

Academic Stereotypes of African American Female Student Athletes: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Greendorfer (1993) described stereotypes as “extremely powerful and potent” forms of discrimination (p. 5). This study examined how stereotypes affected twelve African American female collegiate student-athletes at a large Midwestern university. Data were collected through both focus group and individual interviews during the 1998-1999 academic year. One of the central themes identified by the participants was academic stereotypes and within theme, two sub-themes emerged. The first sub-theme was labeled overlooking and lowered expectations (Perlmutter, 2003) and further defined as “attending college only because of athletics.” The second sub-theme was labeled isolation and further defined as “being the only African American in your classes” with additional isolating effects of gender and racial stereotypes also discussed.

N.B. The terms African American and Black were used interchangeably as descriptors for the participants in this study.

INTRODUCTION

A stereotype is a fixed impression, which conforms very little to the fact that it pretends to represent, and results from our defining first and observing second. (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 14)

A stereotype is an unfounded view or belief about a person or group of people. When referring to African Americans, stereotypes abound concerning intelligence, academic preparation, physical superiority, and athletic ability that have “little scientific credibility” (Sailes, 1993, p. 90). Many stereotypes have developed in an attempt to explain the participation patterns of African Americans in sport. These stereotypes or myths are, as Greendorfer (1993) said, a powerful form of discrimination. It is not that African Americans are genetically predisposed to be less intelligent and more athletically gifted than Whites (Entine, 2000). It is that “variables affecting the sports socialization and sports participation patterns of African American athletes in American sports emanate from the social constraints placed upon them by the dominant culture” (Lapchick, 1996, p. 196). Those in decision-making have the potential to steer African Americans, African American females in particular, toward the fulfillment of stereotypes. So although beliefs about African American females as athletes are unfounded on racial grounds, they are supported on sociological grounds; “it remains a cultural fact that Africans have a special place in the Western imagination as fantasy objects . . . function [ing] as a potent carrier of pseudo-scientific ideas about racial difference” (Hoberman, 1997, p. 207).

Green, Olgesby, Alexander, and Franke (1981) discuss three "distortions" about African American women that are regularly accepted as truth: 1.) The matriarchy myth, referring to the African American woman in a derogatory nature as evoking fear in others with her strong sense of self-reliance and self-sufficiency; 2.) that African American women are only talented in, and therefore only involved in, basketball and track; 3.) African American women are only competent in those skills necessary for basketball and track (i.e., running and jumping). Additionally, Entine (2000) discusses what he labels "the most familiar prejudice" (p. 298) or intelligence, stating that it has long been suspected that certain sports were "too sophisticated and intellectual" (Entine, 2000, p. 298) for African American women. Although the women in this study experienced all four stereotypes, Entine's conception of the "academic stereotype" serves as the focus of this paper.

Theoretical Framework

African American women student athletes' college life experiences differ in meaningful ways from both White women student-athletes and African American men student-athletes. (Sellars, et al., 1997, p. 715)

Both bell hooks (1984, 1989, 1990, 1992, 2000) and Patricia Hill Collins (1988, 1990, 1998, 2000) address the situation of the African American woman in relation to the rest of American society. "Being on the margin" is bell hooks' descriptor and Patricia Hill Collins identifies the concept of the "outsider within" as a basis for Black Feminist Thought. Both women argue that research and intellectual thought has focused on the women who occupy a place at the center of society and those women's "perspectives on reality rarely include knowledge and awareness of the lives of the women . . . who live on the margin" (hooks, 1984, preface). The "double consciousness" (Collins, 1998) of being both female and Black places African American "collectively at the bottom of the . . . ladder. . . [with an] overall social status . . . lower than that of any other group" (hooks, 1984, p. 14). Being situated at the bottom of the ladder places African American women in a position to be stereotyped for those operate within the margins are not versed in their experiences.

Providing an audience for African American women and encouraging them to share how their "lived experience may shape [their] consciousness in such a way that [their] world view differs from those who have a degree of privilege" (hooks, 1984, p. 15) was the underlying premise on which this study was based. For "Black women are empowered with the right to interpret [their] reality and define [their] objectives" (King, 1988, p. 295) and when others (i.e., White males, White females, Black males, those with higher social economic status) define Black womanhood, isolation follows. Collins states that "if we do not define for ourselves, we will be defined by others . . . to our detriment" (Collins, 2000, p.36).

Neither hooks nor Collins contextualizes Black Feminism in sport. However, applying the doctrines of the theory (concrete experience as a criterion of meaning, the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, the ethic of caring, and the ethic of personal responsibility) (Collins, 1990) to sport allows the researcher to recognize the experiences of African American female athletes, empowering them through dialogue,

accepting personal responsibility for change. "Many people believe that sport is the only institution that can cross barriers of gender, race, nationality, political views, and religion to reach all people on a common plane" (Bruening, 2004, in press). Yet, little fact gathering and information solicitation has occurred to determine how to reach African American women athletes and:

since the present and future lives of these athletes may be positively or adversely affected, research which examines the meaning of sport in the lives of female athletes of color is necessary to assist athletic personnel in understanding and communicating with female athletes, and in determining policy or making prudent decisions regarding women's sport. (Stratta, 1995a, p. 4)

The purpose of this study was to gather information on the experiences of African American female student-athletes from the student-athletes themselves in order to share findings with those who are responsible for making the daily decisions affecting these women's lives. The following research questions formed the foundation for the data presented in this paper:

1. How does sport serve to reinforce racial and gender based stereotypes?
2. How can sport serve to dispel those myths?

Academic Stereotypes

Research has shown that "race is the strongest predictor of university academic performance" among student-athletes with gender as a less salient factor (Kiger & Lorentzen, 1986, p.160). However, this research treats race and gender as separate constructs. For instance, most "frameworks examining gender in education . . . have been developed and tested on White student populations" (Chavous, 2002, p. 143). Concurrently, "considerable attention has been paid to the special problems of African American males in schools" (Frazier-Koussi, 2002, p. 151). However, research on the combined effect of gender and race on academic achievement is an almost unexplored domain. In the general student population, Cohen & Nee (2000) focused on gender differences in African Americans' level of educational attainment and retention and discovered significant differences between African American men and women. But such studies have not investigated why such differences exist (Chavous, 2002). Furthermore, even less data is available when athletic participation is added as a variable alongside race, gender and academic environment. For example, Lucas & Lovaglia (2002) reported that compared to non student-athletes, athletes do not see the overall benefits of a college education when weighed against the cost and are less motivated to achieve in the classroom. However, the researchers did not account for gender or race in reporting their results. In addition, they did not investigate but only recommended that future research "shed light" (p. 5) on how racial and economic distinctions in the United States contribute to their findings.

In examining differences between African American women and men in the general student population, Fleming (1985) stated that African American women are "anxious about their own competence" but those feelings are out of proportion with some of the objective facts of their competitive abilities (Fleming, 1985, p. 144). Fleming (1985) also found that African American women perform worse in math than

men but do make gains in verbal ability through their college careers. She reported that African American women, when placed "in competition, . . . are inspired with strong needs for achievement" (Fleming, 1985, p. 144). Additional evidence has been published demonstrating that African American women achieve at higher levels than males (Ford, 1996) and understand that educational attainment is the means by which they will become upwardly mobile in American society (Fordham, 1996). Presently, African American women "are making historic strides on campuses and in the workplace" (Close, 2003, p. 47). In fact, 35% of Black women go to college as compared to 25% of Black men (Close, 2003). Additionally, college educated Black women earn more than the median for all Black working men and all other women as well (Close, 2003).

Despite the data that suggests African American women are succeeding in the classroom, they are still considered an at-risk population (Ford, 1996) as they are faced with the perceptions others have of them given their racial and gender status, or lack thereof. In educational settings, White male students possess more social capital than White female students (Chavous, 2002) and Black male students are viewed as possessing lower academic potential (Davis, 1995). As a consequence of their "shared" membership in both gender (women) and racial (African American) groups these students can be perceived as less able to achieve academically. African American women find themselves subject to "the stereotypes regarding gender and academic ability" (Chavous, 2002, p. 144) as well as race and academic ability. However, as Collins (1988, 1990, 1998, 2000) and hooks (1984, 1989, 1990, 1992, 2000) contend, they do not truly fit within either group. The result for African American women is isolation (Hopkins, 1997).

The isolation African American women feel emanates from the perceptions of gendered and racial academic abilities held by educators. On college campuses, Sedlacek (1987) discovered that "White faculty members may give less consistent reinforcement to Black students than they give to White students" (p.486) and, not coincidentally, "academic achievement [is predicted to] be highest for students with . . . better relations with faculty" (Allen, 1985, p. 137). Additional findings support that poor communication with faculty, particularly White faculty, is a problem for Black students as contact with faculty outside of class is a significant predictor in achievement for Black students (Nettles, Thoeny, and Gosman, 1986). Perlmutter (2003) reported that African Americans visit professors in their offices less often than anyone else (p. B8) because they are intimidated by those White professors who "are behaving in ways that keep those students at a distance" (p. B8). Sedlacek found that some White professors stereotype "Black students as less able than Whites" (Sedlacek, 1987, p. 487), and Permuter (2003) raised concern that African American students and student-athletes are scared to approach even those White professors who do not hold those stereotypes or who do not believe themselves to be "motivated by malice toward athletes or Black students" (p. B8). Despite intentions to the contrary, these professors might still overlook Black athletes as members of the college community primarily, or even exclusively, due do their role as an athlete and as a result have lowered expectations of those who are Black and athletic. Professors might discount the remarks of Black athletes in class, when they are given the opportunity to respond, by subjecting them to "intensified scrutiny" or "negative comments" (Permuter, 2003, p. B8). As a result, a message can be sent to African American student-athletes that they "aren't wanted and they can't achieve" (Beckham, 1988, p. 76) thus adding to a sense of isolation from the university community.

Maintaining the dedication to achieve academically is not an easy road to travel for Black female students given that they do experience alienation and unfairness; whereas “white students adjust well” and “have no complaints about alienation or unfairness in the classroom” (Fleming, 1985, p. 136). African American women also do not choose to withdraw from the challenges facing them in their academic pursuits like their Black male counterparts who struggle at predominantly White institutions to the point where they may “withdraw academically and psychologically” (Fleming, 1985, p. 145). Chavous (2002) contended that African American women do not respond to unfriendly academic environments the way that Black men and even White women do. White women have a more difficult time adjusting to the collegiate academic environment and tend to internalize failures in a manner that diminishes their self-esteem to the point that they become more reserved and uninvolved in the classroom (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986) whereas African American women “show up with a sense of purpose” (Close, 2003, p. 49). Black women “develop the assertive capacities that help them hold their own academically” (Fleming, 1985, p. 145). Pescarella & Smart (1991) agreed that the impact of the academic environment for women may “differ in both magnitude and in kind from that found in men” (p. 129). Contrary to male athletes (Adler & Adler, 1991), females who participate in athletics experience a “modest positive effect of college academic achievement” (Pescarella & Smart, 1991, p. 128). In fact, Kiger and Lorentzen (1986) found that “women [student-athletes] will tend to perform well academically, as a group, as long as the women’s athletic programs do not heavily recruit athletes who might not otherwise attend the university” (p. 165). African American female student-athletes find themselves differentiated from the communities that would be thought “to sustain and support” (hooks & West, 1991, p. 18) them (i.e., other women and African American men). They are “outsiders within” lacking a significant body of research to assist those who are in roles to support their achievement by understanding their experiences.

METHODS

Initial data collected involved determining participation rates through a document analysis of the NCAA Certification Study for X University. In 1998-1999 the university had a total of 336 female student-athletes making the rate of participation for African American women 3% in track and field (911 women), 1.7% in basketball (6 women), and 1.1 % in all other sports (2 in crew, and 1 each in volleyball and fencing). Twelve of the twenty-one athletes agreed to participate in this study (Bruening, 2004, in press).

Next a series of three focus group interview sessions were conducted with a total of twelve women (groups of three, four and five). Background questionnaires were used at the outset of each focus group session to gather demographic information. The women ranged from first year in school to fifth year senior, aged eighteen to twenty-three (See Table 1). The names used to identify the participants in the remainder of this document were selected by each woman as a part of the completion of the background questionnaire. Focus Group 1 was made up of Dianne, Gabby, and Lolita. Focus Group 2 included Essence, November, Kay, and Princess. Focus Group 3 was the largest with Vanessa, Taz, Chyna, Madison, and Babeahgirl. A semi-structured format was used for the focus groups (see Table 2).

Following the group interviews, a grounded survey was developed (See Table 3) and administered to selected participants to check for interpretive accuracy (See Table 4).

Four interviews were then held with individual women, Gabby, Princess, Taz, and Vanessa, selected based on diversity of focus group participation, their sport, their year in school, and availability participate. Preference was given to the older student-athletes given that they had more experience both in sport and at the university (Bruening, 2004, in press). (See Table 2 for interview guide). Member checks were conducted as all participants also read the focus group transcripts and submitted corrections and comments as an additional method of triangulating the data (Janesick, 1994).

The interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed using NUD*IST (Non numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theory-building). Stereotyping was a major theme with academic stereotypes as a sub-theme.

Description of the Research Setting

The undergraduate enrollment of X University was 36,252 with a 7.6% African American undergraduate student body of 1,661 African American females. The institution competed at the NCAA Division I level offering more than thirty varsity sports. Due to the size of the institution, the women who participated in the study were raised in varied locations across the United States and abroad as well as being from major cities, suburban locations, and small towns.

The university had successful athletic programs and the Athletic Department worked well in conjunction with a respected academic support program for student-athletes. The Athlete Academic Services office served a point of entry for this study. They provided additional statistics on the diversity of the athletic program, provided contact information for the African American women members of the teams, and allowed the use of their facility for both focus group and individual interviews (Bruening, 2004, in press).

RESULTS

The women in the study shared how they were subject to stereotypes that were coded into four categories: biological features and traits, gender issues, academic/intellectual capacity, and athletic skill. The focus of this paper is the academics stereotype. This central theme has been sub-divided into 1.) overlooking and lowered expectations {or attending college only for athletics}(Perlmutter, 2003) and 2.) isolation {or being the only African American in your classes}.

Overlooking and Lowered Expectations

As a senior in high school, Gabby scored extremely high on the ACT and her guidance counselor, whom she had never had any interaction with previously, offered to help her in exploring her options for continuing her education:

When I got my scores back from the ACT, the counselor had called for my high school. She said we have to congratulate you on your scores. I didn't know. I said thank you very much. She said we're going to go for those Ivy League schools. Well I'm looking at Florida A&M. And she said that's a minority school. And I said yes. She said I was unaware of that . . . (Gabby)

Gabby's experience of stereotyping was firsthand. She learned that people believe that African Americans are not as intelligent as Caucasians. This stereotype did not disappear for Gabby and her counterparts in this study when they went to college. They were exposed to assumptions on the part of their peers and professors that they were enrolled at X University only to play sports and not capable of excelling in the classroom.

The women were acutely aware of what people thought and said about them. As they traveled from their dorms and apartments to classes, the library, the cafeteria, and practice, the women wore clothing that identified them as student-athletes. They stood out on campus and being a student-athlete was a large part of their identity:

I was thinking about how I feel on campus. We got these backpacks for the conference championships. I started wearing mine around. It has your sport on it. So I was thinking about that. I wonder if they're looking at me? Do they look at me differently because they can tell that I am in sports? That made me a little aware of my surroundings and who was looking at me. Are they looking at me because of a black athlete? (Lolita)

Yesterday I was thinking because I always wear my backpack too, not to be racist or anything, but when white people look at me when I have on the backpack, do they think that I'm here just to play sports? Or do they think that I'm here to get my education and to achieve more academically? That is always running across my mind. Okay there's another black girl here she must be an athlete. She must be a track runner. I don't want people to know me just for that. I want them to know me because I have intelligence too. (Dianne)

They wanted to be recognized for their accomplishments both academically and athletically. However they believed there was a common perception, shared by professors on campus, that they were only attending X University because of their athletic talents.

I'm a biology major and there are many athletes, especially female athletes in the sciences. After I graduate I'm going to optometry school. There is a teacher I've encountered in my role as a [Black] female athlete — looking at me as this dumb athlete who just wanted to get by. I don't know how many times I went to his office to try to explain the reason why I was here. I think it's great that I can get an education not just a bogus degree or something. I can get a biology degree in become a doctor and be a track athlete. That teacher would not hear of it. He thought it was absolutely impossible. (Lolita)

Lolita continued speaking about that professor who doubted her abilities in the classroom:

He wrote my coach a letter that I would never become anything because of the person that I am. Because I was a female athlete. No female athlete had ever passed his class. No female athlete would ever pass his class. . . I just looked at that as discrimination. It [was] racist too, no Black person had ever passed my class. No Black person will ever pass my class. . . he's taken a category of people, a group of people, and said that they cannot do this. (Lolita)

Princess had similar experiences in her life where people have judged her capabilities as a student simply by her gender and the color of her skin:

Being an African American female athlete is a totally different story. I realize when I'm in class that a lot of times people just assume that I'm here because I'm an athlete . . . They think I'm not cut out to do it. People automatically assume that if you're African American and you're an athlete then that's the only reason you're in college. That is the one thing that really makes me mad. (Princess)

Madison also experienced the stereotype associated with African American student-athletes and academics. It was one she had not been able to escape no matter how hard she tried:

People always assume that because I'm black and I'm in college I must play some sport that got me here. Usually I don't tell people that I'm an athlete. I let them get to know me and then when they discover that I am afterwards they have more respect for me than if I would come up and say I run track for X. Then it's all about track and they don't want to hear what my major is or anything. They look at me all shocked that I would have goals in my life and that after track I want to go somewhere. (Madison)

Gabby even heard this stereotype coming from her coach:

Gabby-When it's a coach . . . if you don't give me credit for comprehending a one sentence statement then how can you possibly give me credit for constantly thinking about where are my hand heights, am I going with everyone, am I watching the formation, am I listening to my coxswain? You have to think about all of things and at the same time be clear minded. The bow rower is the one who sets the boat. We steady the boat. Then to turn around the next day and act like I have no clue—that's very disturbing.

Interviewer-They wouldn't put you in that position if you weren't capable.

Gabby-If you didn't think I had the talents to the ability to make quick decision then I don't need to be there. I should be somewhere else in the boat.

(Bruening, 2004, in press)

Isolation

The women in the study were majoring in disciplines where they were the only African American woman or one of the few African Americans represented. They were subject to the pressures of being a college athletes and college students. But these pressures paled in comparison to being the sole representative, or one of the few representatives, of their race in a class.

I think it's different especially being in engineering. I'm Black and I'm female and I play basketball. They think I'm just going up to the gym and shooting around. It's a real shocker for people to realize that I'm on the team. They ask well how do you do it? How are you able to juggle all of that around? I guess we're just not supposed to be in this situation . . . (Kay)

Kay has managed "to juggle all of that around" for four years and has achieved on the basketball court and in the classroom.

There are only three females that will graduate and I'm definitely the only Black one. I think there are only four black students in the whole college of engineering now. We all study together, of course. There's like a little Black section right there. But what are you supposed to do? It's kind of disappointing because people do look at you. They accept us now because we've gotten through all of the weed-out courses and we're into our major. We're doing everything that they're doing and we're scoring the scores we need to score.

The other women asked Kay about her classmates' lack of acceptance:

Princess-They compare themselves to you?

Kay-Yeah, I felt that way in the beginning of my first two years. But I started my major in the fall and I've had the same people in all of my classes. I think we're just used to each other now. We're on the same level now, but I didn't feel like that in the beginning. I had to prove myself.

and then shared their own similar experiences:

November-You really do have to prove yourself. I know in my engineering classes I am the only Black female. I guess the way that I am I can adapt to it well. I can count on my hands how many Black students there are in my lecture and they are all dispersed. They don't even sit together.

Princess-I'm the only African American in my classes. And I don't notice it until my teacher pointed it out to me the other day that I was the only Black person in class this year. . . . after being the only Black person running cross-country, I know what it feels like and you never know until you walk in someone else's shoes. I know what it feels like to be in a race and people don't think you deserve to be there. Like in a lot of my classes, I've been the only Black person in my classes. People have treated me different.

DISCUSSION

African American women, when given the opportunity, will speak of the stereotypical views they are subject to as African American female athletes. Richard Lapchick commented on the "unsubstantiated race-oriented myths" that have evolved "as people attempt to explain the success . . . of African-American athletes in certain American sports" (Lapchick, 1996, p. 194). Lapchick elaborates that most of these myths are attempts to "rationalize the dominance of African Americans in specific sports" (Lapchick, 1996, p. 195). The African American women in this study have experienced these unfounded views, these misconceptions that make them feel as if their only viable access to a college education is through sports. For them, physical superiority is a given; mental capabilities are questioned.

Coaches, administrators, professors, and advisors (among others) frequently discuss the demands of athletics on student-athletes (Gurney & Stuart, 1987; Lucas & Lovaglia, 2002). Researchers have documented the strains attending college and competing in athletics at this level places on individuals (Adler & Adler, 1991; Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Bruening, 2004; Kiger & Lorentzen, 1986; Perlmutter, 2003; Pescarella & Smart, 1991; Sailes, 1993; Sellers, 1997; Stone & Strange, 1989; Stratta, 1995a; Stratta, 1995b). The African American female student-athletes in this study illuminated another level of strain. The discrimination they are exposed to in the form of stereotypes adds an additional stressor to their lives. From Lolita's being told she will not pass a class because her professor has prescribed to a stereotype about the academic capabilities of female athletes and African Americans to Gabby's own coach questioning her intellectual ability, these women do have to prove themselves as capable students almost daily. Unfortunately this particular group of women rarely found support from other African Americans, let alone other African American women, in their classes. Those women who did not play basketball or run track were even further removed from contact. With the exception of their interaction with other African American female student-athletes through their Athlete Academic Service program, they were in isolation (Hopkins, 1997) or as bell hooks states "homeless . . . confronting regularly the question: where can I find a home?" (hooks & West, 1991, p. 18). These student-

athletes demonstrated that they were successful, achievement oriented, and for the most part, independent (Frazier-Kouassi, 2002). Their independence allowed them to separate themselves from White women who tended to internalize academic difficulties and Black men who withdrew from others when faced with school-related issues, but their independence also left them alone.

Where the women in this study have found some support and an emerging level of understanding is from their Athlete Academic Services programming and their advisors in that office. Vanessa spoke to how her advisor assisted her as a biracial student-athlete:

It's been really good and they've helped me out a lot. They were especially good when I was going through my tough time of not knowing my [racial] identity or who I was going to hang out with. They introduced me to people and have just been really helpful.

Academic advisors can have a positive impact on African American female student-athletes by realizing that their experiences differ in being exposed to both racial and gender stereotypes, Collins' "axes of power" (Collins, 2000). Advisors form a portion of the "supportive community" (Fleming, 1985) of peers and role models that can assist African American female student-athletes in feeling "some sense of progress and success in their academic pursuits" (Fleming, 1985, p. 152). Support can be offered by advisors who acknowledge the difficulty inherent in these student-athletes challenging professors who appear to lack interest in them by not encouraging them to succeed, discounting their abilities despite empirical evidence to the contrary. As the women in this study revealed, they want to be taken seriously as students and respected for their intelligence, not just their athleticism. They, for the most part, have risen above the discrimination they face in their academic pursuits through "counseling by coaches, advisors, and older peers," although not enough data exists or is publicized to aid in combating the "the perpetrators [professors . . .]" (Permuter, 2003 B8).

Close (2003) found that African American women "show up with a sense of purpose" sending the message that "We're here. It's tough. We're Black. We're alone" (p. 49). Promising, though, are figures showing that in job settings, 62% of African American women had mentors compared to 35% in 1995 (Close, 2003, p. 50). But, on the downside, Black women are less satisfied with their jobs and have a higher propensity to leave those jobs than their Black male and other female counterparts (Close, 2003). Mentors exist, but communities where solidarity can be felt and renewal can take place are lacking (hooks & West, 1991). Research needs to be conducted to determine the perspectives of African American female student-athletes on other campuses both through a broadly administered survey where experiences of other groups can be compared (i.e., White males, Black males, White females) and through interview-based designs such as this one. Additionally data needs to be gathered that speak specifically to what academic advisors can do to assist African American female student-athletes in dealing with stereotypes concerning their academic abilities as well as how to begin to "debunk" those stereotypes (Stratta, 1995b). Building a sense of community for African American female student-athletes requires understanding and "effective policymaking" acknowledging "how the educational experiences of Black students differ" (Allen, 1985, p. 147).

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TABLE 1. Background Questionnaire Information

Pseudonym/ Focus Group/ Age/Year	College Sport/ Other Sports Played Prior To College	Parents' Occupation/ Parents' Sport Background	Sibling & Ages/ Siblings' Sport Backgrounds
*Gabby/1 22/Senior	Crew/ TN, BKB, TR, SW & VB	F-Supervisor/ F-FB, BKB, TR M-Accountant/None	B-15/ SW, SO, TR
Dianne/1 18/Senior	Track/ VB, BKB, TR	F-Bank Customer Service F-BSB, FB, BKB M-Med. Lab Tech./BW, SB	B-13/BSB, FB, SO
Lolita/1 22/Senior	Track/ BV, BKB, TR GYM	F-Nurse/None M-Nurse/None	B-24/None S-21/None
Essence/2 23/Senior	Track/ TR	F-Retired/None M-Retired/None	B-24 & 26/BKB
November/2 19/Freshman	Track/ VB, BKB, TR	F-School Administrator/ F-FB, BKB M-School Administrator/BW	B-25/FB, BKB, TR S-22/BKB, TR
Kay/2 22/Senior	Basketball/ BKB, SB, TR, BW	M-Legal Assistant/ M-VB, TR	S-23/TR, CH
*Princess/2 22/Senior	Cross Country & Tack/ TR, XC, BKB	F-Bus Driver/TR M-Home Health Care/TR	B-25/None, B-26/BX, S-23/TR
Babeahgirl/3 12/Freshman	Fencing/ BKB, FC	SF-Hairdresser/FB M-Hairdresser/SB	B-20&21/ BKB, TN
*Vanessa/3 20/Junior	Volleyball VB, BKB, SO	F-Shipping Manager/BKB M-Admin. Assistant/None	B-15&22/BKB, S-23/SO, S26/So, CH
Madison/3 21/Senior	Track TR	F-Radiologis/1TR	B-26/FB, BKB
Chyna/3 20/Junior	Track TR	F-Teacher & Coach/BSB M-Seamstress/GYM, CH	S-26&28/ TR, SO, GYM, CH
*Taz/3 23/Senior	Track FH, SO, TR	F-Auto Dealer/FB, BSB, TR M-Professor/TN, SW	B-15/None, B-17/MR, B-21/TR, B-30/SW B-10/SO, S-17/BSB, BKB, TN, TR

TABLE 2. Interview Guides

Example of a Focus Group Interview Guide

1. Did you play multiple sports while growing up? If so, what led you to specialize in the sport in which you currently participate? If not, why?
 2. Who was your role model in sport when you were growing up? How do you perceive your role as an African American female athlete? Do you perceive yourself as a role model? Do you believe you have a responsibility to African American girls interested in sports?
 3. What is your perception of the state of participation of African American females in sport? Are there enough women participating?
-

Example of an Individual Interview Guide

Gabby

1. Why did you chose crew? What influenced you to become and stay involved?
2. What has your experience been as a participant in crew?
3. What stereotypes have you ben exposed to as an African American woman? As an African American female athlete? Talk about the seating arrangment at the student union.
4. How do you feel about the treatment of women by the athletic department?
5. Culture/Race/Ethnicity. Talk about the intricacies and differences among African Americans.
6. What is the current state of participation of African American women in sport?

TABLE 3. Grounded Survey Instrument

Please answer the questions on this survey based on the following scale:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	n/a
1	2	3	4	5	

I. Early Socialization Influences

1. My mother was the most significant influence on my becoming involved in sports.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

2. My father was the most significant influence on my becoming involved in sports.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

3. My brother (s) were the most significant influence on my becoming involved in sports.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

4. My sister (s) were the most significant influence on my becoming involved in sports.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

5. My peers were the most significant influence on my becoming involved in sports.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

6. My teacher (s) were the most significant influence on my becoming involved in sports.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

7. My coach (es) was/were the most significant influence on my becoming involved in sports.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

8. My relatives were the most significant influence on my becoming involved in sports.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

TABLE 3. Grounded Survey Instrument (cont.)

II. Choice of Sport

1. I chose to play the sport I play in college because I was good at it.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

2. I chose to play the sport I play in college because I enjoyed it.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

3. I chose to play the sport I play in college due to the most significant influence I listed in the previous section.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

4. I chose the sport I play in college due to the availability of a scholarship.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

5. I chose the sport I play in college for the opportunities it will afford me after graduation.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

6. I feel a stereotype exists that African-American women are supposed to play a certain sport or sports.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

7. I believe this sport is basketball.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

8. I believe this sport is track and field.

1 2 3 4 5 n/a

TABLE 3. Grounded Survey Instrument (cont.)

III. Societal Perceptions of Race and Gender

1. As a female athlete, I fight the perception of being a sex symbol.

2. As a female, I am not accepted as a legitimate athlete.

3. Because I am a female athlete, my sexual orientation is questioned.

4. I receive conflicting messages about whether it is acceptable to be an athlete and a woman.

5. People assume I am an athlete because I am African-American.

6. People assume I am a talented athlete because I am African-American.

7. My coach expects more out of me because I am African-American.

8. Women athletes have to prove themselves more so than men athletes.

9. Men's sports are prioritized over women's sports.

10. There is a lack of respect of women's sports.

11. There is a lack of understanding of women's sports.

IV. Media Issues

1. Women athletes receive equal TV coverage to men athletes.

2. Women athletes receive equal newspaper coverage to men athletes.

3. Women athletes receive equal radio coverage to men athletes.

4. Women's sports receive adequate coverage by the media.

V. Additional Comments

Please use the space below for any additional comments you wish to share.

Table 4: Grounded Survey Results

Question	Respondent			
	A	B	C	D
Mother	5	2	1	3
Father	3	5	5	3
Brother	1	1	1	1
Sister	1	1	1	1
Peers	2	2	1	2
Teacher	2	2	2	4
Coach	4	2	3	4
Relatives	1	1	1	1
Good	5	5	5	4
Enjoy	5	5	5	3
Influence	3	5	4	5
Scholarship	1	2	5	5
Post-Grad	3	3	3	4
Stereotype	5	5	5	5
Basketball	5	5	5	5
Track	5	5	5	5
Sex Symbol	3	3	2	2
Legitimate	4	4	3	3
Sexual Orient	5	2	2	5
Conflicting	5	5	5	5
Athlete	5	5	5	5
Talented	5	5	5	5
Coach Expects	2	2	4	3
Prove	5	5	5	5
Prioritized	5	5	4	3
Lack of Respect	5	4	4	3
Lack of Understanding	5	4	4	3
TV Coverage	1	1	1	1
Newspaper	1	1	2	2
Radio	1	1	2	2
Media Coverage	1	1	1	1