

4 Years a Football Player: The Social Reproduction of Restricted Agency

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## **4 YEARS A FOOTBALL PLAYER: THE SOCIAL REPRODUCTION OF RESTRICTED AGENCY**

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**Abstract:** Collegiate sport is a reflection of society with regard to the potent and pervasive power structures that both perceptibly and subtly dominates it's inner workings. These structures limit subordinate groups and empower dominant groups through an unequal distribution of cultural capital, monetary gain, rules and regulations placed upon collegiate football and basketball players. Historically, slaves were severely restricted in traveling because of their status as property, while slave masters enjoyed unrestricted travel. A similar paradox exists within Division-I collegiate football. For a collegiate athlete to transfer they must be granted a release, via official documents, from the head coach and athletic director. While there are similar transfer limitations in all collegiate sports, football and basketball, which have the largest African American participation rates, are the only college sports that have restrictions for advancement to the professional ranks from high school. These various restrictions and parameters bear an uncanny similarity to the plantation model that existed during the years of American slavery. This article will examine these transfer parameters within the inequitable structures of college football through the framework internal colonialism. This article's insight will help push the conversation of proposed economic and ethical power redistribution of collegiate football players and head coaches seeking to transfer.

**Keywords:** African American; college football; internal colonialism; NCAA transfer bylaws; Black; Black males; restricted agency; social reproduction; college athletics exploitation; free agency

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College football as entertainment, recreation and socioeconomic mobility has afforded some Black men economic opportunities, but also is accompanied by many sacrifices. For many Black football athletes there is a higher level of athletic identity than their White

counterparts that is also associated with stronger desire to play professionally (Harrison, Azzarito & Burden, 2004; Bimper & Harrison, 2011; Harrison, Sailes, Rotich & Bimper, 2011). Consequently, the only perceived path to the athlete's professional dreams runs through the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The NCAA is one of the governing bodies of college football in American society. The NCAA and its member institutions have been accused of exploitive nature of the student-athletes for decades (Leonard, 1986; Acain, 1997; Carrabis, 2010). Many of the scholars writing on the issues of exploitation examine college basketball and football due to the sports' ability to generate millions of dollars in revenue for their institutions and the NCAA (Rhatigan, 1984; Beamon, 2008; Hawkins, 2010). Conversely, not very much literature has been published on the exploitive nature of the transfer bylaws written by the NCAA.

In 2008 the University of Washington (UW) had just finished their first winless football season in school history. With a couple games remaining in the season Washington's athletic director announced the termination of the head football coach at the end of the season. At that moment a search began for the recipient of a winless football team in a financially successful athletic department. After an extensive search Steve Sarkisian was chosen and accepted the head position. Coach Sarkisian came from the University of Southern California (USC), where he was once a coordinator under head coach Pete Carroll. The NCAA did not regulate Sarkisian's move within conference, nor was his ensuing move back to USC to become head coach following the 2012-13 season. Thus, there were no repercussions for his move to another Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) Division-I (D-I) or his move to another Pacific-12 (Pac-12) institution. On the other hand, from the perspective of a college football player seeking to transfer there are numerous barriers he must overcome. The player must first be granted permission by their present athletic administration to speak with another institution and then be released from his current school to transfer. If transferring from an FBS Division-1 institution there are penalties compounded by additional penalties barring a transfer within the athlete's current conference. This process restricts the players' agency to transfer under Bandura's (2006) definition of agency. Psychologist and author, Albert Bandura defines agency as a person's ability, "to influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances" (Bandura, 2006:164). This article will help to illuminate the political, racial, and economic inequities between football coaches and players seeking to transfer from a FBS Division-1 institution to another in-conference FBS Division-1 institution. With respect for comparisons and analogies this article adheres to the sentiments of civil rights author and historian Taylor Branch (2011). He reminds society that athletes are not slaves, however they do experience exploitation. Branch discusses the use of slavery analogies within college sports stating,

Slavery analogies should be used carefully. College athletes are not slaves. Yet to survey the scene—corporations and universities enriching themselves on

the backs of uncompensated young men, whose status as “student-athletes” deprives them of the right to due process guaranteed by the Constitution—is to catch an unmistakable whiff of the plantation. Perhaps a more apt metaphor is colonialism: college sports, as overseen by the NCAA, is a system imposed by well-meaning paternalists and rationalized with hoary sentiments about caring for the well-being of the colonized (p. 84).

Thus, this article uses internal colonialism to make an analogy to the plantation model, not necessarily to compare football players to slaves in every aspect.

## **Background**

### **College football segregation**

Segregation as an ideology that has been practiced through various mediums throughout history. Dr. James Blaut, well-known scholar of Eurocentrism and colonialism describes the segregation of ideologies and the false superiority of Eurocentric and Western communities, ideals and histories. This segregation ideology leads to the colonization of numerous people across the world and the deleterious nature of various histories (Blaut, 1993). However, in the American context, Jim Crow has direct ties to White and Black relations. Dr. Jesse Dees Jr. and Dr. James Hadley discuss Jim Crow origins and ideologies in their book *Jim Crow*. Dees and Hadley (1970) discuss the beginnings of Jim Crow as a term coming from the discussion of a Cincinnati Black face song in 1832 and the first racial issue dealing with Jim Crow appeared in 1841 in relation to a separate Negro railway car (Dees & Hadley, 1970). Reading further the authors outline the basic philosophy of Jim Crow in various points, which explained White American’s rationale for Jim Crow’s segregation and control over Black people perpetuated by the idea of superiority and purity of White Americans. Jim Crow was practiced through the physical separation of races. For example, signs posted around public places denoting the separation of “colored” and “White” facilities (Brown & Valk, 2010). The racial separation of society was also practiced in college football.

College football at predominately White institutions (PWIs) has been exclusive since its inaugural game November 6, 1869, Princeton versus Rutgers in New Jersey (The Birth Place of Intercollegiate Football, n.d.). Although there have been Black college football players to play on various PWI teams (William Lewis, Duke Slater, Preston Eagleson, Gideon Smith, George Flippin, Ed Harvey, and Paul Robeson) there were not any teams that allowed more than a couple Black players to participate due to the federal and state segregation laws (“Breaking the college color barrier: Studies in courage”, 2008; The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education [JBHE], 1998). It was not until, the famous 1970’s game between Paul “Bear” Bryant’s legendary all-White Alabama Crimson tide

team played the “integrated” USC Trojans, that the college football racial landscape would be forever changed.

### College football desegregation

The 1970 game between USC and Alabama was a blowout completed by the Trojans helping to debunk the myth of inferiority of Black football players. USC’s team boasted three Black players constituting an all-Black backfield and the first of its kind in collegiate football. Fullback Sam “Bam” Cunningham, quarterback Jimmy Jones and running back Clarence Davis were an unstoppable force that led USC to a 42 to 21 victory. The game’s most valuable player, Sam Cunningham, the athlete often mentioned as a one-game catalyst of desegregation in college football, finished with 135 yards rushing and two touchdowns against Alabama’s highly ranked defense (“The event looks at the 1970’s Alabama football game that brought an end to segregation in college football”, 2007). Cunningham was described by coach Bryant as doing “more for integration in Alabama in 60 minutes than Martin Luther King Jr. did in 20 years.” (JBHE, 1998:65). Cunningham’s amazing performance in concert with previous efforts of various Black college football players gave way for the desegregation of collegiate football. In college football winning is the most important factor and that was evident in Coach Bryant’s comments. The powerful difference between Sam Cunningham and what Dr. King was proposing was that Cunningham appealed to the convergence of interest between Black athletes and the Alabama faithful fans.

Interest convergence is a tenant of Critical Race Theory, which was developed from Critical Legal Studies in the 1980’s. Interest convergence as explained by Bell (1992) outlines the critical examination of the *Brown v Board* decision in 1954 boiling it down to several factors, one of which is interest convergence. Interest convergence occurs when Whites promote Black advancement only when it is beneficial to White self-interest (Bell, 1992). Desegregating college football for Black athletes allowed Whites to increase economic success of university athletic departments, ultimately leading to the notoriety of their institution and salary increases for the coaches and administrators. The spectacle of Sam Cunningham against Alabama opened doors for Black athletes’ performances to increase ticket purchases and donor base due to their athletic prowess eventually leading to wins for their universities. In today’s football world winning equates to money and money equates to bigger and better facilities and better recruits with the goal of sustainability of a successful athletic program. Ultimately, the decision to desegregate college football was not one of moral reasoning, but of interest convergence. The desegregation of college football aligned with years of major increase in NCAA bylaw regulation as well as cases opposing the transfer bylaws. According to Jenkins (2006) the transfer rules dissuaded the NCAA institutions to participate in “[a]thletic looting,’ or allowing members to recruit

and compete for active players” (p.459). Consequently, what actually took place was an increase in athletic department revenue, exploitation of athletes due to intense transfer regulations, and maintenance of the cartel type system all coinciding with the desegregation of college football (Jenkins, 2006). The 1980’s also saw a sharp increase in cases against the NCAA and its institutions (Jenkins, 2006), which acted in concert with the last years of controversial NCAA president Walter Byers. Byers is also the author of *Unsportsmanlike Conduct: Exploiting College Athletes*, which detailed his plan to increase revenue and regulate student athletes in a cartel fashion.

## Focus

### Transfer Rules

The focus of this article is selective and direct. The goal is not to analyze these two conferences because they are the only conferences that engage in exploitive behavior, but to illuminate how two of the major conferences exploit their football players. The transfer rules of the Southeastern Conference (SEC) and the Pac-12 conference will be examined for a couple reasons. For this article it is important to examine the winningest past and present football conferences and the coaches and players who have played in these conferences. The SEC and Pac-12 are the top two conferences with Associated Press (AP) top 25 football teams concluding the 2012-2013 season. The SEC finished with seven teams (Auburn #2, South Carolina #4, Missouri #5, Alabama #7, LSU #14, Texas A & M #18, and Vanderbilt # 24) and the Pac-12 had six teams (Oregon #9, Stanford #11, UCLA #16, USC #19, Arizona State # 20, and Washington #25) (“College Football End of Season AP Poll”, 2014).

Furthermore, The Pac-12 is the winningest conference across all sports, hence the trademarked nickname “Conference of Champions” (“About the Pac-12”, 2012). These two conferences are prime examples of trendsetters in terms of athletic practices. The transfer practices in these two conferences are similar to the other six automatic qualification (AQ) conferences for football championships (Atlantic Coast, American Athletic, Big 12, and Big Ten conferences) and ultimately all of them adhere to the NCAA transfer rules as well. However, these two conferences have their own television network, are among the top three revenue generating conferences, and are nationally recognized for successful football teams (“Pac-12 Leads All Conferences in Revenue”, 2014). Therefore these two conferences are exemplary and reliable sources for analysis due to their athletic and economic success.

### NCAA, Pac-12, and SEC Transfer Bylaws

The NCAA bylaws can be very convoluted and ambiguous. The NCAA regulations of Division-I football players transferring to another Division-I



school are seemingly straightforward. NCAA bylaw 14.5.1 rules that a player must sit out a year when transferring from a D-I FBS school to another D-I FBS school. The by law reads, “[a] student who transfers (see Bylaw 14.5.2) to a member institution from any collegiate institution is required to complete one full academic year of residence (see Bylaw 14.02.15) at the certifying institution before being eligible to compete for or to receive travel expenses from the member institution....” (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2013:168). The NCAA has created a year of absence possibly without aid where the football player must have residence at the institution by taking classes.

Furthermore, the Pac-12 and SEC bylaws are similar in nature and implications for the football players who are required to adhere to them. In both conferences there is an additional year the football player must sit out if transferring in conference. SEC bylaw 14.5.5.1 addresses transferring within the SEC stating, “[a] transfer student from a [SEC] member institution shall not be eligible for intercollegiate competition at another [SEC] member institution until the student has fulfilled a residence requirement of one full academic year (two full semesters) at the certifying institution....” (p. 23). Likewise, Pac-12 handbook states,

Each institution, before it permits a student who has transferred directly from another [Pac-12] Conference member institution to compete in intercollegiate athletics, shall require the student to fulfill a residence requirement of one full academic year (two full semesters or three quarters), and shall charge the student with one year of eligibility in all conference sports, and during the period of ineligibility shall not offer, provide or arrange directly or indirectly any athletically related financial aid.” (p. 30)

However, the institution the football player is leaving has an option to waive the additional penalty year.

## **Coaches and Players**

The purpose of selecting coaches and players, especially Black players is to analyze the inequities between the players and coaches including the racial inequities, which has been a focal point for many scholarly works on college sports exploitation. Focusing on college football players and head coaches allows the analysis to illuminate the inequities in the two major stakeholders in college football. The head coaches are the directors of the team and institute the vision and process for a successful team. Whereas, the football players are equally as important, they are the engine that makes college football the colossal industry that it is. Henceforth, the coach and athlete in focus have both sought and successfully moved schools within the same conference of their original institution.

Coach Steve Sarkisian’s career track will be analyzed from his stint as a coordinator at USC through his matriculation to UW as the head coach and back



to USC as the head coach. Although he was hired at an in-conference institution, Coach Sarkisian was not subject to any transfer regulations nor was he subject to the restrictions of a release from the school for this lateral move within the conference. Furthermore, coach Sarkisian proceeded to be hired back to USC where he will serve as the new head coach for the 2014-2015 football season, again without penalty for leaving abruptly without notice. Coach Sarkisian is a prime example of the inequity between football players and coaches because he did not experience any negative consequences whatsoever during both of his lateral moves within the Pac-12 conference.

Football player Cameron Newton's transfer journey was rough and rugged, as he had to attend a junior college in Texas to escape the release of the University of Florida. Mr. Newton played the 2007 season behind two-time Heisman winner Tim Tebow and was on the team in 2008 before he had an incident with the theft of a laptop ("Florida's Newton faces felony counts after fellow student's laptop stolen", 2008). Once seeking a transfer he was not authorized to transfer directly out of the University of Florida to another SEC school barring a release from Florida. Since he was not granted a release he transferred to a division level lower than Division-I FBS. The NCAA bylaws allow a player to transfer to a lower tier institution (D-I Football Championship Series, Division-II, Division-III, junior college or community college) from a D-I FBS school without penalty. After winning a national championship at Blinn College he then transferred back into the SEC to play for Auburn University without penalty.

## Conceptual Framework

### Colonialism

Before examining the exploitive situation of college football through the framework of internal colonization, colonialism must be defined. Hawkins (2010) outlines the colonialism argument of Memmi's (1965) work *The colonizer and the colonized*. Memmi (1965) explains colonialism as a politically and economically controlling institution established through domination. Sociologist Robert Blauner adds to the definition describing it as an, "establishment of domination over a geographically external political unit, most often inhabited by people of different race and culture, where this domination is political and economic, and the colony exists subordinated to and dependent upon the mother country." (Blauner, 1969:395). Césaire (2000) adds to both author's definition calling colonization "a campaign to civilize barbarism from which there may emerge at any moment the negation of civilization" (p. 40). Hawkins (2010) writes, "an example of colonialism is the European colonization of Africa, Asia, and the original territory of Americas" (p. 42). In Hawkins' examples the European colonizers invaded different geographic locations to

exploit the people, land, and culture. Through the definitions of Memmi (1965), Blauner (1969), and Césaire (2000) colonialism will be used to describe the similarities and differences from internal colonialism in the next section.

### **Internal Colonialism**

The frameworks of internal colonialism and colonialism share two common factors. The first factor is the power differential between the colonizer and the colonized. The colonizer has control and rule of the subordinated colonized. The second factor is the combination of the racial, political and economic exploitation of the colonized. Furthermore, internal colonialism has two major differences from colonialism: geographic location of the colonizer and the colonized and the use of force to impose colonization. Colonialism, for example, can describe White people traveling to Black spaces and exerting their colonial power to take over the Black territory. Furthermore, internal colonialism can only exist after colonization through violence and forceful seizure has taken place. Internal colonialism extends the colonial affect through “the threat of the potential use of force, legislative and judicial powers, cultural repression and the miseducation of the colonized” resulting in preserving the colonial system (Hawkins, 2010:43).

Internal colonialism has been used mainly to examine ethnic and race relations, especially within the history of the United States. Internationally prominent uses of the framework include Zureik’s (1979) examination of the Palestinian and Israelites’ ethnic relations and Hechter (1975), which surveys the basics of Celtic ethnic identity and ethnic solidarity in Britain in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the United States, internal colonialism has been used as an analytical tool to illuminate overarching comparative parameters of ethnic and racial domination. Some of the major American ethnic and racial groups scholars have examined are Chicanos (de la Garza, & Cotrell, 1976; Martínez, 1982; Pérez-Torres, 1995; Cabán, 2003), Mexican Americans (Moore, 1970) and African Americans (Cruse, 1967; Carmichael & Power, 1967; Blauner, 1969; Allen, 1990).

Since the major focus of this article is Black college football players, the works of the aforementioned scholars on Black race relations will best examine the exploitive situation of Black college football players. During the 1960’s and 1970’s internal colonialism was used to explain the crisis of Black leadership in the Black community (Cruse, 1967), analyze the political situation of Black liberation (Carmichael & Power, 1967), examine ghetto revolts (Blauner, 1969), and analyze the historical of the effects of capitalism on Black Americans (Allen, 1990). Internal colonialism is also a useful tool to investigate the economic, political, social and cultural inequities of college football (Hawkins, 2010).

Internal colonialism operates through four tenants: the colonizer and the colonized, economic, political, and race. These four tenants are the comparative

factors by which internal colonialism will be used to examine the situation of college football players and Black slaves in the American plantation model.

## **Comparative Agency**

### **The Colonizer and the Colonized**

The colonizer and the colonized tenant describes an interdependent relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The two-way dependence involves both members of the colonial situation out of necessity to sustain exploitation. Hawkins (2010) writes,

The colonizer brings the colonized into existence; by initiating the relationship of mutual interdependence. The colonizer is illegitimately privileged because of usurpation, that is, the colonizers property and privileges are directly and illegitimately based on the exploitation and pauperization of the colonized (p. 44).

Hawkins' passage suggests that not only is the situation of the colonizer and the colonized binding, but the colonizer also directly benefits from the colonized explaining the necessity to sustain the system. Eventually, due to the domination of the colonial power and the negation of other civilization, the colonized are limited to the necessity of the colonial system to survive. Similarities can be drawn between this colonial dependence and college football.

NCAA college football has historically been one of the largest platforms for players to showcase their skills against the other talented teams. However, the necessity for present-day athletes to attend an NCAA institution for ascendance to professional football has increased. Two historical events impacted college football significantly: *Brown v. Board of Education* legally desegregating American schools and the 1970's steam rolling of the all-White Alabama Crimson Tide football team. Legal desegregation of schools paved way for Black students to attend PWIs in mass enrollement and the loss of the Bear Bryant's lily White team opened the flood gates for Black athletic talent. Prior to these events college football's talent was widespread between Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and predominately White institutions. Before the 1970's college football season HBCU's sent more than 200 players to the professional ranks (Gordon, 2008). Today, the option to play in alternative collegiate leagues as a platform for the National Football League (NFL) has significantly decreased. The majority of the players being drafted and signed come from the NCAA ranks and thus opportunity for an alternative route has become less frequent. As a result, the NCAA's Division-I's virtual monopoly on talent and the platform to the NFL is continuing to grow. This has created the

dependence necessary for the colonizer and the colonized model, with the athletes' overwhelming desire to play at a school that can send them to the NFL.

On the other end of the colonial dependency, institutions need college football players in order to sustain their current exploitive model. Today, college football is a multi-billion dollar industry with the rising payouts of television contracts, yet all the money hinges on one source: the players. Without highly skilled players and their performance there would be no reason to televise, no reason to buy a ticket, no reason to participate in the culture of college football. Thus, there is an intensification of the binding model between the players with professional aspirations and the schools aiming to maintain recruitment and retention of elite athletes to sustain the economic system. Feagin (2010) further explains the bond-labor situations of American slavery, "[t]he enslavement of African women, men and children not only stemmed from a desire for profit but also from a concern with developing a scheme of social control that maintained bond-labor against the resistance of those enslaved" (p. 34). The bond-labor necessity was in place on the plantation and is currently being practiced through the relationship between college football players and the profit driven monopoly of the NCAA and its member institutions.

This cyclical mutual relationship between the colonizer and colonized is exercised by various collegiate institutions' athletic departments and the football players. In terms of transferring, increasing the number of skilled players on a roster increases its value. Hence, schools do not like to let go of skilled players at any cost. Schools hoard talent to increase roster depth and overall team talent. Therefore, if a good player, maybe second string, was looking to transfer he would have a hard time because the loss would take away from team depth, as the case with Cameron Newton who played behind Tim Tebow. Furthermore, the transfer protocol works in favor of the university by creating an ownership situation of the player. The player must seek permission to speak with another institution and then be granted a release to leave their current institution. This form of control has positioned college football players as property whose talent is owned by the institution, similar to plantation model slaves and slave masters as aforementioned. Conversely, coach Sarkisian, even though he was under contract, does not have to deal with this form of control because the arm of the NCAA bylaws and his institution do not require him to be granted a release nor to ask permission to talk to another school, thus an inequity is perpetuated. This binding relationship is the initial phase of internal colonialism and sets the foundation for control and exploitation of college football players.

## **Economic**

Economic enrichment is the main purpose of internal colonialism. Although other factors contribute, economics helped to enrich the lives of the slave masters and the country at large. Feagin (2010) recalls the economic situation of the enslaved Black Americans, "[s]lavery in the Americas became a large-scale

commercial and capitalistic, market centered operation, which distinguished it from slavery in the ancient world” (p. 34). Operating within this capitalist model calls for some participants to be economically disadvantaged and others to be economically advantaged. Hawkins (2010) writes, “the internal colonial situation breeds economic success and security for the colonizer, but for the colonized only economic dependency” (p. 47). The economic dependency of the slaves on the plantation was for survival. In terms of college football, economic dependency stems from a large percentage of the athletes coming from lower socio-economic statuses with aspirations of upward economic mobility via the NFL (Edwards, 2000; Harrison et al., 2011).

The plantation model was more than economic control, but economics was a root cause of slavery in American society. In the American south the cash crops included mainly cotton and tobacco. The farming of these crops took many hands hence the increases in the number of slaves over the years of the Atlantic slave trade. With the growing number of slaves came increased profits of America. Feagin (2010) discusses the wealth of North America coming from slavery and slave trade, “[f]rom the early 1700’s to the mid-1800’s much of the surplus capital and wealth of North America came directly from, or by the means of economic multiplier effects, from the slave trade and slave plantations” (p. 45). Not only did the profit from the plantation model directly impact the economy through dollars produced, but also through the expansion of industries. There was a growing need for textiles across the world and with the increasingly large productive capability of slaves, the U.S. was able to capitalize from this cheap labor source. Feagin (2010) expounds on the industrial addition stating,

U.S. cotton production expanded between the 1790’s and the beginning of the Civil war. Cotton was shipped to British and New England textile mills, greatly spurring the wheels of British, U.S., and international commerce. By the mid-nineteenth century New England cotton mills were industrial leaders in value added, and second in number of employees, in the United States. Without slave labor there would probably not have been a successful textile industry ... the United States would have been unlikely to become a major industrial power when it did (p. 45).

Similarities are apparent between the supply and demand for the college football product fueling new economic endeavors. College football has been a major economic force since the first broadcast of a football game in 1912. The University of Minnesota’s game was broadcasted through an experimental radio station, which initiated the process of mass radio production of college football games in 1929 (Zimbalist, 2001). The creation of radio broadcasting later flourished into the assembly of television broadcasts. Between the years 1996-2000 the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Big East, Big Ten, Pacific 10 (Pac-12), Independent Notre dame, and the Southeastern Conference (SEC) accounted for \$373 million dollars in contracted television revenue (Zimbalist, 2001). According to ESPN, current television revenue contracts as of 2013 were: Big-

12 at \$2.6 billion, Pac-12 at \$3 billion, SEC at \$2.25 billion, Big Ten at \$1 billion, ACC at \$3.6 billion, former Big East at \$126 million totaling approximately \$12.57 billion dollars in revenue (*"A comparison: Conference television deals"*, 2013). The economic justification for the internal colonial situation is apparent and magnified through contemporary television contracts. The main product for the television contracts is the teams and without the players the teams cannot take the field. Therefore, the NCAA and its institutions are bound to the players as the contracts depend on them. Although the television money is astronomically large, they are just a fraction of the total revenue generated in NCAA college football. The economic generation of NCAA football and the need for players to reach the NFL has created the binding relationship described by internal colonialism. The colonial situation has thus bred "economic success and security for the colonizer" but only economic dependency for the players (Hawkins, 2010:47). Economic dependency for the colonized affords the colonizer power, which usually translates to the establishment of governing ability in which to keep the colonized in the situation. Once governing ability is secured the control and domination become apparent through the decisions made affecting the colonized population.

In terms of transferring, the better the team the more revenue it should be able to earn. As mentioned earlier, the teams cannot function without the athletes and the better the athletes presumably the more money they program makes. Football is a consumer driven game, thus good talent on the field translates to a better product for consumption. The very same argument can be made for coaches, as they attract more fans and a successful coach will result in more wins, thus more money. Consequently, coaches are not obligated to adhere to transfer rules and thus exempt from control and the degree of exploitation the players are subject to. Thus, players' unwillingly forfeit their self-determination and are denied power to leave an institution at their discretion.

## Political

The political aspect of internal colonialism refers to the "means by which the colonizer rules over the colonized" through political decisions made "directly by the colonizer" (Hawkins, 2010:47). The internal colonial state of the slaves is reflective of laws and codes designed to keep slaves as an underclass and utterly powerless to make decisions that affect their status. Likewise in college football, the political power of the NCAA bylaws reflects similar principles, as the athletes are, for the most part, powerless to make decisions on the bylaws that affect them.

The plantation model exhibited political rule through limiting the agency that slaves had to impact their colonial situation. More specifically, the codes and laws limited their ability to leave the plantation. Slaves had to be given handbills or medallions to denote their status as property of their slave owner so

they would not be captured and sold. These medallions and laws prohibited humans, as property, from leaving the plantation without repercussion. The purpose of the medallions was to serve as a way for slave masters to retain hierarchy and status as masters to their slaves, supporting the “maintenance of the internal colonial power structure” (Hawkins, 2010:49).

Applying the political power inequity to college football, the NCAA restricts athletes’ ability to transfer to another school requiring them to be granted permission by their academic institution. The NCAA bylaws inform us that a player must first ask permission to even speak with another school and then they must be granted a release before they can transfer. (“*Transfer 101: basic information you need to know about transferring to an NCAA college*”, 2012) This severely limits the athlete’s political power to switch schools autonomously. By not allowing the players to transfer without being released, the NCAA has created a situation where the institution wields most of the power and controls the political climate sustaining the internal colonial power stratification (Hawkins, 2010). The result of limiting the athlete’s political power is continual subordination of football players. This form of subordination benefits the colonizer, or the athletic department, while simultaneously rendering the football players powerless. The player is powerless to change his restricted agency to leave the institution. Ultimately, in favor of the institution, the player’s restricted agency maintains the internal colonial power structure.

## **Race**

The largest and most visible aspect of the plantation model was the racial divide. British-American anthropologist Ashley Montagu writes, “[i]n a society that segregated people by caste and class, ‘race’ was the term that categorized the most visibly distinguishable groups of people” (Montagu, 2001:43). White people were generally slave owners and Black people were slaves on American plantations. This color divide coded American social spaces through stereotypes, social cues, and treatment of racial differences. Within college football the racial divide is apparent between White people and all other races. The power positions governing college football include; university presidents (90% White), conference commissioners (100% White), head coaches (85% White), faculty athletic representatives (94.4% White), and athletics directors (87.5% White) (Lapchick, 2013). As shown, there is an overrepresentation of White people in leadership positions in college athletics. Conversely, an examination of the football teams in the FBS reveals that the football student-athletes are predominately Black and increasingly so when referring to the top ranked teams (Lapchick, 2013). This power inequity is apparent between the slave-slave owner and administrator-athlete paradox creating the initial similarity between the two institutions.

The racial aspect also helps to shape identities for Black male athletes aiding the colonizer in maintaining their system of exploitation. Black football



players are heralded as natural athletes while being considered academically inferior (Edwards, 1984; Edwards, 2000; Donnor, 2005). Many Black student-athletes have been victims of prejudice and preconceived notions surrounding the “dumb jock” stereotype. Not only are Black student-athletes dealing with the dumb jock stereotype, they “are burdened also with the insidious racist implications of the myth of ‘innate black athletic superiority,’ and the more blatantly racist stereotype of the ‘dumb Negro’ condemned by racial heritage to intellectually inferiority” (Edwards, 1984:8). The empowerment of the Black male’s athletic identity translated into an opportunity for the colonizer to take advantage and benefit from the myopic professional outlook of a football player. The collegiate experience of numerous Black players consists of athletic exploitation and academic promises never met (Beamon, 2008). Later in Montagu’s (2001) work he postulates against the idea that, “races are populations or people whose physical differences are innately linked with significant differences in mental capacities....” (p. 44). Although Montagu refutes this idea, many have garnished this ideology helping them to make slavery a seemingly moral act and likewise legitimize the racial exploitation of college football players. The internal colonial model illuminates the exploited aspects of college football adequately by drawing attention to the inequities based on race, political control, and economics.

When the racial inequity is compounded by the political and economic exploitation the comparison between the plantation model and college football draw alarming similarities. As the percentage of Black football players is high, the probability of the player seeking to transfer being Black will likely increase possibly resulting in racial inequity. Similar to the plantation, Black slaves were not authorized to leave the plantation without permission and similar control is exhibited through transfer bylaws and NCAA positions of power. NCAA institutions’ athletic leadership is overwhelmingly White as were slave masters on American plantations. College football players are largely Black and slaves on American plantations were overwhelmingly Black. These similarities are apparent and visible, and the past cannot be changed, however the present and future exercise of equity and social justice can foster the reallocation of power and fundamental human rights to agency.

## **Praxis**

The football players at these Pac-12 and the SEC institutions have been exploited in terms of their political, economic and racial standing based on transfer regulations. The following suggestion will help to alleviate some of the exploitation by offering equitable treatment of the main stakeholders in college football. Considerably deregulating or eliminating the transfer bylaws completely, as a suggestion, can be exercised through allowing players to transfer based on their situations.

Considerably deregulating or eliminating transfer bylaws will allow athletes to have the same agency as their respective coaches so they may shop around for better opportunities. Just as coaches are able to exercise their agency to leave a school for a better contract, players should be able to leave a school for a better educational or athletic situation or if they are dissatisfied with the schools they attend. The players' ability to transfer for a better situation returns some control of their life function and purpose by not having to answer to a political and bureaucratic structure which may not have their best interest in mind. Giving the players back their agency will impact how schools treat with respect to their empowered ability to leave.

Universities may exploit players because they understand the players cannot leave without permission to speak with another school and an official release to transfer. The change in the transfer bylaws allows the players and their families to critically examine how the university is using or not using their talent. Based on the athlete's situation, the athlete may seek an institution that can fulfill their needs as a student and an athlete. Seeking another institution allows the players to evaluate their "market value" through the volume and quality of offers they may fetch and use that leverage to find schools that will value versus exploit them.

Ultimately, agency and control of their athletic and academic career is a basic human right that every player deserves, however these rights are denied when adhering to the inequitable NCAA bylaws. It is my hope that my suggestion evolves into actions toward equitable and socially just treatment of all athletes, especially college football players. The progression to action will enable football athletes to have their rights as humans and their agency to transfer as athletes and students.

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