

Playing Offense: How Athletes are Impacting a Changing Administrative State

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Abstract

The start of the 2020s presents a broken American administrative system plagued by state ineptitude in a time of turmoil and government distrust. In their protests, marginalized citizens have seen their voices amplified by integral parts of their communities for whom they have cheered: Athletes. This Perspective draws attention to the idea of super citizens and their ability to influence policy. We argue that Black athlete activism that centers their social reality and legitimizes Black Lives Matter for broader populations is one example of a punctuated equilibrium that work to achieve administrative state change.

Keywords:

administrative state, Black Lives Matter, citizen engagement, protest, social justice, sport, systemic racism

The American administrative state has faced extraordinary challenges over the past two years, many of which highlight profound disparities (Taylor, 2020; Vilda et al., 2021; Yearby, 2021) stemming from state ineptitude in a time of turmoil and government distrust. The May 2020 murder of Minneapolis resident George Floyd at the hands of then-Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin ignited domestic discussion systemic racism and White nationalism (Thomas & Wright, 2021; Wright & Thomas, 2022). Floyd's death coupled with an overwhelming swell of support for Black Lives Matter (BLM, hereafter) generated the largest protests in the nation's history in July 2020 (Buchanan et al., 2020), with current and former Black athletes among the forefront (Thomas & Wright, 2021; Wright & Thomas, 2022). Amid this confluence of events, we are witnessing an administrative state positioned to make policy changes based on the influence of powerful citizen actors who have exercised an impact on public opinion, at a specific moment in time.

Historically relegated to legitimization only in the American popular culture spheres of fashion, music and style, the influence of the Black athlete has been celebrated in nearly all corners of the United States except in the political sphere. This structural disempowerment reflects the concept of Othering, in which a small group of people decide who counts as citizens, with rights to services. More specifically, Powell & Menendian (2016) describe Othering as “a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities.” According to Roberts (2021), public administration scholars often use “citizen” to refer to the general population in a given jurisdiction without explicit definition. However, “citizen” has a distinct legal connotation, often related to political status and/or affiliation with a sovereign state (Alexander, 2021; Shearing & Wood, 2003). People viewed as citizens are subject to and granted

protections by the state. Non-citizens are not necessarily afforded these same protections, and, in some instances, may be viewed as a threat to the state. In these cases, they are Othered, often along lines of race, gender, and/or religion.

Dating to the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome and continuing into the current Western and non-Western societies of today, athletes exercise a powerful role in shaping public opinion due to the role of sports as a purveyor of culture and public identity (Houlihan, 1997; Tomlinson & Young, 2006; Reid, 2017). They can be viewed as “super citizens” (Pope, 1997), who have the respect and admiration of the masses, specifically from the communities that they represent. This relationship may allow them a way to break down the boundaries that Other them, providing a platform to increase awareness of political, social, and human rights issues.

Today, Black athletes are positioning themselves to draw attention to the shortcomings of the administrative state that failed their communities all too often (Grove et al., 2018; Knox et al., 2020; Lu et al., 2020; McLeod et al., 2020; Mesic et al., 2018). They are now positioned to challenge the power structures that Other them. At a time of societal turmoil where calls for the group “to shut up and dribble” are increasingly ignored (Niven, 2021, Thomas & Wright, 2021), their activism is mirrored by White-led activism in the form of the insurrection-related events of January 6th, 2021, whose demographic roots are in counties where the White share of the population is on the decline (Pape, 2022). This is not the first time Black athletes have tried to hold the administrative state accountable. However, in this moment, one best characterized as a period of punctuated equilibrium, this dynamic represents a fight over whose reality and values will ultimately prevail.

With denizens¹ and super citizens alike highlighting instances of Othering and demanding accountability, calling for changes in procedures and seeking more representation in government,

this Perspective draws attention to this idea of super citizens and their ability to influence policy. The Black athlete activism that centered their social reality and legitimized BLM for broader populations is one example of a punctuated equilibrium that worked to achieve administrative change. Thus, we argue that Black athletes have emerged with the ability to shape the administrative state as denizens representing the physical, cultural and communal arenas that they play.

We start by assessing prior literature and outline our contribution to theory, highlighting the racist history of the administrative state and its manifestation today. Next, we follow this with an overview of the administrative state and sports. We conclude with four propositions for future research within this landscape moving forward. At its core, we discuss how historically marginalized voices within this country are emerging with power through sport as they aim to tackle social issues rooted in a broken American administrative state.

The Racist History of the Administrative State

The history of the American administrative state is shaped by racial bias in its practices and understandings (King, 1997; Barkow, 2007; Alexander & Stivers, 2020). While many scholars point to the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887 as the first feature of the administrative state, Alexander & Stivers (2020) observe its reign began nearly a century prior with the establishment of the Naturalization Acts of 1790, 1795, 1798, and 1802. These four policies across a dozen years defined citizens (within a sovereign nation-state context) as free White persons and excluded slaves, free Blacks, Muslims, and American Indians. This White male demographic was the only group that had the ability to affect administration in any real way, notably by voting and serving on juries (Smith, 2003). Alexander & Stivers (2020) remark that

the Asian Immigration Act of 1875 provided race-based regulatory power over individuals, specifically, Asian-Americans, until at least 1965.

This retelling of the history of the administrative state clearly outlines how the state codified racist hierarchies. However, this fact is largely occluded by the White, male demographic responsible for recording the history of the state. In practice, these hierarchies are perpetuated by the myth of bureaucratic neutrality that informs the interpretation of policy, promotion and hiring practices. (Portillo, Bearfield & Humphrey, 2020). Given this history, public administrators have played a “central, though largely unexplored, role in the interpretation and administration of government policies that positioned people outside of the state or maintained their subordinate status on the basis of race” (Alexander & Stivers 2010, p. 578). Crawford’s (2021) study of marijuana allowance also shows the harms this myth perpetuates with regards to policy implementation, demonstrating how groups experience the benefits and burdens of a purportedly race-neutral policy differently along racial lines (Carter et al., 2017, Garces, 2020; Marisco, 2017)

The Racist Administrative State Today

The administrative state presumably exists to protect all denizens across all walks of bureaucracy. Calls to balance social equity and good management date back at least four decades to Frederickson’s (1980) work but have gone relatively unheeded. We need only look at the increased magnitude of national, state, and local protests to recognize reduced public trust and support for the administrative state

Bryant (2019) calls attention to the Los Angeles race riots of the 1990s, followed later by the response of Michael Brown’s murder in Ferguson, Missouri and then protests in Baltimore and across the country with the police-related deaths of Freddie Gray in Baltimore and Eric Garner in New York City. DeMuth (2016) prophetically described the administrative state under

President Trump: “The modern American administrative state [has been reduced to] a regime of lawmaking by ad hoc managed democracy” (p. 121). It is the product of modern affluence and technology.

The current failings of the administrative state can be attributed to a host of political and administrative changes. These include the hollowing out of the administrative state with increased reliance on third parties to carry out government operations (Milward & Provan, 2000). Shearing and Wood (2003) term this a “‘privatization’ or ‘devolution’ from within a state-centered framework dominated by Westphalian imagery” (p.403) and describe the resulting form as a “nodal conception of governance” (p.404) wherein no singular set of empowered entities have priority simply for being an empowered entity.

These trends can be attributed as much to President Obama’s administration as it can to President Trump’s (Light, 2008; DiLulio, 2014; Lewis, 2019). During his administration, President Trump pushed for the “deconstruction of the administrative state” (Metzger, 2017). These have included a gradual downsizing of the service through attrition in part due to relocating department offices (Magill & Boyanton, 2020), removing some protections against dismissals through an executive order that critics argue politicizes civil service jobs, and significantly undermining the powers of labor unions at the federal level (Stracqualursi, 2020). In addition, some more selective attacks on the autonomy of the administrative state have come through moving appointments of administrative law judges from civil service to commission appointment (Yoder, 2018; Peters & Pierre 2019, 1530).

Lewis (2019) argues that President Trump’s criticism of the administrative state, especially of law enforcement, has led to reduced public support (Pew Research Center, 2018; Santhanam, 2018). During his administration, there was an intersectionality of protests ranging

across issues from health care, education, and racism among others (Fisher et al., 2017).

President Trump's rhetoric combined with the denigration of the administrative state has led denizens from all walks of life to further distrust their governments. Populations that already had a level of distrust only grew, with Black Americans serving as a prime example, in which only nine percent reported trusting the government in May 2019. In similar polls, Whites (17 percent) and Hispanics (28 percent) illustrated a severe lack of trust as well (Pew Research Center, 2021). The day after President Trump's inauguration in which an estimated four million people participated in the Women's March (Chenoweth & Pressman 2017), Andrews et al. (2020, p. 208) observe that more than 6,000 protest events with over 1.7 million individuals in attendance occurred in that year alone after the initial protest. One of the groups that emerged positioned to take a deeper dive into challenging an inept system is one that society has lauded in pursuit: athletes, specifically Black athletes.

The Administrative State and Sports

Before we examine the trends that got us to this moment, we take a moment to explore the intersection of the administrative state and sports. The administrative state comprises macro goal-related questions and micro governance decisions (Ford & Irhke, 2019; Roberts, 2020). Sports provides a context in which to explore these dynamics because: 1) sports at all levels (including professional sports and youth programs) can determine budget and financing priorities and expenditures in their local municipalities and 2) sports leagues are subject to decisions made by administrative actors.

Stakeholders of professional sports teams and leagues lean on the cities and states in which they live for public funding, often framing these requests in terms of economic development benefits. This investment of public funding is significant, taking the form of subsidies for land and infrastructure, operations costs, municipal services such as waste

management, and foregone property taxes, costing municipalities an average of \$177 million per facility (Long, 2005). Unfortunately, the economic benefits often fail to materialize, or they accrue primarily to the players, owners, and fans (Baade, 1996; Swindell & Rosentraub, 1998). When the broader economic argument fails to be persuasive, proponents of this public investment shift to focus on intangible benefits (Baade & Dye, 1988; Pelissero et al., 1991). These include psychic income (benefits accrued to residents unconnected to the production or attendance of sports (Crompton, 2004) such as community self-esteem and community collective conscience (Eckstein & Delaney, 2002). Matheson (2019) argues that since some benefit is realized, some investment in professional sports infrastructure is warranted. This takes place at both a national and international level (i.e., teams within national sports leagues like the NFL and NBA but also mega-events such as the Olympics and World Cup).

Bidding and hosting mega-events affect the administrative state in two major ways: First, an astronomical amount of money is spent to host these events and the host jurisdictions can experience a combination of short-term and long-term financial strain (Baade & Matheson, 2016; McBride, 2018; Zimbalist, 2020). Second, when bidding cities make presentations to build infrastructure, the acquisition of land to accomplish this task often leads to displacement of poorer residents as lower-income residents are unable to adequately represent themselves during these processes (Smith, 2009; Minneart, 2012; Watt, 2013; Dempsey & Zimbalist, 2017). This can create mistrust between denizens and their local government, illustrated by denizens' feelings of mistrust and betrayal in the preparation of the 1996 Atlanta Olympics (Smith, 2009). When local officials do focus on youth programming, they tend to use public-private partnerships, formed primarily with nonprofits. Stakeholders tout the benefits of these investments “as a means to underprivileged children acquiring social capital from coaches and other volunteer

mentors” (Leckrone et al., 2015, p. 248). However, this overlooks the financial barriers that prevent families from low socio-economic groups from participating in and reaping the benefits (Leckrone et al., 2015; Grix et al., 2020; Ramchandani et al., 2018). Grix et al. (2020, p.6) identify these trends as both “the politics *between* grassroots and elite sport, and the politics *within* ‘elite’ sport”, underscoring the political nature of the administrative state.

The question of sports and the administrative state does not just focus on infrastructure such as stadiums. The types of programs that are funded are not independent of the context in which other sports-related public decisions are made; in fact, public funding for local youth, sports, and athletics programs tends to go to sports that are successful at the professional level (e.g., soccer gets more funding than sailing) (Grix et al., 2020). In their study of how mayors address income inequality, Leckrone et al. (2015) show mayors favor economic development over redistribution policies.

Implications for the Future: Athletes as Administrative Actors

The growing awareness among scholars and social commentators of how the administrative state is not only biased but also diminished in its capacities reflects the administrative state as one in flux (Roberts, 2020). Protests against systemic racism and police brutality reflect a society that is in turmoil over the past 18 months as a result of President Trump’s actions to pit warring parties against each other as “people that want law and order” versus “people that want systemic change.” These demonstrations have forced administrators to reexamine how to increase administrative transparency within governmental systems currently in place or how systems can be modified or dismantled to create more equity and accountability. In today’s context, we are discussing the unchecked power of local bureaucrats, specifically law enforcement agents, to engage in activities that contribute to the rise of White supremacy and systemic racism within their local communities with very little transparency or accountability.

There needs to be a deeper dive into who benefits from the ongoing nature of administrative work, who is responsible for its current setup and ultimately are the goals of such a system (Portillo et al., 2020). This sentiment echoes Frederickson's assertion that administrators do not maintain neutrality and should focus on social equity and good management as values, goals, or elements to be achieved. Jones & Baumgartner's (1993; 2002) framework of punctuated equilibrium gives us a lens with which to carry out these examinations. The basis of PE is the assertion that policymaking in the United States is best characterized by extended periods of stability (stasis) and then punctuated by brief periods of notable policy change. The theory places an importance on two related elements of the policy process: Issue definition and agenda setting. This is relevant to Roberts' (2020) definition of the administrative state, describing it as "a type of state that seemed to be emerging at a specific moment in history and raised widespread apprehensions about the growth of untrammelled bureaucratic power." At this moment, previously ignored groups such as Black athletes are drawing attention to this growth and how it should be addressed within local and national agendas.

Sports act on and are acted upon by the administrative state. Within their own spheres of influence, they also mimic administrative states. From an organizational perspective, sports leagues are a species of organizations with commonalities regarding structural capacity and resource acquisition (Beard & Dess, 1988). Most leagues were founded as nonprofit sports organizations (and some, like the WNBA, still hold nonprofit status today). Yet sports leagues are individualist firms, relying on users and beneficiaries (in this case, athletes and fans) to generate revenue (Potter & Crawford, 2008). For example, the NFL held on to its tax-exempt status until 2015. That same year, the league made \$7.24 billion, up from just over \$3 billion five years earlier (Nadkarni, 2015). Resource-holding stakeholders seem to exhibit large amounts of

power with little transparency or accountability. Since many team owners and decision makers are White, and many athletes are Black, the picture is reminiscent of a plantation dynamic present in many nonprofit organizations (Gladden & Levine Daniel, 2021). For example, even though NFL players can make upwards of millions of dollars, owners and other authoritative actors lean on what Montez de Oca & Suh (2020) call patriarchal patriotism to insist athletes owe them deference and loyalty in exchange for their paychecks. In his recent lawsuit against the NFL and some of its teams, Brian Flores blatantly calls out this dynamic, with the complaint stating “In certain critical ways, the NFL is racially segregated and is managed much like a plantation” (Flores v. The National Football League et al, 2022, p. 4). This exacerbates issues related to racism and White supremacy (Thomas & Wright, 2021). Along with these outlined intersections and the current landscape illustrated by scholars and the deepening intertwining of the administrative state and sports we posit four contextual propositions:

1). The equilibrium is not punctuated; someone punctuates the equilibrium. Power flows appear hierarchical. Athletes rely on their teams (and by extension, the leagues) for salary, job security, etc. Athletes are often Othered, disempowered and are expected to perform certain roles. Their access to power and expression is constrained, resembling what Wilkerson (2020a) would likely describe as a caste system. Wilkerson (2020b) defines the concept as “the granting or withholding of respect, status, honor, attention, privileges, resources, benefit of the doubt and human kindness to someone on the basis of their perceived rank or standing in the hierarchy. America’s version is largely two-tiered with Whites playing the role of the dominant caste and Blacks as the subservient one (Wilkerson, 2020b). Through America’s racial evolution, institutions such as slavery, Jim Crow and the urban ghettos have served as “institutions” which

reminds Black Americans they are subordinates and the systems confine them “in physical, social, and symbolic space” (Wacquant, 2001; Forman, 2012).

However, this relationship, if unequal, is at least symbiotic. The leagues and teams rely on the athletes to actually play their sports as opposed to sitting out and merely having their rights retained by the respective franchise. They need the athletes to play to secure advertising revenue, box office revenue, image, and reputation. The leagues and team owners may control the bulk of the resources, but athletes do have some power to leverage.

Historically, athletes have leveraged this power to affect change in at least two, not mutually exclusive, ways. One is via protest: Tommie Smith and John Carlos raising their fists at the 1968 Olympics (with Australian ally Peter Norman), NFL Quarterback Colin Kaepernick taking a knee during the national anthem to protest police brutality, hammer thrower Gwen Berry protesting on multiple occasions against racial and social injustices. These efforts represent constructive patriotism, the “ethical obligation to oppose inequities and work on the nation through protest and dissent” (Montez de Oca & Suh, 2020, p.564). On occasion, these efforts are punished (or silenced before they can happen) as athletes are put on probation or sidelined². As a result of organizational or corporate fallout sponsors may drop athletes as spokespeople, potentially costing them millions because of their political stances.

Sometimes these efforts are officially blessed by various sports entities, used to burnish team and league reputations. For example, the NBA recently announced the inaugural Kareem Abdul-Jabbar Social Justice Champion, awarding Carmelo Anthony for “his dedication over the past year to pursuing social justice and advancing Abdul-Jabbar’s life mission to engage, empower and drive equality for individuals and groups who have been historically marginalized or systematically disadvantaged” (National Basketball Association, 2021). When football player

Carl Nassib publicly came out as gay and donated \$100,000 to the Trevor Project, the NFL matched his donation, saying the league “is committed to year-long efforts around diversity, equity, and inclusion” (National Football League, 2021). These types of efforts may be rewarded because they do not challenge the status quo of the leagues themselves or of broader power structures and are a sanctioned way to make change. International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach says athletes can “express themselves ‘in a dignified way’” and the Olympic Athletes’ Commission needs to “draw up a suitable way for athletes to act” (“Thomas Bach”, 2020).

However, approaches are changing. According to Wagner (2021), “Over the past five years, sports has embraced an activism that has quietly revealed a power shift from the rich, mostly White men who run them to the not-quite-as-rich, mostly nonwhite athletes who compete in them.” This has implications for the leagues in which they play, but also society at large. The impetus for this change is in part internal. In 2019, NBA Commissioner Adam Silver urged the league to move away from the term “owners”, encouraging instead “governors”, “CEOs”, and/or “managing partners”. As Kaskey-Blomain (2019) notes, “The change was made due to concerns that the term ‘owner’ can be viewed as racially insensitive in a league where the vast majority of players are African-American, and the majority of owners are Caucasian.”

In large part, though, the change is being driven by the athletes themselves. While athletes have a longstanding history with protest and change, we see increasing evidence of their efforts and reach through both episodic and ongoing efforts to protest racism and social injustices. Some of these activities are led by organizations charged with protecting athletes’ rights. For example, the World Players Association, Global Athletes, and Athleten Deutschland are among a number of nongovernmental organizations vowing to protect athletes’ rights to

protest and fight racism. In contrast to the IOC's attempts to govern protests efforts, some national committees, such as the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee have expressed what CEO Sarah Hirshland says is "our commitment to elevating athlete expression and the voices of marginalized populations everywhere in support of racial and social justice" (Associated Press, 2021).

2). What some see as a breakdown of the administrative state, others see as a breakthrough. All organizations are racialized (Ray, 2019). Sports organizations are notably White spaces. Those with power are disincentivized from examining power structures. The IOC's own attempts to govern protest exemplify this phenomenon. However, in the case of athletes, we see shifting power dynamics where historically minoritized people bring their own increased financial and social capital to bear on social injustices. They do so, in part, by using organizations outside of the athletic administrative state to exert pressure on and dismantle the forces of systemic racism (Gladden & Levine Daniel, 2021).

Given the existing literature within public administration, specifically by Thomas & Wright (2021), there is an avenue for a typology or framework that examines the intersection of protest and change within the administrative state based on the Black athlete activism³. For another macro level perspective, this content could be examined through the lens of work by Ford (2021, p.1) which looks at value conflicts within the public administration field and utilizes a "humanity-driven" approach to classify conflicts. These frameworks can account for power and othering to examine the difference in values and perceptions on the administrative state and specific policies among racial and ethnic groups.

There is no reason to doubt that American athletes will continue to speak out on issues that affect the communities in which they play. Increased access to social capital via

development and subsequent increasing use of social media has provided athletes with the opportunity to speak out directly to fans, communities, and relevant organizations about respective causes without needing a journalist to print their thoughts, further cementing their status as super citizens. Financially, four of the top ten highest paid athletes in the world in the past year reside in the United States (LeBron James (NBA), Dak Prescott (NFL), Tom Brady (NFL) and Kevin Durant (NBA) with Durant checking it at #10 with \$75 million (Knight, 2021). With the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) finally allowing collegiate athletes to capitalize on their names, images, and likenesses (NILs) in June 2021, there is reason to believe that the financial power of college athletes will grow along with their influence⁴.

3). Athletes who punctuate the equilibrium engage in social deconstruction and reconstruction. What appears to be PE (or a one-off event or moment) may actually be a series of active events. Part of this disconnect is rooted in the socially constructed nature of our experiences: athletes, fans, and every day citizens make assumptions about the worlds in which they live. This exercise of social construction means there is no one objective reality; rather, the people involved and the context shapes expectations about behavior (Raggo, 2019). Some athletes hold beliefs about how they themselves should act, including their right to engage in civic and political activity⁵. These actions pierce the reality some fans may construct about how athletes should stay out of the administrative state.

Athletes have successfully punctuated and subsequently reconstructed reality in part by scaling their efforts by partnering with organizations and social movements in broader decision making, The WNBA and the NBA are leading examples of these activities. Thomas & Wright (2021) provide an extensive discussion that highlights how athletes mobilized league support to ally with individuals and organizations such as BLM to address systemic inequities exacerbated

by Covid-19 and unjust police actions. Ultimately, these efforts are driven primarily by Black athletes (notably LeBron James and Maya Moore) and bring together organizations led by people who draw on their expertise and lived experience to address these issues. This work is an example of what Sikkink (2017) draws on in her book *Evidence for Hope* to demonstrate the legitimacy and effectiveness of human rights-focused movements and institutions and shows how the intersections of punctuated equilibrium and social construction can explain the rise in athletes as administrative actors we are currently experiencing.

4). Future influence on the administrative state is coming from all levels of sport.

Given that sports span national, professional, collegiate, and amateur realms, the spillover effects of athletes as administrative actors should not be underestimated. We are starting to see that calls for change not just occurring at the professional levels of sport, but also at the collegiate level as well, evidenced by women's basketball coaches Dawn Staley (University of South Carolina) and Tara VanDerveer (Stanford University) who spoke to the Democratic Women's Caucus to address gender equity issues within the NCAA under Title IX (Voepel, 2021). University athletes have started to speak out against racism, with then-University of Texas wide receiver Brennan Eagles speaking out against the university's playing of the school's anthems "The Eyes of Texas" due to its historical ties with minstrel shows last year (Pettit, 2020).

Increasingly, voices are striking a chord with sports organizations. In April 2021, the IOC reaffirmed its stance on protests continuing the organization's ban on protests at the Olympics during the start and conclusion of competitions and medal ceremonies leading American Olympic thrower Gwen Berry to state on Twitter (via Bushnell, 2021):

This doesn't deter me, or athletes like me, who want to talk about issues that need to be recognized," Berry said. "We'll speak out. We'll say what needs to be said. And we'll do

what needs to be done. And we do have support from legal teams and maybe the USOPC [United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee].

The nation will continue to see tensions between leagues, organizations, and the athletes over whom they have governance. Away from the five rings, major tennis organizations are working with women's tennis star Naomi Osaka in light of her decision to take time away from the sport, spurred by her desire to skip mandatory interviews with the press at the French Open in May 2021 citing mental health reasons. In the swimming world, the use of swimming caps specifically designed for swimmers with natural Black hair has been denied use by the International Swimming Federation (FINA), drawing attention to a perceived lack of diversity in sport. When speaking on sports governing bodies, 2020 Pulitzer Prize finalist and critic for "The Undefeated" Sorya McDonald argues that: "These global sports governing bodies are corrupt AF, don't actually care about athletes or amateurism, and they are abusing / trying to hold fast to power that is not theirs as they gatekeep who [is] female enough and who is not" (McDonald, 2021).

Conclusion & Discussion

As athletes continue to use their voices, there are multiple avenues to research the activities that are unfolding. Coinciding with a change in American demographics in the coming years, we will likely see the rising influence of minorities in public matters through their voices and the ballot boxes. Throughout modern history, sports have placed the spotlight on social matters, and athletes are only one group of voices. The role sports will continue to play is worth continued investigation. In America's current state of government distrust, we found that historically marginalized voices within this country are emerging in power through sport as they aim to tackle social issues rooted in a broken American administrative state. With rising financial and social influence, Black athletes have emerged with the ability to shape the administrative

state and the denizens they represent in the communities in which they reside. From the ballot box to the batter's box, these voices are loud, and they matter to our communities. Just how they will shape public administration in the years to come is an event worth watching on its own.

NOTES:

¹As we discuss below, the term "citizen" often carries specific political and /or state political connotations. Unless the specific context calls for us to use citizen, we follow the lead shared by Shearing & Wood (2003) and Michener (2017) and use the term denizen to refer to people subject to various obligations and expectations across the various public and private spaces in which they live their lives.

²There are a litany of examples of silenced athletes ranging from collegiate athletes to Olympic athletes. In 1969, 14 Black athletes representing the University of Wyoming were dismissed from the team when they sought permission to wear black armbands in a game versus Brigham Young which was considered a racist institution. Norman was banned from the Australian Olympic Committee when he provided the black gloves that Tommie Smith and John Carlos used in the 1968 Summer Olympics.

³A long-reaching parallel in more cited public administration literature is Denhardt & Denhardt's (2000) 'New Public Service' framework highlighting the need for public administrators to focus on serving constituents rather than steering policy.

⁴For example, University of Alabama freshman quarterback Bryce Young made approximately \$1 million in endorsement money before he played his first game for the Crimson Tide (Scarborough, 2021).

⁵An athlete's engagement can change over time. In response to his lack of public political engagement during his playing days in 1990, Michael Jordan quipped at the time, "Because Republicans buy sneakers too." In June 2020, Jordan announced that, in conjunction with his Nike-based Jordan Brand, that he would donate \$100 million to social justice causes over the next 10 years.

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