

Trash Talk in Sport:

A descriptive and philosophical assessment of -intentionality

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Table of Contents

<u>Table of Contents</u>	<u>ii</u>
<u>Chapter One: Introduction</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Problem Statement</u>	<u>15</u>
<u>Sub Problems</u>	<u>15</u>
<u>Research Sub Problems</u>	<u>15</u>
<u>Statistical Sub Problems</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>Independent Variable</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>Dependent Variable</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>Hypotheses</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>Assumptions</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>Limitations</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>Delimitations</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>Need for Study</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>Chapter Two: Review of Literature</u>	<u>22</u>
<u>What are the Origins of Trask Talk?</u>	<u>22</u>
<u>Protest Through Sport – A Communication Device</u>	<u>22</u>
<u>A Contemporary Social Divide</u>	<u>24</u>
<u>What are the Cultural Roots of Trash Talk</u>	<u>25</u>
<u>Signification- The Origin of Trash Talk</u>	<u>25</u>
<u>Black Mythology</u>	<u>26</u>
<u>Esu-Elegbara</u>	<u>27</u>
<u>Ifa</u>	<u>29</u>

<u>Tricksters.....</u>	<u>30</u>
<u>Communication Through Signification</u>	<u>32</u>
<u>The Other</u>	<u>36</u>
<u>Play of Doubles.....</u>	<u>37</u>
<u>Definitions in Black Literature</u>	<u>39</u>
<u>Black Vernacular</u>	<u>43</u>
<u>Urban Myth.....</u>	<u>45</u>
<u>What Can We Learn from the Cultural Roots and Apply to Sport.....</u>	<u>51</u>
<u> The Dozens- Influence of Cultural Roots</u>	<u>51</u>
<u>Dirty Dozen.....</u>	<u>55</u>
<u> Huizinga – A Link to the Dozens</u>	<u>62</u>
<u> Today and Dozens.....</u>	<u>70</u>
<u> Modern Influence of African Vernacular Culture</u>	<u>73</u>
<u>What is Trash Talk?</u>	<u>74</u>
<u> Trash Talk</u>	<u>74</u>
<u> Trash Talk and Gamesmanshp.....</u>	<u>80</u>
<u>Do Sportsmanship Rules Discriminate Against African American Vernacular Tradition ..</u>	<u>82</u>
<u> Discrimination Against African American Athletes.....</u>	<u>82</u>
<u> Return to the Fab Five.....</u>	<u>86</u>
<u> Regulatory and Sportsmanship Rules of Sport</u>	<u>92</u>
<u>Where We are Today</u>	<u>103</u>
<u>Cultural Consideration and Sport.....</u>	<u>107</u>
<u>Chapter Three: Methods</u>	<u>110</u>

<u>Participants.....</u>	110
<u>Protection of Participants</u>	110
<u>Research Design.....</u>	110
<u>Instrument Design.....</u>	111
<u>Perceived Competence.....</u>	113
<u>De- competition</u>	113
<u>Moral Community.....</u>	114
<u>Effort Expenditure</u>	115
<u>Response to Failure.....</u>	115
<u>Underlying Research Questions that Drove this Study?.....</u>	116
<u>Philosophical Methodology</u>	116
<u>References.....</u>	119
<u>Appendix.....</u>	136
<u>Institutional Review Board Approval</u>	136
<u>CITI Certification.....</u>	138
<u>Trash Talk Inventory.....</u>	139

Chapter One: Introduction

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 change 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 extend 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 take action 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 attempts 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 a sociological conflict, resulting in feelings of oppression of 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.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this descriptive and philosophical study is to assess the intentions and effects of trash talk on the moral and ethical culture of competitive sport.

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?

Descriptive Questions

1. What is the correlation between perceived competence and trash talking?
2. Can trash talk increase the level of competition?

3. Is trash talk an influencing factor in building comradery in sport?
4. Can trash talk be used as a coping mechanism to failure?

Statistical Sub Problems

1. What effects does trash talk have on the perceived competence of athletes according to the Trash Talk Inventory? x gender x status x age x geographical region?
2. What effects does trash talk have on the moral community of sport according to the Trash Talk Inventory? x gender x status x age x geographical region?
3. What effects does trash talk have on de-competition according to the Trash Talk Inventory? x gender x status x age x geographical region?
4. What effects does trash talk have on the athletes' effort expenditure according to the Trash Talk Inventory? x gender x status x age x geographical region?
5. What effects does trash talk have on the athletes' response to failure according to the Trash Talk Inventory? x gender x status x age x geographical region?

Independent Variable

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

Dependent Variable

Perceived Competence

De-competition

Moral Community

Effort Expenditure

Response to Failure

Hypotheses

H1: trash talk will have no effect on the perceived competence of athletes.

H2: trash talk will have no use in de-competition.

H3: trash talk will have no effect on the moral community.

H4: trash talk will have no effect on effort expenditure.

H5: trash talk will have no effect on response to failure.

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. The Trash Talk Inventory has not been analyzed through a thorough validity process.

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.

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 and players’ 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, 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 effect 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 will provide 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 descriptive and philosophical study is to assess the intentions and effects of trash talk on the moral and ethical culture of competitive sport. In the following review, the specific research questions will be addressed:

1. What are the Origins of Trask Talk?

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, Kaepernick chose to remain seated. Though not the first occurrence of him 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 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.

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. 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.

A Contemporary Social Divide

The significance of this social divide exemplifies the misunderstanding between the conglomerate of cultures which compose the United States of America, specifically white and black cultures. Many Americans who criticize the Kaepernick protest will claim their understanding 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.

Historically, oppressed

Historically, African-Americans have been systematically oppressed and often secluded within their own communities and harassed when outside of their communities. The systematic approach used to control black America has forced African-Americans to uniquely create opportunities to outwardly express their awareness and concerns without directly attacking the governing body. In Colin Kaepernick and his colleagues' case, taking a knee during the symbolic national anthem was 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. 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.

What are the Cultural Roots of Trash Talk?

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. 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 venacular theory*, 1984). The collection of these variations construct 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 (Gates Jr., The signifying monkey: A theory of African American literary criticism, 1988). 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" (Gates Jr., *The signifying monkey: A theory of African American literary criticism*, 1988). 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 (Gates Jr., *The signifying monkey: A theory of African American literary criticism*, 1988).

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., *The signifying monkey: A theory of African American literary criticism*, 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., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism*, 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., *The signifying monkey: A theory of African American literary criticism*, 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., *The signifying monkey: A theory of African American literary criticism*, 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 1. Signification Versus Signification.

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


Then in the black vernacular,

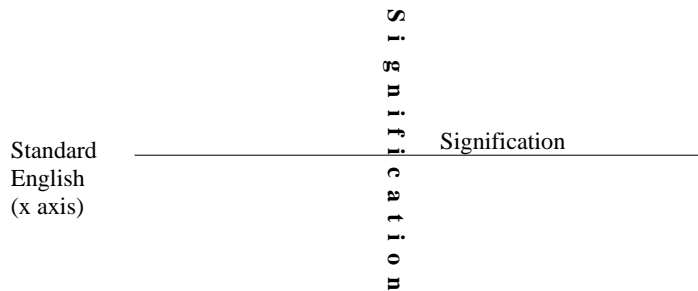
$$\text{Signification} = \frac{\text{rhetorical figures}}{\text{Signifier}} \text{ (Gates Jr., 1988, p. 53)}$$

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 1.2.

Figure 1.2 Black and Standard English

Black Vernacular
(y axis)





(Gates Jr., 1988, p. 54)

As seen in Figure 1.2, 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, Language behavior in a black urban community, 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, Talkin and testifyin: The language of black America, 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

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situation. It can denote speaking with the hands and eyes, encompassing a whole complex of expressions and gestures. 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

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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 ridiculing 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 signifyin(g) 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

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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 discourse within Signifyin(g).

Figure 2 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 signifying and metaphorical signifying. Metaphorical signifying refers to when the speaker attempts to transmit their message indirectly and it is only by virtue of the hearers defining the utterance as signifying that the speaker's intent to convey a particular message is realized. In third-party signifying, the speaker may realize their aim only when the converse is true, if the addressee fails to recognize the speech act as signifying. In reference to the Signifying 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 signifying. 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 signifying 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 remain 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).

What Can We Learn from the Cultural Roots and Apply to Sport?

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. 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 called 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 5th 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*, *déjj*, and *cappa* as synonyms for "vagina", and each is labeled "vulgar" or "very vulgar" and accompanied by the exemplary phrases "*Sa cappa ndey!*" "*Sa déjju 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 Gusi 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 comradeship 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 vilifying the bride and, through her, her kin. The typical themes of these poems include graphic descriptions of sexual deformity and misbehavior, accusations of uncleanness, poverty, stinginess, thievery, 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 descendants 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 exaggerations, similes, 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 constructing 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 combat 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 phenomenom 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.

What is Trash Talk?

Trash Talk

In modern American society, trash talk is often directly related to competitive sport. In competitive sport, the objective is to achieve victory in the perspective sport 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.

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 – 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 wage 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 setting 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 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. 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 defeating 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.

Do Sportsmanship Rules Discriminate Against African American Vernacular Tradition?

Discrimination Against African American Athletes

In modern American sport, competitive fields figuratively serves 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 they're 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 in expression between the cultures within 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 balck 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 delegitimize 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 delegitimize 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 condition, 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 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 pespective 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 taken into account, 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). Sportsmanship 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 sportsmanship 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 sportsmanship, 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 sportsmanship. This concept is based on the premise that a meaningful definition of sportsmanship should encompass several dimensions, which together represent the nature of sportsmanship as perceived by athletes

themselves (Vallerand et al., 1996). The five components of this definition of sportpersonship 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. Delettre (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 obvious 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 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 focusng 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 lusory attitude of the athlete must be taken into consideration when enforcing such rules.

Chapter Three: Methods

Purpose Statement: The purpose of this descriptive and philosophical study is to assess the intentions and effects of trash talk on the moral and ethical culture of competitive sport.

Below find the methods for the descriptive portion of the study in which a trash talk inventory collected data from a population base.

Participants

Convenience sampling will be used in this study. Participants will represent current and former athletes who have, at least, one year of first-hand experience in competitive high school sport.

Protection of Participants

Researcher is CITI trained on all ethical procedures and policies. All subjects are protected by the guidelines established by the University of Idaho Institutional Review Board (IRB). See Appendix for approval through IRB.

Research Design

This descriptive and philosophical study uses the developed 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, 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.

Instrument Design

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 I have participated in, 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 custom to such vernacular tradition. Intrigued to clarify the intentions of trash talk, the initiative to develop an instrument to measure and access 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. 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. 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 are: (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 measured 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 decompetition 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 uses items referring to de-competition to assess the intent of trash talk. (HOW)

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.

Underlying Research Questions that Drove this Study?

1. What is the correlation between perceived competence and trash talking?
2. Can trash talk increase the level of competition? To what level?
3. Is trash talk an influencing factor in building comradery in sport? To what level?
4. Can trash talk be used as a coping mechanism to failure? To what level?

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 will use 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 intends to assess the intentionality of trash talk. The study seeks 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.

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Appendix

Institutional Review Board Approval

The following IRB approval was sent via email from Jennifer Walker, IRB Coordinator at the University of Idaho on October 31, 2017. The study was approved for data collection in a graduate level Survey Research course ([WHAT IS DATE HERE](#)), stating Dr. Damon Burton and Marcis Fennell as the researchers for the study. The initial study used email and other social media platforms to collect the necessary data for the project. Due to response and interest in the topic, I, the researcher, have chosen to continue the study. [Below find correspondence about IRB.](#)

This IRB Proposal is for data collection in ED 595: Survey Research, and we need IRB approval to collect some of our data using Research Match (RM). All four studies should qualify as 'exempt.' The course is set up so students learn survey research by spending the first half of the course completing 4 individual projects, including developing a survey on a topic of their choice. They then spend the second half of the course in groups (a) finalizing development of a survey on one of the students' topics, (b) designing a Qualtrics survey to use in data collection, (c) collecting data from 100 respondents, (d) analyzing the data to evaluate the quality of the survey and examine the research question of interest, and (e) finally writing up their results and presenting them to the rest of the class in an hour presentation.

This semester we have four groups in the course. Group 1 has chosen to conduct a study on rock climbing. The purpose of the study is to explore the psychological attributes of climbers and their relationship to climbing performance. A survey has been developed to assess enjoyment, mental toughness, perfectionism and self-esteem in a climbing population (i.e., survey items attached). Group 2 is examining the reasons why higher education faculty and staff collaborate with their colleagues. They hope to provide insight into how to remove collaboration barriers and how to better learn and utilize collaborative strategies (i.e., survey items attached).

Group 3 will focus on volunteerism. Their survey will assess motivations and outcomes of volunteerism. Their research question will focus on what motivates individuals to volunteer and identify how individual values change as a result of the volunteer experience (i.e., survey items attached). Finally, Group 4 will examine the purpose of 'trash talking' in sport. Trash talking is generally considered to be unsportpersonlike, but this survey will examine the negative and positive effects of trash talking on the moral community within sport for collegiate athletes in the Northwest. The projects are great learning experiences for students and helps to enhance the overall quality of surveys utilized.

[Below find commentary from Jennifer Walker:](#)

I have attached a document that has a project title "Trash Talk in Sport" with Marcis Fennel and Dr. Burton, page 21. We don't have a lot of protocols like this where it includes several different projects under one application but I did it for this one. Hopefully you don't have any issues or concerns with this.

If this is the project that he wants to use for his dissertation then I would say he does have approval to use this data for research purposes. He should submit an amendment or a new protocol if there are changes to the study.

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:** Marcia Fennell (ID: 5062581)
 • **Email:** mfennell@uidaho.edu
 • **Institution Affiliation:** University of Idaho (ID: 1003)
 • **Phone:** 5624723614

• **Curriculum Group:** Investigators
 • **Course Learner Group:** Investigators and Student Researchers
 • **Stage:** Stage 1 - Basic Course

• **Report 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: <https://www.citiprogram.org/verify/7a4d9b290-2bd6-4699-1289-553e71926a2e>

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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, 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:ssstoll@uidaho.edu).

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

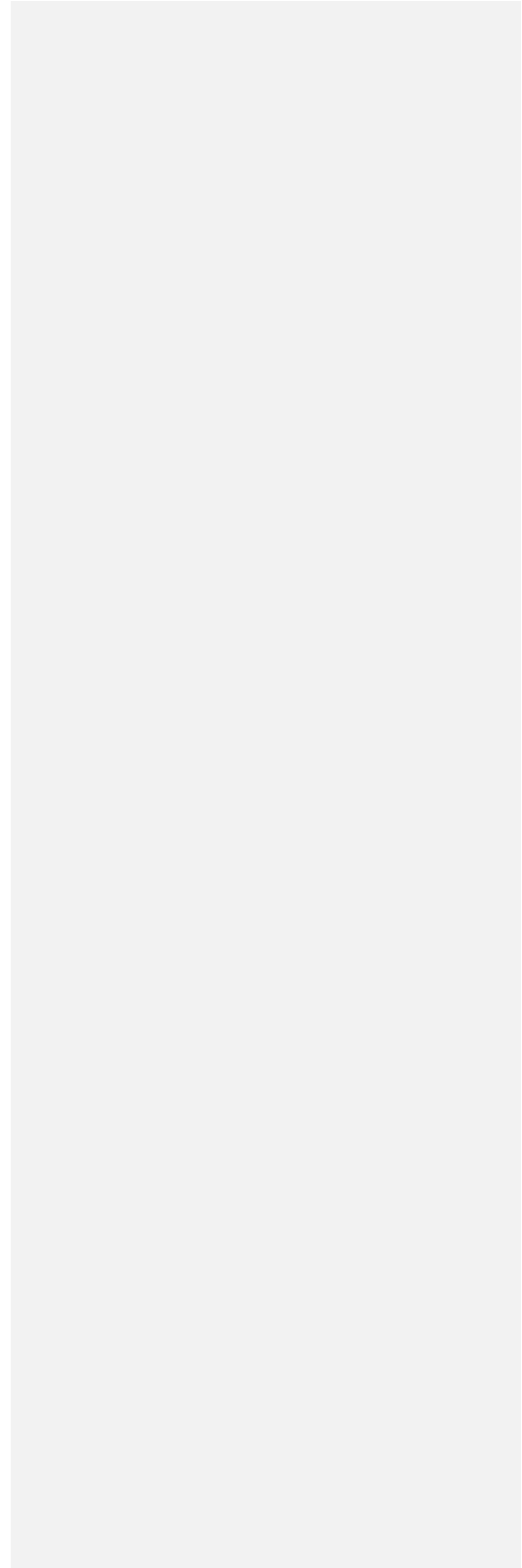
Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled or impact you in any way. Having 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, ssoll@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!

(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.)

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

25	Trash talk can be detrimental to a team following a loss.	SD	D	N	A	SA	
26	Age:						
27	Gender:	Male	Female				
28	Ethnicity:						
29	Highest Level of Education:						
30	Highest Level of Sport:						
31	Sport(s):						
32	Hometown:						
<p><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></p>							