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PHENOMENAL WOMEN:

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF SILENCING, STEREOTYPES, SOCIALIZATION,

AND STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE IN THE SPORT PARTICIPATION OF

AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE STUDENT-ATHLETES

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of

Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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2000

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Phenomenal Woman

Now you understand
Just why my head's not bowed.
I don't shout or jump about
Or have to talk real loud.
When you see me passing,
I ought to make you proud.
I say,
It's in the click of my heels,
The bend of my hair,
The palm of my hand,
The need for my care.
'Cause I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

From Maya Angelou, *Phenomenal Woman*

ABSTRACT

Most women's collegiate sports reflect an underrepresentation of African American student-athletes. The purpose of this study was to examine how silencing through a lack of research and lack of attention on the part of the media, the exposure to gender and racial stereotypes, and the socialization process influence African American women to participate in sports in general, and to participate in certain sports specifically. Following this examination, strategies for change were discussed based on the opinions of experts in the field, the participants, and the researcher.

Many studies have examined women in sport or African Americans in sport, but few have focused on the intersection of race, gender, and sport. This study was intended to give exposure to an area of sport research that is lacking attention. The findings of the study are also significant to educators, coaches, parents, and role models when encouraging African American to speak up, fight the stereotypical views of their athletic talent in only certain sports, and follow those socialization agents who are directing them toward sport participation.

In focusing on silencing, stereotypes, and socialization, the stories told by African American collegiate athletes in focus group and individual interview settings were analyzed. The focus groups were composed of Division I African

American female student-athletes form a large Midwestern university. The women participated in basketball, volleyball, track and field, fencing, and crew.

Data analysis indicated: (1) Media limit the opportunities for exposure for African American female athletes. (2) Administrators, coaches, and male student-athletes play roles in the silencing and the giving of voice to African American female student-athletes. (3) African American female student-athletes are most often exposed to biological, gender, intellectual, and athletic stereotypes. (4) Family members and teachers/coaches are the most significant socialization influences on African American female athletes. (5) The most effective strategies for change in the participation of African American females in sport include positive role modeling and increasing exposure and access to sport all of types.

Dedicated to my mother, Sheila Maureen McGarry Bruening

The most notable fact that culture imprints on women is the sense of our
limits. The most important thing one woman can do for another is to
illuminate and expand her sense of her actual possibilities.
Adrienne Rich

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PUBLICATIONS

Research Publication

1.   Bruening, J. (1995). Title IX Serving Developmental Role. *NCAA News*. Overland Park, KS: National Collegiate Athletic Association.

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3.   Bruening, J. (1997). College conference of America: Perceptions of equity, a preliminary study. *Future Focus: The Ohio Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*. 18: 10-14.

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FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Education

Physical Activity and Education Services
Studies in Sport Management

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The State of Sport in America: Integrating or Segregating?

W.E.B. DuBois predicted that the prevailing issue of twentieth-century

Americans would be the problem of the "color line" (Dubois, 1969, p. IX).

Contradictory to DuBois' sentiments and reflective of more conservative

thought, suggestions have also been made that American society does not

have any racial issues. These suggestions were based on the theory that

Americans judge people "on the basis of character and merit, not skin color"

(Anderson & South, 1993, p. 82) especially in sports. However, much evidence

still exists as we enter the twenty-first century that shows this attitude reflects a

brand of colorblindness that "amounts to an aversion to, and neglect of, real

problems and issues" (Anderson & South, 1993, p. 82).

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. Sport is viewed by some as "a major racial

equalizer" (Lapchick, 1996, p. 75), for it is in sport that performance matters

1

above any marker of race. Therefore, to these individuals, sport should be "the one field in which individual human performance can be accurately measured" (Grundman, 1986, p. 81) and the one field where people of all origins and backgrounds can participate together. Ideally;

> . . . participating in sports allows us to relate to each other in different ways. You have to learn about different people in order to play together and be an actual team. It allows us to delve deeper into other people's cultures and other people's ways and not be so ethnocentric in our own ways. You have to learn to get along with people on different levels if you play sports. (Bruening, 1998, p. 25)

Injustices may exist in society as a whole, but somehow there exist Americans who still believe sport has the potential to be the one institution that can bring together people from diverse backgrounds to compete on a level playing field (Brooks & Althouse, 1993a, p. xiii).

A look back over the fifty years that have passed since Jackie Robinson played his first game of Major League Baseball has lead many Americans to believe that much progress has been made toward the elimination of racial barriers in athletics. The outright racism portrayed in the countless incidences Robinson related about being spiked by the opponents as they slid into second base (Robinson, 1971) is much less prevalent today. Stories like the 1955 Sugar Bowl when Georgia governor Marvin Griffin asked Georgia Tech to rescind its bid on the grounds that opponent Pittsburgh had a black player on its team are much less common today. And through the media, we no longer are exposed to the live visual image of the gloved fists of Tommie Smith and John

2

Carlos raised in the air at the 1968 Olympics in protest of White America's acceptance of Black athletes' achievements but continued insensitivity "to the condition of black America" (Grundman, 1979, pp. 75-80).

The passage of time has also seen some advancement for African Americans participating in sport. Athletes such as Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods have risen to the status of hero in American society. Their recognition and earnings have catapulted them into the mainstream. The success of the 1996 Olympic Women's Basketball team and the advent of the American Basketball League and Women's National Basketball Association have brought African American women to the forefront of sport as well. Sheryl Swoopes (Houston Comets) and Lisa Leslie (Los Angeles Sparks) jerseys are available in sporting goods stores and these women and others can regularly be seen in television commercials and televised games.

However, we still see that black men are concentrated in the sports of professional and collegiate basketball, professional and collegiate football, and to a somewhat lesser extent in professional baseball (Lapchick, 1996, p. 75). African American women are relegated primarily to professional and college basketball and track and field (Coakley, 1998, p. 469). Many collegiate teams still have very few African American members:

> These sports tend to be linked to upper-class patronage, but class linkage is not the entire explanation for black underrepresentation in these sports. Dominant classes have the wherewithal to insulate themselves against those with whom they do not wish to associate.

3

> Laws that prevent African Americans from being kept out do not assure that they will get in. Ample evidence exists to demonstrate that those who control some sports have created barriers to black participation in a number of sports . . . (Brooks & Althouse, 1993a, p. 9)

Tiger Woods' golf success and Venus and Serena Williams' arrival on the tennis scene are anomalies.

Beyond the racial inequality seen in the overrepresentation of African Americans in certain sports and the limited opportunities for African Americans in other sports, there are also other issues of injustice. There exists an unequal opportunity for equal ability in many sports as evidenced by the relative number of African American premier players and African American role players in several sports including football (Brower, 1972) and baseball (Pascal & Rapping, 1972; Rosenblatt, 1967; Yetman & Eitzen, 1972):

> Only if blacks are exceptional are they likely to be recruited, and conversely, mediocrity is a white luxury. Thus, blacks are likely to be overrepresented in the 'star' category and underrepresented among journeymen players. (Berghorn, Yetman, & Hanna, 1988, p. 107)

White players tend to dominate the entry-level roster slots and are less frequently cut or waived from these positions than are African American players. African American players are held to a higher standard, and therefore fail to meet that standard at a higher rate than their white counterparts (Yetman & Eitzen, 1972; Yiannakis, McIntyre, & Melnick, 1993).

In addition to unequal opportunity for equal ability, racial segregation by playing position in baseball, football, and volleyball is a topic of much research. (Best, 1987; Chu & Seagrave, 1981; Curtis & Loy, 1978; Edwards, 1973; Eitzen

4

& Furst, 1989; Eitzen & Sanford, 1975; Eitzen & Tessendorf 1978; Loy & McElvogue, 1970; Massengale & Farrington, 1977; Medoff, 1977; Yiannakis, McIntyre, & Melnick, 1993). According to this research, African Americans are "stacked" in positions where they are not responsible for much if any leadership or decision-making. Instead they are expected to perform the more "physical" responsibilities of their sport. Debates continue as to whether the labels of "leadership positions" and "physical positions" actually signify what these researchers intended. In baseball, research shows that historically African Americans have been concentrated in the outfield positions, pitcher, and designated hitter that are considered "low interacting" positions. These players are therefore involved in fewer plays and are asked to make fewer decisions. African Americans less often occupy the positions of high interaction (infield and catcher) (Leonard, Ostrosky, & Huchendorf, 1990). However, many African American baseball players have gained success and stardom in recent years through their accomplishments in the so-called "low-interacting" positions in the outfield and on the pitcher's mound (i.e. Ken Griffey, Jr. and Pedro Martinez).

The argument can be presented in football as with baseball. Players such as Eddie George and Randy Moss have achieved just as much recognition as any Caucasian players. In fact, their positions allow them to be in the spotlight more than many other players. In football, much publicity has been given to the absence of African American quarterbacks and the

5

overabundance of African American running backs, defensive backs, and receivers. Quarterbacks make decisions and lead a team, while running backs, defensive backs, and receivers rely more on their speed and athleticism to succeed.

As with football, studying the distribution of the races into volleyball positions yields a concentration of African Americans in the speed and jumping position of hitter and almost exclusively white players (252 of 258) at the leadership or "quarterback" position of setter (Eitzen & Furst, 1989). While discussion still takes place about the validity of the basis of the stacking theory, in the sports of baseball, football, and volleyball one can see the unequal distribution of players of different races.

And lastly, when examining off the field practices in sport, African Americans experience even more discrimination. They have limited opportunities to remain involved in sports as professionals. As Harry Edwards states;

> Since Jackie Robinson's debut, Blacks have made virtually no progress beyond the athletic role in major American sport . . .So just as Blacks are overrepresented in the lower occupational statuses on the broader American labor force, Blacks in sport also function in a semi-caste system relegated as they are to the least powerful, least secure, and most exploited role in the sports institution—that of athlete. (Edwards, 1982, p. 20)

The odds of African Americans occupying the positions of coaches, athletic directors, athletic trainers, and other leadership roles in sports are slim as well.

6

Very few opportunities exist for African Americans to ascend to positions in the "upper levels of the sport hierarchy" (Brooks & Althouse, 1993, p. 11). The involvement of African Americans in sport leadership positions has been said to have improved over the course of the last three decades. But as recently as 1992 there were no African American head coaches in NCAA Division I-A football and only two African American athletic directors (Brooks & Althouse, 1993a, p. 101). A 1991 study conducted by USA Today involving 63 Division I college programs found that racial minorities held 12.5% of 3,081 athletic department positions. Of the 12.5%, two minorities were athletic directors, ten were sports information directors, and forty-three were coaches (Boeck & Shuster, 1991). The Racial Report Card published by the Northeastern University Center for the Study of Sport in Society supports these numbers with its 1997 study based on figures from the 1995-96 season. The study states that 17.3% of head coaches were in men's National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I basketball were black and 24% of head coaches in the National Basketball Association were black. In NCAA Division I-A football, 7.2% of head coaches were black and 11% of National Football League head coaches were black. No head coaches of NCAA Division I baseball programs were black and Major League Baseball reported that 14% of its managers were either black or Latino (NCAA News, March 9, 1998). When one considers that approximately 70% of professional basketball players, 54% of professional football players,

and 23% of professional baseball players are African American (Lapchick,

1996, p. 75), the professional coaching percentages do not favorably compare.

African American athletes are well-represented and African American coaches

compose a small percentage of the total. The 1994-95 participation statistics

from a large Midwestern NCAA Division I university show that of male student-

athletes receiving grants-in-aid, 71.4% of basketball players are African

American, 55.7% of football players are African American, and 0% of baseball

players are African American (NCAA Certification Document, 1996). Again, the

percentages of African American head coaches are disproportionate to the

percentages of African American student-athletes.

When examining the research of African American women in positions of

leadership in sport, the representation is even less. As Robertha Abney and

Dorothy Richey elaborate:

> Minority women . . .have limited employment in athletic leadership
> positions . . .very few minorities are in decision-making positions [in
> sport]. (Abney & Richey, 1992, p. 58)

Echoing Brooks, Althouse, and Edwards, these women expound upon the

difficulties African American women have as sport professionals. African

Americans and African American women in particular are excluded from

participating in events, from assuming leadership positions, and from becoming

members of important committees in their organizations or on their campuses

(Abney & Richey, 1992, p. 57). The number of African American head coaches

of NCAA women's teams in all sports is only 3% (Acosta & Carpenter, 1990) and according to Smith (1991), "five percent or less of all physical education teachers, coaches, and sport administrators are multicultural minorities" (Smith, 1991, p. 39).

So in the fifty years since Jackie Robinson's inaugural season, what has changed for African Americans in sport? More African Americans are participating in collegiate and professional sports, but they can profess as Robinson did that they "never had it made;"

> The evolution of the black athletes' involvement in American sport has been a turbulent one at best characterized by major successes as well as a host of problems stemming from habitual prejudices and beliefs about the inequality of the races . . . black athletes . . .have realized major successes in the athletic field only to have the door of opportunity closed on them by believers in Jim Crow and white supremacy. (Wiggins, 1993, p. 43)

African Americans still face "positional segregation, quotas, differential treatment on and off the field, lack of enduring fame, and finally, lack of opportunities in sports when [their] playing days are over" (Lapchick, 1996, p. 76). While sport has the potential to be the "major racial equalizer" (Lapchick, 1996, p. 75), it can also be seen as one more example of "the limitations of equality of opportunity" (Grundman, 1979, p. 84).

African American women experience the limitations of equality of opportunity as much, if not more than others do. They find themselves located on the margin of society in two ways: They are both female and African

American. The section that follows explains the theoretical basis of being "on the margin" and how that theory forms the framework for this study.

From Margin to Center: Black Feminism

> To be in the margin is to be a part of the whole but outside the main body. (hooks, 1984, preface)

> A heap see, but a few know. (Hill Collins, 1988, p. 310)

Many feminists have spoken and written about their position as women in society. The beliefs and subsequent publications of Simone de Beauvior and Betty Freidan, both Caucasians, marked the inception of modern feminism. However, modern feminism was as exclusive of African American feminists as male-dominated society had been of all women in the first place. African American feminists perceived modern feminism as "modern white feminism." "Being on the margin" was a concept coined by bell hooks as an explanation of how African American feminists were positioned in relation to modern feminism as a whole. Patricia Hill Collins referred to this concept in her writing as an "outsider within." I referred to all these feminist scholars in designing the theoretical framework for this study while acknowledging my position as a Caucasian woman and the effects my cultural background have on my perspective. I designed this study around feminist theory, particularly black feminist theory, as I attempted to expose the words and thoughts of African American female student-athletes—to bring them from margin to center.

10

Modern feminist theory's origins can be traced to the writings of Simone de Beauvior (1952) and Betty Friedan (1963). De Beauvior's premise was that women have been forced and expected to occupy a position below that of men, that of "the second sex." The occupation of this position had long been accepted by women as a result of an education and social conditioning leading them in that direction, all of which had been controlled by men. The result of women being the second sex had been "the general failure of women to take a place of human dignity as free and independent existents, associated with men on a plane of intellectual and professional equality" (de Beauvior, 1976, p. vii). Therefore, de Beauvoir aimed to acknowledge women as independent and different from men, to end the defining of women in relation to men, and to "abolish the slavery of half of humanity, together with the whole system of hypocrisy that it implies" (de Beauvior, 1976, p. 731).

Freidan examined what she called "the feminine mystique" or the practice of defining women only as "husband's wife, children's mother, server of physical needs of husband, child, home, and never as a person defining herself by her own actions in society" (Freidan, 1963, p. xi). She developed what she labeled a new life plan for women involving seeing through the "delusions of the feminine mystique" (Freidan, 1963, p. 338) to find her self. Freidan encouraged women to free themselves from the home and discover who they were as independent people, not in relation to anyone else. She emphasized education

11

and work outside the home as a means to liberation from the oppression of

being a housewife.

Feminism began as a struggle by women to prove that they were not " a

passive, empty mirror, not a frilly, useless decoration, not a mindless animal,

not a thing to be disposed of by others, incapable of a voice in [their] own

existence" (Freidan, 1963, p. 81). Instead those who subscribed to feminist

practices set out to earn equal status with men socially, educationally, and

professionally. Feminist theory is based on the assumption that women are not

the "second sex" and must disassemble the "feminine mystique" in order to

re-define themselves and the world around them in their own terms, not exist in

a world defined for them by others. Feminist theory calls for women to add their

voices rather than having men's voices be the only ones head. And feminist

theory invites women to share their conception of reality instead of living in a

male-only reality.

When one examines feminist theory, it becomes apparent that;

> . . . much feminist theory emerges from privileged women who live at the
> center, whose perspectives on reality rarely include knowledge and
> awareness of the lives of the women . . . who live on the margin. (hooks,
> 1984, preface)

In attempting to conduct research with African American women, I realized that

they sit in a position inside and outside of their associations with the African

American race and the female gender. Their experience is one of "multiple

jeopardies" including race, gender, and class. They live in "a different world

12

than those who are not Black and female" (Hill Collins, 1988, p, 299). They can

enter the world that is considered the center, but they have always returned to

the margin (hooks, 1984, preface). They are the few that know.

Reflecting the experiences, ideas, and opinions of African American

females requires capturing the experience of this "outsider within" (Hill Collins,

1988), one who looks from the outside in and from the inside out simultaneously

while never actually belonging in either place. In doing so, it was crucial that I

be attached to the participants, display the presence of emotions involved in the

work, and accept the words of the participants as truths—not the strongest

truths or absolute truths, but truths nonetheless;

> Our speech is most directly personal, and every black person assumes
> that every other black person has a right to personal opinion. In
> speaking of grave matters, your personal experience is considered very
> good evidence. (Gwaltney, 1980, p. 7)

In borrowing from Patricia Hill Collins' Black Feminist Thought and bell

hooks' brand of African American feminism, I followed this advice on the nature

of my research. I focused on how the experience of African American women

reflects the female and the African American experiences, as well as "a point of

contact between the two" (Hill Collins, 1988, p. 309).

Traditionally, feminism focuses strictly on the experience of the "college-

educated, white women who were compelled by sexist conditioning to remain in

the home" (hooks, 1984, p.2) and does not acknowledge the African American

woman. Feminist theory calls for women to "organize around their oppression"

and yet white middle and upper class feminists isolate themselves from women

of other classes and races (hooks, 1984, pp. 5-6). As with their white

counterparts, African American women also resist sexist socialization and

acquire an "awareness of patriarchal politics" (hooks, 1984, p. 10) but African

American women have the added oppression of their race and their class. The

difference lies in the divergent experiences of the two races of women and the

failure of traditional feminist to recognize this divergence. Instead feminists

react to any criticism of their theory by those outside its white middle-class

mainstream with ignorance:

> If we dared criticize the movement or to assume responsibility for
> reshaping feminist ideas and introducing new ideas, our voices are tuned
> out, dismissed, silenced. We could be heard only if our
> statements echoed the sentiments of the dominant discourse. (hooks,
> 1984, p. 11)

I chose to focus on hooks' statement referring to how the voices of African

American women have been "tuned out, dismissed, silenced" in my use of

Black feminism for this study. While I did not have the "necessary prerequisite"

of living life as an African American woman (Hill Collins, 1988, p. 322), I

realized the importance of attempting to operate my study through the

dimensions of Hill Collins' race-based or alternative epistemology. Hill Collins

emphasized 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 (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 206). Through recognizing the validity of the

experiences of African American female athletes, empowering them through giving audience to their dialogue, expressing genuine interest and care in their experiences and words, and cooperatively accepting personal responsibility for change, I followed an alternative epistemology of both race and gender and I tuned into and gave audience to the voices and words of the African American women who participated in my study.

Gender is not the "sole determinant of woman's fate" and African American women sit in the position of being "collectively at the bottom of the . . . ladder . . .our overall social status is lower than that of any other group" (hooks, 1984, p. 14). Because of this fact, African American women have a unique role to play. It is crucial to give voice to these women and 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). And it is crucial to recognize the unique role African American women can play in the evolution of equality in sport because of their position on the margin and the perspective that marginality provides. I could not portray the experiences of the African American female athletes through only their circumstances as African American or as women, but I also had to portray their experiences as the point of contact that is being an African American woman. Black feminism identifies the impossibility of separating race, class, and sex oppression because these are experienced simultaneously.

15

Black feminist theory focuses on the "visibility" of black women. It recognizes that being both black and female designates African American women from other women and from other African Americans. Black feminism also "asserts self-determination as essential" stating that "Black women are empowered with the right to interpret [their] reality and define [their] objectives" (King, 1988, p. 295). Black feminism evolved out of traditional feminism because African American women believed that their "liberation [was] necessity not . . .an adjunct to somebody else's" (Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982, p. 13). They believed that they deserved the opportunity to speak and write about their own experiences in their own words. Black feminism does expand upon feminist principles. One of the primary feminist principles focused on by African American women is that the personal is political (Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982). By bringing the voice of the African American female consciousness to the forefront Black feminism challenges the discrimination based on race, gender, and class, imposed by the dominant societal influences and other liberation movements. These are the tenets I followed in the formulation of my research questions, my interview guide, and throughout the process of data analysis.

Statement of the Problem

Sport is a microcosm of American society. As it reflects the makeup and structure of society, sport has the potential to either improve societal problems or reproduce them. Conflicting opinions exist on the role sport is assuming in

relation to the issue of race. Does it improve societal problems or does it reproduce them? Richard Lapchick, Director of Northeastern University's Center for the Study of Sport in Society, states, "there is little doubt that sport has become the broadest common cultural denominator in most societies" (Lapchick, 1991, p. 207). To Lapchick, sport is a common ground on which racial differences are minimized or even eliminated. He believes in the ability of sport to correct societal problems. However, Harry Edwards, former athlete and current sociologist, states an alternative view:

> Jim Crow has evolved into the thoroughly modern "Mr. James Crow, Esquire." The "White Only" and "Colored Only" signs are gone but the fundamental reality remains for the masses of black people both within and outside of sport, that is, the subjugation within a two-tiered society predicated upon white superiority and black subordination. (Edwards, 1989, p. 286)

To Edwards, sport reproduces the racial separation and inequality present in society as a whole. Edwards agrees with Lapchick that sport can be viewed as a common cultural denominator, but only when examining sport at a surface level. When looking beneath the surface, one finds sport reflects the unequal power structure of American society.

With the divergent views of Lapchick and Edwards in mind, I examined the participation numbers of African American females in collegiate sport (Bruening, 1998). In doing so, I found a glaring underrepresentation in the overall number of student-athletes across all sports, and an even more alarming

17

absence of participation in sports other than basketball and track and field. Take for example the 1994-95 participation numbers at the large Midwestern NCAA Division I school that was used in this study; African American women represent 38.5% or 5 participants in basketball and 66.7% or 8 participants in track and field. The total for all other sports combined is 2.3% or 3 participants (NCAA Certification Document, 1996). Beyond just this university and according to Jay Coakley, who quotes a 1996 study by the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the ratio of student-athletes to students among African American women is "one student-athlete in every fifty black female students." Coakley also reveals "eighty percent of black women athletes were in two sports (basketball and track and field)" (Coakley, 1998, p. 469). These numbers beg the question. Are women's collegiate sports truly a "common cultural denominator" as Lapchick contends? Or do the unwritten "White Only" and "Colored Only" signs continue to send a message to African American women as Edwards states? Sport does have the potential to be a "common cultural denominator," but Mr. James Crow, Esquire also seems to have staked his claim on the realm of women's college athletics. Caucasian women are considerably better represented in college athletics than African American women. African American women are considerably better represented in the sports of basketball and track and field than they are in any other sports.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study has four dimensions. First, through listening to the voices of African American female collegiate student-athletes, the study examines if African American females are silenced by a lack of concern on the part of the media, sport professionals, and researchers. I attempt to bring out the voices of the women and the opinions they represent. Secondly, the study explains how societal stereotypes about gender and culture can affect African American female athletes. Next, the study demonstrates how socialization factors have the ability either to drive African American females away from sport participation or lead the majority of them toward basketball and track. And lastly I, along with the participants, compile strategies to change the current participation rates of African American women in sport both from the research of experts in the field of athletics and from the women who participate in this study.

Major Research Questions

In conducting an examination of the experiences of African American female collegiate athletes, I attempted to answer the following research questions. These questions guided any inquiries and the formation of my focus group and interview guides:

1a. Are African American women silenced by the balance, or imbalance, of racial and gender power in society and in sport?

b. If so, how are they silenced?

c. By what; by whom?

2a. How does sport serve to create and reinforce racial and gender-based stereotypes?

b. How can sport serve to dispel those myths?

3a. How does the socialization process differ for African American women?

b. How does this affect sport participation patterns?

4a. What can coaches, educators, administrators, researchers, the media, families, peers, and role models do to increase the overall sport participation rates of African American girls and women?

b. What can these individuals (coaches, educators, administrators, researchers, the media, families, peers, and role models) do to increase the rates in the currently underrepresented sports?

Significance of Study

Some sport sociologists believe that sport has the potential to be an institution in which equality among the races exists and thrives. However, many instances of discrimination are present in sport. Skewed participation numbers in certain sports, unequal opportunity for equal ability, stacking, and the lack of minorities in leadership positions in the sport profession are all examples of the inequalities. The potential of sport to serve as an example of equality among the races is not being realized.

Providing insight into the factors that contribute to the sport participation of African American females may provide a useful tool in the education of

20

coaches, administrators, educators, and others concerned with the issue of racism in sports. I plan to share the results of the study with the institution the participants attend in order to assist that athletic department's efforts to serve the student-athlete and provide her with a quality sport experience.

If a lack of interest in the sport participation habits of African American females, exposure to stereotypes, and the socialization process effect the level and nature of involvement of African American women in sport, then understanding these factors from the perspective of the women who experience them will further the efforts to help sport reach its integrating potential.

Limitations

In this study I attempted to examine how the sporting lives of African American females were affected buy the attention paid to African American females in sport, the stereotypical views and expressions of American society, and the socialization process. With Black Feminism as a theoretical framework, I acknowledged the "multiple jeopardies" of race, class, and gender experienced by African American women, paid particular attention to the perspective of the participants, and provided the opportunity for the women to interpret their own reality. In order to do this, qualitative research methods were employed to collect and analyze data. Both focus groups and individual interviews made up the data collection segment of this inquiry. The use of

qualitative methods placed an emphasis on understanding "subjective and experiential aspects of a phenomena" (Workman, 1995, p. 11). Rather than attempting to generalize findings to a more universal population, this study focused on the depth of information received from a small group of participants not necessarily "typical or representative of a larger population" (Workman, 1995, p. 11). This study gathered data that was intended to foster to a finer awareness of the often-ignored plight of the African American female collegiate student-athlete for coaches, administrators, and educators. Additionally, inherent limitations exist when discussing sensitive issues in cross-cultural settings. The researcher being a member of the "dominant culture" could lead to the participants tempering their responses.

Delimitations

In this study I did not attempt to discover how silencing, stereotypes, and socialization affected the participation of all minorities in sport, but was delimited by a specific focal point of African American females. The study was additionally delimited by the selection of setting. A large Midwestern NCAA Division I institution was chosen as the location from which data was collected. This location was selected for the size of its athletic program, and therefore number of African American female student-athletes, and for the existence of a special program for minority student-athletes (The Student-Athlete Voice) run

by Athlete Academic Services. In addition, the site was chosen based on accessibility and for the rapport established by this researcher during my earlier work with my pilot study.

Definition of Terms

The following section contains definitions of the primary terms to be used in this study. They are provided to familiarize the reader with the terminology that is used and referred to throughout this work.

Athlete Academic Services-Athlete Academic Service is pseudonym for an office within the athletic department that attends to the academic needs and responsibilities of the student-athlete. This office oversees the scheduling of classes, distribution of textbooks, monitoring of academic performance, and serves as a counseling resource for any academic or social problems of the student-athlete.

Jim Crow- In 1896 the United States Supreme Court's decision in *the Plessy v. Ferguson* case dictated a doctrine of "separate but equal" to be enforced in all public places. A distinction between "white only" and "colored only" facilities served to legally segregate America. Many states passed Jim Crow laws "mandating racial segregation in almost all areas of public life" (Brooks &

Althouse, 1993a, p. 4). Jim Crow ruled the land until the landmark *Brown v.*

Topeka Board of Education case in 1954, which declared the "separate but

equal" doctrine unconstitutional.

*Overrepresentation-*Overrepresentation is the presence of an abundance of

people in a certain sport or sports. For this study, overrepresentation is present

when the percentage of African American women is higher in a sport than the

percentage of African Americans in the total population of the United States

(12.1% in the 1990 census).

*Silencing-*In this study silencing will refer to how African American women have

had their "voices . . . tuned out, dismissed, silenced" (hooks, 1984, p. 11) and

how "women of color . . . have historically been silenced in society and sport"

(Smith, 1992, p. 228). For the most part, theory, research, and publicity in

society and sport has focused on the white female as representative of all

females and the African American male as representative of all African

Americans. Because of this omission of African American women, they have in

effect had their voices, ideas, and opinions silenced by the more dominant

segments of society.

*Socialization-*For the purposes of this study, socialization is "an active process of learning and social development that occurs as people interact with one another and become acquainted with the social world in which they live, and as they form ideas about who they are, and make decisions about their goals and behaviors" (Coakley, 1998, p. 88). People are socialized by what they are taught by others such as family members, peers, and teachers and coaches and what they observe themselves. They learn "how to behave in accordance with the expectations of others in the social order" (Greendorfer, 1993, p. 4).

Stereotype- In relation to race and gender "stereotyping is an extremely powerful and potent form of discrimination" (Greendorfer, 1993, p. 5). Examples of commonly heard and too often believed stereotypes include the idea that African Americans are athletically gifted due to a gene or some biological predisposition. Coupled with that notion is that African Americans are conversely predisposed toward inferior intelligence and academic potential;

> I truly believe [African Americans] may not have some of the necessities to be . . . a field manager or perhaps a general manager . . .they are gifted with great musculature . . .they are fleet of foot . . .[but] as far as having the background to become club presidents to the president of a back . . . I don't know. (Al Campanis, former vice president for player personnel for the Los Angeles Dodgers, 1987)

25

A final example of a stereotype is that women prefer sports such as "figure skating where the women don't look like athletes . . ." (Coakley, 1998, p. 210) over more physical sports like wrestling, ice hockey, and football. These examples are what shape the definition of stereotype to be used in this study: "a fixed impression, which conforms very little to the fact it pretends to represent, and results from our defining first and observing second" (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995, p. 14).

The Student-Athlete Voice-The Student-Athlete Voice is pseudonym used for a group developed and run by Athlete Academic Services at the University being used in this study. The group is made up of minority student-athletes and states its goals to be to:

1. Comprise a network for minority student-athletes within the Athletic Department, the University, and professionals in the community.

2. Increase the graduation rates of minority student-athletes.

3. Promote and advocate for an environment that respects and honors diversity, and responds to multicultural issues and concerns within the university, community, and Athletic Department.

4. Recruit minority student-athletes.

5. Act as a support system for minority student-athletes. (NCAA Certification Document, 1996)

Underrepresentation- Underrepresentation is the lack of people in a certain sport or sports. For this study, underrepresentation is present when the

26

percentage of African American women is lower in a sport than the percentage of African Americans in the total population of the United States (12.1% in the 1990 census).

X University-X University is the pseudonym selected to refer to the institution in the study in order to maintain confidentiality.

Overview of Chapters

The study of how silencing, stereotype, and socialization affect the sport participation of African American females was composed on the following chapters:

Chapter 1 includes introduction and background information, the theoretical framework, statement of the problem, purpose and significance of the study, major research questions, limitation and delimitations, and a definition of terms.

Chapter 2 provides a thorough review of the research pertaining to African American females in sport. A discussion of the bodies of knowledge on African American women in society and scholarship, stereotyping, and socialization is included in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 is an overview of the qualitative methodological paradigm in which the study will be conducted. In this chapter I outline the procedures used

in focus group and individual interviews, and give particular attention to the selection of participants, data collection, data analysis, and research issues related to cross-cultural research, data dependability, transferability, and ethics.

Chapter 4 highlights the results of data collection. I use narratives developed through the focus group and individual sessions to share the stories of the participants and illustrate the themes that remained prevalent throughout the progression of the study.

Chapter 5 contains the conclusions and implications of the study. In this chapter I summarize and discuss the findings of the study, implications for sport managers, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter I provide a review the literature that is associated with the

major research questions of this study. First, I examine the phenomenon of the

silencing of African American females by scholars in their research. Next, I look

at the stereotypes that commonly surround African American women and how

the experts explain the development and the continuation of those views.

Thirdly, I focus on the socialization process as defined by both sociologists and

sport sociologists. And lastly, I present the strategies for change in the sport

participation rates of African American females that have been suggested in the

literature.

Silencing by a Lack of Interest and Research

Women of color . . .have historically been silenced in society and
sport. (Smith, 1992, p.228)

. . . men authors and gate-keepers of Black American Literature have
historically ignored, belittled and suppressed the women authors and
the work they have produced. (Hernton, 1987, p. 38)

Social institutions tend to reflect and benefit the interests of those dominant groups who have created and now oversee them. In sport and society, the needs of people of color are most likely to be disadvantaged by the institutional structure that focuses on the dominant groups. Historically, African American people "have been told by white people what to do, how to do it, and in general, what constitutes reality" (Stratta, 1995b, p. 53). A result of White people having the "power to define contextual relations and reality," (Stratta, 1995b, p. 53) one minority group's views are consistently ignored in social institutions. The voices of "women of color have been silenced by mainstream culture and feminist theory" (O' Bryant, 1996, p. 30). The power of the "white gatekeepers ha[s] prohibited the voices of African American women to be documents in 'respected' literature" (Stratta, 1995a, p. 44).

In attempting to conduct a thorough review of literature and formulate patterns and trends concerning African American female athletes, I have been made painfully aware that these women are for all practical purposes invisible for; "all the women are white, and all of the blacks are men" (Hull & Smith, 1982). Simultaneously belonging to two "minority" groups in the predominantly white male institution of sport, the African American female athlete's experiences are often more disregarded and "less articulated than both her African American brothers or Euro-American sisters" (Stratta, 1995a, p. 4). This fact is accentuated by her being relegated to subordinate status within

both groups in the larger society (hooks, 1990). According to Hill Collins

(1990):

> All African-American women share the common experience of
> being Black women in a society that denigrates women of African
> descent. This commonality of experience suggests that certain
> characteristic themes will be prominent in a Black women's
> standpoint. (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 22)

One of these themes will be the lack of attention paid to African American

women by the dominant groups and those groups' research.

While there is attention paid to African American men in sport

research, that research predictably falls in one of several categories.

According to Susan Birrell:

> The writing that does explore race and sport is generally superficial . .
> .well-intentioned but theoretically limited critiques of sport as a racist
> institution, personal accounts of the exploitation of Black athletes, a
> glut of tediously repetitive studies on stacking, and quantitative studies
> that reduce race to a variable. (Birrell, 1990, p. 186)

Research on African American women, let alone research on African

American women in sport, is lacking. Evidence of the lived experiences of

African American women is scarce in the sport literature. The number of

studies concentrating solely on African American female athletes consists

primarily of:

> autobiographical materials (Gibson, 1958; Rudolph, 1977); published
> analyses (Abney & Richey, 1991; Green, Oglesby, Alexander, &
> Franke, 1981; Houzer, 1974; Smith, 1991); and unpublished studies,
> mostly of a descriptive nature (Abney, 1988; Alexander, 1978; Barclay,
> 1979; Corbett, 1981; Murphy, 1980, 1992). (Stratta, 1995a, p. 2)

Only recently has any research examined "what sport means to college

athletes" (Stratta, 1995a, p. 3) rather than elaborating on the advantages and

disadvantages of sport for the African American female. And only recently

have researchers begun to examine what it means to be an African American

female in sport, acknowledging that race and gender are not mutually

exclusive (Bruening, 1998; O' Bryant, 1996; Stratta, 1995a & b). Studies that

examine the "social and cultural connections between the individual and

society" (Smith, 1992, p. 243) are the only way to "advance knowledge and

understanding of what sport means and how it impacts women of color"

(Stratta, 1995a, p. 85).

Several studies on African American women in sport fall into the

category of "biographical summaries" (Stratta, 1995a, p. 69). These

summaries include the one book dedicated solely to examining African

American women in sport ever published. Tina Sloan Green, Carole Oglesby,

Alpha Alexander, and Nikki Franke's 1981 book entitled *Black Women in

Sport* contains biographies of accomplished African American sportswomen

as well as addressing issues such as myths and realities, participation

disparities, reflections of prejudice, consciousness raising, and outlooks for

the future. The authors reiterate the fact that the "experiences of black

females in sport are characterized in professional literature by silence"

(Green, Olgesby, Alexander, & Franke, 1981, p. 7). Green, Olgesby,

Alexander, and Franke (1981) postulate that the message the silence sends

to both African Americans and whites that "come into contact with potential black sportswomen. The message of the silence is this: no black women are here" (Green, et al., 1981, p. 7).

The other biographical summaries of African Americans in sport include Smith's (1986) volume that documents the accomplishments of African American women from 1900-1979. And lastly, Arthur Ashe's anthology of the achievements of both African American men and women is an extensive three volume series providing a complete history of the Black athlete (1988).

Although the historical and biographical literature is crucial to understanding the situation of the African American female athlete, what is needed in sport, as in all other areas of research, is what Susan Birrell calls "a more profound approach" (Birrell, 1990, p. 185). She asks scholars "to conceive of race as a culturally produced marker of a particular relationship of power; to see racial identity as contested; and to ask how racial relations are produced and reproduced through sport" (Birrell, 1990, p. 186). It is not enough anymore to conduct the repetitious and superficial studies of race and sport (i.e., stacking). Researchers must acknowledge and examine the power relationship of racial difference that is produced and reproduced through sport.

Yevonne Smith (1992) echoes Birrell's sentiments by suggesting new theory development that focuses on the experiences of African American

women through the relationship of race and gender. Smith also advocates

the participation of more African American women in conducting and

publishing research in order to create more literature from the "outsider

within" perspective:

> It is important to begin more relational analyses of and by diverse
> women of color and to understand how collective personal experiences
> and processes are informed by race, gender, and class power
> relations. (Smith, 1992, p. 244)

Examining the intersection of race and gender, particularly by those who are

both racial and gender minorities, asked "how practices are structured [in

sport] in ways that may help to legitimate, reproduce, or challenge the social

relations of power and privilege that exist . . ." (O' Bryant, 1996, p. 32).

Historically, African American women have been invisible both as

researchers and as the researched. This invisibility "has had a profound

effect of mainstream views and perceptions, and on the current status of

African American women in society" (Stratta, 1995a, p. 47). Both Hill Collins

(1990) and Scott (1982) share their impressions of how the views and

perceptions African American women by society as a whole have been

adversely affected. A lack of research on these women has created an

attitude that their lives are not worth researching and their stories are not

worth telling. As a result, "much of Black women's intellectual tradition has

been imbedded in institutional locations other than the academy" (Hill Collins,

1990, p. 15). Stratta (1995a) gives examples of those sources for the

33

tradition as interviews, letters, diaries, speeches, meeting minutes, organizational records, and personal accounts.

In summary, progressing beyond the historical obstruction of African American women's ideas and opinions is a difficult process. A re-education of certain segments of society needs to occur. As in other arenas, essentially no studies document how African American female athletes experience sport. And despite the absence of documentation of these women's opinions and ideas, "critical decisions are made on a daily basis by administrators and coaches who have little substantive knowledge or theoretical basis for predicting the potential consequences of their decisions" (Stratta, 1995a, p. 4). As a result Stratta suggests that:

> 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)

If research on African American female athletes is not conducted and its results made known, then sport continues to be a site for the exercising of dominant group privilege and African American women continue to have their ideas and opinions ignored. It is only through "moving from silence into speech" that "makes new life and new growth possible" for those who have been historically oppressed (hooks, 1989, p. 9).

Stereotyping

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)

Stereotyping is an extremely powerful and potent form of discrimination . . .because we take these practices for granted and assume the outcomes to be 'normal', few of us ever question or challenge the reasons for or the validity of the underlying ideology that is embedded in such practices. (Greendorfer, 1993, p. 5)

A stereotype is an unfounded view or belief about a person or group of people. When referring to African Americans, stereotypes abound. People hold beliefs about the intelligence, academic preparation, physical superiority, and athletic ability of African Americans that have "little scientific credibility" (Sailes, 1993, p. 90). Many stereotypes have developed in an attempt to explain the participation patterns of African American 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. 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 positions of dominance or 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

35

females as athletes are unfounded on racial grounds, they are supported on sociological grounds.

Green, Olgesby, Alexander, and Franke (1981) discuss three "distortions" about African American women that are regularly accepted as truth. The first, the matriarchy myth, refers to African American women in a derogatory nature as evoking fear in others with her strong sense of self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Green et al. (1981) also discuss the stereotype that African American women are only talented in and therefore only involved in basketball and track. And finally, the misconception that African American women are only competent in those skills necessary for basketball and track (i.e. running and jumping) is addressed.

In 1909 W.E.B. DuBois published *The Negro American Family*. His work was reprinted in 1968 and again in 1978. At the original publishing DuBois stated that a study on the African American family's formation, organization, and daily life is "faced with a lamentable dearth of material" (DuBois, 1978, p. 199). In the time since then, research has been conducted on the African American family and myths have developed. The matriarchy myth is influenced most by E. Franklin Frazier's theories about the structure of the African American family (1939) and draws support form other research originating from a male perspective (Hannerz, 1969; Liebow, 1967; Moynihan, 1965). Conclusions from this research explain "that female-headed households developed during slavery and gained prominence after

36

emancipation" (Green, et al., 1981, p. 8). African American women are characterized as possessing great independence, undervaluing the institution of marriage, being promiscuous, and "having no notion of male supremacy" (Green, et al., 1981, p. 8). Although these studies accurately identify the hardships African American males face in racist society, they "have fostered a stereotype of Black families as fatherless and subject to a domineering woman's matriarchal rule" (Marable, 1991, p. 107). African American women are then to blame for all of the social ills surrounding their communities. Unfortunately, this theory was not questioned until Gutman's (1976) findings over ten years later that elaborated on the African American culture's providing of "alternative norms different from the dominant Euro-American culture and this often misunderstood" (Green, et al., 1981, p. 8).

The second contention of Green, Oglesby, Alexander, and Franke (1981) is the myth that African American females are only in basketball and track and field, and their third point is that African American women are known for their running and jumping abilities. Based on the statistics from a single National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I institution cited earlier (Chapter I, p. 13) and the fact that approximately 80% of African American female college athletes receiving athletic scholarships in all NCAA Division I schools participate in track and field and basketball (Coakley, 1998, p. 123), it could be said that basketball and track are the "sports of choice" (Smith, 1992, p. 236). But as early as 1974, Houzer reported that the

stereotypically popular sports like basketball and track and field were not actually the most popular sports for African American young women. Houzer found that African American women preferred sports such as volleyball, tennis, gymnastics, and swimming (Houzer, 1974).

African American girls and women are directed toward basketball and track by the stereotypes that influence them as they formulate their opinions about sport participation and make choices to participate in certain sports, such as their supposed running and jumping skills. This is not because these young women as a group have more talent at some sports or components of those sports rather than others, but instead because they are told and led to believe that they do. In fact, as Houzer found, African American female athletes view their stereotypical image as "replete with inaccuracies and misrepresentations" (Douglas, 1988, p. 1) for when they "looked to society and physical education and sport systems to clarify and define [them], [they] found that [their] images were either distorted and inaccurate or absent." (Smith, 1992, p. 231) African American female student-athletes see themselves differently than the whole of society sees them.

Beyond Green, Oglesby, Alexander, and Franke's identification of the sport-related myths about the African American female, much of the other literature that does exist on African American females in sport outlines these same myths. The most well researched topics include the status of African American women as overrepresented in the stereotypically popular sports of

basketball and track and field, and underrepresented in all other sports as well as in athletically related careers (e.g. coaches, administrators, athletic trainers, officials). These exclusively quantitative studies dealing with athletes include Alexander's (1978) investigation of trends with African American women in the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW), Barclay's (1979) investigation of African American women in Big Ten institutions, and Murphy's (1980, 1992) two longitudinal studies at all AIAW institutions (1973-74 to 1978-79) and select NCAA colleges and universities (1981-82 to 1987-88).

Alexander discovered the effects of clustering, or the phenomenon of African American women making up a larger percentage of participants in certain sports. The athletic participation numbers in Alexander's study reflected a tendency of African American women to gravitate toward basketball and track and field. Alexander's percentages for the 1976-77 academic year reflected 12.5% of African American women in basketball, 10.9% in track and field, and no more than 7% in any other sport.

Barclay found that African American women made up 16% of participants in track and field and 9.3% in basketball, compared to volleyball (3%), field hockey and softball (2%), tennis (.79%), and swimming and diving (.39%). No African American women participated in crew, cross-country, fencing, golf, gymnastics, or synchronized swimming. Murphy's two studies

again resulted in findings that revealed the largest concentration of African American female athletes in basketball and track and field.

Similar statistics to those of the participation numbers of African American female athletes have come from studies examining African American women in athletic leadership positions. Alexander (1978) also illuminated the "clustering" of women in athletically related careers in the AIAW. For coaches, 13% of track and field coaches were African American women, 11.3% of basketball coaches, and 9.8% of cross-country coaches. No other sport had a percentage higher than 6%. Administratively, the percentages were as follows: athletic directors (5.2%), assistant/associate athletic directors (2.5%), sports information directors (1.7%), and athletic trainers (5.0%) (Alexander, 1978).

Beyond the athletic participation numbers, Murphy (1980, 1992) also found that "women and women of color are virtually invisible at the very highest levels of decision-making in sport" (Murphy, 1992, p.6). Yevonne Smith (1991) found that only "five percent or less of all physical education teachers, coaches, and sport administrators are multicultural minorities" (Smith, 1991, p. 39). And perhaps the most well known documentation of women in sport leadership roles is Acosta and Carpenter's longitudinal study of NCAA institutions (1977-present). In each of their yearly updates, Acosta and Carpenter demonstrate that although opportunities for women in sport have increased over the last two decades, fewer and fewer women,

40

particularly African American women, are represented in athletic leadership positions (Acosta & Carpenter, 1990).

African American women, when given the opportunity, speak to the stereotypical views that society has of African American female athletes. Richard Lapchick comments 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). Every African American woman has experienced these unfounded views, these misconceptions that make them feel as if they are predetermined to play certain sports and excel at certain aspects of sport. African American female athletes tend to feel as if that is where they are stuck--silenced and stereotyped.

I composed the poem that follows by using the transcripts from my pilot study. I selected the words of the participants as they discussed their perceptions of their position in society:

Society's Message

The message is sent from an early age;
If you are black you are supposed to be an athlete.
The message is sent from an early age;
When you are tall and black you are supposed to play basketball.
It does not matter if you have no skills,
It does not matter if you'd rather row.
That's where black women are stuck.

41

The message is sent from an early age;
It's basketball or track if you're black and female.
Wear a volleyball sweatshirt—you play basketball, right?
Stand with your crew teammates—you run track, right?
Society has no idea.
They've never seen it before.
That's where black women are stuck.

The message is sent from an early age;
The power of words strikes with debilitating force.
Swimming? Aren't black people afraid of the water?
She's black. She must be able to jump high and run fast.
That's the message our society conveys—
These misconceptions, these stereotypes.
That's where black women are stuck.

The message is sent from an early age.
Segregation is alive and well;
When there exist the really white sports,
When she is often alone on her team,
When breaking down the barriers is her daily struggle.
Segregation is alive and well.
And that's where black women are stuck.
(Bruening, 1998)

Socialization

. . .an active process of learning and social development that occurs as people interact with one another and become acquainted with the social world in which they live, and as they form ideas about who they are, and make decisions about their goals and behaviors. (Coakley, 1998, p. 88)

Female interest and involvement in sport is not a chance occurrence that depends on legislation or on innate skill and motor talent. Rather, it is an outcome of a complex and systematic process called socialization . . .this dynamic social process related gender [and racial] roles and how roles influence the likelihood of who will and will not become involved in sport . . . (Greendorfer, 1990, p. 3)

42

Socialization is a process by which people develop personally and socially through observations, conversations, and interactions with others. Factors such as gender and race have a tremendous impact on the socialization process as they influence the development of people into their gender and racial roles in society. Socialization agents (families, siblings, peers, teachers, coaches) also have impact the way people learn and the perspective from which they perceive the world around them.

Yevonne Smith states that the "socialization of African American and other women of color historically has been different from Anglo American women" (Smith, 1992, p. 234). African American women have a different experience from other women and from African American men. African American women face a double bind of being both female and the member of a racial minority group. They are Patricia Hill Collins' (1988) infamous "outsiders within." They are women, but not white women. They are African American, but not African American men. It is true that "the minority woman has to be very determined to be a full-time participant in sport, because for the most part her heritage and birth culture speak loudly and forcefully against her involvement with most forms of sport" (Acosta, 1993, p. 208). She has both her gender and her race working against her.

For members of a minority group, the family is the initial and therefore most important agent of socialization; "it is within the family context that the individual first becomes aware and begins to grapple with the significance of

racism and discrimination" (Jackson, McCullough, & Gurin, 1997, p. 254).

Beyond what they learn from their families, African American women are socialized by what they are taught by others (peers, teachers, coaches, church leaders) and what they observe themselves. The family remains a crucial influence, though, as it teaches 'a strong and positive sense of black identity . . .[and] emphasize[s] the importance of a racial groups history and togetherness" (Jackson, McCullough, & Gurin, 1997, p. 252).

The socialization process "involves rather complex dynamics among psychological, social, and cultural considerations of learning and development" (Greendorfer, 1993, p. 4). For African American women this process emphatically sends the message of both their role in society as a member of the female subset and their role as a member of an even further division of that subset, that of an African American woman. Through socialization African American women learn "how to behave in accordance with the expectations of others in the social order" (Greendorfer, 1993, p. 4). From a young age, many African American women are told what their role in sport will be. This message is delivered rarely by another African American woman, but more likely delivered by someone with more cultural status than they have.

African Americans are concentrated in the sports of basketball and track and field, and are seldom represented in such sports as field hockey, gymnastics, and swimming. Socialization is what leads most African

44

American women to participate in basketball and track and field. As stated

before, African American women are taught the importance of their group

identity and togetherness making it a difficult decision to be a "token"

participant in other sports, and one that often leads to diminished self-esteem

(Jackson, McCullough, & Gurin, 1997).

Another cause of overrepresentation in basketball and track is the

overall limited opportunities for African American women in sport. These

women either choose not to participate or to follow the expectations taught to

them by society. They often listen to the words of coaches and the images of

the media and play basketball or run track. Socialization into certain sports

and away from others "may be the result of a combination of factors, such as

lack of opportunity, exclusionary clubs, financial outlay, lack of role models,

rural/suburban accessibility to facilities, and availability of private coaches."

(Acosta, 1993, p. 211). African American women face limited opportunities in

many forms when it comes to athletics. Alexander (1978) lists several

reasons why African American women are underrepresented in sport

including: a lack of money for lessons and equipment; lack of affirmative

action on the part of colleges and universities; lack of role models; time

commitments for child care, study responsibilities, and wage earning

responsibilities; and lack of available opportunities in geographical areas of

minority population concentration. Echoing Alexander, Smith states that:

> . . .although a few families are able to afford expensive lessons and
> elite sporting experiences in tennis, golf, swimming, and so on, the

majority of families cannot afford expensive sport experiences. Low socioeconomic conditions impact women of color disproportionately such that their children must participate in stereotypical, 'popular' sports such as basketball and track and field (sponsored by the schools, recreation departments, and other nonprofit agencies) or not participate in at all in organized sports. (Smith, 1992, p. 236)

Although contrary to Jackson, McCullough, and Gurin, Greendorfer and Ewing (1981) found yet another difference between the socialization of African American females and their white counterparts. The researchers discovered that specific agents of socialization such as parents or teachers had more influence on white children's involvement in sport. African American children's participation was guided more by the actual structure of society and certain contextual factors. African American children's sport decisions were more affected by access to facilities, equipment, programming, and instruction then by the guidance of any influential people in their lives.

On the surface this might seem to be a strictly financial concern, but upon further examination it is a societal concern. African American women have not participated or excelled in certain sports due to the social structure of the United States and the isolation of the races" (Houzer, 1974, p. 208). Smith (1992) agrees that traditionally women of color have not been advantaged or even noticed in either society or sport. The origin of the problem of underrepresentation is the segregation of American society. The "paucity of educational and recreational opportunities which have been

provided for minority groups throughout the United States" (Houzer, 1974, p. 208) is one of the results. Sporting experiences for women of color are inextricably bound to the societal experiences of women of color (Smith, 1992).

Another result of society's separation of the races is a lack of role models for young African Americans, particularly females; "appropriate models are almost non-existent" (Houzer, 1974, p. 208). It is crucial to the development of young athletes to see people who look like them participating and succeeding at sports in order for those young athletes to have a source of inspiration both from an athletic perspective and a societal perspective. Many young African American women make the decision to participate in basketball or track and field because their heroes, mentors, and friends have done the same. They know that they will face "hostility and ostracism" (Stratta, 1995a, p. 74) if they are one of the few African Americans participating in sports such a field hockey, swimming, soccer, softball, or volleyball. They also see other African American women excelling in basketball and track and field and that motivates their decision as well.

In 1994 6% of all students in Division I-A institutions were African American, but 37% of all women's basketball players in those same institutions were African American (Lapchick, 1996). Why should a young African American athlete aspire to play field hockey or become a gymnast when no one else around her is doing that? Sport does reflect society.

47

Without examples of cultural diversity in sport, young athletes see "the reflections cast" and their coaches and others who are interested in making changes see these reflections "as clear indications of the problems that exist" (Acosta, 1993, p. 207). Bruening (1998) cites personal interviews with African American female college volleyball coaches and players to demonstrate this point:

> Grace refers to when she was growing up and how it was assumed that she 'would play other sports' like basketball or track and field. She does not feel that black females see much volleyball; 'they see a lot of basketball or a lot of blacks in basketball or track and field. There is a mind set or that is what they are taught growing up.' (Bruening, 1998, p. 25)

Bruening continues with a student-athlete's impressions:

> Abbie expresses how watching television when she was in the seventh and eighth grades taught her that all volleyball players had to be white. She lived with that misinformation for several years and even let it shape her opinions . . . (Bruening, 1998, p. 25)

Without role models to show them otherwise, African American women keep perpetuating their overrepresentation in certain sports and their underrepresentation in others that helps to "maintain the inequalities that currently exist in the social order" (Greendorfer, 1993, p. 4).

African American females are seen most often in the sports of basketball and track and field and are rarely participants in field hockey, gymnastics, and swimming. Socialization is one of the factors that lead African American women to choose to participate in sport, and in which sport

48

to participate. African American females make the choices of basketball and track and field most often because that is what they perceive as possible choices. As African American females go through the socialization process they form ideas about what they are capable of becoming. Society places limits of them as a result of their "African American-ness" and their "female-ness." These limits are apparent in the messages sent to young African American females by socialization agents (teachers, coaches, peers), the media representation of African American females and African American female athletes, and the number of opportunities made available in sport for African American females through mentoring and role modeling.

Strategies for Change

As we move into the twenty-first century, the proportion of racial and ethnic minorities, particularly African American men and women, attending . . .colleges will continue to grow. Turning to the near future, democratizing sports and ensuring opportunities for individuals from every racial and ethnic group . . .means to fight against oppressive sport practices, while at the same time challenging sport in the most fundamental ways to end oppression. (Brooks & Althouse, 1993b, p. 249)

Changing the belief system of American society and American sport is not a simple task. People do not adjust established ideologies that have been ingrained in their way of life without a struggle. Some have benefited from ideologies and resist altering the "relationships and social structures that are built on and reinforce their beliefs" (Coakley, 1998, p. 282). If this change

49

were uncomplicated, then African American women would have achieved

equity in representation in sport some time ago.

The first and most inclusive list of strategies for changing the racial

makeup of sport is provided by the Rainbow Commission for Fairness in

Athletics' diversity and affirmative action plan for National Collegiate Athletic

Association (NCAA) institutions. This plan includes seven points:

1. Fair Employment Practices: Each institution will develop a three-to-five year diversity/affirmative action plan for its athletics department for the inclusion of women and minorities in all areas and proportionate to every hierarchy at all levels. This shall include, but not be limited to, coaches, athletic administrators, sports information personnel and radio/television announcers. These plans should be submitted annually to an impartial third party for voluntary monitoring and evaluation. Each plan should include a reward/liability system.

2. Recruiting: Each institution will develop a three-to-five year diversity/affirmative action plan for the recruiting of athletes so that minorities will be represented in the non-revenue sports and nontraditional sports. Each plan should include a reward/liability system.

3. Vendors Participation: Each institution will establish guidelines for a fair percentage (as reflected by population) of all external purchases of goods and services to minority and/or women vendors. This should included equitable participation in the building of new stadiums/arenas or refurbishing of old ones.

4. Merchandising Licensing: Each institution will develop a three-to-five year diversity/affirmative action plan to include more minorities and women at all levels, proportionate to hierarchy, in the manufacturing, marketing and merchandising of school-licensed products.

5. Executive Assignments: Each institution will place at least two qualified candidates from the target group on a short list of executive and coaching assignments. This process should continue until executive assignments are representative of some

reasonable combination of team composition and available labor force.

6. Player Training: Each institution will provide self-help, lifestyle, career and personal development, and financial management training for all athletes.

7. Sensitivity: Each institution will provide diversity and humanities training within the entire organizational culture for athletics administrators, coaches, and other athletics personnel. Athletes of all ethnic backgrounds are encouraged to take a curriculum that reflects a content of diversity. (NCAA News, 1998)

The Rainbow Commission's seven points touch on what leaders can do to promote diversity in athletics and those seven points provide a synopsis for other researchers' strategies for change.

Jay Coakley suggests that in order for racial relations to be improved through sport, those in leadership positions must make a commitment to challenge the existing system. He suggests that by organizing efforts on the part of both whites and African Americans, sport leaders can make an impact on confronting the dominant racial ideologies. By moving the focus away from stereotypical views of the races and toward a "critical examination" of the symbolism of those stereotypes as promoting privilege and power, progress can be made in changing the current status of African Americans in sport (Coakley, 1998).

Oglesby (1993) agrees with Coakley in suggesting that those members of the dominant group make efforts to help change the racial make-up of sport. Sport leaders have to "stop relying on the few African American coaches to do the work for which the entire [institution] is responsible"

51

(Bruening, 1998, p. 29). By becoming more educated about racial issues in sport and becoming committed to "building an equitable, racially diverse" (Oglesby, 1993, p. 260) structure for sport, "color affirming whites (CAWs) can make a difference. Oglesby's second suggestion is for researchers and scholars to make an effort to conduct and publish studies involving race and sport. Content analyses, demographic assessments, qualitative/descriptive work, experimental studies, and outcome research are all valuable tools in increasing the amount and quality of research that exists. Lastly, Oglesby encourages programmatic efforts as the "type of antiracist effort that probably makes the greatest impact" (Oglesby, 1993, p. 261). According to her:

> The institutionalized form of racism in our society will only be fully eradicated when we have installed enough antiracist institutionalized programs to neutralize the historic toxicity of ordinary social life. (Oglesby, 1993, p. 262)

She points to example of programmatic efforts in the NCAA's Minority Enhancement program that includes scholarships for racial minority graduate students in sport related programs and a resume bank for minorities interested in sport leadership positions, the United States Olympic Committee's racial minority leadership recruitment and training program, a swimming program for children from low-income families at Temple University called the Tiger-Sharks which has produced Olympic caliber swimmers, and the National Youth Sport Program (NYSP) sponsored by the NCAA and

aimed at involving inner-city children in summer sports program at local NCAA member institutions.

Continuing with the theme of involving those in positions of leadership and members of the privileged group in changing the racial climate of sport, Eitzen (1993) proposes that more African Americans be given opportunities for employment in sport through increasing the efforts to hire African American athletic directors, assistant and associate athletic directors, sports information directors, and sports medicine personnel. Eitzen also presents the idea of giving more responsibility to African Americans currently occupying positions of athletic leadership to better prepare them for future positions. Finally, Eitzen describes the process that needs to occur before the applicants for these positions will be more racially diverse. He outlines an education program to sensitize coaches and athletic department personnel to racism in language and in the media, and suggests a process by which athletes and employees can report and administrators can eliminate discriminatory and dehumanizing practices.

Abney and Richey (1992) divide their strategies into two segments, those for participants in sport and those for leaders in sport. They recommend that participants learn and respect individual differences, avoid clustering participants because of stereotypes, and identify and recognize appropriate role models. For leaders, it is crucial to recruit and formulate mentor/protégé relationships to train others as leaders, develop sport

53

leadership programs to prepare individuals for positions, develop a network with other minorities in leadership positions to help new leaders with finding positions, and develop processes for potential leaders to follow to gain practical knowledge and experience (Abney & Richey, 1992).

The emphasis on role modeling and mentoring continues with Gottesman (1996) who highlights Tina Sloan Green as an African American woman coaching lacrosse at Temple University. Green's mission in life "is to see that African American girls have plenty of athletic role models to look up to" (Gottesman, 1996, p. 1) because these girls need someone to explain to them the opportunities that exist in sport and to help them take advantage of those opportunities. Frost (1994) expresses the same sentiment in reference to the lack of African American role models in volleyball and the subsequent lack of African American youth interest in the game; "somebody needs to go out and let them know they can play the sport" (Frost, 1994, p. 32).

Stratta (1995b) provides the only example of recommendations for change directly from African American female student-athletes. The recommendation focus on what can be done by the team, the institution (college or university), and by the NCAA to promote cultural inclusiveness in sport. From the team perspective, African American female student-athletes suggest education for their teammates in order to raise the cultural consciousness level. The women also suggested forming a small advisory group of African American student-athletes to assist coaches and

54

administrators in accessing opinions. Most of the suggestions for the institution centered the characteristics and expectations of white coaches. The women focused their comments on their desire to end the perpetuation of racial stereotypes by coaches, the need to create an atmosphere where cultural expression is welcomed and where African Americans could represent their views, the problem of selectively recruiting athletes so as not to provide equal opportunities for African American athletes, and the tendency of coaches to provide diminished leadership roles to African American female athletes. Recommendations directed to the NCAA included equity in hiring and salary practices, equity on campuses with regard to support staff and facilities, and rules to prohibit racially and culturally denigrating comments at athletic events.

Since so few African American females participate in sport, these women must rely on the assistance of others in order to implement strategies for change. People in positions of leadership, regardless of race, must be made aware of the problems that exist and become committed to making the changes that are needed. The most crucial avenues for change include the development and use of role modeling and mentoring to promote more involvement of young African American women in sport, and especially in nontraditional sports. Also, role modeling and mentoring should be used to encourage more African American women to continue in sport as a profession and to ascend into leadership roles. And, lastly, teammates, coaches, and

administrators need to be educated to the stereotypes and sensitized to the

circumstances surrounding African American females and sport participation

in order for the types of changes the authors in this section recommend to

occur.

Conclusion

African American women face many barriers that deter them from

participating in sport. Corbett and Johnson (1993) outline the compounded

influence racist and sexist practices have on African American women in

sport:

> . . .limited financial support . . .lack of positive opinion leaders as role
> models who are African American sportswomen . . .the tendency of
> white coaches to associate black female athletes with only certain
> sports . . .discrimination in team selection, particularly in the sports of
> volleyball and basketball . . .limited skill development opportunities . .
> .intimidation from male coaches and fans . . .(Corbett & Johnson,
> 1993, pp. 194-96)

Despite all of these deterrents, African American women persist. As Tina

Sloan Green states "in spite of racism, sexism, inadequate financial support,

we still find those African-American women who will succeed and break

barriers in sport" (Green, 1993, p. 221). This happens because the women

who receive the few opportunities to participate and those women who serve

as the few role models for other African American women have the "internal

fortitude, desire, and courage to overcome the obstacles placed before them"

(Green, 1993, p. 221). They have the determination to assist in providing

provide more chances to other African American females.

As more literature is published on African American women in sport, as the stereotypes are broken down, and as the socialization process and factors affecting the socialization of African American females are better understood, progress will be made in increasing participation numbers and diversity among sports. Many people currently know "a lot of statistics about minority women in sport," but more need to learn about "their experiences and what [can be done] to assist them through racial barriers they encountered" (Murphy, 1992, p. 8). The following segment on the methods to be used in examining how silencing, stereotypes, and socialization impact the sport participation of African American women elaborates on how to get past the statistics and delve into the experiences.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The Methods

The following section provides an overview of the procedures that were

used to examine the issues of the silencing of African American females in

sport through a lack of interest on the part of scholars, the perpetuation of

stereotypes concerning the capabilities of African American female athletes, the

socialization of African American females into sport, and strategies for change

in the sport participation patterns of African American females. Specifically, the

portion is divided into the following sections: justification for qualitative methods,

description of the focus group methodology, selection of the participants and

setting, gaining access, data collection, data analysis, and relevant research

issues.

Why Qualitative Research?

Before you impose your theories on the people you study, find out how
those people define the world. (Spradley, 1979, p. 11)

Somehow we have lost the human and passionate element of research.
Becoming immersed in a study requires passion, passion for people,

57

passion for communication, and passion for understanding research. (Janesick, 1994, p. 217)

I believe qualitative research is appropriate for the study of how African

American women are made invisible in research, subject to stereotypical ideas

about their abilities, and socialized into sport for precisely those reasons.

Margaret Andersen states, "sociological studies of race have often been

distorted by having been centered in the perspectives and experiences of the

dominant group members" (Andersen, 1993, p. 39). By conducting qualitative

research, I believe I am avoiding part of that distortion. Storytelling and oral

history is what was interested in, approaching "knowledge as conversation"

(Kvale, 1996, p. 19). These methods reach the heart of the female, and more

specifically, the African American female, experience. While I can never expect

to be able to reach the true heart, I hope that I can get as close as possible;

> There are certain aspects of racial phenomena, however, that are
> particularly difficult, if not impossible, for a member of the oppressing
> group to grasp empirically and formulate conceptually. These barriers
> are existential and methodological as well as political and ethical. We
> refer here to nuances of culture and group ethos; to meaning of
> oppression and especially psychic relations; to what is called the Black . .
> .experience. (Andersen, 1993, p. 40)

In choosing to research "people of color, women, and others traditionally

outside the domain of research authority" (Stanfield, 1994, p. 175), I have

focused on individuals who are traditionally less visible than others with more

cultural power than they have. The critical tradition is given credit for not

participating in the negative consequences of mainstream research that

"reflects the values and interests of its creators" (Scheurich, 1992, p.153) but

rather exposing the values and interest of those not considered to be in the mainstream. Qualitative methods, when conducted with knowledge and self-reflection, attempt to avoid reproducing the power relationships present in mainstream society and therefore mainstream research. I looked at Patricia Hill Collins ideas from Black Feminist Thought and I thought about the four "contours" of her "race-based epistemology" (Hill Collins, 1988, p. 155). She lists concrete experience as a criterion of knowing, the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, the ethic of caring, and the ethic of personal responsibility (Hill Collins, 1988, p. 155). By using qualitative research methods, these theories of eliciting stories of experiences were at the forefront. I used the dialogue of the people I interviewed. By taking the time to listen and choosing an area that is in dire need of change, I attempted to demonstrate my caring and my personal responsibility to the subjects of the study. As a member of society and a researcher, I was cognizant of the tendency "to marginalize and exclude ethnically diverse interpretations of reality and styles of knowing in relation to mainstream normative knowledge creation and reproduction" (Hill Collins, 1988, p. 180). Choosing qualitative research methods was the first step toward not letting that occur in this study. This choice was also a step toward giving accurate and adequate representation of the socialization process of African American women and its sport-related outcomes, and more importantly giving voice to the women these outcomes affect; "In approaching this study . . . I did not intend to speak for the athletes;

59

rather, I was motivated to learn about another reality from those who construct

it" (Stratta, 1995a, p. 40).

Focus Group Methodology and Selection of Setting and Participants

> Instead of pulling together women who were strangers, I contacted a few
> of the social workers to ask about the possibilities of securing the
> participation of several of the ongoing discussion groups that they
> oversaw . . . the women in the groups would have already gotten to know
> one another and would be used to discussing personal issues in front of
> others. (Sabo, 1990, p. 66)

The use of focus groups has traditionally been associated with

marketing, consumer opinion, and political research, but has also been used in

sociological research (Fontana & Frey, 1994). In fact, focus groups are now

used more frequently within "new, often more critical, politicized, and more

theoretically driven research contexts" (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996, p. 80). The

value of using a focus group format in my study was twofold. First, it assisted in

the establishment of rapport between the participants and myself. The

interaction that normally occurs between an interviewer and a participant was

replaced by the interaction among the participants. (Berg, 1998; Kvale, 1996)

Due to their more active role in the leadership of the group, the participants

experienced a type of empowerment that comes with the respect they were

given as active participants in the research process (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996).

The distribution of power was an important aspect of the topical nature of my

study, and it was equally important in the methodological nature as well. By

shifting a significant portion of the power to guide the interview to the

participants, the focus group provides learning opportunities not only for the researcher but also for the researched.

The women who participated in the focus group were members of a program run by Athlete Academic Services at a major NCAA Division I institution. This institution was used both due to convenience and because of a special program in operation at the school. The "Student-Athlete Voice" professes the following goals for its involvement with minority student-athletes:

1. Comprise a network for minority student-athletes within the Athletic Department, the University, and professionals in the community.

2. Increase the graduation rates of minority student-athletes.

3. Promote and advocate for an environment that respects and honors diversity, and responds to multicultural issues and concerns within the university, community, and Athletic Department.

4. Recruit minority student-athletes.

5. Act as a support system for minority student-athletes.
(NCAA Certification, 1996, p. 358)

Being a part of a program such as the "Student-Athlete Voice" gave these women commonality of experience. They knew each other, some quite well, and were comfortable talking about the issues of socialization, gender, and race among each other. The relationship the women have with each other prior to my involvement allowed the focus group to proceed naturally and without difficulty. There was no hesitation on the part of the participants to share their opinions and ideas. The women were also able to feed off each other sharing common experiences as well as those that differed from others; "the mutual presence of other group members served to prompt interviewees to speak from

61

their particular social . . .positions of involvement in various forms . . .

frameworks and identifications" (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996, p. 87).

The second value of the focus group in this study was the exposure

these women had to the issues around which my study was based. By

selecting participants "who are acute observers and who are well informed," I

brought together a small group for discussion and as a resource that was "more

valuable many times over than any representative sample" (Fontana & Frey,

1994, p. 365). By their membership in the "Student-Athlete Voice" and their

positions of leadership as student-athletes, these women were both acute

observers and well informed. They were able to bring their vast and applicable

experiences to the discussion, making it that much richer. These women

practically ran the semi-structured focus group themselves with few

interruptions from me proving that "indeed the ideal group should more or less

run itself with the interviewer occasionally prodding, provoking, reorienting the

discussion" (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996, p. 88). As Berg suggests, a focus group

must have a "clearly defined objective and/or research problem" (Berg, 1998, p.

110) The women who participate were aware of the objective and the problem

of the research and served not only as a discussion group, but also a resource

group. As an initial step in data gathering, the time spent with this focus group

was worth multiple hours spent on individual interviews.

Although there are many benefits to conducting group interviews, there

are also several potential detractors. One of the inherent weaknesses of a

focus group is the danger of them being "misleading insofar as groups may

discuss with enthusiasm and conviction an issue to which, when polled individually in an attitude questionnaire, they may ascribe little importance" (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996, p. 90). Being aware of this possibility from Berg's insights into focus groups (Berg, 1998, p. 112), I followed up the focus group with the administration of a grounded survey (See Appendix A for grounded survey) to all of the participants to confirm their opinions without the influence of the group. By having the participants complete the survey, I planned to confirm the outcome of their involvement in the focus group on all other indicators and was able to incorporate any new findings into my data.

In addition to the risk of "groupthink, " focus groups can also difficult be to administer due to the necessity of the researcher to relinquish much of the directive influence to the participants. Discussions may be difficult to initiate, and once initiated may be difficult to guide. Many times large portions of data are off the topic or irrelevant to the research questions. Avoiding this "lost time" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 85) in this particular study was dependant on the pre-interview organizing and the use of a somewhat non-traditional focus group design. Rather than assembling members who did not know each other, I chose women who were closely acquainted. All of the data I gather was relevant to my study, even that which did not directly relate to the questions asked. The stories that the women told and the experiences they shared gave them the opportunity to "a unique culture, with its own history, humor, preoccupations, and concerns" (Burgess, 1995, p. 503). The use of a focus group made this study possible by assisting in the establishment of rapport

between the participants and myself and by utilizing the already existent rapport among the participants. The selection of the particular members of the focus group (see page 69) from this particular setting allowed for rich data to be gathered immediately and without difficulty based on the knowledge and position of the women involved. Any inherent difficulty with the focus group design was overcome by the administration of a grounded survey as a follow-up to eliminate the effects of "groupthink" (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 365) and the effective relinquishing of power from the hands of the researcher to the ideas, experiences, and voices of the participants.

Gaining Access

Gaining access into the Athletic Department of the major NCAA Division I institution was rather difficult in conducting my pilot study. Department policy dictates that in order to have access to the student-athletes, a researcher needs to work through the Athlete Academic Services department. Since I desire access to the student-athletes who were a part of the "Student-Athlete Voice" program, a direct component of Athlete Academic Services, I followed these procedures. Athlete Academic Services has its own internal human subjects committee that reviews proposals for research with student-athletes based on how the research will impact the student-athletes as well as how it will impact the Athletic Department, specifically Athlete Academic Services. Fortunately, I learned how to avoid the complications with going through this process during my pilot test and received approval to conduct my study. Once clearing the

hurdle of the Athletic Department's internal human subjects board, I was also

able to receive human subjects approval from the University itself.

Pilot Test

In the spring of 1998, I completed a focus group of one and one half hour

in duration with four African American female student-athletes participants as a

pilot test. The pilot test was designed to be a preliminary investigation of the

socialization process among African American females and the role that

process plays in the choice to participate in sports. (See Appendix B for focus

group interview guide). I first asked each participant to complete a background

questionnaire (age, year in school, hometown, sport played in college, sport (s)

played in college, and athletic backgrounds of parents and siblings.) (See

Appendix C for background questionnaire.) After the participants had

completed the background questionnaire, data was collected through a semi-

structured group interview. This data was documented both through the use of

field notes and recorded on micro-cassette, following the signing of an informed

consent sheet by each participant. Both the note taking and tape-recording had

a positive effect on the course of the discussion and allowed for extensive

review of the data collected. The tapes were transcribed verbatim and each

participant was identified with a pseudonym that she picked to be used when

analyzing and reporting the data.

The pilot test was beneficial for many reasons. I appreciated the chance

to interview members representative of my proposed sample. The total

population I studied was small and I had members of my pilot test in my final study. This practice is not uncommon in qualitative research (Lather, 1999). Since my presence will not be new to the women who participate in both the pilot test and the full study, there should be little if any effect on the participants' responses (Gall, 1997).

The pilot study was beneficial both for the practical experience and for the assistance it provided with the further development of my interview guide. Based on the interview, I learned the intricacies of running a semi-structured focus group such as when to direct the group and when to allow them to self-direct. I was also provided with information from the women that fit with my expectations as well as information that did not. What was most interesting was how much the women focused on gender issues and how they are treated based on their gender. I expected more from them about race issues, but they kept mentioning the inequalities they see as female athletes. This was a very important finding and caused me to think of what Patricia Hill Collins said. These women share an experience of being both African American and female. I cannot expect them to separate the two. Both simultaneously define them. I also believe I learned a great deal about their socialization in this segment. It is acceptable in society, especially in the context of a weight room, to openly insult women when they try to do what they need to do to be successful athletes. It is the way men discourage them from entering into a domain that used to be male-only. "I think a lot of non-athletic men see females athletes as threatening. That's a big issue too. We're a threat to their egos and their pride"

(Interview Transcripts). It is not acceptable to openly insult people because of their race. As they stated themselves in reference to race; "Only when outsiders come in and ask dumb questions does it bother me" (Interview Transcripts). With gender, dumb questions are not just reserved for the outsiders.

In addition to the participant response concerning gender, I never would have anticipated the response to the media would have been as strong and probably would not have considered coding it as a major category prior to the focus group. Through conducting and analyzing I learned so much about what had been said as well as where to go next. Richardson states "line by line coding helps you decide what data to collect next" (Richardson, 1994, p. 297). Administering and coding this study led me to understand that in my continued collection of data I need to delve deeper into the inseparability of the gender/race dichotomy and to pay more attention the media as an important component in the socialization process of my participants. My interview guide for the full-scale focus group reflects these gains in knowledge.

As a result of the pilot test and the subsequent research it led me to conduct, I expanded my study. First, I chose to enlarge my investigation to include the phenomenon of the silencing through a lack of interest on the part of scholars and the media. Secondly, I chose to add an analysis of the role of stereotypes in the socialization process and the effects of stereotypical opinions of African American females. And lastly, I included an examination of strategies

for change as suggested by the experts in the field as well as asking the

participants for their insights.

Data Collection

> . . . a researcher must get close to the people whom he studies; he [sic]
> understands that their actions are best comprehended when observed
> on the spot—in natural, ongoing environment where they live and work . .
> .The researcher himself [sic] must be at the location, not only to watch
> but also to listen to the symbolic sounds that characterize this world. A
> dialogue with persons in their natural situations will reveal nuances of
> meaning from which their perspectives and definitions are continually
> forged. (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 103)

Data collection occurred in the form of a document analysis, background

questionnaire (demographic information), three focus group sessions, and

individual interviews with selected members of the focus group. Before

conducting the focus group, I performed a document analysis of the NCAA

Certification Report Self-Study for the university. Marshall and Rossman

suggest the review of documents as "an unobtrusive method, one rich in

portraying the values and beliefs of the participants in the setting" (Marshall &

Rossman, 1995, p. 85). By examining the NCAA Certification Report Self-

Study I was able to "develop an understanding of the setting [and] group

studied" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 85). By following the document from

beginning to end focusing on my basic conceptual framework in the form of my

research questions, I gathered significant information on the influence of

institutions of sport and their members (schools, coaches) have on African

American women's choices to participate in sport and in certain sports. I also

examined in-depth what are these institutions and their members doing to change the underrepresentation of African American women in sport.

The self-study report was more statistical in nature that anything else. When trying to understand how African American females have been made invisible by a lack of attention on the part of researchers, are characterized as only possessing certain talents, and what socialization factors explain why African American women gravitate toward basketball and track, I did not have much luck. But instead, I found many statistics that support the fact that African American women are better represented in these two sports, and underrepresented in all others. The Athletic Department and its staff do have the ability to influence African American women to participate in sport as well as in certain sports. The Athletic Department can show its commitment to increasing the number of participation opportunities available for women—made evident by addition of both sports and participants. Making such changes and committing to progress are ways in which the athletic department as an organization and its staff as individual members can influence African American women to participate in sport in general and certain sports specifically.

Next, I conducted the focus groups with a total of twelve members of the "Student-Athlete Voice" program. Kvale suggests that the answer to the question of how many subjects are necessary is "interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know" (Kvale, 1996, p. 101). The purpose of the focus group is to understand the experiences of the women in the "Student-Athlete Voice." Dividing the twelve women into three focus groups

69

of three, four, and five members respectively presented a manageable number for each focus group and, based on the total number of females (23) in the "Student-Athlete Voice," provided an understanding of the experiences of these women. I notified all twenty-three African American female athletes at X University and twelve agreed to participate in the study. The background questionnaire (Appendix E) was administered at the beginning of this session. It allowed me to acquire some basic demographic information about each participant that was helpful in the analysis of data, but would have taken a considerable amount of time to collect individually as a part of the discussion. Each participant was asked to indicate their age, year in school, hometown, sport (s) played in college, sport (s) played in college, and athletic backgrounds of parents and siblings.

After the participants completed the background questionnaire, data was collected through semi-structured focus group interviews. This data was documented both through the use of field notes and recorded on micro-cassette, following the signing of an informed consent sheet by each participant. Neither method of recording the data interfere with the discussion and, in fact, added to the data collection process. The tapes were transcribed verbatim and each participant was identified with a pseudonym that she selected to be used when analyzing and reporting the data.

Then a grounded survey (Appendix A) was developed based on the document analysis and my preliminary coding and analysis of data; "grounded theory incorporates other sources of data and aims to develop a basic social

70

process and a more abstract mid-range theory" (Morse, 1994, p. 224). Broad categories were identified and questions developed in each category to be answered on a five point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The categories included the emerging themes from the data such as: early socialization influences, choice of sport, societal perceptions of race and gender, and media issues. A space at the conclusion of the survey for additional comments was also provided.

Lastly, I conducted individual in-depth interviews with four participants from the focus groups. These interviews allowed me to delve even deeper into the silencing, stereotype, socialization and sport experiences of the student-athletes and ask more specific and pointed questions (Appendix D). Kvale labels this type of interview question "probing questions: Could you say something more about that? Can you give me a more detailed description of what happened? Do you have further examples of this?" (Kvale, 1996, p. 133). Building on the rapport established in the focus group, I believe a comfort level between the participants and myself was reached where they felt comfortable enough to explore the issues even further. This rapport also enhanced the validity of the responses.

The individual interviews provided "the rich first-person narratives that [will] form the heart" (Sabo, 1990, p. 63) of my data report and discussion. I selected those women who brought interesting perspectives to the focus group from those who were both the most and the least vocal. I also wanted to be aware of giving adequate representation to those student-athletes who play

71

different sports and come from different backgrounds, as again a representative group was desirable. Availability to participate also played a role in selection. The one-on-one interviews were more structured that the focus groups, but also allowed for the collection of "unanticipated information" (Sabo, 1990, p. 68) as the interviews progress. The interview guide developed out of the focus group data, was aimed at going beyond that data to learn more about the individual experiences of the women, and was somewhat individualized to follow-up on themes generated by each participant during the focus group conversation.

In addition to the data collection procedures described above, a reflexive personal journal was kept throughout the study. I made use of this journal to reflect on the process of researching, of situating myself methodologically, of successes and failures in the field, and my own personal influences and biases: "the hegemony of my whiteness and how it has shaded my views" (hooks, 1984, p. 15). My journal provided me the vehicle to explore my evolving beliefs and how I was given the "opportunity [to have] the athletes 'teach' me what it is like to be an African-American intercollegiate athlete and enabled their voices to constitute the reality and perceptions that are described in this study" (Stratta, 1995a, p. 80).

Manual and Computer Assisted Data Analysis

The qualitative research process often generates huge amounts of unstructured textual data, such as interview transcripts, protocols, field notes, and personal documents, which if not managed properly, can result in data overload (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 2)

72

Erickson states that a researcher should "plan to spend at least as much time in analysis and write-up of fieldwork as . . .spent in collecting the fieldwork" (Erickson, 1986, p. 147). In systematically examining the interview tapes and transcripts, field notes, document analysis, and grounded survey, I did just that. Listening to the tapes multiple times gave me the most accurate read of emerging themes—a feel for the what the women were saying through their voices, not just their words. After listening, my analysis of the transcripts proceeded much more smoothly. I first coded the transcripts using multiple colored pens and then proceeded to the computer and coded them through the use of the NUD*IST (Non numerical Unstructured Data Indexing searching and Theory-building) computer assisted qualitative data analysis. By using NUD*IST I was able to elaborate on my preliminary codes and found the "key linkages" (Erickson, 1986, p. 147) of which Erickson speaks.

The primary responsibility of analyzing in qualitative research cannot be done by a computer, as "understanding the meaning of texts . . .is not an algorithmic process and hence cannot be considered a mechanical task" (Kelle, 1995, p. 3). But there are portions of this responsibility, primarily the "management of data material" (Kelle, 1995, p. 3), that can be shared by a computer. The last ten years have seen the advent and expansion of the use of computer assisted data analysis for qualitative research. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), it is now taken for granted that a researcher needs to make use of a computer in order to conduct good qualitative research:

73

. . . handwritten or dictified field notes, along with tape recordings, must be converted to analyzable text, which then needs to be reduced, displayed and used to draw and verify conclusions . . .and is especially useful for 'case-oriented' research . . .interested in 'interconnected arguments about interrelated events. (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.2)

In examining the cross-section of race and gender, I conducted research on interconnected arguments about interrelated events. Therefore, making use of computer-assisted methods of data analysis not only made sense, but also was necessary to enhance my ability to make connections between ideas and themes in the data.

The decision to use a program such as NUD*IST was based on several factors (See Appendix D for evaluation of NUD*IST and other programs). First, NUD*IST is perhaps the most well-known and widely used program for qualitative data analysis. Secondly, NUD*IST allows the researcher to "make connections between codes, develop higher-order classifications and categories" (Wietzman & Miles, 1995, p. 3). These connections, classifications, and categories are more clearly developed and their relations to each other more easily seen through NUD*IST's style of organization than the outdated cut and paste coding methods and earlier computer assisted attempts.

Another advantage to NUD*IST was its ability to assist the researcher to "formulate propositions or assertions that imply a conceptual structure . . . and to test such propositions to see if they apply (Wietzman & Miles, 1995, p. 4). NUD*IST extends beyond more than a simple code-and-retrieve program in this regard and becomes a code-based theory builder. It assists the researcher in developing the conceptual framework by which the data is organized.

74

Research Issues

Cross-Cultural Research: The Establishment of Researcher Credibility and Rapport

> There are certain aspects of racial phenomena, however, that are particularly difficult, if not impossible, for a member of the oppressing group to grasp empirically and formulate conceptually. These barriers are existential and methodological as well as political and ethical. We refer here to nuances of culture and group ethos; to meaning of oppression and especially psychic relations; to what is called the Black . . .experience. (Andersen, 1993, p. 40)

I was not an "oblivious" researcher as I examined how socialization and stereotypes can affect African American female involvement in athletics. I valued the thoughts and words of the women with whom I worked. I was aware of both the potential and actuality of sport as "an institutional site for the reproduction of relations of privilege and oppression, of dominance and subordination, structured along gender, race, and class lines" (Birrell, 1990, p. 185-6). Much of the research published on African Americans in sport has centered on men; "little research on multiethnic women in sport has been published" (Smith, 1992, p. 230). By ignoring African American women this way "we continue to treat race as a variable rather than a relationship of power" (Birrell, 1990, p. 186). By allowing African American female athletes to be silenced by an absence of published literature and sport research, a perpetuation of the separation and inequality occurs through the socialization process and the unfounded stereotypes that accompany it.

Stanfield references "people of color, women, and others traditionally outside the domain of research authority" in questioning whether researchers

75

who do not belong to the same cultural meaning systems as their subjects can "be adequate interpreters of . . .experiences" (Stanfield, 1994, 176). Scheurich gives the critical tradition credit for not participating in the negative consequences of mainstream research that "reflects the values and interests of its creators" (Scheurich, 1992, p.153). However, he also goes on to say that individuals "can only name and know from within the social context available to them, from within the social history in which they live" (Scheurich, 1992, p.153). As a white researcher in a study that focused on African Americans, I faced these realities and examined my own beliefs and prejudices before beginning this study as well as during the study. I reflected upon each interaction with the participants in my journal as well as with my peer debriefer. I also approached my research with an emphasis on "placing the perspectives of African-American women at the center of analyses and attempting to understand their authentic experiences" (Stratta, 1995a, p. 80).

It is not impossible for white women to write about African American women, in fact it is "important for all of us to work at learning more about one another, and such learning is best expressed in concentrated work and study on another group" (hooks, 1989, p. 46). What was crucial to keep in mind as a researcher and a member of the "dominant" group was that this dynamic could not shape the research while acknowledging its inevitable influence on the research. The voices of the women who participated must be heard, not silenced or dismissed as unimportant (hooks, 1989, p. 43). In order for the work to be trustworthy, the "realities of the participants" must come forth

(Workman, 1995, p.67). Keeping my "dominant" position as both a white

woman working with African American women and a researcher working with

participants, I worked at easing of establishing rapport with the women by

involving the African American male director of the "Student-Athlete Voice"

program who gave credence to both my study and myself with the women.

Using the focus group format allowed the women to set the tone for the

research in many ways and express their ideas, values, and opinions:

> . . . oral narrative offers a unique and provocative means of gathering
> information central to understanding women's lives and viewpoints.
> When applied to women of color, it assumes an add significance as a
> powerful instrument . . .so often overlooked and/or neglected in history
> and literature alike. (Etter-Lewis, 1991, p. 43)

Lastly, by briefly sharing, exhibiting reciprocity, with the participants my

background as a former collegiate student-athlete and current collegiate coach

and administrator, I strengthened the receptiveness of the women to my role in

the study.   I was cognizant of the tendency "to marginalize and exclude

ethnically diverse interpretations of reality and styles of knowing in relation to

mainstream normative knowledge creation and reproduction" (Hill Collins, 1990,

p.180) and took steps both personally and with my research to avoid this

tendency.

I worried sometimes when I read statements like "I wouldn't want to talk

to any anthropologist or sociologist or any of those others if they were white

because whatever I said they would write down what they felt like, so I might as

well save my breath" (Andersen, 1993, p. 41). I did not encounter this feeling

among the women in the study. I clung to my stance as a feminist researcher and expressed my position as an outsider to the male world, but I acknowledged the lack of most feminist theory to include African American women. I shared how much effort and thought I put into "examin[ing] self-consciously the influence of institutional racism and the way it shapes the formulation and development of [my] research, rather than assume a color-blind stance" (Andersen, 1993, p. 43). I believed that by honestly evaluating my limits as a researcher and being up front with those whom I researched, I "develop[ed] and utilize[d] tensions" (Andersen, 1993, p. 42). As Andersen discovered so did I; "I could not assume the role of expert, and I needed to be willing to talk about my life as a woman and as a white person in conversations . . ." (Andersen, 1993, p. 49). Through my commitment to and engagement in discovering how African American females are socialized in sport, I attempted to escape the "framework of scientific methodology" and capture the "texture and nuances in social relationships" (Andersen, 1993, p. 51). Although I worried some about what I would encounter as I entered the field, I did understand that even as a white researcher I could contribute valuable knowledge to the issue and help get the words of these women heard. I acknowledged my background by challenging "white privilege and question[ing] how such privilege may [have] shape[d] my research experiences" (Andersen, 1993, p. 51). I shared some of my own experiences with the participants in such a way that I allowed them to understand my perspective and my experiences without interrupting or monopolizing the conversation.

78

The Establishment of Data Dependability

Triangulation

The researcher often relies on triangulation, or the use of several kinds of methods or data. (Janesick, 1994, p. 215)

Utilizing more than one method, or triangulation, in my study allowed me to "gain a more holistic view" (Morse, 1994, p. 224) of how silencing, stereotype, and socialization lead to the underrepresentation of African American females in college sports and what strategies can be used to alleviate this problem. Although some qualitative researchers resist the use of the term and the concept of triangulation because it "carries too positivist an implication" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.240), I chose to refer to triangulation and utilize the practice of triangulation in my study. The primary sources of information in my study are the women who will participate in the focus group, and the subsequent in-depth interviews, along with the transcripts and field notes that are generated from those discussions. Other sources of information included the focus group participants' background questionnaires, a document analysis of the NCAA Certification Self-Study for the university that the student-athletes attend, a grounded survey, and a reflexive journal. This data triangulation process assisted me in analysis as my conclusion converged from different sources (Workman, 1995, p. 68).

Peer Debriefing

Credibility is increased through . . .peer debriefing. (Denzin, 1994, p. 513)

I employed the use of a peer debriefer as I conducted my study. A peer debriefer is someone who is familiar with the intricacies of qualitative research and serves as a checkpoint for the researcher as she begins to formulate opinions about the study and conduct data analysis. A peer debriefer can provide methodological critiques and advice as well as the sometimes much-needed outlet for a qualitative researcher when the "crisis of representation" occurs.

I selected another doctoral student who was at the same stage in her research as I was and who had a strong background in qualitative methods to serve as my peer debriefer. We spoke several times as I conducted the focus groups and individual interviews about issues that developed with confidentiality when interviewing such a small and easily identified population. As promised to the participants, I did not share the verbatim transcripts of the interviews with anyone. However, I did share several of my evolving conceptual schemes with my peer debriefer to receive her feedback on my interpretations. I also shared some of the struggles I chronicled in my reflexive journal dealing with trying to remain in a guidance role during the focus groups rather than intruding into the conversations. Her suggestions, particularly with protecting the confidentiality of my participants, proved valuable to me throughout the research process.

Qualitative researchers must make many decisions in the course of

developing and conducting a study as to how to best represent the words and

opinions of the participants while all along knowing that "no matter how hard

one may try to be impartial one still possesses some degree of bias" (Gall,

1997, p. 78).   A peer debriefer can provide "assurances of methodological

quality and data integrity in evaluative work" (Greene, 1994, p. 537) which add

to the credibility and trustworthiness of the data and conclusions.

Member Checks

. . . member checking . . .is the most crucial technique for establishing
credibility because it allows the researcher to test data, analytical
categories, interpretations, and conclusions with the stakeholders from
which the data were originally collected. (James-Brown, 1995, p. 85)

I conducted member checks during the course of my data gathering in

the focus group and individual interviews as I interjected questions to clarify

statements and the issues behind those statements, as well as asking

participants to repeat statements to ensure I captured them verbatim in my field

notes. Distributing the grounded survey developed out of the focus group data

was intended to serve as a second form of member checking by asking the

participants to reaffirm or modify their positions and answers on a quantitatively

measured scale. I received completed surveys from four women (Appendix B).

I believe this was due most to the timing of the study falling at the end of the

spring quarter and during the summer quarter. Several women in the focus

groups graduated during the course of the study and moved to other locations.

81

The underclass women scattered to various locations for the summer and then moved to new locations on campus in the fall. I also conducted a more formal member check by distributing copies of the transcripts and coding categories of emerging themes to each of the participants in the focus groups and those who continued to participate in the individual interviews. I was able to go through the transcripts page by page with the individual interview participants. Not only did I want to make sure that my transcribing is accurate, but also that my developing analysis and conclusions agreed with what these women say and what they thought. Participants usually appreciate being "placed . . . in a key role: that of either confirming or negating the researcher's interpretations and conclusions" (James-Brown, 1995, p. 85) and I appreciated them sharing their interpretations and conclusions with me. Both the participants and myself were able to "cross-check" (Janesick, 1994, p. 217) what was said and interpret that data in a way that made the study stronger and more credible.

Transferability

. . .in postpositivist research, transferability replaces generalizability [and] is associated with how the individuals studied are in some ways representative of those to whom the results may be [inferred]. (Workman, 1995, p. 71)

By carefully delineating the make-up of the study, complete with "descriptions of the time, place, context, and culture" (James-Brown, 1995, p. 90), I allowed for the possible reproduction of the study to occur by others without making any proclamations as to how widespread the results might be.

82

Including background information about the participants through questionnaires, specific details about the "Student-Athlete Voice" program, and figures of participation and representation from the document analysis of the Athletic Department developed a clear picture of the personal and contextual dimensions of my study. Through my work with the women in my focus group and the information I gathered on their situations, I centered my attention on seeking meaning, depth, and understanding while also "discover[ing] that similarities in lived experience may exist and then be transferable to others, but the exactness of each lived experience is nonexistent and therefore not generalizable" (James-Brown, 1995, p. 92).

Ethics

. . .subjects are not exposed to risks that are greater than the gains they must derive. . . subjects enter research projects voluntarily, understanding the nature of the study and the dangers and obligations that are involved . . .. (Bogdan & Bilken, 1983, p. 49)

By having obtained Human Subjects approval through the Athletic Department and from the University to proceed with this study, any concerns about risk to the student-athlete participants were eliminated. My study was approved by the committee and sanctioned by both the director of Athlete Academic Services and the director of the "Student-Athlete Voice" program. My letter of introduction informed them of the nature of the study and their potential role in it (Appendix F). Participants in this study were also asked for informed consent both from the director of the "Student-Athlete Voice" program when he

asked them if they would be interested in participating in the study and again when they signed the informed consent form before both the focus group discussions and the individual interviews began (Appendix G). The informed consent form was accompanied by an explanation of the nature of the study and requirements of the participants for the participants to keep. The participants understood that they would be audio taped, these audiotapes would be transcribed, and that their identities would remain confidential. Each woman was asked for a name to which they wanted to be referred in the transcripts and write-up of the study. They also were informed that they could at any time withdraw from the study, stop the interview, or delete or change any part of the transcripts without any hesitation on my part.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION

This study examined the sport participation patterns of twelve African American female collegiate student-athletes. The findings of this examination are presented in the following order: an overview of the research analyses, a description of the research settings, and the biographies of the participants. The final section outlines the prevalent themes found in the data, including silencing through the media and athletic department, stereotypes (biological, social, academic, and athletic), socialization through both human and environmental agents, and strategies for change in the sport participation patterns of African American females.

Overview of the Research Process

Data was collected for this study through questionnaires, three focus group interviews, and four interviews with individual members of the various focus groups. The women who participated were all student-athletes at a major NCAA Division I university. The interviews were all transcribed and analyzed individually with the assistance of NUD*IST (Non numerical Unstructured Data

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86

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Indexing Searching and Theory-building). As the data were coded and organized the four themes, as identified in my research questions, expanded into multiple sub-themes. These sub-themes include a lack of attention to African American females in sport on the part of the media and the components which make up the athletic department, which I have labeled silencing; stereotypes about African American women in general and African American women athletes held by peers, coaches, professors, and society in general; influences of socialization agents in the sport choices of African American women, and strategies for change in the current pattern of sport participation for African American women.

I have included not only summaries of the themes, but also the actual words of the participants to support the identification of these themes. Reading and listening to the voices of these women assists in the development of a more complete context through which one can begin to understand the experiences of the participants. Many of the quotes from the transcripts are lengthy in order to attempt to capture this context and to achieve a heightened sense of the views of each participant. I have also refrained from editing the language patterns of the participants.

The women who participated in the interviews were each given a copy of the interview transcript for review and comments, as well as a grounded survey that allowed them to confirm or deny my initial analyses. This member checking allowed for the women to examine the transcripts for any editing they felt to be necessary. Several of the women made such editorial corrections, but

no contextual changes were suggested. I was concerned, given the sensitive nature of some of the interview topics, which the women would choose to edit some of their comments what criticized people associated with their university. My concern far outweighed any concern on their parts. The women all felt comfortable with what they had said and how their words had been transcribed and coded. They appreciated the opportunity to review the transcripts and complete the grounded survey. Their approval of the contents added to the overall trustworthiness of the study.

Background of the Study and Description of the Research Setting

My interest in this study has an extended history. As a collegiate volleyball player and now a collegiate volleyball coach, I have long been aware of the scarcity of African American female participants in my sport. I began researching this phenomenon several years ago focusing only on the sport of volleyball. As my research continued, I realized that volleyball was not alone in its underrepresentation of African American players. Based on this discovery, I wanted to learn what influenced African American women to not play sports at all or to choose sports other than volleyball, field hockey, soccer, softball, and swimming to name a few.

In planning my study, I chose to use the student-athletes of a large Division I institution as the participants. Selecting a university with more than thirty varsity sports increased the number of women who would qualify to be a part of my study. It also increased the chance that the women who participated would be

from diverse backgrounds, hail from all across the United States and abroad, and bring with them a variety of experiences.

The university has successful athletic programs across the board. As an example, the university has a multi-time national championship synchronized swimming team, major college nationally ranked football team, nationally recognized gymnastics team, top 20 men's basketball team, and national tournament qualifying teams in men's and women's volleyball and baseball. The university is also home to one of the most well respected academic support networks for its student-athletes. It is through this network that I operated in identifying potential participants and contacting them to participate. The Athlete Academic Services office provided me with statistics about the racial makeup of the athletic program as a whole, information needed to contact the African American women members of the teams, and allowed me to use their facility for both focus group and individual interviews. I was impressed by the cooperation of the university in my research. And I was significantly impressed by the caliber of the women who were a part of the university's athletic teams. These women were dedicated to their academic and to their athletics and seemed to have their priorities in order. Many of them were in demanding academic majors and performing at the top of their sport as well. Most, but not all, of them were on full athletic scholarships and those who were not were receiving various combinations of merit and need-based financial aid. Overall, they were an extremely talented group of women with a level of consciousness about the

world around them, inside and outside of sport, which provided for excellent discussions.

Biographies of the Participants

The following information was gathered through the administration of a background questionnaire at the beginning of each focus group session as well as taken from the context of the interview transcripts. 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. The biographies are ordered according to focus group participation. 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. The individual interviews were conducted with Gabby, Princess, Taz, and Vanessa (See Table 1).

Table 1:
Participant Background Information

Participant	Group	Age	Year	Sport	Individual interview
Gabby	1	22	Sr.	Crew	yes
Dianne	1	18	Fr.	Track	no
Lolita	1	22	Sr.	Track	no
Essence	2	23	Sr.	Track	no
November	2	19	Fr.	Track	no
Kay	2	22	Sr.	Basketball	no
Princess	2	22	Sr.	Xcountry/Track	yea
Babeahgirl	3	19	Fr.	Fencing	no
Vanessa	3	20	Jr.	Volleyball	yes
Madison	3	21	Sr.	Track	no
Taz	3	23	Sr.	Track	yes
Chyna	3	20	Jr.	Track	no

Table 1: Background questionnaire information

Gabby

Gabby is 22-year-old senior member of the crew team. A native of

A large Midwestern metropolitan area, Gabby participated in tennis, basketball,

and track in high school and also swam and played volleyball at a younger age.

Like Vanessa, her family's sport background had an influence on her

involvement. Her father, currently a supervisor for the postal system, was a

three-sport athlete in high school, and played college and pro football (CFL).

Her mother is the head of the accounting department for a car loan financing

company. Gabby has one brother (15) who participates in swimming, soccer,

and track and field.

When asked to recall her sport experience, Gabby referred to her "first

athletic memory was probably at about four or five, you do your usual running

and catching." But she elaborated to include a more structured sport

experience:

> Then I remember in kindergarten playing kick ball. That was the game of
> champions! If you could kick the ball, bounce it you know not roll it, but
> bounce it, and to see who could wail on it the hardest. And I always
> wanted to be the first to kick it the hardest and go around the bases the
> fastest. But I wouldn't be able to catch. I remember when I thought oh
> my God, I kicked it now have to catch it. I was in the outfield and I was
> so worried about kicking and running, then I was like you mean I have to
> catch it now? I forgot that part! I think that was my first vivid memory of
> sport. I think I realize that I didn't know how to catch the ball
> instantaneously. I remember stating the field and thinking I do not how
> to catch. What a loser! I have to learn how to do this. I have to be the
> best. I have to be the one chosen. I have to master this game and be
> the winner.

Gabby found through sport, even if only grade school kick ball, that she had an intense competitive drive. Her first sport experiences affected who she is today and laid the groundwork for her sport participation in high school and college. That kick ball game "became the defining moment were I said I will not have anything else but that W. in my column. It ignited the hunger for the win." Gabby realized at a young age that "no matter what I have to do, the game is the same. You either wade in or you lose. Losing is second to first. You come close but you don't get the gold." She carried these lessons with her as she grew up and continues to carry them with her as an adult.

Dianne

Dianne is one of the younger participants, just having completed her first year of college. She is an eighteen-year-old freshman track athlete from a large metropolitan area in the Midwest. In high school she participated in volleyball, basketball, and track and field. Her college choice was not dictated by her involvement in sports as she walked onto the track team after arriving on campus. Her family's sport involvement is fairly extensive. Her mother is a lab technician and her father is in customer service with a bank. Their sport background includes baseball, football, basketball, bowling, and softball. Her thirteen-year-old brother plays baseball, football, and soccer.

Dianne's first sport experience had a profound effect on the rest of her life and her decision to remain involved in sport:

Dianne-I started to play sports at the age of eight. The first sport was

93

softball. And I was the only girl on all boys team. What encouraged me to play was when I used to go out to the field and watch my father playing with the older guys this softball league . . . I really liked playing. It was fun. So I got into it, and from there I started exploring other sports.

Jennie-How do you think that first experience with softball that shaped you now?

Dianne-It really shaped me because I was the only girl. It really encouraged me to prove myself to be better than other people thought I was. When I was younger they used to say you throw like girl and you hit like a girl. That encouraged me to stick to what I believe in and to believe in myself regardless of what other people say.

She learned a life lesson from her participation on the boys' team, one that stuck with her as she grew older and expanded her involvement in sports.

The other significant influence on Dianne's sport participation was her father. He was one of her role models and someone who took a great interest in her developing as a person and as an athlete. When asked whom the most person was in encouraging her to become involved and stay involved in sports Dianne answered her father:

Jennie-Do you think if it weren't for him you still would have gotten involved?

Dianne-I don't think I would have been as involved. But I always wanted to learn new things and be around other children. I used to play kick ball and stuff like that. I didn't realize I had any kind of talent until my father put me on organized teams.

Dianne has a positive experience growing up both with the teams she was on and the people around her that led to her continued enjoyment of track in college. Although unsure of her career plans, Dianne will most likely have track

as a permanent part of her life.

Lolita

Coming from the least athletic background of the participants, Lolita is the sole

member of her family to participate in sports. Her parents are both registered

nurses with no sport background. Her brother (age 24) and sister (age 21) do

not participate in sports either. Lolita is a 22-year-old senior track athlete.

Lolita is an international student. She was involved in many sports prior to

making her decision to run track in college. She participated in volleyball,

basketball, track, and gymnastics in high school. According to Lolita, she:

> . . . ran track because I didn't want to get my hair wet! I did soccer,
> basketball, volleyball, gymnastics, track, I even did archery for a while.
> That was really cool. So I did all of that. What made me specialize in
> track was that I was good at it. I wasn't bad that the others, like in
> gymnastics I was pretty good. But my body outgrew that. In soccer I
> pulled my groin so I stopped playing. It was just one event after another.
> My mother did not want me to keep playing when I got hurt. Basketball
> was okay but I didn't really like, it was just all right . . . Volleyball, I loved
> it but I had to pick between track and volleyball. I was doing extremely
> good in track. I was doing okay and volleyball and that was the deciding
> factor. I made a national team for track. So I was like volleyball I love
> you but I'm going to have to let you go. (Lolita)

In college she has enjoyed success competing in the 100, 200, and 400 meters

and also the 4x 100 meter and 4 x 400 meter relays.

Lolita remembers her first sport experience occurred when she was ten

years old playing softball. She does not remember many specifics of the

experience other than that she was not very good at softball. She also has

trouble identifying who had the most influence on her sport participation. She

95

names her mother as an influence when referring to her first taste of sports; "basically, my mom sent me here so that is why I'm here." She also refers to a teacher as an important influence in her early years in sports, but she is not sure exactly how much influence either of these people actually had on her involvement. Lolita looks to herself and her desire to be the focus of attention and praise as the reason she competed in sports.

> People encourage me, saying you know what your good your good at this or your good at that. You know you could probably not be that good, but they're just trying to give you a compliment. That gets you going. You know I think it all started with complements. I remember my sixth-grade teacher. We used to have the fitness tests. There was 60-meter dash and he thought I was the best. Everyone's goal was I want to beat Lolita. So after that I got all the praise. It had nothing to do with need wanting to be the best. I just wanted the attention. If I had to pick somebody, it would probably be my teacher for anyone else who complemented me on my running. I'm kind of a laid-back person. I'm not like okay I will do anything you say. If I feel like running, I'll run. If I don't, well you're out of luck. So in a way it was influential, and in a way it wasn't. If I didn't want to do it in the first place, I wouldn't have. I loved all the attention and I loved all the praise. But I would say it was my teacher (who was the most influential). (Lolita)

Lolita's experience in sport has been a good one for her and she is ready to graduate with a degree in biology and plans to attend optometry school. She is extremely proud of what she has accomplished as an African American female student-athlete, both in the classroom and on the track.

Essence

Essence is a 23-year-old senior track athlete from a major metropolitan area on the East Coast. She only participated in track in high school and

comes from a family where both of her parents are retired. Neither of her parents have any background in sports. Essence has two brothers ages 26 and 24 and the older one participated in basketball.

Essence recalls her first sport experience when she was ten years old running in an open track meet in New York City. She was no part of a team at that point and had no coach. Her mother entered her in the meet because she thought Essence needed something to do with all of her energy. After that experience, Essence remembers that she:

> . . . started training a little bit. I went to this meet at a park. It wasn't a big meet or anything like that. I went out there and I ran and I made it back to the finals. I had to come back the next day and I got disqualified because I ran out my lane. I didn't know about staying in my lane so I ran out of mine and I didn't make it back. I was mad and that's the last time I ran track until I got back involved and started competing again when I was twelve. I started traveling when I was fourteen. (Essence)

Essence had a coach who pushed her to excel and had an effect on Essence's choice to pursue a collegiate track career. The first coach she ever had was for a club team she joined at age twelve. She remembers that she was not one of the better runners on the team and was not one of the hardest working runners either. It was also this coach who told Essence that at some point she would have to choose between basketball and track. He told her that she could play two sports now, but eventually she would have to make a decision in order to be the best possible athlete she could be. Her decision process began when she was twelve and ended when she was fourteen.

> I played two sports and I did well. I was the fastest one up-and-down the court. And I was the quickest one to go to the ball. I didn't really like that

team thing though. You had to depend too much on your teammates. Track I liked it because it was about me. If I didn't do something right then I could improve. I didn't depend on somebody else. If I wanted to win then I have to focus to get myself out there in win. In basketball when you're playing you have to worry about all these other things. I came back to my coach and I said I'm going to do track. And he said yeah, I thought so. (Essence)

Ever since she was fourteen, Essence was a track athlete and a track athlete only. She competed as a sprinter in college. She is graduating with a degree is counseling and plans to counsel sexually abused children in her own clinic. She wants to work with people no matter where her career takes her.

November

November got her start in sports earlier than any of the other participants. She was running in track meets from age six.

My first experience was when I was six years old when I went to a track meet just to watch my sister run. My sister was on the track team. I was just going to see my big sister run. One of the girls on her 4 x 1 got sick and the coach was like well you're old enough you can fill in for us. I started saying no I'm not going to run. I just came to watch the meet. But my mother made me change my shirt and she made me run the anchor leg of the 4 x 1. She said well that's the easiest thing. You practice it in the street with your sister all the time. Just stand there until she gives you the baton and just run. So I'm standing there with my little shirt on. My sister says go and I start running and grab the baton. And I'm running down the track and I say wait a minute why am I'm all by myself? So I stopped on the track and looked like where is everybody. My mom and sister are screaming at me to go. I did and finally I finished the race. My mom was like why did you stop? I said I didn't know what I was supposed to do so I was waiting for everyone else to come back. We came in first that race and ever since then I've been running. (November)

A nineteen-year-old freshman from a large midwestern metropolitan area, November participated in volleyball, basketball, and track in high school and now runs track at X University. Both of her parents are administrators in the local school system. Her father has a background in football and basketball and her mother in bowling. Her brother (age 25) participated in football, basketball, and track and her sister (age 22) participated in basketball and track.

By listening to November's descriptions of her early experiences with track, it seems that all of her family members played a role in her developing a love for sport. She would practice running relays with her sister; "I always used to practice with my sister outside. We would use twigs. She always needed someone to practice with so I did it. So I knew how to do it." Her mother would watch the two girls practice and give them encouragement; "my mom said just stand right there, wait until your sister says go and then just run as fast as you can to the end of the line." November also credits her father with being influential in her sport experiences:

> . . . my dad would say well you need to work on this and we'll come out
> here and . . . So I would definitely have to say that my father led me into
> sports. (November)

November came to college with no plans to participate in sports. After the first semester of her freshman year, November decided that she missed being a part of a team. Since the time she was six years old, she had belonged to a team whether it be track, basketball, or volleyball. November made the track team and has completed her first spring season. She plans to continue

running her sophomore year as she enters into her engineering major.

November wants to become a biomedical engineer and surgeon so that she

can design and make artificial hearts as well as perform the surgery to install

them.

Kay

Kay, a 22-year-old senior, just completed her final year of eligibility in

basketball. A native of a major metropolitan area in the Midwest, Kay

participated in basketball, softball, track, and bowling in high school. She chose

to play basketball in college rather than any of the other sports because she felt

there were more opportunities for her in basketball. Kay had a successful

college career and still entertains thoughts of going overseas to continue to play

professionally. Those thoughts are intermingled with graduate school

aspirations after Kay receives her degree in engineering this spring.

Kay's family has a background in sport as well. Her mother is a legal

assistant with sport experience in both volleyball and track. Kay has one older

sister (23) who participated in track and cheerleading in high school. When

asked to recall her first experience with sport, Kay told a story involving her and

her mother:

> If I can remember, I think it was when I was seven. I was in Toys R Us
> with my mom. She's the type of parent who doesn't believe in girls' and
> boys' toys. Toys are just toys. For some reason I never played with
> Barbie dolls or jumped rope. That day I saw this basketball and it was
> one of those Globetrotter balls, the red, white, and blue ones. I said
> mom I want that basketball. She didn't hesitate buying it. She bought
> me that ball and I still have it to tell you the truth. It's all worn out with no

grip! I just started doing like they did on TV. I would go to the park and the ball would be with me everywhere. I started doing things with it that normal people can't do like walk the ball and I just got good at it. I think that's when I first started and from there I played in grammar school and high school. (Kay)

Kay's relationship with her mother and her mother's beliefs about women being involved in sport were strong influences on Kay's early and continued participation. Kay's mother attended all of her high school sporting events and college basketball games.

Princess

Princess ran both track and cross-country during her four years of college. She is a 22-year-old senior from a major metropolitan area on the East coast. During high school her sport participation included track, cross country, and basketball. Her mother is a home health care giver and her father is a bus driver. Both of her parents have a background in track. She has two brothers ages 26 and 25 and a sister age 23. Her oldest brother is a boxer and her sister runs track.

Princess recalls her first sport experience coming at a very young age and then her sport involvement developing as she grew older:

. . My parents ran. My mom says that one of her memories of me is that I was always running. When I was about four or five I was in a sports meet. They had this sports meets in kindergarten. I just told my dad I wanted to run in it. I beat everybody in my neighborhood, the boys and the girls, except not my sister. My first real meet was when I was about eleven. I'd been running all the time, but at eleven I ran in a meet that was trials for an international team and I made it. After that, because I ran all over the country, it just really shaped my life. I had fun because I go to travel and meet different people . . . (Princess)

101

Princess' father was an extremely influential part of her sport

involvement. He has been her self-appointed coach for as long as she can

remember. His guidance encouraged her and she welcomed the chance to

learn from him.

> Jennie-Do you think if your dad hadn't been like that, you still would have gotten involved or do you think it would have been different?

> Princess-I probably wouldn't have stayed in sport this long. I hated losing. I just hated it. I wanted to win all of the time and he just told me that when you lose it makes you train harder to win. I remember training when I was eleven or twelve. I was up in the morning at like seven o'clock. He would wake me up in the mornings so we could go run. I asked him to wake me up in the morning so we could go run and I did it. When I got a better performance from training, it just made me love the sport more. He wasn't the kind of parent who would push me to the point where it wasn't fun. I loved doing it. He would get up with me, run with me. I was a young kid and I wanted to spend time with my dad. He'd pick me up after classes or he'd take me out at night so I could get some practice in.

Princess enjoyed the time she spent with her dad as her coach and believes

that she would not be where she is today without his influence and his pushing

her to achieve at the highest level.

Babeahgirl

A 19-year-old freshman fencer from a large metropolitan area on the

Midwest, Babeahgirl participated in basketball and fencing in high school. She

lives with her mother and stepfather, who are both hairdressers and have sport

backgrounds in football and softball. She has two brothers ages 20 and 21 who

participate in basketball and tennis, and a younger half-brother who is 2 years old. Babeahgirl remembered her first sport experience as a family event:

> I would say the first sport-oriented experience I remember would be this summer day back when my mom and my step dad were engaged. I was about 7 years old playing basketball in our backyard. I have two older brothers so they were like ruling the court and I was just this little girl. So my dad picked me up and let me dunk it. (Babeahgirl)

Babeahgirl's involvement in fencing is an interesting story, since no high schools in her state offered fencing. She became involved through a coach who worked at the local university as well as at her high school. She experienced success with fencing rather immediately, and that success kept her involved:

> I stopped playing basketball and then my junior year, I can't really say what sparked my interest in it, but there were a couple of kids at my church who were fencing. I thought it was odd but I told my mom I thought I wanted to try it. I wanted to meet a bunch of new people and try something I had never tried before. My mom said ok I'll get you some lessons. I took lessons my junior and senior year and I guess what really turned me on to it was that in my very first competition I won first place. I was fencing these people who had been fencing for years and I had only been fencing for a few months. Then I noticed that I might have a talent at this. I stuck with it and my coach was actually the assistant coach at the local university. He asked me if I'd like to fence in college. At first I was a little skeptical about it. . .but things just took off from there. (Babeahgirl)

Vanessa

Vanessa is a 20-year-old junior volleyball player from a large city in the West. Her high school sport participation included volleyball, basketball, and soccer. Her family is very involved in athletics. Her father is currently a shipping manager, but he played college basketball, and even spent a brief time

with a NBA team. Her mother is an administrative assistant for a computer

company and participated in strictly recreational activities. She has half

brothers ages 22 and 15 and stepsisters ages 26 and 23. Both brothers are

high school basketball participants. Her older stepsister was a soccer player

and cheerleader in high school and participated in club soccer in college.

Vanessa's father had a big impact on her sport participation and on her choice

to play volleyball rather than basketball: "my very first sports memory would

have to be my dad putting a basketball in my hands because that was his sport

experience. He bought me a little hoop and everything when I was like five and

I'd be down in the basement by myself. He'd buy it for me and just be like go

and play." As Vanessa grew older and realized the commitment she would

have to make to volleyball in order to play on the NCAA Division I level in

college, she had to limit her participation:

> Vanessa- . . . I played basketball and that's the only thing I played from
> age five in the basement to middle school. In middle school I saw
> volleyball and I started to play a little soccer. Then I got to high school
> and my club coach approached me and he asked if I wanted to play for
> the club team. My mom was a little skeptical at first because it was in
> another city and I had to go up five days out of the week. It's not a long
> drive but a lot of gas and time. So I did that and they told me I couldn't do
> any other sports because it was so time consuming.
>
> Jennie-The club people?
>
> Vanessa-Yes. So I had to make a decision and my dad wasn't too
> happy about it. But I pretty much sucked at basketball anyway because I
> just got pushed around by all of the big girls so it worked out.
>
> Jennie-Are you glad that you made that choice?
>
> Vanessa-Yeah.

Vanessa's choice has proven to be a good one. She is a multiple All-Conference award winner and was even asked to train with the National Team over the summer. Volleyball will continue to be a part of her life after college, whether it is as a player or as a coach. Volleyball has had a positive effect on her life, and she wants to give back to the sport.

Madison

A 21-year-old senior track athlete from a major metropolitan area on the East coast, Madison was rare among the participants in that she only participated in one sport in high school. Her father is a radiologist and has some background in track. She also has a 26-year-old brother who participated in football and basketball in high school and had an impact on Madison's desire to become involved in sports. Madison's first sport experience was in an after school program through her community center; "Well, I was in an after school program where every day basically we had recess and ran around. But I also have an older brother who was into a lot of sports like football and basketball so I was always following him and trying to be like him." Madison also felt a great deal of influence from a teacher at her school who was also the track coach. The after school program led her to be noticed for her athletic ability and the coach talked with her about competing:

> I guess since I went to that after school program and you're always running around and doing relay races. One of the teachers there was the track coach and he said I should go tryout but there were mostly thirteen and fourteen year olds on the track team and I was like seven. I did tryout but I basically cried every practice because it was so hard but I

105

stayed with it for 13 years! (Madison)

She has had a positive experience with track, but has struggled as well. As evidence from her own words, track was hard for her and something that pushed her to her limits. She did not express the connection with sport that some of the other women did and will probably not be involved with sport beyond graduation.

Taz

Taz is a 23-year-old senior track athlete from a small town on the East coast with a long history of sport involvement. In high school, Taz participated in field hockey, soccer, and track and field. In college she became a heptathlete, competing in the seven-event test of one's speed, strength, and endurance. In women's track, this is the most demanding event and it attracts the best athletes. Taz's mother is a professor with a background in tennis and swimming. Her father is an auto detailer with a background in football, baseball/softball, and track and field. She has six siblings. Her brothers are 30 (swimmer), 21 (college track athlete), 17 (high school wrestler), and 15(no sport participation). Her sisters are 17 (basketball, baseball, tennis, and track and field) and 10 (soccer). Taz and her family have the most extensive sport background of any of the participants and their families.

Taz's first memory of her involvement in sports came in elementary school when in "third grade I started playing soccer just for fun, just for something to do. I was on an all guys team because there were no girls who

106

were playing. I didn't like that. It was fun but there were no girls to talk to, no girls to hang out with." Taz's experience with being the only girl on an all-boys soccer team allowed her to enjoy sport, but not to the point that she was determined to continue to participate. As the only girl on that team, Taz found it difficult to build the type of relationships that would have kept her involved. Then when she was in middle school, much like Madison's experience, the track coach discovered her abilities. Taz still remains in contact with this coach and gives him a great deal of credit for her continuing to compete and succeed at a level that gained her a full scholarship to college. Taz has received her undergraduate degree and is currently waiting the start of physical therapy school. She is working with physically challenged children and plans to stay involved with kids through coaching.

Chyna

Chyna is a 20-year-old junior who participates in track. Her hometown is a suburban area in the West. While she only participated in track in high school, her family was and is involved in many different sports. Her mother is a seamstress and has a background in both cheerleading and gymnastics. Her father is a teacher and a baseball coach. She has three sisters ages 28, 26, and 2. The older sisters participated in track, gymnastics, soccer, and cheerleading through high school. Chyna's first experience is sport came partly out of convenience, but also out of her interest in participation of the sister closest to her in age: "When I was seven during the summer time and I went to

one of my sister's track practices because I had never seen one. I started

running track after that because I needed a babysitter." Chyna's sister helped

to expose her to the sport and her sister's continued involvement in track gave

Chyna's parents help with taking care of their young daughter.

Chyna did grow to enjoy the competition and especially the winning.

When asked what the biggest influence on her involvement in track was, she

answered:

> Chyna-Just probably getting sick of losing and constantly being last.
> That's all I got until the 8th grade and I started to really train. I didn't
> know what I was doing for all of those years before that.
>
> Jennie-So you had an internal influence? You got tired of not doing as
> well as you wanted to?
>
> Chyna-I didn't take it seriously and then I saw the other girls and how
> good they were. . .
>
> Jennie-Did that stay with you? Do you still hate to lose?
>
> Chyna-Well, it's a little more ok to lose as long as I run a good time.

Chyna's experience in track through the years has been a positive one and she

looks forward to completing her college career on a high note running in the 100

and 200 meters.

Themes

The themes from the interviews are categorized into four main areas, as

consistent with my research questions: silencing, stereotypes, socialization, and

strategies for change. Within silencing, sub-themes include the attention paid

by the media to African American women athletes, treatment of African

American female athletes by the athletic administration at the university, and

treatment of African American female athletes by the coaches at the university,

and their treatment by male student-athletes. The stereotype category is

broken down into biological stereotypes, gender stereotypes, intellectual

stereotypes, and athletic stereotypes. Socialization includes influences such as

racism and its effect of the quality of experience, environment, financial access,

peers, family, teachers and coaches, and sex role expectations. And finally,

strategies for change are composed of role modeling, exposure, and access.

(See Table 2 and Table 3).
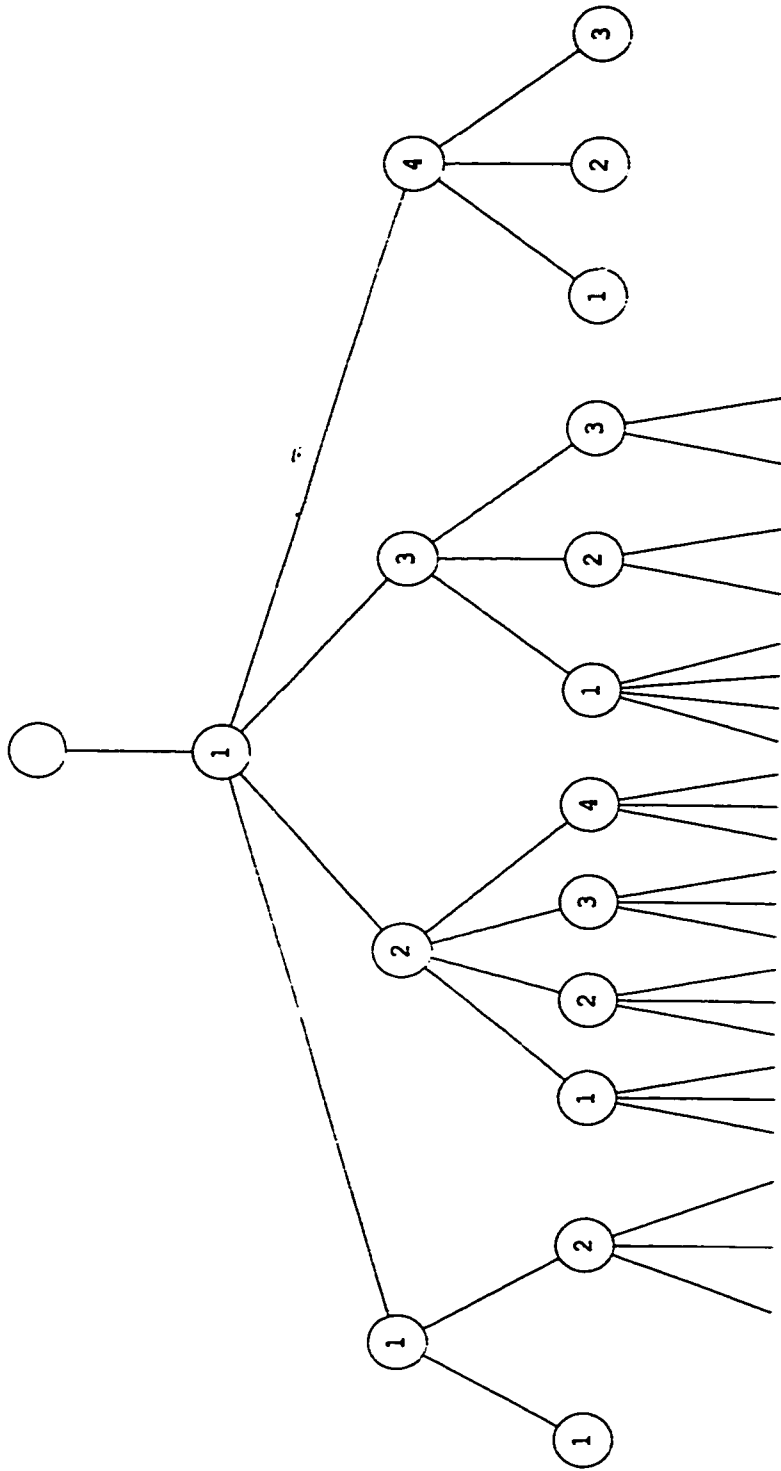
Table 2: Node tree display of themes and sub-themes

110

1-African American Female Sport Participation

1-1 Silencing
    1-1-1 Media
    1-1-2 On Campus
        1-1-2-1 Athletic Administrators
        1-1-2-2 Coaches
        1-1-2-3 Male Student-Athletes

1-2 Stereotypes
    1-2-1 Biological
        1-2-1-1 Hair
        1-2-1-2 Nose
        1-2-1-3 Physiological Attributes
    1-2-2 Gender
        1-2-2-1 Athletic Ability
        1-2-2-2 Body Image/Societal Expectations
        1-2-2-3 Homosexual Assumptions
    1-2-3 Intellectual
        1-2-3-1 Attend college only because you are an athlete
        1-2-3-2 Being only African American in classes
        1-2-3-3 Language as an indicator of intelligence
    1-2-4 Athletic
        1-2-4-1 Basketball and track assumption
        1-2-4-2 Living outside the stereotype
        1-2-4-3 Assumption of superiority

1-3 Socialization
    1-3-1 Socialization agents
        1-3-1-1 Parents
        1-3-1-2 Siblings
        1-3-1-3 Peers
        1-3-1-4 Teachers/Coaches
    1-3-2 Environment
        1-3-2-1 Neighborhood
        1-3-2-2 Economic
    1-3-3 Racism
        1-3-3-1 Childhood Experiences
        1-3-3-2 College Experiences

1-4 Strategies for Change
    1-4-1 Role Models
    1-4-2 Media/Sponsorship Opportunities
    1-4-3 Exposure/Access

Table 3: Legend for node tree display

<u>Silencing</u>:

"Are African American women silenced by the balance of racial and gender power in society and in sport? If so how are they silenced? By what, by whom?"

I used the concept "silencing" to describe the representation of the African American female voice in sport. I also used it to describe the amount of attention paid the African American female voice by individuals and organizations that have the power to provide outlets and exposure for these women. In the focus group interviews, I began to explore whether the participants believed the African American female voice was heard in sport and how much attention the participants believed was paid to their efforts and the efforts of other African American female athletes. I asked the women what their perception was of the state of sport participation of African American females, and I asked them what they perceived to be the societal influences on this participation. Based upon the responses I received in the focus groups, I followed up in the individual interviews by asking how the women believe they have been treated during their college athletic experience. I also pursued concerns the women raise about the media and asked what the women believed could be done to better publicize African American female athletes.

Mass Media: Power of Influence

Each of the participants commented on the relatively low numbers of African American women participating in sports other than basketball and track and field and the lack of coverage given to women's athletics by the media. The women I interview agreed that there are not enough African American

112

women participating in sport and that those who were participating were not publicized enough; "I think that there would be more [participation] of African American women in sports if they (the media) publicized it more" (Dianne). Two of the participants even go as far as to have said that they thought there "are a lot of them (African American women) participating" (Gabby) but we do not have the opportunity to see them based on the decisions made by those in control of the media outlets; "We have them but you just don't see them or hear about them" (Kay). The four women who completed the grounded survey all answered that they strongly disagreed that women receive adequate coverage by the media. All four also responded that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed that women athletes receive equal TV, newspaper, and radio coverage to men athletes.

The influence of the media, particularly television, is powerful. Children are affected by what they see and what they do not see on television. Access to sports through viewing them on television is what drives many children's decisions to participate. For example, when asked what leads people to choose to become involved in sports, one participant was quick to answer; "If anything it's TV. I don't know any other way that children see sports" (Chyna). Other participants made references to how seeing a sport being played on television led them to choose to play that sport; "I saw it on television and I was hooked" (Gabby) and "I just started doing like they did on TV" (Kay).

The power of the media to influence the sport participation choices of children goes beyond simply the decision to play or not to play. According to two women, it extends to the decision of what sport to play:

> I think the media denotes what sports different people will play. If you look at most NBA teams it's mostly African American players. And if you look at football, I still think that football has a mix of white and black. A lot of times a kid might see a particular sport and see a predominant race and they may think I won't be good at that or they see a predominant race and say I'll excel at that. That's not the case. The media has lot to do with what sports we get into. (Babeahgirl)

> TV influences a lot. I know that kids see women on TV now and say that's my role model. I think African Americans go on basically what they see. You won't see a lot of girls playing tennis or ice-skating. Did you guys ever see anyone ice-skating? . . . So you don't see a lot of people as a role model to get the girl motivated . . . Otherwise you aren't doing it. That's what I think. (November)

For many participating in sport begins with a desire to imitate someone or something. To imitate, one needs to find someone who possesses qualities worth imitating. Children look for role models in athletics, people who have achieved what the children want to achieve and have earned the respect that the children want to earn. Given what the participants stated about the accessibility the media grants to women's sports, it is difficult for women to find role models.

> Basketball for instance, it's always on. On the weekends you get a little of the WNBA but you have to have cable most times. With men's basketball it's always on. Like gymnastics and swimming, I don't see anyone. Janet Evans swims, but I haven't see any African American women swimming role model. That's what little kids need. If they see somebody up there, they want to be like that. There's lots of little girls who want to be like Michael Jordan, but that's an unrealistic goal. You can't be Michael Jordan. It doesn't matter how hard you play. They should try to be Sheryl Swoopes or someone. (Princess)

Many young girls do have male athlete role models because that is all they have seen. African American women have an even more difficult time choosing a role model because access through the media to African American female athletes is scarce:

> You look for people that look just like you. If you don't see that out there, then you're going be like I don't want to do that because I don't see any black girls doing that. That's the same with gymnastics and most of the other sports except for track and basketball. Those are the only two sports where I see them publicizing black women as role models and stars. That's the reason little black girls are geared toward basketball and track. (Princess)

The women in the study also believed the media pays more attention to the few African American athletes who break the stereotypes and participate in different sports.

> Kay-Tiger Woods.
>
> Princess-Yeah. They are always making a big deal of it. I don't know what's going to happen I hope it changes.
>
> Kay-Tiger could come in the first, second, fifth, or one hundred and fifth and they are always going to let you know how he did. They will always let you know how he did. And who is it, Dominique Dawes and the tennis players, the Williams sisters? Even when they weren't something, you heard about them. They let you know.

Tiger Woods is one of the more popular examples of an African American a non-stereotypical sport who attracts a great deal of media attention.

> I think sometimes the media thinks everybody is content if we throw one black person out there. Like oh we got Tiger Woods, they'll be content for a little bit. It would be nice to get the bite rather than just the nibble. Big corporations and the media think we are going to be satisfied just because we have that representation of like 10. I can turn on car racing anytime or horse racing or rugby or swimming or lacrosse and there's no one. (Gabby)

115

What was most disappointing to the women is how much of a difference

the media could make in the sport participation patterns of African American

women. Women would be more inclined to become involved and stay involved

if the media would give them more exposure and better coverage.

> They are playing in a broader area but my thing is I watched the WNBA all star game and said there's a court full of black people but they're 10. How many teams are there in the WNBA? That's terrible. It's one thing to be like we don't know if we have the financial backing but it's another thing to not incorporate them in other sports and other aspects of sports. There are a lot of sports that are content to not recruit African American. There are a lot of situations and corporations who are content not to showcase African Americans. Track is by far the most heavily populated African American sport where you have great numbers. At any given time you'll fill up a stadium and half of them will be athletes and a great deal of them are female athletes. Track allows anyone to participate in any kind of event. But how many times do I turn on NBC and see track? How many times do I turn on NBC and see the women's volleyball team with three or four African American players? How many times do you get to see any black female golfers. If I as an African American woman should be satisfied to watch David Robinson, who is nothing like me, dunk over somebody and they're both getting paid 12 million dollars then that's not really conducive to what I need. It's great that Lisa Leslie and Sheryl Swoopes and everybody are playing basketball but how often can I see them? (Gabby)

African American women are playing sports; "they are in community centers or

playing on street courts or rec teams, club teams. They are playing in a

broader area . . ." (Gabby). According to Gabby they are there, but there are

not receiving the media coverage. And when they do, that coverage is not

necessarily flattering to what the women are trying to accomplish:

> And I got to hear bad commentary! That's the worst commentary I've ever heard. How many times do you hear announcer talk about Michael Jordan's children? And look at Robinson man can he knit! I want to watch the game and it's bad enough I'm watching it on Lifetime. It's

116

ridiculous. There's like roller handball on ESPN 2 and I can't find a track meet. Roller handball, not to take anything away from the people who are watching it, but if I don't see anyone who looks like me in it or don't take an interest in it then what good is it? We have to concentrate on building on what we have and spreading out. How many times are you going to see a black rower? . . . Kids tend to see something someone else is doing and take a liking to that person and buy their baseball card or whatever or see them on commercials. (Gabby)

The women in this study believed that the media could have a profound impact on increasing the number of African American women who participate in sports and the variety of sports in which these women participate. The student-athletes in the study applauded the efforts of Sports Illustrated for Women; "my boyfriend came in today with the new Sports Illustrated for Women. That got me pumped. It's worth it. It's so worth it . . . I was so impressed and thought that this was so great" (Lolita). They also admired what the WNBA has done in the way of scheduling and marketing the league through media outlets.

Kay-I was so surprised to see all the stuff on the WNBA and my mom is on top of all of that and it was so good to see. There needs to be more of that.

Essence-But they put it in a season that's like a transition time between spring and summer.

Kay-yeah, but that's so it's not at the same time as the men. I think it should be in the fall but this is a transition and I think eventually it will be in the fall. it has to grow just like everything else . . . But now it's like the main sport at this time of year.

Nike and Gatorade are the companies the women mentioned when thinking of people who are assisting African American women athletes express their voices and exposing others to their efforts:

117

Jennie-There are a lot of kids who are starting to golf now because of Tiger.

November-I am Tiger Woods.

Princess-We should be using him as a motivator . . . I'm glad that they're doing it because little black kids are saying that they want to be like Tiger Woods. They need to do that with the Dominique Dawes and Surea Bonaly. If you're not going to do that then a lot of these little kids are not going to go out there and try to be brave.

November-Like those Nike commercials with the little girls and the Gatorade commercials. I think it's getting a little better with telling girls it's OK to do what boys do. It's [been] a goal for women to have their own basketball league. It's the time when people are willing to do it and put the money up for it.

As Princess stated, the exposure the women need does not simply come from television. It comes from people and companies who are willing to sponsor the televising of events involving African American female athletes:

Just they way they've really pushed Shannon Miller and Dominique Mocianeau to the forefront, they should put Dominique Dawes on an equal level. Just so little black girls can see that they have a role model in this too. They do push her but I don't think they push her as much. It's not just TV but who wants to sponsor it. I was reading an article about car racing and it said that there are no black people doing car racing. This one black guy wanted to break in and nobody wanted to sponsor him. Nobody wants to sponsor a black guy's car because they think it's going to degrade the sport or that nobody's going to come watch anymore. (Princess)

Princess continued:

I thought about it and thought maybe that's the reason people don't publicize Dominique Dawes. We are sitting here saying why don't they show them on TV and it's because nobody wants to pay to see them on TV. Nobody wants to spend money to put her on a box or a bulletin board or whatever. We need to get some of these millionaires like FUBU and these guys, entrepreneurs who are making all of this money, to help publicize black athletes. It will give young African American athletes someone to look up to so we can integrate all of these sports. That's the only way it's going to happen. (Princess)

118

On Campus: Influences Closer to Home

Beyond the influence of the media, the participants also believed that there are influences within their university that have an effect on how African American female athletes are heard and respected. The women had conflicting opinions on how these internal factors support African American females. The on campus influences are separated into athletic administration, coaches, and other student-athletes.

Athletic Administration

Some of the women's views reflect a strong positive feeling toward the university's athletic administration:

> . . . I feel they take care of us. I'm the type of woman who when I want something done, I'm going to get it done. I don't take race, sport, or gender into consideration. When I talk to you I expect you to listen. My expectations are not based on my being a woman and having this plight against me because of the football players . . .I go in with an open mind giving everybody a chance. I think they treat us great. I think there could be a women's athletic banquet just to acknowledge that they are important. Men are so highly recognized and so to show that what we do is appreciated. If they want to have a men's athletic banquet then go ahead, but just show that they appreciate us too. I do think they treat us great. (Taz)

The efforts the administration creates to take care of its athletes was appreciated by these women and they recognized that the university assists them when they face the difficulties of being African American student-athletes on a predominantly Caucasian campus:

> . . . 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.

119

I think all of the academic and related support is the same. . . We get a lot of nice stuff too. I'm happy for that! (Vanessa)

The athletes realized that the administration's job is not an easy one and they commend the university on its efforts to treat all the student-athletes well.

The student-athletes who participated in this study were also not afraid to point out when the shortcomings of the athletic administration. The four women who completed the grounded survey indicated that they strongly agreed that women athletes have to prove themselves more so than men athletes. Two of those women also strongly agreed that men's sports are prioritized over women's sports and that there exists both a lack of respect and a lack of understanding of women's sports. Gabby began the conversation about the silencing of African American female athletes that occurred at the hands of the members of the university's athletic department:

> Gabby-This little brochure right here. When we first started putting this together for "The Student Athlete Voice," if you could have heard the criticism of it. It was insane. All of these people were criticizing the man holding the globe like we were saying that black people were taking over the world. There was this donation made to dedicate a lounge in the new Student Success Center to the "Student Athlete Voice." It was supposed to be a place where people would feel welcomed. The donation was refused rather than have a "Student Athlete Voice" lounge. The situation made me feel like I was being contained because of my race, limited to what I could do. . .

> Jennie-Who were these people? What were their roles?

> Gabby-Student athlete support services, student affairs, even my coach was the same way. I believe he was against it.

The women athletes spoke to the needs of the African American female population and what the administration has done to address these:

120

I think the administration has good intentions by us. I'm on the Title IX committee. They are very determined that everything is accurate numbers-wise, as far as financially for each team, but I think it gets lost somewhere in the chain. Sometimes it becomes too much about the numbers and not enough about the effort that goes into everything. I guess it does come down to the boss but it is the whole administration too. I think a lot of teams feel this way that aren't revenue producers. I think that they do have good intentions by the women's teams, and that they do want to make this a woman friendly university and athletic department. But it's hard to see that when there aren't a lot of female coaches and that's a key thing. If they had more, and I know it's a tough market for female coaches because when I was on the search for an ice hockey coach there are of course more men applying. So now you have to dig deep to try to find a pool of females. I think they could do a better job finding female coaches and not just head coaches, but female assistant coaches too. That's a scarce commodity there too. (Gabby)

The women also found fault with the emphasis that major Division I programs,

like theirs, put on football:

No matter what happens at this school, when you cut to the chase they're always going to look to their men's athletics. The reason why you'll see a whole lot of these female athletes is so that the men can be here. That is their focus. The underlying rule about this athletic program is that whatever we got to do to keep the football team the way that we want it, we'll add more women. Crew would not exist in a varsity setting if it wasn't for the fact that they wanted to keep the men's football team. They use the most money and we're the only kind of team that can balance that budget. That's the only reason. (Gabby)

The help from the administration is not the same, not equal. In track we run every single weekend from January until June. We're out of town. Sometimes we're in town for 2 days and then gone. And everyone is like these poor football players 25 of them are ineligible. The season is only one quarter. What have they been doing the last two quarters? We really have to apply ourselves in so many ways. We have to stay so focused because we're out of town so much. I think they should give us more credit. We should be recognized more. (Chyna)

and men's basketball:

Gabby-. . . What doesn't State basketball rule? The [basketball] arena was built in less than a year. We [are] still waiting on the track stadium.

Lolita-Thank you!

Gabby- We [are] still waiting on the big house.

Dianne-We are last on the totem pole.

Gabby-And it's the facility named after the most famous track star to ever go here. We're not talking about some scrub!

Dianne-They just tore the track out like well, whatever. They disrespected it. They totally disrespected it.

Lolita-We had to cancel our meets. You guys don't even care. He is like our father on campus. He went and he competed in the Olympics. He won all of these medals. He went and represented his country.

Gabby-Yeah, when it comes to throwing names! You had better throw his name hard! Throw it out there. But that's the system we're in right now.

The rapid construction of a new arena for basketball and hockey on the campus was a source of frustration for the track athletes who were anxiously awaiting a new competition track after theirs was torn out to make room for more seating in the stadium they shared with football. The construction of new arena also affected the volleyball team, who remained in the old arena for practice and contests along with several other teams:

Jennie-How did you feel when the new arena was built?

Vanessa-It's nice to get basketball out of the gym, but their lines are still down on the court! It made me mad when after the last basketball game people were asking what the gym was going to be used for now. I was like there are still 3 sports who play in there—us, wrestling, and gymnastics. They ask if we'll ever play in the new place. There's no chance!

Lastly, the participants identified a problem with how African American athletes are recruited to their university to play sports. They believed that student-athletes and other students could identify the "white sports" and the "black sports" on their campus without much trouble.

> . . . here there could be better representation of black athletes. I'm not in the recruiting office so I don't know what goes on there. They're probably recruiting there and maybe the kids aren't smart enough or don't want to come here. I don't know what goes on. I still think there should be better representation. I did see a gradual increase. You know all the sports that have the black people in them. You shouldn't be able to pick them out as easy as that. (Taz)

> . . . I was shocked with how many African Americans this school was actually bringing in. But I am angry that the African Americans they are trying to recruit are only athletes. It's almost giving the school a bad name. Most African Americans I've seen on this campus are athletes. Then they wonder why the African Americans GPA is lower and I'm not saying that just because you're an athlete your GPA will be lower, but we have so many other things to do. It's going to be harder to have that 4.0 even though you were a good student in high school but it's not racial. What about all of the training and running and all of that stuff we do when other people are studying? We don't have any support. We went to the senior sendoff and it was really shocking. Our team was the only one that was all black. Everybody looked at us and you could just see it. Why aren't there any black girls on the other teams and why aren't there any white girls going up for our team? (Princess)

Coaches

In addition to the influence the athletic administration has on the African American female student-athletes, coaches also play a role in the opportunities provided to the student-athletes. The women who participated in the study share stories of how they believed they were treated by the coaches and how that treatment affected their ability to be seen, heard, and recognized for their

123

accomplishments. The comments the women made first center around track and field and the coaching situation in that sport. The men and women's teams share a head coach, train at a common time, and travel together.

Of the twelve women who participated in the study, eight of them were members of the track team. Princess and Taz were the most vocal on the subject of coaching and how it affects them and their team. Taz spoke on subject of sharing a head coach:

> Taz- . . . you can't coach women and men the same. There's a difference. The women and men's basketball teams don't train together. Or soccer.

> Jennie-Would an answer be then to have two head coaches?

> Taz-Oh yeah. No one else does that. But even if we just had one head coach, we still need to have two separate practice times. I don't think they mean to do this, but they're stuck in a hole right now. People should notice a change in the performance of the track team. Our team used to be noted for our performances and we were high in the rankings every year. We're barely getting 3rd or 4th in the conference now. When you're recruiting you don't want to hear that the coach is sharing his time with the other team. You want his undivided attention. That plays a big role in our success.

Princess echoed Taz's concern about coaching men and women identically and within the same practice setting:

> We are a team that is both male and female. . . It seems that some coaches try to apply the same method to both, but it doesn't work. Some guys are coached by yelling and cursing and they think that will make them run faster. One coach tried to do that to me and it didn't work. I will respect you if you respect me. I have never stepped out of line until he just cursed at me. We were going back and forth and I told him not to curse at me. He told the head coach and the head coach agreed with me. We had a meeting and the coach told me that he had been trying to apply the same thing he did with the guys to me not thinking that women are coached differently. Women always fight for equal rights, but I don't think that wanting equal rights means I want somebody to curse in my

124

face. It has nothing to do with whether you want equal rights or not, it's disrespectful. I can be tough without you cursing at me.

Madison had issues with the way the two track teams were coached as well:

> The way that the coaches treat the men and the women on the track team. They would yell at the guys but when it comes to the females he
>
> would be a softie and let you get away with things. I think he should treat us the same. (Madison)

While the teams shared a head coach, each team did have specialists that work with only the women or men. These coaches trained certain events, such as the sprinters or the distance runners. Training the both teams together led to the head coach not spending quality time with all of the student-athletes. Using assistant coaches as specialists to train only certain events led to those coaches not spending any time with student-athletes in other events.

> Jennie-You made a comment before in the focus group about going into indoor track after cross-country and having only certain coaches know certain athletes' names. That really struck me. Tell me more about that and how you perceive that situation.
>
> Taz-I'm guilty of that myself. I don't do it purposely, but because I interact more with the track team than the cross-country team I know those names. If I ever am in the locker room and don't know, I ask people's names. The coaches, I don't think they do it purposely either. Maybe they do. If you perform then they pay attention to you. It's almost like there are two separate groups with one coach. We don't interact. The word team is not being utilized. They never say our team they always say I did this. What can I do? Not how many points can be scored for the team. The communication is horrible from coaches to the athletes and among the athletes.
>
> Jennie-The two groups are distance and sprints?
>
> Taz-Distance is the cross-country kids and track and field is all of us. The cross-country kids who run like the mile will train more with us so they'll start interacting. We'll get to know you. The rest of them aren't

ever in there because they're out on their 3-hour runs. When we're done, they're still out there running. There's no effort to integrate us. When we have team meeting we are either track and field or cross-country. We never all meet together.

Jennie-Is it white and black?

Taz-Well, . . . no . . . Yes, not purposely but that's the way it breaks down. You might get a couple white jumpers but that's about it.

Jennie-Obviously certain coaches work with certain events and tend to know those kids and maybe not everybody?

Taz-Yeah . . . But in high school there were probably 40 people on the team and my head coach knew everybody. He might not have always talked to everyone individually every day, but because he talked to his three assistant coaches he knew. It's on the person himself . . . the coach has a lot to do with it too. He sets an example . . .

Taz was correct, the coach did set an example. Coaches set powerful examples sometimes when they do not even realize it. Student-athletes follow these examples. In track and field, the cycle will continue with coaches trying to approach men and women with the same methods and coaches not being aware of what is going on with other segments of the teams. While a good assistant coach can fill the attention void left by sharing the head coach between two teams, nothing can substitute for contact with the head coach. At some point, one team or certain student-athletes are shortchanged.

Coaches set examples in aspects of the athletic program beyond track and field as well. One of the women shared an elaborate recollection of a situation that occurs in the weight room with the strength coach that led her to question what her role as an African American female athlete was supposed to be at this university. Gabby made reference to her experience in the weight

room in the focus group, so I asked her to go into more detail in her individual

interview:

> Jennie-What about the weight room? You get the sense that there is a place you definitely feel that you belong but at the same time the people who are in there are making you feel as if you don't. How do you deal with that?

> Gabby-The people, who normally initiate that feeling, you just disregard because of their character. You think about the reliability of their thoughts. After you think about that it become very much like he's a dork! It's disturbing when you're trying to accomplish a goal. It's disturbing that somebody wants you to stop pursuing your goal so that someone else can pursue theirs. There's a strength coach here who has literally asked me to get off a machine so that the basketball team could get on. There are certain things I think you shouldn't sacrifice—like this team or this person because of the publicity of another team or person. If I come into the weight room at 3 pm and I'm doing my workout and not being sociable and going and drinking water every 3 minutes and just going about my business then there should be no problem if I'm on a machine. She'll be off in a minute. But to go over and tell me that they really need to do this when they have seven other exercises they could be doing and they just came in the building at like 3:35 and they're late. That's not my responsibility.

In addition to being asked to step aside so a men's team can lift, this same

woman (a member of the crew team) has been criticized by the strength coach

for what she wears when she trains:

> There have been times that we've been asked to put on more clothes. The weight room rules state that you have to have on a dry shirt and dry shorts. That's pretty much it. We train in spandex. We train in body suits. We race in body suits. I remember I had an Adidas body suit and it was short and I had another pair of shorts on over top. I was more clothed than half the girls walking on campus were. The strength coach came over and said that it was disturbing the guys and I should put on a shirt . . . maybe . . . if they weren't so focused on whether I was wearing an Adidas body suit or a T-shirt; they might win a few more games! By making me change my shirt, does that make them work out harder? I think you have a problem. I'm not going to be on the court taking on and

127

off my shirt. If that was the logic then just put a girl in an Adidas body suit at the free throw line and they'll crumble. The logic is very obtuse.

Lastly, the strength coach made comments about how the women on the crew team are performing their workout when he was not the person responsible for their training regimen:

> They had no clue what we were doing. We have these circuits. It's 45 seconds on 15 off and you go to the next thing. The longest we've ever done this was like two hours. That's just dead. People would come
>
> watch us do it and be tired . . . The object is not to do the best technique but to do as many reps as possible and he would come over and criticize us on our technique. I think the males in the weight room whether they be the coaches or the athletes have a tendency to put emphasis on certain things and they forget that you are in there in the same capacity that they are. It's like why don't you mind your team and get them to win. Mind your own weight program. We aren't struggling and it's because I'm in here doing my business. And you are so get out of my face!
>
> Jennie-Do you think they make those comments purposely?
>
> Gabby- I think some of them do. It's no longer just subconscious. You have to have some kind of thought when you come over and ask somebody to put on a different shirt because the guys can't concentrate? The guys will come in with no shirt on and put it on when they get in there and you don't here anyone saying hey, these girls are working out you better put your shirt on before you come in. You don't hear those kinds of things.

Student-Athletes

The weight room is a place where the women felt as if they were silenced and put into their place not just by the male coaches, but by the male athletes as well. Lolita began with her "weight room experiences and Gabby continued:

> Lolita- . . . but because you are an athlete and primarily an African American athlete. You look good and you have a great body and you drive men crazy. Automatically the minute you walk into the weight room

128

Gabby-The weight room should be rump shaker central! It's so funny. You've seen it. The crew team and the volleyball team have similar uniforms to go training. We wear the short biker shorts and sometimes we'll roll them up and then we have on t-shirts or our sports bras. We'll go in and do the weights bam, bam, bam. There'll be a team sitting there, some guys, not lifting no weight just sittin' there with there hands folded across their chests. Just looking around saying eeny meenie minie mo, I'll take catalog number four, let's see and I'll take her in a medium. It's like a supermarket buffet to them. I could tell you names. We're sittin' there doing our weights and we're crying because it hurts so bad and he's there watching behind us in the mirror.

Jennie-So you can see him in the mirror watching you?

Gabby-Yeah! Is he just not seeing that I'm looking dead in his eyes or what?! He's looking dead at your chest, dead at your legs. Looking at you from your shoes to your head. That's where you're wrong. We are getting down to business in there.

Lolita-They wonder why we have an attitude. We have an attitude because we come in there to work and we get stared at. That's another stereotype right there. They automatically assume that we have an attitude. We are tomboys that are just rough and can't get along with anybody and are always ready to start a fight. But they think we feel like when we go in there we have something to prove. I don't feel like I have something to prove, but I go in there to take care of business. I don't go in there to sit and socialize. When they want to sit there and socialize and get my phone number. Forget it, I'm in there to train. You're not going to be out there on the track when I lose that race because I was sitting in here talking to you. I'm here to train. They're paying for my school. I'm here to be successful. They get upset.

Gabby-The b word, she's a bitch. And I say you're right. You're absolutely right!

Lolita-They think that they should just come in there and talk to us.

The control the male athletes tried to exercise over the female athletes extends outside of the weight room also, but the theme remained consistent. These women believed that the male athletes saw them as a benefit provided for being on this university's teams:

129

Gabby-So when you bring guys in, you fly them in, 80 guys out of 102 on full-ride scholarships who walk around campus like their s*** don't stink . . .any chick that they see is a varsity athlete they feel is a part of their scholarship program.

Jennie-Do they say that to you?

G-Absolutely, they used to have a freshman orientation dance. The first week of school. Don't you know that every new freshman girl athlete would be out there and don't you know that you'd have a couple of football players there and a couple of basketball players there. There would be four guys to every girl. The older ones you'd see conversing with more the people who they'd come through the program with because they had already established a rapport. They had already established what the relationship level would be. These new ones are fresh meat. That might be harsh, but that's the fact. The basic, fundamental, underlying balance. People who say we try to keep this program we try to help that program. Baloney! What it comes down to is you can't tell that guy who came from Florida and comes in here and sees all these good-looking women in shape and is told that this is X University and football rules . . . what it doesn't rule. What doesn't X basketball rule?

Stereotypes:

"How does sport serve to create and reinforce racial and gender based stereotypes? How can sport serve to dispel those myths?"

Stereotypes are commonly held views about a particular person, gender, race, nationality, or religion that have little to no basis in truth. In the section that follows, I have divided stereotypes into four categories pertinent to the experience of African American female student-athletes at X University. It is difficult to separate the stereotypes as all of these categories relate to racial stereotyping in some way--biological features and traits, gender issues, intellectual capacity, and athletic skill. These women are subject to biological stereotypes such as inquiries about the shape of their nose or lips. They are subject to gender stereotypes like being called "tomboys" or "manly" because

130

they choose to participate in sports. Intellectual stereotypes include expectations on the part of other students and professors that due to their race and sex, these women cannot succeed in the classroom. Athletic stereotypes refer to the typical assumption that African American women who participate in sports play basketball or run track.

Biological Stereotypes

Attending a predominantly Caucasian university, the participants in this study experienced more than their fair share of biological stereotypes. A partial or complete lack of understanding of other cultures was the root of much of the misinformation. As the student-athletes explained, they have been brought up in a white society and they have been exposed to white culture. Some of their peers have never been exposed to black culture and some have.

The prevalent biological stereotype the women encountered at X university have to do with their hair:

> . . . You get the hair questions. Can I touch your hair? How did you get your hair that way? One time you have it straight and then it's curly. I don't know if it's just because I'm the only one on my team but it's constant . . . (Babeahgirl)

> I see stuff like that because I'm the only black girl on my team. They ask questions. Well I got to go get a perm and they're like why? I had braids and I took my hair down one time and they were like that's not yours. I was like well it's mine because I bought it. (Vanessa)

Some of the women found that bits of information about their biological traits have made it to their classmates:

> Essence-She asked questions that I didn't even have answers to . . .
> Kay-Do you wash your hair everyday?

November-Yeah, that's a good one.

Essence-She was like how come you don't wash your hair everyday. I didn't know about white people's hair until I came here and this girl told me. I had no idea why they wash it everyday. All that shampoo, why was it such a big deal?

They also found that their classmates were being exposed to black culture and even some dialect:

It's so different now because they slip in all of this stuff about the black culture. And I'm happy about that because these people knew something about me. Like about hair, why's my hair nappy? Why do you perm your hair to make it curly and I perm mine to make it straight? (Princess)

Next to hair, the women related stories about situations in which they have been subject to stereotypes about their noses, rear ends, and busts. One of the most interesting stories about a biological stereotype came from Essence:

Essence-I got a funny story. This girl asked me if she could touch my nose.

Kay-Touch your nose?

Essence-Yeah.

Kay-Why'd she want to touch your nose?

Essence-That was her first time being around a black person. She wanted to comb my hair. I let her wash my hair.

Kay-That might be kind of cool.

Essence-It was later on after we had gotten to know each other. One day she said can I touch your nose? It was like whatever. But her nose was different from my nose. Our noses are wider than white people's

132

noses. It's like a different shape. She wanted to know.

Beyond the stereotypes about hair and noses other examples of biologically based misconceptions the women have heard include the following:

The girls on my team will say their butts look like black girl's butts. (Vanessa)

They always say black girls have big busts. If they see a white girl with a big bust they say she has implants. (Princess)

Most of the women laughed off the comments their peers make as ignorance and believed that the things that are said are not meant with any malice, however one woman started to cry when she related an event that happened to her:

One thing that upset me was that our coach is really adamant about body fat. He makes us do hydrostatic weighting and I can't do it because my lung capacity is really small and my vo2 max doesn't even show up so I get skin folds done and they came back at like 15% or something. A lot of the girls were 20 or 22, 23 and he decided that for us to be good athletes we had to be between 13 and 18 so we did it again and mine came back 13.6%. I was lowest on the team but he made a point to say that African Americans have a higher density of bones so that's why mine would be lower. I was thinking I had done skin folds so I wasn't even in the water. It struck a nerve and I really don't have much respect for my coach right now. (Vanessa)

Gender Stereotypes

From the time they were young girls beginning their careers in sports, the women in the study have been exposed to stereotypes having to do with their gender. Two women who completed the grounded survey agreed that they are not perceived as legitimate athletes, and all four women responded that they strongly agreed that they receive conflicting messages about whether it is acceptable to be an athlete and a woman. Gabby referred to her mother

133

wanting her to be "the pink and purple type of young woman," which meant not playing sports. Luckily Gabby's mother softened on her stance and signed her up for teams. Dianne, Babeahgirl, and Kay all remembered their experiences as the only girls on all boys' teams. They heard the usual "you throw like a girl" and were called "tomboys." These stereotypes stuck with them throughout their entire lives:

> [playing softball] . . .it really shaped me because I was the only girl. It really encouraged me to prove myself to be better than other people thought I was. When I was younger they used to say you throw like girl
>
> and you hit like a girl. That encouraged me to stick to what I believe in and to believe in myself regardless of what other people say. (Dianne)

> . . . my whole entire childhood I was the tomboy. I had to fight for my position and was always competitive even going out and riding your bikes I was always the one saying hey wait up for me and following them. This forced me to be competitive and to persevere. I was very involved in sports and I was always the only girl. We'd be playing flag football or basketball and I was the only girl. Pretty much all I hung out with was boys when I was growing up. (Babeahgirl)

> I was a tomboy too. Maybe that's why nobody on my block liked me because I didn't do what they did. I just didn't like it. We'd climb trees and jump fences and play cops and robbers with sticks. I didn't like to do the so-called girl things. My mom . . . at one point she kind of got scared because I was playing on a guys' team. The coach of the guys' team asked me to because we didn't have a girls' team in seventh and eighth grade. But my mom finally let me play. She'd get scared sometimes that I would get hurt, her little baby. She got over that.

As the women grew older, they still had difficulty being identified as women and as athletes. Even the other female students questioned them as to whether they are truly athletes:

> Being a female too, I know that Lolita wore her varsity jacket a lot. Even when it was nice out. . . the other black females on campus will look at you like she must be sporting her boyfriend's jacket. (Dianne)

134

And the student-athletes commented on the female body image women were

exposed to as they grew up in American society and how that affected their

involvement in sports. This stereotypical image led some women away from

sports and others who did not want that image toward sports:

> I think the shape of women today. You can flip on BET anytime and you'll see a thicker woman. A more rounded woman. If you do any athletic event and you train as hard as you have to win that event and maintain that status, then you won't look like that woman in the videos. You'll be a totally different type of shape. (Gabby)
> That affected me a lot when I was younger. I think that is what made me pick the sport that I picked. Because I had a tiny little body and that

> really made me stay in sports. The weight room gave me a way to be a

> little more muscular. Women not being sex symbols so much and being women, people. Sports are a way to do that. (Dianne)

> I started really working out and one time I was just wrestling with my boyfriend and I threw him. He was totally intimidated. He was like why are you working out like that. It intimidated him. That's intimidating for a man. Some women wouldn't want that factor. [they say] I wouldn't want to be stronger than my man. [And I say] well, he needs to go work out then because I'm not stopping. That's one major reason why women don't play sports. (Lolita)

Additional changes took place as the women grew older as well. The

language of the stereotype changed from "tomboy" to "homosexual." When

asked if they heard any stereotypical statements related to being African

American female athletes, two of the women answered:

> Not being in a sport that people usually associate gay people with but I hear people say that about basketball and softball, . . .
> no but when my hair cut was short I did. People, even my friend who runs for another school, had the nerve to ask me. She was like Taz, are you drifting? I thought because your hair was short you were going for a change. (Taz)

135

Other than the fact they we're gay? I've gotten those . . . from coaches and teammates. (Gabby)

In terms of any relationships, homosexual or heterosexual, African American women are stereotyped as dominant:

> Black females are strong willed in terms in relationships and [like to] be the boss in a relationship. Whereas a white female would take the stand of being an equal partner and not necessarily submissive but being more compromising. Black women don't let the man be in charge. (Princess)

They are also stereotyped as overly sexual:

> Dianne-Because we're athletes we hang around with other athletes, guy athletes. It seems like when I'm in the union and I see just ordinary students and then I see athletes, I'm going to talk to the athletes because I know them better. It's like when I talk to them it's like other girls and other people look at me like she must be doing this and she must be

> doing that. They are like why is she all in his face. People assumed that you are doing something.

> Lolita-They think that you' re having sex with them.

> Gabby-That you're a groupie or something.

> Dianne-They say that you're a groupie when you're not. I'm an athlete and I do the exact same thing that other athletes do. People start saying things about you and talking to coaches, I don't know why! It's just like oh my goodness I can't believe that people think this about me.

> Lolita-That happened to me. That happens to all, well I don't think it happens to guy athletes as it happens to the women athletes. A lot of the women athletes, primarily the African American women athletes, are associated basically with sex. Because you're an athlete you are really good in bed. You have no problem sleeping with whoever. Because you are athletic and you are healthy . . . It bothers me because I am not like that. I am the exact opposite of that, and I'm sure these ladies are as well, but because you are an athlete and primarily an African American athlete . . .

136

Overall, the women understood that the stereotyping was going to occur and they took a positive stance toward it:

> As a rule, I guess we're looking at two variables [being African American and being female]. Being a female athlete is very important because you are watched continuously. And it's just automatic that people are going to attach stereotypes. So you want to be positive and not do things that are going to upset your role . . . as an African American female athlete. (Lolita)

Intellectual Stereotypes

Attend college only because you are an athlete

Gabby shared a story about a situation that occurred when she was a senior in high school and looking for colleges. Her ACT scores were extremely high 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 that, I'm so sorry. And that was the end 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 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. They were not capable of excelling in the classroom.

137

When asked how they feel walking across campus, the African

American female student-athletes 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. And as they revealed, they had much to be recognized in the

classroom. However they believed there was a common perception, shared by

both other students and 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 female athlete --
> looking at me as this dumb athlete in who just wanted to get by. I don't

138

know how many times I went to his office to try to explain the reason why I was here. The way I looked at it, the way I want to achieve, the goals I've set, I think we should try to be positive and to have a positive impact not only on my friends but the kids that I see when I go on the road or my teammates. 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. In that regard I just looked at that as discrimination. It could have been racist too, like no black person had ever passed my class. No black person will ever pass my class. As long as he's taken a category of people, a group of people, and said that they cannot do this . . . You know I did that night when I saw that letter that my coach showed me. It made me so mad that I went to the library and studied my butt off. I mean I studied hard. It just makes me, oh you say I can't do this well then I'm going to study! It makes me want to go and do better. I am going to show you I can do this . . . and I'm going to get a good grade out of too, so there! (Lolita)

Princess has 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)

She has witnessed firsthand the stereotype that studying and doing well was for

Caucasians and playing sports was for African Americans:

139

. . . I remember in my neighborhood because I was always going to school and studying, I couldn't hang with the cool kids. I was too smart and I was too into academics. I didn't want to do the hanging out and picking up the boys thing. That's like a big thing for the other girls. They told me I was acting white just because I wanted to study. I never understood what that meant. (Princess)

Madison and Chyna also experienced the stereotype associated with

African American student-athletes and academics. It was one they have not

been able to escape no matter how hard they 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)

It doesn't matter where I go I can't shake that. Just because I'm black and an athlete I got into college, just because I can run fast. That one bugs me. It just really gets to me. (Chyna)

Gabby even heard this stereotype coming from her coach:

Gabby- [I get this look like] . . . I can't comprehend what it is to do what I do, that I can calculate or realize the realm in which I operate . . . a lot of the times I speak out but one time my coach said something to me and I looked around like do I have jack*** written on me? I understand that to row well means to win. What do you think, I just fell off the turnip truck? It's one of those feelings like what are you doing? Why don't you just ask me like I know something about what I'm doing?

Jennie-That's hard to respond like that back to a coach though, right?

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

140

steady the boat. Then to turn around the next day and act like I have no clue that's very disturbing.

Jennie-They wouldn't put you in that position

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.

Being the only African American in your classes

The women in the study were majoring in several areas were the only

African American woman or one of the few African Americans represented.

They were subject to the pressure of being a college athlete and the pressure of

being a college student. But their pressures were elevated when they were the

sole representative, or one of the few representatives, of their race in a class.

No one else could truly understand:

> 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. We aren't the top scores but we're not at the bottom. We do what we need to do.

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

141

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.

Princess-You really do.

November-Un-huh!

Kay-It took a lot for me to get through it.

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.

Kay-I can't deal with that. We have to sit together.

November-And the teachers assume that either you are the smartest kid or you're here on scholarship. It's not like you had the grades to do both. There is some other reason why you're there.

Princess-I'm the only African American in my classes.

Jennie-You're biology?

P-This was zoology, but I am a biology major. 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. They look at me like I have to be totally smart and gifted to be in there. They assume that I have to be that because I am so different than them that I have to be that smart to be in there. They think that I have to have some special quality. I see it all the time. It doesn't offend me now. I'm used to it.

142

Language as an indicator of intelligence

The student-athletes related stories of how language was used as an indicator of intelligence. In their experiences, talking "white" meant speaking grammatically correct. Whereas "talking black" meant speaking with less than perfect English and typically in slang. They were bothered by the fact that when an African American person spoke with correct grammar, they were labeled as "trying to act white." The women believed this degraded their intellect:

> Dianne-Just be yourself. If you have a different personality then be different. So what? Don't try to be something that you're not. Don't be proper if you're not really proper, or whatever they say is proper. I hate when people say that she's not a black girl just because she talks grammatically correct. Why is it that you have to sound "white?" I hate that.

> Gabby-What does that mean? Only white people speak exact English?

> Dianne-That bothers me because my aunt is from California and she talks really grammatically correct and when I was younger I used to talk a little slang, what they call ebonics now. They have a name for everything. She used to tell me you'll never meet a guy talking like that. You need to be more proper. You need to talk correct English. Who are you to say what correct English is? People look at you differently just from the way you talk.

Babeahgirl questioned what "sounding black" or "sounding white" even meant:

> This girl told me once that I talk more black than most black people she knows. What establishes what is black talk and what is white talk? I went into this ghetto rendition. I can jump from being very intellectual and talking on a very high level to being like yo, what up I'm just hanging with my friends. Some things just blow your mind. What is going on in your head? What establishes what is white and what is black? (Babeahgirl)

Language is a way people are identified, categorized, and stereotyped. In American society, people who speak in slang or in a non-standard dialect are

143

assumed to be less intelligent than those who do not. The student-athletes

understood the difference between the way one would speak in a job interview

and the way one speaks when sitting around the dorm on a Friday night:

> I think there's a place for the individual dialects because that's part of
> what defines you. Then you also have to look at, as you are speaking of
> job type situations, you have to realize that you are in a different type of
> environment. As you move from environment to environment, you have
> to recognize I know when it's cold weather I have to where a coat. It's
> the same type of theory. I know when it is hot I can wear shorts. (Gabby)

The women did not identify that situation as a racial stereotype, but they saw

racial stereotypes in other situations they have found themselves in on campus:

> . . . When you come to X, it's almost like you have to make choice.
> How are you going to define yourself? Either you're going to define
> yourself as black, either I am inner city African American, suburban
> African American, you have got to make the choice that day. It's with the
> same determination that you pick your major. They don't expect even
> you to change it. If you do, there's almost the punishment to it. There's
> some backlash on that. (Gabby)

Dianne agreed, "Yes, she's trying to hard. She's trying to be something that

she's not." (Dianne) Another example was given as Lolita remembered when

she first came to campus and met the track staff:

> I think a lot of times students come in with that attitude. This is what they
> expect me to be or how I should talk. When I speak properly it's taken
> out of context and catches them off guard. When I first came here, I
> walked into the office and they had no idea who I was. I didn't come on a
> visit here. I took my five other places and it was just by a fluke, by the
> grace of God that I ended up here. I walked into the office after having
> only spoken on the phone with them before. And they looked at me like I
> was completely strange. My coach was like hi can I help you. I was like
> yeah my name is Lolita. I'm a new member of the track team. They were
> like whatever. They were all looking at me. I said I'm Lolita. I'm from
> Canada. Then they said oh, we thought you were white. We are so
> sorry. So when I got on the team, everyone was like oh, we thought you
> were white. I opened my mouth and they were like oh, she is! It was a
> rough first year. I was even a little bit prejudice at first. (Lolita)

144

The women found it interesting how "talking black" was evolving currently to becoming more accepted among people their age and younger. "Talking black" is now the way to talk and be accepted by your peers or teenagers:

> I used to live with a girl from the Middle East. One of her friends was from India. I used to get sickened, you know how we said that people try to speak out of themselves? Something other than what they are? When people try to sound a certain way, out of character, I am immediately disgusted. Whether it be someone white trying to sound Chinese or someone white trying to sound black, most things come in terms of your either white or black you either talk like you're white or you're black. Very rarely do see a black person trying to imitate the Chinese person for their patterns of speech. The in thing now is the black style of language. You'll hear so many different people say the same phrase and it's almost to the point where it is disgusting. (Gabby)

Take for example the conversation that began when Lolita brought up a popular slang term used by other students their age, both black and white:

> Lolita-Why do they have to be so ghetto?

> Gabby-I hate ghetto. I hate ghetto this and ghetto that.

> Dianne-You act so ghetto. What is that?

> Jennie-The school where I coach is predominantly white and the kids are always talking about being ghetto and they're just saying it because that is what everybody says.

> Gabby-They got cable and they see BET and they're talking about you so ghetto. And they think it's cute . . .

> Jennie-And if you think about what it means . . .
> Gabby-Nobody wanna be ghetto, nobody wants to be from the ghetto.

> Lolita-if you think about where the word ghetto originated from which was a certain area that had to do with the Jewish people and their community. You would not associate it with the hood or the black community.

145

Athletic Stereotypes

The last sub-division of the stereotype theme has to do with how African American female athletes are labeled as being better at certain sports than others. In addition to being labeled as having more ability at certain sports, the African American women are exposed to assumptions made that based on their race and gender they participate in only those sports. Through their travels and experiences, the women in this study related the stereotype that African American women play basketball and track. The women in the study who break that stereotype shared the difficulties they have encountered. The women also explained the phenomenon that African American females are assumed to be superior in certain aspects of sports and Caucasian women in other aspects of sports.

The basketball and track assumption

▣	Track-89
■	Basketball-56
□	Volleyball-25
□	Tennis-16
■	Soccer-13
▣	Softball-6
■	Field Hockey-6
□	Swimming-5
■	Gymnastics-4
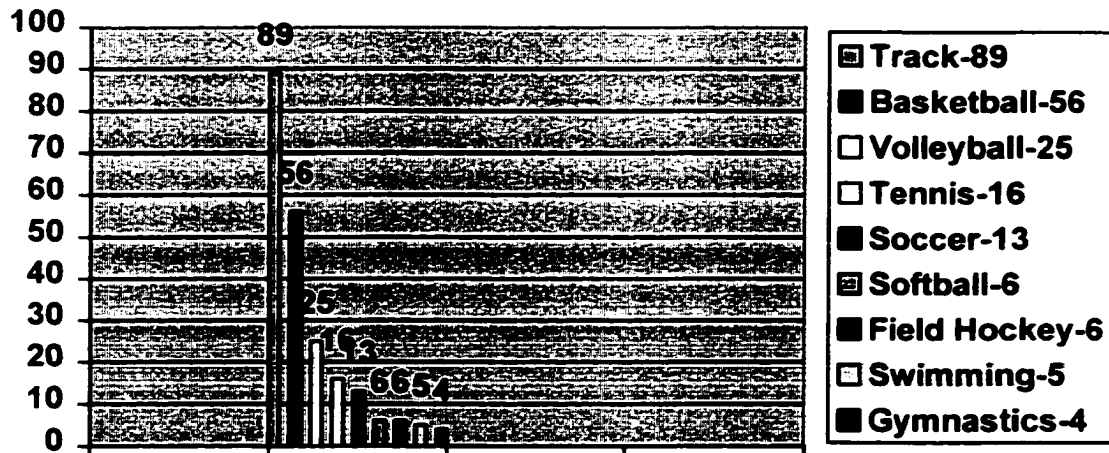
Table 4: Frequency of mentioning sports in interview transcripts

Above is a table that displays the frequency with which different sports were mentioned during the interview process (See Table 4). As Table 4 demonstrates, track and basketball are clearly most prevalent. The assumption that African American women are best suited to play basketball and participate in track probably has several origination points. Long has the belief been held that the African American body type provided for extraordinary jumping ability, thus the popular phrase "white men can't jump." It has also long been believed that African Americans possessed more fast-twitch than slow-twitch muscles, which allowed for them to run fast. Some will recall the infamous Jimmy the Greek statement made on an NFL broadcast in the 1970s that explained the

147

success of African Americans in athletics as a result of the breeding of their

race by slave owners. While none of these theories checks out with

physiologists, the "jumping high" and "running fast" beliefs about African

American women have led to their stereotypical prowess in basketball and track

and field. The four women who completed the grounded survey were unified in

their strong agreement that a stereotype exists that African American women

are supposed to play certain sports. They were unanimous in identifying these

sports as basketball and track:

> But a lot of people were like black girl. . . you should play basketball.
> But I didn't like it. (Lolita)

> The first thing freshman year people say y'all going to be ballin' today . . .
> No, but that's all right. They assume that I play basketball. People
> automatically assume that I was on this team. They assume that I was a
> dominant player. (Gabby)

> Okay there's another black girl here she must be an athlete. She must
> be a track runner. (Dianne)

> I know with basketball everyone asks me if I play basketball because I
> am tall. (Babeahgirl)

> I get you must run track because your legs are long. I can't run a lick.
> (Vanessa)

> We go out and people think we're a basketball team but we're not tall.
> (Chyna)

Princess elaborated on her experience with this stereotype:

> Being an African American athlete people tend to associate you with a
> certain sport. If they know you're an athlete . . .I know on the cross
> country I was the only African American on the team last year. People
> just walk up to you and ask why you're on the team. I would say I'm a
> cross country and track runner and they would be like well, that explains
> it. It was like I was supposed to be running just track or playing

basketball. If you say you're an athlete you have to be associated with basketball or track. (Princess)

Within the sport of track and field, the stereotype subdivides. African

Americans are associated with the sport of track in general, but with the sprint

events specifically. Caucasians are associated with the distance events:

> On track the cross-country girls are really almost considered another team and they're all white. The outdoor track girls are predominantly black and they won't even know our names. We don't even know their names either. I think that's kind of messed up because we're all one team. (Madison)

November, Princess, and Essence explain the subdivision in more detail:

> November- You don't see too many blacks running long distances. Like at the Olympics you see white people running the mile and black people running the 100 and relays. It's just what you traditionally see.

> Princess- It's crazy like competing against certain races and only certain races are supposed to win certain events.

> Jennie-What events would those be?

> November-All the sprints.

> Princess-The 800 up is for white girls.

> November-The 800 wasn't even considered for black people in high school. It was the 400 and down and the relays.

> Princess-Now the 800 is like half and half.

> Essence-Once you go into that mile range, no way!

> Princess-Even at conference in the 3000 it is all white, not one black person in I don't know how many. There were only two black people in the cross-country conference meet last year. Only two black people in the whole race. One of my teammate's moms was screaming for me when I was running. I said to the girl after that I heard her mom but that I had never met her so how did she know who I was. She was like shut up, Princess, you are the only black person on the team!

149

Living outside the stereotype

The women who participated in sports other than basketball and track and field were constantly trying to prove that they belong and have frequently found themselves being the only African American on the team. This can be a difficult and trying position. Princess ran cross–country as well as track so she has seen the stereotype from both sides. Vanessa played volleyball, Gabby rowed for the crew team, and Babeahgirl was on the fencing team:

> People make fun of you if you're black and try to play a white sport. Ohhh you are trying to play a white people's sport! . . . I go out there and try to play these sports. I'm the only black girl out there and it's going to be a little uncomfortable for me at that age. Just because you don't know anything else. As I get older I don't mind being on a team that's all another group because I'm a little more knowledgeable of what's going on. When you're little it has to be scary. You're looking around and nobody looks like you, especially if you don't have strong people telling you, stressing the issues of racism. If they don't tell you about the other races, you don't know. You just know that she's different and I don't know if I want to be on this team. (Princess)

> I had a big problem my sophomore year because I was the only black girl on the team. My friend on the crew team helped me out and let me make friends. It was really hard but when I started to think about it. I had never thought about it before because I went to a predominantly white high school and it was never an issue before until I started to think about it that I was the only black girl on my high school team, on my club team. (Vanessa)

> On track we have both black and white girls, but speaking for my friend on the crew team, the only black girl on the crew team. She feels there's some isolation there and some of the girls even voiced it to her saying I'm not used to working out with a black girl or I'm not comfortable around you. At least they're honest, but that shouldn't even be a situation. (Taz)

> With fencing I haven't experienced any kind of racial tension but I have noticed that I am the only person of any kind of color on our team. Everyone else is white . . . I think sometimes being the only person of

color on a team you wish they could know what you're experiencing or going through. Why you do what you do. If you have someone there who is more like you, I mean I draw close to all of the people on your team, but there just isn't that connection. Even if you walk in a room with a thousand people in it you automatically draw towards someone who is similar to you in some way. No difference in racial tension here or anything but you can notice a difference on the team. (Babeahgirl)

When the women leave campus for road trips, they were exposed to the opinions and ideas of people outside their campus. Lolita and Dianne talked about traveling to other schools in their conference, some of which were located in more rural areas, for track meets and how people reacted to seeing a large group of predominantly African American women walk into a restaurant or hotel:

Sometimes you can use stereotypes to your advantage. We get all kinds of stuff when we travel. The white athletes probably wouldn't get it. When you are black you're automatically associated with sports, you're automatically assumed to be big time. We get whatever we want. (Lolita)

When we go to restaurants, never so many black people in one place. We have to be a team. We have to be a track team. And people will ask us or think where are they from they have to be a team or gang or something. What game did you just come from? Did you win? Sometimes we are in our sweats, sometimes we are in our regular clothes. But just because we are the group you know that we are some kind of organization. But any group of black people that walk into that restaurant, people will ask what do you play. What game did you just get finished with? They just assume that you are an athlete. It's just because of your skin color and because you are in their city. If you were in the middle of [a Midwestern town] they would definitely assume that you are an athlete because why else would you be there. (Dianne)

For Gabby, the scenario was quite a bit different:

Walk into a restaurant and I am in a different situation. Where she is coming with an entourage of people who are similar to her, I am coming by myself with the group of people who are different than me. I am going in as the only black person. It is interesting because I'll go and find the quickest thing and order. They will let somebody else answer. I do not recall ever being asked what we did. Because we have like 40 or 45 huge girls 5'9" and some of them would be probably wearing sweats and

151

they would be like they can't be a basketball team because there is only one black person but there's too many of them. I wonder what they are. I know they're something. (Gabby)

Assumption of superiority

When African American women participate it sports, whether it be basketball and track or any others, assumptions are made about their abilities. All four women who completed the grounded survey strongly agreed that people both assume that they are athletes and that they are talented athletes because they are African American. The student-athletes in the study shared examples of how they have felt when they compete against Caucasian athletes and the pressures their coaches have put on them and they have put on themselves to be superior. Gabby explained how she approached competition against an African American athlete and a Caucasian athlete:

> Usually when I was doing another sport if the person was another black person I would make a certain assumptions or associations that I better approach it this way. I better bring a little more athleticism to the situation and a little the more cunning, but if I were going up against the white person a white female opponent, well I know she probably has the standard skills, she has the basic fundamentals. But I'm just going to win. I'll go through her and move onto the next thing. . . (Gabby)

According to Gabby, African Americans athletes were assumed to be more athletic and Caucasian athletes were assumed to have more training and be more fundamentally sound. Kay was able to relate to Gabby's beliefs and has experienced a similar situation in her basketball career. When asked if she believed there were any assumptions made based on race in the ability of teams and athletes, she answered:

152

I think so in basketball. We'd play games in high school and even though our school was not predominantly black, our team was. There might have been one white girl. And our team is one of the best in the area so we're automatically assumed to win the game. We'll play against white teams and we'll get fouled and the refs won't call it. We'd say something to the refs and they'd say come on stop crying, you're going to win anyway. You supposed to play the game the way to supposed to be played regardless of who's the best team. If it's going to be a blowout game then it's going to be a blowout game. You can't sit here and make it the way you want it to be because it's white girls against a black team. You don't want the black girls to beat up on the white girls. They wanted the score to seem fair. I don't think that's fair but I know that all through high school it was always like that. You're going to win anyway so why worry about what the score is. Take your foul and go on. That's just the way it's always been. (Kay)

Essence and Princess picked up on Kay's frustration from being treated

differently by the referees and related what happened to them during high

school. At one point in their state, all of the high schools competed in one state

track meet. The best athletes from both the public and private schools came

together for the state finals:

Essence-In my high school we went to states and Princess and I competed against each other. The public schools were all black.

Princess-And they kicked us out!

Essence-We went to the state meet and the state meet was predominantly white where we went. It was all of the schools combined, the Catholic schools and everybody. The public schools in New York would go up to the state meet and wipe everybody out. Not one white school would win. So what they did was separate the states. So they'd have their white thing and the black people would have their thing.

Jennie-They separated it public/private?

Essence-Yeah. We took everything. It was a landslide like 180 points versus 10. We were that good. I understand where they are coming from but they didn't have to separate us. They should have done it a different way. That doesn't happen in college. Everyone is on the track. It's not even about color

153

The student-athletes have been exposed to such examples of unfair treatment that they were determined to win no matter what the situation and no matter how the odds were stacked against them.

The track athletes explained a phenomenon that has evolved out of examples like the ones Kay, Essence, and Princess shared. These women elaborated on how, as an African American female runner, you "never get beaten by a white girl."

Lolita-Track is probably the worst sport for that. You better pull a hamstring before you let a white person beat you. You do not let a white girl beat you.

Jennie-Where does that come from? Who says that?

Dianne-It's the Bible!

Gabby-Track chapter 7, verse 12.

Lolita-Do not let a white person beat you.

Gabby-I've had coaches tell me that.

Lolita-Actually I think I've heard it more here in America although I experienced it in Canada. You know if a white person beats you, they can be good. But honestly, you just don't do it! You go and you stay in your distance running but don't even think about stepping up into sprints.

Gabby-Don't even get near the fastest woman thing.

Lolita-You will never live it down. Then go to the Olympics and you look on TV and the finals are all black. Even the 800 now is black girls. That's all you see--black people after black people and black people. You just automatically assume that white people can't run but they can those German girls they just do. A good 400 is about 54 or 53 and they are running 49. They are rolling. In the 100 they are running like 10.7 or 10.8. And the first thing you say is?

154

Gabby-'Roids! You will even go as far as look things up on the Internet to prove it to yourself, the settle it in your mind that they had to take drugs to win. The coaches would tell me all the time don't let that white girl beat you. They know that that is going to motivate you. They know that there is that factor and they milk it.

Dianne-They play on your emotions. Tell you that the white people have been oppressing you and that you need to win that this is your chance to get back.

Gabby-Even though you don't know none of these girls, it's like she is oppressing me.

Lolita-Yeah, but I'm from England coach!

The same type of thing happened in other sports as well. Gabby and Kay

remembered back to high school basketball:

The funny thing is that during basketball tournaments, we'd be literally sitting there and figuring out the person we'd have to guard. And in basketball we hated that person. I'd always have to guard the white girl and she'd always be some. . . type of superstar. I'd always be like please don't let me get her and I'd always get her. It would be so typical for my coach to be like you have to guard her. And you start setting up this thing in your mind that she's a white girl and you have to put her down. (Gabby)

In basketball we had an all black team and we'd go play in different Christmas tournaments. Our coach didn't take us losing to no white teams. We don't do that. It stuck in my head. You could lose, just don't lose to a white team. (Kay)

Much of the pressure put on the African American women came from their

coaches. Princess found that pressure was put on the Caucasian women as

well. They should win events that were stereotypically "white" and win in sports

that were known as "white people's sports":

It's interesting that she [Kay] said that about the coach. I find that it's not the athletes. It's the coaches. You come in and your coach will tell you that you got walked down by that white girl. It was the same in cross-

country. I would go by and I would here them saying you let that black girl beat you? (Princess)

Lolita tried to explain why racial competition occurs in athletics. She grew up in

another country and was able to examine what happens in America from a

different perspective than the other women:

> I think this lashing out and having to beat the white person is not anywhere else like it is in athletics. Out of all of the places I've been in the world, and I've been a lot of places . . .if you want a perfect example of people lashing out against each other it is in sports. Because you don't want to let a white girl beat you because she's white. If you ask me why I can't answer. It is just because. (Lolita)

The other women explained how they became acquainted with the "don't get

beaten by a white girl" sentiment:

> Dianne-Everything you've heard about your history.

> Essence-You hear this sometimes and it happened to me my freshman year at the conference meet. I got pushed off the track. The comment was made by someone was that you not only got pushed off the track, you got pushed off the track by a white girl. It's that little thing that gets thrown in there. And if you get walked by them, it's like damn!

> November-You let a white girl walk you down! OHHH!

> Essence-That happened to one of our teammates Monica. She got beat by this white girl. Not only did she get beat, but this white girl came on the track and waxed her. This white girl beat you and you're supposed to be dominant?

Essence stated that she had a misconception of the talent level of other

athletes when she came to college. Based on the attitude that it was an insult

to let a white girl beat her, she thought white girls were not talented:

> I had that attitude that white girls were slow and then I came up here and they were punkin' me, pushing me off the track. It's not the color of their skin. They can really compete. (Essence)

156

<u>Socialization:</u>

"How does socialization process differ for African American women? How does this affect sport participation patterns?"

Socialization is the process of learning and developing as a part of a society. Children are socialized through the influence of other people who teach them what it means to be a member of society. They are socialized through their environment or surroundings. And, institutional or societal forces socialize them. The women in the study have felt the influence of parents, siblings, peers, teachers, and coaches as they have been socialized to American society and sport. They have also been affected by the neighborhoods, cities, and states into which they were born or lived as they grew up. And lastly, the women have and continue to experience racism in American society in a way that influences their socialization.

Socialization Agents

Parents

The participants in the study identified both their mothers and fathers as powerful socialization influences in their athletic careers. In fact, when asked to name the most influential person in them becoming involved and staying involved in sports, half of the women responded with either their mother, their father or some combination of the two. All of the women indicated their parents had played some role in their sport involvement, but the following women credited their parents as the central figure in their sport participation.

157

Dianne, Princess, and Vanessa strongly believed that their fathers served as their primary socialization influence. Their fathers performed a variety of tasks that led their daughters to play sports, including teaching them how to play, signing them up for teams, and even serving as their coach. The women demonstrated their love for their fathers and their appreciation for the time, support, and admiration their fathers gave them:

> . . . My dad . . . was always the one who played sports. I always followed him. I was like daddy's little girl. He took me everywhere. I just loved being around him and he encouraged me to play. He supported me. All through high school he came to every practice. He was so supportive. He still supports my team to this day. . (Dianne)

> For me it would be my dad. I was the youngest and he never let me feel like I couldn't be up with my brothers and sister. He always kept pushing me and telling me I could be good some day. He kept pushing me and he's been my number one fan from day one. (Princess)

> I'd have to say my dad was important because my mom, well she does aerobics now and that's the extent of her physical activity. My dad was the main sports figure in my life. He was always watching sports on TV so if I wanted to hang out with my dad then that's what I did too. (Vanessa)

The women who identified their mothers as the central influence in their sport involvement did so with the same type of appreciation and love the other women showed for their fathers. Gabby's mom wanted her to be that "pink and purple" type of little girl with a dress on and bows in her hair. But Gabby's mom realized after arriving one too many times to pick her up at school and finding that her "stockings were torn, [her] pretty sweater was all ripped, and [her] hair . . .everywhere" (Gabby) that Gabby was going to be an athlete:

> My mom is not a big fan sports, but she's very big on her only daughter being an individual . . . she signed me up to play on team sports. So I

158

have to credit her because she's the one who got over the expectations that she had and said you know what this is something that she wants to do . . .So I wouldn't say that she was my athletic poster woman, but I'll say that she did a lot and took a little bit of the chance there and let me go on my own and develop into the person that I am today. I give her credit for getting me started in sports. It she wouldn't have been in my life, I don't doubt that I would have gotten involved . . . (Gabby)

Kay's mother was just the opposite of Gabby's, but had the same type of influence on her daughter. When asked who the most influential person was for her becoming involved in sports, Kay answered:

It would have to be my mother. I was a tomboy too. Maybe that's why nobody on my block liked me because I didn't do what they did. I just didn't like it. We'd climb trees and jump fences and play cops and robbers with sticks. I didn't like to do the so-called girl things. My mom always told me that was alright, that I didn't have to do that. That kept me going. I did it because she told me I could. (Kay)

November identified both of her parents as the central figures in the inception of her athletic career. Her father influenced her participation with his first-hand experience in sports and her mother influenced her with positive support:

I guess I could say for me it was my father. My father played football and

basketball in college. He was always the one encouraging us in sports, both me and my sister. No matter if I lost a race he would always be the one encouraging me; telling me that I did my best. He would always come out there and cheer for me even if I were dead last. It was my father, well my mother too, but she never played sports. . . She would always say well you did your best, the typical mother. (November)

Siblings

The guidance given to the women in the study by their siblings was not as prevalent as the parental guidance the women experienced. Only two of the

159

women mentioned the influence of their siblings on their sport participation decisions. One of those women, November, identified her parents as the primary influences in her life, but she also talked quite a bit about how her sister's involvement in sports led to her involvement. Babeahgirl attributed her interest in sport to her exposure to athletics as aided by her two brothers.

November remembered going to watch her older sister run track and being frightened to fill in when one of the other girls on the team became sick. November was only six years old and a little intimidated by the situation. She used to practice running relays with her sister in front of their house. However, November viewed actually running in a meet as a completely different challenge. November's desire to emulate her sister led her to be in attendance at that track meet, which led her to participate that day. She and her sister "came in first that race and ever since then I've been running." (November)

In Babeahgirl's case, she attributed her involvement in sports more directly to her brothers. Her brothers were two and three years older than her, so their closeness in age led to their playing and spending a good deal of time together growing up. She remembered herself as the tag-along little sister in a group of boys who did not necessarily want her around. They would have left Babeahgirl behind had she not fought to be included:

> One of the giant factors in my life was that I grew up with two older brothers . . .and my whole entire childhood. . . I had to fight for my position and was always competitive even going out and riding your bikes I was always the one saying hey wait up for me and following them. This forced me to be competitive and to persevere. I was very involved in sports and I was always the only girl. Pretty much all I hung out with was boys when I was growing up and I guess if it weren't for

having two older bothers . . . they kind of instilled competitiveness in me! (Babeahgirl)

She understood what an important role they played in her developing a desire to play sports and a desire to succeed in sports. The competitiveness and perseverance she learned from spending time with her brothers remained with her as a college student-athlete.

Peers

A few of the women addressed how their friends and peers had influenced their decision to become involved in sport, and helped them continue to be involved. Lolita was the only woman who identified her friends as a factor in her initial sport participation. November remembered how her roommate at X University encouraged her to try out for the track team when November had come to school without a definite plan to participate in sports. And lastly, Gabby explained how a friendship she developed when she first began rowing helped to keep her on the team.

Lolita did not believe that anyone in her family played a significant role in her becoming involved in athletics. She recalled that in her first sport experience she did not show any natural talent. She was playing softball at age ten:

> I just remember that I sucked! I was really really bad. But I thought I was really really good. Maybe that's why my parents never came to see me! (Lolita)

161

Although her parents did not come to see her and she did not experience a great deal of success at first, Lolita continued to play because for her "it was a way that [she] could hang out with friends, the few people, run around get all [her] energy out" (Lolita).

November chose to attend X University without having received a scholarship in any sport. She thought she needed a break from the competition. Instead she found that not participating after playing sports from the time she was six years old left her bored and unchallenged:

> I did track when I was six. I played basketball from fourth-grade all the way through high school. I played volleyball from seventh grade all the way through high school. For me because I played sports from the time I was very young, going into college I had a scholarship but I thought I had played for so long that I didn't want to anymore. I didn't want to go into college playing sports. Once I got there I was sitting around and I had all of this free time. I missed the structured scheduled because instead of going practice I just went home and sat. So instead of sitting around, I would go to aerobics trying to work out. (November)

After a short time she grew tired of aerobics and the alternative of sitting around and her roommate approached her about running track: "My roommate runs track in she tried to talk me into it. I knew I could do it. So I ended up going out and running (November). November's roommate was instrumental in her becoming a college student-athlete.

Gabby shared a similar experience to November in that she came to college as a student only. Gabby had some scholarship offers to other schools, but chose X University instead. She knew she wanted to participate, but she was not sure how that would work out for her when she began school her first year. Luckily for Gabby, X University had a rowing club. Gabby had been

exposed to crew growing up in Canada and had always been interested in the sport. She joined the club and experienced success immediately. Her sophomore year, crew became a varsity sport and Gabby was able to realize her dream of being a college athlete.

Gabby was excited to be a part of the team, but experienced some difficulties being the only African American woman. She was having trouble fitting in with the other women on the team:

> I liked the coach. I found a friend because I really didn't know anybody. She was another black girl and we just got along very well. We had a lot of fun and she was older than I was. We would get a kick out of it because we would always be paired up together. She just made it a lot of fun and that's what kept me coming. I liked being on the water too versus being indoors and in that part of the season you are always outside. It was a lot of fun and my friend made it fun. We were always partners and were always in the middle of the boat because that's where the strongest rowers are so the boat doesn't curve one way or the other way. We balanced each other out. We were always cracking up and laughing. It was pretty good. (Gabby)

The friendship Gabby developed made being a part of the crew team more enjoyable and influenced her decision to continue rowing for three years.

Teachers/Coaches

Teachers and coaches have proven to be influential in the sport participation patterns of the women in the study. Many of the women remembered a physical education teacher or a coach from elementary or middle school playing an important role in their initial sport experiences. The teachers and coaches were also instrumental in the encouragement that kept the women involved. Some of the women remained in contact with those

163

teachers and coaches and continued to appreciate their influence many years later.

Lolita and Chyna both recalled their physical education teachers from middle school spotting their talent. Both women welcomed the praise and attention received from the teachers as a result of this athletic ability. Lolita enjoyed that attention to her talents that she was not receiving from any other source. When first asked to name the person who was most involved with her athletics, Lolita responded:

> Nobody. Absolutely nobody. People encouraged me, saying you know what your good your good at this or your good at that. You know you could probably not be that good, but they're just trying to give you a compliment. That gets you going. You know I think it all started with compliments. (Lolita)

As Lolita devoted more thought to the question, she focused on her teacher and track coach from middle school:

> I remember my sixth-grade teacher. We used to have the Canadian fitness tests. There was a 60-meter dash and he thought I was the best. Everyone's goal was I want to beat Lolita. So after that I got all the praise. It had nothing to do with me wanting to be the best. I just wanted the attention. If I had to pick somebody, it would probably be my teacher. . . I loved all the attention and I loved all the praise. But I would say it was my teacher. (Lolita)

While Chyna identified the most influential aspect of her becoming and staying involved in sport as an internal drive to succeed, Chyna did echo Lolita's desire to earn her coach's attention. Chyna admitted that she did not take track as seriously as she could have until she saw her teammates succeeding: "I saw. . . how much more the coach pushed them and gave them more attention and I

wanted that" (Chyna). Chyna confessed that although she has aged several years from that time she "still like[s] the attention of [her] coach." (Chyna)

Taz also referred to a middle school physical education teacher and track coach as her primary athletic influence. Unlike Lolita, Taz had more input from her family on her sport participation. But, her seventh grade teacher still earned the label of most influential. It was his challenge that motivated her to try running track and his mentoring that kept her running:

> Taz-In middle school, I think seventh grade, I was playing flag football for gym class and the first time I got the ball I ran for a touchdown. The teacher was the track coach at the time and he said you gotta come out and run. I was like why, I did no type of exercise other than gym class. But he was like just come out and see if you like it and if you don't you won't have to bother again. So I did it thinking I'd shut him up. So I went and I've been running even since then. If he wouldn't have challenged me I would have done nothing.

> Jennie-Is he still in your life at all?

> Taz-Oh yeah.

As Essence remembered her beginnings in track, she did not do so with a great deal of pride. Her attitude toward hard work and dedication was lacking as a young girl and if it were not for the stance of her club coach, she might not have accomplished all that she has in her career. Much like Taz, she needed a challenge. Essence related the "transforming" experience she had as a runner thanks to her coach:

> I came on the team and I was lazy. I didn't really like doing the workouts. But I liked the team atmosphere. I liked all of that. He gave my mother an ultimatum one day. I remember we were leaving and walking out of the building and he said, you know if your daughter doesn't pick it up with the exercises and put a little bit more energy into it then we're going to have to cut her. I came back the next week and ever since then I was all

into the workouts. After a while he kept pushing me, but it really wasn't overbearing. I started getting praise from other people. (Essence)

The final story of a coach's influence belonged to Gabby. She painted a picture of her first day of practice with the crew team. Catching the coach's eye on this particular day changed the course of her college career. Gabby responded to an announcement on campus inviting all women interested in joining the rowing club to the boathouse. At the time, the club team was extremely talented gearing up for their ascension to varsity status the following season:

> I remember the coach at the time. His name was Bill. He was asking us all if we were interested. He got some information from us and then asked us to get on the machines. I did pretty well on the machine. That day the TV station was they're doing a little spot on rowing at State. It so happened that all of us that came that day got on television. The rest of the team hated us. I didn't even know we were going to be on TV, but when we came down for the next day they had on the chalkboard who in the h*** are those girls. I ended up being the only one who continuously came. The coach ended up erasing the chalkboard and writing 'well, one of them is really good and she's going to stay'. He wanted me to race and I'd only been on the machine a week and he wanted me to race the next week. He was going to put me out there. It was interesting. It was pretty interesting. (Gabby)

Environment

Neighborhood

The student-athletes in the study hailed from neighborhoods as different as the Bronx in New York City to suburban Denver, Colorado. Despite the differences found in those neighborhoods, all of the women agreed that the surroundings in which one grows up have a tremendous effect on the sport choices young athletes make. The women described what type of sports they

saw being played outside their homes and what types of courts, fields, and

other athletic spaces were available to them near where they lived. They also

described how sport choices are affected by the surroundings of a person, not

to mention a person's conceptions of what people play which sports.

The student-athletes from major metropolitan areas discussed what

athletic venues they had access to around their neighborhoods:

> What do you see in the inner cities, basketball and track. You don't see
> any volleyball or swimming pools. You don't see golf courses. (Princess)

> There aren't a lot of tracks where I'm from just basketball courts,
> everywhere. . . You see basketball courts all around the hood. You
> may see a track, but it doesn't take much to run. You can run anywhere.
> But as far as having late night tennis, we didn't do that . . . What led me
> to basketball? I think it was just more opportunities. (Kay)

> You won't see a lot of girls play tennis or ice-skating. Did you guys ever
> see anyone ice-skating? We are supposed to drive you all the way in the
> suburbs to go skate somewhere. (November)

They saw a difference when they looked at the neighborhood that surrounded

their university:

> Kay- Right over here they would turn out the basketball lights but they
> would have the hockey lights on 24 hours. They kept those lights on
> over there for like two years so that the kids could come out and play.
> But they didn't have the lights on the basketball courts and somebody
> had to say something. That's messed up.

> November-The tennis courts were lit too.

Growing up in Canada, Gabby recalled what she was exposed to as a

young child and how it differed from the women from large American cities:

> Gabby-My first exposure was living in Canada. We lived there off and on
> for half a year at a time from when I was 6 months to when I was in third
> grade. . . You have to work with what you got. Let's go play tennis.
> Tennis courts are everywhere.

Jennie-And you saw people row?

Gabby-Yes. Rowing is pretty big in Canada and I remember seeing a report on television when I was very young and I thought it was very interesting. I like water sports, but I chose that one for some odd reason. I think it's just because I remember it from when I was little.

Kay agreed with Gabby's analysis of why she chose crew. Like Gabby, Kay made her decision to play basketball based on what she was exposed to as a young girl. Lacrosse and field hockey were not even options, not to mention crew:

It's how you grew up. Some of these sports here, like what about lacrosse? We didn't even have a lacrosse team in high school. I didn't even know what lacrosse was until I got to college. Field hockey? We didn't do that and I'm sure those girls had to play in high school to get to the point to do it in college. I was like what is that. That's like a new sport. I think it's your environment. (Kay)

November echoed Kay's reference to environment:

I think it is what is accessible to you and who is there to motivate you. Otherwise you aren't to be doing it. That's what I think. (November)

Economic

The second component of how one's environment is an agent of socialization is a financial one. The women in the study expressed how the physical environment of the surrounding neighborhood influences how people become acquainted with sport and society, and they elaborated on how the economic environment a person grows up in plays a role as well. It is impossible to separate the two components. People tend to live in neighborhoods with others of similar socioeconomic status. Neighborhoods with less money will frequently have fewer and less expensive sport venues

168

while neighborhoods with a higher median income level will have more elaborate athletic facilities.

To play sports such as golf and tennis and to participate in swimming, a child needs access to golf courses, tennis courts, and swimming pools. Access has variant definitions. Among those definitions are being able to reach the facilities, being able to afford to use the facilities, and needing someone to teach or coach. All of these forms of access require money:

> You have to pay money and these inner city kids don't have any money. (Kay)

> I don't have the money. . . Some people say well you can do it but other people say well we don't have the money. (November)

Kay had no trouble playing basketball in her neighborhood and it cost nothing to go down the street and shoot at any of a number of baskets. And November ran in the street in front of her house with her sister using a twig as a relay baton. This was how these two women's financial environments influenced their choice of sports.

Taz and Vanessa had experiences that differed quite a bit from many of their peers. Taz grew up in a smaller town in New Jersey and Vanessa grew up in Colorado Springs. Neither of their families had any trouble providing their daughters with the necessary training and equipment necessary to play sports. Taz participated in field hockey, soccer as well as her college sport of track. Vanessa played basketball and soccer before she decided to focus her efforts on volleyball and join an elite club program.

While Taz and Vanessa were thankful for the opportunities they were afforded growing up, they realized that not all children are as fortunate. Taz remembered when she played field hockey and soccer:

> When I asked my girlfriends why they didn't play it was because they couldn't buy a hockey stick or cleats. I don't think people are really that bad off but the parents are afraid to lay out $60 or $100 max to have their daughter step out of her comfort zone to play that sport and then not like it. My mom, when it came to athletics, she was willing to get you anything you needed for that sport. She would say you buy your own school clothes, but for athletics she would buy me anything. I don't know if that was a color issue or just the way she was raised. (Taz)

Vanessa elaborated on the specifics of her club volleyball experience:

> It's all about dues that you pay. My parents paid $2500 in dues each year just for me to play on that team. Then we went to Vegas, California, junior Olympics, and another qualifier. Those were each like another $800. That doesn't include your travel or food. If you don't have $5000 per year just for volleyball then you are going to play for a lesser club. That club is not as well known and makes it harder for you to get seen by colleges. Your level of training is going to go down. (Vanessa)

Vanessa appreciated the chance she had to play club and the scholarship to play volleyball in college she earned as a result, but she understood the problems the club system created and perpetuated:

> I never really saw any of the other clubs because they wouldn't go to the same tournaments that we would because the entry fees for the tournaments we went to were high. I never saw their level of training or anything. Now I go back and look at them though and I see athletes who could be really good volleyball players and just don't have the money to do it. They go and play basketball or something that's more accessible. It's kind of sad that good athletes are being passed up because they don't have enough money to play. (Vanessa)

Racism

Racism has affected the women from an early age, and it continued to affect them as college students. In the final socialization section, they shared

experiences from their childhood or their first exposure to racism. They also

shared experiences they have had since enrolling in X University. Both the past

and present incidents spoke to the racial climate in which these women lived

and how that affects the socialization process.

Childhood Experiences

Taz and Gabby both recalled the first time they remember being single

out because they were African American. Both instances involved a racial slur

on the part of a classmate and a subsequent lesson in life for both women. Taz

learned from her father what the name meant and why it was degrading.

Gabby knew the name her classmate called her was bad, but she did not get a

chance to inform him before her teacher completed that task for her.

> My first experience [with racism] was when I was in 4th grade and I went
> to an all-white school. We lived in the country and were the only black
> family. I was mad at my best friend and we got into an argument and
> she called me n*****. I didn't think anything of it and I came home and
> said to my dad, "Brandy called me a n***** today." He went ballistic and
> here I'm thinking oh, it's bad. And I knew it was a bad word, but I didn't
> know how bad it was. So he explained it to me and told me to never let
> anyone call me that again. (Taz)

> I remember an occurrence in third grade and a little boy called me a
> black monkey and I just stood there looking at him as I was returning
> papers. Every kid likes to return papers. Oh, teacher's pet. And I just
> looked at him like what are you talking about? The substitute teacher
> heard him and snatched him up before I could even say anything. He
> got paddled and had to apologize to me. It was interesting but I just went
> about my day and thought of it as he's stupid for calling me that name.
> And he wasn't even cool enough about it to say it low enough so nobody
> could hear him! If you're going to do it, do it right! I found fault with him
> for being a bad criticizer. (Gabby)

171

Unfortunately those were not the only incidents of racism Taz and Gabby were personally involved in growing up. Both of the women were exposed to further examples during high school:

> Since then [the fourth grade], well you always get people who will say something about you. I was playing soccer and I was the only black girl who ever played in that league and I was really called some names. (Taz)

> . . . I go to West Virginia every summer since as long as I can remember. My cousin, who lives there . . . We're sent to a basketball camp there by my aunt. When you go to basketball camps, everybody's black. . . We went and we were the only two black people. She was more used to being separated because she comes from a very highly populated black city in West Virginia. . . I remember she was braiding another girl's hair and the girl said what do you n****** like to do? My
> cousin is feisty and she raised the brush and she was really going to hit her hard and I dove across the bed and grabbed it. We just looked at her like why would you say something like that? (Gabby)

Taz wrote off the comments made to her as something that will inevitably happen. Gabby decided to use the moment to do a little socialization and education of her own:

> The girl [who made the comment] is from a town near my cousin and said that she had been taught that black people want to be called that. We were looking dumbfounded. If you look n***** up in the dictionary, what would make you think that I want to be called that. They had never met any black people and the most they had seen was like the Cosby Show. They had never touched a black person's hair or had a discussion with a black person. There were no black people in their community, or for their county for that matter. The football players who were there for camp were like you're right no black person is going to go into that county. One of the girls at camp, her father was a football coach and knew some of the kids there. They thought he was cool, but the county as a whole is avoided by black people. It's just stuck in some kind of time warp. Those kids asked us about fifty questions like are we black all over, could I swim, did my black ever come off. Part of me wanted to be angry but part of me was like they are ignorant of a set of facts that I can give them information about so as best as I can I will provide them with the information I need. It was almost frustrating

172

though because it was like are you serious. Get real this is the 20th century. What's wrong with you people? (Gabby)

College Experiences

Making the decision to attend a predominantly white university has proven to be an interesting and difficult one for the African American female student-athletes. They described a type of "culture shock" experienced at X University by African American students. They felt this sense of isolation in their dorms, as they walked to class or practice, and in the Student Union. There was no denying that they were in the minority on campus.

Princess, Kay, Essence, and November expressed their initial reactions to the complexion of X University's student body:

Princess-I didn't know I'm getting myself into when I came to college.

Kay-Me neither.

Princess-It was a culture shock.

Essence-When I came here it was not only culture shock, but I had never seen so many white people in all my life. It was like 90% white.

November-It was like a culture shock for me coming here. There were white people at my high school and on my teams. But the white people here they seem like they come from rural areas. Like they've never been around blacks at all! . . . there's only four blacks on our whole floor, maybe in our whole building.

Babeahgirl related to their observations:

It's primarily a Caucasian campus. I was just walking to class with one of my friends and looking out and it was speckled with all of these peach faces and you might see a little yellow or brown here or there but it's basically all one shade. I haven't been affected by it but it's predominantly a white campus. (Babeahgirl)

173

In addition to the climate in the dorms and on campus, the women also noticed a racial segregation that took place at one of the central meeting places on campus, the student union:

Dianne -When you walk into the union, when I first walked in here . . .

Gabby-It's like the United Nations.

Dianne-One part has a section full of black people. Little Africa.

Lolita-All the black sororities and fraternities are there.

Gabby-There's always little Africa, little Asia, little India, and little Britain. And little Britain is scattered.

Gabby went into more detail about the seating patterns in the union:

Jennie-There was one experience you related in the first interview about the student union and how people sit in different places.

Gabby-You mean like little Africa and little Asia!

Jennie-That was very interesting to me.

Gabby-Do you want me to explain what it is?

Jennie-Well, I think I get the idea that there are different places where different people tend to sit. You shared that there are actually names for these areas. That was the interesting part because as we talked in the group, sitting like that is not specific to this school but to actually have names for those areas . . .

Gabby-There's not a sign, it's just like that. It's funny though because I've gone in with some of my teammates and of course they're white. They tend not to see it. They just get their food and go to this area. They'll go wherever they want to sit. I'll be thinking well, my people are over there. I don't think all people do it consciously but a lot of people do. There are some people who say I am going to sit over here because it is little Africa. And now that everyone knows that this is little Africa and that this is little Asia, it is very easy to say well this is where I'm supposed to sit. It's just a weird phenomenon. The first time I went in the union I was with a mixed group and we kind of sat in the middle, which was pretty interesting! Then when I started going to school here and I would come

into the union I would notice that if I were with one group of people they would tend to pull over to one side and if I were with a mixed group you would sit wherever. I'm flexible as long as it's not a dirty seat and I can see Oprah or whatever is on TV. It's weird and it does happen at every university that I've ever seen.

Jennie-if you're with your team and you sit in little Britain do you feel any different? Do you think people look at you any differently?

Gabby-Maybe only once or twice and not because I sat in the wrong spot, but because they were just looking at us because we were a mixed group. People from little Africa see me going over there and I sense from that side of the room, and this is just my own personal feeling, a question of why is she going over there? Why's she having lunch with that group?

The segregation of the union led to the question of whether or not X

University was racist:

Jennie-Do you think that X is racist?

Kay-That's a tough question.

Essence-White people will speak to when they're drunk. And then other times they look the other way.

Kay-I think certain people are racist. I think it is about people. And some people will speak to you and treat you right, but others well you say you're a lot different I am.

Essence-I was coming back from church this past Sunday and there were these three guys walking. There were three of us ladies and we were all black, and the guy in front was the only one who said good morning. The two other guys just looked like whatever. I was just like that's rude. Bless you! Usually you get a little friendly smirk. Something respectful. I smirked at this white guy and he gave me this cold look so I just kept on walking. It doesn't bother me as much as it did when I first came in. Before I probably would have just gone off on the guy and told him how racist he was. Now I'm like it's on you, God will take care of you.

Essence spoke more to her beliefs about the racial atmosphere on campus:

Essence-I've never really been afraid of being here at X and being black. But I had a situation happen to me that kind of made me paranoid and it made me look twice. I was with his guy named Matt and we parked, walked somewhere else, and came back to the car. I'm not a person who is into cars . . . It was parked next to my friend's car in so I went close to the car in asked what kind of in car is this? I started looking at it. Then I went around the front and I was just really nice. I was even dressed nice. I even had my purse. And I was looking and then these three guys came out of a restaurant . . . And I heard them and I thought this would be just my luck that this was their car. Sure enough the guy walks up to me and he's like what are you doing with my car. I look at them and I'm not ignorant of street smarts or anything . . . so I looked at him and I said nothing, no problems. But he wasn't about being sweet. I said it was not a problem, but he said so why are you all up on my car. He just kept looking me up-and-down. I kept saying there's no problem. And my friend had a bat in his car and he was on his way to get his bat. Then these guys started to surround me and they were just checking me   out. I kept saying and thinking what is the issue? What is the problem? I felt so helpless just because I was looking at his car. And he even checked his car before he got in it. He looked at the trunk. And I thought like what could I have really done to his car? My friend Matt was really upset. He said that was wrong. I was even looking at the way I was carrying myself. I didn't have on a hood or a cap! No, street clothes. I couldn't understand what the problem was. That was the worst time that I ever felt like that. X has its issues.

Some people would identify what the men were feeling was fear when they

approached Essence. Gabby disagreed but explained that African Americans,

particularly the student-athletes were viewed in a different light on campus:

Well that wouldn't say necessarily fear, but you have ever noticed that there will be a pack of athletes and they'll all have on their letter jackets. People will part like the Red Sea. It will open and people will stop their conversations . . . My boyfriend also plays sports. He's on the football team. We'll be walking around together with our varsity letter jackets on. You see two huge black people walking around and people say I know about them they're going to rob us. I just think it's interesting the way people treat us. (Gabby)

On the athletic teams, there were few instances of racist comments or

attitudes. The women believed that their teammates were sensitive to their situation on campus and in society. The women also believed that their teammates, for the most part have been sensitized through their athletic experiences:

> I tell people it's hard being a racist athlete. Think about it if you are an athlete and you're so racist that you don't want a white person or a black person to beat you, you're going to be disappointed every single day because somebody from a different race is going to beat you. You can't be a racist athlete. (Princess)

Kay believed that by the time athletes enter college, they have learned enough about teamwork and unity through playing sports that racism was not a major issue:

> I think in college that kind of disappears. I didn't play with Caucasians in high school. When I got here we had like 13 people on the team and maybe 5 black girls . . . and next year there will be even more black people than there will be white. I don't think we had a problem. Probably the biggest issue was deciding on what kind of music to listen to. We were on a team just trying to do the same thing.

For the most part, the women considered themselves fortunate to be attending a good school, participating in athletics, and receiving a quality education. They knew that their situation could be worse. They have had exposure to other parts of American society that were not as accepting of difference as the college environment:

> I can't stay there [West Virginia] for long periods of time. It's like the city mouse going to the country. You start to get upset about the things that aren't like the city; changes that it seems like people almost aren't willing to make because they are so comfortable in their ways. It's very hard for me to see a confederate flag on every license plate. It's very hard for me to see symbols of the Ku Klux Klan on bumper stickers and not react to it. Here it's like 1990 and there it's like 1860. I found myself in quite a few situations where I probably put myself at risk, but it was right to me.

177

I'm not going to let somebody badmouth me. There are two baseball farm teams near where my cousins live. One for the Orioles and one for the Reds in their town, which is mostly black, and the next town, which is mostly, white. Some of the players were from the Dominican Republic and I heard one guy in the stands say something in reference to a n*****. He was sitting really close to me and I stood up and chewed him out in front of everyone. He was pretty heavyset and I said shut your fat a** up. I told him that I didn't want to hear anything else and that he didn't have anything else to say. Watch the game or leave. My cousin was looking at me like oh my god they are going to run us out of here. I had just been waiting to say something to someone in that town . . . I was a freshman or sophomore in college. I don't take that trash from anyone . . . It needed to be said. (Gabby)

Strategies for Change

"What can coaches, educators, administrators, researchers, the media, families, peers, and role models do to increase the overall sport participation rates of African American girls and women?"

"What can these people do to increase the rates of African American girls and women in the underrepresented sports?"

By asking the women in the study for strategies that would assist in raising the sport participation rates for African American girls and women, I found that their comments focused on role modeling. The student-athletes related what type of influence a role model could have in introducing a young woman to sport and encouraging her to stay involved. All of the participants realized how the role models and mentors in their lives had guided and helped in their athletic careers and believed that the same could be achieved for more African American women. The women also addressed the additional strategies of increased exposure to sports and increased geographical and financial

178

access to these sports. Exposing African American females to sports of all kinds through the media and sponsorship opportunities, and the efforts of coaches, camps, and clinics, would increase the chances that these girls and women would participate. And, by bringing the sports to African American women by way of these same people and methods, the likelihood that the women would choose to play field hockey or to swim would be greater than if they would have to find ways to travel to the places where those sports are played and ways to pay for their participation.

Role Models

The conversation of role models began with my asking the women who they considered to be their athletic role models and how those people had influenced their lives:

> Flo Jo and Jackie Joyner. Those would be women who I would call role models for me. Flo Jo, she won the Olympics in the 100 and 200 and that's an accomplishment. Not too many women have done that. And then the fact that she was pretty . . .she's a beautiful lady with an elegant style. She had all of those uniforms she designed for herself and she would wear her nails long. She helped to bring the feminine physical appearance to the sport. Jackie Joyner is strong, determined, and has so much pride. I think one thing that leads women away is procreation. A lot of women think they can't play sports and have children. Like Jackie Joyner retired so she could have kids. To me I think you can be what you want to be if you apply yourself. You can care for your child the way you want to while you do other things too. Women need to get out of that personality from the older days. You need other things to survive and live now and I think sports helps a lot. (Dianne)

> Muhammed Ali. That's the first person that pops into my mind . . . Actually you know what he said, he never was in a situation where he didn't get his point across. Never let there be a time when you keep you mouth shut when you have something to say because the moment goes like that. He might have said things that weren't the right thing to say,

but he never kept his mouth shut for fear of saying the wrong thing. I like that about him. That confidence that he showed . . . He said what was on his mind and he didn't care who was listening. To me that is something that is always worthy of praise and recognition . . .[and] I guess Chris Evert Lloyd. I got a racket signed from her and I was like oh wow! And I used it to play against the wall, but I knew I couldn't play like her. She was very very graceful, and I'm not graceful! But I saw her and then I saw Martina Navritalova and I thought there's somebody with strength. I was always looking for somebody with strength, somebody who I could relate to. I can't necessarily relate to somebody with a squeaky voice. I wanted to know that somebody else was like me, that it's not just me. Somebody who had the imperfections like I perceive myself to have. That way I could identify with the things that I was doing wrong and see how they coped and how they managed. (Gabby)

. . . a role model as far as getting me started would have been in gymnastics that I was in for about five years and that would have been Nadia Comenechi. I liked everything about her. After that I wanted to become a serious gymnast and nothing was going to stop me. I saw her movie and I saw how perfect she was and where she came from and everything. Everything that was going on in her life, she may be Romanian and I'm Canadian, but I loved her. So it was definitely Nadia. (Lolita)

It was a guy. That was the Magic Johnson era. There weren't too many women. I tried to be Flo Jo but I didn't run track as much. (Kay)

The women also commented on what they had learned from these role models and the role models they have had in their personal lives. The shared how important becoming involved in sports had been in their lives and how the strong role models they have had have helped them to continue their involvement:

[Sports] . . .change your whole outlook on life . . .if you can play with the boys on the court and you can play with them anywhere. And I definitely have that. I know I can do anything that I want to do anything that a man can do within reason. . . I know that I had gained confidence from competing in sports. In fields like biology too, it gives me the strength and confidence. I think that all girls should play sports. It gets your juices going. It makes you think and gives you discipline. . . (Kay)

180

I go out there and try to play these sports. I'm the only black girl out there and it's going to be a little uncomfortable for me at that age. Just because you don't know anything else. As I get older I don't mind being on a team that's all another group because I'm a little more knowledgeable of what's going on. When you're little it has to be scary. You're looking around and nobody looks like you, especially if you don't have strong people telling you, stressing the issues of racism. If they don't tell you about the other races, you don't know. You just know that she's different and I don't know if I want to be on this team. I never had that situation. (Princess)

The student-athletes explained their viewpoints on whether or not they believed that everyone needed a role model. They stated that role models were central to the development of female athletes. A role model could be anyone: mother, father, coach, older athlete, or professional athlete. Different people found their role models in different places:

I don't think you need one but it does help. That's a driving force. We all came to our sport because somebody said something to us. Somebody influenced us one way or another. You don't have to but it is a definite strong driving force. If I wouldn't have seen any women doing sports then I would have thought that there's no such thing. So obviously that image and that picture of women playing stirred up some desires in me to play. And then I acted out on them . . . (Lolita)

. . . I played on teams where there weren't any women so I've always been more of an independent person. I think words motivate me more than someone's physical appearance or some image. I think words and then the spirit really motivates me the most. I don't need a picture of a woman or a picture of a man, just some kind of figure saying you should do this because I do this. Words have touched me the most . . .My definition of needing a role model is, well I do need one, but not necessarily through the marketing sense. A lot of people find their role models in advertisements. But I find them on a more personal level and as far as building a foundation it's not in an advertisement. (Dianne)

. . .I think it is important for people to know their own identity, but I guess what stimulates that is the identity of others. I believe that everything I did was based on a concept that was initiated by somebody else in my early life. My personal opinion is that it would be wrong to say that nobody needs a role model. Our parents are our role models. It doesn't

have to a picture of somebody doing something. Our parents show the determination and give you the foundation. We do need role models. It is an absolute necessity. You'll find children who have no one to turn to and aren't as strong in their convictions because of that . . . There doesn't have to be a Nike swoosh at the bottom of a poster to make someone a role model. (Gabby)

According to the participants, the younger African American women today look up to new heroes in professional sports and new heroes in their everyday lives more than the women who participated in the study did as they grew up. These heroes share some common characteristics that make them positive role models. Some of today's role models are playing sports other than basketball and track as well. They are helping to expose more young African American females to different athletic options:

> Kay-You have to have someone who's a more experienced type person. My father was kind of different. He did different sports. He did golf when golf wasn't so popular. He got me into bowling. He did tennis and I was the only kid walking around with a tennis racket. You need someone else to show you how to do something else. You can't know if someone else doesn't show you. How many of us are going to show you? How many people do you have connections with? Your family, it's kind of a generation thing, like this is what we've been doing. And until someone else comes in and influences you in another way, then this is what you'll be doing . . . I think it takes courage just to be different though. You aren't doing what everybody else is and you kind of have problems. It takes a lot to go out there and do something else. Are there any black women golfers? We have them but you just don't see them or don't hear about them.

> November-It will get better as it goes on. There will be more and more people. But I haven't seen the black woman golfer.

> Jennie-There are a lot of kids who are starting to golf now because of Tiger.

> November-I am Tiger Woods.

Princess-We should be using him as a motivator . . .I'm glad that they're doing it because little black kids are saying that they want to be like Tiger Woods. They need to do that with the Dominique Dawes and Surea Bonaly. If you're not going to do that then a lot of these little kids are not going to go out there and try to be brave.

Although they were not Tiger Woods, as student-athletes at a major university, the women in the study were potential, if not already actual, role models. They were observed and even idolized by the young women who attended their competitions, participated in the camps and clinics they worked, and in the other extracurricular activities they participated in on and off campus. The women shared how they felt about being in such a position:

> I don't feel like it's my responsibility to give back. I don't do it because I have to. I just feel like I've been given this gift and gotten this scholarship to come up here . . . I'm in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program. The little girl that I'm working with--I tell her things about sports. She's going to get more out of that because she knows that I've done it. . . Kids will listen to you more if you've had the experience. . . My teacher was always like you're the one they're looking up to. I think that changed my life because there are a lot of things I don't do because I know there are so many people looking at me. I am so happy that I was placed in this position to be a role model. It changed my life. I have a real squeaky-clean life. With a lot of people looking up to me there are a lot of things I just don't do. Kids will do stuff. If you are supposed to be their little hero and you're doing stuff then they are going to want to do it too. So the kids see that I don't drink and I don't do other stuff so they don't either. I am real glad to be placed in that position for that reason. (Princess)

The student-athletes have modeled not only athletic inspiration to the young females with whom they interact, but also inspiration on how to make positive choices in their lives. Being able to influenced young African American females in both athletics and life has made the student-athletes proud:

I think if people look up to you for guidance and leadership, you are a role model. Whether you place yourself in that position or not, people are looking up to you. Those kids, I'm their role model. I'm the person when they need help that they call. Even if their parents are home they ask to call me. I feel honored that they want to ask me stuff about school. I do think I'm a role model . . . [of] how to be strong black women . . .if you know inside who you are then you don't need to worry about what people say. I teach them stuff like that. Stay in school, the basics. Don't do this, don't do that. And I lead by example. I don't do a lot of thing and they hear me say it and then see that I don't do it. I don't say one thing and then let then see me smoking or having a lot of partners. They're seeing me not do it. The kids look at me and say she's not doing it so I'm not going to either. Parents come up to me and say my daughter says she isn't going to do this or she's going to do this because she wants to be like you. I feel so proud. (Lolita)

While Princess and Lolita were cognizant of the mentorship position they were in as African American female student-athletes, Essence was surprised that she had people looking up to her:

I didn't realize I was a role model or anything until last summer I went home and my aunt wanted me to come to her elementary school. So I went. She said she wanted me to meet one of the teachers. I went into the classroom and I was talking to the teacher and she said class this is Essence and she runs track in college. All these kids started going crazy with can I have your autograph. It made me kind of scared to see all of these kids. I felt like saying no, I'm just a junior in college. But they didn't see it like that. All that I saw was this person standing there and they heard star. That was just overwhelming. I couldn't believe that. Then when I went home I was talking to my goddaughter and she said to my aunt well Essence doesn't do it that way and when Essence comes home she'll show me how to do it. It wasn't until these things happen last year that I realized. It was always in the back of my mind . . . I'll help them out and I'll talk to them. I tell them not to listen to what everybody else says. You can do what you want to do. (Essence)

November, on the other hand, was made well aware of her position as a potential role model. She just was not sure she was interested in that type of responsibility until she had a positive experience with some young athletes:

184

. . .My grandma always said I used to want to play basketball but I wasn't given the opportunity to play. Girls were girls and sat on the porch and helped their mothers. Giving back is something, since I was given the chance to play, that I should be able to give other girls the motivation by saying you can play. Don't let somebody say you can't play because you're not tall enough or not fast enough. If I can be the one to tell someone that they can have the opportunity then I should do it . . . When I played basketball, we'd teach at camps during the season. The girls, they'd come to our games like we were superstars or something. I felt good that I was looked up to as somebody who was like a role model. I guess I'm not sure I necessarily want to be a role model because not everything I do is good but it just felt good when those girls came to see us and we made their day. They were like we want to be just like you and play basketball. Now that I'm in college I come back and they say I want to go to college and be an engineer too. It feels good to know that somebody else looks up to you even though you are not perfect. You never know if they have anyone else to look up to. (November)

After the women graduated from college, many were planning to

continue to be role models to young African American female athletes:

. . . I'm always going to be involved . . . now that I'm done with my career I look around and I say I'm supposed to be somewhere and I'm late just cause I'm used to always having to be somewhere. I'm doing things like coaching the kids and doing what I can and engineering takes up all day and most of the night. You find things to keep busy and I know I'll be in sports with the kids or something . . . (Kay)

. . . I'd like to have a camp. My dream is to have a camp built. I want to work with kids from all different places and I want to teach kids about sports. So many people go into sports for the wrong reasons and I want to teach them to use sports to teach you so much more about life. There is a lot to be learned from sports whether it's good or bad . . . there are all these camps and there's a black group in one camp and a white group in another camp. If you learn at a young age that you can come together it's so much better. (Princess)

They realized that they could make a difference in the lives of the young girls who looked up to them. They could give something back to the sport that had given them so much:

> I'm honored. I'm proud. I always wanted to do it because I know how track has influenced my life . . . I can help them by saying if they take a certain path they might avoid some of the pitfalls that I've had. There are a lot of things that people didn't tell me that could have helped me avoid mistakes. I just did it for fun and didn't know all of the rules and regulations. I can help them with that stuff. A lot of people just run and run and run when they're little and don't get the academics. Then they try to get into college and they can't. (Princess)

> . . . I had this guy come up to me and ask if I had ever thought about coaching kids. They don't have a coach so they go out and practice by themselves. Kids want a coach who is young, who went thought what they are going through, and actually go out there and show them what to do. The girl that I'm coaching now says that when I tell her to do something and she can't see it, it doesn't click. I have to show her. They really appreciate that. If we can find more people who want to go out there with the kids and give it their all, anybody can tell them what to do, but give it your all and that makes a difference. When the kids see that sincerity they are more willing to try. Once you build that trust with them, you have it. I love it and the kid I coach is awesome . . . this girl says she can't wait to go to practice to learn more about high jumping . . . .my mom keeps asking me to come home and do a clinic. The kids don't have any role models. No women coaches. They need to see someone who has done it before and can show them how . . . (Taz)

> Me being here is really important so they can see that I'm here and I made it. We always have a talk after camp and I always tell them that it can be done and that it is possible . . .[I tell them] find a club, which could be possible, or not depending on where you are. Play a lot and maybe come to camps where if you're not going to play club, at least the people at those college camps will see you . . . [and also] seeing people that are playing now. I know that a couple of predominantly black high schools bring their teams into watch and they all come up to me after. They don't talk to any of my teammates, but they'll speak to me. I ask them when their season is and encourage them to keep playing. Role models are really important. (Vanessa)

Media and Sponsorship Opportunities

The women believed that the media and companies who were willing to sponsor athletes had a role to play in improving the exposure of African American females. The participants identified television as one of the primary sources of information for young athletes and a source that could be used to promote the participation of African American females in sport. In order for this to happen, however, the people who control the media and the companies who pay for advertisements and provide product contracts for the athletes have to also make steps toward promoting these athletes.

The initial introduction many young people have to athletics is what they see on television. The student-athletes immediately identified their role models as athletes who they had seen participating in their sports on television. They did not see Magic Johnson or Nadia Comenechi in person. They were exposed to these people and their athletic talents through the media:

> TV influences a lot. I know that kids see women on TV now and say that's my role model. I think African Americans go on basically what they see. You won't see a lot of girls play tennis or ice-skating. . . I think it is what is accessible to you and who is there to motivate you. Otherwise you aren't going to be doing it. That's what I think. (November)

> I think there would be more participants of African American women in sports if they publicize it more. Before the WNBA first came out, I quit basketball because I thought there was no chance for me. I thought well we don't have the chance to succeed, to be on a professional level. We'll never have the same opportunities as the men. . . so I thought with track well I have an opportunity here. . . They don't show this on TV. They show football and basketball. And all those negative things that happened to the black basketball football players, and then they publicize that. They don't do as much for women as they should be doing . . . like the black sisters who play, Venus and Serena Williams. Are they the only black tennis players that can do anything? (Dianne)

We see that in soccer there is the one black goalie on the Women's National team . . . but you don't hear anything about her. They are out there though . . .I still feel that. But how many times do I turn on NBC and see track? How many times do I turn on NBC and see the women's volleyball team with three or four African American players? How many times do you get to see any black female golfers? (Gabby)

The women realized that it was not only the responsibility of the television media to promote African American female athletes. It was also the responsibility of companies to include these women in their advertisements on television, in magazines, on billboards, and on the radio. Beyond that, companies could select African American females to promote their products:

> . . . Just so little black girls can see that they have a role model in this too . . . It's not just TV but who wants to sponsor it. I was reading an article about car racing and it said that there are no black people are doing car racing. This one black guy wanted to break in and nobody wanted to sponsor him. Nobody wants to sponsor a black guy's car because they think it's going to degrade the sport or that nobody's going to come watch anymore. I thought about it and thought maybe that's the reason people don't publicize Dominique Dawes. We are sitting here saying why don't they show them on TV and it's because nobody wants to pay to see them on TV. Nobody wants to spend money to put her on a box or a bulletin board or whatever. . . People always complain about stuff but they don't do anything about it. I'll call FUBU up myself! (Princess)

> The media. There's always black players from football and basketball advertising stuff but I don't think I've seen any baseball players. I haven't seen anything else. Sammy Sosa . . .(Chyna)

> It's one thing to be like we don't know if we have the financial backing but it's another thing to not incorporate them in other sports and other aspects of sports. There are a lot of sports that are content to not recruit African American. There are a lot of situations and corporations who are content not to showcase African Americans . . . people are losing interest because there's no money it in and it's all talk and not a lot of support. It's a great idea until you need about $20,000 in sponsorship. It's about doing the right thing not always about doing the thing with the numbers. Unfortunately it usually boils down to the numbers in these types of situations. (Gabby)

Exposure and access

The final strategies the women in the study recommended to aid in

increasing the sport participation of African American female were exposure

and access to sport both geographically and financially. Committed coaches,

community leaders, and current athletes were the essential components listed

in an effort to improve the participation rates.

Playing field hockey was a positive experience for Taz and taught her at

a young age about the sport culture and how young athletes made decisions on

which sport or sports to play:

> I don't know but people gravitate toward where there are people like
> them. Look at Tiger--to go out and be a black golfer and step out there?
> He could have easily just hung back instead of going out and not fitting
> in. That's just one example. People gravitate to where people are like
> them. That's one reason why when black people see other black people
> they think that's where they're supposed to be. It's hard to be different
> and easy to fit in. That's what the United States is, fitting in. The melting
> pot. Fit in somewhere. You fit in where everybody else is like you . . . [in
> field hockey there were] not many. When I used to go to camps, I used
> to be the only one. I saw it but I didn't think oh no everybody's going to
> be looking at me because I'm the only black girl. (Taz)

Taz suggested, based on her experience as the only African American female

playing field hockey, that more people have to show young athletes how to

break the stereotypes and play:

> . . . Instead of the black guy who is usually assumed to be a sprinter,
> take the white guy who does just as well. I remember there's a white guy
> from Kentucky who was really fast and they blew him up because of all
> of the norms and expectations for fast people to be black. But you could
> see more white people sprinting and jumping. I think if you take what's
> uncommon and exploit it. Send white people to the predominantly black
> areas and tell them about track. Let the black people see how awesome
> this white guy is. It sends the message that I don't have to be stuck in

this just because I'm black. I can go out and do something else just like this guy did. (Taz)

Taz also understood that more children have to be exposed to what changes were occurring in sport in order for the cycle of African American women only playing basketball and track. Everyone had to take part in that exposure:

> Even parents [are] . . . unaware that just because there are more black people doing track it's not just for black people. Breaking that generational ignorance so when we have our kids we can be telling them to get into volleyball even though there's not a lot of black people there. You're an athlete so I'm pretty sure you can learn the sport. It's not like white people only have genes for volleyball and that's it. The family sets a big example. . . We need to step out of our comfort zone . . . (Taz)

The other women commented on how different people needed to be involved in efforts to expose all sports to African American females, and also that exposure efforts needed to concentrate on different locations where African American children were more likely to live:

> As far as getting more black women to play sports, I think in the inner cities there a lot of women who want to play but they aren't targeted. There isn't the exposure. And that's where the concentration of black people are. No one will go in there and help these people out because of all these drugs and this crime and all of these broken homes. No one wants to take that chance. (Princess)

> It also has to do with what you expose kids to. In order to get a scholarship in volleyball you have to play club, you have to. Not a lot of people know about club programs. (Vanessa)

> . . . Kids tend to see something someone else is doing and take a liking to that person and but their baseball card or whatever or see them on commercials . . . you have to introduce then to the sport and find some way that they can get a sense for what it is. I think that there could be a way to do that in Brooklyn. You have to go there and find out what the kids are interested in—what they'd like to see, and then you start showcasing different sports. If you want them to relate to somebody then bring in Dominique Dawes. You introduce them and let the kids

190

connect. Sometimes it's not even the sport but the person that they connect to. They want to be like that person. You start teaching them the skills behind it and let's go on a field trip. Let's go get in a boat and row. You have to work with what you got. (Gabby)

Exposure and access extended beyond the physical location by also having a great deal to do with finances. Vanessa's experience in volleyball has taught her that you can expose children to different sports, but if they do not have the financial resources to participate they will not participate:

> Vanessa-It's kind of sad that good athletes are being passed up because they don't have enough money to play.

> Jennie-What do you think can be done to change that?

> Vanessa-I don't really know. As clubs grow it's all about your reputation. I wouldn't have played for my club if they didn't have a good reputation. Maybe offering summer camps to kids or something?

> Jennie-Your experience with it was good because it got you noticed and to where you wanted to be. If college coaches rely solely on club tournaments for their recruiting then there's a whole population of kids they miss.

> Vanessa-It's sad but that's totally the way it is now.

> Jennie-What do you know of any efforts being made to reduce costs or target different kids?

> Vanessa-I know in my home state that there are a whole bunch of different clubs that I didn't even know existed until I got to college and went back to work tournaments. There are a bunch of them who have reduced their costs and I feel if they would kind of come together and form a couple of big clubs that they would get better and get better coaching. They are moving in the right direction in trying to get kids from inner city schools that don't have access to suburban clubs.

Taz explained that increasing the numbers of African American females participating in sport is a difficult battle based on the history of African Americans in society, but one where she has seen some progress already:

> We live in a white privileged world. It's reality and ever since you're in elementary school you learn white history. And you might get February as black history month or a blurb about Chinese history or the Korean War. We're always only getting white history. Where's our foundation? Of course your parents teach you not to be racist and not to look at yourself as being black but just as an American. But if you're in school getting this every day? So ever since you're young you're getting this white privileged world and until that stops you won't see a lot of change. You are seeing more African American athletes in golf or baseball. I hear people asking why there are more black people playing baseball. We're just balancing it out, not dominating it. It stems from way before now. (Taz)

Vanessa agreed that the battle to increase African American participation in sports in general, and for women in particular, is a difficult one. She believed it is a slow process, but one that is moving in the right direction:

> I think that black people are going to keep playing basketball and football and running track. I think more and more maybe some in volleyball and tennis will start showing up. For right now it's just those main sports. More slowly we will inch our way up in those other sports. (Vanessa)

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study had four dimensions. The first dimension was to examine how African American female student-athletes are provided with opportunities for exposure by the media, sport professionals, and researchers. Secondly, I explored how stereotypes affected the lives of African-American female student-athletes. Next, I investigated how socialization agents affected the sport participation patterns of the women. And lastly, I compiled strategies to increase the current sport participation rates of African American women. My analysis and presentation of results focused then on these four areas: silencing, stereotypes, socialization, and strategies for change. In this final chapter, I have organized my conclusions on this study and the four areas it contains into a summary of the research process, a summary and discussion of the research findings, implications for sport managers, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Research Process

An examination of the participation statistics for X University for the 1998-99 academic year (Athletic Department Statistics) revealed that minority student-athletes represented twenty percent or 168 of the total 828 student-athletes. Of that one hundred sixty-eight, 104 were African American males and 23 were African American females. African American males composed 21% of all male student-athletes and 12.6 % of all student-athletes. African American females composed 7% of all female student-athletes and 2.7% of all student-athletes. The disparity between the number of African American student-athletes, particularly females, and the number of non-African American student-athletes has become increasingly problematic. Many coaches, administrators, and sport scholars have called attention to the need to increase the number of African American female sport participants (Abney & Ritchey, 1992; Acosta, 1993; Birrell, 1990; Bruening, 1998; Corbett & Johnson, 1993; Frost, 1994; Gottesman, 1996; Green, 1993; Green, Olgesby, Alexander, & Franke, 1981; Houzer, 1974; O'Bryant, 1996; Smith, 1992; Stratta, 1995 a & b).

By understanding the components that lead to the underrepresentation of African American females in sport, coaches, administrators, and sport scholars may be able to increase participation numbers. When examining the components selected as foci for this study, it can be easily discovered that little to no research has be conducted as to how those components specifically affect African American female athletes. Research on silencing, or the lack of opportunities for expression, has been conducted on African American women,

but not African American women athletes (Collins, 1988; Collins, 1990; Etter-Lewis, 1991; hooks, 1981; hooks, 1984; hooks, 1989; Hull & Smith, 1982). Investigations on stereotyping and its effects have been conducted with African American men (James-Brown, 1995; Marable, 1984), African American male athletes (Best, 1987; Chu & Seagrave, 1981; Curtis & Loy, 1978; Edwards, 1973; Eitzen & Sanford, 1975; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Loy & McElvogue, 1970; Medoff, 1977; Sailes, 1993), and even non-African American women athletes (Birrell, 1984; Greendorfer, 1993). Socialization studies have examined the experiences of non-African American women athletes (Greendorfer, 1993), male athletes (Coakley, 1998; Yiannakis & McIntyre, 1993), and African American males (DuBois, 1978). Research has only provided isolated examples of studies that investigate how African American women become involved in sport and what influences keep them involved (Bruening, 1998; Corbett & Johnson, 1993; Douglas, 1988; Smith, 1992; Stratta, 1995 a & b).

In order to gain a more inclusive understanding of the reasons behind the percentages of African American female sport participants and the efforts of coaches, administrators, and sport scholars to advocate more participation by African American females, I selected interviews with current African American female student-athletes as the method of data collection. The interviews were conducted with the following questions as the structure for inquiry:

1a. Are African American women silenced by the balance of racial and gender power in society and in sport?

b. If so how are they silenced?

c. By what, by whom?

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

3 a. How does the socialization process differ for African American women?

b. How does this affect sport participation patterns?

4a. What can coaches, educators, administrators, researchers, the media, families, peers, and role models do to increase the overall sport participation rates of African American girls and women?

b. What can these individuals do to increase the rates of African American girls and women in the underrepresented sports?

My examination of the individuals and the processes that influenced the African American female student-athletes in the study to become and remain involved in sports was a mixture of focus group and individual interviews. I emphasized providing the opportunity for the women to share stories and experiences based on Black Feminist theory (Collins, 1988; Collins, 1990; hooks, 1981; hooks, 1984; hooks, 1989). I focused particularly on Collins' dimensions of a race-based epistemology: 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). My research

questions and my interview guide questions were aimed at accessing the concrete experiences of the student-athletes and encouraging dialogue among the focus group participants, and between the individual interview participants and myself. I also framed my interest in the study to the women in an introduction to each of them by demonstrating my interest in the sport participation patterns of African American women as well as my feeling of personal responsibility as a coach, athletic administrator, and researcher to aid all women in being able to participate in sports. As the interviews progressed, it became obvious that the student-athletes possessed both the ethic of caring and the ethic of personal responsibility toward the sport participation patterns of African American females as well.

The three focus groups interviews included the participation of twelve student-athletes. In these focus groups, the questions centered around: (a) the initial sport experiences of the women and how those played a role in their future sport endeavors; (b) their role models and most significant influences on their sport involvement; (c) what sports they played while growing up and what led them to specialize in the sport they played in college; (d) what they perceive their responsibility is to encourage participation by functioning as positive role models; and (e) their perception of the state of African American female sport participation.

The individual interviews involved four of the women who had participated in the focus groups. I interviewed one woman from each of the first two focus groups and two from the final group. I selected the women based on

their level of comfort with being interviewed, the variety of their experiences and backgrounds (both hometown and family), and their sport of choice in college. Two of the women participated in track and field, one in volleyball, and one in crew. The interview guides for each of the individual interviews had some similarities but were also based on the woman participating and her responses in the focus group. I asked each woman why she chose the sport in which she participated in college and what her quality of experience has been in that sport. I also asked each woman to talk more about the stereotypes she has been exposed to as an African American female athlete stemming from comments made in the focus groups. The last two questions asked of all of the women included how they felt they had been treated by the athletic department (including administrators and coaches), and what they felt could be done to increase the number of African American females participating in sports. Individually I read quotes to each of the women from their focus groups and asked them to comment further on topics such as role modeling, the media, situations in the weight room, and club volleyball.

All of the interviews were semi-structured in nature allowing for a free exchange of ideas among the focus group participants and extended commentary on the part of the individual interviewees, while still maintaining a consistency in the topics explored in each session. The interviews all took place on the campus of X University. The focus groups occurred in two different athletic department buildings and the individual interviews were located in the Athlete Academic Services conference room.

Each participant in the focus groups was mailed the transcript and given the opportunity to comment on the accuracy of the transcription. The individual interview participants were also given a first hand opportunity to comment on the focus groups transcription at the beginning of their individual session. With the exception of typographical errors, the participants in either the focus group or individual interview transcripts made no changes. This member checking was coupled with several peer-debriefing sessions on my part to additionally ensure the trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis processes. Following the member check, the verbatim transcripts of the interviews along with field notes and reflexive journal entries were examined to develop codes and sub-codes organized around the research questions. The findings of this analysis were organized as a data story or narrative using the dialogue of the participants.

Summary and Discussion of the Research Findings

Before presenting the findings of my research, I must note that these findings are generalizable only to the twelve women in the study and not to all African American female student-athletes. While the data from this study may be used to assist in the understanding of the experiences of other African American female student-athletes, it is applicable only to the women who took part in this study, and the time and the place in which this study occurred. This data was gathered and structured around the influence of previous research, as

were the research questions that serve to organize the summary and discussion that follow.

Are African American women silenced by the balance of racial and gender power in society and in sport?

If so, how are they silenced?

By what, by whom?

Traditionally, women of color have had few opportunities to be noticed or to have their voices heard in American society and sport (Smith, 1992). While the opportunity for others in positions of social importance to assist these women exists, this opportunity is not always seized. The women who participated in the study revealed several sources they believed have served roles in limiting their exposure as athletes in society and on the campus of X University. The women also revealed ways in which these sources can, and in some cases do, assist in promoting their accomplishments and efforts. The sources the women identified included the mass media, athletic administrators at their university, their coaches, and fellow student-athletes.

Mass media

Comments on the relatively low numbers of African American women participating in sports other than basketball and track and field filtered through every interview session. Many of the women credited this poor representation to the lack of coverage given to women's athletics by the media. While to some readers it might seem as if the media does not possess the power to influence

the sport choices of American youth, the women in the study contradicted that idea. Dianne stated that she thought "there would be more [participation] of African American women in sports if they (the media) publicized it more" (Dianne). And Chyna revealed how powerful she believed the influence of the media, television in particular, was on children. She commented that "If anything it's TV. I don't know any other way that children see sports" (Chyna).

Television is a major segment of mainstream culture, a mainstream culture that has been known to inhibit the voices of African American women (O'Bryant, 1996; Stratta, 1995a). The women I interviewed agreed that there existed a considerable lack of publicity given to African American women in sports, as research has shown to be true in other parts of society (Gray White, 1987; Herton, 1987; Hull & Smith, 1982). And not only did the women state that little exposure was given to African American female athletes by the media, but they also believed that portions of the coverage was limited to certain sports. Babeahgirl attributed the sport choices of children to what they see on television. She articulated her view that if a child sees a particular sport being played by people of a certain cultural background, that child will make conclusions on his or her ability to participate in that sport. November felt that children selected their role models from what they saw on television. In fact, some scholars identify the media as the source from which most African American children first identify role models; "the imagery of the popular media . . . provides the . . .role models for black youth" (Pieterse, 1992, p. 148). The experiences of African American females "are characterized . . .by silence"

201

(Green, Olgesby, Alexander, & Franke, 1981, p. 7) and the lack of exposure by the media of these women, especially those in sports other than basketball and track, enforces the message that "no black women are here" (Green, et al., 1981, p. 7). As Princess contended, the only two sports where black women receive any publicity at all are basketball and track.

Perhaps what was most disappointing to the women was the unexplored impact the media could make in the sport participation patterns of African American women. The participants believed that African American females would be more inclined to become involved and stay involved if the media would encourage that involvement. African American women are playing sports; "they are in community centers or playing on street courts or rec teams, club teams. They are playing in a broader area . . ." (Gabby). The women in this study believed that the media could have a profound impact on both the number of African American women who participate in sports and the variety of sports in which these women participate. They pointed to the popularity of Sports Illustrated for Women, the marketing of the WNBA, and the commercial efforts of NIKE and Gatorade.

The lack of media involvement in providing positive and numerous examples of African American participating in sports has and can continue to have the same detrimental effect that the absence of research on African American women has had. The invisibility of African American women in sport informs "mainstream views and perceptions . . . and the current status of African American women in society" (Stratta, 1995a, p. 47). According to the

student-athletes who participated in this study, if the media, which has the ability to provide the most widespread exposure, does not cover the sport participation of African American women then many young women will miss an opportunity.

Administrators

A critical segment of the campus society that women commented on extensively was the athletic administration. The women shared both positive and negative opinions on what the university's athletic administrators have done to support them and give them a voice in the overall scheme of athletics at the institution. Historically, athletic administration has been a white male-dominated career path as only "five percent or less of all physical education teachers, coaches, and sport administrators are multicultural minorities" (Smith, 1991, p. 39). The central athletic administration at X University presents a balanced mix of race and gender including a white male athletic director, a white male associate director, an African American male associate director, and an African American female Senior Women's Administrator. The make-up of this group of administrators is a possible explanation for the mixture of opinions the women hold about the athletic department.

Some of the women's views reflected a strong appreciation toward the attention they believed had been paid to them by university's athletic administration. Taz felt that she and her fellow female athletes were taken care of by the administration. Although she wished there was a women's athletic

banquet, she thought the women were treated well. Vanessa also appreciated the assistance she received as she struggled with her identity as an African American female student-athlete on a predominantly Caucasian campus, "it's been really good and they've helped me out a lot . . . they introduced me to people and have just been really helpful" (Vanessa).

On the other hand, several of the women student-athletes also identified negative experiences they have had with the university's athletic administrators. Gabby went into great detail in expressing her dissatisfaction with how the naming of a Student-Athlete Voice lounge in the new Student Success Center was voted down. All of the women from the track team voiced their feelings of second-class citizenship when their competition track was torn out to make room for the expansion of the football stadium. The promise of a new track has gone unrealized while just a few blocks away, a new basketball arena was erected with record speed. The numerous concerns the female student-athletes raised about the administration are best summarized by Gabby, who believed that the administration had good intentions, but was too focused on the participation numbers and Title IX compliance. She and the other women were convinced that the administration wanted to make X University a "woman friendly university and athletic department," but that was difficult to accomplish.

Research indicates that decisions are made daily that impact student-athletes by athletic administrators and as Stratta states "the present and future lives of these athletes may be positively or adversely affected" (Stratta, 1995a, p. 4) by these decisions. If the administrators or decision makers are not well

204

aware of how African American females are affected, then the potential for adverse effects is heightened. Athletics were a central part of the lives of these student-athletes just as they are for any other student-athletes. Athletic administrators need to treat their African American female student-athletes with that in mind. They expected the administration to treat them as they treat every other student-athlete--with respect. They experienced a mixture of respect and what they interpreted as a de-prioritizing of their interests and needs. According to the participants, the athletic administrators at X University should pay more attention to the well being of the African American female athletes. An extra effort needs to be made so those women do not feel like "outsiders within" compared to African American male student-athletes and other female student-athletes. As the women point out, the attention paid to male athletes in a major NCAA Division I institution can lead to the female athletes being a secondary concern. The same is true of how African American female athletes are positioned in relation to their African American male counterparts. Athletic administrators can insure that this type of prioritization does not take place.

Coaches

Beyond the decisions administrators make on a daily basis, coaches' daily decisions directly impact the quality of experience of their athletes. Many "critical decisions are made . . . by coaches who have little substantive knowledge . . . for predicting the potential consequences of their decisions" (Stratta, 1995a, p. 4). Since only one of the women had a female head coach

205

and none had an African American female head coach, the chances of decisions being made that did not take the viewpoint of an African American female into account were increased. The student-athletes in the study shared examples of coaches who have negatively impacted their athletic experiences by both actions and words.

While coaches operate as agents of the athletic department administration as a whole, they are given latitude in developing and implementing their own systems and styles in order to successfully run their programs. The majority of the women on the track team did not appreciate the style their coach adopted in order to motivate them. These women were not alone. Stratta found that most African American female athletes would rather be talked to than yelled at by their coaches, and appreciated being encouraged to think for themselves rather than being controlled (Stratta, 1995b). The student-athletes on the track team agreed that the coach's style set the tone for how the athletes responded, "it's on the person himself . . . the coach has a lot to do with it too. He sets an example" (Taz). And if that coach has little experience with or knowledge of how African American women experience sport, the example that coach sets will not appreciate or understand that experience.

Coaches have a place in "providing support for African American athletes" (Stratta, 1995b, p. 54) and a responsibility to ensure that all athletes, regardless of gender or cultural background, are given the same opportunities to succeed. Gabby provided an example of a situation where another coach

limited the opportunities of certain athletes. The strength coach asked her to vacate certain pieces of equipment so that the men could lift. Gabby, as did the other women, believed that she had as much of a right as any male student-athlete to be working out. Unfair treatment at the hands of a coach leads student-athletes to perceive an atmosphere of insensitivity on gender and cultural differences (Anshel, 1988). Gabby would agree that her ability to perform in her sport was compromised by this coach's inability to appreciate her role. He eliminated her rights and her voice as an African American female student-athlete.

Coaches, more so than administrators, have direct contact with and a daily influence on their student-athletes. While administrators can make broad reaching policies to better the lives of African American female student-athletes, coaches are closer to the student-athletes and should have the knowledge of their individual needs to make decisions that better their experience. More than one of the runners in the study mentioned that she felt as if she were only competing to score points for her coach, as if she were merely the mechanism of success for her coach. According to those women, a message is sent:

> . . . that African American athletes are only important to win athletic contests . . . African American athletes felt 'used' for their athletic prowess with little regard for their cultural existence. (Stratta, 1995b, p. 54)

Popular culture, such as this lyric from Ice Cube's song *Higher*, has even picked up on African American athletes being used by coaches: "don't like scholarships because they hurt me, nothing but a slave to the university" (Harrison, 1998, p.

207

64). Considering what has been reported about African American women being stereotyped as physical specimens not capable of much intellectual thought, coaches should be more than sensitive to treating their student-athletes as the means to an end. The women resented their coaches approaching them as more physically talented and less intellectually gifted than the Caucasian student-athletes. They wanted their coach to be aware of and sensitive to how society views African American women. As someone who has the power and position to make a positive difference in the lives of these women, a coach should provide the opportunity for the student-athletes to have a positive experience on a team where they are welcomed and respected.

Student-athletes

Male student-athletes are sometimes unaware of their positions of privilege on campus, and sometimes they are more than aware of the position they occupy (Stratta, 1995b). Many male student-athletes follow the lead of the administration and the coaches. If the administration places more of an emphasis on football and men's basketball, then those athletes will feel privileged. If the coaches of these teams reinforce this privileged attitude, then the student-athletes on those teams will adopt that attitude. The women complained about how the members of these two men's teams have an air of control and power as they walk across campus. The way they treat all women, but particularly these African American female student-athletes, made the women uncomfortable. Lolita stated that the men made her feel objectified

"because [she was] an athlete and primarily an African American athlete"

(Lolita). Sport can be a place where the societal structure of power and

privilege are reproduced and even legitimized (O'Bryant, 1996). The women at

X University believed that this reproduction and legitimization occurred in many

locations on their campus.

Not only was the weight room a site for ignoring the needs of female

student-athletes by coaches, it was a place where the women feel as if they are

silenced and put into their place by the male athletes as well. Gabby shared a

story about one particular male athlete who chose to watch the women lift

rather than complete his own workout. She was disgusted by his attitude

toward the women as well as his lack of discipline to his own workout. Rather

than allow this type of behavior to continue, the African American women

athletes chose to challenge the power structure with an attitude that conveyed

that they were in the weight room to work, not to be watched. The women

realized that some of the men viewed them as a fringe benefit to playing major

Division I sports, but the women were determined to stay focused on their own

athletic achievements and remained steadfast toward their goals no matter who

tried to tell them otherwise.

Male student-athletes can take responsibility, according to the

participants, and treat the women with respect. Peer role modeling is an

effective tool in teaching college students to act in accordance with social

expectations. Programs such as Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP)

developed by the Center for the Study of Sport in Society focus their energies

on teaching male student-athletes to model positive social behavior to other male student-athletes. While it is difficult for one male student-athlete to stand up and challenge the negative behavior of his peers, it is just as difficult for one male-athlete to act contrary to the positive behavior of his peers. Male student-athletes can be role models for each other in an effort to make African American female student-athletes feel as if they belong. The power of peers, particularly on athletic teams, can have tremendous positive effects on behavior. The women in the study agreed. If only one teammate of the male student-athlete who stared at them in the weight room would confront him and inform him that he needed to treat the women better, then that negative behavior would change. Just as the participants decided that they were not going to allow anyone to challenge their rights as athletes at X University, the male student-athletes can challenge their peers to treat all student-athletes with respect.

How does sport serve to create and reinforce racial and gender based stereotypes?

How can sport serve to dispel those myths?

The African American women who participated in this study have been exposed to stereotypes having to do with their gender and their race for most of their lives. They have heard the impressions others hold about their biological traits, their gender differences, their academic capabilities, and their athletic prowess. They know what it means to define a group of people first and

observe whether the definition has any validity second (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Stereotypes are a powerful form of discrimination (Greendorfer, 1993). These women have felt the results of their lives being steered by certain stereotypes that attempt to explain everything from their physical characteristics to their role in society.

Biological Stereotypes

The African American female student-athletes from X University found themselves subject to questions from their peers about the texture of their hair and the shape and feel of their noses. The women found that their peers came from a variety of backgrounds, and therefore had been exposed to African Americans to a variety of extents. The questions asked of the women by their peers were taken in different ways. For the most part, the women laughed off the inquiries about how often they washed their hair. The most unbelievable request came from one of Essence's dorm-mates when she asked to touch Essence's nose. The women still managed to find humor in both the ignorance and boldness of the other student. The only example of a biological stereotype touching a nerve was Vanessa's coach dismissing the hard work she had dedicated herself to doing in order to lower her body fat. His comments completely disregarded anything she had done to bring her percentage down and gave credit to her 13.6% as having solely to do with her bone density as an African American. Vanessa's coach ascribes to the theory that "black is best" (Harrison, 1998, p. 68). By attributing her low body fat to her racial background,

211

the coach attributes her success to the fact that she is African American while he would attribute the success of his Caucasian players to effort.

Having grown up with societal stereotypes about both their gender and their race, the women did not feel the need to challenge these biological stereotypes. They were all aware that their peers had some misconceptions about African Americans and chose to educate them rather than be offended by the comments. Vanessa's coach should have had the experience and exposure to know that his comments were merely supporting stereotypes and degrading Vanessa, as coaches should "recognize stereotypes and then attempt to debunk them by highlighting other dimensions of athletes" (Stratta, 1995b, p. 54). Her reaction to him was understandable. His assumptions about her bone density had "little scientific credibility" (Sailes, 1993, p. 90) with which to begin. Since she did not participate in the underwater body composition measurements, his comments were even more off base. He is a perfect example of someone who took stereotypical practice for granted and never questioned its accuracy (Greendorfer, 1993). Vanessa's frustrations and deep emotional injury from the treatment she received at the hands of her coach resulted in a decreased quality of experience for her.

Gender Stereotypes

As young female athletes, the women in the study have been the subjects of many gender-based stereotypes as well. From their parents hesitating to sign them up for teams to being the only girl on a boys' team, the

212

women have had their fair share of experience with being treated differently due to their gender. Many of the women remember being told that they were "tomboys" because they enjoyed sports or that they "threw like girls" by their male teammates, coaches, or even their teammates' parents in an effort to discourage them from participating. The treatment they received from those people and the supposed stigma of the stereotypes did just the opposite. The women were encouraged to continue playing. They found they had to prove themselves and hold true to what they believed in regardless of what others said. As Babeahgirl realized it "forced me to be competitive and to persevere" (Babeahgirl).

The women held on to their competitive spirits as they grew older and found themselves the object of different gender stereotypes. Both Taz and Gabby shared their stories of being the subject of homosexual stereotypes because of their athletic involvement. They failed to understand why, simply because of their involvement in athletics, they were assumed to be homosexual. They were angered that sport is one of the most visible arenas where the success of women must be justified:

> I don't think there's any more 'gayness' in sports than in many other areas of life. I think sports has been set aside as a 'masculine' thing, where other things have not. What I'm saying is if you take almost any other field—business or medicine, for example—there's a place for women even though in some areas it's been small. But women haven't been labeled with a gay image simply because they are in that area. However, if you're an athlete, that's historically been the stereotype. (Leonard, 1988, p. 262)

213

Lolita, Dianne, and Princess continued with expectations or assumptions society and its inhabitants place on women athletes. They talked about the physical image created by society for women and how athletes do not fit those expectations. Princess spoke to the matriarchy myth (Bernard, 1966; Frazier, 1939; Green et al., 1981; Hannerz, 1969; Liebow, 1967; Moynihan, 1965) in her comments about the way African American women approach relationships, "black women don't let the man be in charge" (Princess). Dianne, Gabby, and Lolita completed commenting on the list of assumptions that make up that myth including being promiscuous (Green et al., 1981).

The women resented the stereotypes about their sexual preferences and habits more than any other gender stereotypes. They believed that these assumptions were not accurate and did not appreciate being subjected to them. Despite these feelings, however, the women again presented a mature viewpoint toward stereotypes. They understood that their positions as African American female student-athletes put them under a microscope. They knew it was crucial to continue to be positive role models and not let the stereotypes anger them. Instead of fighting stereotypes, they chose to let their actions prove the stereotypes invalid.

Intellectual Stereotypes

African American males have long been associated with athletic success in a few highly visible sports. This success has theoretically taken away from their ability to achieve academically, or even their desire to do so. If success

awaits on the playing field, then why spend time in the classroom? Historically, African American males "have not had the chance to see pay-offs connected with education, [so] they conclude that running and jumping offer the best chances for fame and fortune" (Coakley, 1998, p. 263). The visibility provided to professional football, basketball, and baseball players by the media presents the picture that in order for African Americans to achieve in society, they must do so in athletics.

The stereotype the group of African American student-athletes disproved most immediately was that they were not capable students. Gabby related a story about her "Ivy League Caliber" ACT scores. Both Kay and November were engineering majors. Taz had already graduated and begun physical therapy school. Princess was a biology major on her way to graduate school. They wanted to be and deserved to be recognized for their accomplishments both academically and athletically. However, they shared their beliefs that there was a common perception shared by both other students and professors on campus that they were only attending X University because of their athletic talents. The discussion the women had on intellectual stereotyping harkened back to Al Campanis', Log Angeles Dodger executive, comments in the late 1980's. Campanis gave an interview in which he stated:

> I truly believe that they may not have some of the necessities to be, let's say, a field manager or perhaps a general manager. They may not have the desire to be in the front office. They're outstanding athletes, very God-gifted, and they're wonderful people . . . (Hoose, 1989, p. 50)

And what Campanis was saying, then, was that:

215

. . . blacks can't think. They have no ambition. Don't know how to lead. They have great bodies. They are, as a race, gifted physically but deficient mentally (Hoose, 1989, p. 50).

This misconception of mental deficiency in African American athletes was uncovered too often in the stories the X University student-athletes told. The athletes witnessed too often that "everyone around [them] perceived [them] being there only for [their] physical talents" (Harrison, 1998, p. 72).

The most disturbing story about the perception that "whites are geared for minds, blacks for hands" (Harrison, 1998, p. 72) came from Lolita. She related how her professor had written a letter to her coach in which he revealed his pride in the fact that no female athlete had ever passed his class. His letter was openly discriminatory and understandably angered Lolita. Again, as the other women have done when exposed to stereotypes, she directed her anger in a positive way. She chose to study even harder in order to succeed in that professor's class. She was determined to show him that she could achieve despite his contrary beliefs. Princess, Madison, Chyna, and Gabby all added to Lolita's story with experiences of their own where other students, professors, and even their coaches doubted their intellectual capacities. Every woman expressed the anger she felt when people made comments or assumptions about her ability to think and comprehend. They did not ascribe to the "all brawn, no brains" (Harrison, 1998, p. 71) attitude that some people take toward African Americans. The women were extremely offended that because of their race and athletic abilities, it was assumed that they would not be able to

216

achieve in the classroom.

The women also found themselves being the isolated or token representative of African American women in their classes. They not only had the academic demands of college and the athletic demands placed upon them as collegiate student-athletes, but also the added pressure of being the sole representative, or one of the few representatives, of their race in a class. They were alone in being able to understand the weight of having to manage the roles of a woman, an African American, and an athlete.

The final example of an intellectual stereotype that the women experienced was related to their language patterns. They expressed their dissatisfaction with the association of correct grammar with Caucasians and slang with African Americans. They felt that 'talking white" should not be synonymous with intelligence and "talking black" synonymous with a lack of intelligence. This relationship basically states that Caucasians are more intelligent than African Americans. And, in order to be perceived as being intelligent an African American must "talk white." The women believed that there was a place for dialects and accents and that the way a person spoke was a part of that person's identity. It bothered them that these labels had been created through the use of stereotypes and the misconceptions on which they depend.

Athletic Stereotypes

Statistics point to basketball and track as the most played sports for African American women with approximately 80% of all NCAA Division I scholarship athletes on the rosters of those two sports (Coakley, 1998). The women in this study questioned whether these sports were indeed the most popular, or rather the sports to which they received the greatest exposure or the sports in which they were led to believe they had the greatest opportunity for success. All of the women commented on assumptions held about them because of their race and athleticism. Lolita, Gabby, Babeahgirl, and Chyna had all been approached and asked if they played basketball. Vanessa and Dianne were assumed to be on track teams. Princess was exposed to the athletic stereotype as the only African American member of the cross-country team. People just assumed she ran cross-country to keep her in shape for track, which to them obviously was her first priority because of her race.

While Lolita, Dianne, Princess, November, Essence, Chyna, Madison, Taz, and Kay all participated in the stereotypically African American sports of track and basketball, Gabby, Vanessa, and Babeahgirl had different experiences as student-athletes in crew, volleyball, and fencing. Research has indicated that "women who choose to participate in the less 'acceptable' sports tend to experience more role conflict and stigma than those in the [socially] approved sports" (Leonard, 1988, p. 268). All three of the women expressed their frustrations and feelings of isolation in being the only African American

218

woman on their teams. Choosing to break the stereotype had its consequences

for these women.

Not only were the women assumed to participate in certain sports, but

assumptions were also made on the skill they would demonstrate in those

sports:

> The historical belief was that African Americans were inferior physically.
> This idea was totally diffused in 1936 when Jesse Owens dominated the
> Olympics in track and field. Since 1936, the philosophy, theory, and
> belief by many in society is that African American athletes are just
> naturally gifted. (Harrison, 1998, p. 67)

African Americans are assumed to have natural physical abilities that others

have to work long and hard to achieve. Words used to describe the success of

Caucasian athletes include tireless effort, hours of practice, and extreme

discipline. On the other hand, descriptions of the achievements of African

Americans in athletics more often take the form of biological gifts, superior

genetics, and natural athletic superiority. This perception of the differences

between different athletes explains why the women in the study are determined

to be good students in order to prove that they can work hard and achieve. It

also explains why they refuse to let themselves be "beaten by a white girl."

In addition to the belief that African Americans are more suited for certain

sports, there are additional sub-divisions within sports. Genetically, claims have

long been made that African Americans possessed different muscle fiber

composition, differences in muscle configuration, and some even believe that

African Americans have an extra foot bone (Hyland, 1990). All of these claims

attempt to explain the success of African American athletes in sports or events that require speed and/ or jumping ability. Within the sport of track, African Americans are stereotypically known for their speed and Caucasians for their endurance. In accordance with this stereotype, the women also explained the concept of "not getting beat by a white girl." If an African American sprinter were to lose to a Caucasian runner, a stigma would be attached to that runner and be hard to live down. Kay explained the basketball version of this concept when she was on an all African American high school team that competed against all Caucasian teams. So not only did the women experience a societal expectation to participate in track or basketball, they also experienced a societal expectation within those sports to not lose to a white competitor.

How does the socialization process differ for African American women?

How does this affect sport participation patterns?

The interviews with the student-athletes reinforced Yevonne Smith's point that the "socialization of African American and other women of color historically has been different from Anglo American women" (Smith, 1992, p. 234). While the women in the study had similar experiences with the socialization agents (parents, siblings, peers, teachers, and coaches) in their lives to that of other women, they faced the influences of environment, access, and racism in a manner much different than most of their Anglo American counterparts;

220

. . . their overall view of the world, significant others, and opportunity structure contain the potential for a different pattern of socialization into sport roles. (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1989, p. 218)

Having both race and gender working against their sport participation

opportunities, these women showed a determination not many athletes do

(Acosta, 1993).

Socialization Agents

The most prominent socialization agents for the women who participated

in this study were their parents. Jackson, McCullough, and Gurin (1997)

explained that the family is the initial socialization influence on all children, but

that the family takes on additional importance for African American females.

They stressed how the dynamic of a close and nurturing relationship in African

American families remains beyond the initial socialization influence. This

relationship emphasizes the importance of history, identity, and togetherness in

a way that is not as prevalent in families from other cultures. The influence of

the family and the neighborhood increase the chances that African American

children will become involved in sports, particularly track and field, at an earlier

age than their Caucasian counterparts. Where Caucasian children tend to

derive their initial sport influences from school more than African American

children (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1989).

Dianne, Vanessa, and Princess all identified their fathers as the central

figure in their sport participation and shared stories of their fathers coaching

them, playing with them in their neighborhoods, and how they associated sports

221

with time they spent with their fathers. Gabby and Kay both saw their mothers as the main person in their support network, and had similar memories of their mothers helping them with their first athletic experiences. Kay's mother bought her the Globetrotter ball and Gabby's mother signed her up for team sports once she realized that her daughter was going to continue to come home from school with ripped dresses and holes in her stockings from playing games at recess. These women helped their mothers and their mothers helped them to rise above the gender socialization that traditionally taught women that 'being an acceptable 'feminine' woman did not involve proving oneself in competition" (Leonard, 1988, p. 267). November labeled both her mother and father as the primary influences in her athletic career. Her parents were the ones who encouraged her to continue and to always try to do better the next time she played a game or ran in a meet.

Brothers and sisters were additional familial influences for the student-athletes in the study. November credited her older sister's involvement in track with assisting her to become involved as well. If it were not for the missing relay team member on her sister's track club, November might not have begun her track career at the young age of six. Babeahgirl gave even more credit to her brothers for teaching her about sports. She attributed her ability to persevere and her competitive spirit to her attempts to play sports with her brothers when she was very young. She could have given up and not continually tried to keep up with them, but she learned that giving up would not

help her accomplish anything. She carried that lesson with her all the way to college sports.

Peers were important, but not as instrumental in the lives of the African American female athletes who participated in this study. For African American female athletes, peers are few and far between. Most of the other females who share similar cultural backgrounds play basketball and run track. That tendency did have an influence on the sport choices of the women from X University. Initially, Lolita chose track because it was a way that she could spend time with her friends. November picked track because her roommate participated. The lessons African American women learn from their families about group identity and togetherness, makes it difficult for them to choose a sport where they are the only African American female. The decision to be that "token" participant can lead to feelings of isolation and lowered self-esteem (Jackson, et al., 1997). Both Gabby and Vanessa attested to sharing those experiences. Research indicates that:

> With the admission of a minority member to a team, the informal interaction and conversation will be changes. The toke member is likely to be on the periphery of the team socializing, excluded from in-group humor, and generally treated as an outsider. (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1989, p.206)

Gabby found one peer on the crew team that encouraged her to continue and Vanessa received support from Gabby and members of the athletic department.

Greendorfer (1993) asserts that socialization is the mechanism through which African American women are educated to the expectations of others. Socialization is the process by which these young women are exposed to their

role in athletics. Rarely, if ever, are African American women exposed to this role by another African American women. None of the women in the study had the opportunity to be taught or coached by another African American female in their early sport experiences. Some of the women, however, did identify a teacher or coach as the central influence in their athletic participation. Both Chyna and Lolita credited their middle school physical education teachers with discovering their talents in track. They were able to gain the attention of their teachers in a way they had not been able to do with their parents. These two teachers filled the socialization role of the family in these cases. Taz and Essence also identified coaches who saw their potential and pushed them to explore it. Neither woman was self-motivated enough at the time to dedicate themselves to track, but these coaches assisted them in finding that motivation.

Environmental and Economic Access

While the women identified people as the most significant influences in their sport participation decisions, research has shown that African American women are more prone to be influenced by societal factors than Caucasian women (Greendorfer & Ewing, 1981; Smith, 1992). The additional socialization influences faced by the African American female student-athletes at X University, and many other African American females, included the environment in which they grew up and the economic access they were afforded to athletics. The women felt strongly that these two factors played significant roles in their sport involvement and in the sport participation patterns of all African American

females. They agreed that the socialization of African American women includes several factors such as the lack of environmental and economic opportunities. African American women often have to overcome the limits of exclusionary teams and clubs, geographical access to facilities, cost of private coaches, and cost of equipment (Acosta, 1993; Alexander, 1978).

The women in the study who grew up in urban areas were exposed to only basketball being played in the park and playgrounds near their homes and kids running in the street. There were no swimming pools, golf courses, tennis courts, or opportunities to play volleyball or soccer. They had to drive to the suburbs to be able to play those sports: " . . . black women . . .have rarely been seen in the country club sports" (Leonard, 1988, p. 271). African American women are disproportionately represented in the lower end of the socioeconomic scale and have not been able to afford to play those sports. Individuals and institutions have also discriminated against African American women when they have attempted to swim or play golf or tennis (Leonard, 1988).

Kay told a story about an experience she had at X University with the lights on the basketball court being turned off at night so the students who wanted to play basketball could not play. She was amazed that the lights for the street hockey and tennis courts would stay on twenty-four hours a day so that the students who wanted to play hockey and tennis could play. The environment surrounding the school provided students the opportunity to play only certain sports. A further example would be how Gabby's environment as a

225

young girl in Canada allowed her to be exposed to crew whereas the other women growing up in America never saw the sport. Kay also labeled the sports of field hockey and lacrosse as sports she never saw growing up in Chicago. African Americans tend to excel at sports where the facilities, coaching, and programs are available. They tend to be underrepresented in "sports that have a club nexus such as tennis, golf, and swimming" (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1989, p. 219).

Environmental and economic access are inextricably bound together as socialization factors for African American females. Lower socioeconomic conditions have a disproportionate impact on African Americans (Smith, 1992). The majority of African American families cannot afford costly athletic experiences and do not live in neighborhoods with access to them. Neighborhoods with residents who have fewer financial resources will not frequently be chosen as sites for swimming pools or tennis courts. These neighborhoods tend to be urban areas that do not make them candidates for golf courses or ice rinks. Many suburban locations attract these types of facilities because those neighborhoods have the resources to support them.

Kay and November shared how they developed their athletic skills. Kay shot baskets across the street from her house at a playground. November ran in the street in front of her house with her sister using a twig as a relay baton. They found ways, despite their surroundings, to become involved and succeed in athletics (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1989). They were able to succeed at the sports of basketball and track because they had the environmental and

economic means to do so. Conversely, Taz and Vanessa had environmental and economic access to any sports they wanted to try. Both families had the resources and saw sports as an important outlay of those resources. Taz ended up participating in track in college but was able to play soccer and field hockey throughout her first few years of athletics. She also chose an event in track, the heptathlon, in which very few African American women participate and which requires more personal training and more expensive coaching. Vanessa's parents committed to her future in volleyball. They paid expensive club fees and drove her over an hour each way for every practice.

Regardless of their own experiences, all of the women found fault with a society and a system that limits what sport a child can play based on environmental and economic access. Each of them was pleased with their own athletic experiences and choice of sports, but many of them wondered if they would have chosen a different sport if given the opportunity to be exposed at an early age. The women worried about the future of African American female athletes if the geographical and financial access of sports such as tennis, swimming, volleyball, soccer, field hockey, and lacrosse continues to be exclusive rather than inclusive.

Racism

Being singled out because of their race was an experience that too many of the women in the study shared. From being subject to racial slurs at the hands of elementary school classmates to having opposing teams in high

school refer to them by epitaphs, these women have lived through their fare

share of racist incidents. For a young African American female, this type of

ostracism and hostility (Stratta, 1995a) tends to socialize her away from

situations where that type of treatment might occur and toward safer situations.

Situations with an increased likelihood of vocalized racism against African

Americans include those with few African Americans present (i.e. swimming,

golf, tennis, field hockey). Situations with a decreased likelihood of vocalized

racism against African Americans would be those where African Americans are

represented in greater numbers (i.e. basketball, track and field). While some of

the women in the study gave the impressions that they would confront racism

when given the opportunity, not all young African American females share that

type of courage. The younger the female, the greater the chance is that she

chooses basketball or track rather than having to stand up to those in the

majority. Or as Arthur Ashe related, the greater the chance is that she does

what she has to do in order to succeed:

> There is a telling of a story about Arthur Ashe. He always lunged for
> every ball, even those clearly out of bounds. When a friend asked him
> why, he said 'When I played against white players in the early days, the
> linesmen didn't always call them out. I learned that there was no use
> complaining, but I also learned that I could win anyway. (Harrison, 1998,
> p. 63)

The existence of racism did not cease when the women grew older and

entered college, particularly since they chose a predominantly Caucasian

University in the Midwest. The women noticed that although they had been

classmates and teammates with people from different races before, many of the

women they came into contact with at X University grew up in more rural areas and were isolated from any significant African American populations. Some of that isolation continued at X University in such places as the Student Union or the residence halls:" . . .on every campus I visit I see a little band of black students . . . they mix very little with the white students . . .the cultural discontinuity is staggering . . ." (Smith, 1990, p. 15). The women in the study identified the culture shock they felt on the campus when they were isolated from any significant African American populations. They found it difficult to see so few faces that looked like they did, which explained why they banded together with other African American students in the Student Union.

Essence went to great length to describe two situations at X University in which she felt she was being looked at differently because of her skin color. The first incident occurred when she was walking home from church and a group of men failed to respond to her greeting of "Good Morning." She admitted that this lack of respect did not bother her as much as it would have when she first came to X. Her sensitivity to some forms of racism had lessened. The second incident involving Essence upset her more. Another student and his friends approached her in a parking lot. The student questioned what she was doing looking at his car. She was frightened by this and made to feel helpless because of her skin color. She had no intentions of doing anything to harm the car, but the other students assumed she did because she was African American.

The men who approached Essence had been socialized to have

certain opinions about African Americans, "how do you feel comfortable around people you can't trust" (Harrison, 1998, p. 72). The women in the study had been socialized to have certain opinions about their roles in sport and in society. As African American women experience the socialization process, they are exposed to words and images that leave impressions on them. These impressions lead them to form ideas about what they are capable of becoming in American society: "unfortunately amongst sport providers there appears to be a deficiency in understanding the needs of these women and how to overcome constraints to their participation" (Taylor & Toohey, 1998, p. 85). Many of the images the women remembered are like those that Taz and Gabby shared about being called names by classmates and teammates, and Essence shared about not being shown respect. Few of the images are of African American women as role models and successful athletes.

What can coaches, educators, administrators, researchers, the media, families, peers, and role models do to increase the overall sport participation rates of African American girls and women?

What can these people do to increase the rates of African American girls and women in the underrepresented sports?

As early as 1974 Houzer identified that African American females interested in athletics had very few role models (Houzer, 1974). In order for young athletes to develop their interest and their skills, they need to be able to look up to people who share some of the same cultural characteristics. African American females need other African American women as role models. Young

African women need to be told that they can participate in any sport they desire (Frost, 1994). The situation is difficult to remedy. In order for young African American women to be encouraged toward participating in sport, particularly sports other than basketball and track, they need positive role models in those sports. In order to have those positive role models, more African American women need to participate in those sports. No matter the difficulty level, all of the women in the study agreed that role modeling was the area at which to direct the most energy; 'it is crucial to have minorities as role models in coaching, officiating, and administrative positions at institutions and sport-related agencies and/or organizations" (Abney & Richey, 1992, p. 58). All of the participants realize how the role models and mentors in their lives have guided and helped in their athletic careers and believe that the same can be achieved for more African American women.

The first method by which the women believed more role models could be identified was through the media. Television provides more young people with access to sport that any other source. The women listed their role models and most of those were athletes they had the opportunity to watch compete on television. Florence Griffith Joyner, Jackie Joyner, Muhammad Ali, Magic Johnson, Nadia Comenechi, Chris Evert Lloyd, Martina Navritalova. The more exposure the media provides to African American female athletes, the more options young women will have. The women in the study held similar opinions on the value playing sports has had in their lives. They wanted more females to share in positive aspects of athletics. All that the women in the study have

231

learned from participating in sports has carried over in to their lives outside of sports with increased self-esteem, dedication to succeed, and discipline. They believed that the role models they had helping them remain involved in sports aided them in that education process: "young girls don't really know what's going on for them in sports unless someone is there who understands and takes the time to tell them about it" (Sloan Green, 1996, p. 1).

The student-athletes in the study also made a valid point about where individuals find their role models. The media can provide assistance in the identification of role models, but a role model can be anyone, mother, father, coach, older athlete, professional athlete. Different people find their role models in different places. Not all role models are found in a commercial or on a poster. As Gabby said, "there doesn't have to be a NIKE swoosh at the bottom of a poster to make someone a role model" (Gabby). What was more important to the women was that more positive role models were needed for young African American females, regardless of the source.

In addition to assisting with providing exposure for role models, the women also believed that the media and companies who are willing to sponsor athletes have a role to play in improving the exposure of African American females. The women asserted that not only is it the responsibility of the television media to promote African American female athletes. It is also the responsibility of companies use these women to promote their products and to include these women in advertisements. African American women need to be included in the marketing of sport products (NCAA News, 1998).

While they realized that the media could make a difference in the accessibility of professional and collegiate athletes to serve as role models, they also recognized that communities and schools could make a difference as well by hiring more African American coaches and administrators. Despite the fact that Title IX has made a significant difference in the number of women who are participating in sports, the number of women who are coaches, administrators, officials, commentators, and athletic trainers have decreased (Acosta & Carpenter, 1993). Discrimination has limited the potential for minority women to assume positions of leadership in athletics: ". . . [they] have limited employment in athletic leadership . . .societal and instructional barriers deny minorities the opportunity to obtain such positions" (Abney & Richey, 1992, p. 58).

The women in this study found it difficult to recognize that they were now the role models for many African American females. Through working with Big Brothers/Big Sisters, the YMCA and YWCA, and simply by being a student-athlete at a major NCAA Division I institution, these women have become role models. The student-athletes in the study viewed their role model status in a variety of ways. Some were unsure of carrying out what could be labeled as a responsibility to give back to their communities for their opportunity to participate. Others were excited about the chance to teach young African American females how to play sports, get an education, and be positive members of society. They all understood their position as African American women who have succeeded in academics and athletics and how valuable they

could be in assisting other females in achieving the same goals. Some had already begun to give back through coaching at clinics and camps. Others had spoken to teams and classes at schools. They all were amazed on how the younger African American females looked up to them and ascribed hero status to them. The women knew they were being watched and emulated.

Lastly, the participants in the study addressed how increased exposure and access could positively affect the number of African American females participating in sports. The women identified committed coaches, community leaders, and current athletes as essential components in improving the participation rates. The women emphasized that these committed leaders have to be both African American and members of the dominant group (Olgesby, 1993). Not only do African Americans have to be involved, but "color-affirming whites" (Olgesby, 1993, p. 260) must also become leaders in improving the African American female representation in sport. Those in positions of sport leadership need to end their reliance on the few African Americans in similar positions to challenge societal norms and improve participation statistics (Bruening, 1998).

Taz's comments on how to involve more people who break stereotypes in the education process demonstrated how simple increasing exposure and access could be: "Send white people to the predominantly black areas and tell them about track. Let the black people see how awesome this white guy is. It sends the message that I don't have to be stuck in this just because I'm black" (Taz). Vanessa added ideas about how to reach out to more African American

females by lowering costs of athletic programs such as club volleyball. Taz, Vanessa, and the other women understood that more children have to be exposed to what changes are occurring in sport in order for the cycle of African American women only playing basketball and track to be altered. They need to see women like Gabby on the crew team, Vanessa playing volleyball, and Babeahgirl fencing. Everyone has a role to play in increasing the exposure and access of African American females to different athletic options.

Implications for Sport Managers

Perhaps the most important fact the African American female student-athletes have illuminated in this study was that they are not simply female student-athletes, nor are they simply African American student-athletes. They are both female and African American. This combination presents a special set of implications for sport managers who are interested in successfully marketing, managing, and motivating them. Based on the outcomes of this study, I have chosen to focus the implications on three particular groups of sport managers: the sport media, athletic administrators, and collegiate coaches.

Media

Sport managers are aware of the "symbiotic relationship between sports and the mass media . . . " (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1989, p. 251). Some might be aware that in this relationship, rarely are any African American female athletes

235

visible. Men's sports still receive over 85% of the coverage in all forms of the media including television, radio, newspapers, and magazines (Coakley, 1998). Take for example that in the history of *Sports Illustrated*, 90% of the covers have featured male athletes. The media have been afforded the opportunity to provide their own version of sport, one that selects sports and athletes based on their ability to provide entertainment and in turn to provide revenue. This view of sports is exclusionary and is the only source many individuals have for sports: "many people use mediated sports as reference points as they form, revise, and extend their ideas about sports, social life, and social relations" (Coakley, 1998, p. 381).

The women in this study identified that it was not sufficient coverage for the media to televise sports that did not highlight the talents of women, but instead showed them in secondary roles (i.e. NFL football and NBA basketball cheerleaders and spectators). They also stated that it was not sufficient to cover sports in which very few African American women participate (i.e. LPGA tour, tennis). And as the participants pointed out, it did not serve the future of African American female athletes well to only provide media coverage of African American women participating in basketball and track and field. Presenting women as secondary in the sport roles to men does not promote gender equity. Presenting sports where very few African American women participate does not promote increased participation in those sports. And presenting sports in which African American women have been stereotyped does not encourage young athletes to step outside the stereotype. The media representation of African

American women currently does little to encourage progress or change. While many individuals realize that the perception of sports that pervades the media is slanted:

> . . . most people do not give much thought to how and why sports are represented as they are. In fact, most people just enjoy what they read, listen to, and view. They are not inclined to ask. . . questions, and media representations do not encourage audiences to be critical. (Coakley, 1998, p. 383)

Television is the means by which much of American society experiences sport. The media and the sport managers who oversee the media can make a difference in the sport experience of African American females by assuming a critical stance. By promoting the coverage of African American female athletes, sport managers can assist in highlighting them in sport roles where they are represented in great force and where they are role models for breaking stereotypes like Gabby who rows, Babeahgirl who fences, and Vanessa who plays volleyball. Sport mangers can help to lead members of society to be more questioning of the media representation of sports. They can assist individuals in the "recognition of the . . . bias in televised sport" and in the taking of " . . .a first step in developing a greater public awareness of the ideological work embedded in sports programming" (Hillard, 1994, p. 98). The more members of American society develop an understanding of what the media includes and excludes, the more members of society will recognize the role African American women play in sports.

In addition to increasing the frequency and quality of media coverage of African American female athletes, sport managers also can play a role in the

237

marketing of those athletes through the media. The Rainbow Commission for Fairness in Athletics proposed that NCAA institutions establish policy that dictates a fair percentage of their vendors represent minority and women vendors and that each NCAA institution increase the number of women and minorities participating in licensing (NCAA News, 1998). Proposals modeled after this one for managers who deal with marketing and the media would not only increase the number of African American women who are involved behind the scenes, but they would increase the chances that those African American women would select other African American women to represent their product. The women in this study strongly believed that bringing the faces and accomplishments of African American women into the public eye was an important method that should be utilized in increasing awareness on the parts of potential young athletes and others.

The power and influence the media possesses in American society makes it almost impossible to imagine life without televised sports and its advertisements, radio broadcasts of athletic events and news, weekly sports magazines, or the sports section of the morning paper. When firsthand experience with sports is not possible, people use the media to keep them informed and to help them form their opinions and ideas about sport: "research suggests that dominant ideologies about . . . gender, race . . . are perpetuated through the images and messages contained in the media coverage of sports in the U.S." (Coakley, 1998, p.399). The media has functioned for African American women as a means of reinforcing traditional beliefs and stereotypes

238

instead of challenging people to raise questions and promote change (Cohen,

1993). Sport managers who work with the media can challenge and raise

questions. Some suggestions of ways in which to do so include:

-Making contacts with both television and print journalists to develop
sports stories to feed the media.

-Encourage writers, such as sports information directors and their staffs,
to develop sports stories of African American female athletes to provide
to the media.

-Constantly monitor media coverage of African American females in
sports. Call or write newspapers, magazines, and radio and television
stations whenever coverage warrants positive recognition for the
supportive treatment of African American females or sporting events with
African American female participants.

-Protest verbally and in writing when media coverage is offensive or
trivializing, and when African American women are overlooked. (Cohen,
1993)

Athletic Administration

One of the central roles of all athletic administrators should be increasing

diversity in their institutions, which could be accomplished in part by providing

participation and leadership opportunities for African American women. An

increasing number of African American student-athletes "are met by few people

of color working as presidents, administrators, professors, academic advisers,

coaches, or athletic directors when they are recruited to predominantly white

institutions" (Lapchick, 1996, p. 2). In his address at the National Collegiate

Athletic Association Convention in 1998, Executive Director Cedric Dempsey

"urged members to take a new look at ways to increase ethnic and gender

diversity at their institutions" (NCAA News, 1998). He admitted that the

performance of sport managers in administrative positions at NCAA member institutions is lacking in this area. In 1994, 3.6% of athletic directors, 4.5% of associate directors, and 4.9% of assistant directors at NCAA member institutions were African American (Lapchick, 1996).

The NCAA has taken an admirable lead in providing examples of how other sport managers in athletic administrations can diversify their staffs. The national office has initiated a program of diversity education seminars with "goals of providing participants with an understanding of, respect for, and sensitivity to multiculturalism and diversity; assisting participants in becoming catalysts to promote diversity at their respective institutions" (NCAA News, 1998). The NCAA has also implemented National Office Internships for "on-the-job learning experience for ethnic minority and women college graduates" (NCAA News, 1998) as well as expanding their postgraduate scholarship program to include women's and minority enhancement grants for student-athletes who plan to continue their education in athletic administration. And finally, the NCAA Fellows Program was developed "goal of enhancing employment and leadership opportunities for minorities and women at the senior management level of intercollegiate athletics administration" (NCAA News, 1998).

Coupled with the NCAA's efforts have been Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow Commission's guidelines for fair employment practices to be implemented by sport managers in administrative positions at all NCAA institutions. People in positions of leadership who have the power to hire candidates tend to gravitate toward people with similar backgrounds and from

the same school of thought. Thus the popular phenomenon known as the "old boy network," or more applicable to this situation "the old white boy network." This network has been in existence for some time in college athletics and "as long as it continues, . . . all women will be underrepresented in the power positions . . ." (Coakley,1998, p. 316). With this in mind, the Rainbow Commission's guidelines call for the inclusion of minorities and women in all areas and proportionate to every hierarchy at all levels—including coaches, athletic administrators, sports information personnel, and radio/television announcers. Reducing covert racial bias can be more quickly accomplished by hiring minorities and women for positions in athletic administration.

In an effort to educate more administrators to the components of diversity, the Rainbow Commission has also advocated sensitivity training within each NCAA institution's entire organizational culture of administrators, coaches, and personnel (NCAA News, 1998). These sessions are aimed at explaining the historical and sociological background of racism in sport. The sessions address dominant ideologies of race and culture and the stereotypes that evolve from them from both the perspective of the minority group as well as the dominant group. Participation in these and similar sessions provides the opportunity for sport managers to be educated and to help educate others. In order to create a more diverse working environment, administrators have to be sensitive to the needs of other administrators, coaches, and student-athletes.

Athletic administrators who provide a high quality of experience for the African American female student-athletes on their campuses do so because they

have an understanding of what that experience entails. Positive experiences in

college athletics encourage those women to enter into athletically related

careers. Currently efforts to increase participation numbers fall to the few

African American women in leadership positions and others who see the effort to

increase representation as worthwhile. Providing more positive role models for

young African American females will convey the message of opportunity for

those women in athletics. Sport managers who are employed as administrators

in college athletics can be positive role models for African American female

student-athletes by committing themselves to:

-confront discriminatory practices in your institution

-be an advocate for African American female student-athletes, coaches, and other personnel

-model and execute fair employment practice in your institution

-learn about and be able to educate others on the history of discrimination in sports

-object to any policies that would decrease opportunities for African American women to participate in sports

-recruit African American women into coaching by creating internships and other program to prepare these women to assume coaching and administrative positions

-utilize networks of African American women when hiring coaches and administrators and develop resume files to be able to supply names of potential sport leaders to other institutions

-create and promote a positive work environment for African American women in your institution

-form mentoring relationships to assist in training young African American female sport leaders.

242

(Abney & Richey, 1992; Lopiano, 1991)

Coaches

Sport managers who coach in intercollegiate programs must "be committed to equality and demonstrate this to the team" (Lapchick, 1996, p. 8). Since only 3.9% of head coaches and 9.8% of assistant coaches at NCAA member institutions are African American, coaches of other cultural backgrounds must learn how to serve as mentors to their African American female student-athletes (Lapchick, 1996). A coach is the person, other than peers, with whom the African American female student-athlete typically has the most contact with throughout her career. It is crucial that the coach understand the dynamics at work in both sport and society that discriminate against these student-athletes.

Coaches must be aware of the prevalent stereotypes concerning African American females and work to treat these women as individuals. They must respect any differences in their African American female student-athletes and not characterize these differences as representative of a stereotyped group (Abney & Richey, 1992). The participants in the study explained how negatively being stereotyped can affect an African American woman. Not only can there be emotional effects, but many times young African American females also base their athletic, educational, and career choices on stereotypes that have little or nothing to do with reality. Sport managers who coach must be careful

not to cluster players due to perceived stereotypes in regard to position, athletic

ability, or intellect (Abney & Richey, 1992).

In addition to Abney and Richey's recommendations for working with

African American female student-athletes, Stratta makes some concrete

suggestions for coaches to follow:

-Instead of characterizing student-athletes by the color of their skin and
typical association with that color, coaches should describe their student-
athletes by their physical and intellectual attributes.

-Allow African American recruits to interact alone with African American
athletes in order to sense the perspective of an insider as to the cultural
environment on the team

-Provide "safe spaces" and support for African American female student-
athletes to express themselves and aspects of their culture freely

-Create opportunities for representation of African American female
student-athletes in leadership roles (i.e. team captain) in order to give
them a voice on the team

-Ascertain if all athletes, regardless of cultural background, have
opportunities to experience the same levels of satisfaction and success

-Implement non-traditional methods in recruiting African American female
student-athletes to the team. (Stratta, 1995b)

In addition to working with their own student-athletes to create an

atmosphere of cultural acceptance, coaches can be positive agents of

socialization for athletes outside of their teams and provide access to other

agents as well. Coaches can take athletics to African American females and

introduce new sports to different children. The managers can develop

programs to target neighborhoods that do not traditionally have access to sports

like golf, tennis, or swimming. They can develop and operate camps and clinics

at reduced or no cost to the children in an effort to increase exposure and publicize the opportunities that exist. Sports Unlimited is an example of a program created for inner city girls in Philadelphia who had no involvement in sports. The girls were given a choice of different sports, one of which they received an intense exposure to over a six-week period (Oglesby, 1993). Another example is the Starlings program in southern California that provides volleyball training and coaching to high school aged girls in the hopes of gaining them college scholarships (Shewman, 1997). Coaches can make a difference in the lives of many African American females: "young girls don't really know that's going on for them in sports unless someone is there who understands and takes the time to tell them about it" (Sloan Green, 1996, p. 1). The difference can only be made, however, through conscious choice and constant effort.

Researchers and sociologists agree "race is not a reality but a social construct" (Harrison, 1998, p. 70). The mass media, athletic administrators, and coaches have the ability to continue that construction or to disassemble it. Sport managers who work within and oversee media outlets can either work to present sport inclusively from all cultural and gender perspectives. Or they can continue to reinforce the biased coverage that currently exists. Sport managers who occupy role as athletic administrators in colleges and universities can aggressively engage in mentoring and hiring practices to diversify the cultural and gender composition of athletic leadership. Or they can continue to allow "blacks to manifest themselves on the field, but not off it" (Harrison, 1998, p.

245

70). And sport managers who coach can "debunk stereotypes" (Stratta, 1995b, p. 54), foster welcoming and accepting environments for their student-athletes, and reach out to young athletes with knowledge and guidance. Or they can continue to take "kids and [sell] them on the bouncing ball and running . . . and that being able to do these things athletically was going to be an end in itself" (Harrison, 1998, p. 66) without regard for their social, academic, and physical well-being.

An immense and almost overwhelming responsibility falls on the shoulders of sport managers according to the research and the women in this study. But can sport managers allow for silencing, stereotypes, and socialization to prevent them from adopting and implementing strategies for change in the lives of these African American females, these phenomenal women?

Recommendations for Future Research

Research on the experiences of African American females in sport is limited and a relatively untapped area of inquiry. Based on the methods used in this study and the findings generated, several recommendations for future research related to the sport participation patterns of African American females can be made. The following are suggestion for future research:

1. Conduct interviews with coaches and administrators at X University in order to ascertain their impressions of the experiences of African American female student-athletes at their institution.

2. Use this study as a model for replication at other NCAA Division I institutions. Contact other researchers in sport management or sport sociology for collaboration and Athlete Academic Support Offices for assistance with access to student-athletes.

3. Replicate this study at NCAA Division II and III institutions in order to compare findings with those from Division I institutions.

4. Conduct this study at institutions in major metropolitan areas such as Chicago, Los Angeles, Atlanta or Washington, D.C with higher percentages of African Americans enrolled and a more diverse population in the city.

5. Conduct a similar study with female student-athletes at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

6. Utilize quantitative methods to develop a survey to investigate differences in the socialization and stereotyping experiences of African American female student-athletes to non-African American female student-athletes X University.

7. Employ quantitative methods to develop a survey to examine the differences in socialization and stereotyping experiences between African American female student-athletes to non-African American female student-athletes at all NCAA Division I institutions.

8. Develop a qualitative study that examines how silencing, stereotype, and socialization affect how other minority female student-athletes (i.e. Asian American, Hispanic, Native American) have experienced sport as youths and at X University.

Appendix A

Grounded Survey

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

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

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

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

251

III. Societal Perceptions of Race and Gender

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

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |

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

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |

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

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |

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

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |

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

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |

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

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |

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

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |

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

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |

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

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |

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

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | n/a |

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

1   2   3   4   5   n/a

IV. Media Issues

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

1   2   3   4   5   n/a

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

1   2   3   4   5   n/a

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

1   2   3   4   5   n/a

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

1   2   3   4   5   n/a

V. Additional Comments

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

Thank you for participating in this study.

Appendix B

Grounded Survey Results

I received four returned grounded surveys. The following are the responses of each participant.

Question	Respondent A	Respondent B	Respondent C	Respondent 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

255

Appendix C

Focus Group Interview Guide

1. When did you first begin your involvement in sports? Can you recall your first sport experience? How did that experience shape the role of sport in your life?

2. Who or what would you credit with getting you started in sports? How influential has this event or person remained in your life? Do you think you would have gotten involved if it weren't for this event or person?

3. 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, what do you think you weren't involved in many sports while growing up?

4. How do you perceive your role as a female athlete? How do your 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 give back to African American girls interested in sports?

5. What is your perception of the state of participation of African American female sin sport? Are there enough women participating? Are these women participating in a variety of sports?

Appendix D

Individual Interview Guides

Princess
7/15/99

1. Why did you choose track and field? What influenced you to become and to stay involved?

2. What has your experience been as a participant in track and field?

3. What stereotypes have you been exposed to as an African American woman? As an African American female athlete? Talk about the academic experience and getting beaten by a white girl (see marked page).

4. Comment more on your experience participating in cross-country.

5. Talk about your work with children. Are you a role model? Do you feel that you can affect change in the sport participation rates of African American women?

6. What can be done to publicize the African American female athlete?

Gabby
7/15/99

1. Why did you choose crew? What influenced you to become and to stay involved?

2. What has your experience been as a participant in crew?

3. What stereotypes have you been exposed to as an African American woman? As an African American female athlete? Talk about the Union.

4. Comment more on the weight room.

5. How do you feel about the treatment of women by the athletic department?

6. Culture/Race/Ethnicity. Talk about the intricacies and differences among African Americans.

7. That is the current state of participation for African American women in sport? Quote from marked page.

Vanessa
7/22/99

1. Why did you choose volleyball? What influenced you to become and stay involved?

2. What has your experience been as a participant in volleyball?

3. What stereotypes have you been exposed to as an African American woman? As an African American female athlete?

4. How do you feel women are treated by the athletic department?

5. Talk about club volleyball and the exclusionary nature of it.

6. What is the current state of participation? What can be done to encourage more girls to play and to play different sports?

Taz
7/22/99

1. Why did you choose track and field? What influenced you to become and stay involved?

2. What has your experience been as a participant in track and field?

3. What stereotypes have you been exposed to as an African American woman? As an African American female athlete?

4. How do you feel women are treated by the athletic department?

5. Talk about cross-country/track differences and the coaches not knowing the other kids' names.

6. What is the current state of participation? What can be done to encourage more girls to play and to play different sports?

Appendix E

Background Questionnaire

Name_____

Age _____

Year in school _____

Hometown _____

Sport played in college _____

Sport (s) played in high school

_____

Parents'professions_____

Parents' sport backgrounds

_____

Siblings and ages

_____

_____

Appendix F

Letter to Participants

May 4, 1999

Dear Participant:

I would like to ask for your collaboration in my dissertation research. I am examining the effects of a silencing of African American women in research and literature, stereotypes associated with African American women, and the socialization process on the participation choices of African American females. I am also interested in strategies for changing the participation rates and choices.

For this study, I would like to engage in three group interviews with members of your institution's athletic teams. If you should agree to be a part of one of these interview sessions, I would ask you to share with me some of you thoughts, reflections, and experiences as a sport participant. I would be particularly interested in discussing what influenced you to participate in sports and to choose the sport in which you currently participate.

Your involvement would consist of one interview with a total time commitment of 1 ½ to 2 hours. With your permission, the interviews will be audiotapes and transcribed. The information you provide will remain confidential. Access to the tapes will be limited to myself. Upon completion of the study, the tapes will be destroyed. The transcription of your interviews will be presented to you to insure that they reflect your voice and point of view. While consenting to participate, you may at any time stop with the interviews, withdraw from the research, ask that some piece of information not be included, or request that observations regarding yourself or any part of your activity not be reported in this research investigation. Your wishes will be respected.

I hope you will find this study acceptable and support my work with African American female student-athletes. If you have any questions or additional comments about the direction of the research, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Sincerely,

Jennie Bruening
455 Larkins Hall
337 West 17th Avenue
Columbus, OH 43210
(740) 427-5469 (work)
brueningj@kenyon.edu

Appendix G

Informed Consent Forms

Individual Interview Informed Consent Form

I consent to participating in the project on the participation of African American females in sport.

The purpose of the project is to learn more about the influences that lead African American females toward and away from sport. I understand that this portion of the study will entail a one-hour individual interview and an opportunity to review the transcripts.

I understand that in any documents arising from this study my name and the details of my life will be changed in order to insure confidentiality and that the tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the research.

I understand that I can stop participating in this study at any time.

Name_____

Address_____

_____

Phone_____

Principal Investigator's Signature

_____

Focus Group Interview Informed Consent Form

I consent to participating in the project on the participation of African American females in sport.

The purpose of the project is to learn more about the influences that lead African American females toward and away from sport. I understand that this portion of the study will entail a 1 ½-2 hour group interview and an opportunity to review the transcripts as well as the potential to be asked to participate in an individual in-depth interview.

I understand that in any documents arising from this study my name and the details of my life will be changed in order to insure confidentiality and that the tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the research.

I understand that I can stop participating in this study at any time.

Name_____

Address_____

_____

Phone_____

Principal Investigator's Signature

_____

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