

Trash Talk in Sport:  
A Descriptive and Philosophical Assessment of the Intentionality of Trash Talk in Sport

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by  
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**AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT DISSERTATION**

This dissertation of Marcis Fennell, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Education and titled “Trash Talk in Sport: A Descriptive and Philosophical Assessment of the Intentionality of Trash Talk in Sport” has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates given below, is now granted to submit final copies to the College of Graduate Studies for approval.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this quantitative descriptive study was (1) to examine metaphysically the empirical and philosophic relationship between the intentionality of trash talk and competitive sport, (2) to develop a statistically valid and reliable instrument to quantitatively describe the empirical relationship between the intentionality of trash talk and competitive sport among current and former athletes with experience playing competitive sport on the High School level or higher. The relationship is assessed across the following factors- Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Highest level of education, Highest level of sport as an athlete, Sport(s), and Hometown. Therefore, the study examines the use of trash talk and its effects on competitive sport through the disciplines of sport ethics and moral philosophy.

Factor analysis procedure was used to provide evidence of statistical validity. We examined the factor structure of the Trash Talk Inventory (TTI) using the appropriate 10 instrument items. The TTI evaluates the moral judgment of participants among competing social values and moral values in competitive sport. Specifically, the TTI evaluates the participants' moral values within their interpretation of trash talk during competition in sport. The EFA findings revealed a one-factor structure, moral community. This factor affirms the presence of morality within the use of trash talk. Five additional items formed factor 2, Socialized Ethics, which needs further validation. With the addition of Factor 2 to the items of Factor 1, future pilot studies will attempt to validate the TTI-15.

Factor 1 loaded question 1 (.497), question 2 (.721), question 3 (.698), question 4 (.637), question 5 (.627), question 6 (.594), question 7 (.606), question 8 (.655), question 19 (.550), and question 20 (.586). Factor 2 loaded question 14 (.505), question 15 (.702), question 17 (.780), question 21 (.491), and question 24 (-.491).

Using the TTI, 10 items in Factor 1, the internal consistency reliability of measure was .876. A multiple regression was conducted to determine which independent variables (HLE, HLS, SPT, HT, ETH, GEN, AGE) were the predictors of the use of trash talk in competitive sport. Regression results indicate an overall model of two predictors (Gender, Sport) that significantly predict the use of trash talk in competitive sport,  $R^2 = .078$ ,  $R^2 \text{ adj} = .066$ ,  $F(6, 489) = 6.86$ ,  $p = .0001$ . This model accounted for less than 1% of the variability in the use of trash talk in competitive sport.

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## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to every African American, or black athlete in America. As an African American athlete in modern America, sport has provided me an opportunity to create relationships across many cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, sport has allowed me to educate others about my cultural background. My study and research throughout my pursuit of a Ph.D. supports the positive impact my culture makes on American society despite the misunderstandings of those outside my culture. I hope this project provides scholarly support that affirms the personal expression of African American athletes in America.

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## Chapter One

On February 9, 1992, the University of Michigan Men's Basketball team participated in a regular season competition versus the University of Notre Dame Men's Basketball team (University of Michigan Athletics, 2017). With America's biggest sport fans' attention, Head Coach Steve Fisher unknowingly changed the cosmetic and sociological make-up sport in America forever with his choice to start five true freshmen to begin the game, a strategical move that had never been implemented in the history of National Collegiate Athletic Association (2015) competition. In modern American society, this statistic is the highlight of Fisher's decision. However, upon further reflection and evaluation of the events which followed the NCAA (2015) sport event featuring the Fighting Irish of the University of Notre Dame and Wolverines of the University of Michigan (University of Michigan Athletics, 2017), the impact played a major role in the social, educational, regulatory development of sport. This impact not only changes the appearance of sport and how many view the participants, but it changed to how sport is played and regulated (Hehir, 2011). Athletes appeared to feel more comfortable expressing themselves verbally and indirectly in their appearance, often opposing the spirit of competition. To combat this shift in behavior, governing bodies in sport placed emphasis on developing regulations to temper the shift in behavior.

Unfortunately, this change has not produced positive results for all participants for several reasons. However, in order to truly understand the overall impact of the 1991-1992 University of Michigan Men's Basketball team, the sociological background of the Fab Five must be understood. The Fab Five consisted of Chris Webber, Juwan Howard, Jalen Rose, Jimmy Jackson, and Ray Jackson; all rated as top 100 high school prospects as high school senior, with four ranked in the top ten in the nation and McDonald's All-Americans which is

the highest honor as a high school basketball player. Beyond the athletic prowess of the members of the Fab Five, all five young men were African-American from the urban inner city (Hehir, 2011). With the one of a kind recruiting class, the Fab Five led the Michigan Wolverines to two consecutive national championship games in their first two seasons in Ann Arbor, Michigan (University of Michigan Athletics, 2017).

During that juncture of NCAA Men's Basketball, the dominant Wolverines shocked the world with their youthful roster. No other program, ever, has started five freshmen in a NCAA basketball game (University of Michigan Athletics, 2017; Hehir, 2011; NCAA, 2015). Retrospectively, the emergence of the Fab Five ignited the initial conversations of collegiate underclassmen departing from school prior to the exhaustion of their NCAA eligibility to enter the National Basketball Association (National Basketball Association, 2017). The physical talent, along with basketball IQ, made the five members of the Fab Five prominent candidates for the 32 NBA teams seeking to draft athletes onto their teams; With lucrative professional sport contracts and poverty-stricken families, the talent, popularity, and demand for the of the Fab Five sparked the discussion of amateurism within NCAA athletics. These discussions eventually, almost a decade later, created what is now called the "one and done" rule implemented by the NCAA (NCAA, 2015). Furthermore, the five African American freshmen's personality and character were very vibrant and popular from the time they stepped foot on the University of Michigan campus. Under the guidance of Steve Fisher, the Fab Five infused the NCAA (2015) basketball world with their style, which included aggression, trash talk, and celebrations. Their style has now been transformed into a type of entertainment, influencing modern commercialism through baggy shorts, black socks, and the way they styled their hair. It seemed as the Michigan Wolverines' success grew, the more

the university and their partnered companies sought profit using the likeness of the Fab Five (Hehir, 2011).

NCAA basketball during the early 1990s flaunted uniforms that could be considered uncomfortable, hideous in current fashion terms, and a form of indecent exposure in modern NCAA basketball where today the length of the basketball shorts often extends below knee level. At the time, short and tight hip-hugger shorts were worn and almost comparable to the compression shorts worn by NCAA Women's Volleyball players. Jerseys were skin tight and so snug that athletes could not wear a t-shirt underneath it. Athletic socks were white and pulled as high as possible, and ugly white shoes served as the popular choice for major NCAA men's basketball programs. Along with the seemingly uncomfortable uniforms, most NCAA men's basketball players were clean cut in terms of appearance; Standard haircuts and clean-shaven faces were the norm, while tattoos and other fashion statements were frowned upon as they were thought of as being self-serving antics which deterred the focus away from the team and to the individual. Unlike the conservative culture of NCAA basketball, the Fab Five defied all stylistic and apparel expectations. Groomed with bald heads, tattoos, long and baggy shorts, loose fitting jerseys, with black shoes and socks, the Fab Five invaded the buttoned-up culture of sport.

The vivid fashion of the Fab Five was amplified by the style of basketball exhibited by five young athletes. Aggressive slam dunks were highlighted by difficult and fancy ball handling, all of which were deemed unnecessary and unsportsmanlike by basketball critics, experts, media, and the Fab Five opponents. The Fab Five's flashy bravado on and off of the basketball court was perceived by most as a false sense of confidence and a sign of disrespect to their opponent and the game of basketball (Hehir, 2011). Further antagonizing their critics was the Fab Five's use of trash talk, a term they themselves were not aware at the moment.

Often accompanied with aggressive body behavior, the Fab Five enjoyed and thrived during competition that involved constant verbal chatter amongst themselves and towards their opponents and their fans. Though the University of Michigan Men's Basketball team did not garnish a reputation for flagrant or technical fouls, nor cheating, the verbal chatter during competition was translated by spectators and many of the NCAA board members as verbal assault which violated everything about sport. The antics of the Fab Five were perceived as blatant disrespect to the morals and history of sport, specifically respect, honesty, and beneficence. This perception placed a divisive narrative between the youthful nature of the Fab Five and the manner in which they played and what was deemed the behavior of a sportsman. Mistakenly, observations which were analyzed in a regulatory manner, disregarding the street style of play that strategically and aesthetically enhance play of the University of Michigan's Men's Basketball team.

Often with great charisma and exuberance, the Fab Five verbally interacted with themselves and opponents with the same pace as their attacking offense. To administrators, officials, and other coaches in the NCAA, the interactions were intended to antagonize and disrupt the focus of their opponents. Based on this interpretation, the NCAA chose to act to limit and regulate the types of personal interaction during competition, creating additional guidelines to which such behavior would be penalized with technical fouls (Hehir, 2011).

With the intentions of protecting the values associated with sport, such as respect, courage, and honesty, sportsmanship rules were established and enforced immediately. As expected, the immediate effect of the sportsmanship rules stifled behavior that mimicked the Fab Five. This effect pleased the rule makers and stakeholders as a sport modeled after the English protocol that ensured the comfort of the upper-class society, or elite class. In a basketball sport community which still served White America due to the social temperament



of American society, these rules were accepted and abided by without any consideration for the culture of the violators such the Fab Five. As recruiting became more prevalent for athletic departments at the major Division 1 NCAA level, the social, ethnic, religious, and geographical backgrounds of players became more important. Furthermore, Steve Fisher along with several of his colleagues ventured into urban areas of major cities which often were poverty-stricken to offer athletic scholarships to their perspective institutions in return for the athletes' athletic talent.

While the influx of athletic scholarships being offered to inner city athletes, the development of subcultures became evident and controversial. The term student athlete became an intricate role in a growing environment which translucently capitalized on the commercialism of major NCAA athletic events. Within the subculture of student athletes, White America and Black America influenced the daily lives of student athletes. Ethnic and social backgrounds merged on the playing fields and athletes were forced to cooperate in conjunction with rules regulating how the sport is played as well as the social interaction of the athletes.

Often overlooked is the dynamic between the athlete subculture and the civilian/fan subculture. Mostly viewed with a double standard, athletes are often held to a higher ethical and moral standard than that of the regular civilian or spectator. The Michigan Fab Five were student athletes from Black America and were viewed and judged by fellow athletes as well as spectators. During their collegiate playing careers, these judgements were often negative based on naïve perceptions which are a product of one's social, economic, and ethnic background. Despite the negativity surrounding the Michigan Fab Five's behavior and style of play, the social impact the five young men had on American society is immeasurable.

It has now been 25 years since the Fab Five shocked the world. Under the strategical, emotional, and social guidance of Steve Fisher, the Fab Five's talent and willingness to be who they were in a world that could not fathom their existence was remarkable. However, upon observation of modern basketball culture, the baggy shorts, jerseys, the tattoos, the bald heads, and black shoes and socks have prevailed. Despite, an exaggerated increase of African American student athletes participating in NCAA basketball, the dress code established by the Fab Five has become the standard dress for athletes of all backgrounds. In conjunction with the popularity of baggy uniforms and black socks, the occurrences of extracurricular verbal and physical interaction between teammates and opponents appears to be more prevalent during competition, based on personal observation; A note must be made that this increase includes Caucasian Americans participating in trash talk.

The increase in trash talk in sport has placed an emphasis on the enforcement of sportsmanship rules regarding behavior. However, a sense of selective enforcement has become a trend. Though there appears not to be any distinct forms of trash talk that have been dictated, there seems to be two distinct interpretations used by White America and the individuals enforcing sportsmanship regulations. These two interpretations translate trash talk as intentional behavior which negatively influences the purity of sport. The first interpretation of trash talk violates the respect aspect of sport also known as de-competition. De-competition refers to the intent to "strive against" your opponent, shifting the goal of sport from excellence to conquering opponents (Shields & Bredemeier, 2011; Shields & Bredemeier, 2009; Shields & Funk, 2011). Those developing and enforcing sportsmanship rules believe trash talk decreases the quality of competition by distracting and frustrating the opponent with verbal jeers, convoluting the ultimate goal of excellence (Shields & Funk, 2011). This sort of interaction benefits the trash talker, as it disables their competitor's desire

to achieve the psychological focus needed to compete at an elite level. This approach may result in de-competition. The verbal jeers attempt to force the opponent into striving to defeat the trash talker, rather than competing with themselves within the sport in order to achieve the greatest performance. Therefore, this approach taints competition, as true competition is between two or more competitors seeking to achieve their greatest performance individually and/or as a team. The second interpretation of trash talk by the rule makers sees the action as violating the respect expected between competitors. This sort of trash talk is interpreted as personal attacks upon an individual, such disrespect that is intolerable in civilian interactions.

Furthermore, both types of trash talk as noted by the rule makers violate the moral value of respect which in the English modeled society of sport is highly valued. However, modern American sport has appeared to begin a transition from what most participants would argue is a slow-paced and meek-mannered set of activities. With the increase of participation in organized competitive sport by African Americans, as well as the importance placed on winning in sport, trash talk has become a common activity for participants of all backgrounds. For some, trash talk increases enjoyment in comparison to the notion that it tarnishes the experience for others. As sport continues to grow into one of the biggest influences of modern American society, as seen by the Fab Five's influence on fashion with their black socks and baggy shorts, perhaps the sociological and philosophical history of trash talk must be examined to further examine its practice and effect.

The use of trash talk and enforcement against trash talk appears to present an ethical and sociological conflict, resulting in feelings of oppression for athletes of all backgrounds. Black America while allowing White America to exploit the very same concept being disallowed and given a negative association. This cultural change has placed great strain on the social aspects of sport as the selective enforcement and translation of sportsmanship rules

has led some to believe that the regulatory rules of sport are based upon a specific racial or social politic, institutional racism. Perhaps it is now time to examine trash talk through its historical roots to modern day usage and investigate its philosophical and practical effects on the user as well as implications on sport society.

### **Problem Statement**

The purpose of this quantitative descriptive study was:

Philosophic:

(1) To examine metaphysically the empirical and philosophic relationship between the intentionality of trash talk and competitive sport.

Descriptive:

(2) To develop a statistically valid and reliable instrument to quantitatively describe the empirical relationship between the intentionality of trash talk and competitive sport among current and former athletes with experience playing competitive sport on the High School level or higher. The relationship is assessed across the following factors- Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Highest level of education, Highest level of sport as an athlete, Sport(s), and Hometown. Therefore, the study examines the use of trash talk and its effects on competitive sport through the disciplines of sport ethics and moral philosophy.

### **Sub Problems**

#### **Research Sub Problems.**

Philosophical Questions

1. What are the origins of trash talk?
2. What cultural roots of trash talk have emerged over time?
3. What can we learn from the cultural roots and apply to sport? And trash talk?
4. What is trash talk?

5. Do sportsmanship rules discriminate against African American vernacular tradition?

### **Statistical Sub Problems**

- 1) What is the difference by gender in how athletes administer and receive trash talk as measured by the TTI.
- 2) What is the difference by sport in how athletes administer and receive trash talk as measured by the TTI.
- 3) What is the difference by age in how athletes administer and receive trash talk as measured by the TTI.

### **Independent Variables**

This study was delimited to a philosophical and quantitative descriptive study. Categorical independent variables- Gender, Sport(s), and Age were examined to help explain moral perspective on trash talk usage in competitive sport. There is one dependent variable or quantitative variables: response to the inventory.

### **Dependent Variables**

The subjects' responses are the dependent variable. There is one dependent variable or quantitative variables: Moral judgment.

### **Descriptive Variables**

To support findings used to examine the independent and dependent variables, Highest level of education, Highest level of sport, Ethnicity, and Hometown were also examined.

### **Hypotheses**

- 1) There are no significant differences in scores by gender (male versus females) in how athletes administer and receive trash talk as measured by the TTI.

- 2) There are no significant differences in scores by sport (VB, FB, BB) in how athletes administer and receive trash talk as measured by the TTI.
- 3) There are no significant differences in scores by age in how athletes administer and receive trash talk as measured by the TTI.

### **Assumptions**

1. All participants in the subject sample lowest level of competitive sport is the High School Varsity level.
2. All participants in the subject sample understood the specific definition of the term trash talk.
3. All participants in the subject sample are psychologically able to participate.
4. The subject sample represents all statuses among athletes.
5. All participants in the subject sample voluntarily participated in the study.

### **Limitations**

1. Participants may have very limited experience with trash talk.
2. The subject sample may not represent every culture present in America.
3. Environment in which survey was completed could not be fully controlled, possibly effecting responses to items.
4. Other factors in competition could affect dependent variables in conjunction with trash talk.
5. Validity of the Trash Talk Inventory has occurred through the factor analysis, though this is a preliminary study limiting generality.

### **Delimitations**

1. Subject sample consists of subjects who have participated in competitive sport on the High School level at least.

2. The Trash Talk Inventory provides an efficient instrument measuring the designated factors.
3. The opportunity to provide additional comments will provide additional insight on experiences with trash talk.

### **Operational Definitions**

Operational definitions were derived from materials at the Center for ETHICS\* at University of Idaho (Center for ETHICS\*, n. d.).

**Athlete:** for the purpose of the present study the term athlete refers to an individual who has or is currently participating in competitive sport on the High School level or higher.

**Athletics:** the competitive experience of sport whereby coaching is essential with spectators being present, and with specific constitutive, proscriptive, and sportsmanship rules highly developed within an organized structure. The experience is often likened to that of work with decided aspects of dedication, intensity, and sacrifice.

**Beneficence:** the ethical position whereby one attempts and is actually obligated to do no harm, remove harm, prevent harm, and actually do “good”.

**Cognitive dissonance:** the cognitive process whereby an individual's values and beliefs are challenged. The challenging process is necessary in moral reasoning to wrestle with moral dilemmas.

**Constitutive rules:** the specific game rules that guide play in a sport. Constitutive rules may have unsportsmanlike conduct explicitly described and violations specifically written to punish such behavior.

**Cool pose:** a carefully crafted persona based on power and control over what the black male says and does, how he plays his role. For black males, who have limited control or access to conventional power or resources, cool pose is empowering. Power over one's self is the most

important form of power, particularly in an environment where manipulation and control over others have been raised to the level of a fine art, where contest and game playing are often the rule, not the exception.

**Deontic Ethics:** ethical theory based on the ideal that we can perceive rightness apart from any consequences. This perspective believes that there is an inherent right, which must be followed regardless of any extraneous factors. Right and wrong are based on the ideal of what should be. Major philosophers: Kant, i.e., Kantian ethics (Kant, 1987).

**Ethics:** is the theoretical study of morality. Ethics is also the standard of morality that all should follow.

**Extrinsic value:** is the relative worth that an individual places on objects, things, or actions that have an objective worth. For example, members of an athletic community might place much value on an article like a letter jacket, which is a symbol awarded for work done.

**External goods:** refer to the notion that sport brings some sort of payback in an objective sense. External good: would be a letterman's jacket, a newspaper picture, fame, fortune, or any sort of objective measure.

**Harm:** refers to physical, mental, emotional, and financial effect of behaviors/actions or words will cause harm of any of the categories listed above, then that is a good indication that you must think in moral terms. If your action or inaction will or has the potential to cause harm, then that action or inaction must be morally justified.

**Honesty:** is defined as the condition or capacity of being trustworthy or truthful. Honesty, in this sense, is a basic character that society espouses - an ideal of moral development...to be honest in thought, word, or deed. Honesty, therefore, is the code of conduct, which takes into consideration lying, cheating, and stealing, and refers to the honest person as one who follows the rules and laws.



**Gamesmanship:** the perspective of pushing the rules to the limit, without getting caught, uses whatever dubious methods to achieve the end.

**Immoral:** a moral perspective in which the individual knows the good, right, and proper course of action but instead chooses to do wrong.

**Integrity:** is a moral virtue or distinguishable character trait in which an individual is free from corruption. That is, the individual has been shown to have certain positive, moral character traits that even when challenged and tempted to do wrong, will chose the good, right, and proper.

**Intentionality:** the power of minds to be about, to represent, or to stand for, things, properties and states of affairs.

**Intrinsic value:** is a non-moral value in which relative worth of an event, object, or experience is placed on some internal, personal satisfaction. An intrinsic non-moral value in sport might be the internal, personal joy of playing, the joy of success, the joy of experience, and so forth.

**Internal goods:** the notion that sport brings subjective reward for being a part. That is, the personal satisfaction that comes from participating, from being a part of a team, or from just experiencing the activity. Truly subjective in the sense that the internal goods solely lie within the individual's perspective.

**Justice:** is defined as an equity or fairness for treating peers or competitors equally. Justice is the quality of being righteous or of dealing justly with others. It is based in the integrity of doing the right or fair act.

**Metaphysics:** The branch of philosophy that is concerned with the nature of things.

Metaphysics is a descriptive tool, which identifies the qualities and characteristics of physical and non-physical things.

**Moral:** is a state in which one knows the good, proper, and right moral obligation. The moral is dependent on motives, intentions, and actions as they affect other human beings.

**Morality:** refers to motives, intentions, and actions of an individual as they are directed toward others and how these are judged by the greater society.

**Moral development:** growth process by which one learns to take others into consideration in making moral decisions. Moral Development is usually considered to occur through six different stages in three different levels, from a low reasoned perspective to a greater reasoned perspective.

**Moral judgment:** is the ability to form an opinion on moral issues.

**Moral reasoning:** the ability to systematically think through a moral problem taking into consideration one's own values and beliefs while weighing them against what others and society values and believes.

**Moral value:** the worth each individual places on specific non-moral values, such as winning, which affect and impinge others. Moral values are usually highly specific, such as honesty, justice, responsibility, and beneficence.

**Non-moral value:** the perspective taken toward an issue in which good and bad are determined based on non-moral issues. The question is based on intrinsic or extrinsic values. For example, Jane has a good car.

**Normative ethics:** the theoretical study or position of morality in which a rightness and wrongness is analyzed and reviewed with a specific previously stated position.

**Obligation:** is one of the four stipulations to categorize the event a moral dilemma.

Obligation implies that one "should" and even must follow one's principles, based on one's moral values.

**Proscriptive rules:** game rules that expressly forbid specific actions.

**Relativism:** the popular position that states either that (1) there is no standard of right and wrong, (2) no one has the right to make moral judgment, (3) right and wrong is unknowable because of different societies and cultures, and (4) no one should judge others concerning right and wrong.

**Respect:** is holding someone or something in high regard.

**Responsibility:** is defined as accounting for one's actions in the past, present, and future. We are responsible for our acts, if, and only if, we did the act or caused it to occur. A responsible person is morally accountable and capable of rational conduct.

**Reversibility:** is the moral perspective of placing the onus of on one-self. It is asking the question, "What would it feel like if this was done to you?" Reversibility in common usage is "The golden rule."

**Rules:** are individual day-to-day moral guidelines which can be written or unwritten by the individual. Rules are usually or should be based on specific FIRST rules, or principles. Rules are divided into three different types: constitutive rules, proscriptive rules, and sportsmanship rules.

**Playing the Dozens:** a form of verbal play which uses viciously funny rhymes. The dozens can be a challenge to physical combat or a test of cool, in which the first player to throw a punch was regarded as having proved his lack of self-control. Playing the dozens can mean cursing someone out, insulting someone's mother or other relatives, or engaging in a duel of increasingly elaborate insults that might or might not include ancestors or female kin.

**Proscriptive rules:** are game rules that expressly forbid specific actions.

**Signification:** mode of communication derived from black linguistic mythological figure, Esu-Elegbara. To understand signification, one must understand the relationship between the signifier and the signified.

**Sportsmanship rules:** are rules of conduct that are to be followed while in the game and out of the game.

**Sports:** games and activities directed toward the play experience in which organization and rules play a significant role.

**Sportsmanship:** the quality inherent in playing a game in which one is honor bound to follow the spirit and letter of the rules. Sportsmanship rules are rules of conduct, explicitly written or implicitly believed, that adhere to this principle.

**Trash Talk-** verbal communication between competitors which intently insults the competence, performance, and/or appearance during competition.

**Value:** is the individual relative worth placed on some intrinsic or extrinsic object, experience, or persons.

**Validity:** is a measurement of sound reasoning whereby consistent, impartial, and reflective logic is the standard.

### **Need for Study**

Modern American society prides itself on being an example of the “land of the free”. Encompassed within this pride of freedom is the unspoken infatuation with sport. Major sporting events attract the attention and passion of millions upon millions of spectators. During these sporting events, spectators outwardly support teams hoping to assist in achieving a victory. In all competitive team sport, athletes cooperate within regulations to achieve the ultimate performance, while pursuing a victory. Amongst these regulations are sportsmanship rules. Sportsmanship rules refer to the quality inherent in playing a game in which one is honor bound to follow the spirit and letter of the rules (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1994). Many of these rules preclude behaviors that place winning above everything else, including opponents’ welfare and competition between equitable opponents.

Sportsmanship rules were developed and implemented to prevent uncertain ethical and sometimes violent conduct and to control the use of intimidation and gamesmanship in trying to win. The idea of implementing sportsmanship rules is an attempt to prevent the use of intimidation and gamesmanship. With these rules implemented, competition should be considered “clean”. However, competitive sport revolves around a game in which each team strategically seeks to gain an advantage through physical techniques, gaming methodology such as play calling, as well as the use of intimidation and gamesmanship by way of “home field advantage” and other factors which affect the atmosphere surrounding the competition. Though often not spoken, competitors in all games seek a competitive edge. Coaches’ strategies evolve around gamesmanship while players’ playing mentalities favor intimidation. These motives are viewed as methods of establishing dominance while psyching the opponent out. An outward manifestation of these motives prior to, during, and after competition is trash talking. Trash talking is the use of insulting or boastful verbal and/or physical communication intended to demoralize the opponent (Dixon, 2008). Per sportsmanship rules, trash talking is a practice that is a violation, placing all importance on winning while disregarding the welfare of one’s opponent.

However, from first-hand experience as an elite athlete and coach, trash talking does not violate sportsmanship rules from the perspective of the athlete. Though trash talk can be included in the unsportsmanlike category, based on the moral perspective called reversibility, a reverse position exists. Trash talk can serve as a way of displaying respect to an opponent through signification, a method of motivating teammates and opponents, and communication style between individuals within a team or sport community. Perhaps, trash talk serves as a form of self-talk, a tool intended to assist in coping with the stresses of competitive sport.

Self-talk is the steady stream of on-going thoughts or internal dialogue that occurs within our minds constantly, influencing one's moods, emotions, and behavior.

According to Hardy (2006), self-talk includes several components: (a) verbalizations or statements addressed to self, (b) multidimensional in nature, (c) having interpretive elements associated with the content of statements employed, (d) is somewhat dynamic, and (e) serving at least two functions; instructional and motivational, for the athlete. Self-talk may elevate motivation, enhance focus and concentration, manage stress, boost self-confidence, and maximize skill development and performance. Intrinsic motivation occurs when athletes feel competent and in control; persuasive self-talk can convince athletes that they possess the competence and preparation to be successful. By using self talk, athletes are able to focus on their priorities and goals (Van Raalte, Vincent, & Brewer, 2016). Due to the dynamic and discursive nature of self-talk, one could propose that trash talk is not intended to effect one's opponent but to positively affect the competitor or trash talker. In competition, elite athletes seek the ever-evading state of "flow". There are instances within all of sports where everything is perfect. These are times when there are no thoughts, movements are effortless, and time is transcended. "Flow," is popularly known as being "in the zone." In sport, it is essentially losing oneself in the moment of our activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Perhaps, trash talk is used as a self-talk tool to influence one's psychology state in an attempt to reach "flow".

Therefore, this study attempts to decipher the meaning and motive of trash talk as an expression of both coping and motivation for self and the opponent. Furthermore, a philosophical and historical assessment of trash talk will provide an interpretation of such communication. With more focus placed on commercialism in sport, participation of African Americans from the inner city will continue to increase, particularly NCAA and professional

athletics. Therefore, a thorough consideration of African American culture provides quality insight into the intention and use of trash talk in sport, as the originators of such behaviors were considered to be individuals of color. In the “Land of the Free”, sportsmanship rules violate the civilian rules of those from ethnic and urban cultures as sportsmanship rules have been established based on the incorrect interpretation of trash talk. Perhaps, the origin of trash talk was meant to present a sense of honor and spirit amongst a group within the letter of street rules.

The purpose of this study is multi folded. First, one purpose is to develop a new instrument to measure trash talk in sport and examine how it is embedded in the culture of sport. A second purpose is to further understand of the role, reasons, and goals in determining how and why athletes both administer and receive trash talk. Like the members of the Fab Five who were very talented in the sport of basketball, trash talk presents an opportunity to confirm or deny one’s competence or perception of their competence. And third, the use of trash as a motivational tool has yet to be considered a feasible interpretation, as de-competition has driven most interpretations of the intentionality of trash talk. While most interpretations consider competition as a derivative for the use of trash talk, the social community has been disregarded. Perhaps, trash talk is the language of the moral community, which is sport. We want to better understand whether trash talk is detrimental to performance, and why people trash talk themselves. And fourth, at the conclusion of this study, we hope to gain further insight into the use of trash talk in modern American competitive sport with historical and philosophical evidence

## Chapter Two: Review of Literature

### Problem Statement

The purpose of this quantitative descriptive study was:

Philosophic:

(1) To examine metaphysically the empirical and philosophic relationship between the intentionality of trash talk and competitive sport.

Descriptive:

(2) To develop a statistically valid and reliable instrument to quantitatively describe the empirical relationship between the intentionality of trash talk and competitive sport among current and former athletes with experience playing competitive sport on the High School level or higher. The relationship is assessed across the following factors- Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Highest level of education, Highest level of sport as an athlete, Sport(s), and Hometown. Therefore, the study examines the use of trash talk and its effects on competitive sport through the disciplines of sport ethics and moral philosophy.

1. What are the origins of trash talk?
2. What cultural roots of trash talk have emerged over time?
3. What can we learn from the cultural roots and apply to sport? And trash talk?
4. What is trash talk?
5. Do sportsmanship rules discriminate against African American vernacular tradition?



### **Protest Through Sport – A Communication Device**

On August 27, 2016, NFL Media reporter, Steve Wyche, reported on the peaceful protest of the national anthem by Colin Kaepernick (Wyche, 2017). During the playing of the national anthem of an NFL preseason game, the starting quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, Colin Kaepernick chose to remain seated. Though not the first occurrence of him being seated during the national anthem, the sighting sparked a controversial debate amongst Americans on the translation and purpose of the peaceful protest. When questioned about the protest, Kaepernick stated, “I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color” (Wyche, 2017). The oppression of which Kaepernick referred was a series of killings of American civilians of color at the hand of police enforcement. Though American history is riddled with such killings, Kaepernick’s protest intended on exposing the unethical environment of American society, which appeared undisturbed by the unjustified and seemingly unpunished offenses of those chosen to protect and serve the very civilians who were brutally shot down (Wyche, 2017).

Furthermore, following an uproar of disappointment about the perceived disrespect of the national flag, Kaepernick consulted a fellow NFL player and former United States military member, Nate Boyer, in hopes of making the protest respectable. Kaepernick also sought mentorship from Dr. Harry Edwards, a renowned sociologist and civil rights activist. Dr. Edwards, best known for his role in Tommy Harris and John Carlos’ black fist moment during the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City, has encouraged black athletes to use the platform created by their athletic talents to voice their concerns and dislikes within American society (Barnes, 2018). With the advice from Boyer and Dr. Edwards, the protest then turned to the significant gesture of taking a knee during the playing of the national anthem (Wyche, 2017). Throughout the NFL’s 2016 and 2017 seasons, several of Kaepernick’s NFL

colleagues joined in him in his protest by taking a knee or sitting during the playing of the national anthem. The significance of the protest grew larger as athletes on the high school and youth level joined in the gesture during their perspective sporting competitions. The protest has now become a central focus of every NFL competition, so much that the President of the United States of America, Donald Trump, and his staff has joined the commentary circulating around the peaceful protest. During a political rally in Alabama on September 22, 2017, President Trump stated, “That’s a total disrespect of everything we stand for...wouldn’t you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, you’d say, ‘Get that son of a bitch off the field right now. Out! He’s fired.’” (Colvin & Lucey, 2017). In a society that appears to be becoming more divided upon social economic and racial boundaries, President Trump’s comments fueled a society on the verge of serious civil divide, played out on a public forum through sport. Additionally, President Trump’s comments also enabled NFL owners to outwardly express their support for Trump. Though Kaepernick’s protest is a legal issue within NFL and its player’s union. such support presents a power move within the social subcultures of the modern American society.

President Trump’s commentary surrounding recent protests from African American professional athletes illuminates the social divide that has and continues to be prevalent in American society. In a recent interview with Time Magazine (Lee, 2018), Spike Lee, a renowned New York sports fan, addresses the social divide through President Trump’s comments on Twitter (Trump, 2018). Following the announcement of the opening of NBA (2017) superstar, Lebron James’ new grade school, I Promise School (Lebron James Family Foundation, 2018), Trump (2018) stated, “...He made Lebron look smart, which isn’t easy to do. I like Mike!”. Trump’s (2018) reference to Mike, is a reference to Michael Jordan, arguably the most prominent African American athlete in modern day American sport. In

response to these comments Lee (2018) states, “He has a thing for black athletes... He does not like them brothers making that money. But it runs even deeper than that. This stuff is all planned,” he continues. “The sneaky thing is, he tried to start some sh-t between Michael [Jordan] and LeBron. That’s the old divide and conquer.” Perhaps President Trump’s comments are an attempt to discredit and defame the character of African American athletes. Additionally, the posturing of President Trump within the sport realm will certainly exacerbate the social divide within America.

### **A Contemporary Social Divide**

The significance of this social divide exemplifies the misunderstanding between the many cultures which compose the United States of America, specifically white and black cultures. Many Americans who criticize the Kaepernick protest will claim their opposition of the NFL players’ protest as fair and dignified based on their patriotism; the love for or devotion to one’s country (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2016). Unfortunately, this patriotism is rooted in misinterpretation and blatant disregard for the cultural differences between Americans. Like sport, the governing system, developed and managed mainly by individuals from white America, has attempted to stifle those opposing the actions and regulations established by white America. Through oppression and systematic social injustice, white America has succeeded in limiting the voice and freedom of those being oppressed; in this case, Black America (Andrews V. L., 1996).

### **Historically, oppressed**

Historically, African-Americans have been systematically oppressed and often secluded within their own communities and harassed when outside of their communities (Majors & Billson, 1992). The systematic approach used to control black America has often forced African-Americans to create unique opportunities to express outwardly their

awareness and concerns without directly attacking the governing body. Colin Kaepernick, and his colleagues taking a knee during National Anthem is their way of outwardly expressing their awareness and concerns without directly addressing President Trump and law enforcement about the unjust killings of black people around the nation. In other cases in sport, African-Americans have used how they dress in their uniform and how they speak to each other as ways to express themselves to spectators, teammates, and opponents (Majors & Billson, 1992). Though many Americans interpret the actions of African-American athletes before, during, and after the game as disrespectful, African-Americans embrace and completely understand the manner in which these athletes choose to communicate. This mode of communication is termed signification.

### **Signification- The Origin of Trash Talk**

According to modern American history, America was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1492 (McNeese, 2006). Upon his arrival to the Americas from Spain, conflict between the European men on the ships accompanying Columbus and Native Americans was evident. Despite the controversial social and moral background surrounding the discovery of the Americas, the development and establishment of the Americas depended upon the labor of slaves, slaves from Africa (McNeese, 2006). During Columbus' journey from Spain to the Americas, Columbus and his men violently and radically abstracted black Africans from their civilizations with intentions of using the men for physical labor and women for hospitality chores and sexual pleasure (Resendez, 2016). Despite the hundreds of years of slavery, which brought physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual pain and hardship, the discovery of the Americas began the process of creating a New World society which now serves as the homeland of the human beings from various ethnic backgrounds.

The black Africans who survived the horrid middle passage from the west coast of Africa to the Americas, or New World, did not only bring their physical capabilities to the New World but they also brought aspects of their cultures that were meaningful. These aspects could not be obliterated, as they chose, by acts of will, not to forget: their music (a mnemonic device for Bantu and Kwa tonal languages), their myths, their expressive institutional structures, their metaphysical systems of order, and their forms of performance (Abrahams & Szwed, 1983). Despite the common American notion that the ancient African traditions referred to in modern American history were originated by black African slaves as they suffered the commute of the middle passage, the classic cultures of traditional West Africa serve as the base culture in which African-American culture. Due to slavery in the New World, the extremely tense cauldron of cross-cultural contact, previously isolated black African cultures were forced to exchange and revise cultures creating the new African culture (Gates Jr., *The signifying monkey: A theory of African American literary criticism*, 1988). The Pan-African culture formed a unique mix of linguistic, institutional, metaphysical, and formal cultural structure.

### **Black Mythology**

Of the music, myths, and forms of performance that the black Africans brought to New World, one specific figure was very influential on black mythology in Africa. The mythical figure which can be traced directly to the Fon and Yoruba cultures of Benin and Nigeria, Esu-Elegbara, recurs throughout black oral narrative traditions and contains a primal scene of instruction for the act of interpretation. Upon analysis of current social-culture background of the world, this specific trickster figure appears in Nigeria, Benin, Brazil, Cuba, Haiti, and the United States (Gates Jr., *The signifying monkey: A theory of African American literary criticism*, 1988). Like other mythological figures, Esu-Elegbara transmuted

into several variations of itself in relation to the cultures interpreting his myths. The trickster figure in his New World figurations include Exú in Brazil, Echu-Elegua in Cuba, Papa LaBas in the loa of Hoodoo in the United States (Baker Jr., *Blues, ideology, and Afro-American literature: A vernacular theory*, 1984). The collection of these variations constructs the common New World figure, Esu-Elegbara.

### **Esu-Elegbara**

Though I will refer to Esu-Elegbara as one figure, the variations on the figure represent signification in itself. The variations on Esu-Elegbara eloquently present an unbroken arc of metaphysical presupposition and a pattern of figuration shared through time and space among certain black cultures in West Africa, South America, the Caribbean, and the United States (Gates Jr., *The signifying monkey: A theory of African American literary criticism*, 1988). Amongst the cultures in these countries in the New World, Esu-Elegbara presides over its liminal crossroads which is a sensory threshold barely perceptible without access to the vernacular. It is important to note that the term ‘vernacular’ is taken from the Latin *vernaculus* (“native”), taken in turn from the Latin *verna* (“slave born in his master’s house”) (Baker Jr., *Blues, ideology, and Afro-American literature: A vernacular theory*, 1984). In modern American society, ‘vernacular’ is often replaceable with ‘lingo’, frequently used in reference to one’s style of talk in conjunction with their modified use of linguistics- i.e. slang.

Despite the number of variations which conform Esu-Elegbara, each version of Esu is the sole messenger of the gods. Esu-Elegbara interprets the will of the gods and carries the desires of man to the gods. His is the guardian of the crossroads, master of style and of stylus, the phallic god of generation and fecundity, master of that elusive, mystical barrier that separates the divine world from the profane [17]. Linguistically, Esu-Elegbara is the

ultimate copula, connecting truth with understanding, the sacred with the profane, text with interpretation, the word that links a subject with its predicate. He connects the grammar of divination with its rhetorical structures (Gates Jr., 1988). In Yoruba mythology, Esu-Elegbara is said to limp as he walks due to his mediating function: his legs are of different lengths because he keeps one anchored in the realm of the gods while the other rests in the human world. Perhaps this limp is where the urban street gesture of the “cool walk” or “cool pose” is derived.

Furthermore, the nature of this trickster figure can be characterized by many qualities, qualities in which cannot be determined as predominant. A partial list of these qualities includes individuality, satire, parody, irony, magic, indeterminacy, open-endedness, ambiguity, sexuality, chance, uncertainty, disruption, and reconciliation, betrayal and loyalty, closure and disclosure, and encasement and rupture (Pelton, 1980). Though Esu-Elegbara possesses all of these characteristics, he also possesses a plethora of other qualities which present an idea of the complexity of the figure itself. Much of Esu-Elegbara’s literature concerns the origin, nature, and function of interpretation and language use above that of ordinary language (Thompson, 1976). Esu-Elegbara is the Yoruba figure of the meta-level of formal language use, of the ontological and epistemological status of figurative language and its interpretation. (Witte, 1984).

Esu-Elegbara’s most Western kinsman is Hermes. As Hermes’ role as messenger and interpreter for the gods transformed his name into *hermeneutics*, the New World’s word for the study of methodological principles of interpretation of a text, the literary critic named the methodological principles of the interpretation of black text *Esu- ‘tufunaalo* which literally means “one who unravels the knots of Esu” [17]. Esu-Elegbara is the indigenous black metaphor for the literary critic, and *Esu- ‘tufunaalo* is the study of methodological principles

of interpretation itself, or what the literary does. *Esu- 'tufunaalo* is the secular analogue of Ifa divination, the richly lyrical and densely metaphorical system of sacred interpretation that the Yoruba in Nigeria have consulted for years and continue to consult. Whereas, the god Ifa is the next of divine will, Esu is the text's interpreter, "the one who translates, who explains, or who loosens knowledge" (Witte, 1984). Therefore, Esu-Elegbara seems to have priority over Ifa in the process of interpretation.

### **Ifa**

Ifa is the god of determinate meanings, rendered by analogy. Esu-Elegbara, god of indeterminacy, rules the interpretive process. Esu is the god of interpretation because he embodies the ambiguity of figurative language, signifying the divinity of the figurative. For Ifa, one's sought meaning can simply be read as Esu-Elegbara decodes the figures. If Ifa is the metaphor for the text itself, then Esu is the metaphor for the uncertainties of explication, for the open-endedness of every literary text. Ifa represents closure, while Esu rules the process of disclosure, a process that is never-ending and dominated by multiplicity. Esu-Elegbara stands for discourse upon a text. Esu's Pan-American kinsman, the Signifying Monkey stands for the rhetorical strategies of which each literary text consists. The Signifying Monkey is the great trope of Afro-American discourse, and the trope of trope, his language of Signifyin(g), is his verbal sign in the Afro-American tradition (Gates Jr., *The signifying monkey: A theory of African American literary criticism*, 1988).

To truly understand the myths of the origin of Ifa divination, consideration of the figures the Yoruba employ to account for this system of oral interpretation. The Yoruba myth of the origins of interpretation is relevant to the use of Esu-Elegbara as the figure of the critic and is helpful in explaining the presence of a monkey in Latin American versions of the primal myth. The Signifying Monkey, the oxymoron, is Esu-Elegbara's functional equivalent



in Afro-American mythic discourse regarding his metaphoric uses for black literary criticism (Gates Jr., *The signifying monkey: A theory of African American literary criticism*, 1988).

The presence of the monkey in the Yoruba myth, which is repeated with a difference in Cuban versions, stands as a trace of Esu-Elegbara in Afro-American myth (Ogundipe, 1978).

The roles of Esu-Elegbara and the Monkey are crucial. The Monkey became, through a displacement in African myths in the New World, a central character in the scene of instruction. In the transmission process from Africa to the Western Hemisphere, the Monkey became a major character in the surviving oral variation in a New World black culture. The Monkey, like Esu-Elegbara, two dominant physical characteristics are extraordinary dark color and tiny size (Ogundipe, 1978). Through transmission of the Middle Passage, the Signifying Monkey emerged from his Afro-American origins as Esu-Elegbara's first cousin, often considered his American heir. The Signifying Monkey remains as the trace of Esu-Elegbara, however, both serve as transferences in a system aware of the nature of language and its interpretation [17].

### **Tricksters**

There are three related modes in which the tricksters serve as figures of importance to theory. First, they and the myths in which they are characters function as focal points for black theories about formal language use. The figure of writing is uncharacteristic to the myth of Esu-Elegbara (Ogundipe, 1978). The figure of speaking, of oral discourse which is rhetorically structured, is atypical to the myth of the Signifying Monkey. As figures of the duality of the voice within the black tradition, Esu and the Signifying Monkey manifest themselves in the search for a voice. The tension between them appears in the double-voiced discourse. It surfaces as the free indirect discourse, occurring when third and first person, oral and written voices, fluctuates freely within one structure (Gates Jr., 1988).

Second, the myths of Esu and the Monkey define the role of the figurative. The myths of origins of the tradition favor both the figurative and the ambiguous. The literal and the figurative are locked in a Signifyin(g) relation, the myths and the figurative Signified upon by the real and literal, just as the vernacular tradition Signifies upon the tradition of letters, and as figures of writing and inscription are recorded in oral literature (Gates Jr., 1988). This mode regarding Esu-Elegbara and the Signifying Monkey presents an example of the presence of the dual voice. One can consider the Afro-American concept of Signifyin(g) as the formal revision of the concept of double-voiced. Third, the myths of Esu and the Monkey concerns the indeterminacy of interpretation. Esu is a principle of language, particularly, of written discourse. Esu-Elegbara is all metaphor, all ambiguous oracle (Pelton, 1980). Indeterminacy is accounted for by the vernacular tradition as an unavoidable aspect of acts of interpretation. These three observations encapsulate the self-reflexive functions that Esu-Elegbara serves in Yoruba discourse.

Ultimately, the Signifying Monkey in the New World derived from the mythical figure from Yoruba discourse. Esu is meta-discourse, the writing of the speech act of Ifa (Norris, 2003). However, the speech of the *babalawo*, the high priest of Ifa, is figured rhetorically in terms of writing, Afro-American vernacular discourse figures its archetypal trickster in terms of speaking. Furthermore, the highly structured rhetoric of the Signifyin(g) Monkey conforms to the demands of writing, particularly in the sense of a chain of signifiers open to (mis)interpretation (Gates Jr., *The signifying monkey: A theory of African American literary criticism*, 1988). The open-endedness of figurative language, rather than its single-minded closure, is adorned in the myths of the Signifyin(g) Monkey. Throughout the journey through the Middle Passage, to the Oriente province, and ending at the United states, Esu-Elegbara was prominent, however only the Signifyin(g) Monkey survived the journey from

Cuba to the United States. Perhaps the racist designation of the Afro-American as a monkey primed the North American features of the Monkey. The explicit aporia between speech and writing formed a crucial and dynamic aspect of Ifa divination which was forced underground into the implicit by the hostile terms of survival demanded of the Monkey (Gates Jr., 1988). Despite the conflicts in the origins of the Signifyin(g) Monkey, we do know that the Signifyin(g) Monkey is the figure of the text of the Afro-American speaking subject whose manipulations of the figurative and the literal both wreak havoc upon and inscribe order for criticism.

### **Communication Through Signification**

As the Afro-American began their transformation from operating under African tradition to Afro-American tradition, signification became the nature in which individuals communicated. Like all societies, conflict occurred due to misinterpretation, particularly between the black linguistic sign “Signification” and the Standard English sign “Signification”. The conceptual difficulty stems from, yet seems to have been intentionally inscribed within, the selection of the signifier “Signification” to represent a concept remarkably distinct from the concept represented by the Standard English signifier, “Signification” (Gates Jr., 1988). The two versions of “Signification” have everything to do with each other, yet, are as common their origins. Precisely, the Standard English word is a homonym of the Afro-American vernacular word. (de Saussure, 1966).

These homonyms may serve as the linguistic depiction of the conflict, or confrontation, between Afro-American culture and American culture. This confrontation is often coined as white America versus black America. This confrontation is political and metaphysical. In regard to Signification, this confrontation is defined by the politics of semantics, the study of the classification of changes in the signification of words. More

importantly, the semantics include the relationships between the theories of denotation and naming, as well as connotation and ambiguity. The relationship between black and English Signification is paradoxically, a relation of difference within a relation of identity. In order to understand the linguistics of Signification, Saussure (1966) identified and termed three neologisms, *signification*, *signifier*, and *signified*. By displacing the received term's associated concept, the black vernacular tradition created a homonymic pun of the English community of speakers. The Afro-American culture's act of language Signifies upon both formal language use and its conventions. Ultimately, traditional black culture revises the received sign accounted for in the relation represented by the *signified/signifier* at its most apparently denotative level is to critique the nature of the English/white meaning itself. This action is meant to challenge white America through literal critique of the sign, the meaning of meaning (Gates Jr., 1986).

This interaction is at a level meta-discourse. If the *signifier* stands disrupted by the shift in concepts denoted and connoted, then the individuals are engaged at the level of meaning itself semantically. Black people disregarded this *signifier*, substituting their concept a *signified* that stands for the system of rhetorical strategies unusual to their own vernacular tradition. This transaction enables the rhetoric aspect to displace semantics in the most literal meta-confrontation within the structure of the sign, *signification*.

### **Figure 2.1 Signification Versus Signification.**

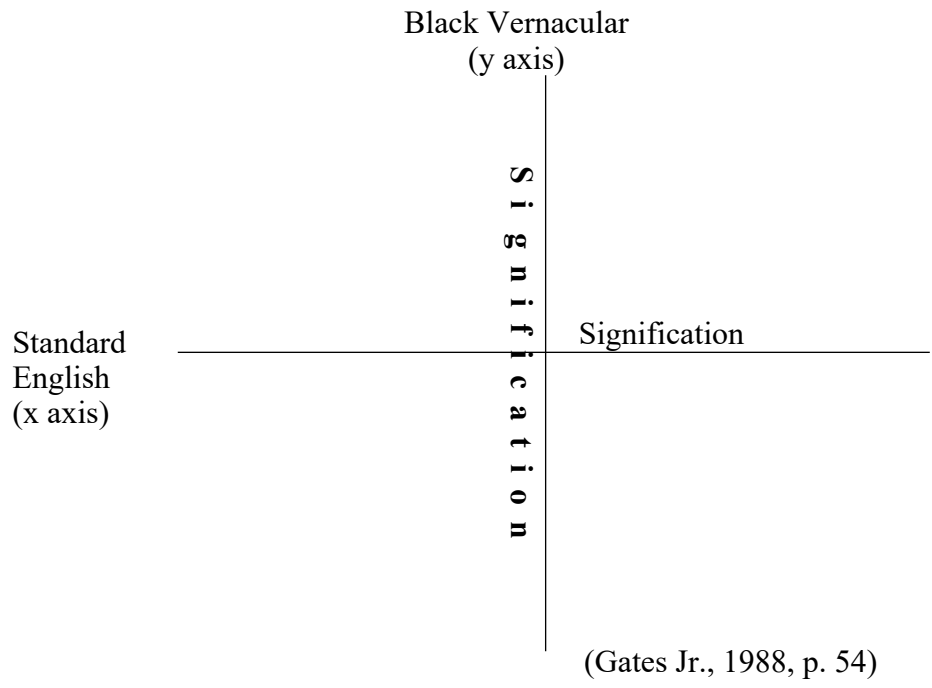
$$\text{signification} = \frac{\text{signified}}{\text{signifier}} = \frac{\text{concept}}{\text{sound-image}}$$

Then in the black vernacular,

$$\text{Signification} = \frac{\text{rhetorical figures}}{\text{Signifier}} \text{ (Gates Jr., 1988, p. 53)}$$

Saussure’s (1966) discussion on Signification provides clarification on the glaring conflict between black Signification and white Signification. Standard English signification can be represented *signified/signifier* and that which is signified is a concept, or concepts, in the black homonym, this relation of semantics is replaced by a relation of rhetoric, wherein the *signifier* “Signification” is associated with a concept that stands for the rhetorical structures of the black vernacular. The result of this concept is Signifyin(g) (Figure 1). The relation of signification itself has been critiqued by a black act of (re)doubling. Signifyin(g), the black term, creates a concept constructed by all of its rhetorical figures into the subsumed term, *Signify*. In black terms, to *signify* is to engage in certain rhetorical games. The depiction of signifyin(g) and its comparison to its white counterpart, signification, is displayed in Figure 2.2.

**Figure 2.2 Black and Standard English**



As seen in Figure 2.2, two discursive parallel universes, black and white America, signification is placed in a metaphor of two perpendicular universes. The English language use of *signification* refers to the chain of signifiers that configure horizontally, on the syntagmatic axis. Signifyin(g) operates and can be represented on a paradigmatic or vertical axis. Signifyin(g) concerns itself with the what Saussure (1966) calls, “associative relations”, which can be considered the playful puns on a word that occupy the paradigmatic axis of language and which a speaker draws on for figurative substitutions. The substitutions associated with Signifyin(g) tend to be humorous, or function to name a person or a situation in a telling manner. Signification, in white America, calls for order and coherence on the exclusion of unconscious associations which any given word yields. Lacan (1977) calls these suspended associations “a whole articulation of relevant contexts”, meaning all of the associations that a signifier carries from other contexts which must be deleted, ignored, or censored “for this signifier to be lined up with a signified to produce a specific meaning”. On the other hand, Signification, in black America, or Signifyin(g) relishes in the inclusion of the free play of the associative rhetorical and semantic relations. Signifyin(g) calls for everything that is to be excluded for meaning in the process of signification to remain coherent and linear (Gates Jr., 1988).

### **The *Other***

Anthony Easthope’s (1983) discussion on signification and Lacan’s (1977) “suspended associations” utilizes the term “Other” for the banned contexts associated with signification in white America. Easthope (1983) states, “All of these absences and dependencies which have to be barred in order for meaning to take place constitute what Lacan designates as the *Other*. The presence of meaning along the syntagmatic chain necessarily depends upon the absence of the Other, the rest of language, from the

syntagmatic chain”. According to Lacan (1977), Signifyin(g) is the Other of discourse, representing the black Other’s discourse as its rhetoric. Ironically, the black vernacular discourse did not seek a proclamation of emancipation from white America’s standard English. The synergetic relationship between black and white language use, between the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes, black vernacular discourse, and standard English discourse, is signified by the exposed relationship between the terms *signification/signifyin(g)* and *Signification/Signifying* (Gates Jr., 1986). The signifier “signification” remains identical in spelling to its white counterpart to demonstrate that a simultaneous, but negated, parallel discursive (ontological and political) universe exists within the larger white discursive universe. It is apparent that retaining the identical signifier argues strongly that the most poignant level of black-white differences is that of the meaning, of signification” in the most literal sense (Gates Jr., 1988).

### **Play of Doubles**

The play of doubles in this process occurs precisely on the threshold or at Esu-Elegbara’s crossroads, where black and white semantic fields collide. The American discourse is the both the opposition between and the ironic identity of the movement encountered in the mental shift between the two terms, *signification* and *Signification*. In relation of Signification to signification, the process of semantic appropriation has been described by Mikhail Bakhtin (as cited by Morson, 1981) as a double-voiced word decolonized for the blacks’s purposes by inserting a new semantic orientation into a word which already has and retains its own orientation. The audience of a double-voiced word is therefore meant to hear both a version of the original utterance as the embodiment of its speaker’s point of view, their semantic position, and the second speaker’s evaluation of that utterance from a different point of view (Morson, 1981). The motivated troping effect of the

disruption of the semantic orientation of signification by black vernacular tradition depends on the homonymic relation of the white term to the black (Gates Jr., 1988). In others, the sign or word must be mutable. Regarding white America's signification, the signifier is fixed, not free in respect to the linguistic community using the signifier. The masses have no voice in the matter and the signifier chosen by language could be replaced no other. The community itself cannot control so much as a single world, bounding it to the existing language (de Saussure, 1966).

According to Saussure (1966), shifts in the relationship between the signified and the signifier shifts in time that result directly from the arbitrary nature of the sign or word. Furthermore, Saussure (1966) states that a particular language-state is always the product of historical forces, and these forces explain why the sign is unchangeable. However, when considering double-voiced words, or more specifically the black vernacular tradition, the masses in a multiethnic society draw on arbitrary substitution freely to disrupt the signifier by displacing its signified in an intentional act of will. Signifyin(g) is double-voicedness as it always entails formal revision and an intertextual relation. Repetition, with a signal difference, is fundamental to the nature of Signifyin(g) (Gates Jr., 1988).

The tales of the Signifying Monkey has been explicated by analyzing black cultural forms, particularly music, jazz music. The Signifying Monkey is the principle of self-consciousness in the black vernacular tradition (Gates Jr., 1988). Signifyin(g) in jazz performances and in the play of black language games is a mode of formal revision. It depends on its effect on troping, often characterized by parody, and most crucially, it turns on repetition of formal structures and their differences (Abrahams R. , 1976). Learning how to Signify is part of adolescent education in the black culture (Mitchell-Kernan, 1973). Signifyin(g) is a trope in which are subsumed several other rhetorical tropes, including



metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, irony (master tropes), hyperbole, litotes, and metalepsis (trope-reversing trope). Additionally, aporia, chiasmus, and catechresis should be considered as they are used in the ritual of Signifyin(g) (Smitherman, 1977). The black rhetorical tropes subsumed under Signifyin(g) include marking, loud-talking, testifying, calling out (of one's name), sounding, rapping, playing the dozen, and other forms not yet formally identified (Gates Jr., 1988).

The basis of these rhetorical tropes are to deliver the sign poetically, signifyin(g) in the most free-flowing and artistic way possible. Music, especially in the black culture, is directly influenced by poetry which initially was directly influenced by the Signifying Monkey. The poetry in which the Monkey's antics unfold is a signifying system. In marked contrast to the supposed transparency of normal speech, or signification, poetry turns upon the free play of language itself, upon the displacement of meanings, because it draws attention to its rhetorical structures and strategies and thereby draws attention to the force of the signifier (Kristeva, 1980). In opposition to the transparency of speech, this poetry calls attention to itself as an extended linguistic sign, composed of various forms of the signifiers unfamiliar to the black vernacular. The meaning of this poetry is deferred because the relationship between intent and meaning, between the speech act and its comprehension, is skewed by the figures of rhetoric or signification of which these poems consist. This set of skewed relationships creates a measure of undecidability with the discourse, forcing absolute caution when interpreting or decoding its play of differences. Due to the ambiguity in its rhetorical structures, interpretation can never be definitive (Gates Jr., 1988).

### **Definitions in Black Literature**

As a result of such ambiguity, many scholars have made an attempt to establish a definitive definition of signifyin(g), to no avail. For the purposes of this study, I will review

all definitions acknowledged in black literary criticism. As can be assumed, Signifyin(g) was an indirect technique to communicate for Africans before the term signification was established in the New World. William Faux (1823) wrote, slaves commonly used lyrics to Signify upon their oppressors. Their verse was their own, and abounding either in praise or satire intended for kind and unkind masters. According to Abrahams (1970), signifyin(g) refers to the trickster's ability to talk with great innuendo, to carp, cajole, needle, and lie. In other instances, signifyin(g) can mean the propensity to talk around a subject, never achieving the point of understanding. Signifyin(g) can refer to making fun of a person or situation. It can denote speaking with the hands and eyes, encompassing a whole complex of expressions and gestures (Abrahams R. D., 1970). Essentially, Signifyin(g) is a technique of indirect argument or persuasion, a language of implication. Signifyin(g) is to imply, goad, beg, boast, by indirect verbal or gestural means. Through signifyin(g), the Monkey is not only a master of technique, he is technique, or style, or the literariness of literary language. The Monkey is the great Signifier; one does not signify something, rather one signifies in some way (Gates Jr., 1988).

To gain further discernment of the complexity of Signifyin(g), an examination of various dictionary definitions of the concept, providing an idea of how unstable the concepts are that can be signified by Signifyin(g). The *Dictionary of Afro-American Slang* (Major, 1970), states that Signify is the same as the *Dirty Dozens*, to censure in 12 or fewer statements. The *Dirty Dozens* is defined as a very elaborate game traditionally played by black boys in which the participants insult each other's relatives, especially their mothers (Major, 1970). The object of the game is to test emotional strength. The first person to give in to anger is the loser. Considering Major's (1970) definition, to Signify is to be engaged in a highly motivated rhetorical act, aimed at figurative, ritual insult. Hermese Roberts (as cited

by Gates Jr., 1988) combines Major's (1970) emphasis on insult and Abraham's (1970) emphasis on implication, defining signifyin(g) or "siggin(g)" as language behavior that makes direct or indirect implications of baiting or boasting. For Roberts, the signal aspect of Signifyin(g) is "making fun of" as a mode of "baiting" or "boasting", like many other definitions of Signifyin(g) or trash talking. This interpretation of Signifyin(g) corroborates the Afro-American symbolic aggression, enacted in language, rather than upon the play of language itself rhetorically. "Making fun of" is far from "making fun" and it is the latter that defines Signifyin(g) (Gates Jr., 1988).

A well-known jazz musician, Mezz Mezzrow (1946) defines "signify" as to put on an act, boast, make a gesture; Signifyin(g) implicitly defined as the homonymic pun. Signifyin(g), according to Mezzrow (1946), is one mode of "verbal horseplay", designed to train the subject to think faster and be more numble-witted. Being one of the first commentators to recognize that Signifyin(g) as a structure of performance that could apply equally to verbal texts and musical texts, Mezzrow (1946) was able to penetrate the content of the black verbal horseplay to analyze the significance of the rhetorical structures that transcend any fixed form of Signifyin(g). To support his definition, Mezzrow (1946) states:

Through all these friendly but lively competitions you could see the Negro's appreciation of real talent and merit, his demand for fair play, and his ardor for the best man wins and don't you com around here with no jive. Boasting doesn't cut any ice; if you think you've got something, don't waste time talking yourself up, go to work and prove it. If you have the stuff the other cars will recognize frankly, with solid admiration. That's especially true in the field of music (and currently athletics), which has double importance to the Negro because that's where he really shines, wher his inventiveness and artistry come through in full force...

Ultimately, Mezzrow's (1946) definition of Signifyin(g) does not consider the sign or what is said, rather, signifyin(g) is a form of rhetorical training, an on-the-street exercise in the playful use of troping, specifically analyzing how the sign was expressed. Signifyin(g) requires an appreciation of the manner in which one communicates, without this consideration, one will risk misreading.

To further elaborate on Signifyin(g), Andrews and Owens (1973) identified two crucial aspects of Signifyin(g). First, the signifier invents a myth to commence the ritual. Second, trinary structure prevails over binary structure. Therefore, to signify is to tease and/or provoke into anger. The signifier creates a myth about someone and tells him a third person started it. The signified person is aroused and seeks that person (Andrews & Owens, 1973). Though this interpretation appears to be elementary, the purpose of signifyin(g) is meaningful in a jovial manner when the signifier convinces the signified that what he is saying is true. Signifyin(g), in turn, embodies much more than a rebellious manner to cope with oppression. Signifyin(g) serves as a method to play a game for Afro-Americans despite the regulatory environment enforced by white America.

Signifyin(g) itself encompasses a larger domain than solely the political. Signifyin(g) is a game of language, independent of reaction to white racism or even to alleviate black wish-fulfillment vis-à-vis white racism. J.L. Dillard (1977) defines Signifyin(g) as a familiar discourse device from the inner city, which tends to mean "communicating (often an obscene or diddling message) by indirection". In agreement with Zora Neale Hurston's definition in *Mules and Men* (1935), Dillard (1977) states that signifyin(g) enables one to show off with language use. These superficial definitions contribute to the current misunderstandings of black culture and its modes of communication. To exacerbate this interpretation of the definition of Signifyin(g), Haskins and Butt (1973) define "to signify" as to berate, degrade;

defining signifying as a more human form of verbal bantering compared to the dozens. Acknowledging the multiplicity of the meaning of Signifyin(g), Haskins and Butt (1973) state that three, of the many purposes of the term, are to put down another person and/or making another person feel better, or to simply express one's feeling. This interpretation corroborates the exact complexity of black vernacular tradition.

### **Black Vernacular**

The black vernacular provides much ample opportunity for interpretation, removing restrictions that forces one to disregard their ethnical and linguistical background. Black vernacular allows one communicate in such a way that presents the most genuine form of communication. Signifyin(g) does not mean to pretend to have knowledge, pretend to be hip, especially when such pretentions cause one to trifle with an important matter (Wentworth & Flexner, 1975). The societal conflict between white and black America can be a result of a lack of communication, or perhaps miscommunication. In simple terms, white America seeks an outcome through the meaning of a word as black American seeks this outcome through the interpretation of the expression of the exact word through signifyin(g). According to H. Rap Brown (1969), Signifyin(g) is 'what the white folks call verbal skills. We learn how to throw them words together. Signifyin(g), at its best, can be heard when brothers are exchanging tales'. Signifyin(g) can be seen most in this sense of storytelling, communal canonical stories or on-the-spot recountings of current events, being repeated and shared.

To tract and understand the complexities of the interpretive evolution, Abrahams (1962) published a series of significant studies of Signifyin(g). Abrahams (1962) defined Signifyin(g) as the following:

The name Signifying Monkey shows the hero to be a trickster, signifying being the language of trickery, that set of words or gestures which arrives at direction through indirection.

The word *indirection* hereafter recurs in the literature with great frequency. To further expand on his definition of Signifyin(g), Abrahams (1970) provided a useful list of signal aspects for his extensive definitions. The list is as follows:

1. Signifyin(g) “can mean any number of things.”
2. It is a black term and a black rhetorical device.
3. It can mean the “ability to talk with great innuendo.”
4. It can mean “to carp, cajole, needle, and lie.”
5. It can mean “the propensity to talk around a subject, never quite coming to the point.”
6. It can mean “making fun of a person or situation.”
7. It can “also denote speaking with the hands and eyes.”
8. It is “the language of trickery, that set of words achieving Hamlet’s ‘direction through indirection’.”
9. The Monkey “is a signifier”, and the Lion (see story of the Elephant and Lion), therefore, is the signified.”

Abrahams’ (1970) final definition of Signifyin(g) states to signify is to imply, goad, beg, boast, by indirect verbal or gestural means. Signifyin(g) is a language of implication. The definitions established by Abrahams are vital to the rhetorical strategy of Signifyin(g) as Abrahams was the first scholar to define Signifyin(g) (Gates Jr., 1986).

Signifyin(g) is an adult ritual, which black people learn as adolescents, like children learn the traditional figures of signification in classically structured Western primary and

secondary schools. Black adults teach their children the complex system of rhetoric. The mastery of Signifyin(g) creates *homo rhetoricus Africanus*, allowing-through the manipulation of the Signifying Monkey and Esu-Elegbara-the black person to move freely between two discursive universes (Lanham, 1976). Gates (1988) calls this linguistic masking, the verbal sign of the mask of blackness that demarcates the boundary between the white linguistic realm and the black, two domains that exist side by side in a homonymic relation signified by the very concept of Signification. Just as though the black West Africans who survived the Middle Passage, Afro-Americans in modern American society, black parents face the challenge of teaching their children to manipulate language in such a way as to facilitate the smooth navigation between the two realms. Teaching one's children the fine art of Signifyin(g) is to teach them about this mode of linguistic circumnavigation, to teach them a second language that they can share with other black (Folb E. A., 1980). Perhaps, the second language being passed down through the generations of the black culture serves as a psychological tool used to survive the given circumstances.

### **Urban Myth**

Common modern urban myth often refers to the streets as the training grounds for African-Americans. H. Rap Brown (1969) declares passionately that his true school was the street. Lanham's (1976) depiction of the student passing through the rhetorical *paideia* mirrors the description of vernacular black language training.

Start your student young. Teach him a minute concentration on the word, how to write it, speak it, remember it...From the beginning, stress behavior as performanc, reading aloud, speaking with gesture, a full range of historic adornment...develop elaborate memory schemes to keep them readily at hand. Teach, as theory of personality, a corresponding set of accepted personality types,

a taxonomy of impersonation...Nourish an acute sense of social situation...Stress, too, the need for improvisation, ad-lib quickness, the coaxing of chance. Hold always before the student rhetoric's practical purpose: to win, to persuade. But train for this purpose with continual verbal play, rehearsal for the sake of rehearsal...Practice this re-creation always in an agonistic context. The aim is scoring. Urge the student to go into the world and observe its doing from this perspective. And urge him to continue his rehearsal method all his life, forever rehearsing in a spontaneous real life...Training in the word thus becomes a badge, as well as a diversion, of the leisure class.

Lanham's (1976) description speaks directly towards Signifyin(g). Among his description are key words- "a taxonomy of impersonation", "improvisation", "ad-lib quickness", "to win", "to persuade", "continual verbal play"- all signals of black signification. Ironically, even Lanham's (1976) concept of a "leisure" class applies, since blacks tend in capitalist societies to occupy a disproportionate percentage of the "idle" unemployed, a leisure class with a difference. Therefore, to Signify is to master the figures of black signification.

In the leisure class, Signifyin(g) possesses many synonyms- *talking shit, woofing, spouting, mucky muck, boogerbang, beating your guns, talking smart, putting down, putting on, playing, sounding, telling lies, shag-lag, marking, shucking, jiving, jitterbugging, hoorawing, sweet-talking, smart- talking, amongst others* (Abrahams R. , 1976). For the purposes of this study, I am adding *talking trash or trash talking* to the list of synonyms for Signifyin(g). This list of synonyms reveals that black people can mean at least twenty-eight figures when they are Signifyin(g). Beyond the linguistic background of Signifyin(g), Signifyin(g) can also be used in recurrent black-white encounters as masking behavior (Abrahams R. , 1976). Since the full effectiveness of Signifyin(g) turns upon all speakers



possessing the mastery of reading, what Abrahams (1976) calls intergroup Signifyin(g) is difficult to effect, because the inherent irony of discourse most will not be understood. The following figure will assist in deciphering the discouse within Signifyin(g).

**Figure 2.3 Talking Black**

Conversation on the streets; Ways of speaking between equals			
Informational; Content focus <i>Running it down</i>	aggressive, witty performance talk <i>signifying</i>		
	Serious, clever conflict talk “me-and-you and no one else” focus <i>talking smart</i>	nonserious contest talk “any of us here” focus <i>talking shit</i>	
	overtly aggressive talk <i>putting down</i>	covertly aggressive, manipulative talk <i>putting on</i>	nondirective <i>playing</i>
			directive <i>sounding</i>
conversational (apparently spontaneous)	arises within conversational context, yet judged in performance (stylistic) terms	performance interaction, yet built on model of conver- sational back-and-forth	

(Abrahams R. , 1976, p. 46)

The standard English signification denotes meaning whereas the black vernacular signification denotes ways of meaning (Gates Jr., 1988). The black concept of Signifyin(g) incorporates a folk notion that dictionary entries for words are not always sufficient for interpreting meanings or messages, or that meaning goes beyond such interpretations. Complimentary remarks may be delivered in a left-handed fashion. A particular utterance may be an insult in one context and not in another. What simulates to be informative may intend to be persuasive. The hearer is thus constrained to adhere to all potential meaning carrying symbolic systems in speech events, the total universe of discourse (Mitchell-Kernan, 1999). Signifyin(g) is the figurative difference between the literal and the metaphorical, between surface and latent meaning (Gates Jr., 1986). This feature of discourse is an implicit content or function, which is potentially obscured by the surface content or function (Mitchell-Kernan, 1999). Signifyin(g) presupposes an encoded intention to say one thing but to mean another (Gates Jr., 1988).

This mode of Signifyin(g) best resembles the jovial mode of trash talk during competition in sport. It is though the hearer has the opportunity to confirm or contradict the signification. Mitchell-Kernan (1999) calls this form of Signifyin(g) allegory, because the significance or meaning of the words must be derived from known symbolic values. Allegory Signifyin(g) is commonly practiced by Afro-American adults. It is equivalent to one of its embedded tropes, often called *louding* or *loud-talking* (Gates Jr., 1988). *Loud-talking* is considered successful by speaking to a second person remarks directed to a third person, at a level just audible to the third person. For example, a member of a competitive team can yell, “He can’t guard you! Dunk it in his face!” during a basketball game in which you are dominant. This comment was not specifically intended to motivate the teammate, but to

psychology effect the opponent by acknowledging and encouraging the continuance of the dominance. *Loud-talking* is related to Mitchell-Kernan's (1999) second figure of Signification, obscuring the addressee, also called *naming* (Gates Jr., 1988).

Signifyin(g) does not always have negative valuations attached to it. It though of as a kind of art, a clever way of conveying messages. Signifyin(g) alludes to and implies things which are never made explicit (Mitchell-Kernan, 1999). To understand Signifyin(g), you must understand the distinction between the ritual of Signifyin(g), epitomized in the Monkey tales, and the language of Signifyin(g), which is the vernacular term for the figurative use of language. Mitchell-Kernan (1999) establishes terms for these differences, third-party signifyin and metaphorical signifyin. Metaphorical signifyin refers to when the speaker attempts to transmit their message indirectly and it is only by virtue of the hearers defining the utterance as signifyin that the speaker's intent to convey a particular message is realized. In third-party signifyin, the speaker may realize their aim only when the converse is true, if the addressee fails to recognize the speech act as signifyin. In reference to the Signifyin Monkey Tales (Gates Jr., 1988), the monkey succeeds in goading the lion into a rash act because the lion does not define the monkey's message as signifyin. This tale can serve as an example of *trash talking*.

The Monkey tales mark a dictum about interpretation, whereas the language of Signifyin(g) addresses the nature and application of rhetoric. The import of the Monkey tales for the interpretation of literature is that the Monkey dethrones the Lion only because the Lion cannot read the nature of his discourse (Gates Jr., 1988). The Monkey and the Lion do not speak the same language; the lion is not able to interpret the monkey's use of language, he is an outsider, un-hip, in a word (Mitchell-Kernan, 1999). In other words, the Monkey speaks figuratively, while the Lion reads his discourse literally. His act of misinterpretation

produces severe consequences. This valorization of the figurative is the most important moral of the poems, although the Monkey's mastery of figuration has made him one of the canonical heroes in the Afro-American mythic tradition (Gates Jr., 1988).

Signifyin(g) is considered a form of verbal art (Mitchell-Kernan, 1999). The characteristics of Signifyin(g) help clarify the most difficult and elusive mode of rhetoric. The two most important characteristics are indirect intent and metaphorical reference. The aspect of indirection is a formal device, which appears to always be most purely stylistic; moreover, its art characteristics remain in the forefront. Signifyin(g) turns upon the foregrounding of the signifier by indirection (Gates Jr., 1988). The apparent significance of the message differs from its real significance. The apparent meaning of the sentence signifies its actual meaning (Mitchell-Kernan, 1999).

The relationship between latent and manifest meaning is determined by the formal properties of the Signifyin(g) utterance. Manifest meaning directs attention away from itself to another, latent level of meaning. Scholars in linguistics compare this relationship to that which obtains the two parts of a metaphor, tenor (the inner meaning) and vehicle (the outer meaning) (Gates Jr., 1988). Signifyin(g) operates because the apparent meaning serves as a key which directs hearers to some shared knowledge, attitudes, and values or signals that reference must be produced metaphorically (Mitchell-Kernan, 1999). The decoding of the figurative depends upon shared knowledge and this shared knowledge operates on two levels. One of these levels is that the speaker and his audience realize that signifyin(g) is occurring and that the dictionary-syntactical meaning of the utterance is to be ignored. The second text, "shared knowledge", in this decoding is of utmost importance in the esthetics of Signifyin(g). It is the cleverness used in directing the attention of the hearer and audience to this shared knowledge upon which a speaker's artistic talent is judged (Levine, 1977).

Signification is a complex rhetorical device that has obtained various, often contradictory, definitions from linguists. While many of its signs and possibilities are figured in the tales of the Signifying Monkey, most people who Signify do not engage in the narration of the tales. Rather, the Monkey tales stand as the canonical poems from which the language of Signifyin(g) extends. The degree to which the figure of the Monkey is anthropologically related to the figure of the Pan-African trickster, Esu-Elegbara, will remain a matter of speculation as record of African vernacular and mythical tradition remained scarce. Nevertheless, the two figures are related as functional equivalents as they stand as a moment of consciousness of black formal language use of rhetorical structures and their appropriate modes of interpretation. Both figures function as repositories for a tradition's declarations about how and why formal literary language departs from ordinary language use. The metaphor of a double-voiced Esu-Elegbara parallels the double-voiced nature of the Signifyin(g) utterance. When one text Signifies upon another text, by tropological revision or repetition and difference, the double-voiced utterance allows us to chart discrete formal relationships in Afro-American literary history. Therefore, Signifyin(g) is a metaphor for textual revision (Gates Jr., 1988).

### **The Dozens- Influence of Cultural Roots**

As the Americas moved from the New World to modern American society, the modes of signification were forced to evolve along with the evolution of the society. As minorities, Afro-Americans were still subjected to oppression, yet were given the liberties to live amongst society as citizens rather than slaves as they were years before, such being forced to sit on the back of the bus, "whites only" restrooms and water fountains, and "whites only" sport facilities (Alderman, Kingsbury, & Dwyer, 2013). In conjunction with appearance of freedom, exposure to black vernacular tradition increased. This exposure came through

versions of play in public. Specifically, this sort of play was displayed in a competition which involved verbal jousting call the Dozens. The original definition (in print), coined by an African American songwriter and pianist named Chris Smith (1921), in the opening verse of his pop song, *Don't Slip Me in the Dozen, Please* states, "Slipping you in the dozen means to talk about your fam'ly folks and talkin' 'bout your parents aren't jokes" (Smith & Morgan, 1921).

Though this definition of the dozens was the first in print, it was not an accurate definition of the linguistic code depicted within a game. For many Afro-Americans, *the dozens* were merely jokes, and the jokes did not have to involve parents. Playing the dozens, like signification, requires an understanding of who is "putting someone in the dozens", as well as who is receiving the dozens. Depending on the participants, playing the dozens can mean cursing someone out, insulting someone's mother or other relatives, or engaging in a duel of increasingly elaborate insults that might or might not include ancestors or female kin. The dozens can be a challenge to physical combat or a test of cool, in which the first player to throw a punch was regarded as having proved his lack of self-control. Ultimately, playing the dozens is a form of verbal play which uses viciously funny rhymes. This verbal play can be credited as the source for aggressive comic rhyming or rap, puns, extravagant exaggerations, and other forms of verbal play which are prevalent in modern American society (Wald, 2012).

According to record producer, Bob Koester (as cited by Wald, 2012), Speckled Red, a pianist and singer who had a national hit called "The Dirty Dozen" in 1929, told him that the dozens originated when he was a kid, that it was a kids' game: I insult twelve of your relatives, you insult twelve of mine, back and forth. The first guy who throws a punch loses. John Dollard (as cited by Wald, 2012) wrote:

The origin of the title, “the Dozens,” is not known to me. What is known is that there is an obscene rhyme which is used in playing the Dozens which has twelve units in it. It goes in part as follows:

I \_\_\_\_\_your mammy one;

She said, “You’ve just begun.”

.....

I \_\_\_\_\_ her seven;

She said, “I believe I’m in Heaven.”

.....

I \_\_\_\_\_ her twelve;

She swore she was in Hell.

Zora Neal Hurston (1935) also emphasized the number twelve in her 1930s “song poem”:

When the clock stryck eleven, I was in heaven, in heaven with Sue, in heaven with Sal, in heaven with that pretty Johnson gal. When the clock struck twelve I was in hell, in hell with Sue, in hell with Sal, in hell with that pretty Johnson gal.

The significance of the number twelve was not produced randomly. The motif of the twelve hours within African American music and the dozens is part of an older tradition.

McCormick clarifies (as cited by Newell, 1891):

As one of the most favored numbers... twelve occurs as the divisions of the Zodiac, in the fixtures of Heaven (Revelation 21,22) and in the measure of hours, inches, and dice. Its history ranges from the earliest Roman Law, codified in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. as the XII Tables, to the fact that it is still twelve men that we put in the jury box.



McCormick suggested that the insult game materialized out of a Christian variant of this twelve-item tradition in which twelve verses are used to enumerate key articles of faith. Such rhymed catechisms were common in churches and schools throughout Europe and survived as folksongs and carols, often sung in call-and-response, with one group asking questions and the other replying (Newell, 1891). McCormick, specifically contended that the dirty dozens satirized an earlier “Bible Dozens”, which he claimed to have traced to the 1880s with its origins being during slavery. Gerhson Legman (1975) states that the insult game has nothing to do with a dozen (twelve objects or actions), but comes from the Anglo-Scottish term ‘to dozen’, meaning to stun or stupefy, still surviving in ‘bull-dozer’. It is important to note that there is no record of the verb ‘to dozen’ being used in the United States. However, the etymology of the term “bulldozer” does suggest a possible relationship. Prior to the usage of the word being referred to for a piece of machinery, it meant “a person who goes around and visits the colored people of nights, or visits their houses, shoots off guns, or threatens them with violence, or threatens them in various ways, if they do not vote the democratic ticket (as cited by Wald, 2012) Lewis Hyde (1998) supports Legman’s (1975) explanation by adding that the object of the game is to stupefy and daze with swift and skillful speech.

Prior to owning the right to place a democratic vote, Afro-Americans thought of the dozens as a negative. In *The Black Book* (Harris, 2009), the dozens were traced back to slavery:

When slave auctioneers had exceptional merchandise, they sold it separately. When they felt the “items” were flawed in some way - age, illnesses, deformities, etc. – they sold them in lots, frequently of a dozen. Every slave knew that he was included among a dozen only if something was physically

wrong with him. Thus, to be a part of a dozen was humiliating...Eventually, the term was applied to a ritualized verbal battle that black people developed to insult and humiliate each other.

William Schecter (1970) provides another derivation linking the dozens to slavery stating that the most common theory of the origin of the term dozen is based on a recurring insult: an opponent's mother was said to be one of the dozens of women available to her master's sexual whims. Exacerbating the emphasis on mother jokes, Charles Johnson (as cited by Wald, 2012) suggested an additional derivation of the term dozen, a phonetic rendering of "doesn'," as in, "At least my mother doesn'...". As a result, distinctly sexual ritual insults involving the mother are sometimes called the "doesn'ts". Linguistic anthropologist Edgar Gregersen (1979) wrote that of 103 languages for which he has studied, sixty-six consider the gravest insult and abuse which is directed at the opponent's mother.

### **Dirty Dozen**

As American society evolved over the years, as did the black vernacular tradition of playing the dozens. In the 1920s and 1930s the dozens were considered the "Dirty Dozen" in a string of songs (as cited by Wald, 2012). By the 1940s, the street term, "joaning", was used as a synonym for slipping someone in the dozens. During the 1950s, some Afro-American neighborhoods shortened Chris Smith's (1921) phrase to "slipping", or "slip fights" (Davis & Dollard, 1940). According to William Labov (1972), "sounding" is the most common term used in reference to the dozens in New York, also favored in Philadelphia. "Woofing" is the most common in Philadelphia, "joning" in Washington, DC, signifyin' in Chicago, "screaming" in Harrisburg, PA, and "cutting", "capping", and "chopping" on the west coast (Labov, 1972). Other phrases or terms used in the likes of the dozens include "crackin' on the kitchen folks", "going in the kitchen", "getting down on the crib", "ribbon", and most

popularly used by teens, “talkin’ about moms” (Foster, Ribbin', jivin', and playin' the dozens, 1990). In Harlem, NY, the popular terms were “ranking”, “busting”, “bagging”, and “dissing” (Kelley, 1997). Other terms used during the 1950s were “playing house”, “hiking”, “basing”, “hoorawing”, and “lugging” (Wald, 2012). Most commonly used in the 1990s, “snaps”, became popular after the mimicking of the term used in popular joke books. The most relative term, regarding this study, “trash talk”, became the NBA (2017) standard in the 1990s (Perceland, Ivey, & Dweck, 1994).

Despite the various terms used for the dozens, one must understand the environment in which the term is derived. Street language is slippery, shifting in subtle and complicated ways. Street language which, in modern American society is considered all black vernacular, often conveys its most important information not in the words but in the intonation, style, or context, and its taxonomy can change from week to week (Wald, 2012). In a study administered by Labov (1972), observations were able to distinguish between the types of verbal interactions amongst Harlem, NY gang members in the mid 1960s. The dozens were specialized rhyming couplets referring to any ritualized insult directed against a relative. “Sounding” also used these sorts of insults, including personal insults of the simpler form. “Louding” refers to when someone says something specific towards another before an audience. Whereas “signifying” is considered when one insults a person directly, much like “sounding” (Labov, 1972) .

The signification of the dozens can be interpreted in many ways. However, the main component of the dozens, or any other term regarding the verbal interaction between Afro-Americans, is comedy, specifically mistrel comedy. Mistrel comedy has frequently been dismissed as racially demeaning, but from the first it included elements that suggest “black humor”. Similar to “signifyin’”, words whose many meanings include a form of satire in

which a song or story that white listeners understood in one way carry a different, often opposite, meaning for black audiences. The purpose of the comedy was not to win the competition within the dozens. According to Abrahams (1970), the duels of the dozens need not have a winner or a loser to justify the performance, since the competition is entertainment itself. Like blues, jazz, and African American preaching, the dozens mixes immediacy and inspiration with a deep affection for tradition (Wald, 2012).

According to Davis and Dollard (1940), the dozens is a pattern of interactive insult which is used among some American Negroes. It is played by boys, girls, adolescents, and adults. According to Davis and Dollard (1940), adolescents frequently make use of rhymes to express the forbidden notions. The dozens, for some, is a game in which the only purpose is for the amusement of participants and onlookers. The game takes place before a group and usually involves two protagonists. The onlookers' response to the rhymes or sallies of the leaders is crucial; individuals do not play the dozens alone. As a game, it is described as a form of aggressive play; in other circumstances the play aspect disappears and the dozens lead to fighting (Davis & Dollard, 1940).

Unfortunately, the dozens has attracted less scholarly attention than other forms of African American performance art, not only because it tended to be informal and played by kids, but because most educated people (often white) dismissed it as violent nastiness (Wald, 2012). While the dozens is part of the larger world of African American verbal art, poetry, and comedy, it is also part of the larger world of combat. The rhymes and linguistic dexterity make it unique and interesting, but many of the crowds that encouraged insult battles also encouraged physical battles, as the verbal duels can easily move on physical violence. Langston Hughes (1995), wrote about men at a local barbershop who "could play the dozens for hours without anger unless the parties concerned became serious, when they were

invited to take it on the outside. And even at that a fight was fun, too”. Claude Brown (1993) blatantly added that in Harlem, “a guy who won’t fight when somebody talks about his mother is the worst kind of punk”.

Brown’s (1993) comments can be misinterpreted if the emotional climate of the environment is not considered. One must be aware of the tension engulfing the dozens session. This tension is one of the aspects missing in analyses of dozens matches by folklorists. The words may be the same but the feeling is different. Some scholars have argued that there is safety in the dozens because the insults are so outlandish that they could never be taken seriously, but there is always the possibility that someone will say something that hits a nerve and the tone to the dozens match will shift (Wald, 2012). Nevertheless, the translation of the intent within dozens relies on the personal relationship between the players and their audience.

### **The Joking Relationship**

Amongst African American’s the personal relationship referred to while engaging in the dozens is called the joking relationship. Rudolph Fisher, the first writer to explore the literary possibilities of the dozens, highlighted this sort of relationship in his work. Fisher’s stories used gentle humor in dealing with prejudice and stereotyping between blacks and whites. Specifically, Fisher wrote about his observations in Harlem, NY. He observed interactions between whites, upper-class blacks, regular working-class blacks, and the lower class. In his observations, Fisher associated the dozens with the lower class (Wald, 2012). Violent interactions between individuals in a joking relationship can appear as antagonistic, however such language and behavior can simply be complimentary. This error in interpretation occurs when outsiders, individuals not involved in the interaction, attempt to

interpret the behavior and language without being aware of the relationship. The nastiest of insults cloaked in warm affection are misinterpreted (Wald, 2012).

This misinterpretation is committed by those who are cultural outsiders. Dollard (1940), who was the first scholar to explore the tradition of the dozens, used his sociopsychological analysis to assess the use of the dozens. According to Dollard (1940), adolescent males are the most frequent dozens players, using rhymed insults to expose sexual habits and particularities of female relatives. Though many believe that the dozens requires a rhyming pattern, Dollard (1940) stated that the dozens are also played among adolescents without the use of rhymes and without direct erotic references. Therefore, the dozens can be considered any verbal banter between those who have a joking relationship. While most scholars focused on the extended duel between individuals playing the dozens, focusing on the specifics of black vernacular and communication includes shorter and less formal interchanges (Wald, 2012).

The inclusion of informal interchanges between those in black America has led to the questioning of the formal patterns by scholars. In fact, some scholars argue that the formal patterns were imposed on the dozens *ex post facto* by white academics (Wald, 2012). Kelley (1997) condemned such scholars for framing the dozens as ritual with rules, players, and mental scoreboards rather than the daily banter of many young African Americans. Though, by the rules of vernacular grammar, the rules of dozens playing are understood and followed by most, they never think of the rules as rules, just norms. The rules vary from group to group, particularly, from neighborhood to neighborhood. The temperament of the joking relationship also plays a major role in the rules of a particular dozens matchup. Despite the angst of ending a dozens matchup with violence, most matches end just as casually as the spontaneous start of the match (Wald, 2012).

The spontaneous manner in which one is eased into the dozens is sudden, disabling one from preparing their rhymes for the match. Prior to the 1960s, young people would spend time privately preparing their rhymes for the moment they were eased into the dozens. By the 1960s, preparation for the dozens became rare. Most of the traditional rhymes were no longer well known, and teenagers were only familiar with a few rhymed dozens (Hannerz, 1969). According to Smitherman (2000) and Chaika (1994), by the early 1960s, the structure and topic of the dozens proved too limiting, giving away to “sounding” which involved unrhymed one-line insults revolving around poverty, the alleged sexual promiscuity of the opponent’s female relatives, and their physical attributions or those of the opponent. Some researchers describe the move away from rhyme as a sign of maturity (Wald, 2012). In fact, Labov (1972) found in his study that adolescents of the 1960s used unrhymed insults that showed much greater skill in adaptation and improvisation.

To further support the notion of maturity influencing the move away from rhyming dozens, John Roberts (1982) found that older teenagers in the 1980s considered rhymed dozens as kid stuff and wanted nothing to do with them; they enjoyed unrhymed insult jokes they called “joning”. The linguistic distinction is important to this age group as part of their definition of themselves as adults. On the other hand, younger teenagers in the same community used “joning” and “the dozens” interchangeably, eliminating the distinction between the two age groups (Roberts J. W., 1982). As with most linguistics, these distinctions are irrelevant as some people take these distinctions more seriously than others. Individuals who grew up in certain neighborhoods or periods of time would say that the joking only became the dozens when it shifted to mothers or to rhymes. All would agree that rhymed dozens focused on sex and relatives, while unrhymed insults covered a much broader spectrum of themes (Wald, 2012).

Most researchers have agreed that the black vernacular tradition involves more improvisation than its white counterparts, and if true, one should expect a higher proportion of unmemorable, unrefined insults from the black kids, who were making stuff up than recycling established favorites (Wald, 2012). Non-rhyming, nonsexual insults made up the majority of dozens interchanges. Some were improvised within the instant, some learned or adapted over years of playing. Insults which were considered less dangerous than the sexualized mother insults were classified as a different kind of play, classified as “cutting” or “ranking” rather than “dozens” (Wald, 2012). This sort of play does not eliminate the possibility of being hurt by these insults.

Other researchers have suggested that the dozens insults are fictitious and do not reflect real failings of the participants or their relatives. According to Smitherson (2000), “the disses are purely ceremonial which creates a safety zone. Like it’s not personal, it’s business- in this case, the business of playing on and with the Word”. The ideal of getting close to dangerous truths in comical ways provides entertainment. The kidding can seem cruel or funny depending on the manner and situation, and is most effective when it is a bit of both. The comedy provides a layer of protection and entertainment; the possibility of inflicting or incurring pain provides excitement. The listeners also help shape the mood of the matchup. If enjoyable, listeners will laugh at both players’ jokes to encourage them and keep the insults coming. On the other hand, if they want to see a fight or a player be punished, they will act as if someone is being genuinely humiliated (Wald, 2012).

The spectator of the dozens played an intricate role in the dozens. Being a spectator in a dozens matchup does not exempt an individual from being slipped into the dozens. A game could only result if both parties were willing, however the way to test an individual’s willingness was to insult them hard and fast. Whether engaged with a friend or stranger



depended not just on social custom but on how much trouble an individual was ready to handle. The barrier between players and spectators is reflected in the retorts to an initial insult. In the African-American community, these retorts may be, “I laugh and kid, but I don’t play” (Smitherman, 2000; Abrahams R. , 1976) or “oh man, don’t play with me” (Abrahams R. , 1976). Ultimately, the dozens appeared as a game that produced a sense of comradery. According to Cross (2007), African-Americans in the early 1970s traded mother insults as a celebration of racial unity and pride.

### **Huizinga – A Link to the Dozens**

To a noble man of any culture, verbal interaction with a peer has the ability to produce a sense of unity. Contests of more or less good-natured abuse were common to all societies at some stages in their development (Huizinga, 2003). Huizinga (2003, p. 65) states:

The nobleman demonstrates his “virtue by feats of strength, skill, courage, wit, wisdom, wealth or liberality. For want of these he may yet excel in a contest of words, that is to say, he may either himself praise the virtues in which he wishes to excel his rivals, or have them praised for him by a poet or a herald. This boosting of one’s own virtue as a form of contest slips over quite naturally into contumely of one’s adversary, and this in its becomes a contest in its own right.

The nobleman represents a Nietzschean ideal, an ideal of chivalry and chivalrous conduct. While Huizinga (2003) focused on European Medieval conception of noble contests, Abrahams (1976) traced a linguistic thread that links the European Medieval conception to African American traditions in what he call the “man of words”. In African American culture the boasting counterpart to the insults of the dozens is called “woofing”, in reference to someone who is a talker rather than a fighter (Baraka, 1997).

The Old German languages have a special word for this ceremony of mutual bragging and insult, be it the prelude to armed combat in connection with competition, or only part of the entertainment. This German term is called *gelp* or *gelpan*. The substantive, in Old English, means glory, pomp, arrogance, etc., and in Middle High German, clamour, mockery, or scorn. The English dictionary still states “to applaud” or “to praise” as obsolete meanings of “yelp”. For pre-Islamic Arabs during verbal contests called *munafara*, which were held in front of judges and often carried out in rhyme, the highest demand of a noble like is the obligation to preserve your honor safe and unsullied. Your opponent is supposed to be animated by strong desire to damage and demolish your honor with an insult (Huizinga, 2003).

The European vernacular tradition exhibits the cultural yearning for verbal banter between individuals. Many scholars have attempted to trace such banter back to European countries, however, one can only trace the dozens back to Africa. Though the rhyming techniques and some stray phrases show influence of Scottish Flyting and toasting, there is no comparison to the competitive singing and rhyming of “Dirty Dozens” insults existing today anywhere in the English-language tradition except among Negroes, or has ever been recorded among whites (Legman, 1975). The Scottish explorer, Mungo Park, tracing the course of the Niger River in the 1790’s, found that an African will sooner forgive a blow, than a term of reproach applied to his ancestors; “Strike me, but do not curse my mother” was a common expression even among the slaves (Park, 1816).

Despite the angst against curses towards one mother, African cultures did not lack their own lexicon of forbidden or dangerous language. A Wolof-French dictionary defines the words *coff*, *dèjj*, and *cappa* as synonyms for “vagina”, and each is labeled “vulgar” or “very vulgar” and accompanied by the exemplary phrases “*Sa cappa ndey!*” “*Sa dèjju*

*ndey!*” and “*Sa cottu ndey!*”, which all translate as “Your mother’s cunt!” (Diouf, 2003). Europeans would have a conception of obscenity regarding these phrases, misleading the African context. In the United States, such phrases can vary in actual usage from offensive to amusingly naughty. Children’s games in many languages involve such involuntary or joking insults. Tonal languages allow for such forms of wordplay. Many African cultures distinguish between genuine insults, which are resentfully disputed, and insult games or jokes, which can indicate intimacy rather than irritation (Wald, 2012).

Depending on the region, the social or ethnic group, and the family relationships of those involved, teasing or joking might involve complex and closely regulated systems of etiquette (Wald, 2012). Such relationships are defined as a relation between two persons in which one is by custom permitted, and in some instances required, to tease or make fun of the other, who in turn is required to take no offense. The joking relationship is a combination of friendliness and antagonism. The behavior is such that in any other social context it would express and arouse hostility, but it is not meant seriously and must not be taken seriously. There is a pretence of hostility and a real friendliness (Radcliffe-Brown, 1940). As written by Phillip Mayer in study of the African Gusii language (as cited by Wald, 2012):

Words or actions which are insults at their face value are *egosori*, which literally means “play” or “game”, in certain contexts, and are then not only not insulting, but positively intended to give pleasure. The more grievous the “insult” at its face value, the greater are the intimacy and affection indicated by its playful use...[As one man] summed up the situation: “My pal is delighted when I abuse him; he laughs and jokes. One uses insulting words in fun because it pleases him. And I also like to abuse me in the same way”.

Mayer (as cited by Wald, 2012) describes the deeper significance of the dozens in the role *egosori* in Gusii adolescent culture:

A frequent kind of verbal insult consists in the use of expressions normally considered indecent, obscene or even unutterable... the true measure of the unique unrestraint of pals and the climax of their intimacy is to exchange pornographic references to the other's mother and particularly to impute that he would be prepared for incestuous relations with her. "Eat your mother's anus!" is a specimen of this kind, or even the direct, "copulate with your mother!" Normally no insult could be more frightful. But, "did they not sing the *esimbore* together?" say the Gusii-naming the song which the circumciser starts up when the operation is over, and which the novices and their escorts sing on the triumphal homeward journey:

- Little *abaisia* have had pain, *oyoo!*...
- Mother's clitoris, mother's clitoris;
- Intercourse with mother, intercourse with mother;
- Mother's pubic hair, mother's pubic hair;
- Little *abaisia*, have intercourse with mother!...

When the pals have worked through their more harmless jokes, such a dreadful statement serves to increase their mutual delight and feeling of superb intimacy.

The use of such insults in puberty ceremonies suggests deep resonance of the dozens as an adolescent rite of passage.

Such rite of passage and its relationship with the dozens was not limited to puberty rituals. Such rituals also occurred when greeting those of the same age, whether adults or adolescents. According to Rigby (1968), the people of Tanzania typically used insult joking as a way of greeting new arrivals. If strangers from distant areas find they belong to the same

age-set, they immediately begin teasing and abusing each other, easing any initial strain. The abuse between age-mates is of the stringest kind, and the relationship includes frequent horseplay and practical joking. Grandparents of the age-mates freely included in the verbal banter, as well as references to each other's parents, particularly their mothers. *Muduwo*, meaning, completely free conversation, including references to sexual matters, is characteristic of relations between age-mates (Rigby, 1968).

In African tradition, unlike European tradition, verbal banter and teasing enables a sense of comradery that is needed to produce a cohesive community. Such rituals of insults are often based on family. The Wolof *xaxaar* is a form of rhythmic poetry performed primarily by and for women, also serves as the name of the ceremony at which such poetry is recited. The ceremony goes as follows. Following a bride's first night with her husband, the women of the husband's family hold a welcome and hazing ceremony for which they commission female griots to recite poems villifying the bride and, through her, her kin. The typical themes of these poems include graphic descriptions of sexual deformity and misbehavior, accusations of uncleanness, pverty, stinginess, theivery, violations of the rules of caste, and other crimes. While being addressed, the bride must sit with downcast eyes and deadpan expression, without any physical movement. Though the co-wives express their hostility towards the newcomer, that expression is also a compliment to the bride because it implies that she is a genuine rival for male attention and respect. Due to the bride's rigid deadpan expression, she is set off in a positive manner despite what is said (Irvine, 1993).

Nonetheless, the verbal jeering of an individual in African tradition serves as a tool for many things, most importantly, the insults and jokes are not to be translated as real unless the relationship between the participants are established. Such relationship can be misinterpreted when it crosses the racial line in modern American society. For Afro-

Americans, the use of the dozens can be used in several social circumstances. During interactions with those from white America, the dozens were often used as a coded language. Throughout Africa and the diaspora there are reports of black workers singing derisive songs about white owners, overseers, and employers. The Texas song “Holla Ding” (Thomas, 1992) provides an example of the sarcastic lyrics based on race relations:

- Nought’s a nought, figger’s a figger,
- Figger for the white man, nought for the nigger.
- Nigger and a white man playin’ seven up
- Nigger won the money but was feard to pick it up.

The lyrics of this folk song exhibits the feelings and reactions evolving around the interactions between black America and white America. With the obvious tension between the two societies within America, the dozens became the ideal form for Afro-Americans to overtly as well as covertly express anger by playing the dozens with white people to get them upset and speechless (Wald, 2012).

Players and researchers have described the dozens as a school of stoicism, teaching young African American people to keep emotions in check and avoid responding physically to insults, thus equipping them for a world in which such a response can be detrimental (Wald, 2012). Onwuchekwa Jemie (2003) refers to usage of the dozens as a training in self-control as an adaptation of the “pan-African heritage of male-child rearing” to the horrific experiences of slavery and racial oppression:

In the African homeland, those painted scenes of abuse of the mother were mostly that- painted scenes, unreal, conjured up as a means to preempt and prevent their actualization. But here in the Americas, under slavery, the imagined became real, and the real a nightmare...The African American male has therefore has to achieve

detachment of a higher, deeper, tougher quality than his cousin in the homeland, or his counterparts elsewhere in the world. He must not only embrace the sorrow; he must chew and swallow it, let work from the inside, tightening the guts, thickening the skin, steeling the bones, petrifying the emotions- and at the same time block the poison from callusing the soul and rendering the total person anarchic, suicidal, or dead.

According to Ossie Guffy (1971), the dozens were used less as a way of developing psychological detachment than a straightforward training in physical survival:

It was a game slaves used to play, only they wasn't playing for fun. They was playing to teach themselves and their sons how to stay alive. The whole idea was to learn to take whatever the master said to you without answering back or hitting him, 'cause that was the way a slave had to be, so's he could go on living. It maybe was a bad game, but it was necessary...

Other scholars state that the dozens is an art at the heart of African American expression. The roots of the African American society are intertwined with the legacy of racism. Dozens players adopted and reshaped minstrel stereotypes, signifyin' on the racist images. When slaves were separated from their families and friends, forced to adopt the English language, it was a form of intentional linguicide. However, the English spoken by the slaves and their descendents is to great extent their own creation. In the 1970s, Houston Baker (1972) wrote:

In a situation where property ownership is rare, employment scarce, excitement minimal, and literacy sparse, but where talk is abundant, it seems natural that status is conferred according to verbal ability...The ability to "dance" one's talk, to dramatize the self by the use of an intrusive first person pronoun, to employ

aggressive and active verbs when referring to one's own actions, and to use varying intonation and gesture to hold the attention of listeners characterize ghetto language and reinforce the idea of black language as a performing art.

Like any language or art form, the dozens proved to have the propensity to adapt to new situations and resist easy classification, much like signification. Some scholars concentrated on the rhyming versions of dozens play, because rhymes are more easily distinguished from normal speech than exxagerations, similies, and metaphors. Therefore, rhyming has been singled out as a discrete style. Other forms of linguistic play have produced colorful and entertaining phrases but those of dozens reached a level of surreal purity. Artistically, conducting a verbal battle is far from constucting a memorable composition. The dozens can be linked to pieces of work that have helped establish performance genres from poetic recitations to pop songs and rap. Culturally, the dozens were part of the fabric of daily life within the African-American community. The dozens derived much of their bite and humor for the way they fit together with looser forms of verbal combact and the broader patterns of personal relationships. The dozens served as a training ground and theater for verbal performance, while serving as an entertainment tool during down time. The dexterity of the intent and meaning of the insults within the dozens varies from place to place, player to player, and moment to moment.

### **Today and Dozens**

In a modern American society in which many black Americans do not feel comfortable being themselves, some chose to use the dozens to alleviate that pressure by covertly attacking the oppression. On the other hand, the dozens also serve as a tool to build a racial bridge. Insult joking can ease racial tensions by providing a comic meeting ground, but it can also reinforce underlying stereotypes and divisions (Wald, 2012).



Misunderstandings can go both directions, codes vary, overlap, and change according to time, place, and situation. At one juncture, Dollard (1977) described the dozens as an exclusively African American practice. However, when young people from one culture encounter a fun or exciting custom in another, the young people become inclined to experiment. In this case, black culture in America has been adopted and imitated by Americans of all backgrounds.

The accuracy of the imitated African American practices depends on the cultural convergences, convenience, talent, and taste. Like jazz, rock 'n' roll, rap, and now, sport, the dozens provided white kids with opportunities to adopt black styles and also alter them through intention ineptitude. In Labov's study (1972), in which he compared observations of black and white New York teens in the 1960s, he stated that the white insults were more frequently scatological, using memorized routines and rebuttals which preserved older lined that had fallen out of fashion with the black teens. By contrast, the black teens used joking which was more often sexual, improvised, and symmetrical, meaning that the players mimicked and responded to each other in the same manner (Labov, 1972). This revelation does not disregard the use of the dozens in all cultures. Robert Clayton Buick (2010), who grew up in a white, working class neighborhood of Johnstown, PA, in the 1940s, described the dozens play as the standard of street behavior, a test, and confidence builder as to who could stand in longer without losing his cool. Carl Francis Cusato (2006) recalled that kids gained street status and respect in Albany, NY by fighting with their fists or by being a "mouth", and that mouths were book and street smart and were good at "sounding" or the dozens.

Perhaps there is reasoning for these scholars' experiences with the dozens as adolescents in their hometowns. Labov's white associates and Levine were Jewish, Carlin, famous comedian who speaks about race relations was Irish, Buick was Serbian, and Cusato

was Italian. In modern American history, these cultures were cultures of immigrants. These immigrant communities have provided a disproportionate share of the white devotees and translators of black vernacular tradition and style. As the New World transitioned to modern America, immigrants of the various backgrounds often resided in neighborhoods that adjoined or overlapped African American neighborhoods. Therefore, members of the communities were geographically forced to interact, naturally exposing each other to their cultures. Like modern American society, immigrant youths felt it was easier to gain an American identity by imitating blacks than by trying to be accepted as quasi-Anglo-Saxons (Wald, 2012).

This influence has become a part of the modern American culture. African American music infused the New World with soul in the 1800s. By the 1940s, Latino Americans, Asian Americans and young white Americans adopted black fashions, body language and speech. The Great Depression inspired working-class solidarity, intergration of the armed forces during and after World War II forced people to interact more intimately which lead to the desegregation of neighborhoods and schools. Though some may disagree, the influence of the black culture outweighed the influence of any other culture. In a famous quote, Carlin (1973) states:

If you take five white guys... and put 'em with five black guys, let 'em hang around together for about a month, and at the end of the month you'll notice that the white guys are walking, and talking, and standing like the black guys do. You'll never see the black guys saying, "Oh, gol-lee, we won the big game today!" But you'll see guys with red hair and freckles named Duffy saying, "What's happenin'?" Nothin' to it. You got it, man. Right, nice, that's cool. Tell ya later, baby. Shit.

Not to say that Carlin's (1973) statement is absolute, however, it is considered accurate in majority neighborhoods.

The African American influence on American society transformed a culture creating a conglomerate of cultures within one society. In modern American society, this influence can be depicted through the lens of sport, specifically, the dozens has influenced sport through trash talk. Trash talk is not a current phenomenon however. A report in 1912 states that legendary professional baseball player, Ty Cobb, assaulted an opposing team's fan after an interchange in which he yelled, "I was out with your sister last night," and the fan responded, in Cobb's phrase, by "reflecting on my mother's color and morals" (Tripp, 2009; Stein, 2005). Another story involving Cobb and trash talk refers to Cobb psyching out an opposing catcher by tossing him a pair of women's panties and saying, "Give these back to your wife, she left them in my car last night" (Buick, 2010). In sport, the dozens, or trash talk, is intended to get people riled up for battle, having seen similar insults used in West Africa as preludes to wrestling or boxing matches (Wald, 2012).

### **Modern Influence of African Vernacular Culture**

In such cases, the practice could reflect different social and psychological pressures than the matches in which resorting to physical combat is an acknowledgement of verbal defeat (Wald, 2012). As a player or spectator, one can be disturbed or angered by the dozens, yet cannot deny the talent it has honed artistically and athletically. To reflect on the talent the dozens has honed, I will refer to the interactions and relationship between two of the most prominent modern American rappers in the African American culture, Nas and Jay-Z. The famous exchange between the New York rappers has been referred to as hip-hop in its purest form (MTV News Now, 2011). Antagonized by members of their crew, the rivalry began when Jay-Z dissed Nas at a live concert, Nas responded with a freestyle rap implying Jay-Z

was gay, then Jay-Z release a song called “The Takeover”, describing Nas as a one-hit has-been. In an interview regarding the feud, Jay-Z (2001) states:

...definitely gonna bring out the best of me...It’s like playing basketball with a guy. He’s gonna put me on top of m game; I hope I do the same for him. I don’t want to hurt the guy. It’s just verbal sparring. No one is fighting. It’s just records.

Nas went on to release another diss record, *Ether* (2001), to the likes of Jay-Z’s *Super Ugly* (2001). Mirroring the commentary supporting the dozens, Jay-Z (Tannenbaum, 2003) comments on Nas’ reaction:

There’s an imaginary line in the sand, and most people cross it when they are off balance. You don’t say things about another guy’s genitalia...It’s like when you have nothing else to grab on to and you say, “Fuck you! Your mother! I take comfort from that.

Jay-Z and Nas’ rivalry is an example of the impact of the dozens. Though they were not kin or even acquaintances, the insults within the rap battle were used mutually to motivate the opponent. This mode of motivation served as a symbol of respect between the two. This dual displays transparent similarities between competitors in sport. Perhaps, trash talk in sport is not the negative and unethical act being defined.

### **Trash Talk**

In modern American society, trash talk is often directly related to competitive sport. In competitive sport, the objective is to achieve victory while abiding by all regulatory rules within the game. Furthermore, as African Americans gained access to compete alongside and against white Americans in competitive sport, white America gained exposure to black vernacular tradition- signification and the dozens- through the form of trash talk. Though there is no documented evidence as to how and who coined the term “trash talk”. One can

assume that white America designated the term, hence the negative translation of the action which so closely resembles black vernacular tradition. Like the dozens, the intention and meaning of trash talk has not been clearly established.

### **What is Trash Talk?**

According to Phillip (1995), the term trash talk has been used for verbal taunts that players direct at their opponents during contests, often accompanied by displays of physical intimidation. Considered intentional psychological intimidation, trash talking is as common as putting on a game uniform though outlawed by most amateur sport ruling bodies (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1994). Trash talking exists in youth sports, school sports, collegiate sports, and professional leagues. Women practice it, children it, and fans practice it. According to Harrison (1996), trash talking grew from the jive of the intercity playground. As a cultural practice, trash talking began on the playground and now exists on the playing fields. Harrison (1996) argues that trash talking is not about doing any type of physical or emotional damage.

Athletes use trash talk as a way of increasing the level of performance within the competition. To a certain extent, athletes believe that trash talk enables them to be more psyched up for to compete and when denied the use of trash talk, they lose their motivational edge. If viewed in this manner, trash talk is a way of celebrating the very act of competition (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1994). Though not limited to only African American athletes, trash talk has been outlawed due to its African American roots and argued by Harrison (1996) that the outlawing is a form of racism which denies the worth of a cultural practice. Furthermore, Eassom (as cited by Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1994), noted that name calling or trash talking is only what we make of it; the athletes learns how to “not listen”, to tune out the trash talking that occurs within sport. Such analyses of trash talk in sport enable critics to

refer to morality regarding the behavior and language involved in trash talk and its effect on the environment.

According to Kretchmar (1995), human beings develop moral callouses around our hearts like we do on our hands. As callouses become so hardened on our hands that we are prevented from feeling what we touch, likewise, moral callouses around our hearts keep us from feeling ethical right or wrong. Similar to the commentary surrounding trash talk, Kretchmar (1995) states that callouses come with symptoms such as: “everyone else is doing it”, if no harm is done or no rule is caught broken, it is okay; problems distinguishing rules; as well as difficulty in understanding the difference between strategy and moral trickery (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1994). Philosophically, the callousness allegedly caused by trash talk is an example of how situational ethics is applied to sport. Situational ethics suggests that every ethical and moral decision is made on the spot, with no consistency between acts. Behaviors are justified by stating that nonmoral values such as money or winning, outweigh moral values such as respect (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1994). In this case, critics believe that the money and fame which accompanies winning in modern American sport causes athletes in competitive sport to disregard their moral values. Within the moral analysis of trash talk, one must consider the intent of the action. However, intent is often misinterpreted between members of different cultural backgrounds within modern American society. This misinterpretation of trash talk is displayed by media portrayals of sport in America.

In the early 1990s, most media portrayals assumed that trash talk is a unique practice among athletes, posing a serious threat to the future of organized competitive sport as it undermines the sense of sportsmanship which serves as the basis of regulatory rules. Media constructions resemble the phenomenon of a moral panic, as trash talk is portrayed as symptomatic of the decline of civilization (Bruning, 1994). Influencing the moral panic,

coaching journals routinely recommend that coaches take immediate action to stop trash talking young athletes (Schipper, 1994; Staffo, 1996). Therefore, specific attention has been placed on how younger athletes have copied their trash talking professional heroes (Taylor, 1995).

However, no grounded, empirical research on the role of trash talking in competitive sport appears to exist – perhaps because of its place in the Black community. In an observational study, observing boy's basketball players at a school in suburbia Philadelphia, PA, Eveslage and Delaney (1998) identified trash talk as “insult talk”. Additionally, three distinct forms of insult talk were observed- trash talking on the court, playing the dozens among teammates, and motivational talk from the coach. The three forms of insult talk have common traits, despite only one fitting with the restrictive definition of trash talk; they continuously stress and establish hierarchies; they involve personal insults or put-downs, often as calls to defend masculinity and honor; and they often degrade objects defined as feminine (Eveslage & Delaney, 1998). Such discourse has been linked to male-dominated settings such as the shop floor (Collinson, 1995), fraternities (Boswell & Spade, 1996), locker rooms (Curry, 1991), suburban little leagues (Fine, 1987), and the corporate office (Cohn, 1993). The general themes within these settings highlight the relationship between trash talk in sport and other discourses.

Media representations of sport, including commercial advertising, present an ongoing narrative of the larger meaning of sport in American society. With such attention placed on sport in modern American society, the narrow definition of trash talk is vivid during competition. In fact, trash talk has become a leading part of the relationship between the media and sport (Boyd, 1997). Michael Jordan's infamous tongue wag following a spectacular drive to the basket or Dikembe Mutombo's notorious finger wag following a

defeating rejection at the basketball hoop are considered trash talk. According to observations, trash talk is intended to deride an opponent's skill in many fashions: emphasizing the opponent's weakness: "Your sorry ass can't stop me!", some in a misogynist manner: "Used you like a bitch!", very often in an aggressive manner: "J in your eye" (making a jumpshot directly over your opponent), some trash talk refers to claiming turf: "My ball!", while others are simply mildly humorous put-downs: "Call 911, there's been a robbery" (after making a steal in basketball) (Eveslage & Delaney, 1998). These verbal interactions are executed in a very short period of time. Such in-competition trash talk, or insult talk, is not required nor contagious, however, findings support that competition heightens insult talk. When the competitive hierarchy is in doubt, insult talk increases, when players feel secure in their position it subsides (Eveslage & Delaney, 1998; Curry, 1991).

Sociological research has shown that in all-male, highly competitive settings with high insecurity levels, insult talk dominates (Bissinger, 1990; Raphael, 1988). Power is often essential in understanding the specific form these discourses take (Lyman, 1995). The fraternal bond between male athletes is established through misogynist and homophobic talk as boys learn that rejecting the feminine is an integral portion of defining masculinity (Curry, 1991). Many scholars have documented that sport affirms a "hegemonic masculinity" entrenched in competition, hierarchy, and status (Boyle & McKay, 1995; Sabo & Messner, 1990; Schact, 1996). Young athletes absorb lessons from the structural arrangement of sport. Such arrangement includes a clear dichotomy between winners and losers, the supreme value of abstract rules over interpersonal relationships, and the primacy and importance of predominantly single-sex settings (Lenskyj, 1990). In sport, boys are trained to control and suppress their emotions as they are under great pressure to win. As a result, competitive sport is primed for the existence of trash talking.



In analysis of the influences of sport and trash talk on American society, one must consider the integration of African Americans in sport. According to Bruning (1994), the prominent theory for the increase of trash talk in the 1990s is that African American athletes recruited from poor, inner-city neighborhoods have brought a “macho street culture” to the arenas of mainstream America. Such explanations mirror the demonization of African American exponents of “gangsta rap” (Boyd, 1997; Rose, 1994). Critiques of both, trash talk and gangsta rap, assume that these discourses emerge in isolation cultures unaffected by mainstream values. Like music, trash talk derives from African American linguistic styles like “woofing”, “bragging”, “marking”, and playing the dozens. These linguistic styles can be interpreted as creative outlets for those living in a racist culture (Goodwin, 1990; Kochman T. , 1981; Mahiri, 1991). Trash talk, like playing the dozens, can be used as a way of learning to stay cool under pressure (Majors & Billson, 1992). Gates (1988) argues that these practices are more than just a matter of style; they are part of the larger vernacular tradition of signification, which incorporates an element of misdirection. Signification is a crucial and creative way of dealing with a lack of power (Gates Jr., 1988). According to Eveslage and Delaney (1998), race is important in understanding trash talking as one response to feelings of relative powerlessness.

### **Trash Talk and Gamesmanship**

Scholars classify trash talk under what is termed gamesmanship (Dixon, 2007). Gamesmanship is the antithetical to the notion of sportsmanship and the essence of the sporting contest. Gamesmanship can be divided into two cases- weak and strong. The stronger forms are to be discouraged and actually suggest a failure on the part of the gamer or talker to engage properly in the contest as a mutual challenge. These stronger cases seem to be a rejection of it in favor of viewing winning as the sole indicator of success. The weaker

forms of gamesmanship are considered strategies that not only challenge the recipient but also make the gamer or talker a better player (Howe, 2004). According to Summers (2007), the weaker forms of gamesmanship are considered “competitive skill”; actions falling under its designation are intended to affect the outcome of play, and as long as they are within the rules of play, they should be allowed.

A verbal challenge intended to get the opponent to perform better may instead make he/she realize that h/she is not playing well as they should, having the possibility of enabling the competitor to go into a greater slump. On the other hand, many players use attempts to demoralize them as fuel to excel in performance. As a competitive skill, trash talking is largely a question of timing. Trash talk while play is not in play is not considered a competitive skill. However, trash talking during the time of play under the constitutive rules, is a very handy strategy for breaking concentration, undermining determination, and distracting one from the gameplan. Concentration, determination, and strategy are clear examples of competitive skills that are open to being challenged in the course of competition. If trash talking is a method of defending a determined opponent or testing one’s ability to fully challenge the opposition by breaking down that determination, then a skillful competitor may wish to develop that skill. Such focus or determination results in the more holistic concept of better competitor rather than the better athlete. According to this view of competition, what is being tested at the highest levels sport is which team is more skillful at achieving the goal of the sport in question, and the goal of competitive sport is winning. Therefore, the manner in which the competitor counters the trash talk is optional. Such trash talk is not out of bounds of play by virtue of being antithetical to the notion of competition as some traditional accounts of sport would contend (Summers, 2007). According to Summers (2007), trash talk should be understood as a test of the opponent’s mental commitment to the

contest at hand. Furthermore, Summers (2007) states that trash talk should be engaged in in order to make sure that one is getting the challenge one deserves. Therefore, trash talk serves as an act of positive good sportsmanship, by which benevolent athletes coax their rivals to play to their best of their ability to ensure that both teams or individuals display the maximum amount of athletic excellence.

The basis of regulatory rules, specifically sportsmanship rules in sport, evolves around the moral value of respect. However, Summers (2007) argues that trash talk is not necessarily disrespectful. The use of trash talk is motivated by respect for the opponent's ability, a legitimate test of the nature of the challenge the opponent presents (Howe, 2004). When opponents are of equal athletic skill, what differentiates between the two are the competitive skills. When used and understood in this manner, trash talk is a token of respect for or recognition of the opponent's ability, not an ethically impermissible treatment of the opponent as a mere obstacle to be overcome (Summers, 2007).

Though trash talk has become imminent in the competitive atmosphere of sport, it is not a required competitive skill. Trash talk is a skill developed as one facet of the individual's competitive spirit, a stylistic choice for how to challenge an opponent. While it is a skill largely peripheral to evaluations of competitors, it is an appropriate skill in some cases. Trash talk is not an inherently unsportsmanship behavior, except under the conceptions of sportsmanship that are flawed for modern competitive sport. Any lingering unease about trash talk is a result of unease over the questionable motives and content of many instances of trash talk (Summers, 2007). The motives of such trash talk are considered questionable when interpretations are mixed. This confusion is due to the conflicts between black and white America.

### **Discrimination Against African American Athletes**

In modern American sport, competitive fields figuratively serve as a battlefield for the clash of cultures in addition to the passionate competition between groups of competitors in sport. This clash is between opponents with different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, trash talk is the derivative of the dozens in its modern form within competitive sport. The debate over trash talk presents the cultural battle between white and black America. To further analyze the trash talk debate, the big ticket revenue sports in modern America, basketball and football, are dominated by African American athletes. Therefore, this debate pits the African American athletes against the sportsmanship rules of sport. This analysis presents the dilemma that surrounds signification, the dozens, and trash talk as well.

The behaviors and attitudes of white America often clash with the adaptive patterns of behavior of those in black America (Folb E. , 1990). Acts by children and adolescents are misunderstood and reprimanded because they are not quite right, not quite “white” (Foster, 1995; Kochman T. , 1981). Coolness and stylistic improvisation in speech or movement, among other black masculine response to harsh living conditions, have been misinterpreted in classrooms, the work place, and the sporting field (Andrews V. L., 1996; Dyson, 1993; Fiske, 1993; George, 1992). A subject in a study administered by Andrews (1997), provides supportive testimony regarding celebratory expression and trash talk:

The majority of black kids that are playing are from the inner cities, and I think that expression comes from maybe some of the things that they’ve experienced. Maybe theyre a little more happy to be out of the situation than other kids are...I’m away from the violence, and I don’t have to worry about somebody popping their cap [gun] in me. So maybe I’m a little happier when something goes

right for me on the field, so that causes me to express myself more than others...You've come a little longer way than someone else.

The same subject then goes on to make the distinction of family differences in behavior norms:

...it depends on what you were raised to believe is good and what's bad, or what's acceptable in your family or not acceptable. Maybe some families would think it would be outrageous to dance or something. They might think that's embarrassing. But my family wouldn't think that way, they'd say "he's having fun out there. He's doing what he likes to do (Andrews V. , 1997).

This description presents conflicts between black and white America in sport. This conflict is not unknown. Players, coaches, and spectators are very aware of the differences expression between the cultures withing sport.

In the same study (Andrews V. , 1997), a subject cites aggression as a primary way of white expression and physical talent a key factor in the black movement in sport.

You can separate the black athletes from the white athletes as far as their mentality and their emotions...it's hard to explain...it's just the physical appearance and the way they move...it's the style, I'll put it like that. It's the style ...the black athletes have a lot of aggression...and that's what separates them.

Such description of the differences of expression between white and black America vaguely explains the mystery of the trash talk debate. In reference to sport in predominantly African American neighborhoods, such as East Oakland, CA, Andrews (1996) states that sports is not about winning or losing, but how you played the game. Andrews (1996) explores sociological aspects as to why black athletes' expression in sport is common.

While white athletes participate in trash talk with angry intentions, black athletes seek benefits in many aspects from participating in trash talk. Though trash talk may appear to be malicious when received from black athletes, no research has supported immoral intent when participating in trash talk. For black athletes, there is something about being on stage that African Americans are familiar with because they are always on an esteem-seeking stage in modern American society. In modern American society, African Americans are forced to act like they know what they are doing, where they are going, and how they getting there, while looking good. Socially, this is very true for African Americans when traveling from section to section of town that are unfamiliar (Andrews V. L., 1996).

Such reasoning for trash talk in sport is considerable, however, it appears to be fear based. Though the exterior fear-reaction has played a role in black vernacular tradition, the environment is a major component of the variable mix, and reactions to internal city conflict and the use of posturing and other self-presentation tactics (Goffman, 1959) are only one side of the many-faceted cultural dynamic. In an attempt to describe such expression, Majors and Billson (1992) create the phrase, Cool pose, a carefully crafted persona based on power and control over what the black male says and does, how he plays his role. For black males, who have limited control or access to conventional power or resources, cool pose is empowering (Majors & Billson, 1992). Power over one's self is the most important form of power, particularly in an environment where manipulation and control over others have been raised to the level of a fine art, where contest and game playing are often the rule, not the exception (Folb E. A., 1980).

Many African American males have a knowledge of expression that is often peppered with verve, rhythm, improvisation and individualistic style, even within the context of team (Dyson, 1993; Kochman T. , 1981). The variation of the extent of this knowledge differs

between each individual, for some not allowing as much celebration or individuality in a team context. White athletes, likewise have knowledges of expression, occasionally overlapping with black knowledges. However, white knowledges often conflict black knowledges. A knowledge often struggles to repress, evade or deligitimate other knowledges (Fiske, 1993). In sport, a macro-social culture, knowledge serves the cultural interests, both materially and politically, of the social formation that produces knowledge, and resulting the effectiveness is likely in direct proportion to the power of the interests behind the knowledge (Andrews V. L., 1996). Power, then, produces a knowledge which is disguised as truth (Foucault, 1972). The truths struggle to repress, evade or deligitimate other knowledges (Andrews V. L., 1996).

Such truths were established by critics, often those in power who were members of white America, with intentions stifle certain types of expression, trash talk included. Such expressions include the first endzone celebratory expression in Elmo Wright's (Kansas City Chiefs) high-knee dance, which followed Muhammad Ali's verbal and physical behavior in the mid 1960s, and the raised fists of Tommy Smith and John Carlos in the 1968 Mexico Olympics. All are historical examples of black expression in sport (Andrews V. L., 1996). Such expressions have been interpreted as black resistance. Trash talk has been linked to black resistance. Such resistance extends beyond sport, for sport behavior can never be disconnected from the larger society of which it is part (Eitzen S. D., 1984). The current racial dynamic of American society mirrors the continuing conflicts between white and black America, often focused on expressive behavior such as clothing, hair styles, facial hair, speaking styles, enunciation, and even the loudness of African Americans.

### **Return to the Fab Five**

The treatment of the University of Michigan Fab Five serves as a vivid example such conflicts. In one instance during the 1993 NCAA Men's Basketball final game, Chris Webber, the dominant center for the Michigan Fab Five, stole the ball during a competition which concluded with Webber slamming the ball into the basket, pulling himself up on the rim for a few seconds. As he glanced down and ecstatically drops to his feet, the announcer promptly said "Webber should have received a technical foul for hanging on the rim!" Webber, in his own way, may have been attempting to express himself during the momentary victory to fire his team up to play with more intensity. Webber and his teammates had been the target of writers and announcers who derided their expressive behavior and style of play, their bald heads, their long trunks, and their black shoes. Such critiques generally categorized the team as being too showboaty and hot-doggish on the court. During the post game highlights following the University of Michigan's Men's basketball team's second consecutive loss in the NCAA championship game, Keith Olberman (1993) states:

Webber failed to remember his team had no time-outs remaining and was thus penalized with a technical foul, thus losing the ball and the game by four points.

Michigan played all this year with that in-your-face style and they got caught on a little fundamental. It's kind of a morality play, if you believe in that sort of thing.

Olberman's (1993) remarks essentially states that bad behavior is punished with bad results. No bad individual deed or team goes unpunished. Morality takes care of that. This commentary and opinion of the white announcer, Olberman, on slam dunking is one specific knowledge of sports.

Such knowledges are discourse in action. Race and culture often serve as the foundation for knowledges of social phenomena, therefore of discourse they are the bed rock



criteria for what is said and not said. Sports discourse, like discourse in general, is never neutral or objective. Sports discourse's work of production and repression is always politically active in specific social conditions, becoming a terrain of struggle: discourse is always a matter of contestation (Fiske, 1993). Knowledge is activated socially through discourse and discourse circulates knowledge and carries its power into a variety of social situations. Observers of sport are bombarded with the discursive views of sport announcers, executives, and aficionados. These individuals walk into sport arenas with their respective political, social, and historical consciousnesses, a knowledge of sport, and a knowledge of appropriate behavior by athletes. The messages presented by these individuals about what is appropriate and not appropriate in sport constitute a specific discourse. Sports media discourse is typically allied with those in power whom they attempt to control the sport in whatever way they choose.

This discourse can be considered the catalyst for the misinterpretation of black linguistics in modern American society. Due to this misinterpretation, some African Americans have chosen to use the stylistic linguistics in a code-like manner. Most commonly, black athletes participate in such code of conduct. The player's code of conduct by black athletes is that psychological warfare must at some level be countered on the field. The counter seems to depend on personal motivation that appears to be demonstrated psychologically, verbally, or physically (Andrews V. , 1997). A portion of this code provides leeway for pure excitement and joy. In sport, there are too many other things besides celebration rules to worry about on the playing field, after big plays when adrenaline flows, expressions of happiness and joy should be tolerated.

Critics of trash talk have acknowledged the psychological qualities associated with trash talk, many maintain the argument that trash talk is immoral. Apologists for trash talk

have appealed to the ethos of sport, focusing on the fact that the athletic community itself accepts it as a strategic ploy that does not convey the insulting message that it carries in other contexts. Additionally, trash talk apologists believe it is justified because it is not only consistent with but actually enhances one of the main goals of athletic competition: testing athletic excellence (Dixon, Trash talking as irrelevant to athletic excellence: Response to Summers, 2008). In response, Dixon (2008) states although psychological qualities such as coolness under pressure are essential components of athletic excellence, the ability to use trash talking to disturb opponents' concentration and to resist their attempts to disturb ours is extraneous to the qualities that sport is designed to test. Such response is under the pretence of defining trash talking as verbal insults and intimidation, designed to gain a competitive advantage (Dixon, 2007; Dixon, Trash talking, respect for opponents and good competition, 2007; Dixon, Trash talking, respect for opponents and good competition, 2007).

Under such circumstances, trash talk critics believe that trash talkers depict the world of sport as a whimsical, playful zone in which the moral prohibitions that apply in other contexts, such as condemnation of abusive language, do not hold. To counter, critics of trash talk approach their judgemental moral evaluations considering the constitutive rules of sport in comparison to the civilian laws of the U.S. As a result of this approach, support or justification of trash talk undermines the claim that sport helps build character. In fact, critics of trash talk believe that using trash talk as a competitive skill exemplifies a pernicious "winning-at-all-costs" mentality (2008).

When analyzed under the pretence that winning is the only goal, trash talk can be considered destructive. To counter Summers' (Summers, 2007) competitive skill argument, Dixon (2008) argues that the clear goal of demoralizing opponents is to reduce the level of their play, not improve it. The use of trash talking in elite sport is considered destructive trash

talking, causing mental disintegration. Such disintegration causes a decrease in the opponent's effectiveness, increasing the chances of winning for the one trash talking. Therefore, despite the potential for trash talking to actually improve the opponent's performance, the intent to gain a competitive edge over the opponents through trash talk can be considered ethically wrong.

The moral and ethical review of trash talk from critics uses Kantian ethics as supportive evidence regarding the moral value, respect, which is the value being violated. In the review of trash talk, critics attempt to disregard whether offence should be a factor considered, as there are many athletes who do not participate in trash talk yet are subject to trash talk but are not offended by the insults. According to Dixon (2007), even if trash talkers genuinely believe that their opponents will not be offended at the trash talking which can be a strategic ploy, a lack of intent to offend does not necessarily absolve people from blame for the offence that they cause. For reasons being, according to critics, the use of such language off the playing would have such results as angry confrontation, lost friendships, and fist fights. Outside sport modern American society considers such verbal assaults to be demeaning, insulting and morally reprehensible. As we subject people to legal punishment on the grounds of recklessness and negligence, neither of which involves intention to harm others, criticising them for actions that unintentionally but predictably offend others serves as the argument for critics of trash talking.

Kantian ethics contains no clause that permits one to treat others as mere means, objects to be overcome by causing them psychological distress, as long as we have done so only temporarily. However, if trash talking is inherently wrong, its wrongness is not dissipated by the victim's acquiescence. According to Dixon (2007), the inherent wrongness of trash talking resides in the fact that it demeans and disrespects opponents, even when the

opponent is not offended by it. However, according to Herrera (2004), trash talkers assign a different significance to their words than do people who utter the same phrases in genuine acrimony outside sport. In the specific context of an athletic contest, words that we normally construe as insulting are understood by participants to be strategic ploys that are devoid of disrespectful intent.

Within the debate around trash talking, supporters of trash talking advocate for the athlete. Athletes seek optimal environments which assist in creating the best performance possible. Often times in elite competitive sport, the ability to psychologically prepare and adapt in competition is directly correlated with the ability to participate in the constant physical and verbal interaction between opponents and teammates. On the other hand, critics are seeking to maintain the ethical disposition of sport under regulatory and sportsmanship rules established by the founder of the sport respectively. These founders established such rules considering the cultures of those participating in the sport. At the juncture in which most rules were created, particularly those regulating the behavior of the participants, the ethnical make-up of the participants were greatly favored those of caucasian background. These rules also favored those who were members of the elite social class, the class that had the exclusive access to the necessary facility and equipment needed to participate.

Like white America's perspective on the dozens, hip-hop, and other black vernacular traditions linked to urban America, trash talk is viewed as inappropriate behavior which negatively effects the environment and those who are in it. According the Dixon (2007), trash talk not only disrespects opponents and interferes with good athletic competition. He believes trash talk also harms trash talkers themselves, by inhibiting their athletic development, since it may allow them to achieve victory without maximizing their skill and legitimate strategy. Perhaps if trash talking was not permitted, athletes would achieve victory by means of skill,

effort, and strategy alone, without insulting opponents (2007). In her comments about gamemanship, Leslie Howe (2004) displays the perspective of the white sport rules makers and white America.

If you can get your opponent to cave mentally, you don't get pushed as hard as you might. This lessens the competitive situation and your own opportunities for improvement and achievement, whether on that day or in the future.

Howe (2004) continues to describe trash talk as an indicator of lack of self-respect, mirroring the lack of respect shown towards opponents.

If you have to taunt or physically intimidate your opponent in order to win, if you need to make him small, it suggests a lack in you, specifically, a lack of confidence or self-respect, and possibly of the necessary skills well – after all, can't you beat him on your own?

Such commentary surrounding trash talk in sport exemplifies the cultural disconnect white and black America has in modern American society. White America uses a Kantian injunction against treating opponents merely as objects to be overcome is sufficient to condemn trash talk which they have categorized as verbal abuse. Scholars in black America justify trash talking as a strategic ploy that implies no disrespect. Scholars in white America claim that this claim is disingenuous as the strategic ploy's effectiveness relies on the opponent's being offended by the insults. Critics from white America refuse to support the ideal that trash talk enhances the goal of athletic competition, as the ability to trash talk is extraneous to the athletic excellence that contests are designed to measure. With few exceptions, modern American society judges actions in sport by the same moral standards that we use in any other context. The view that neither trash talking nor other actions in sport are fit subjects for strict moral scrutiny is inconsistent with the often heard claim that sport

promotes moral development (Dixon, 2007). Such view brings pause for an evaluation of regulatory and sportsmanship rules in sport.

### **Regulatory and Sportsmanship Rules of Sport**

The philosophical anthropology of regulatory and sportsmanship rules of sport are based on the ideals of Olympism which translated in the old English sport model. These ideals include but are not limited to 1) individual all round harmonious development, 2) progress towards excellence and achievement, 3) through effort in competitive sporting activity, 4) under conditions of mutual respect, fairness, justice, and equality, 5) with a view to creating lasting personal human relationships of friendship; 6) relationships of peace, toleration, and understanding; and 7) cultural alliances with the arts (Parry, 2012). The values established under these ideals support the definition of competition, focusing on the pursuit of personal excellence while respecting all participants. Though competition requires a winner and loser, the ultimate goal under the English model is create and cultivate positive human relationships. However, as competitive sport intensified through the evolution of the New World, regulatory and sportsmanship rules maintained stagnant under the ideals of Olympism. This stagnation, in conjunction with integration of African American culture, enforced rules that ultimately created voids within the cultural alliances developed through sport.

According to Kretchmar (1995), athletes are exposed to a socialization process in which they are exhorted by parents, coaches, and fans to win at all costs. As a result, the athletes develop moral callouses that cause them to become inured and unable to consider the harmful nature of their competitive style. To combat the moral callousness associated with trash talk, along with influencing the situational ethics within competitive sport, rules are implemented during competition. Prior to examining the rules of sport, we must explore the

elements of sport as rules are one element of sport. Games in competitive sport are goal-directed, rule-governed activities which involve choice. Ends and means are two elements of games, rules being the third element of games. Additionally, the attitudes of the participants in the game must be considered, making the game-players' attitudes the fourth element of competitive games; without attitude, playing a game is not possible. Bernard Suits (1988) calls this attitude the lusory attitude. The lusory attitude is the element which unifies the other elements of games. They form a single formula which successfully states the necessary and sufficient conditions for any activity to be an instance of game-playing. Abiding by the formula, the elements of games are (1) the goal, (2) means for achieving the goal, (3) rules, and (4) lusory attitude (Suits, 1988).

The goal can be broken down into three distinguishable goals. In a competitive basketball game, a competitor could say (1) that their purpose is to participate in a competitive basketball game, or (2) that their purpose is to win the game, or (3) that their purpose is to accumulate better statistics than all other contestants (Suits, 1988). There must be this triplet of goals in games will be accounted for by the way in which lusory attitude is related to rules and means. The simplest of the three goals is to win the game, being that the other two goals presuppose it, and it does not presuppose either of the other two. The other two goals, considered compounded components, can be defined only after the disclosure of additional elements.

The simplest goal, winning the game, is at issue. The issue is that the goal does not describe how one will win the game. Such goal is described as a specific achievable state of affairs (Suits, 1988). By omitting to say how the state of affairs in question is to be brought about, it avoids confusion between this goal and the goal of winning. Furthermore, since any achievable state of affairs whatever could, with sufficient ingenuity, be made the goal of the

game, the description does not include too much. Such goal has been coined the pre-lusory goal of the game. The pre-lusory goal of the game can be described before or independently of any game of which it may be, or come to be, a part. On the other hand, the goal of winning can be described only in terms of the game in which it figures and winning may be called the lusory goal of a game. Additionally, the goal of participating in the game is not strictly seeking to be a part of the game at all. The goal of participating in the game can be compared to simple goals not associated with sport, such as wealth, glory, or security (Suits, 1988).

Following the distinction of the pre-lusory and lusory goals of the game, one must establish the means, the second element of games, to achieving the goal of the game. Like the goal of the game, there are multiple interpretations of the means of the game; specifically, there are two interpretations, the means for winning the game or the means for achieving the pre-lusory goal. In games, we are interested only in means which we are permitted for winning, called lusory means. Lusory means are means which are permitted, legal and legitimate, in an attempt to achieve pre-lusory goals. Thus, a basketball player may use their upper extremities, but not their lower extremities, in their efforts to achieve that state of affairs wherein the ball is in the basket. A player who does not confine himself to lusory means may not be said to win, despite achieving the pre-lusory goal. Therefore, achievement of the lusory goal, winning, requires that the player confine himself to lusory means, so that confinement to lusory means is necessary condition for winning (Suits, 1988). It is important to note that the lusory means is not sufficient means to win.

Like goals and means, there are multiple types of rules in sport-constitutive, proscriptive, and sportsmanship rules. The rules of a game are proscriptions of certain means useful in achieving pre-lusory goals (Suits, 1988). Constitutive rules guide play within in a specific game. Such rules were established to monitor and control the level of competition



within a game, maintaining the fair playing ground. Constitutive rules govern areas such as length of the game, number of players, eligibility of the participants, and the need to be able to compare team and individual accomplishments. These rules specify to all players what actions are permissible during games. Beyond providing descriptive boundaries on what is permissible during games, constitutive rules also place limitation on players' behaviors, constraining behaviors to those deemed appropriate to the sport and the specific action taking place. Such rules govern in-game fouls which are applied towards impermissible touching, hitting, and holding. More severe violations or an accumulation of moderate fouls may result in disqualification. Disregard for these rules out of ignorance or blatant antipathy to gain advantages, violence occurs, frequently in retaliation for perceived intent to harm or to gain an unfair advantage (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1994).

Furthermore, proscriptive rules operate within the area circumscribed by constitutive rules (Suits, 1988). Proscriptive rules forbid specific actions, such as spearing in football and undercutting in basketball, due to the high risk of injury. One cannot ignore the violent nature associate with many specific sports. Success in some sports may be predicated on the utilization of one's body and equipment as weapons against opponents, often resulting in pain, serious injury, and unfortunately sometimes in death. In an attempt to control such actions, proscriptive rules were established to prohibit players from intentionally trying to harm opponents. Such rules were enacted in response to stick-wielding hockey players, pitchers throwing at batters' heads, and offensive linemen using chop blocks in football. Beyond the field of play, some proscriptive rules exist to prevent interference from governmental authorities (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1994). To break a proscriptive rule is usually to fail to play the game well, as to breaking a constitutive rule is to fail to play the game at all (Suits, 1988).

The third type of rule, sportsmanship rules, refers to the inherent quality in playing a game in which is honor bound to follow the spirit and letter of the rules. Sportsmanship rules preclude behaviors that place winning above everything else in sport, including opponents' welfare and competition between equitable opponents. Such rules are designed to prevent ethically questionable and sometime violent conduct (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1994). Sportsmanship rules serve as the moral compass of sport; they monitor and govern the ethical conduct in sport. Sportsmanship rules are in place in attempt to uphold the "sport builds character" notion which is the steadfast belief among sport advocates.

Key assumptions of this notion are that competitive sport nurtures societal values such as hard work and cooperation, providing a context where virtues such as teamwork, team loyalty, and persevering over adversity flourish (Bredemeier B. J., 1999). Studies have concluded that a competitive youth sport context may be beneficial to psychosocial and moral development by allowing children to create and refine peer status, develop self-worth, exhibit moral behavior, and influence peer acceptance (Evans & Roberts, 1987; Fox, 1988; Roberts & Treasure, 1995). However, evidence suggests that competitive sport may have a negative influence on character development (Coakley, 1990). Competition may produce moral problems (Orlick, 1978), reduce pro-social behavior (Kleiber & Roberts, 1981), supports anti-social behavior (Kohn, 1986). Sportpersonship has been the most cited character virtue needed to be fostered in sport participation to oppose such moral problems (Bredemeier & Shields, 1995).

Bredemeier and Shields (1995) describe sportpersonship as the coordination of one's play impulse with one's competitive impulse with respect to moral goals. Vallerand et al. (1996) developed an operational definition of sportpersonship, which incorporates five distinct components: (1) full commitment toward sport participation, (2) respect for social

conventions, (3) respect and concern for the rules and officials, (4) respect and concern for one's opponent, and (5) negative approach toward sportspersonship. This concept is based on the premise that a meaningful definition of sportspersonship should encompass several dimensions, which together represent the nature of sportspersonship as perceived by athletes themselves (Vallerand et al., 1996). The five components of this definition of sportspersonship highly reflects upon the ethics or rules of sportsmanship in sport based on the latent traits of the construct of character, respect and integrity.

Respect is to feel or show deferential regard for others (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2016). It is the regard for the fundamental worth and dignity of every human being (Marrella, 2001). Many refer to respect as "the golden rule" (Doty, 2006). Lawrence-Lightfoot (2000) states:

Respect is not something one can imitate, but something one must embody... a person has a disposition to act with respect, it is only in the individual acts of respect that the quality becomes actual... respect is maintained by the respectful acts of individuals.

These definitions include respect for teammates, opponents, fans, coaches, and referees. Fraleigh (1994), McNamne and Parry (1998), and Shea (1996) pose that respect in sports primarily means how an athlete approaches both the game and their opponent. A lack of respect would be "treating one's opponent as a mere means to the goal of victory... the objectification of opponents" (Fraleigh, 1994).

Integrity refers to doing what is right in word and deed (Doty, 2006). Integrity is a steadfast adherence to a strict moral or ethical code (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2016). Therefore, if a person is doing and/or saying what is right, they are acting with integrity. This definition includes, but is not limited to, not lying, cheating, or stealing. Integrity entails a sense of duty or doing what an individual is responsible to do. Delettire (1971) states:

Competing, winning, and losing, in athletics, are intelligible only within the framework of rules which define a specific competitive sport. A person may compete at a game or cheat at it, but it is so logically impossible for him to do both. To cheat is to cease to compete. It is for this reason that cheaters are the greatest failures of all in competitive athletics, not because of any considerations of winning or failing to do so, but because they fail even to compete.

Contests could not be played if there were not a fundamental expectation that the participants would follow the rules and regulations that govern sport. Such expectations are expressed and monitored through sportsmanship rules.

Though regulatory rules involve ethics, in order to enforce sportsmanship rules, one must understand the nature of ethics. According to Frankena (1973), ethics involves thinking about morality or moral problems. Morality is essentially concerned with how our actions, motives, and intentions affect other people (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1994). Evaluating morality requires an understanding of the intentions behind the action (Bredemeier & Shields, 1995). Actions with harmful intent violate morality (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1994). Therefore, ethics involves reasoning about the rightness or wrongness of one's actions or how one ought to act in order to avoid others (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 1996; Morgan, Meier, & Schneider, 2001). This reasoning process is referred to as moral reasoning, which importantly, will be affected by what one values: the moral or the nonmoral (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1994). Moral values are those values involving actions, motives, and intentions towards other people (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 2003). Therefore, moral values are critical to human relationships and when violated may likely cause harm (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1994). Thus, ethical situations arise when harm may come to another individual as a result of

violating a moral value. Moral values include honesty, justice, beneficence, and responsibility (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1994).

In contrast to moral values, nonmoral values are based on things that have an extrinsic quality such as money, power, fame, and winning (Frankena, 1973; Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1994). Nonmoral values, alone, do not have a moral quality because they are merely things. However, what one does to obtain a particular nonmoral value may induce an ethical problem and the use of moral reasoning. For example, the extent that an athlete values winning may impact whether or not the athlete will play fairly or respect their opponent. Furthermore, the athlete may value winning to the point that they will cheat to win or perhaps bring harm to their opponent. In sport, such scenarios also refer to sport spectators (Rudd, *Sport spectator behavior as a moral issue in college sport*, 2017).

Considering moral and nonmoral values, Rudd and Stoll (1998) posited that sportsmanship includes the moral values of responsibility, fairness, and the respect for one's opponent. Clifford and Feezell (1997) suggest that sportsmanship is "excellence of character" with the moral value of respect at its core. Arnold (1984) proposed a multidimensional view of sportsmanship, including amicability (social union view), generosity and magnanimity (pleasure view), and compassion (altruistic view). Ultimately, such view suggests that sportsmanship is the display of virtuous behavior. Furthermore, the notion of sportsmanship supports the idea that there is morality in sport. Without sportsmanship, the ethos of sport becomes purely about winning and achieving this goal by any means necessary, breeding a "winning at all costs" culture.

Arnold (1992) suggests that the "winning at all costs" model is the byproduct of the "sociological view of sport" in which the purpose of competition is to achieve a variety of extrinsic goals such as winning, money, fame, and prestige. To counter such ethos in sport,

Arnold (1992) presents an alternative view; Sport may be considered as a culturally valued human practice much like other valued human practices such as medicine, engineering, farming, or architecture. When sport is viewed as a valued human practice, each competitor considers themselves as a member of that particular sport. As a member, one willingly agrees to be measured and evaluated in accordance to the particular rules and standards of excellence within a given sport. Sport is then pursued for the sake of participating and attempting to achieve the internal goals of sports rather than for extrinsic rewards (Arnold, 1992). Arnold (1992) states:

Furthermore, every practice if it is to remain true to itself and not be corrupted by influences or pressures external to it, requires a certain kind of relationship between those who participate in it, whether they like one another or not, or whether, as in many instances of sport, they find themselves opposed to one another in competitions. Unless the participants in a practice see one another with respect and as being common guardians of the values inherent in the practice they are pursuing, the practice itself is like to suffer and perhaps fall victim to the unprincipled and the unscrupulous.

Therefore, in order to avoid the desire for extrinsic rewards and the winning at all costs mentality that may follow, the moral values of justice, honesty, and courage be fostered and intergrated into the ethos fo sport. Specifically, justice will establish fair treatment and play among competitors. Honesty will create a sense of trust between opponents and courage will generate the ability to risk harm to oneself when ite is necessary to uphold and protect internal goals and values that construct the practice of sport (Rudd, 2017).

According to Fraleigh (1982), sportsmanship is thought to be the “good sports contest”. The good sports contest can only occur when all athletic participants are able to

fairly contest one another, all competitors abiding by the rules of the given sport (Fraleigh, Why the good foul is not good, 1982). Therefore, when participants intentionally break rules to gain an advantage, a fair contest no longer exists and thus making it impossible to determine a legitimate winner. Supporting this theory, Pearson (1973) proposed that the purpose of an athletic contest is to test one's skills against their competitors in order to determine who is the more skilled individual or team. Athletic competitors compete unethically or unsportsmanlike when they intentionally defy the purpose of the athletic contest (Pearson, 1973).

Sportsmanship can be understood as fair play, honor, or ethics applied to the sporting realm. Sportsmanship as fair play is the idea that competitors should behave in a manner consistent with the spirit and norms of the game. Loland and McNamee (2000) states:

If voluntarily engaged in sporting games, keep the ethos of the game if the ethos is just and if it includes a proper appreciation of the internal goods and the attitude of playing to win.

The act of voluntarily agreeing to the ethos of a game, enables participants to proceed within sport using a honor code. Sportsmanship is part or all of the group's, the collective of competitors in question, honor code of competition (Sessions, 2004). This honor code of competition precludes all behavior considered unsportsmanlike on many levels, however, there is no obviously preclusion in professional sports and arguably in collegiate sports. In fact, it can be considered within the bounds of them. If the central goal of these levels of sport is to present a complete challenge to win, then it could be considered dishonorable not use every legal skill available to strive toward victory (Summers, 2007).

The notion of sportsmanship is that it is the the athlete who behaves ethically in pursuit of victory. Therefore, all behaviors defying sportsmanship rules is deemed unethical.

Unfortunately, such assumptions highlight the problem with generally understanding sportsmanship. Sportsmanship cannot be the simple application of ethics to sport (Summers, 2007). Ethically, actions necessary for success in specific sports can be deemed unethical when simple ethics are applied. For example, boxers must punch their opponent to achieve success and athletes who play football or rugby must inflict pain on their opponent's through tackling in order to be successful. In these cases, intent serves as the catalyst for determination of rightness. In the case of trash talking, one of the biggest violators of sportsmanship, it is deemed disrespectful to taunt an opponent. The content and intent are often opposed and that is the intent that should be considered when evaluating the disrespect. However, the intent cannot be interpreted when the dialect is misunderstood. This misunderstanding creates internal conflict between all constituents of sport, often centered around the enforcement of sportsmanship rules.

### **Where We are Today**

Modern American society has made general sense of the world by focusing on the implied deep structure and how it invisibly organizes categories and thus, social experiences. Structural categories such as black/white (racial structure in America), left wing/rightwing (political thinking), management/labor and salaried/hourly employees (workplace) have served as mental frames of reference that aid in understanding social reality (Fiske, 1993). Many sociologists and social psychologists have relied on binary theories, concepts, and categories of explanation. To detail such reliance, Kuhn (1970) states that normal science is to a great extent self-validating: it produces a world in which it is true. Therefore, the set up of structural categories has produced a world of social observation such that one or the other is more true.



As a result, regulations in modern American society often support the societal divide between the haves and the have-nots. According to Fiske (1993), the haves and have-nots are not objective social categories like the bourgeoisie and the proletariat or blacks and whites. They are mobile categories, formed to fit the conditions of their use and their user. Thus, in sports contexts, black athletes are the have-nots: laborers without power and without regulatory control over their cultural-specific brand (Andrews V. L., 1996). Such construction could be one of their own making or of the making of social scientists or fans observing racial and cultural dominance. However, the key to the opposition of the haves and the have-nots, just like the conflict between “them” and “us”, is that its categories are not stable and not structurally set, but mobile, strategically and tactically formed and dissolved according to the perceived exigencies of the issue involved and its situating conditions (Fiske, 1993).

A product of conflict between the haves and have-nots, in this case, African American athletes and members of the rules committees, is the formulation of social power blocs. The concept of social power blocs can help in understanding the subsequent political and power-related nature of decisions by people in certain social roles, as in the role of the NFL or NBA team owner. Gramsci (as cited by Hall, 1986) hypothesized the bloc as a welding together of different components for a specific purpose. The power bloc is strategic, multi-axial, often existing for a long period of time and often covering a wide set of issues. The most important component of the power bloc is the aspect of power over the group of people the bloc is dominating (Andrews V. L., 1996).

Access to the power bloc is solely determined upon the membership within the elite class of that society. In the sport context, the elite class consists of owners, executives, upper administration, rules committees, media members, and often times fans. Furthermore, the

members of the power bloc are more likely to be members of white America. The access to the power bloc provides privileges not granted to other members of the society. Fisk (1993) vividly expresses his theoretical assumptions about privileged access to power:

The power bloc, then, is not a social class, nor even a category of people. It is a disposition and exercise of power to which certain social formations, defined by class, race, gender, and ethnicity, have privileged access and which they can easily turn to their own economic and political interests.

Therefore, the power bloc does not oppose certain actions or behaviors unless it negatively affects their economic status. Furthermore, such opposition is not solidified as restrictions may be lifted if the behavior being prohibited benefits the members of the power bloc.

Perhaps, this is the reason why football celebrations by NFL players are recorded and used to promote NFL games and events yet are policed by sportsmanship rules.

Essentially, the conflict between trash talkers and sportsmanship rules is a racial contestation over bodies, over expressive behavior, over the rights and wrongs in modern American society, the good and bad, normative and non-normative, the powerful and the powerless. Wielded by the power bloc, power has regulatory control over all the other contestations. The instrument by which this power is used on the lives of others is via the “top-down” power “imperializing” the weak, as Great Britain imperialized its power over other less powerful nations and communities by sending ships out to all corners of the earth to ravage, overtake, and “civilize” the world. The English knew that their form and style of living was far superior, using their standards to construct the norms by which to normalize those who were abnormal (Andrews V. L., 1996). Contemporary delegating bodies in sport attempt to extend their normalizing power over the bodies of the athletes, specifically the dominant African American athletes. The goal of imperializing power is:

To extend its reach as far as possible- over physical reality, over human societies, over history, over consciousness. It strives constantly to extend the terrain over which it can exert its control extensively to outer space and the galaxy and intensively to people's most mundane thoughts and behaviors (Fiske, 1993).

According to Fiske (1993), there is resistance by the have-nots to this imperializing power. The have-nots use a localizing power whose main tactical purpose is not to expand terrain as much as it is to strengthen control over the immediate conditions of everyday life, which is the space the have-nots live and work and move within.

For athletes, the playing field is contested terrain. Localizing powers struggle to control identity, race, and cultural consciousness. In some instances, joy and resistance to the imperializing powers that be serve as motivation (Andrews V. L., 1996). In many cases, African American athletes earn a wealthy living from sport, however, the members of the power bloc earn much more from the bodies of these black athletes. The non-moral values such as money, fame, and stature should not justify rule-makers' denial of difference on the field of play. The sentiment within the enforcement of sportsmanships regarding trash talk mirrors the sentiment second class African Americans felt during World War II under Jim Crow status- you can fight for the United States of America, and even die for it, but you must remain subordinate and controlled.

This actuation forces those interested in making changes to this sentiment to evaluate the nature of their knowledge of expression and how it is attached to power. The term knowledge can be used in a plural sense as well. A knowledge of expression is a specific way of looking at expression, a perspective on expression helped by an individual or many. Knowledges of expression is the many specific ways of looking at expression taken together. Many African Americans have a knowledge of expression that is peppered with verve,

rhythm, improvisation, and individualistic style, even within a context of team sports (Dyson, 1993; Kochman T. , 1981). On the other hand, whites have knowledges of expression, occasionally overlapping with black knowledges. However, white knowledges often clash with black knowledges. According to Fiske (1993), a knowledge often struggles to repress, evade, or deligitimate other knowledges. In the macro-social, knowledge serves the cultural interests, materially and politically, of the social formation that produces the knowledge, and the resulting effectiveness is likely in direct proportion to the power of the interests behind the knowledge (Andrews V. L., 1996). Power, then, produces a knowledge which is disguised as truth (Foucault, 1972). These truths struggle to repress, evade, or deligitimate other knowledges.

### **Cultural Consideration and Sport**

Based on these truths, sportsmanship rules were established in sport intending to control the behavior of all players and coaches. However, all players and coaches possess their own knowledges about how one is to behave and communicate within sport. These knowledges preclude their attitudes in their approach to the game. This attitude represents the last element of games outlined by Suits (1988), which happens to be the one element of games in which many rules do not consider, the lusory attitude of a player. The attitude of the game player must be an element in game playing because there has to be an explanation of the curious state of affairs wherein one adopts rules which require them to employ worse rather than better means for reaching an end. Therefore, lusory attitude is the knowing acceptance of constitutive rules just so the activity made possible by such acceptance can occur. Normally in competitive sport, the acceptance of prohibitory rules is warranted on the grounds that the means rules out, although more efficient than the permitted means, have further undesirable consequences from the viewpoint of the agent involved. In games,

although more efficient means are ruled out, the reason for doing so is because there are simply rules against it. The justification for a prohibited course of action that there is simply a rule against it may be called the bureaucratic justification, meaning no justification at all (Suits, 1988).

Aside from bureaucratic practice, in anything but a game the unjustified introduction of unnecessary obstacles to the achievement of an end is regarded as a decidedly irrational thing to do, whereas in games it appears to be an absolutely essential thing to do. Some observers have concluded that there is something inherently absurd about games, or that games must involve fundamental paradox. Such view has been mistaken; the mistake consists in applying the same standard to games that is applied to means-end activities which are not games. Games are essentially different from ordinary activities of life (Suits, 1988). Furthermore, it is a mistake to evaluate, monitor, and punish the behavior of African American athletes in a sports context for violating rules established to police the behavior of Caucasian American athletes. The lousy attitude of the athlete must be taken into consideration when enforcing such rules.

### Chapter Three: Methods

The development of the Trash Talk Inventory (TTI) was based on my personal experience as an African-American athlete, coach, and athletic support staff. As a citizen of the New World and resident of the urban inner-city, I have experienced trash talk in nearly every activity in which I have participated, including competitive sport. As a member of the inner-city community, trash talk is embedded in the culture of the macro-society. However, upon my immersion into competitive sport on the collegiate level, I began to recognize the differences of vernacular use between teammates of different ethnic and social backgrounds within and outside different teams. The language used was often very similar; however, the translation of the language often presented different definitions informally. Such translations caused social tensions, as the intent of the language was seemingly always left for translation. Based on social and regulatory rules within sport, trash talk was discouraged, often being the source of discontent especially for myself and other African American teammates as we were accustomed to such vernacular tradition. Intrigued to clarify the intentions of trash talk, the initiative to develop an instrument to measure and assess the use and intention of trash talk began.

The Trash Talk Inventory (TTI) was designed in 2016 primarily in an inductive way in an attempt to collect initial data that shows how trash talk could serve as a positive factor in sport. The original data collected in the initial study will assist in transforming the TTI into a deductive instrument, hopefully confirming the self-proposed theory of smack talk. As the initial influencer for the development of the TTI was informal as a project for a graduate course. The professor for the course possesses a renowned background in sport psychology, therefore the TTI initially sought to collect information based on sport psychology principles. Such principles produced five dimensions in which the researcher sought to assess. The

initial dimensions of the TTI were: (a) perceived competence, (b) de-competition, (c) moral community, (d) effort expenditure, and (e) response to failure. These dimensions were identified as possible motives in which one would engage in trash talk. Due to the acknowledged, yet informal awareness surrounding trash talk, there was no true epistemology which supported this study. As a result, the five dimensions only served as preliminary guidelines to establish principles which drive trash talk in sport.

Additionally, my major professor, an international scholar in the field of sport ethics, assisted in constructing the original 25 items of the original version of the TTI. The initial thought or theory of smack talk incorporated the motivational aspect of psychology, while challenging the principles of morality in sport. Following the initial data collection period and several intense discussions with my major professor, a clear conflict surrounding the dimensions of the TTI emerged. As discussions increased, the dimensions began to appear to assess moral conflicts rather than psychological impacting dilemmas. As a result of this conflict, the results of the EFA serves as a vital source for the study. The results of the EFA resolves the conflict between the intentional dimensions of the TTI- sport psychology versus moral reasoning in sport.

### **Problem Statement**

The purpose of this quantitative descriptive study was:

Philosophic:

(1) To examine metaphysically the empirical and philosophic relationship between the intentionality of trash talk and competitive sport.

Descriptive:

(2) To develop a statistically valid and reliable instrument to quantitatively describe the empirical relationship between the intentionality of trash talk and competitive sport among current and former athletes with experience playing competitive sport on the High School level or higher. The relationship is assessed across the following factors- Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Highest level of education, Highest level of sport as an athlete, Sport(s), and Hometown. Therefore, the study will examine the use of trash talk and its effects on competitive sport through the disciplines of cognitive psychology, sport ethics, and moral philosophy.

### **Participants**

The pilot study used a convenience sampling method during two data collection periods. A total of 498 participants; 295 males and 203 females who have, at least, one year of first-hand experience in competitive high school sport. At the moment of data collection for this study, all participants were at least 18 years of age. The purpose of selecting college age subjects is to minimize age related problems. Researchers Bredemeier, Weiss, Shields, & Schewchuk (1986) reported that younger subjects were often either unaware or disinterested in moral reasoning. In addition, Kohlberg (1981) indicated that adolescence (ages 14-25 for male, and ages 12-21 for female) is a critical period for moral development. Younger subjects are not suitable for examining moral reasoning. Therefore, university age students were selected because of developmental age and ability to make distinctive moral decisions. Research in developmental psychology indicates, with considerable validity, that specific moral tendencies [that seek] expression at [this] particular time or developmental age (Dewey, 1964). Therefore, individuals 18 years of age or older are appropriate participant choices for a study in moral reasoning and moral development.



The initial data collection period was used to validate informally the TTI created during a Survey Research course. During this data collection period, hard (paper) survey responses (N=100) were collected on the campus of the University of Idaho. Weeks following, during further discussions prior to exploratory factor analysis, the second data collection period emphasized capturing additional data from a more diverse sample, using an electronic version of the TTI and distributing through email and social media. At the conclusion of the second data collection period, the researcher ran a preliminary exploratory factor analysis as well as addressed the following: face validity, content validity, reliability, criterion validity.

### **Protection of Participants**

Researcher is CITI trained on all ethical procedures and policies (ID No. 5062581). All subjects are protected by the guidelines established by the University of Idaho Institutional Review Board (IRB), ID No. 16-125. See Appendix for approval through IRB.

### **Research Design**

This descriptive and philosophical study used the Trash Talk Inventory to survey current and former athletes on their experiences in sport associated with the use of trash talk. Preliminary surveys were distributed and collected, on a convenience basis, in person at the University of Idaho. Surveys, during the second data collection period were distributed electronically to students at the University of Idaho, University of Arkansas, University of Central Florida, and Texas A & M University. Additionally, the survey was distributed through social media platforms. Though the sample is a convenience sample, all participants must have at least participated in competitive sport on the high school level and be 18 years of age or older. To protect the participant's identity, identity remained anonymous, their identity was not disclosed. To protect the subjects from abuse and to protect the researcher from liability

signed informed consent/ waivers forms were collected for hard copies, completed surveys served as signed consent forms for all surveys completed electronically.

## **Instrument Design**

### **Trash Talk Inventory (pilot version)**

The pilot instrument was developed to collect categorical data specifying age, gender, ethnicity, highest level of education, highest level of sport as an athlete, sport(s), and hometown. The language used in the composition of the items within the TTI is neutral in hopes to remain unbiased. The TTI consists of simple statements rather than scenarios, based in a 7th grade reading level as evidenced by the Flesch-Kincaide Grade Level (application found on Microsoft Word). These statements represent the dimensions assessed, which are strategically numbered to ensure reliability. The TTI was developed based on five dimensions. The dimensions of the survey were: (a) perceived competence, (b) de-competition, (c) moral community, (d) effort expenditure, and (e) response to failure. These dimensions were identified as possible motives in which one would engage in trash talk. Each dimension is measured equally using five items for each dimension. In addition to the items measuring the five dimensions, demographic information will be sought. The demographic information sought: Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Highest level of education, Highest level of sport as an athlete, Sport(s), and Hometown. This information could provide insight on cultural differences in the use of trash talk in sport.

The TTI uses a 5-point Likert scale: *strongly agree* (SA), *agree* (A), *neutral* (N), *disagree* (D), and *strongly disagree* (SD). The TTI uses a midpoint of “neutral” due to interpretation aspect of communication. The theory offered is that trash talk can be interpreted in many manners, which can be perceived as negative, positive, or can simply go unnoticed. Due to the variety of statements in the TTI, respondents may not have experienced

all scenarios. In order to evaluate the face validity of the TTI prior to implementing the study, the TTI was evaluated by several colleagues and experts in the field of sport ethics and sport psychology. The reviewers evaluated the TTI for simplicity, reading level, length, and relevance. Upon the conclusion of the review, the TTI was slightly modified to increase reading level and face validity. Test takers respond by reading the given statement and circling or selecting the response that best corresponds with their level of agreement with the statement. Below find the discussion of the five factors which were originally thought to measure important factors in the Trash Talk Inventory.

### **Perceived Competence**

Perceived competence is a self-perception of an individual in their capabilities and ability to control their environment and situation. Perceived competence refers to how skilled and effective one perceives themselves to be in a particular situation. In competitive sport, individuals typically choose challenges that are suitable to their level of capabilities. Increasing perceived competence can be accomplished by establishing small goals and tasks, increasing level of difficulty as skill improves. Rewards and praise are important in increasing perceived competence along with constructive feedback (Elliot & Dweck, 2005). The TTI will assess the negative and positive impact trash talk has on perceived competence.

### **De- competition**

Competition is defined as striving for excellence in a contest situation. According to this view, competition entails a combination of a contest structure with a personal orientation toward seeking excellence through the mutual challenge that opponents provide to each other. According to Shields (2009), de-competition describes a situation in which a contest is metaphorically understood as a battle for superiority or extrinsic reward. In this study's case, the extrinsic reward is winning. The different motivations and goals associated with de-

competition account for the negative findings prevalent to the literature associated with competitiveness. Therefore, trash talk can be deemed de-competition as it may obstruct one's effort to strive for excellence within a competition. However, based on the African vernacular traditions of signification and the dozens, trash talk can be translated within the realm of competition rather than de-competition. Under such theory, trash talk has the capabilities of increasing the internal and external motivation of all competitors, increasing the level of competition. The Trash Talk Inventory intended to use items referring to de-competition to assess the intent of trash talk.

### **Moral Community**

According to Hauerwas (1981), the concern that our behavior contribute to our moral character is but a recognition that what we do should be done in the manner befitting our history as moral agents. The recognition and performance of duty is made possible because we as humans are virtuous, and a person of virtue is dutiful because not to be is to be less than virtuous (Hauerwas, 1981). Like any skill, virtues must be learned and coordinated in an individual's life, just as a master craftsman has learned to blend the many skills necessary for the exercise of any complex craft (Hauerwas, 1981). To support the mantra "sport builds character", these skills give the individual the ability to respond creatively to the always unanticipated difficulties in any craft in a manner that technique can never provide. Our capacity to be virtuous depends on the existence of communities which have been formed by narratives to the character of reality (Hauerwas, 1981). The reality is that competitive sport has an aspect of play, allowing sport produce behavior that would not be approved in normal society. However, this behavior does parallel reality, it mirrors reality. In regard to trash talk, such verbal interactions occur in everyday life. However, it is only when the interaction negatively effects an individual when one's morals and values are in question. Perhaps, trash

talk serves as a tool to measure one's character within the community of competitive sport, providing a method of establish one's stature within the community. The intent of the TTI is to assess to what extent trash talk contributes to the development and maintenance of the community.

### **Effort Expenditure**

When individuals compete, they strive to obtain a limited goal and to compare favorably to others similarly striving. In sports, the contest-specific goal, of course, is to win. The amount of preparation, focus, determination, and energy that a person puts into striving to win is often referred to as their competitiveness. Competitive individuals have a strong desire to achieve and succeed, thereby demonstrating their competency to themselves and others. Amongst this demonstration is a comparison of competency. Perhaps, if one views themselves as incompetent based on their opponent, one's performance can be affected. In my personal experience, trash talk can increase or decrease one's effort expenditure based on one's perceived competence. As the opponent trash talks, the competitor uses the trash talk to internally motivate self to achieve performance. Furthermore, the trash talker may use trash talk to improve internal motivation, in turn, increasing the opportunity to reach the state of flow in sport.

### **Response to Failure**

Like effort expenditure, the competitiveness of an individual will temper one's response to failure. Socially, such response relies on one's motivation. In competition, individuals who are intrinsically motivated, or performance minded, often respond to failure positively. However, those who are extrinsically may respond to failure negatively. Intrinsic motivation refers to the psychological drive that leads an individual to engage in an activity without being externally rewarded for the action; Whereas, extrinsic motivation refers to the

competitor driven by external rewards such as money, fame, and stature (Sullivan, 2009). There are many factors that may influence such reaction, for instance, verbal banter from opponents and fans during competition in the development of the TTI, the mindset of the participant is not assessed. The TTI assesses the effect of trash talk on one's response to failure as trash talk may serve as an extrinsic motivator for the competitor being trash talked and an intrinsic motivator for the trash talker. This assessment of trash talk will present an understanding on the positive usage of trash talk.

### **Trash Talk Inventory (revised version)**

Following the final exploratory factor analysis, the five dimensions initially thought to be measured in the original TTI were not supported, i.e., perceived competence, de-competition, effort expenditure, and response to failure. Instead, the results of the EFA presented one solidified factor, which I earlier named Moral Community, measured by 10 items. Reflecting upon the certain items that were eliminated (perceived competence, de-competition, effort expenditure, and response to failure), the epistemological background of the TTI - sport psychology versus moral reasoning in sport - TI was solved through the EFA. Of the dimensions initially examined by the TTI, Moral community was supported. Such results allow the researcher to assume that the items within the TTI indeed measure the constructs intended regarding the moral community of competitive sport. Additionally, the results of the EFA and the responses of the participants affirms the researcher's thoughts that trash talk is a behavior which significantly influences the moral community of competitive sport and is used to support the athlete's competitive self.

### **Trash Talk Inventory-15**

Though the 10 questions selected in the revised version of the TTI were the strongest and formed the factor of moral community, a future course of pilot studies are being

considered to develop the TTI-15. Five (5) items within the other four dimensions in the original version of the TTI formed one dimension I named Socialized Ethics. In turn, the basis of the 15-item edited TTI is to assess the moral reasoning of participants during competitive sport as well as their interpretation of the rules and guidelines within competitive sport. All items which were constructed with moral reasoning in mind were the items which factored out in the EFA of the TTI. The most significant items (10) were extracted to form the sole factor, Moral Community, of the revised TTI. However, the five additional items in the socialized ethics dimension were too significant to disregard, therefore these items were added to the revised TTI to form the TTI-15. Additionally, the items which were selected in the EFA provide items that seek to assess the exact topics which present conflict in the interpretation of trash talk in competitive sport. Such topics consider the monitoring and regulation of behavior such as trash talk, mainly the moral foundation of sportsmanship rules. In considering the epistemology of the two-remaining factor in the revised version of the TTI, the results of the study using the revised TTI will present contributable evidence to the field. The TTI-15 will provide deductive insight regarding the socialized ethics of the moral community in competitive sport in addition to the inductive insight acquired by 10 items of the revised TTI.

### **Socialized Ethics**

Sportsmanship and Regulatory rules serve as socialized ethics in competitive sport. Such rules are expected to be followed and obeyed by all participants. In addition to the sportsmanship and regulatory rules in competitive sport, the participants within the moral community in competitive sport have a set of socialized ethics they follow. Like many moral communities in modern American society, what is learned in sport is often about how we (humans) work with others, and how we (humans) play with others. Interestingly,

sportsmanship rules are based on an interpretation of what coaches and administrators want to happen on the field of play – their notion of socialized ethics transpire to develop rules. This is the coaches’ or administrator’s notion of how athletes are supposed to talk and act toward each other. The original rules have an historical basis, a theoretical basis, and an idealized notion of what it means to be a “sports person” and to play fair. However, in the real practical world of sport what actually is occurring within sport is not the same - black America’s influence has changed that notion of socialized ethics. A different banter, a different language, a learned moral code and behavior – a practice of socialized ethics hinging on black America and playing the dozens now exists. Often, these actions reflect on relationships which deal with the fringes of ethical conduct. Socialized ethics govern behavior such as trash talk and the social interactions of the athletes and coaches. Therefore, socialized ethics may often cause conflict with those unfamiliar with the practical world of sport, as this study has proven that competitive sport possesses its own moral community separate from normal American society. The TTI -15 would assess the effect of trash talk on one’s interpretation of the socialized ethics in competitive sport. This assessment of trash talk will present an understanding on the effect trash talk has on the subculture of sport in modern America.

### **Underlying Research Questions that Drove this Study?**

- 1) What effect if any does trash talk on the competitive community?
- 2) How does that effect, if any, influence positively or negatively, the athlete in competitive relationships, with peers and opponents?
- 3) How does the sort of relationship between opponents and peers effect, either positively or negatively, the level of competition in sport?



### Exploratory Factor Analysis

Factor analysis was conducted to determine what, if any, underlying structure exists for measures on the 25 items. Prior to the analysis, evaluation of linearity and normality were conducted. No issues were identified. Principal component analysis was conducted using a varimax rotation. The initial analysis retained only one component. Four criteria were used to determine the number of components that should be retained in the model. These criteria led to an investigation of two components. Principal component analysis was conducted to retain the two components and the varimax rotation was applied. With the inclusion of two components the model fit was increased, thus decreasing the number of residuals exceeding the .05 criteria.

After rotation the first component accounted for 28.10% and the second for 8.13%. Component 1 had all positive loadings while component 2 had 4 positive and one negative loading. Component 1 was named Moral Community and Component 2 was named Socialized Ethics.

#### Component 1: Moral Community

Q1	.497
Q2	.721
Q3	.698
Q4	.637
Q5	.627
Q6	.594
Q7	.606
Q8	.655
Q19	.550

Q20 .586

Component 2: Socialized Ethics

Q14 .505

Q15 .702

Q17 .780

Q21 .491

Q24 -.491

### **Regression Analysis**

A multiple regression was conducted to determine which independent variables (HLE, HLS, SPT, HT, ETH, GEN, AGE) were the predictors of the use of trash talk in competitive sport. Regression results indicate an overall model of two predictors (Gender, Sport) that significantly predict the use of trash talk in competitive sport,  $R^2 = .078$ ,  $R^2 \text{ adj} = .066$ ,  $F(6, 489) = 6.86$ ,  $p = .0001$ . This model accounted for less than 1% of the variability in the use of trash talk in competitive sport.

The scores obtain from the TTI should not be used to establish a cause and effect relationship between competitive populations and moral decision making because other extraneous variables may hinder the researcher's ability to establish that relationship, i.e. pressure of competition erodes moral character or reduces level of moral reasoning. The purpose of the score is twofold. First, to develop a context-specific measure of moral reasoning regarding trash talk in competitive sport. Second, the purpose is to set a baseline of participant response in understanding the moral reasoning and sociological effect one's traditional background has on participants and spectators of competitive sport. The status of the TTI remains in pilot mode despite acquiring a sufficient number of participants ( $n = 498$ ) have been procured.

Therefore, the data collected from the original participants (n=498) was used to analyze trash talk's effect on competitive sport, using the revised 10-item TTI. The study used the original independent and dependent variables of the study to analyze the data through an ANOVA test. This analysis serves a pilot to ensure the validity of the revised TTI as an assessment instrument, as well as provide inductive evidence to the foundation of the research in the fields of moral reasoning, sport ethics, as well as sport sociology. The revised TTI will remain in pilot mode as the researcher would like to assure the reliability and validity of the instrument.

### **Philosophical Methodology**

This study is both a descriptive and philosophical study. Below, find the philosophical theory to support and direct the study.

Sportsmanship guidelines in competitive sport are based upon the moral values of respect and honesty. Under such values, interactions involving trash talk are often considered violations of the moral values of sport (NCAA, 2015, p. Bylaw 2.4). The context and methods used during trash talk are translated as disrespect towards the opponent.

Additionally, the outcome of a competition involving trash talk violates the honesty value as the effects of trash talk can negatively affect the purity of competition. Competition, in its purest form, requires each competitor to be at their best. When trash talk is present, competition cannot be considered as pure as trash talk may psychologically present an advantage for one competitor and a disadvantage for the other. Therefore, competition is no longer competition under the Old English model of sport.

The ethical parameters involving trash talk construct regulations which monitor such behavior, considering the Old English model of sport. However, such regulations do not consider the norms within the social community of African Americans, who now dominate

the participation in many competitive sports. According to the latest Race and Gender Report Card (Lapchick & Cabral, 2013), in 2013, 81.1 percent of NBA players were people of color, 73 percent of WNBA players were African American, 63.3 percent of NFL players were African American, and 55.7 and 54.4 percent of collegiate men's basketball and football student athletes were African American respectively. The African vernacular tradition embraces interactions which are now considered trash talk in sport. The ability to verbally combat within a social group presents one with a social status within the African American social community. Often times, such combat can be conceived as aggressive and violent, however in the African American community, one must truly understand the signification of each transaction. In white America, words have meaning, whereas in black America, the meaning to the words lie in the translation of the words. Therefore, the words spoken within the trash talk do not disrespect the opponent. The disrespect is self-inflicted when the words are translated as disrespect, disregarding whether the comment is true or false. Signification enables the trash talked to define the truth based on the reaction and response to the trash talk.

This study used the philosophical methodology of Lumpkin, Stoll, and Beller (2003) to assess the usage of trash talk and the correlation of the consistency in the moral reasoning process. Specifically, the study will assess the moral values involved within the action of trash talk. Moral values are those values involving actions, motives, and intentions towards other people (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 2003). Moral values include honesty, justice, beneficence, and responsibility (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1994). In sport, trash talk can be negatively assessed in regards to moral values. Moral values are critical to human relationships and when violated may likely cause harm (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1994).

Thus, ethical situations, such as trash talk, arise when harm may come to another individual as a result of violating a moral value.

Additionally, this study intended to assess the intentionality of trash talk. The study sought to understand the true purpose and directionality of trash talk. On one hand, sportsmanship guidelines, produced under the English model of sport (Suits, 1988), intend to limit the use of trash talk under the belief that it violates the purity of sport. On the other hand, African American participants and others use trash talk as a tool maintain the “play” element in sport using interactions similar to playing the dozens as well as establish a social stature within the moral community of sport by way of signification. As a result, a moral and social rift has been created, resulting in tensions between governing bodies and the athletes participating. To relieve the tensions and better serve the participants, a philosophical understanding of trash talk is needed.

## **Chapter Four: Results**

### **Problem Statement**

The purpose of this study is to develop a statistically valid and reliable instrument to quantitatively describe the empirical relationship between the intentionality of trash talk and competitive sport among current and former athletes with experience playing competitive sport on the High School level or higher. The relationship is assessed across the following factors- Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Highest level of education, Highest level of sport as an athlete, Sport(s), and Hometown. Therefore, the study will examine the use of trash talk and its effects on competitive sport through the disciplines of cognitive psychology, sport ethics, and moral philosophy.

### **Participants**

Four hundred and ninety-eight (498) participants volunteered to participate in the study. The sample had 295 males and 203 females. All participants agreed that they possess who at least, one year of first-hand, playing or coaching, experience in competitive high school sport. Participants who have experience in competitive sport on levels higher than high school were also encouraged to participate in the study.

### **Instrumentation**

All participants completed the original version of the TTI. Following the exploratory factor analysis, each participants' set of responses were run assessing the final 10 items of the revised TTI. The Cronbach alpha for the revised TTI-10 was .876.

### **Statistical Hypotheses**

- 1) There are no significant differences in scores by gender (male versus females) in how athletes administer and receive trash talk as measured by the revised TTI?

No significant difference was found by gender  $F(17.84) = 17.84, p = .553$ . On the revised TTI, females scored  $(29.83 \pm .690)$  compared to males  $(31.43 \pm .832)$ .

2) There are no significant differences in scores by sport (VB, FB, BB) in how athletes administer and receive trash talk as measured by the TTI?

A significant difference was found by sport  $F(1,248.61) = 178.37, p = .001$ . On the revised TTI, sports classified under “other” scored  $(27.67 \pm 1.24)$  compared to track & field/cross country  $(28.28 \pm 1.62)$ , baseball  $(31.05 \pm 1.72)$ , tennis  $(24.17 \pm 3.75)$ , volleyball  $(33.95 \pm 1.87)$ , soccer  $(30.85 \pm 1.50)$ , basketball  $(31.30 \pm .787)$ , and football  $(36.26 \pm .955)$ .

3) There are no significant differences in scores by age (18-21, 22-25, 26-30, 31-40, 41+) in how athletes administer and receive trash talk as measured by the TTI?

No significant difference was found by age  $F(37.45) = 9.36, p = .185$ . On the revised TTI, ages 18-21 scored  $(30.20 \pm 1.00)$  compared to ages 22-25  $(31.35 \pm .894)$ , ages 26-30  $(30.51 \pm 1.38)$ , ages 31-40  $(30.82 \pm 1.18)$ , and ages 41 and above  $(30.47 \pm 1.62)$ .

## Exploratory Factor Analysis

**Table 4.1**

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	498	100.0
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	498	100.0

**Table 4.2**

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.876	10

**Table 4.3**

<b>Item Statistics</b>			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Q1	3.93	.972	498
Q2	2.77	1.147	498
Q3	3.31	1.401	498
Q4	3.60	1.144	498
Q5	3.52	1.137	498
Q6	1.95	.918	498
Q7	2.57	1.145	498
Q8	3.49	1.296	498
Q19	3.23	1.242	498
Q20	3.83	1.016	498

**Table 4.4**

<b>Item-Total Statistics</b>				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q1	28.28	53.068	.603	.865
Q2	29.44	50.927	.630	.862
Q3	28.90	47.462	.680	.858
Q4	28.61	51.904	.567	.867
Q5	28.69	51.096	.625	.862
Q6	30.26	55.447	.458	.874
Q7	29.64	50.952	.629	.862
Q8	28.71	48.655	.676	.858
Q19	28.98	50.814	.576	.866
Q20	28.38	53.321	.552	.868



**Table 4.5**

The table below illustrates descriptive data for factors between participants for gender, age, and sport variables.

		Value Label	N
GEN	1		295
	2		203
AGE	1	18-21	165
	2	22-25	109
	3	26-30	66
	4	31-40	105
	5	41 +	53
SPT	1		51
	2		29
	3		28
	4		4
	5		43
	6		45
	7		112
	8		186

**Table 4.6**

The table below illustrates descriptive data for ANOVA for gender, age, sport, and ethnicity variables.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5092.697	4	1273.174	24.145	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	25995.584	493	52.729		
	Total	31088.281	497			

**Table 4.7**

The diagram below is a measure of the coefficients of the scores of the revised TTI scores.

**Coefficients**

Model	B	Std Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	85.23	2.761		30.883	.000
Eth	.278	.427	.029	.651	.516
Gen	-2.887	.903	-.157	-3.196	.001 **
Age	-.380	.324	.059	-1.175	.241
Spt	.511	.185	.136	2.759	.006 **
HT	-.842	.474	-.079	-1.774	.077
HLE	-.914	.667	-.068	-1.370	.171

Note 1. \*\* Denotes significance at the  $p < .01$  level.

Because ethnicity, age, hometown, and highest level of education did not significantly predict the use of trash talk in competitive sport, only Sport and Gender were entered into the ANOVA model. A significant difference was found by sport  $F(7, 482) = 3.127$ ,  $p = .003$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .043$ , however not by gender  $F(1, 482) = .372$ ,  $p = .699$ . Tukey's post hoc was run to see which means differed significantly at  $p < .05$ .

**Table 4.8**

The diagram below is a measure of tests between the variables tested based on the scores of the revised TTI scores.

**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: Total Final

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	9005.294 <sup>a</sup>	60	150.088	2.970	.000	.290
Intercept	94378.800	1	94378.800	1867.661	.000	.810
GEN	17.844	1	17.844	.353	.553	.001
AGE	37.448	4	9.362	.185	.946	.002
SPT	1248.605	7	178.372	3.530	.001	.054
GEN * AGE	254.960	4	63.740	1.261	.284	.011
GEN * SPT	178.094	7	25.442	.503	.832	.008
AGE * SPT	1408.782	24	58.699	1.162	.273	.060
GEN * AGE * SPT	834.342	13	64.180	1.270	.228	.036
Error	22082.987	437	50.533			
Total	547718.000	498				
Corrected Total	31088.281	497				

**Table 4.9**

The diagram below is a measure of tests between the sports participated in by each participant tested based on the scores of the revised TTI scores.

**Significance Between Sports**

Sport "Other" significantly different than:	Baseball/Softball, $p = .004$ Volleyball, $p = .002$ Soccer, $p = .041$ Basketball, $p = .001$ Football, $p = .0001$	Mean 27.67	Standard Deviation 1.24
T & F/ CC significantly different than:	Baseball/Softball, $p = .006$ Volleyball, $p = .005$ Basketball, $p = .005$ Football, $p = .0001$	Mean 28.28	Standard Deviation 1.62
Baseball/Softball significantly different than:	Tennis, $p = .035$ Football, $p = .015$	Mean 31.05	Standard Deviation 1.72
Tennis significantly different than:	Volleyball, $p = .04$ Football, $p = .001$	Mean 24.17	Standard Deviation 3.75
Volleyball significantly different than:	Football, $p = .001$	Mean 33.95	Standard Deviation 1.87
Soccer significantly different than:	Football, $p = .0001$	Mean 31.30	Standard Deviation .787
Basketball significantly different than:	Football, $p = .0001$	Mean 36.26	Standard Deviation .955

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

### **Problem Statement**

The purpose of this quantitative descriptive study was:

Philosophic:

(1) To examine metaphysically the empirical and philosophic relationship between the intentionality of trash talk and competitive sport.

Descriptive:

(2) To develop a statistically valid and reliable instrument to quantitatively describe the empirical relationship between the intentionality of trash talk and competitive sport among current and former athletes with experience playing competitive sport on the High School level or higher. The relationship is assessed across the following factors- Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Highest level of education, Highest level of sport as an athlete, Sport(s), and Hometown. Therefore, the study will examine the use of trash talk and its effects on competitive sport through the disciplines of cognitive psychology, sport ethics, and moral philosophy.

### **Statistical Analysis**

#### **Statistical Hypothesis**

1) No significant difference was found by gender  $F(17.84) = 17.84, p = .553$ . On the revised TTI, females scored  $(29.83 \pm .690)$  compared to males  $(31.43 \pm .832)$ .

No significance was found between gender and the intentionality of trash talk.

Statistically, these results were anticipated as the found epistemology of trash talk supports the results. Social interactions in the like of trash talk between peers does not consider gender. Historically, males and females engaged in signification through playing the dozens, cappin', or trash talking (Goodwin, 1990). The use and interpretation of trash talk is highly

influenced by one's exposure to the black vernacular tradition. In modern American society, individuals of both genders have ample opportunities to be exposed to such black vernacular tradition, as trash talk is very prevalent in competitive sport and has an unspoken present in many other corporate environments as well (Raphael, 1988). In modern American society, women have the opportunity to engage in trash talk during competitive sport as well as in their corporate career environment. Though women have gained access to many opportunities previously only available to men, women continue to receive resistance in many fields, including sport. Perhaps, due to this resistance, women probably participate in trash talk just as much as men. Therefore, there is no significant difference between men and women in the use and interpretation of trash talk as women have historically experienced a sort of insult talk.

2) A significant difference was found by sport  $F(1,248.61) = 178.37, p = .001$ . On the revised TTI, sports classified under "other" scored ( $27.67 \pm 1.24$ ) compared to track & field/cross country ( $28.28 \pm 1.62$ ), baseball ( $31.05 \pm 1.72$ ), tennis ( $24.17 \pm 3.75$ ), volleyball ( $33.95 \pm 1.87$ ), soccer ( $30.85 \pm 1.50$ ), basketball ( $31.30 \pm .787$ ), and football ( $36.26 \pm .955$ ).

Significance between sport and the intentionality of trash talk illuminates the dynamics of the sociological construction of competitive sport. Of the 498 participants, 298 participants male and female, reported their sport as one of the "money-maker" or "big" sports (see Table 4.5). This statistic presents exactly half of the participant sample. In modern American society, the "money-maker" sports are basketball and football on the collegiate and professional level, considering the revenue and fanfare these sports produce on each level. To further analyze the results of the study, one must reflect upon the data beyond the descriptive data presented. Considering the descriptive data of the Racial and Gender Report Card

(Lapchick & Cabral, 2013), African Americans represent more than half of the population of athletes who participate in collegiate basketball and football. One should assume that such ratio also correlates with the ethnicity of the participants playing basketball and football on the professional level.

3) No significant difference was found by age  $F(37.45) = 9.36, p = .185$ . On the revised TTI, ages 18-21 scored  $(30.20 \pm 1.00)$  compared to ages 22-25  $(31.35 \pm .894)$ , ages 26-30  $(30.51 \pm 1.38)$ , ages 31-40  $(30.82 \pm 1.18)$ , and ages 41 and above  $(30.47 \pm 1.62)$ .

No significance was found between age and the intentionality of trash talk (see Table 4.5). The cultural background of African Americans is referenced back to years before the formation of the New World. Therefore, exposure to trash talk has been present dating back to the captured slaves from West Africa. As trash talk became a black vernacular tradition, participation in trash talk became a habitual manner of speech within the community, spanning all generations. Perhaps, the participants 41 years of age and above approach to trash talk is more conservative than the younger participants, based on the socialized ethics of their generations. However, one can assume that the older generations participants who are African American responded to the items in the TTI in a much more positive manner regarding the intentionality of trash talk. This reasoning for this assumption is the cultural socialized ethics older African American participants experienced through the racial tensions in America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In comparison to the older generations of African Americans, the interpretation of the intentionality of trash talk from members of other cultural backgrounds is unknown. The statistical evidence of this evidence states that age does not indicate one's interpretation of the intentionality of trash talk. Perhaps, more responses in addition to a more evenly distribution within each age group will present more significant evidence for this study. However, the epistemology of trash talk supports that individuals of

all ages within the African American community engage or have engaged in some sort of trash talk as it is a ritual taught and passed on by generations.

This study assessed the intentions and effects of trash talk on the moral and ethical culture of competitive sport by collecting descriptive information in the form of quantitative data. Considering the revised version of the TTI, following the exploratory factor analysis, participants, former and current athletes, completed the 10-item Trash Talk Inventory (TTI) not including demographic information. The demographic information collected included age, gender, and ethnicity, highest level of education, highest level of sport, sport, and hometown. However, due to inconsistencies in responses only three variables were examined using ANOVA. The descriptive data collected aimed to assess the participants' experiences regarding their exposure to trash talk during competitive sport. The items in the assessment consider one factor, Moral Community. The results of the study analyzed this factor in correlation with the collected demographic information. The results found significance difference between sport(s) and the intentionality of trash talk in competitive sport. Despite the lack of statistical significance regarding all other factors, the results support importance when assessed within the philosophical frame of trash talk.

Furthermore, such a framework directly correlates with all independent variables assessed with the exception of gender. The philosophical aspect of this study explored the vernacular history of what modern American society calls trash talk. The journey to seek the origin of trash talk through available literature states that the vernacular constructs of trash talk in modern American society derives from the enslaved West Africans taken for labor in the New World which is now the United States of America. Since the arrival of black slaves on the lands of the Western states, a social conflict between white America and black America has been evident through the verbal interactions between those of each micro



society. Black vernacular tradition in modern American society often offends those of white America ethically.

The statistical results of this study reflect such conflict between white America and black America indirectly. Though the quantitative data does not support a direct correlation between ethnicity and the intentionality of trash talk, the results make a strong argument to the philosophical foundation of the study when analyzed in a total framework. The popularity and commercialism of competitive sport in modern American society has placed an extreme demand on athletes who are the strongest, fastest, and most athletic. Though many African Americans have participated in competitive sport, the emergence of the University of Michigan's Fab Five (Hehir, 2011) exposed the business-like supply and demand relationship between commercialized sport and the African American athletes. Large educational institutions, members of the NCAA (2015), ventured into the poverty-stricken urban neighborhoods with promises of higher education and better economic lives in return for their financial investment of college tuition, university administrators and boosters demanded elite athleticism during competition. Similar to the slave trade, the greater the athlete, the greater the production during competition.

### **Thoughts concerning data**

Typical variables in a model are characteristics of a person. However, in the case of trash talking, the characteristics of a person (male, female, age, and so forth) cannot capture what is going on statistically here. The unit of measurement is the ethos or the environment, not the individuals. It is not the characteristics of a person, but rather we should examine the variables of ethos, not the characteristics of the individual. In other words, trash talking is not about the individual, but about how the game is played – and especially how some specific games are played. These games may influence how other games are played –

football (team oriented) may influence men's basketball, women's basketball, and women's volleyball.

A comparison between the social dynamics of commercialized sport in modern American society and the social dynamics of the New World can produce skepticism. However, similarities between the two eras of American society are extremely vivid physically and socially. Like most slave owners, large university administrators, boosters, and coaches, as well as executives for professional sporting organizations are middle-aged to elderly white men. Sadly, these individuals use socioeconomic dynamics to entice athletes to represent their institutions and organizations for a margin of profit. Such recruitment is often not intended to benefit morally and ethically the athlete. The allure of having a life without drugs, violence, and poverty serves as the bait used by universities and organizations to acquire the assets needed to produce competitive teams yearly. The opportunity to be exposed to the riches of white America, specifically higher education, socioeconomic stability, and stature, will always appeal to African Americans considering their historical plight in America.

Despite the demeanor of an aristocracy, white America in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century opened a social vacuum that greatly influenced the manner in which all athletes participated in sport. The effects of such vacuum appear on every American's television set daily. Linguistic styles used by those around the world including white America, from the president of the United States of America to a young group of athletes playing basketball in the local park. Formal speeches often use a sort of trash talk within the speech to capture the attention of the audience. Most forms of music use rhyming and metaphors similar to those of blues and jazz musicians in early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Clothing has become a form of self-expression similar to the "cool pose" (Majors & Billson, 1992) of the

late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Clothes are brighter, hairstyles are more unorthodox, tattoos are abundant, and jewelry is much flashier. In addition, though not statistically proven, the presence of trash talk during every day interactions has increased noticeably.

Though the quantitative data collected by this study does not explicitly support the ideal that ethnicity serves as predictor in the use of trash talk, the data enables one to consider the influence of black vernacular on sport. Considering the data, the sport in which significantly uses trash talk within the given theory, football, presents a cultural background that greatly favors the black vernacular tradition based on the racial population of those playing college and professional football. In accordance with the data collected, one can argue that the trash talk dilemma resides within the moral community of each respective sport. Perhaps future studies should present a more focused methodology which will assess the intentionality of trash talk use within each sport within themselves; therefore, using descriptive data such as ethnicity, age, and gender as descriptive variables. Despite the need for a more precise methodology, the glaring influence of black vernacular tradition positively or negatively affects sport as a whole.

The results of this present study did not present significant data supporting a correlation between trash talk and competence in sport, or trash talk's ability to increase the level of competition, or its use as a coping mechanism, nor its ability to build comradery in sport. Even though none of the psychological variables were found to be meaningful in this study, this study has presented a valuable set of data considering trash talk in sport. The statistical analysis suggests the positive social impact of trash talk on sport. Considering the sociological background trash talk, black vernacular tradition, trash talk significantly correlates with specific descriptive items in question. In the black community, the manner in which you trash talk correlates with an individual's competence in sport. Sport appears to

serve as the **Dozens** match for the current generation of African American community. For example, the reaction from the opponent, teammates, and spectators a competitor attains through trash talk in sport is comparative to the number of laughs attained during a dozens match.

Trash talk, arguably, serves as a tool to establish one's cool pose in the African American community. In competitive sport, like the African American community, where it is vital to maintain a cool pose, competitors compare themselves through performance. The strategical aspect of competitive sport places heightened importance on the importance of talk on the act of competing. The athlete who struggles to maintain their composure usually fails to achieve victory competitive sport which is the ethical guideline within the moral community, allows trash talk to serve as a comradery builder. Those who understand the joking relationship between athletes, understand the comradery that exists within the hostile environment that engulfs competitive sport.

The comradery between competitors in conjunction with the desperate need to maintain the cool pose, trash talk directly affects the level of competition. The moral community of sport embraces trash talk because it enhances one's chance to achieve flow. Flow is the ultimate achievement for competitive athletes. Flow allows athletes to perform at their greatest unconsciously, often leading the athlete's greatest performance (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Similar to the African American community, trash talk in sport probably enables the athlete to expand their comfort zone, eliminating mental and social barriers. The more relaxed an athlete can be socially and mentally, the greater they perform. In such an environment where most athletes in a competition are exposed to trash talk and become more relaxed, the level of competition probably increases due to each athlete's ability to improve their performance.

Uniquely to the moral community of sport, trash talk is used to establish a cool pose which can only be validated through performance. One must train one's body to perform. For this reason, modern American society has seen the greatest performances ever in competitive sport; performances such as Kobe Bryant's 81 point performance versus the Toronto Raptors (National Basketball Association, 2017), Michael Vick's 6 touchdown performance versus the Washington Redskins in 2010 (National Football League, 2018), and the one point victory of the 1983 University of Miami's football team over the University of Nebraska Cornhuskers in the 1984 NCAA national championship. These competitions included many instances of trash talk, but the performances of the athletes were what made these competitions so great. Without the presence of trash talk prior, during, and after competition by all constituents, one could argue that the magnitude of the performances would not have been considered as one of the greats. Trash talk may serve as tool to influence competitive sport as well as a validator for the competitor and spectators.

### **Philosophical Analysis**

With the social influence of black vernacular tradition at an all-time high, we must assess the sociological background of black America and ask, what is so unethical about trash talk? I argue that such a question has no current answer due to the lack of cultural consideration from the established ethical research and writing community which guide sport. Through this study, I focused on the philosophical background of the term, trash talk, and its effects on sport and those participating. To further understand the impact in which trash talk has on sport, this study explored sport ethics. Sport ethics are greatly monitored within competition under the regulation of sportsmanship rules. Under these rules, trash talk has been demonized by sport governing bodies which, again, are largely populated by

members of white America. Therefore, the ethics of sport derive from white America, for the greater good of white America.

The social vacuum created through sport exposed the world's inability to cope with socialization. As human beings, socialization is very important. In association with socialization, morality which refers to how we treat each other as human beings (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1994), is the main criteria to which justifies the actions in which we choose to perform. Morality may be divided into two sections, ethics and morality. Ethics considers theoretical social obligations and morality refers to a person's individual choice (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 1994). However, ethics does not consider the joking relationship athletes develop and share between each other as teammates and opponents. Much like the adolescents of the 1960's (Labov, 1972), the unrhymed insults display great skill and adaptation, often appearing to be cruel as well as humorous. Often times, the stronger the joking relationship, the more each participant seems to be encouraged and antagonized to increase the intensity of cruelty within the insults. Unfortunately, socialization may possess negative or positive characteristics, which depends upon the perspective of the participant and the viewer. The result of these many perspectives is relativism. According to Frankena (1973), relativism states that things are not universal and that there is no absolute truth.

The reason for this uncertainty about truth is that the perspectives of the viewer, or those who judge, are derived from either of the two ethical theories, idealism and realism. According to Frankena (1973), idealism establishes an inherent nature of right and wrong regardless of consequence while realism considers consequences to have meaning. When you put these theories on a spectrum, they would be on the opposite sides. In the case of this study, white America's judgement of trash talk is based in idealism. Whereas, members of black America would support their case based in realism. However, in a society such as our

current American society, critics of trash talk cannot lie on extreme ends of this spectrum. In other words, one has to consider one's values as well as the situation when establishing rules such as sportsmanship rules. Mixed deontology considers established theories, realism and idealism, when dealing with ethical situations. The decision-making process relies on the individual's moral values and the context of the situation. In other words, in reference to Aristotle's syllogism, one takes general principles and applies them to individual situations (Frankena, 1973).

The consideration of the context in which one uses trash talk must be considered by those establishing ethics which govern behavior during competition. In addition to the context in which one trash talks, governing bodies must also consider the true purpose of sport. Unlike the origin of sport, serving as a leisure activity for upper class men, modern American sport serves as extracurricular activities driven by a purpose. However, sport has evolved from an activity to an art, a way of life. As cited by Edgar (2015), Kant's definition of beauty as a characterization of sport states that sport is purposiveness without purpose. To elaborate, sport is a structured and disciplined activity, with rules that determine the meaning and legitimacy of a given action within the game. Though sport has become a platform of influence in modern American sport, sport governed under white America's pretense has no external purpose that could allow the sport to meaningfully correlate to the non-sporting world. The purposiveness of sport is clearly presented by constitutive rules of the sport. These rules allow spectators and participants to use rules to understand the guidelines and restrictions of the sport. The purposiveness does not place importance on winning yet outlines how to keep score within the sport. Furthermore, the purposiveness of sport outlines how participants should interact with each other. Though there are unofficial sets of ethics

incorporated with sport, the constitutive rules of any sport provide a marker on how the game should be played.

“Purposiveness without purpose”. In this case, without purpose refers to the enjoyment of sport. Though sport often tracks success by the score displayed on the scoreboard, the score does not measure the level of enjoyment each participant receives from the sport. The pre-lusory goals associated with sport have derived from the term, game, which was derived from the term, play. In simpler terms, sport are constructive activities that are infused with measurable competition that originated from the free-spirited activity of play (Suits, 1995). As stated by Meier (Morgan & Meier, 1995, p. 32), play is simply and profitably, an activity voluntarily pursued for predominantly intrinsic reasons. For the athletes who understand the pre lusory goals of their respective sport, their intrinsic reasons for participating in the sport should allow them to happily experience all aspects of the tricky triad. As termed by Bernard Suits, the tricky triad refers to the interactions of game, sport and play. Furthermore, Suits proposed that game, sport and play interacted with each other equally (as cited by Morgan & Meier, 1995, p. 20). According to Meier’s version of the tricky triad, the demonstration of physical skill and prowess of sport is fully engulfed in the goal directed, rules governed aspect of game, while the intrinsic rewards aspect of play only interacts with game and sport about 30 percent of the time, respectively (as cited by Morgan & Meier, 1995, p. 33). Though this interaction could very well be correct, I do not believe that it is accurate for modern day sport.

Unfortunately, modern day sport does not incorporate play at all. Competitive sport leagues focus solely on the outcome of competition, winning. Again, based on commercialism, winning often equates to profit. Though such an approach rarely affects the personal relationships between athletes, this approach has the capacity of ignoring the play



aspect, eliminating the intrinsic rewards associated with the real beauty related to the process of winning. The process has much more to do with the participating athletes of the moral community than the actual outcome of the competition. All of which occurs through the general purpose of competitive sport as an attempt to perform efficiently enough to win the nominal competition within the competition.

The process of preparing for elite level competitive sport is strenuous. In team sport, the preparation is often rigorous, imploring challenging physical conditioning that not only prepares the body but prepares the mind and soul for adversity. The most valuable aspect to the process of winning in team sport is the camaraderie the process creates. Strategically, each member on the team must rely on each of their teammates to fulfill their role on the team. In all roles, one must physically and mentally prepare to be successful. As athletes and coaches, when one knows that their peers have endured the process of preparation to win, then one gives and receives respect and honor. This honor serves as a membership to the moral community of competitive sport.

In modern American society, Americans unofficially accept that competitive sport and the members of its community acts as its own moral community. Some argue the basis of this moral reasoning is in allowing such a moral community to exist. One could parallel this with white America's belief in idealism. . Despite such idealism, there are other individuals who are members of this moral community whose personal values do not align with such idealism. Despite common belief, athletes compose this moral community. Executives and administrators, support staff members, cheerleaders, referees, and even unattached fans serve as bystanders to this moral community with the possibility of membership through trial and error. Due to the dynamic within the relationships between the athletes, all support staff, coaches, and executives must earn respect and trust. Similar to bystanders at a game of the

Dozens a bystander may be unwillingly pulled into the culture of this moral community. When this occurs, the bystander has the opportunity to prove oneself within the community of competitive sport or eliminate their access to the moral community. To prove oneself within the community, just as in a match of the dozens, one must display respect for the process of winning and display such respect in an emotional yet charismatic manner. To display respect, one must present a sense of empathy for the process of preparation. Additionally, the bystander must display form of cultural humility, understanding that they are foreign to the moral community and cannot judge without understanding the culture. Judgement without understanding is offensive in any community. However, judgement against the moral community of competitive sport is result of the bystander being offended by the values of the moral community of competitive sport. For those within the moral community, such judgement is arrogant as one cannot judge what they have not experienced. Judgement rather than opposition eliminates the bystander's access and acceptance in the moral community of sport.

Though I speak of the moral community of competitive sport as a separate entity of modern society, I contend that competitive sport exists as a micro society within modern American society. Furthermore, I contend that the moral community of competitive sport is a microcosm of what a moral and ethical American society. The moral argument opposing this statement is the illusion that the members of the moral community seek only immoral values- money, fame, and stature. Competitive sport, particularly on the professional and collegiate level and most recently on the high school level, is definitely enthralled with the allure of the commercialism of sport. Athletes who reach the professional level of competitive sport, especially in the "money-making" sports, are exposed to amounts of money, fame, stature one could never imagine. Such rewards for their athletic talents is appealing to all athletes.

However, I am troubled to believe that the rewards serve as the main source of wanting to compete; Those who garnish the most rewards from the commercialism of competitive sport.

African American tradition and all it encompasses, in modern American society, derived from the Yoruba culture of West Africa. Since enslavement, blacks have been forced to find enjoyment and solice in the little freedoms given by the New World. Blacks were able to infuse purposive play into the process of survival and success through verbal and nonverbal linguistics. From signification, to playing the Dozens, to the cool pose, to trash talk, blacks have used their voice as a tool to establish hierarchy within their communities while preparing the members of the community for adversity. Furthermore, the Yoruba culture also encouraged a sense of style and flash. Despite excess verbal interactions involved with playing the Dozens and trash talk, blacks also learned to carry their confidence in their body carriage and apparel choice. In the New World, blacks were not offered a voice throughout American society. Therefore, blacks used loud clothing, seeming lazy and insufficient walking gaits, jewelry, and tattoos to express themselves in an oppressive society.

In conclusion, the data collected in this study, in conjunction with the philosophical assessment of the origin of trash talk supports the direct correlation between competitive sport in modern American society and the current sociological background of America. The American government has established a set of laws, which often times have failed the African American communities in America. The reason for this failure is that the power bloc of America, politicians, established the set of laws based on idealism within upper class America. One must also consider that the laws are possibly established to protect the immoral values – money, fame, and stature, of the upper class Americans. In a society which

places such importance on immoral values, the socialized ethics or law are materialized with intentions to support the values of the society.

Like the American government, competitive sport has its governing bodies such as the NCAA (NCAA, 2015), NBA (National Basketball Association, 2017), and NFL (National Football League, 2018). Like the American government, each governing body in competitive sport have established a set of socialized ethics or regulations that govern the behavior of all constituents. Like the American government, the regulations in competitive sport have often failed African American athletes. The regulations, established by members of the power bloc from white America only consider the social values of their cultural background. Through the evolution of American sport, as a result of the integration of African American athletes and their statistical dominance in sport, the established regulations can no longer relate to the moral community of modern American sport. A set of socialized ethics cannot be the standard or reasoning to a society with a different set of values. The socialized ethics in competitive sport must align with the moral values of its members.

In an effort to present a final summary of the study, I conclude that trash talk's prominent presence in competitive sport is a direct reflection of black traditional culture's influence on modern American society. The Signifying Monkey's (Gates Jr., 1988) cool pose (Majors & Billson, 1992) is the norm regarding behavior of those who come from, middle to low social class, urban areas of America. With the integration of black athletes in major American sport, those members of the elite social class, mostly members of white America who reside in the upper class urban areas and/or rural areas, have become more exposed to black culture through competitive sport. The popularity of social media in conjunction with socialized ethics based on values within white America, in competitive sport and modern American society, has exacerbated the effect of black culture on modern American society.

Black culture's influence on modern American society has created conflict across cultures and subcultures of America. A portion of the conflict has created cognitive dissonance amongst the elite of the elite social class. Cognitive dissonance is a theory which refers to a situation involving conflicting attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors. This situation produces feeling of discomfort leading to an alteration in one's attitude, beliefs, or behavior to reduce the discomfort (Festinger, 1957). These individuals represent the those who interpret the vernacular and behavior associated with trash talk as violations against the socialized ethics of sport and modern American society. The other portion of the conflict no longer is a conflict. This conflict solely refers to the cultural backgrounds of those are members of the cultures and subcultures of America. To clarify, every citizen or person living in America is member of at least one culture and one subculture.

When one takes the time out to watch competitive sport in modern America, the social residue of the University of Michigan's Fab 5's (Hehir, 2011) demeanor, style, way of play, music, and trash talk continues to spread. Athletes of all ethnicities, ages, and social classes have adopted the physical and social characteristics of the Jalen Rose and the other members of the Fab Five (Hehir, 2011). In almost any social space in America, you can observe the clothing fashion influence of the urban black culture. Hair styles are bright and creative, clothing is loud and risque, and the manner in which you wear your clothing is as important as the clothing. On playgrounds and televisions across America, you can observe athletes competing for victory with style points vividly on their minds. The more difficult the catch on the football field, the more prowess. The flashier the ball handling on the basketball court, the more YouTube (2018) views one gets. In any competitive sporting event, you can observe celebratory fist pumps, chest bumps, high fives, and screams following an impressive and/or important play during competition. In conjunction with such behavior on

the competitive field, on personal mobile phones, computers, and televisions, fans and athletes use insult talk to commentate for a competition before, during, and after the competition. In addition, the current President of the United States of America, Donald Trump's use of and/or acceptance insult talk on social media as a marker of black vernacular tradition's influence on the sociology and moral reasoning of those in America.

## Chapter Six: Implications

With the prominence of trash talk and the behaviors associated with trash talk in competitive sport in modern America growing, it is important to understand the intentionality of trash talk. This study attempted to assess the intentionality across several demographic categories. The significance of the study presents data supporting the use of trash talk across sport with the intent to positively affect competition. The use of trash talk across sport presents trash talk as a tool that positively effects the signifier and the signified. Trash talk may serve as a motivational tool to respond to failure. Trash talk may also be used to express emotions of acceptance between competitors, which creates a sense of comradery amongst participants. Reactions to trash talk can represent and influence self-confidence for participants. All in all, the results from this study suggests that trash talk is not intended to disrespect the competitor or competition. Trash talk is intended to show or gauge respect amongst competitors. The verbal and nonverbal interaction associated with trash talk enables competitors to prepare for the intense competition while maintaining the “play” aspect on games.

Though this study presents significant data, more data collection is needed on this topic to contribute to the literature on the moral being of sport for all participants. Despite the growth in the frequency of use of trash talk amongst competitive athletes, regulatory and sportsmanship rules, which govern the games within sport, are established to limit trash talk. The glaring significance of the behavior displayed during competition and the rules which regulate sport and the results of this study present major implications. Such implications require a commitment to collect and analyze additional data from athletes across America. The implications presented by this study evolve around multiple subsets within modern

American society- History of Sport, Regulatory and Sportsmanship Rules, Moral Reasoning in Sport, Education, and Sociology of Sport.

### **History of Sport**

Though literature clearly acknowledges the social impact African American athletes have on sport. Much of the literature does not directly acknowledge the social influence that the integration truly made on sport as a whole. To acknowledge the social influence of black tradition on sport, literature should reflect upon the social integration between cultures and subcultures in sport. Such integration must present research such as this study to provide evidence of the influence of black tradition on sport. Perhaps, many of the controversial African American athletes, such as Jack Jones, Muhammad Ali, Tommy Smith, and John Carlos, would no longer possess controversial reputations in the history of sport. Furthermore, sport literature discusses the origin of regulatory and sportsmanship rules. However, these rules serve only as markers in the history of sport. To present more significant data, further studies must continue to assess the influence of America's cultures and subcultures on competitive sport in America.

### **Regulatory and Sportsmanship Rules**

As leisure activities such as baseball and tennis became competitive sport, regulatory rules were needed to establish order within the competition. In this evolution, "play" became "games", focused much more on achieving victory rather than the enjoyment of participation. To contest this trend, sportsmanship rules were established to ensure that all participants behaved under the values of the socialized ethics. With the intent to maintain the purity and fairness of competition, governing bodies have committed to monitoring the rules in sport. In collegiate and professional sport, many of the sportsmanship rules monitor behavior off the playing the field as well. The integration of black culture and influence of technology and art



has exposed the strain in which sportsmanship rules have in monitoring behavior deemed unethical. Trash talk, flamboyant gestures, and fan interaction is at its all-time high in competitive sport in modern America.

This study presents evidence that such behavior is prevalent in the “money making” sports, basketball and football. Additionally, this study presents data that argues that the participants in these sports do not intend to violate the values of sport nor taint the purity of competition. In fact, the results of this study can interpret the use of trash talk as moral gauge between participants and a useful motivational tool. Based on the Racial and Gender Report Card (Lapchick & Cabral, 2013), 81.1 percent of NBA players were people of color, 73 percent of WNBA players were African American, 63.3 percent of NFL players were African American, and 55.7 and 54.4 percent of collegiate men’s basketball and football student athletes were African American respectively. African Americans represent more than half of the population of basketball and football participants on the collegiate and professional levels of competitive sport. In conjunction with the results of this study, such statistics provide a moral and ethical argument against many of the present sportsmanship rules. Particularly, the sportsmanship rules which should be considered are those which regulate the interactions between athletes, coaches, and spectators.

Sportsmanship rules are socialized ethics based on the values of the elite social class of the early 1900s of America. The members of the elite social class during this era of America were mostly wealthy, middle-aged, white men; Access to sport was limited to this group (Adelman, 1983). Therefore, the rules established in sport today only consider the values of the elite class of white America. With that in mind, sportsmanship rules in modern American sport do not consider the cultural backgrounds of any other subculture in America. As reflected in this study specifically, sportsmanship rules discriminate against African

American athletes, as they intend to restrict the athletes' freedom to operate under their cultural values. Sportsmanship rules not only immorally restrict athletes' behavior, the rules restrict the athletes' abilities to achieve optimal performance during competition by controlling the moral environment of sport. Such rules coincide with the prominent social divide within America. In an interview discussing sport in America and his film, *BlacKkKlansman*, Spike Lee (2018) discusses the parallels between racism in the 1970s and today; between law enforcement then and now; between the Klan and the so-called alt right; and between KKK grand wizard David Duke and President of the United States Donald Trump. Like America during the civil rights movement, America under the leadership of President Trump, attempts to stifle African Americans through dynamic statements and sportsmanship rules in sport which restrict the civil rights of participants. To do good within the platform sport provides, rule makers must consider the civil rights of all participants to uphold the "sport builds character" mantra as well as combat the social divide in America. To evaluate current sportsmanship rules and establish new rules considering the values of all subcultures of America, further studies must present significant data which supports the establishment of sport as its own moral community.

### **Moral Reasoning in Sport**

Athletes in competitive sport are presented with moral dilemmas during every competition. Through the lens of modern America, the competitive nature of sport may force athletes to choose between the pursuit of victory and the ethical values of honesty, respect, beneficence. Contrary to this belief, such dilemma does not exist in competitive sport as sport serves as its own moral community. Though the members of the moral community of sport honor the values of honesty, respect, and beneficence, the methods and manner in which such honor is displayed opposes the socialized ethics of modern America.

Under the moral reasoning pretense of those operating through socialized ethics of current sportsmanship rules, the moral reasoning of participants is compromised by the competitive nature of sport. Such moral reasoning displays moral callousness towards the deemed unethical behavior associated with trash talk. By studying the intentionality of trash talk, this study presents data that opposes the theory which states that competitive sport compromises the moral reasoning of participants. Behavior such as trash talk appears not to violate the moral values of competitive sport. However, the theory of moral reasoning strongly considers intent. This study presents data supporting the use of trash talk as an indicator of self-respect, respect towards the opponent, and an overall intention to do good by sport within the values of the moral community of sport. Such results imply that our understanding of moral reasoning in sport is not fully correct or our understanding needs to become more transparent. An understanding of the moral reasoning of participants in competitive sport requires factual evidence. To acquire factual evidence, additional significant data, from participants across all subcultures evolving around the philosophical approach to the sociological aspect of sport, is needed. Additionally, such data will provide insight that will enable participants, officials, executives, and spectators to understand the moral threshold that may serve as a boundary between morally good trash talk or “smack talk” versus trash talk interpreted through the lens of current sportsmanship rules. Once such boundaries have been established, sportsmanship and other regulatory rules can ethically monitor the behavior and actions of sport participants.

### **Education**

As an understanding of moral reasoning in sport becomes more comprehensible, education about such topics in sport philosophy must be updated. Regulatory rules, sportsmanship rules, spectator behavior, and the overall strategic approach of athletes and

coaches will be greatly affected by a clearer understanding of the behaviors of all participants. Upon the receipt of this information, educational curriculum and training incorporated with sport will need to be evaluated and reassessed. If fairly evaluated, many of the rules and presumptions involved with competitive sport perhaps should be voided, altered, and revamped. If such rules do not change, individuals, officials and executives, who are responsible for making judgmental decisions, should be educated and trained to morally reason concerning this present issue. Through such training, these individuals should be able to establish rules to include the cultural background of an “offender”.

Additionally, in conjunction with the growth in popularity surrounding competitive sport, many higher education institutions are now offering degrees competitive sport i.e. Coaching, Athletic Administration, and Athletic Training. Such programs involve curriculum with subjects such as Sport Psychology, Biomechanics, and Anatomy. Topics such as Cultural Consideration in Sport, or other topics that inform students of the cultural influences which affected the history of sport and the current operational background of sport should be implemented. Educational curriculum which includes information associated with the data from this study would enable all participants to understand the social backgrounds of those participating in competitive sport. This sort of insight will enable coaches to assist their athletes in continuing to compete at their highest abilities while reassuring and affirming the cultural background of each participant. The insight will also allow coaches and officials to adapt to behavior that opposes their own personal values. This study will perhaps present genuine access to the moral community of sport to college administrators, professional executives, and officials. To further understand the educational influence of vernacular tradition on sport, additional data must be collected.

## **Sociology of Sport**

Much of the conflict in modern American society evolves around ethics. Ethics solely consider the manner in which humans interact with each other. Ethics attempt to guide humans through these interactions based on common moral values. Through this study, we have learned that the values in competitive sport do not oppose the values established in common American society. Rather, the interpretation of the values of respect, honesty, and beneficence differ between the moral communities of American society and sport in American society.

Despite common belief, the interpretation of these values in American society do not police the behavior of athletes during competitive sport. Yet, the interpretation of these values in the moral community of sport absolutely influences the behavior of those in common America. This study has initiated the educational process in understanding the sociology of sport. Furthermore, the results of this study could initiate an assessment in which sport is not analyzed under the values of American society but how the values of sport support the moral growth of America. To truly understand the effects competitive sport has on the moral health of America, additional significant data considering the cultural backgrounds of all participants is needed.

## **Trash Talk Inventory**

The development of the TTI was intended to collect information about the intentionality of the use of trash talk in competitive sport inductively. The results of this study offer a valid and reliable measure of intentionality in the use of trash talk. Furthermore, the measurement of this construct allows one to analyze and interpret the meaning of such behavior and the impact it has on competitive sport as well as modern American society. Additionally, this study provides a version of the TTI which can be used deductively.

Conjunctively, the 10 items in the revised TTI and the 5 items of the socialized ethics factors create the TTI-15. The socialized ethics items provide an opportunity to assess the guidelines which monitor the behavior of the participants of competitive sport. To assure the validity and reliability of the TTI and TTI-15, additional significant data is needed.

### **A Final Thought**

The results of this dissertation argue for a conversation that is greater and deeper than one study. From a moral development perspective, this study offers information that may be highly troubling to the established sport community. The findings further argue that what we practice in sport may alienate individuals to the point that the aggression within sport is tempered by language to tolerate the actions within sport. Much more study and conversation is needed on this critical subject.

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## Appendix A: IRB Approval

### University of Idaho

Office of Research Assurances  
Institutional Review Board  
875 Perimeter Drive, MS 3010  
Moscow ID 83844-3010  
Phone: 208-885-6162  
Fax: 208-885-5752  
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To: Sharon K. Stoll  
Cc: Marcis Fennell  
From: Jennifer Walker, IRB Coordinator

Approval Date: November 10, 2016

Title: Trash Talk Inventory

Project: 16-125

Certified: Certified as exempt under category 2 at 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).

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On behalf of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Idaho, I am pleased to inform you that the protocol for the research project Trash Talk Inventory has been certified as exempt under the category and reference number listed above.

This certification is valid only for the study protocol as it was submitted. Studies certified as Exempt are not subject to continuing review and this certification does not expire. However, if changes are made to the study protocol, you must submit the changes through [VERAS](#) for review before implementing the changes. Amendments may include but are not limited to, changes in study population, study personnel, study instruments, consent documents, recruitment materials, sites of research, etc. If you have any additional questions, please contact me through the VERAS messaging system by clicking the 'Reply' button.

As Principal Investigator, you are responsible for ensuring compliance with all applicable FERPA regulations, University of Idaho policies, state and federal regulations. Every effort should be made to ensure that the project is conducted in a manner consistent with the three fundamental principles identified in the Belmont Report: respect for persons; beneficence; and justice. The Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring that all study personnel have completed the online human subjects training requirement.

You are required to timely notify the IRB if any unanticipated or adverse events occur during the study, if you experience and increased risk to the participants, or if you have participants withdraw or register complaints about the study.



## Appendix B: CITI Certification

### COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)

#### COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF 2 COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS\*

\* NOTE: Scores on this [Requirements Report](#) reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details. See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

- **Name:** Marcis Fennell (ID: 5062581)
- **Institution Affiliation:** University of Idaho (ID: 1003)
- **Institution Email:** mfennell@uidaho.edu
- **Phone:** 5624723614
  
- **Curriculum Group:** Investigators
- **Course Learner Group:** IRB Investigators and Student Researchers
- **Stage:** Stage 1 - Basic Course
  
- **Record ID:** 17233785
- **Completion Date:** 29-Oct-2016
- **Expiration Date:** 29-Oct-2019
- **Minimum Passing:** 80
- **Reported Score\*:** 80

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY	DATE COMPLETED	SCORE
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE (ID: 491)	28-Oct-2016	5/5 (100%)
Assessing Risk - SBE (ID: 503)	28-Oct-2016	4/5 (80%)
History and Ethical Principles - SBE (ID: 490)	28-Oct-2016	2/5 (40%)
The Federal Regulations - SBE (ID: 502)	28-Oct-2016	4/5 (80%)
Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504)	28-Oct-2016	3/5 (60%)
Internet-Based Research - SBE (ID: 510)	29-Oct-2016	3/5 (60%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505)	29-Oct-2016	5/5 (100%)
Research with Children - SBE (ID: 507)	29-Oct-2016	4/5 (80%)
Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBE (ID: 508)	29-Oct-2016	5/5 (100%)
Unanticipated Problems and Reporting Requirements in Social and Behavioral Research (ID: 14928)	29-Oct-2016	5/5 (100%)

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

Verify at: [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?ka4d9b290-2bd6-4899-b289-553e7f9b8a2b-17233785](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?ka4d9b290-2bd6-4899-b289-553e7f9b8a2b-17233785)

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)

Email: [support@citiprogram.org](mailto:support@citiprogram.org)

Phone: 888-529-5929

Web: <https://www.citiprogram.org>

## Appendix C: Trash Talk Inventory



# University of Idaho

### CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH

#### UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO

Project Title: Trash Talk in Sport

Researchers: Dr. Sharon Stoll, Marcis Fennell

Phone: 208-885-0213, 562-472-3614

Email: [sstoll@uidaho.edu](mailto:sstoll@uidaho.edu), [mfennell@uidaho.edu](mailto:mfennell@uidaho.edu)

My name is Marcis Fennell and I am working on my doctorate degree in the College of Education at the University of Idaho (UI). I am part of a research team through the UI and we are interested in the moral and psychological interpretation of trash talk in sport. Trash talk has been negatively associated with unsportsmanlike behavior, however, the perceptions of this sort of communication has not been examined through the lens of the athlete. Therefore, we are interested in learning more about the effects of trash talk on all participants of sport and their moral development. The University of Idaho Institutional Review Board has certified this project as exempt.

If you agree, you will be asked to complete a survey will take approximately 5-7 minutes to complete. It is hoped that this initial survey will provide insight that will lead to further research. Therefore, we may ask for further participation in this study in the future. This anticipated participation will come in the form of an additional survey. If you choose to continue to participate beyond this survey, please list your email below.

At the end of this project, I would be happy to share the data with you at your request. I will take every precaution in order to protect your confidentiality. For this reason, no identifying information will be collected during this survey and each survey will be given a unique ID number to identify each completion. If you choose to participate in future studies, please contact Dr. Sharon Stoll, University of Idaho, Department of Movement Sciences, 208-885-0213, [sstoll@uidaho.edu](mailto:sstoll@uidaho.edu).

Your participation will increase our understanding of trash talk in sport and its impact on athletes during competition.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled or impact you in any way. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the primary investigator, Dr. Sharon Stoll, University of Idaho, Department of Movement Sciences, 208-885-0213, [sstoll@uidaho.edu](mailto:sstoll@uidaho.edu); or the Office of Research Assurances, Morrill Hall, University of Idaho, 208-885-6162.

Subject's Name:

Subject's Signature:

Date:



# University of Idaho

Hello!

My name is Marcis Fennell and I am working on my doctorate degree in the College of Education at the University of Idaho (UI).

For my study topic, I am interested in your interpretation of trash talk in sport. You are participating in the study because you have participated in sport at some juncture of your life, which has provided you experiences in which we seek to gain insight. Insight gained from your experiences will assist leaders in sport in understanding the culture that lies within sport. Current initiatives actively discuss trash talk; however, we are interested in learning more about the interpersonal communication aspect of trash talk and its effect on you.

First of all, thank you for participating in our study! Your insightful responses will allow us to learn about your motives and effects of engaging in trash talk during sport. The attached survey will take approximately 5-7 minutes to complete.

While you complete the survey, please consider your interactions during leisure competition in the backyard or park, intramural activities, and competitive sport. Trash talk should be considered as any action or verbal communication which can be interpreted negatively.

Tell us and help us learn more by participating in our new survey!

<b>(Directions: Please read each question carefully and separately. Please chose one response per item by circling your choice. The response choices range from Strongly Disagree (SD) to Strongly Agree with Neutral (N) being the midpoint. If there are any comments concerning any of the items, please comment in the associated box on the right.)</b>							
Trash Talk Inventory							Comments
1	Trash talk is a part of sport.	SD	D	N	A	SA	
2	Sport without trash talk eliminates the element of play between teammates and opponents.	SD	D	N	A	SA	
3	The most memorable game I have participated in included trash talk.	SD	D	N	A	SA	
4	Anytime I participate in sport, on any level, I hear trash talk or I trash talk.	SD	D	N	A	SA	
5	The more trash talk occurring during competition, the more energy the players appear to have.	SD	D	N	A	SA	
6	Athletes who engage in trash talk are more talented.	SD	D	N	A	SA	
7	Trash talk gives me confidence in my skills when I am the one trash talking.	SD	D	N	A	SA	
8	Trash talk toward me during practice increases my motivation to achieve a goal.	SD	D	N	A	SA	
9	Trash talk is used by players who lack athletic ability.	SD	D	N	A	SA	
10	Trash talk can affect an opponent's intrinsic motivation.	SD	D	N	A	SA	
11	Athletes who engage in trash talk intend to psych out their opponents.	SD	D	N	A	SA	

12	<b>Trash talking is intimidating.</b>	SD	D	N	A	SA	
13	<b>Trash talk is intended to gain an advantage over an opponent.</b>	SD	D	N	A	SA	
14	<b>Trash talk is a violation of the competitive nature of sport.</b>	SD	D	N	A	SA	
15	<b>Coaches should not engage in trash talk.</b>	SD	D	N	A	SA	
16	<b>When your opponent is affected by trash talk, you can lower your effort level during competition.</b>	SD	D	N	A	SA	
17	<b>When a coach trash talks, I feel angry.</b>	SD	D	N	A	SA	
18	<b>Trash talk can assist an individual in experiencing flow.</b>	SD	D	N	A	SA	
19	<b>My teammates and I trash talk each other when we get tired training to get us psyched to finish the drill.</b>	SD	D	N	A	SA	
20	<b>It motivates me to work harder when I compete against an opponent who is talking trash.</b>	SD	D	N	A	SA	
21	<b>When a coach makes fun of my performance, I become unmotivated in the sport.</b>	SD	D	N	A	SA	
22	<b>An example of trash talk is, "We are going to blow you out of this game."</b>	SD	D	N	A	SA	
23	<b>Trash talk serves as a coping mechanism when experiencing failure or anxiety.</b>	SD	D	N	A	SA	
24	<b>Trash talking is acceptable between teammates when a teammate is not expending the necessary effort needed to succeed.</b>	SD	D	N	A	SA	

25	<b>Trash talk can be detrimental to a team following a loss.</b>	SD	D	N	A	SA	
26	<b>Age:</b>						
27	<b>Gender:</b>	Male	Female				
28	<b>Ethnicity:</b>						
29	<b>Highest Level of Education:</b>						
30	<b>Highest Level of Sport:</b>						
31	<b>Sport(s):</b>						
32	<b>Hometown:</b>						
<p><b><i>Thank you for your feedback! Your insight is really appreciated! Upon completion of the study, you will receive a copy of the findings. We anticipate further studies assessing this topic, please consider providing your valuable insight in the near future.</i></b></p>							