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CHAPTER 2

Kids of Color in the American Sporting Landscape

LIMITED, CONCENTRATED, AND CONTROLLED

Douglas Hartmann and Alex Manning

In the United States, as in many countries around the world, competitive athletics are often thought of as an unparalleled arena of opportunity and mobility for children and youth from disadvantaged backgrounds. There is obviously some truth to this, especially given patterns of racial discrimination and disparities in other social domains, and that helps explain why sport is often so popular in many communities of color. However, while opportunities for fun, fitness, socialization, development, and even mobility in and through sport do exist for American kids of color, they also face challenges of access and issues of treatment that are unique, uneven, and unequal when compared to the typical experience of white, middle-class children and youth. And these differences and disparities can, we believe, both compromise the benefits and accentuate the problems of all youth sport and athletic involvement. This chapter provides an overview of some of the ways in which race structures physical activity and athletic participation for children and youth from communities of color. We believe that these unique experiences and challenges have significant implications for how sport is experienced and understood by young people of color in the United States.

We begin by providing a brief overview of rates of sports participation and physical activity for young people of color across the country. Then, we discuss some of the factors that help explain the uneven and unequal rates of participation, focusing on the obstacles that stand in the way of young people of color's full and equal access to sport and the ways these youth are channeled toward some sports more than others. In the third section we argue that the challenges kids of color face in the athletic arena not only are about unequal access, but also involve differential treatment in the activities and programs in which they actually do

participate. Drawing respectively from Hartmann's research on sport-based crime prevention (2015, 2012, 2001) and Manning's work (2014) on USA Soccer's new national development model, two different dimensions of differential treatment are highlighted: (1) how young people of color are specifically targeted for development and high performance in certain, elite-level athletic programs and sporting organizations; and (2) how sport is disproportionately understood and used as a form of social control of kids of color. Consistent with the larger thrust of this volume, we conclude the chapter by presenting some preliminary interview data that suggest some of the potential contributions of taking parents and kids of color more seriously as agents in the production, reproduction, and potential contestation of the material patterns and cultural forces that structure sport participation and physical activities in the contemporary United States.

PARTICIPATION RATES

When we started doing background research for this chapter, we assumed that young people of color in the United States faced significant, systematic inequities when it came to physical activity and athletic participation. After all, for decades sport researchers have claimed that racial and ethnic minorities participate in youth sports at lower rates overall when compared to their white peers (Ewing and Seefeldt 2002). And with all of the persistent racial gaps in areas such as wealth and poverty, education, health care, and criminal justice in society as a whole (for a comprehensive overview, see Carter and Reardon 2014), we saw no reason that these patterns would have shifted appreciably.

In many respects, it does appear that youth and young people of color continue to be underrepresented in sports. For example, we learned that white youth are more likely to participate in youth sports from grades three through eight than any other racial group (Physical Activity Council 2013). We also found that the mean age for African American and Latino/a kids entering organized sports is significantly higher than that for white kids. Anglo children are, on average, 6.6 years of age when they begin to participate in sports, as compared with 7.7 years of age for African American kids and 8.2 years for Latino/a youth (Aspen Institute 2015). Studies have found Latino American students are less likely to participate in sports in comparison to white American students (Davalos, Chavez, and Guardiola 1999; Feldman and Matjasko 2007), and Asian American youth appear to have the lowest rates of sports participation of any racial community in the United States (Darling 2005; Faircloth and Hamm 2005; Feldman and Matjasko 2005).

However, the current research and evidence on racial disparities were more equivocal and mixed than we anticipated. For one thing, there are some real limitations in the data. National and even state-level data are essentially nonexistent for Native American children (Stick and Schaeffer 2014), and we know next to

nothing about athletic participation among ethnic and racial subgroups and new immigrant communities. Second, there are some distinctive variations in racial patterns when we take gender into account. Proportionally fewer girls of color are involved with sports than white girls, and girls of color are also much more likely than their male counterparts to be non-athletes. However, the same discrepancies across racial and ethnic groups do not exist among boys and young men of color (Sabo and Veliz 2008).

Third, and perhaps most important, youth sports are actually quite racially and ethnically diverse. According to Donald Sabo and Philip Veliz (2008), 15 percent of all girls and 16 percent of all boys who participate in sports are African American, numbers that compare quite favorably to the overall population (approximately 14 percent nationally). Similarly, 17 percent of female athletes and 15 percent of male athletes are Hispanic. Participation rates for African American youth are particularly strong. Some of the most systematic sociological research that has been conducted suggests that Black/African American youth are more likely to participate in sports than youth from any other racial or ethnic group (Feldman and Matjasko 2005, 2007). Kathleen E. Miller and colleagues (2005) found similar patterns of sports participation for Black/African American and white youth. Randall Brown and William P. Evans (2002) reported that "African American students play more sports than Latino and Asian American students" (Peguero et al. 2013). Here it is also worth noting that while white youth are the most likely to participate in sports in grades three through eight, their rates of participation fall off dramatically beginning at age twelve and continuing into high school, the reverse pattern holds for African American kids. More than half (52 percent) of African American youth, both boys and girls, begin to participate in sports only around eighth grade.

At least two additional clarifications and qualifications are in order. First, racial participation in different sporting activities is particularly mixed and uneven, with minority groups being significantly overrepresented in some sports and underrepresented in others. Demographic statistics from the US Tennis Association show that white adolescents tend to be overrepresented in noncontact sports like tennis, golf, or swimming, while Latino/as and African Americans are overrepresented in contact sports. More specifically, white adolescents are almost twice as likely to participate in tennis (9 percent) as African American or Latino/a youth (5 and 4 percent, respectively). Overall, according to the association, 77 percent of participants in youth tennis are white (compared with 9 and 14 percent African American and Latino/a).

On the other hand, African American males are almost 43 percent more likely to play football than other sports, and 68 percent more likely to take up basketball. By comparison, they are less likely to play baseball, soccer, wrestle, or swim.[1] The one noncontact sport they are more likely (35 percent) to engage is track. By way of comparison, Latino boys are most likely to play soccer (68 percent) and

less likely to wrestle or swim or, perhaps surprisingly, to play baseball. African American females are more likely to play basketball or run track, but less likely to play softball or lacrosse, swim, or run cross-country; for Latinas, the most likely sports are soccer and track, with softball, lacrosse, swimming, and cross-country being less likely. Importantly, Black girls are 11 percent less likely to play any sport, with Latina girls being 31 percent less likely (Sagas and Cunning-ham 2014).

The second additional point to make is that all of the statistics we have pre-sented are for organized, competitive athletic pursuits—"sports" in the most common usage of the term. What is not captured in these numbers are rates of participation in less competitive, more recreational athletic pursuits and physi-cal activities (e.g., in recreational settings, physical education classes, or other movement-oriented activities). This is a crucial point because there is a tremen-dous amount of evidence in the area of public health that poorer, low-income children, who we know come disproportionately from communities of color in the United States, suffer the health consequences of much lower levels of physi-cal activity (Halpern 2006). Put somewhat differently, the fact that patterns of participation in organized, competitive sports may be more equitable than we have sometimes realized may actually blind us from the fact that rates of activity among the masses not involved in these more intensive, higher level pursuits are the far bigger issue and problem.[2]

In sum, then, the most basic and important general point about race and youth sports is that children of color are unevenly and often unequally repre-sented in the youth sporting landscape. The net result of these unequal patterns of participation is clear: children and youth of color have less access to the pur-ported benefits of athletic competition and physical activities—higher levels of fitness, greater opportunities to experience the social benefits of competition, socializing with others, and having role models, or even the most basic, elemen-tal benefits of recreation, fitness, and fun.

Access Issues

Some of the patterns of uneven and unequal athletic participation among youth of color in the United States may be explained by cultural differences between racial communities. For example, many researchers and community members alike believe that African Americans are disproportionately drawn to basketball more than other sports; a similar dynamic is believed to hold for Latino/as when it comes to soccer. Conversely, our interviews and fieldwork in the Twin Cit-ies of Minnesota provide anecdotal evidence that some new immigrant families and parents (Hmong and Laotian immigrants in this case and, to a lesser extent, Somali) are not as drawn to sport in the first place, preferring their children to focus on schoolwork and family responsibilities over sports (or any other

extracurricular activities for that matter). Obviously, these cultural preferences and tastes could play an important role in influencing the sports and physical activities these children end up playing.

As sociologists, however, we tend to focus less on individual choices and gen-eral cultural preferences than on the broader social structures and organizational factors that might provide barriers or obstacles to some activities, while encour-aging entry or involvement into others. And one of the first and most basic sets of factors we would highlight in this regard has to do with the economic margin-alization and class disadvantage that so often is associated with minority status in the United States.

There is a large and well-established sociological literature on economic barriers to social inclusion in sport (Collins 2003). In fact, when one surveys research and reports on youth participation rates in sport, the clearest, most con-sistent patterns are those related to class and economics. According to the Physi-cal Activity Council (2013), for example, kids from wealthier families tend to start playing sports earlier (family incomes over $100,000 at age 6.3, below $35,000 at 8.1 years of age, almost two years later). Similarly, the Aspen Institute's (2015) Play Project reports that the 20 percent of US households that take in over $100,000 in income per year account for 33 percent of kids actively involved in competitive youth sports. Moreover, kids in richer neighborhoods and school districts par-ticipate at consistently higher rates as compared with those in less well-off areas. The same study found that in "low socio-economic schools" (that is, schools in areas of limited school funding), 24.6 percent of eighth-graders participate in sports. In contrast, 30.9 percent of students in "middle socio-economic schools" participate in athletics and 36.9 percent in the richest school districts.

Our point is that the economic and material challenges of access are accentu-ated and intensified for those in communities of color who are disproportion-ately poorer and less stable financially. Part of this is simply economic. Significant resources are required to play sport across childhood into the teenage years, especially as young athletes develop and the competition gets more intensive and expensive, requiring additional and often specialized training and develop-ment. This is where the intersections of race and class need to be considered—or, put more precisely, where the fact that there is significant overlap between racial background and economic status such that people in communities of color tend to be have lower levels of employment, higher rates of poverty, less access to good schools, community facilities, and after-school programs, and so on.

And when we talk about class and economics, it is not just the cost of play-ing sports that is problematic for minority kids and their families. For example, as Michael Messner shows in *It's All for the Kids* (2009), class and racial privi-lege often translates into robust adult volunteer participation and other levels of support for youth sports in well-to-do suburban areas. Other material fac-tors that impact participation levels are unequal neighborhood and community

resources as well as high levels of reliance on public programs and facilities like those associated with parks and recreation departments. The problem with publicly funded athletic opportunities and facilities is that they have actually been declining since the 1980s, with cutbacks in governmental resources and more reliance upon the market and private organizations (Crompton 1998; Crompton and McGregor 1994).

Access and opportunity are also strongly impacted by the programs and facilities offered in schools. Youth from nonwhite backgrounds tend to be much more prevalent or represented in "school-sponsored" athletic activities than in private, "agency-sponsored" programs (Ewing and Seefeldt 2002). Over the past couple of decades, scholastic athletic programs have been cut back dramatically in elementary and middle schools, high school programs have become more fee-based, and physical education has been slashed dramatically—less than a day or two a week in many districts, if students are lucky. Today, it is estimated that over 70 percent of parents pay a hundred dollars or more for their children to participate in sports through their schools (Show 2009). According to the Aspen Institute (2015), the differential resources and opportunities available through schools are pivotal factors in racial inequalities, even when sports are provided for free or for a nominal fee in the educational context. Studies of after-school intramural athletic involvement show a similar pattern: low-income and African American students are much more likely to participate in these school-based programs (Edwards et al. 2011; Kanters et al. 2013).

One final, very important factor to consider in explaining the differential rates of access and participation among children of color in the United States involves cultural labeling and the concentration of nonwhite youth in a select set of high-profile, racialized sports. In the wake of the civil rights movement, a fairly well-developed literature on racial "stacking" in sport emerged. Stacking was the idea that African American athletes were channeled only into certain positions in the sports they played (Eitzen and Sage 1992; Frey and Eitzen 1991; Lapchick 1999; Margolis and Piliavin 1999; Smith and Leonard 1997). In tackle football, for example, African American boys were directed to play running back, wide receiver, or defensive back rather than quarterback or offensive line. While such practices may not be quite so pronounced today, our argument extends a similar logic to suggest that kids of color are identified and targeted for specific sports (and at elite levels) and discouraged from playing others.

Practices of micro-level racial stereotyping by coaches, leagues, organizations, and whole systems can manifest themselves within specific sports at various levels of competition. Such patterns reveal larger racial and classed assumptions and stereotypes in operation at the level of youth sports, even when organizations try to address issues of athletic access and support. For example, in his preliminary fieldwork on elite youth soccer in the United States, Alex Manning has found

that some elite-level youth coaches within the academy system implement such racial and class rhetoric when envisioning an ideal boys' soccer team. During a conversation about the racial and class demographics of a particular academy team (in this case mostly white and middle- to upper-middle-class) the coach joked that "we don't have any Allen Iversons" and wished for a multicultural team that had "big, strong, and fast African strikers, technical and quick Latino midfielders, and well-positioned, composed, and determining white defenders" (Manning 2014).

While USA Soccer does not use such explicit racial language, the federation has recently targeted its elite youth development program specifically at urban areas and other communities with larger communities of color where athletic talent is believed to be concentrated and underdeveloped (Borden 2012; Laroue 2012). We will return to this development in the next section.

DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT

The challenges that kids of color face in the American athletic arena are not only about unequal access and opportunity. They also involve differential treatment in the activities and programs and even specific sports in which they actually do participate. These differences manifest themselves in one of two very different ways. One extends from the ways in which kids of color appear to be channeled into some sporting activities and away from others. It involves the ways in which young people of color are often targeted for athletic development and high performance by elite-level programs and sporting organizations. The second is how sport is disproportionately understood and utilized as a means of social containment and control for youth and young people of color.

Manning's (2014) research on USA Soccer's new development program is a powerful illustration of the former. In an attempt to make elite men's soccer more accessible for urban immigrants and racial minorities (and thus more competitive internationally), the US Soccer Federation (USSF) and Major League Soccer (MLS) have created eighty development academies for boys ages twelve through eighteen across the United States. This soccer development policy is geared toward increasing the male professional talent pool in US soccer. Academies affiliated with professional clubs (sixteen in the United States) have been championed by leaders and coaches within the soccer community because they provide the coaching, facilities, and, for a few, housing and financial support for families that have been underrepresented in high levels of youth soccer (Borden 2012).

The words of Jürgen Klinsmann, the head coach and technical director of the US Men's National Team, speak to the classed and racial assumptions that inform the conception of the ideal professional soccer player. "Soccer is very

similar to basketball, you need [players] out of the lower class environment and soccer worldwide is a lower class environment sport. We all [came] out of moderate families and fought our way through . . . so we need to keep this hunger throughout out life. I compare it to basketball here, because I look at these guys and they are coming from inner cities. So we need to find ways to connect, however that could be, to connect with Hispanics, to connect with everybody in the soccer environment in the U.S., and to get kids who are really hungry, to get kids on technical level to perform [at a world class and professional level] and what I mean is first touch" ("Future for U.S. Soccer" 2010).[3]

These cultural assumptions directly influence current elite youth soccer policy and practice, which target young people of color for athletic development and elite-level performance. The notion that elite and future professional soccer success requires more access for urban kids of color from working-class backgrounds is rooted in the idea that there is an untapped and plentiful source of soccer talent in communities of color all across the United States. In addition to racial assumptions about innate athletic talent, Klinsmann's class-based logic about "really hungry" kids reflects the popular US sporting narrative of a desperate, resource-deprived person (most often a person of color) investing all of his or her effort into a sport as a way of escaping hardship and rising to the top of professional athletics. From this perspective, the reason that elite American soccer has not been successful previously is because soccer in the United States has been culturally classified as essentially a "white, middle-class, and suburban sport" littered with moms, minivans, and orange slices (Andrews et al. 2006; Hersh 1990).

Klinsmann's class and racial diagnosis of America's soccer flaws is more than just a personal quirk. This rhetoric is prevalent and has had significant policy implications in the highest levels youth soccer in the United States (see the creation of the Developmental Academy System).[4] Participants in the field of elite youth soccer adopt elements of this rhetoric when discussing their own experiences and soccer clubs. In interviews with two coaches of two different US Soccer Development Association teams that are not affiliated with MLS teams, both coaches lamented the fact that their clubs could not take in kids from poorer communities or communities of color because of cost barriers. As one of the coaches put it, "The hardest thing, I guess, for me is that there are kids out there who would be worthwhile for us to bring in, but we just financially can't afford it. We bring 'em in, we test 'em out, we think they have the potential to grow, but we can't save 'em all. We can't bring 'em all in" (Manning 2014).

These coaches are concerned about access (but only at the most elite level) and profess a desire to coach more inclusive teams. They see socioeconomic and racially diversity as an important component of an ideal, successful, and extremely talented soccer academy. However, this form of elite athletic inclusiveness/

diversity and support does not address concerns of access and support for soccer at a more local and recreational level. Their concern, in short, is to create a pipeline for elite-level competition.

Such a targeted approach to recruitment of racial minorities, immigrants, and the working classes into elite soccer spaces has consequences beyond rhetoric employed by coaches. For example, conversations with coaches and players at different soccer clubs reveal that registration fees for younger less elite teams were being used to subsidize one or two scholarship funds for older players at the elite academy level (Manning 2014). Furthermore, such targeted recruitment of racial minorities can produce significant labor and stress for parents and players. In an interview with a current college soccer player, who played for an elite pay-to-play academy in his youth, the racial and classed dimensions of the "undiscovered" ideal soccer player intersected with the daily life. Devin shared the following story with me about the college recruitment cycle and recruiting a talented Latino player. "When the college push happened, we had a stud from a neighboring town who had played in academies in South America. He didn't have a car and his parents were working during practice, so my dad and I would drive an hour out of our way to pick him up, take him to practice, and sometimes feed him" (Manning 2014). In this conversation, Devin also made clear that his academy team often cycled through a number of immigrant and lower-class players (who rarely stuck with the team due to costs, travel, and transportation) as they looked to bolster their status and competitive success. Such stories speak to the patterns and possible negative consequences of targeting marginalized populations.[-]

The other kind of athletic endeavor in which children of color appear to be channeled and concentrated is programs directed toward social intervention and control. The belief that sport is an important and almost uniformly positive arena of socialization, education, and opportunity for youth and young people has a long history that goes back to the origins of modern sport itself. However, these notions of sport as a tool for social development are often believed to hold particular, unique significance for young people from marginalized and disadvantaged backgrounds. Indeed, these ideas originally took shape in the United States during the play movement of the early 1900s, which was promoted by progressive reformers who believed that the development of parks and recreation programs and provision of access to sport was a way to socialize and "Americanize" the waves of working-class immigrant, ethnic, and racial minorities moving into American cities, especially in the North (Cavallo 1981).

In the late 1990s and the early part of the new millennium, the more controlling face of youth sport and physical activity reasserted itself with the emergence and proliferation of youth sports initiatives that took crime control, risk prevention, and public safety as their primary focus (Cole 1996; Pitter and Andrews

1997; see also Carrington and McDonald 2008). Midnight basketball, researched by Hartmann (forthcoming; see also 2001) was as an extreme and thus revealing case: it was almost exclusively about social containment and control, less oriented to the desires and needs of young people themselves than to the perceived public need to contain, control, resocialize, and reeducate its target population of young, African American males. While such initiatives are often well intentioned and can benefit participants if properly implemented (Hartmann 2012), they often play off of racialized stereotypes and have meant that the experience of programming for youth of color looks very different (being controlled rather than having fun or staying fit) from that of mainstream, middle-class youths' experiences in sport (Andrews et al. 2003; Lareau 2011). More generally, it is also worth noting that this strategy of using sport to regulate and control poor boys and young men of color appeals widely across the political spectrum partly because it allows mainstream America to say that it is doing something good for otherwise disadvantaged populations while skirting public discussion of more substantial, meaningful public investment in communities and schools, jobs, health care, and housing. This is just one of the more pronounced ironies of sport policy for youth in the context of curtailed and privatized social services of the neoliberal era described previously.

THE EXPERIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR PARENTS

Often missing from the research on race and youth sport in the United States is an understanding of how (or to what extent) the deeply racialized structures of the youth sports world are understood and experienced by kids of color themselves and their parents. Are these folks aware of these inequities and disparities? Do they see barriers and obstacles? How do they see and experience the different ways they are treated? These are important questions because we know that kids of color (and their families) do not always have the same motivations and assumptions and experiences as their white counterparts. One example of such contrasts has to do with the issue of retention and dropouts. In 1992, Vern Seefeldt, Martha Ewing, and Stephan Walk found that the main reasons African American and Hispanic youth gave for dropping out of sports were "too much emphasis on winning," "needing more time for school," and "ineffective coaching." These stood in contrast to those of white youth, who were more likely to cite "no longer having fun" (see also Weiss and Ferrer-Caja 2002). Do these patterns still hold today? Are resources or access part of the problem for kids of color? What about differential treatment from coaches or league organizers? Has burnout or injury become a factor? And how do they compare or contrast with the reasons white youth give when they drop out?

These are important questions because we have found, in a series of preliminary interviews, evidence that parents from communities of color are actually quite interested in and aware of the racial composition and dynamics of the various activities, programs, leagues, and teams that their children participate in. An interview with a middle-class Black mother we call Valerie about frustrations with her fourteen-year-old son's participation in club soccer highlights this awareness. "In general, these are not my social group of folks. I wouldn't want to hang out with these people. . . . I don't want him to think that in order to be or have something that you have to be white or white like and so that's why I was like is it the wrong message [having him play for a travel soccer team]." Valerie's explanations for removing her boy from a predominately white and upper-middle-class travel soccer club demonstrate the quiet ways soccer clubs can exclude and the importance of racial composition for parents of color as they navigate youth sports with their children. They also suggest that parents of color may have different motivations for their kids' participation. They are interested in having their kids play sports not only because of the various developmental and health benefits that may accrue but also because they see sport as an arena for racial socialization—that is, for exposing their children to racial groups and situations they might not otherwise encounter in their regular, daily lives.

Sometimes these experiences are integrated and diverse, in other cases they may involve being in white-majority settings or, conversely, settings that are "majority-minority." For example, from an interview with a Black father from a middle-class background with five kids involved in various organized activities, it was clear that participation in various sports had visible racial dimensions. This dad, whom we call Rob, said that "race is always on my mind" when thinking about getting his kids involved in certain sports. Rob viewed sports like soccer and wrestling as more racially inclusive and diverse; in contrast, he saw baseball, softball, and hockey as essentially white games, and with regard to hockey he made it clear that he would allow his kids to join such activities only if they knew some of the kids or parents beforehand. For this father, fear of racial isolation for his kids in certain sports played a significant role in how he approached his children's participation in sports.

Parents of color appear to be very much aware of and attentive to these racial dynamics and see physical fitness and all manner of athletic activities as a unique space and opportunity to encounter and learn about the dynamics of racial identity and interaction in contemporary America. Rob's son's experience with wrestling highlights this possibility. When describing wrestling, Rob said, "You know, I thought wrestling was more of a white sport, but when my son started I was pleasantly surprised at how many kids of color were doing it." This racial diversity surprised Rob and challenged his own assumptions about certain sports. Such an experience speaks to the possibility and opportunity for

more positive racial interactions and environments in different youth sporting environments.

Parental attentiveness to the racial dynamics of youth sports has implications for ethno-racial socialization as well. The notion of ethno-racial socialization focuses on the messages and strategies parents of color use to teach their children about their respective culture, prepare them for potential experiences with racism and prejudice, and promote healthy mistrust of out-groups (Hughes et al. 2006; Peters and Massey 1983; Suarez-Rozco 2001; Tatum 1987; Winkler 2012; see also Hughes 2003; Hughes and Chen 1999). In addition, there has been much attention given to how ethno-racial socialization relates to outcomes for children along dimensions of racial identity (Anglin and Whaley 2006; McHale et al. 2006), self-esteem (Constantine and Blackmon 2002; Goodstein and Ponterotto 1997), mental health (Scott 2003), and academic achievement and engagement (Grantham and Ford 2003; Smalls 2009). The key point here is that sport offers several ways for parents to socialize their children racially and ethnically.

First, athletic activities are significant places where children can develop ideas about race outside of families or the school, which ethno-racial socialization has claimed as the most critical agent in racial socialization (Boykin and Ellison 1995; Hughes 2003; McHale et al. 2006). Youth sports offer a window into how children, their peers, and their parents understand and learn about race, thus adding to a more comprehensive understanding of ethno-racial socialization and the racial dimensions of youth sports. Erin Winkler's (2012, 7) comprehensive racial learning framework is particularly useful for understanding how race and socialization intersect within youth sports. Comprehensive racial learning is a "process through which children negotiate, interpret, and make meaning of various and conflicting messages they receive about race, ultimately forming their own understandings of how race works in society and their lives." This framework pays attention to multiple influences (family, media, peers, teachers, activities), while recognizing the role of the child in developing ideas about race (Winkler 2012; see also Van Ausdale and Feagin 2001). Sport, simply put, is a rich site where multiple messages about race are transmitted, contested, and interpreted by parents and children alike.

Parents and other adults often make many assumptions about the attractiveness of youth sports and athletic participation for kids, and the larger benefits of these activities. But we should also not forget that kids and young people themselves may have their own unique interests and ideas about all of this. One example of this comes from the ethnographies of high school basketball conducted by Reuben May (2008) and Scott Brooks (2009), which help us see how sport can be a unique, subcultural site for collective identity and community building among young African American men. Another illustration comes from Hartmann's research with teenagers and young men of color involved with midnight basketball leagues. Hartmann (forthcoming) found that while these programs were

often justified as "crime prevention" programs, participants in them did not see themselves as potentially unlawful or prone to crime as the program funders and supporters believed. Instead, these midnight basketball participants (admittedly at the high end of the age spectrum we are dealing with here) were looking for facilities and programs that offered them the opportunity to play basketball at a fairly organized, high-quality level in a city that had few such public programs available. In other words, these program participants simply wanted to have fun, stay fit, and socialize with their friends and teammates.

These various motives and desires are not all that different from the reasons that youth and young people from all racial groups and ethnic backgrounds want to play sports. They also serve as a hedge against the beliefs that kids of color are uniquely obsessed with or overinvested in sports. And yet we may know less about the attitudes and understandings of sport among kids of color than anyone else in the sports world. Losing sight of these realities—that is, failing to appreciate the most basic human needs and desires that draw young people to sports and physical activity—may be one of the most demoralizing and dehumanizing problems with our sport system, if not of sport studies itself.

Conclusion

In a society marked by persistent racial inequities and obstacles, sport can serve as a unique arena of enjoyment, socializing, and opportunity for youth and young people of color. However, these positive outcomes are not automatic, and sport itself is far from immune to the deleterious effects of race and racism. Indeed, our primary and most basic point is that if the benefits of youth sports are to be fully realized for children of color, we must attend to the racial realities and obstacles that constitute the American youth sporting landscape. That is, we must understand the barriers to access and equal opportunity that confront youth and young athletes of color; we must try to avoid treating kids of color in stigmatizing and dehumanizing ways; and we must try to take advantage of the opportunities that are available while counteracting the barriers and stigmas of race. The imperatives here involve both proper comprehension and intentional action.

And when it comes to acting and understanding, we must also not forget to take seriously the agency and subjectivity of kids of color and their parents. These folks, after all, are the ones whose lives and life worlds are most directly and decisively impacted by the structures of race in the athletic arena. As we've suggested, they might not always have the same views of the obstacles they face or be motivated by the same goals and objectives as program organizers, other parents, or idealistic social scientists. All of this is crucial if we are to continue to make good on the history and promise of sport as a positive, progressive racial force in contemporary social life.

NOTES

1. The odds of African American and Latino youth for participating in various sports were generated in comparison to their Anglo counterparts, controlling for family structure, parental education, place of residence, school performance, and age.

2. Similar patterns of unequal and uneven access and involvement in all manner of out-of-school-time activities and programs apply all across the country (Feldman and Matjasko 2007; Moore et al. 2014).

3. See "Future for U.S. Soccer" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0706qsZT71c).

4. MLS and the US Men's National Team (USMNT) have traditionally relied on private club teams and universities as a talent pool to select from, but due to international competition and a burgeoning professional league, MLS and US Soccer have begun to adopt the top-down developmental approach of the international sporting world. In 2007, the US Soccer Federation (USSF) created official legislation that forces youth soccer players who play on MLS-operated youth clubs and other US Soccer Development Association (USSDA)–licensed academies to commit to a yearly ten-month soccer schedule with regional and national travel (Borden 2012). Youth players in development academies are not allowed to play for their high school, and the ten-month schedule is indicative of the commitment of players, families, and franchises (Bell 2012; Laroue 2012). USSF/USSDA officials consistently evaluate academy players and coaches based on a set of soccer development criteria that are supposed to engender a plethora of professionally talented US soccer players for MLS clubs and the USMNT. There are currently eighty USSF-sanctioned development academies across the United States; sixteen are directly associated with MLS franchises and are free for players. The nonaffiliated clubs are often still pay-to-play due to a lack of financial support.

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CHAPTER 3

Girls and the Racialization of Female Bodies in Sport Contexts

Cheryl Cooky and Lauren Rauscher

During the 2012 summer Olympic Games, the US women's gymnastics team, dubbed "The Fierce Five," captured America's hearts, as well as the social and news media spotlight, with their awe-inspiring performance and dramatic "comeback" as the first to win the team gold medal for the United States since 1996. One member of the team, sixteen-year-old Gabrielle (Gabby) Douglas, made history becoming the first American, the first African American woman, and the first woman of color to win both the team and individual all-around competitions (Singh 2013). Given her success, it is perhaps unsurprising that Gabby Douglas even "out-trended" Michael Phelps, the American gold-medal swimmer who held the title for most Olympic gold medals, on Twitter at one point during the Olympic Games (Jordan-Zachary 2013).

Another young teenager also captured the media spotlight during the 2012 summer Olympic Games. Missy Franklin, a member of the US women's swim team, became the first American woman to swim seven events, winning four gold medals and a bronze. She broke the world record in the 200-meter backstroke event, doing so just minutes after competing in another event. Those inside and outside the swimming community deemed her the "Next Big Thing" in swimming, a timely honor given the previous "Next Big Thing" in swimming, Michael Phelps, had announced his retirement at the end of the 2012 games. Franklin, seventeen years old at the time, was anointed "America's Sweetheart" and framed as such in both mainstream news media and on social media (Crouse 2014). Franklin also unofficially holds the world-record title for appearances in fans' "selfies" (Crouse 2014).

One might expect that Douglas's outstanding accomplishments would garner respectful news media coverage and accolades in social media as had Franklin's accomplishments. However, the dominant media frame for Gabby Douglas's groundbreaking Olympic achievements centered not on her history—and