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Hard Ball, Athletic Identity, and Black Masculinity: A Contemporary Chronicle of African-American Youth's Depletion

Several articles and scientific studies have been published on African Americans in organized baseball. Nevertheless, our understanding of African American's depletion from organized baseball continues to be limited. There is a tendency, for the most part, to sidestep this issue and ignore the perceptions of African American youth towards the sport. This study provides an empirical test of theories and anecdotal evidence presented by several authors. Using various sociohistorical references, and detailing key empirical patterns and trends among African American participants in organized baseball from 1885 to its steady decline, this study examines underlining factors leading to the decline of African American involvement in organized baseball. Data are drawn from urban area high schools grade 9-12. African-American male student-athletes involved in at least two sports participated on a voluntary basis. A questionnaire was administered to 300 student-athletes (equally distributed to baseball, basketball, and football participants) to determine their perceptions or beliefs about selecting specific team sports (baseball, basketball, and football). Regression results indicate that the depletion of African American participants from the game of baseball is influenced by several factors: the lack of interest in the game; the lack of media influence; professional baseball players' lack of influence on African American youth; the lack of appeal on high school campuses; and a dearth of baseball resources, such as summer camps and youth leagues in their communities. These findings support previous literature pertaining to the depletion of African Americans in organized baseball. Further, this study addresses future research, which may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the depletion of African American youth from America's favorite pastime.
