarities in process and structure become evident. No longer enslaved, today’s descendants of enslaved Africans in the Americas submit to athletic training as preteens to achieve optimal athletic acumen early in life (Coakley, 2016; Horn, Tomlinson, & Whannel, 1999). It is during the crucible of athletic socialization that young athletes become exposed to ideas of wealth and fame. Falcous and Maguire (2005) further illustrated how many enslaved African descendants living in dire conditions embrace athletics in the hope of elevating their identity by becoming a professional athlete. As this aspiring professional athlete works toward a “million-dollar payday,” he may be unaware of the realities of commoditization (i.e., being a physical specimen) or the potential for marginalization. Beyond the role as player/performer, today’s current and former marginalized athletes work to retain the status quo of compliance.

Marginalized identities persist when society limits opportunity, be it actual or perceived. Ogbu’s (1978) theory of oppositional culture illustrates the difference between the academic engagement of Black youth (what he labels “involuntary minorities”) and immigrant minority children whose families freely migrate to their host country. In this comparison, the descendants of enslaved Africans in

the Americas are labeled as “psychologically vulnerable” (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998, p. 536) as opposed to resistant. For Black athletes, resistance sometimes emerges from marginalization, as the recent examples of Colin Kaepernick, LeBron James, and others have proven (Griffin, 2011; Wyche, 2016).

### *Legacy of Resistant Masculinity in the United States during the 19th and 20th Centuries*

In the world of sport, there has been a long legacy of Black athletes and teams who have embraced resistance over marginalization (Ashe, 1988; Brown, 2005; Carrington, 2010). Many early accounts of resistance through sport can be found in slave narratives that address liberation as a motivation for participating in slaveholder-sanctioned events, despite being exploited as entertainment for White audiences (Lussana, 2010). Former enslaved Africans Wallace Turnage (Blight, 2007) and Reverend Perry Sid Jamison (Work Projects Administration, 1941) both recounted situations (note: Jamison, anecdotally; Turnage, personally) where athletic enslaved Africans would not allow themselves to be whipped by White overseers, resulting in direct physical challenges to fight or wrestle them. Former featherweight champion Colin McMillan’s analysis of these actions further illustrates how enslaved Africans learned to resist their oppressors by using sport. McMillan observed that the boxing arena internally liberated Black men to raise one’s self-esteem, be equal to all men, and transcend “a world cloaked in prejudice” (Lussana, 2010, p. 911).

While these historical accounts illustrate how athletic competitions, such as fighting and boxing, help restore one’s sense of self and identity in the midst of oppression, other instances of resistance occurred through unsanctioned forms (Dossar, 1992; Lussana, 2010). To fight without slave owner permission was in itself an act of resistance for enslaved Africans, many of which were not known to White observers, such as the art of capoeira (Dossar, 1992).

Retained by enslaved Africans from the Kongo-Angola area of southern Africa, capoeira arrived in Brazil as what many would describe as a “warlike, aggressive dance” (Talmon-Chvaicer, 2008, p. 8). A fear of slave revolts led plantation owners and government officials to outlaw capoeira, however the practice continued underground and evolved into a lethal form of self-defense (Dossar, 1992). In addition, capoeira allowed enslaved Africans to reconnect with traditional African spiritual systems and reaffirm their collective identity. Today, the sport of *Capoeira Angola* is a distinctive style that preserves the African origins of the art, which was codified as a form of Black resistance (Joseph, 2012; Talmon-Chvaicer, 2008).

Inspired by a tradition of resistance, Black athletes of the 19th and 20th centuries established a legacy of reaffirming their manhood and identity through athletic competition (Sailes, 1998). Whether it was Tom Molineaux versus Crib, Jack Johnson versus Burns, or Joe Louis versus Schmeling (Dorinson, 1997; Rhoden, 2010), Black manhood challenged every notion of White supremacy (Ferber, 2007). An evaluation of William DeHart Hubbard's performance in the 1924 Olympic Games was cause for reevaluating masculinity (Gaucher, 2009). By accessing the world stage through events like the Olympics and boxing matches, many were able to affirm both their individual and collective identity as persons of African descent (Harrison, Sailes, Rotich, & Bimper, 2011).

Blackness, as it relates to cultural pride and resistance to racism, was displayed throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Probably the most famous of these acts of defiance occurred at the 1968 Olympics, when champions John Carlos and Tommie Smith arrived for the medal ceremony. Under the mentorship of then professor Harry Edwards, lead organizer of the Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR), the two ascended the victory podium with Black fists raised in protest of the treatment of African American people in the United States. The aftermath of this statement of Black resistance was an outcry of anger and fear from spectators and US officials (Zirin, 2005). However, just as Jesse Owens's 1936 Olympic performances made a statement against Aryan supremacy, Carlos and Smith reminded the world that sport can provide a platform to do much more than receive individual recognition (Carrington, 2010). Against this backdrop, athletes in the 21st century have been told to "shut up and dribble" (Gleeson, 2018).

Colin Kaepernick's protest (Edwards, 2016) and its aftermath reignited the debate over athletes and their use of resistant masculinity. In both historical and contemporary contexts, statements made by Black athletes have brought great societal awareness and have signaled a movement of consciousness and solidarity for persons of African descent. The reasons are varied, be they carrying on a family rite of passage or rising above economic disparity. It is clear that college and professional opportunities, particularly in revenue-generating sports like football and basketball, have provided avenues for upward advancement for standouts of the game (Harrison & Lawrence, 2003). Less pronounced is the legacy of resistance displayed by enslaved Africans, the descendants of enslaved Africans in the Americas, and Black athletes over the last century (Dorinson, 1997; Gordon, 2006).

## IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The sociohistorical examination of Black athlete masculinity is in its nascent stage. Given the dearth of literature in this area, scholars from diverse fields

(e.g., psychology, sociology, kinesiology, and Black studies) have an opportunity to apply new theoretical frameworks to further our understanding of the social construction of Black athlete masculinity. The intersection of research and published works in these fields has added to the critical discussion of roles and identities employed by enslaved Africans and their descendants (Delany, 2000; Lussana, 2010).

As institutional racism persists within our society, studies examining the longitudinal effects of marginalization should be considered. Efforts in the aforementioned inquiry aim to inform scholars, practitioners, and educational and athletic administrators. Furthermore, the critical examination of historical narratives throughout this paper were intended to appropriately illustrate for the reader the methods employed by White slave owners and their families to draw entertainment from their enslaved Africans. This occurred initially through force (Lussana, 2016) and later through socializing and hegemonic forces.

Future studies from the field of psychology would help illuminate the effects of historical trauma on ethnic identity (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999). This work, in addition to studies of gendered stress in descendants of enslaved Africans in the Americas, should be applied to Black athletes (Pieterse & Carter, 2007) and could lead to a deeper understanding of how athletic socialization impacts self-perception and masculine stress (Wong et al., 2013).

Additionally, sport sociologists studying this population may wish to further explore systems of marginalization found in athletics (King, Leonard, & Kusz, 2007); whereas, studies focusing on the culture of sport in Black society might focus more on the narrative and utility of resistant masculinity for today's youth (Edwards, 1969; Ferber, 2007). This was evident in the aftermath and impact of Kaepernick's actions, particularly on young athletes. In the wake of additional police shootings that initially sparked the "Kaepernick Effect," Gibbs and Khan (2017) report that at least 45 NFL players from 13 teams have also knelt, sat, or responded with a raised fist during the playing of the national anthem. Beyond the NFL, similar protests have taken place at high schools, colleges, and youth league games in 30 states across the nation. In future studies, it would be of great interest to learn if these phenomena are examples of prosthetic memory (Landsberg, 2004) attached to larger societal implications or if they are perceived as an example of the "problematic" influence of today's athlete, who is often portrayed as selfish, overindulgent, and ungrateful (Abdul-Jabbar, 2016; Arnett, 2015).

In applied settings, practitioners who work with athletes at all levels might benefit from these and other works that seek to recognize and retract the effects of marginalized masculinities, which often are cast as deviant. Marginalized masculinities may serve to limit the advancement of today's Black athlete both as performer

and as individual, which may come in the form of over-conformity with hegemonic masculinities (Brown, 2005; Locke & Mahalik, 2005). Practitioners may also be interested in athletes who become victims of deviance and acts of fan violence through racism, xenophobia, and homophobia and should consider helping athletes and then develop resistant and/or intellectual masculinities as a protective action against racism (Gardiner & Riches, 2016). This can be operationalized through programs that emphasize strength in ethnic identity and collective consciousness. For example, there has been a movement in Canada to rediscover capoeira as a means of renewing and demonstrating African identity (Joseph, 2012). Practitioners of this art form acknowledge the synergy of physical movement and cultural expression. Using these examples, the implications cited within this paper serve to address and imbed cultural messages within sport.

This bodes the same for education and social justice advocates. Cultural knowledge and positive ethnic identity help build self-efficacy and academic persistence (Bivens & Leonard, 1994; Cokley & Chapman, 2008). For this reason, educators should continue to advocate for culturally relevant education with student athletes of African descent. This initiative should include ensuring instructors and academic professionals working with Black athletes possess an advanced degree of contextual understanding of racism in sport and within our society (Griner & Smith, 2006).

## CONCLUSION

Athletic expression takes place in three forms: (a) play, (b) sport, and (c) spectacle (Coakley, 2016). For Africans, sport offers leisure, recreation, competition, and masculine authority (Brookins, 1996; Decker, 1992; Harvey & Hill, 2004). Enslaved Africans strove to covertly retain traditional sports while overtly displaying the master's expectation for slave life on the plantation—one grounded in spectacle that afforded opportunities for advancement and decreased marginalization, the other in resistance through performing and practicing in secret (Lussana, 2010). Some descendants of enslaved Africans in the Americas who sought favor through spectacle gained prominence in sideshows and as colorful minstrels. These individuals were viewed as affable and harmless (Turner, 1977). Oftentimes, these acts of compliance were just that—elaborate rouses meant to retain favor with wealthy benefactors (Booker, 2000). In other instances, compliance and subjugation meant adherence to the limitations of society and perhaps some measure of favor (Turner, 1977; White & Cones, 1999).

Today's Black athletes have been socialized to assume the latter as sport (as well as other forms of entertainment), representing a viable path toward

prominence and success. These environments encourage disciplined adherence to an athletic lifestyle, which for many athletes minimizes growth and maturation in other areas (e.g., career exploration, romantic relationships, and family connections). With growth and greater awareness, a resistant masculinity, as illustrated in historical accounts, might present an opportunity for greater congruence with a collective identity and increased agency for Black athletes at all levels (Smith, Clark, & Harrison, 2014). This paper seeks to offer a new perspective on the formation of Black athlete masculinity by framing resistant masculinity as restorative and significant in the struggle to assert one's humanity and identification with a collective consciousness.

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I. S. KEINO MILLER (iskmille@indiana.edu) is a graduate of the Counseling Psychology doctoral program in the School of Education at Indiana University Bloomington. His research centers on intergenerational trauma, race and sport, masculinity, and ethnic identity. Presently, Miller is a Postdoctoral Research Scholar in Sport Psychology at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, North Carolina.

JESSE A. STEINFELDT (jesstein@indiana.edu) is a Sport Psychologist and Associate Professor entering his eleventh year in the department of Counseling and Educational Psychology. Steinfeldt became a tenured faculty member in 2013, and spent a year-long sabbatical in 2014 with the University of Washington Athletic Department and at Seattle Children's Hospital. Steinfeldt teaches and mentors both graduate and undergraduate students. He also coordinates the program's undergraduate minor in Counseling and doctoral minor in Sport and Performance Psychology for Counseling Psychology graduate students. Finally, Steinfeldt serves as the Director for the IU Sport and Performance Training Practicum.

JAMES G. RICHTER (jgrichte@indiana.edu) is a PhD candidate in Counseling Psychology in the School of Education at Indiana University Bloomington. His research centers on childhood trauma, chronic pain, and prescription pain reliever misuse. Richter is also a licensed mental health counselor who is a manager at the Eskenazi Health Midtown Community Mental Health Center in Indianapolis, Indiana.

MARY T. MCKINLEY (mtmckinley@ou.edu) is a doctoral student in the department of Counseling Psychology at the University of Oklahoma. Her research centers on mental health disparities, domestic violence, trauma, and resiliency among migrant populations. McKinley is also a licensed mental health counselor and a member of the Faculty Ally Advisory Board at the University of Oklahoma.