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A STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF BLACK COLLEGE FEMALE STUDENT ATHLETES AT A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTION

by

Noël Suzanne Harmon

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in
Counseling, Rehabilitation, and Student Development
in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

December 2009

Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Sherry Watt

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gather descriptive data on the experiences of Black female student athletes. A better understanding of the experiences of Black female student athletes as students, as athletes, and as developing young women may help student affairs practitioners better understand their collegiate experience; provide them with information to make decisions about student affairs programs, policies, services, and practices; and offer a subgroup of students who have historically been underrepresented in research an opportunity to share their stories. The study addressed the following research question: What are the college experiences of Black female student athletes during athletic eligibility at a large, predominantly White, Division I, Midwestern, public university?

Eight Black female eligible college student athletes were purposefully selected to participate in the qualitative study. Participants' ages ranged from 18-23 years and they self-identified as Black (n=3), Caribbean (n=3), and West Indian (n=2). The women participated in both individual and team sports.

Participants participated in two hour-long interviews. Data were coded and analyzed into categories. A process analysis enabled the key themes from the findings to be identified. Credibility and dependability were accounted through member checks and the use of three outside auditors. Four major themes emerged: unfulfilled expectations during the college experience as an athlete, student, and developing young person; perceptions of being treated differently than her White female peers; complex relationships that deeply impacted participants' experiences in college both positively and negatively; and positive and negative forms of resistance in which participants' engaged in response to experiences during college.

Five implications for student affairs practiced were introduced: cultural competence, validating experiences of racism, collaboration with athletics, climate issues at PWIs, and Black female role models. Four programming considerations were also

discussed: Afrocentric models of development, race- and gender-specific programming, cross-racial and intra-relationship building, and broadened involvement.

Abstract Approved: _____

Thesis Supervisor

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Title and Department

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Date

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Graduate College
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

_____

PH.D. THESIS

_____

This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

Noël Suzanne Harmon

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Counseling, Rehabilitation, and Student Development at the December 2009 graduation.

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To the women who participated in this study

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> The world would see that these girls composed music, wrote poetry, went to church, told jokes, and did well in school. They aspired to be doctors, lawyers, psychologists, and journalists. If I had anything to do with it, the world would come to see these young women as **people**.
>
> C. V. Stringer (2008) *Standing Tall*

Black female student athletes have competed and excelled in college sports since the mid-1960s. Legendary track athletes such as Jackie Joyner Kersee and Florence "Flo Jo" Griffith Joyner, as well as pioneering basketball athletes Cheryl Miller and Lisa Leslie, are prime examples. The 2008 Beijing Olympics introduced the world to formidable new stars in track, Alison Felix, Sandra Richardson, and LoLo Jones, and in basketball, Candace Parker, Candace Wiggins, and Cappie Pondexter. Before entering the professional ranks of their sport, each one of these women was an All-American National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) athlete representing her school.

With growth in the last decade of awareness of intercollegiate athletics, especially at Division I (D-I) institutions, increased coverage in the mainstream media, and access to televised events to most homes, more attention has been paid to women's collegiate athletics (Duderstadt, 2003), thus providing exposure to talented Black female student athletes (Wiggins & Miller, 2003). Not all of this exposure, however, has been positive. In April 2007, talk radio host Don Imus brought Black female athletes to the forefront during the NCAA women's basketball championship game by calling Rutgers women's basketball players "nappy-headed hos."

Imus' comments marked an incident deeply affecting the lives of the women on the Rutgers basketball team. At a press conference, the young women expressed their own perceptions of the experience. Essence Carson stated that they [the team] were highly angered at his remarks, but deeply saddened with the racial characterization they entailed (Stringer, 2008, p. 269). Sophomore Heather Zurich stated, "Our moment was taken away—our moment to celebrate our success, our moment to realize how far we had

come, both on and off the court, as young women. We were stripped of this moment by degrading comments made by Mr. Imus last Wednesday. What hurts the most about this situation is that Mr. Imus knows not one of us personally" (quoted in Stringer, 2008, p. 269). And Kia Vaughn, a sophomore, stated, “I would like to speak to him personally and ... ask him, after you've met me personally, do you still feel that I'm still a 'ho' as a woman and as a black, African-American woman at that? I achieve a lot, and unless they have given this name of 'ho' a new definition, then that is not what I am" (Stringer, 2008, p. 270).

Little is known about the college life experiences of today’s Black female student athletes (Etzel, Ferrante, & Pickney, 2002), but Imus’ comments thrust them into the spotlight and started a national dialogue about stereotypes and race with these student athletes at the center. The event disrupted their lives as students, as athletes, and as developing young people. As students they had to navigate a heightened racial climate and find avenues for social support. As athletes they had to contend with historically rooted stereotypes of Black female athletes as masculine and sexually promiscuous (Liberti, 1999). And as developing young people they were forced to defend their own identity against long held sexist and racist images of Black women.

Sport presents a paradox for Black female athletes. Historically it has been a context for racial discrimination, as evidenced not only by the Imus incident but also by a long history of continuing practices in racial exclusion or tokenism, persistent patterns of institutional racism including inequities in access, a lack of representation of minority athletes in certain sports, and a lack of representation of minorities in collegiate coaching and staff (Sailes, 1998); the dual effects of racism and sexism (Cahn, 1994; Constantine & Watt, 2002; Corbett & Johnson, 2000; Messner, 2002); and stereotyping and marginalization of the Black female athlete (Corbett & Johnson, 2000).

Sport is also one of the few avenues of upward mobility in American society in which Blacks might hope to be judged on their ability instead of their skin color (Ashe,

1989; Edwards, 1979, in Sellers, Chavous, & Brown, 2002). Although Black females are underrepresented in just about every traditional venue for upward socioeconomic mobility in our society (e.g., education), they are significantly overrepresented in collegiate basketball and track (Sellers et al., 2002). The most recent NCAA Student Athlete Ethnicity Report states that from 1999-00 to 2003-04, the total percentage of Black female student athletes at D-I institutions increased from 13.8 to 14.9%. In 2003-04, 41.6% of women participating in basketball at the D-I level were Black, as were over a quarter (29%) of female track athletes (NCAA, 2005).

Despite increased participation and representation in collegiate sports by Black females, the 2008 Federal Graduation report indicated that for the 2007-08 academic year, White female student athletes at D-I schools graduated at 64%, significantly higher than the graduation rate of Black females, 49%, at D-I schools.

As student affairs professionals, we do not know what accounts for the discrepancy in graduation rates between Black female athletes and their White peers. Some researchers believe that Black female student athletes may encounter challenges related to being Black, female, and a student athlete (Howard-Hamilton, 2001); other researchers have found through quantitative studies that their retention rates may be linked to incongruity between personal values and the values of the campus environment (Constantine & Watt, 2002; Gloria, Robinson, Jurpius, Hamilton, & Willson, 1999). Researchers have found some empirical evidence of barriers affecting Black female athletes such as racism and discrimination by peers, coaches, and staff (Bruening, Armstrong, & Pastore, 2005), limited social support (Suggs, 2001), and negative stereotyping from peers and faculty (Engstrom et al., 1995; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991). Some research indicates that as athletes, Black females may experience isolation (Bruening et al., 2005), such as cultural inhibitions in which they are unable to express parts of their identity related specifically to being Black (Suggs, 2001).

Researchers have also examined how Black females may resist perceived barriers. In 1991, Robinson and Ward presented a psychological resistance model based on the seven principles of the Nguzo Saba in which they describe two forms of resistance, optimal (liberating) and suboptimal (survival), exhibited by Black women who perceive they are oppressed. Researchers have also conducted quantitative studies examining the affect of Afrocentric values on Black students' ability to resist cultural barriers. They have consistently found that those students who are more socialized within Afrocentric values exhibit better social adjustment (Brown, 2008; Johnson, 2001; Mutisya, & Ross, 2005; Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 1994; Robertson, Mitra, & Delinder, 2005).

Although there has been some quantitative and qualitative research focused specifically on the college life experiences of Black female athletes, as student affairs professionals, it would be useful to know about their overall college experience. Without a more holistic view and a deeper understanding of their experiences, it may be difficult to know how best to support them.

One of the responsibilities rooted historically in student affairs practice is supporting the well being and development of all students (American Council on Education [ACE], 1949). Rodgers (1990) noted that a student's development is a philosophy that has guided student affairs practice and served as the rationale for specific programs and services since the profession's inception. As student affairs professionals, we believe we must understand the developmental challenges facing today's college students in the cognitive, psychosocial, affective, and behavioral domains (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998) in order to better meet their needs.

Researchers focused on the experiences of college students have studied college environments, educational experiences, social experiences, ways in which student's develop, and student involvement (Astin, 1993; Boyer, 1987; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Past research also includes exploring how dimensions of a student's individual identity such as race, gender, socio-economic class, sexual orientation, and other aspects

of identity may impact their learning experience during college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Student affairs practitioners have also long been committed to the core assumptions and beliefs that each student is unique, each person has worth and dignity, feelings affect thinking and learning, and personal circumstances affect learning (ACE, 1949). These beliefs have anchored our practice and have been applied to different student populations based on changing times and the need to acquire more knowledge about our students in order to better meet their needs (ACE, 1949, p. 11; Blimling & Whitt, 1999).

The increase in Black female student athletes on the campuses of Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) challenges student affairs professionals to provide them with the assistance and opportunities they need to help them be successful in not only our goals for them but also the goals they have for themselves. To do so effectively, student affairs practitioners must in engage good practices, namely systematic inquiry *Principles of Good Practice* (ACPA/NASPA, 1999), to get at questions related to the Black female student athlete experience. What do student affairs practitioners know about these students' experience during college? What conditions, experiences, and environments foster desired student outcomes (Blimling & Whitt, 1999)? Blimling and Whitt stated that good practice in student affairs requires becoming familiar with the intellectual and developmental influences of student experiences that fall directly or indirectly in the purview of student affairs and using that information to inform development of plans, policies, and programs (p. 95). They suggested forming an inquiry agenda including some or all of the following:

1. How do students spend their time?
2. What are they like?
3. What do they know and learn?

4. Detailed descriptions of campus environments and students' experiences, and descriptions of campus climates.
5. What are students' stories about learning, life as a student, their peers, and student affairs professionals, about whatever they are thinking?

Finally, Blimling and Whitt (1999) suggested that there is a growing appreciation for the use of qualitative methods to study the experiences of college students. Collecting data by talking and listening gives the inquirer an up-close and textured view of many aspects of work and life in college (p. 106). Qualitative studies can provide a detailed look at peer cultures and focus attention on the experiences of students whose voices can be muffled by traditional studies of college outcomes (Blimling & Whitt, 1999, p. 106). And perhaps most important, qualitative studies offer students an opportunity to tell their own stories of life and learning which benefits both the students and those wishing to learn more about them (Baxter Magolda, 1997, in Blimling & Whitt, 1999, p. 107).

In conclusion, a study of the experiences of the Black female athlete within the context of her experience as a student, an athlete, and a developing young person may help student affairs practitioners better understand the Black female student athlete experience; provide them with information to make decisions about student affairs programs, policies, services, and practices; and offer a subgroup of students who have historically been underrepresented in research an opportunity to share their experience.

Research Question

What are the experiences of Black college female student athletes during athletic eligibility at a large, predominately White, Division I (NCAA classification), Midwestern, public university?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the college life experiences that Black female student athletes encounter during their college years.

Definitions

Division I Institutions

Division I (D-I) institutions are active membership schools of the NCAA. They are divided into divisions for purposes of bylaw legislations and competition (NCAA, 2005). Division I institutions meet performance criteria including minimum sports sponsorship requirements, minimum scheduling requirements, and minimum game-attendance requirements (NCAA, 2005).

Predominantly White Institutions

Predominantly White institutions (PWIs) are institutions of higher education where the dominant race of students, faculty, and staff is White (Willie, 2003). Many D-I PWIs are public institutions that, established by the Morrill Act of 1862, did not admit Blacks who were either free born or who had been freed from slavery until forced to do so by governmental policies and legislation.

Black Females

Black is a term used in reference to a racial group with a dark skin color. The term has been used to categorize a number of diverse populations (e.g., African American, African, and West Indian) into one common group (Brooks & Althouse, 2000). Because the women in this study identify as African American, Black, Caribbean, and West Indian, I will use the term 'Black' when referencing them as a group. However when referencing others' work, I may use the term 'African American' if that was what was used by the author/s in their research.

I want to provide a brief note regarding terminology used throughout the quotes that I've included. The women defined themselves differently during the interviews. The women in the study who identified as West Indian or Caribbean often refer to themselves as *Black foreign*, *Foreign Black,* and at times as simply *Foreign*. These same women often referred to Black women from the U.S. as *Black American* or *African American*. To alleviate confusion, when needed, I delineated between the two groups of

women by referring to them as women who were born outside of the U.S. (the women who identified as West Indian and Caribbean) and women who were born in the U.S. (the women who identified as Black).

Student Athletes

For the purposes of this study, *Division I* (NCAA Classification) *student athletes* are individuals who receive aid (e.g., scholarship, grant, and tuition waiver) from a university that is awarded on the basis of the student's athletic ability (Watt & Moore, 2001). It should be noted that not all student athletes at D-I institutions receive financial aid. Student athletes compete in intercollegiate athletics within their division as representatives of their institution.

College Experience

College experience is the ecological context that students encounter during their collegiate career (Sellers & Damas, 2002). For the purposes of this study, those experiences are related to participation in athletics (e.g., practice, competition, interactions with coaches, team, athletics), student life (e.g., classes, interactions with faculty and peers), and growth and development (e.g., involvement, social life, career development, and psychosocial and cognitive development).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This review of related literature begins by providing an historical context to the Black female student athletes' experience at PWIs. It is then framed by three different dimensions in which Black female student athletes experience college: as students, as athletes, and as developing young people.

Historical Context of Blacks at PWIs

Both male and female Black Americans have attended college since prior to the Civil War, but the experiences of Black females are limited in the research literature (Moses, 1999). This section provides an examination of the historical context of Black Americans in general in higher education.

Three colleges were established for the specific purpose of educating Black Americans: Cheyney State College (1830) and Lincoln University (1854) in Pennsylvania and Wilberforce University (1856) in Ohio (Willie, 2003). After the Civil War, a few historically White colleges began to admit a small number of Black Americans. The view that Black Americans were inferior, however, was widespread, and greatly affected the attitudes of their benefactors (Willie, 2003).

In 1890, Congress passed the Morrill-McComas Act requiring states to either admit Black students to existing institutions or provide separate and equally funded schools for them. *Plessey v. Ferguson* cemented the doctrine of separate but equal, leaving the states wide room for interpreting how to provide education for Blacks (Willie, 2003). In the South, the "separate but equal" doctrine was interpreted to emphasize industrial rather than liberal arts training.

By the turn of the 20th century, it was estimated that 2,500 Black students had graduated from both Black and White colleges (Willie, 2003). The growing numbers of college-educated Black Americans highlighted the cultural distinction between rising

educational and professional status and continued low social status (Willie, 2003). A number of court cases, namely *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* in 1954, attacked the legality of separateness, and the Supreme Court was convinced that separate was inherently unequal.

During the second half of the 20th century, Black Americans migrated from rural to urban areas within the South and from Southern to Northern cities, characterized in textbooks as the Great Migration; the Civil Rights Movement ensued (Meyers, 1987). Social protests threatening to disrupt educational institutions were catalysts for the government to reexamine its support of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Congress reaffirmed its support of the approximately 100 two- and four-year HBCUs with the 1965 Higher Education Act (Meyers, 1987). This act brought about the unintended consequence of some legislators' supporting HBCUs based on the desire to minimize Black student attendance at historically White campuses (Meyers, 1987).

The presence of Black students at White institutions began to increase dramatically for a number of reasons: (a) The GI bill provided access to colleges and universities for many Black war veterans; (b) Supreme Court rulings during the 1940s and 1950s ruled in favor of admitting Black students to institutions receiving federal monies; and (c) the Civil Rights Act of 1964 forbade discrimination based on race, color, sex, or national origin among federal government agencies and all organizations that received funding from the federal government (Meyers, 1987). Finally, the Higher Education Act of 1965 made monies available to traditionally White colleges that were also considered "developing." By 1968, however, 80% of all Black students who received undergraduate degrees were graduating from HBCUs (Anderson, 2002).

By the 1970s, most public universities in states with large Black populations were admitting significant numbers of Black students, and many private universities and colleges were admitting them regularly, even if they remained underrepresented as compared with their proportion in the national population (Willie, 2003).

During the 1980s, Black students lost ground, especially at PWIs that suffered massive cutbacks in financial aid and grant funding (Willie, 2003). The number of Black student at PWIs fell in the 1980s, and for the first time since the 1960s, PWIs began to receive negative publicity based on the experiences of black students on those campuses (Willie, 2003). Racial incidents ranging from name calling to beatings were reported on more than 250 campuses in the 3-year period between 1987 and 1990 (Camper, 1991). The 1990s saw a significant and steady increase in college enrollment of Black students, but more recently the numbers of Black students are skewed, with Black women under-represented in the student population (Stiff-Williams, 2007).

The preceding historical overview provides an important context for the current Black experience on college campuses in the United States (U.S.). The tradition of separate but equal continues to permeate U.S. campuses through issues of access, support, and treatment of Black college students. It should be noted that most of the research focused on Black college students does not separate the experiences of Black men and women. This finding is surprising in light of the many contributions made by Black female college students during the Civil Rights Movement, only cursorily noted in historical texts and not in ways in which their experiences are highlighted or studied (Giddings, 1984).

The Student Experience

Research indicates that as *students*, Black female student athletes are often compared with White females. Black female student athletes have reported experiencing a “chilly campus climate,” including racism, discrimination, and lack of social support (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000). At the same time, some research has focused on their positive experiences while in college as well.

Black Female Experiences in Higher Education

To date the limited studies of Black women in higher education have focused primarily on issues related to health and body image, and are comparative studies to

White women. Most prevalent are comparative quantitative studies related to self-concept (Parham & Helms, 1985; Pyant & Yanico, 1991), self-esteem (Crocker, 1999; Demo & Parker, 1987), and body image (Bond & Cash, 2006; Molloy & Herzberger, 1998). Findings from these studies indicate that when compared to White females, Black females often have a more positive self-concept, self-esteem, and body image.

One study focused specifically on African American females and issues of self-esteem. Watt (2006) examined racial identity attitudes, womanist identity attitudes, and self-esteem of 111 African American college women attending two historically Black higher educational institutions. One of the major findings from the study indicated that African American women use a variety of coping mechanisms to survive the experiences they perceive as oppressive and that the ways the women in the study were coping negatively affected their self-esteem (Watt, 2006). The study also found that the women who were actively engaged in rejecting male supremacist ideals scored lower on the self-esteem measures. This finding supports the idea that African American college women may be facing difficult challenges negotiating the college experience as a member of two de-valued groups and that this negatively impacts their self-perception (Watt, 2006, pp. 329-330). In addition, the researcher found that womanist identity attitudes appeared to strongly influence how an African American college woman perceives her environment (Watt, 2006). This finding could indicate that race is a more salient identity for this population (Watt, 2006).

There is also a small body of somewhat out-dated research focused on the occurrence of depression in Black females. Carrington (2006) asserted that the mental health needs of Black women have been historically understudied, underserved, and misdiagnosed as a result of stereotyping (p. 779). Carrington argued that the immediate and long-term effects of misdiagnoses and under diagnoses of depression have led to increased incidence and prevalence of both psychiatric and medical disorders among this population.

Roberts and Sobhan (1992) conducted a quantitative study to determine differences in the prevalence of depressive symptoms in adolescents from 12 to 18 years old (*N*=2200) by comparing symptom levels of White, Black, and Hispanic Americans. Overall, the results found different rates of depression but found that Black females reported more depressive symptoms than both Whites and Black males in the study.

Barbee (1992) conducted a review and critique of literature on Black women and depression. The findings suggested that Black women are at an especially high risk for depression and often delay or do not seek treatment for depression.

Another cluster of quantitative studies in which Black females were the focus concerned health behaviors at PWIs. Most prevalent were those studies assessing eating behaviors (Abrams, Allen, & Gray, 1993; Akan & Grilo, 1993; Dacosta & Wilson, 1995; Debate, Sargent, & Ropping, 2001; Edwards-Hewitt, 2006; Gray, Ford, & Kelly, 1987; Rucker & Cash, 1992) and "risky" health behaviors (Armstead, Lawler, Gorden, Cross, & Gibbons, 1989; Clark, 2003; Tashakkori & Thompson, 2006; Thomas, Gilliam, & Iwrey, 1989).

It seems that research on health behaviors and comparative research with White women have been the predominant focus of studies on Black women. Studies that look specifically at the experiences of Black women could provide a much deeper and richer understanding of the experiences of Black female students.

"Chilly" Campus Climate

There is much research to suggest that campus environments have an important influence on the experiences of college students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). There is also evidence that campus cultures at PWIs can be problematic for students of color because these cultures can convey messages of unimportance, devaluation, and exclusion to those students (Museus, 2008). Kuh and Whitt (1988) defined campus culture as a persistent patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that shape the behavior of individuals and groups in a college or university and provide a frame of

reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off the campus (pp. 12-13). Wolf-Wendel, Douglas, and Morphew (2001) posited that diversity and cultural climate can shape feelings of inclusion or alienation, encourage or discourage student retention, and define positive or destructive intergroup relations.

Although educational institutions enroll a diverse student body, quantitative and qualitative research suggests that students of color do not necessarily experience a campus cultural climate similar to that of White students (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). In a qualitative analysis, Lewis et al., as cited in Museus (2008), interviewed 75 students of color at a PWI. They concluded that those students were marginalized and faced contradictory pressures to represent their race while assimilating into the majority culture of their campus.

There have been a number of quantitative studies assessing Black student perceptions of campus culture as related to diversity. Corroborating findings from the late 1980s and early 1990s, some current research has found that Black students have negative perceptions of their campus climate.

A study conducted by Ancis et al. (2000) that surveyed 578 Black, Asian American, Latino/a, and White undergraduates at a large PWI university revealed significant differences between racial/ethnic groups on multiple dimensions of campus climate. Blacks consistently reported more racial-ethnic conflict on campus, pressure to conform to stereotypes, and less equitable treatment by faculty, staff, and teaching assistants. White student responses reflected limited perceptions of racial-ethnic tensions and a university climate characterized by respect for diversity.

These results are indicative of much of the research that compares the perceptions of diversity climate between White students and students of color. For example, a number of quantitative research studies have found that students of color enrolled at PWIs, unlike their White counterparts, often experience a lack of support and an unwelcoming academic climate (Loo & Rolison, 1986; McClelland & Auster, 1990;

Pascarella, Edison, Amaury, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1996; Schwitzer, Griffin, Ancis & Thomas, 1999; Stone & Archer, 1990; Suen, 1983, in Ancis et al., 2000). Pressure to conform to stereotypes is also prevalent in research literature focused on Black college students (Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002; Osborne, 2001; Steele, 1997).

In addition to encountering different experiences, students of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds have divergent perspectives regarding features of campus life (Ancis, et al., 2000). Whereas White students tend to view groups composed solely of Black or Asian American students as "racial segregation," students of color perceive the same groups as providing a valuable source of support. Similarly, Cabrera and Nora (1994) reported that students of color may hold more nuanced perceptions of discrimination. The researchers found that students of color conceptualized prejudicial attitudes of faculty and staff and discriminatory experiences in the classroom as separate yet interrelated dimensions, whereas White students viewed these attitudes and experiences in the classroom as one dimension (Cabrera & Nora, 1994).

A small body of quantitative research has indicated that cultural factors in the environment may influence how African American students experience college (Constantine & Watt, 2002). Gloria et al. (1999) found that greater cultural congruity, the fit between students' personal values and the values of the environment in which they operate (Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996), was a significant predictor of African American students' decision to remain in college. Constantine and Watt (2002) conducted a study that examined cultural congruity, womanist identity attitudes, and life satisfaction among 165 African American women attending historically Black and predominantly White colleges and universities. Their findings indicated that African American students at historically Black institutions reported higher levels of cultural congruity and life satisfaction than their counterparts attending PWIs (Constantine & Watt, 2002). The findings from these studies suggest that culture and environment are important factors to understanding how Black students experience college.

Experiences of Racism and Discrimination at PWIs

Incidents of ethnic and racial discrimination continue to be prevalent at American universities (Chang, 2000; Pettigrew, 1998). Research has found that Black students in particular are more likely than White students to be the target of some form of direct personal racism (Ancis et al., 2000; Fisher & Hartmann, 1995; Gossett, Cuyjet, & Cockriel, 1998). These types of incidents include differential treatment and stereotyping by fellow students, faculty members, campus police, teaching assistants, administrators, and staff (Suarez-Balcazar, Orellana-Damacela, Portillo, Rowan, & Andrew-Guillen, 2003). Perceived discrimination has been documented in residence halls (Piedmont, 1976), in interactions with campus police (Eliot, 1969; Heussenstamm, 1971; Leitner & Sedlacek, 1976), and in campus life in general (Fleming, 1984; Littleton, 2003; Lunnenborg & Lunnenborg, 1985; Moses, 1999; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003).

There is also a small body of research focused on the effects of discrimination on people of color. Williams and Williams-Morris (2000) conducted a review of scientific evidence that racism can affect the mental health of Black Americans. They found that experiences of discrimination may induce physiological and psychological reactions that can lead to negative changes in mental health status (Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). They did not delineate between Black males and females; however, they did report that negative racial stereotyping by Whites can lead to unfavorable self-evaluations in Black people that can then lead to negative effects on psychological wellbeing.

Another area of research germane to this study is the intersection of racism and sexism and their effects on Black women. Birrell (2000) argued that although women of color have not been absent from traditional feminist theories, they have not been recognized or honored in feminist theories in meaningful ways (p. 66). One early solution was to incorporate Black women into already existing feminist theories; however, Birrell (2000) suggested that this diminishes their experiences as it assumes

they can be contained in pre-existing theories, and this strategy assumed that ‘women of color’ was a unified category of experience (p. 66).

Collins (2000) argued for Afrocentric feminist thought. Black feminist thought as described by Collins (2000) is a type of oppositional knowledge influenced by a particular outsider-within location, or that position of being both Black and a woman. It aims to legitimize black women’s intellectual production as critical social theory (p. 8). Collins (2000) argued that the fact that so many African American women have grown to womanhood able to resist the damaging effects of stereotyping demonstrates the significance of Black feminist thought and the strength and survival capabilities of Black women (p. 9).

However, there is empirical evidence indicating that the effects of perceived racism and sexism can have negative effects on Black women. Subich (2003) conducted a quantitative study of 133 Black women at a large Division I institution to determine the relationship of perceived racist and sexist events to psychological distress. Results indicated that perceived racist and sexist events correlated positively and comparably with psychological distress, but when examined concomitantly, only perceived sexist events accounted for unique variance in psychological distress.

Another study conducted by Kwate, Valdimirsdotir, Guevarra, and Bovbjerg (2003) investigated whether experiences of racist events were related to psychological distress, negative health behaviors, and health problems for Black women. A sample of 71 Black women with a mean age of 30 self-reported that lifetime racism was negatively related to perceived health and positively related to a lifetime history of physical disease and frequency of common colds. The results indicate that racism can be detrimental to Black women’s physical health.

The findings from this research indicate that racial and gender attitudes may influence how Black women view their college experience. In addition, although Black women may find strategies to assist them in coping with racist and/or sexist events, there

may be other effects related to both physical and mental health of which practitioners should be aware when considering best practices in being both proactive and reactive in their work.

Social Support for Black Students

Perhaps because of difficult adjustments to a PWI, including perceptions of a negative diversity climate and experiences of racism/discrimination, Black students are particularly in need of social support. Black students have expressed a need for more Black faculty and staff at PWIs (Burrell, 1980; Butler, 1977; DeSousa & Kuh, 1996; Hinderlie & Kenny, 2002; Willie, 2003). In the absence of Black role models among faculty and staff at PWIs, research has found that Black students rely heavily on other sources of social support (Webster & Fretz, 1977), including parents (Hinderlie & Kenny, 2002), extended family (Harris & Molock, 2000; Littleton, 2003; Moses, 1999; Rovai, Gallien, & Stiff-Williams, 2007), and the Black community that does exist on campus (Brown, 2008). These internal support systems may often serve as Black students' first line of defense when dealing with psychological distress (Bagley & Carroll, 1998; Constantine, Wilton, & Caldwell, 2003, in Brown, 2008, p. 34.)

A fairly recent qualitative study (Littleton, 2003) examining the experiences of 16 Black students at a PWI found that Black females perceived the necessity of having a "brother and sister" relationship with their Black male peers in order to establish support, sacrificing the potential for romantic involvement. The Black females in the study also felt there was a lack of female Black role models on campus. Both the males and the females in the study indicated that they encountered difficulties in gaining entrance to the campus community, related to the stereotype that all Blacks are athletes. They reported that they did not fit into the Black community, which was predominantly athletic, because they did not play a sport. This is an interesting finding and may suggest that Black collegiate athletes experience college differently because of their athlete status.

Research indicates that in the absence of role models, Black students find ways to support themselves at PWIs. Research on college involvement indicates that Black students at PWIs are highly involved and invested in leadership activities on campus (Moses, 1999; Sedlacek, 1999). Sedlacek (1999) wrote that Black college students at PWIs have a long history in their ability to organize and influence others on college campuses. Heyward (1985) reported that Blacks do not look to White faculty and staff as role models for leadership but look to other Blacks in the outside community or develop their own styles and forms of leadership that have been highly successful on college campuses.

Findings of recent quantitative studies have indicated very little difference between the college life experiences of Black and White students. Cureton (2003) conducted a study of 500 undergraduate students enrolled at a PWI to assess the extent to which Black students enrolled at a PWI may or may not experience unique, racially exclusive social situational circumstances that could potentially affect academic performance. The findings indicated that general attitudes concerning the college experience, adverse situations or circumstances unrelated to the university, perceptions of self, perceptions of the campus social climate, and perceptions of the campus police were not racially exclusive, as both Black and White students expressed similar attitudes about the university setting and had experienced similar personal and social issues related to and not related to college.

Eimers and Pike (1997) conducted a quantitative study of 799 first-year students at a large public research university in the Midwest to assess minority and non-minority students' adjustment to college. This study found that perceived quality of the institution had significant effects on intention to persist for Black students, although not for White students. In addition, the perceived quality of academic achievement had significant effects on intent to persist for Whites but not for Black students. Similarities between the two groups, however, overshadowed differences (Eimers & Pike, 1997). For example,

perceived racial discrimination exerted equivalent effects on intent for Blacks and Whites (Eimers & Pike, 1997).

In summary, there has been a considerable amount of research on the Black experience at PWIs since the 1960s. Although research consistently indicates that Blacks continue to experience racism and discrimination and perceive negative aspects of the campus climate, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) noted that the various studies on racial-ethnic attitudes and campus climate perceptions differ in so many ways (design, sample, instruments, and analytical procedures) that it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions. The research is mixed regarding whether Black college students have unique positive or negative experiences in college apart from their White peers, leaving open the question of the role that race plays in the Black female student athlete experience.

The Student Athlete Experience

Research has indicated that as *athletes*, Black female student athletes continue to be compared with their White female counterparts. Research related to specific experiences of Black female student athletes is mixed, although issues of discrimination permeate sport research and literature.

Black Student Athletes

Research on Black student athletes continues for the most part to consist of comparative studies to White student athletes, reflecting behaviors, attitudes, and/or perceptions of college phenomena such as drinking (Green, Uryasz, Petr, & Bray, 2001; Lewis, 2008; Nelson & Wechsler, 2001; Thombs, 2000; Thombs & Hamilton, 2002), academic success/motivation (Hamilton, 2005; Petrie & Stoever, 1997; Potuto & O'Hanlon, 2007; Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992; Sellers, 1992; Sellers, & Damas, 2002; Simons, Van Rheenen, & Covington, 1999; Wolniak, Pierson, & Pascarella, 2001), and interactions with faculty and peers (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1989, 1991; Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995; Ferrante, Etzel, & Lantz, 1996).

Literature has been published that addresses issues and concerns for counselors and staff working specifically with African American student athletes. Lee and Rotella (1991) suggested that because of cultural and racial influences, African American athletes want different things from their relationship with staff and coaches than White student athletes. For example, they wanted to know that coaches and staff realize and acknowledge that they are African American. Based on their qualitative research, Lee and Rotella (1991) compiled a list of skills that staff working with African American athletes should employ: (a) They would prefer not to be forced to analyze everything they do in practice or competition; (b) especially at PWIs, they want coaches and staff to see the big picture and show they truly care and are concerned; (c) they want differences in practice style and attitudes to be recognized and not interpreted as signs of laziness; (d) they wish they never had to hear "you've got to give me 100% every day," and they know that there is no such thing; (e) they are most receptive to those who realize that looking laid back does not mean a lack of readiness to perform; and (f) they want staff and coaches who are comfortable with themselves and willing to be themselves. Implicit in Lee and Rotella's (1991) suggestions is the importance of an understanding of the uniqueness of the African American student athlete's experience. A deeper understanding of some of the experiences of African American athletes could enhance the rapport between the athlete and coach and staff and thus create a more meaningful experience for the student athlete.

Much of this research, however, consists of large quantitative studies of varying methodologies that compare Black and White student athletes but usually do not examine differences by gender. Black males, perhaps because of their lower academic performance, are the subjects of much of the past and current research on student athletes. More emphasis on the female student athlete, whose experiences are often mingled into those of her male counterpart, could be important. Not separating the experiences of Black males and females perpetuates male domination in sport and the ideology of "sport

as a male preserve" (Birrell, 1989). Lack of research focused on the female student athlete does not acknowledge her experience or provide a realistic view of the lives and experiences of the Black student athlete as a whole.

Black Female Student Athlete Experience

Despite considerable attention paid to athletes in higher education research, Black female athletes remain a subgroup of the student athlete population that is significantly underrepresented in both the research and the literature. A few qualitative studies have shown that the college experience may be somewhat different for Black female athletes, especially at D-I institutions (Alexander, 1979; Gerdy, 1987).

Bruening, Armstrong, and Pastore (2005) conducted a qualitative assessment involving 12 Black female collegiate athletes and found that the participants felt silenced through a lack of media attention; lack of representation of Black student athletes, administrators, and coaches; and discriminatory and sexist treatment by coaches (Bruening et al., 2005). This corroborates previous research conducted with Black females. Participants in the study felt restrained from expressing their feelings and/or opinions to others and felt there was a lack of recognition of the achievements of Black female student athletes (Bruening et al., 2005).

Researchers have cited institutional barriers affecting Black female student athletes such as racism and discrimination by teammates, coaches, and staff (Bruening et al., 2005), limited access and social support (Suggs, 2001), negative stereotyping by peers and faculty (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom et al., 1995), and negative stereotyping by the general public as perpetuated by the mainstream media (Schell, 1999).

This research, although limited, supports other empirical findings that did not delineate between male and female Black student athlete experiences. These findings suggested that these student athletes may have negative experiences during college

(Ancis et al., 2000; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom et al., 1995; Ferrante, Etzel, & Lantz, 1996; Loo & Rolison, 1986; McClelland & Auster, 1990; Stone & Archer, 1990).

There is quantitative research that has found no difference between the experiences of Black and White female student athletes. Sellers, Kuperminc, and Damas (1998) conducted a national quantitative study examining the academic performance, alienation and abuse, perceived social advantage as the result of athletics, and life satisfaction of both White and Black female student athletes at large D-I institutions. This study found that Black female student athletes performed well academically, integrated socially within the university, perceived some social advantage as a result of being an athlete, and were in general satisfied with their lives.

Potuto and O'Hanlon (2007) conducted a large quantitative study of student athletes at 18 D-I institutions and found that Black female student athletes provided a positive assessment of their overall college experience.

Because of both the lack of research and the varied methodologies and results of the studies that have been conducted, more research focused specifically on Black female student athletes could confirm or refute previous research and add to the understanding of their college experiences.

Experiences of Access and Representation in Sports

Access to athletics, regardless of race or ethnicity, begins at a young age and can drastically affect the proportion of Black females in particular involved in collegiate athletics. The social context of young women's lives shapes their sports choices and opportunities, with financial constraints often restricting Black girls' opportunities. For example, depressed socioeconomic conditions, which impact girls of color disproportionately, prevent families from funding their children's athletic activities. The Wilson Report (Wilson Sporting Goods Co. & the Women's Sport Foundation, 1988), based on a nationwide sample of 500 families, found that although Black and White girls

were equally likely to participate in sports, 33% of Black girls compared with 18% of White girls said their families could not afford to pay for equipment and lessons.

Generally, because low-income girls of color have sports opportunities through schools, recreation departments, and other non-profit agencies, their participation is limited to stereotypical “popular” sports: basketball and track and field. Since 1987, when Congress passed a law that strengthened the enforcement of Title IX, the fastest growing sports in the NCAA have been women’s soccer, rowing, golf, and lacrosse. Most urban high schools do not have the green space needed for sports such as soccer, lacrosse, and especially golf (Suggs, 2001), leaving many Black females without access to participation. Of the women participating in basketball at the D-I level of the NCAA, 27% are Black, as are 26% of female track athletes (NCAA, 2005). However, only 2.7 % of the women receiving scholarships to play all other sports at D-I PWIs are Black (NCAA, 2005).

New NCAA rules and the passing of Propositions 48 and 16, which require athletes to meet minimum standards for standardized test scores to be eligible to play college sports, have further restricted opportunities for Black females (Corbett & Johnson, 2000). Many students from urban high schools are academically under-prepared and have not had exposure to or had the same resources available to them as students attending more rural or suburban high schools where there is traditionally a higher socioeconomic population. Although White domination in sport is perhaps less blatant since the inception of Title IX, economic influence continues to exclude Blacks from economic participation and from economic power.

Lack of Black Role Models as Coaches and Staff

A body of research has documented that racial minorities have historically been excluded from the middle and upper levels of organizations, and although some improvement has been made in upward mobility, it is also well documented that institutional racism persists in intercollegiate athletics (Cunningham & Sagas, 2005).

An analysis by Gaston (2003) of recent data on demographic trends among athletic personnel at NCAA affiliate institutions found that White males continued to dominate athletic administration at PWIs. Out of 884 athletic director positions, White males held 709 positions, White females held 159, Black males held 23, and Black females held 2 (NCAA, 2005). Out of 521 senior administrator positions held by women, White females held 483 positions compared to 17 held by Black females. Gaston also found that most Blacks in athletic administration were concentrated in lower level administrative positions such as academic advisor.

Cunningham and Sagas (2005) examined the representation of racial minorities in intercollegiate coaching positions. Data gathered from 191 NCAA D-I athletic programs found that White head coaches were more likely to have White assistant coaches and that the proportion of Black assistant coaches (33%) was significantly less than the proportion of White assistant coaches (48%).

Substantive research has been devoted to the role of race in sport. This research establishes a longstanding pattern of institutionalized racism directly affecting Black student athletes, and specifically females. Lack of access and lack of support for those who participate and/or work in athletics combine for a potentially isolating and frustrating experience for Black student athletes.

The current research focused on student athletes consists primarily of comparative studies between White athletes and athletes of color. The limited research that is focused on Black female student athletes is mixed but suggests that they may have negative experiences within the context of their participation in intercollegiate athletics at PWIs.

The Developing Black Young Person

As a developing young person, Black female student athletes are faced with developmental tasks (Chickering, 1969; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). During the college years, students are challenged to make major life decisions relating to a sense of purpose and developing their own multi-faceted identities.

Student Development

Student athletes, like all college students, are faced with developmental tasks (Chickering, 1969; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). General principles within student development theory state that development is both continuous and cumulative in nature. Development often moves from the simpler to the more complex and tends to be orderly and stage related. Many student development theories have evolved, addressing students' human, cognitive, moral, psychosocial, and vocational development. These theories have viewed development as a series of developmental tasks or stages, including qualitative changes in thinking, feeling, behaving, valuing, and relating to others and oneself (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Psychosocial theories view development as a progression through and accomplishment of "developmental tasks" influenced by both the environment and biological maturity. Erik Erickson, on whose research much of psychosocial theory is built, believed that development was influenced by the environment and that it occurred through a series of crises. Given that this study proposes to examine the college experiences of Black female student athletes, it is relevant to provide a brief overview of psychosocial theory that may pertain to Black female student athletes.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) extended Erickson's theory by identifying seven developmental vectors along which he proposed students would progress during their college experience: developing competence, managing emotions, becoming autonomous, establishing identity, freeing interpersonal relationships, clarifying purpose, and developing integrity. Chickering's stages have been thought to be fairly linear; however, critical occurrences such as injuries, changes in coaches, and/or performance issues can create a spiral movement through the stages. More recent literature has adopted a more spiral, cyclical approach to student development theory whereby students may move forward or backward through stages based on individual experiences and unexpected catalysts (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001). Although each stage may be a beneficial lens

through which to view Black female student athletes' development, identity development is salient in light of their multiple identities as Black student athletes.

Identity Development

Identity, a dimension of psychosocial development, refers to "a clearly delineated self-definition comprised of those goals, values, and beliefs which a person finds personally expressive and to which he or she is unequivocally committed" (Waterman, 1985, as cited in Brewer and Cornelius, 2001, p. 3). The concept of "identity development" first posed by Erickson is an ongoing, lifelong process, yet the most significant strides occur during late adolescence (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Of particular relevance to Black female student athletes is Cross' Black identity development theory (1971) and Helms' womanist identity development (1990). In Cross' original model (1971), five stages of racial identity were presented: Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, Internalization, and Internalization-Commitment. Helm's four-stage model is similar to Cross': Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and Internalization

Like Chickering and Reisser (1993), Cross' and Helms' models also marked the movement from stage to stage by catalytic events that cause individuals to reconstruct experiences in meaningful ways. These experiences serve as the impetus to motivate individuals to explore their identity, thus moving them to another stage. Researchers have investigated how both racial and womanist identity attitudes might influence Black female's perceptions of their college experience (Constantine & Watt, 2002; Watt, 2006).

Afrocentric Development Theory and Resistance

Some researchers have argued that current student development theories are limited when applied to Black students because the theories do not acknowledge the collective; they originate from a Eurocentric view that values and addresses the individual, ignoring that many minority groups have a deeply imbedded history that identifies with a more collectivist culture (Constantine, Alleyne, Wallace, & Franklin-

Jackson, 2006; Johnson, 2001; Mutisya & Ross, 2005; Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 1994; Shockley, 2008; Von Robertson, Mitra, & Van Delinder, 2005). These researchers have argued that Afrocentric models of development are more appropriate for Black students. Afrocentricity is the study and examination of phenomena from the standpoint of Blacks as subjects rather than as objects, becoming, by virtue of its authentic relations, the centrality to Black reality (Asante, 1987, in Johnson, 2001). The history, culture, and philosophy of Black people are used as the reference point for determining one's approach to reality and understanding of the world. Afrocentricity implies that there is a distinct African worldview or way of looking at life that is manifested through Black culture (Johnson, 2001, p. 409). Because Afrocentricity is a process that calls for centeredness in terms of heritage and worldview, it also empowers those who perceive their worldview as marginal to Europe (Mutisya & Ross, 2005).

Some researchers have suggested that the seven principles of Nguzo Saba are an effective and comprehensive Afrocentric scale (Cokley & Williams, 2005; Grills & Longshore, 1996; Johnson, 2001; Robinson & Howard-Hamilton, 1994). According to Karenga (1980, in Robinson & Kennington, 2002), the Nguzo Saba represent a basic value system that is African in origin and enables people to establish purpose and meaning in their lives. The seven Swahili terms that define the values that constitute the Nguzo Saba system are *umoja* (unity), *kujichagulia* (self-determination), *ujima* (collective work and responsibility), *ujaama* (cooperative economics), *nia* (purpose), *kuumba* (creativity), and *imani* (faith). The principles underlying this value system are the principles for Kwanzaa, which means first fruit in Swahili (Robinson & Kennington, 2002).

The Nguzo Saba have been used in research focused on forms of psychological resistance that Black students use to defend against oppression. Oppression is an act that prevents a person from being fully human or alive (Friere, 1970). Robinson and Ward (1991) introduced two forms of psychological resistance: optimal resistance (liberating)

and suboptimal resistance (survival oriented) in an article discussing ways to cultivate resistance in African American female adolescents. Optimal or healthy forms of resistance were based on the Nguzo Saba. Robinson and Kennington (2002) expanded the application of the philosophically oriented Africentric resistance model to all women, including women of color, White women, bisexual and lesbian women, women with disabilities, and women across the developmental life span.

Afrocentric development theory has been applied in a few research studies using the Nguzo Saba. In a qualitative study to analyze the social adjustment processes of African American female students at a predominantly White institution, Robertson et al. (2005) gave primary consideration to Nguzo Saba in restructuring the experiences of racism and as a possible component in the development of future college adjustment programs for Black females.

Constantine et al. (2006) conducted a quantitative study with 147 adolescent girls to explore the relationship among Africentric cultural values, self-esteem, and perceived social support satisfaction and life satisfaction. Results indicated that greater adherence to Africentric (Nguzo Saba) cultural values among African American adolescent girls was predictive of higher levels of both self-esteem and perceived social support satisfaction.

Cokley and Williams (2005) conducted a quantitative study with 167 African American students to examine the psychometric properties of the Africentric Scale, also known as the Nguzo Saba. Results of a factor analysis revealed that the Africentric Scale is best conceptualized as measuring a general dimension of Afrocentrism rather than seven separate principles (Cokley & Williams, 2005). The findings suggested that with continued research, the Africentric Scale will be an increasingly viable option among the handful of measures designed to assess some aspects of Afrocentric values, behavioral norms, and an African worldview.

A study conducted by Mutisya and Ross (2005) corroborated the potential for the Afrocentricity scale. Data were obtained from a survey of 453 African American college students. Several variables thought to represent both Afrocentricity and racial socialization were constructed, analyzed for their reliabilities, and combined into attitudinal scales (Mutisya & Ross). Findings from the study suggested that the overall scales are positively related.

Research that focuses on Afrocentric development theory specifically as it relates to coping, adjustment, and resistance of Black students could have implications for the formation of interventions and program development designed to meet the needs of Black female student athletes.

Research on the Development of Student Athletes

Student athletes' development is an area that has been well researched in higher education. Areas of interest include social roles exploration, including athletic identity. Athletic identity reflects the cognitive, affective, behavioral, and social elements of identifying strongly and, more importantly, exclusively with the athlete role (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993). Strong athletic identity has been found to correlate with a stronger sense of self-identity, more social interactions, a higher level of confidence, and more positive athletic experiences (Brewer et al., 1993). Cornelius (1995) found that athletes with a strong athletic identity scored high on tests of time, relationship, and obligation management, yet also possessed immature career plans (Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996) and were at greater risk of emotional and psychological distress upon withdrawal from sport (Headrick, Nasco, Riley, & Webb, 2002; Lally & Kerr, 2005).

Miller and Kerr (2003) found that athletes at D-I institutions may be more at risk for identity foreclosure because of their almost total immersion in athletics. Identity foreclosure exists when an individual prematurely commits to a career or lifestyle without adequate exploration of available opportunities and ideologies (Miller & Kerr, 2003). Researchers have found evidence of identity foreclosure among student athletes,

including a lack of autonomy, low moral development, authoritarian thinking (Petitpas & Champagne, 1988), and unrealistic educational and career plans (Lally & Kerr, 2005).

These findings suggest that being an athlete may create such a different college experience from that of non-athletes that the entire context of their college experience is qualitatively different. Student athletes have their own unique culture with accompanying problems in relating to the university system (Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992). All of these experiences and issues affect how student athletes form their self-concept as it relates to their identity, and how that identity in turn affects their college experience.

Finally, as developing young people, Black female student athletes are similar to their non-athlete peers in that they may experience many developmental tasks during college. However, Black female student athletes may face developmental tasks directly related to their racial and athletic identities, resulting in a potentially different college experience.

Summary

This literature review framed the Black female student athlete within the context of her experience as a student, an athlete, and a developing young person. The review provided a brief historical context of Black students in higher education in the U.S., looking specifically at Black females and their experiences of racism and discrimination at PWIs. Literature regarding the experiences of Black student athletes and Black female student athletes was also reviewed and examined institutional racism in both higher education and sport. Student development theory and theories relevant to Black female students were reviewed, and current research focused specifically on the development of student athletes concluded the review.

This review of related literature confirms the need to conduct further research to clarify the college experiences of Black female student athletes. The review indicates that research focused specifically on the experiences of Black female student athletes is

limited. The absence of this demographic has had a profound effect on mainstream views and perceptions and on the current status of Black women in both sport and society (Stratta, 1995). It is important to present an alternative narrative to identify and validate the life experiences of Black female student athletes.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gather descriptive data on the experiences of Black female student athletes. A better understanding of the experiences of Black female student athletes within the context of their experiences as a student, an athlete, and a developing young woman may help student affairs practitioners better understand the Black female student athlete experience; provide them with information to make decisions about student affairs programs, policies, services, and practices; and offer a subgroup of students who have historically been underrepresented in research an opportunity to share their experiences. The study addressed the following research question: What are the college experiences of Black female student athletes during athletic eligibility at a large, predominately White, Division I (NCAA classification), Midwestern, public university?

This chapter describes the study's research methodology and includes discussions of the following areas: (a) rationale for research approach, (b) description of the researcher's epistemological and ontological stance, (c) researcher subjectivity, (d) description of the research sample, (e) methods of data collection, (f) analysis and synthesis of data, (g) ethical considerations, (h) issues of trustworthiness, and (i) limitations of the study.

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research is concerned with how the complexities of the sociocultural world are experienced, interpreted, and understood in a particular context and at a particular point in time (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 80). The intent of qualitative research is to examine a social situation or interaction by allowing the researcher to enter the world of others and attempt to achieve a holistic rather than a reductionist understanding (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Locke, 2000; Mason, 1996; Maxwell, 2005;

Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002; Schram, 2003; Schwandt, 2000, in Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 80). Qualitative methodology implies an emphasis on discovery and description, and the objectives are generally focused on extracting and interpreting the meaning of experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Merriam, 1998). The fundamental assumptions and key features that distinguish qualitative research fit well with this study. These features include (a) understanding the processes by which experiences take place, (b) developing contextual understanding, (c) facilitating interactivity between the researcher and participants, (d) adopting an interpretive stance, and (e) maintaining design flexibility.

Although not originally aligned with any particular qualitative approach, this study may best be described as using a phenomenological approach, a form of qualitative inquiry that focuses on human experience. The primary goal of this approach is to inductively and holistically understand human experience in context-specific settings (Patton, 2001). Interviews were utilized to gain insight and deeper understanding into the experiences of Black female student athletes. The interview is the primary way in which the researcher obtains an in-depth understanding of another person's experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002).

Epistemological and Ontological Stance

Qualitative research is often guided by a researcher's own epistemological, ontological, and methodological assumptions and beliefs, all of which may influence the lens through which the researcher views, interprets, and analyzes the data. I will therefore briefly review my epistemological and ontological beliefs. Crotty (1998) described epistemology as "a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know" and ontology as "a way of understanding what is." The theoretical framework for my research is constructivist. The constructivist view is that there is no objective knowledge independent of thinking and that reality is socially embedded and exists within the mind (Grbich, 2007). This particular research falls within the constructivist view because it is an exploration of the way people interpret and make sense of their

experiences, and how the contexts of events and situations and the placement of these within wider social environments may impact their constructed understandings, namely, how individuals construct, make meaning of, and then respond to their experiences. In the constructivist view, multiple realities are presumed. The understandings that researchers construct and impose through interpretation are seen as limited by the frames derived from their own life experiences. The influence of this perspective on my research accepts inherent researcher subjectivity and frees me from looking for a typical or "correct" response from the research participants.

Researcher Subjectivity

I am aware of how power can influence qualitative research, and to be as transparent as possible, it is important for me to also provide a clarification of my researcher bias, a reflection on my own subjectivity, and how I will use and monitor it in my research (Glesne, 2006). One of the most important things I can do as a researcher conducting research across racial lines is to reflect on the complexities of the process. I am invested and potentially biased in my search for a better understanding of the experiences of Black female student athletes for a number of reasons. First, as a Korean American, I identify with the experience of being a female person of color. I understand issues related to gender that play a factor in life of a college student and even to some extent an athlete as it relates to a male-privileged sport environment. As a person of color, I have first-hand experiences of being stereotyped, judged, and discriminated against based on my race. Second, while as an adult I have come to identify as a person of color, I am an adopted member of an all-White family and grew up within a predominantly White culture. This positions me to view the world from a White privileged perspective. Third, while not a collegiate athlete, I have been an avid marathon runner for 12 years, and thus I identify as an athlete. Fourth, I have worked professionally with Black athletes at three different institutions. I worked with some of the Black female student athletes who participated in this study for 2 years prior to

conducting the study as well as during the study itself. During this time, I observed practices and engaged informally with the some of the women at the Learning Center on campus. I also tutored a couple of the women who participated in this study a year or two before starting the study. These experiences led me to form relationships with some of the Black female student athletes prior to the study. I also observed relationships between the women and their coaches, staff, and to some extent with one another. And so I entered the study with some preconceived ideas of their perceptions of the level of support they felt they had or did not have and the kinds of positive or negative relationships they had with coaches, peers, and staff. My previous experience also allowed me to build rapport with some of the study participants, which I believe led to their openness with me as an interviewer. Fifth, my partner is a Black male and a former university and professional athlete. Finally, I have either participated in or conducted numerous courses and training seminars on multicultural issues in my capacity both as an administrator and as a graduate student.

Based on who I am and my own experiences, I strongly adhere to the belief that racism and sexism exist as strong institutionalized forces in our society, and we are all affected by their influence through our assumptions and biases toward others. All people hold prejudiced beliefs and attitudes that manifest themselves in situations and contexts that are often times unexpected. Although there are historical parallels in the experiences of Black women and Asian women as racial minorities in a predominantly White society, traditionally Asians are held to a “model minority” status thus offsetting the “common” experience. As a researcher, I hold an insider perspective in that I identify as a woman of color and an athlete; however, neither of these perspectives provides me with a perspective on what it means to be a Black female athlete. The multiple ways in which I identify both limit and influence how I interpret and interact with the data. I may interpret the data based on my assumptions about the experiences of being a female, athlete, and person of color. My upbringing in a predominantly White culture may also

influence my interpretation of the data, as I still view the world at times from a White privileged lens.

My reflections on my own privileged and non-privileged identities led me, at various stages in the data analysis process, to engage three different auditors. The first auditor was chosen mainly because of his familiarity with the Critical Incident Technique; however, the next two auditors were chosen specifically because they were Black females. My thesis chair, a Black female former student athlete, and I had many conversations about how my own identities may impact the data analysis process. Therefore, as I formed categories and themes from the codes I had extracted from the data, I realized I needed someone with insider status to review how I was interpreting the findings to help me more accurately assess the way I was interpreting the data due to my privileged status and where I may have missed complex nuances in the stories of the participants. After forming the four main themes from the data, my chair and I revisited the process that resulted in how I heard, interpreted, or understood the stories of the women. We decided engaging another outside auditor who was not only Black but also a former student athlete was important to add to the process to enhance the credibility of the findings. The second auditor's identity as a Black women and a student athlete potentially allowed her to be closer to the data than I could be because I did not share the same ethnic and cultural lens that they did.

I have now outlined what I believe to be important influences on my perspective as a researcher by addressing who I am, how I came to this topic and population, my educational and professional background, and my relationships.

The Research Sample

I used a purposeful sampling procedure to select this study's sample. Purposeful sampling is a strategy used to select information-rich cases for in-depth study (Patton, 1990). The size of the sample and specific cases depend on the study's purpose. According to Patton (2002), within qualitative inquiry, rules for sample size do not exist.

The decision of sample size depends on several of the following factors: (a) what the researcher wants to know, (b) the purpose of the study, (c) what is at stake, (d) what will be useful, (e) what will have credibility, and (f) what can be done with available time and resources (Patton, 2002). My criteria for the selection of participants were Black female, eligible collegiate athletes at a specific large, Division I, predominantly White institution located in the Midwest. At the beginning of the study, only 12 women met the criteria; therefore, I decided to invite each of them to participate in the study.

The final sample was comprised of 8 Black college female student athletes who were on full athletic scholarships. Seven of the 8 research participants were recruited by the institution and participated in at least one campus visit before deciding to come to the institution. Two of the women participated in a team sport, and the other six participated in individual sports.

Data Collection

Negotiating access to conduct research on student athletes at Division I institutions is a challenging process. My previous work experience in Athletic Student Services office helped me to establish rapport with administrators and staff. The Athletic Director submitted a formal letter granting permission to recruit participants, and the names and addresses of all Black female student athletes were forwarded to me from the Department of Athletics.

Data collection occurred over approximately 2 months between April and May 2009. Initial contact with participants was an invitation e-mail sent at the end of March, followed by a packet sent through the mail with information including the purpose and description of the study, an informed consent form, a biographical questionnaire, and a pre-stamped envelope so participants could return the documentation to begin the study.

Upon receiving the biographical questionnaire (Appendix A) from respondents, I called the participant to schedule the first interview. Interviews took place at locations chosen by the participants and were in one of two locations: my private office or the

indoor track facility at the institution. Study participants were read a script (Appendix B) reviewing the consent document (Appendix C). They were also asked to grant permission to tape record the interviews to which each participant consented. Each of the first-round interviews lasted approximately 1 hr. They were completed over a 2-week period. I transcribed each interview within 24 hr of the interview. The second round of interviews began approximately 2 weeks after the first round of interviews was completed. These interviews also lasted approximately 1 hr and were also completed over a 2-week period in the same two locations as the initial interviews. Finally, as with the others, I transcribed each interview within 24 hours. I e-mailed a copy of the transcripts from both interviews to each participant. If participants felt some aspect of the contents needed revision, they were asked to so indicate and return the transcript. None of the participants submitted revisions.

Analysis and Synthesis of Data

Following member checks, I began reading the first set of interviews to obtain a general sense of the information. I engaged in memo writing on the margins of the transcripts to reflect on the following questions: What general ideas are participants expressing? What is the tone of the ideas? What is the general impression of the overall depth, credibility, and use of the information?

After several careful readings of the first set of interviews, I began a start list of codes stemming from the research question and key variables within the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I loosely coded sections of data in each of the eight transcripts. After this first round of coding, I went back to the data to identify areas that were not coded to see if there were similarities between un-coded sections. I then began to form my first round of categories from the codes. Un-coded data became its own category of codes.

Next, I revisited the data. I had begun by looking for categories within each participant interview; I now focused on looking for categories across the 8 participants. I added new codes and categories as I worked through the data.

Following this initial analysis, I stopped to evaluate how to proceed. I had decided before data collection that after the initial data analysis of the first set of interviews, I would evaluate the effectiveness of using the Critical Incident Technique (CIT; Flanagan, 1954) for analysis. The critical incident technique outlines procedures for collecting observed incidents having special significance and meeting systematically defined criteria. An incident is defined as an observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act (Flanagan, 1954). To be critical, an incident must occur in a situation in which the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear to the observer and in which its consequences are sufficiently definite to leave little doubt concerning its effects (Flanagan, 1954).

From my initial analysis, it seemed that participants were not framing their experiences as critical incidents, which would have involved naming specific incidents that significantly impacted their experiences in college. I engaged a male colleague familiar with CIT to examine the data and provide his assessment of using CIT. I will refer to him as Auditor 1.

Auditor 1 is a doctoral candidate in Counseling Psychology at the institution where the study was conducted. He identifies as being of Japanese/White descent and was 27 years of age at the time of the study. He has extensive experience using CIT analysis on prior research he has conducted at the graduate level and at the time of the study was engaged in using CIT for his own dissertation.

I provided Auditor 1 with the eight transcripts and asked him to read them and provide feedback regarding analysis techniques. After reading the transcripts, Auditor 1 did not advise using CIT to analyze the data. He provided the following rationale: (a) Although in some of the interviews CIT could be appropriate, most of the interviews did not contain specific incidents that met the definition of a Critical Incident; (b) the interview protocol did not follow the CIT format, which is asking participants

specifically for a “critical incident,” and so there was no indication that the participants considered the incidents they shared as “critical”; (c) many of the responses were opinions about issues and not necessarily behavioral descriptions of incidents; (d) there was not one “general aim” to many of the questions (as the CIT calls for); thus questions were open-ended. For example, some questions asked about "stories that illustrate what it is like being on a team, how you and your teammates/coaches interact" versus "what have been some experiences you've had as a student athlete at this university." In contrast, the CIT may ask very direct questions (e.g., “Describe an incident that you would consider critical in making you feel uncomfortable on your sports team...” something like this). Finally, Auditor 1 felt that although I might have some incidents to report, they might be related to different "general aims." For example, one incident may be related to a person's recruitment experience, while another may be related to a person’s experience with a coach.

Based on Auditor 1’s recommendation, I determined the data did not fit the definition or parameters of CIT as outlined by Flanagan (1954). I decided to proceed without using CIT.

Next, I conducted the second round of interviews. Following transcription of those interviews, I engaged in coding, category formation, and memo writing following the same steps I had taken with the first set of interviews. While keeping codes and categories from the first set of interviews in mind, I tried to remain open to the data and created new codes and categories when appropriate.

After the initial codes were formed for both the first- and second-round interviews, I then re-read each participant’s transcripts together, creating one longer interview. Following that I created a short summary “story” for each participant that I reviewed carefully. This process not only helped me to be closer to the data but also provided me a chance to review and check my own understanding of the experiences of each participant.

Knowing that the start list of codes would continue to change, I continued to look for new codes and either confirm or refute the codes from the original start list. Data from both rounds of interviews were re-coded, and codes were again sorted into categories. Next I engaged another auditor, a female colleague whom I will refer to as Auditor 2. Auditor 2 is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Health and Sport Studies at the institution where the study was conducted. She identifies as African American and was 27 years of age when the study was conducted. After reflection and consultation, I felt it was important to have a Black female who was as doctoral student in the department of Health and Sport Studies work with my data to provide insight and perspective as an outsider to my study but an insider to the population I studied. I provided Auditor 2 with the full set of 16 transcripts and my list of codes (see Table 1). I then requested that she read through all of the transcripts and code two interviews chosen at random. This check served to aid definitional clarity of the codes.

The first coding check yielded a 85% inter-coder reliability, using this formula (Miles & Huberman, 2002):

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Number of agreements}}{\text{Total number of agreements + disagreements}}$$

Upon clarification of the codes and a few days in between, the second coding check yielded 96% inter-coder reliability. Inter-coder reliability is a critical component of content analysis. Neuendorf (2002) stated, "Given that a goal of content analysis is to identify and record relatively objective characteristics of messages, reliability is paramount; without the establishment of reliability, content analysis measures are useless" (p. 141). Kolbe and Burnett (1991) wrote that “interjudge reliability is often perceived as the standard measure of research quality.” The coding check was a

necessary step in confirming the validity of the overall coding scheme so that I could move forward to category and theme formation.

Table 1. Start List of Codes

ATHLETE EXPERIENCE		AE	PH: I don't care	PH-Idcar
AE:	Job	AE-Job	PH: I don't mind	PH-Idmi
AE:	Strong	AE-S	PH: Doesn't matter	PH-DM
AE:	Scholarship	AE-Sch	PH: I just laugh	PH-Laug
AE:	Pressure	AE-P	PH: Ignore it	PH-Iit
AE:	Stress	AE-Stres	PH: Forget it	PH-Forg
AE:	Silence	AE-Sil	PH: Blow it off	PH-Blo
AE:	Divided	AE-Div	PH: Not a big deal	PH-NBD
AE:	Disappointment	AE-Dis	PH: Just go through it	PH-Jgo
AE:	Coaches	AE: Co	PH: Learn to ignore it	PH-Lign
AE:	Team	AE-Team	PH: Just do it	PH-Jdoit
AE:	Trust	AE-Trust	PH: Overcome	PH-Ovco
AE:	Isolation	AE-Iso	PH: Do what I gotta do	PH-Dow
AE:	Different	AE-Dif	PH: I keep going	PH-Ikeep
AE:	Performance	AE-Perf	PH: Called my mom	PH-clmo
AE:	Stereotyping	AE-Stere	PH: Normal self	PH-Nself
AE:	Racism	AE-Race	PH: Be me	PH-Bme
AE:	Success	AE-Succ	PH: Do me	PH-Dme
AE:	Skills	AE-Ski	PH: Know yourself	PH-Kyou
AE:	Feelings	AE-Feel	PH: That's who I am	PH-That
			PH: I'm my own person	PH-IMP
STUDENT EXPERIENCE		SE	PH: Be whoever you are	PH-Bwo
SE: Isolation		SE-Iso		
SE: Uncomfortable		SE-Unco	Words *others* use to describe them	
SE: Invisible		SE-Invis	WDO: Unapproachable	WDO-U
SE: Difference		SE-Dif	WDO: Intimidating	WDO-I
SE: Motivation		SE-Mot	WDO: Angry	WDO-An
SE: Classes		SE-Class	WDO: Aggressive	WDO-Ag
SE: Teachers		SE-Teach	WDO: Mean	WDO-M
SE: Learning Center		SE-LC	WDO: Strong Personality	WDO-SP
SE: Academic Major		SE-AM	WDO: Scary	WDO-Sa
SE: Grades		SE-Grade	WDO: Loud	WDO-Lo
SE: Stereotyping		SE Stereo	WDO: Violent	WDO-V
SE: Racism		SE-Race	WDO: Standoffish	WDO-St
SE: Feelings		SE-Feel	WDO: Offensive	WDO-O
SE: Goals		SE-Goal	WDO: Confrontational	WDO-C
SE: Silence		SE-Sil		
			Words *they* use to describe themselves	
DEVELOPMENT		D	WDT: Isolated	WDT-I
D: Homesick		D-Home	WDT: Lonely	WDT-L
D: White girls		D-WG	WDT: Bored	WDT-B
D: Football players		D-FB	WDT: Alone	WDT-A
D: Dating		D-Date	WDT: Secluded	WDT-Se
D: Black Men		D-BM	WDT: Sad	WDT-Sa
D: Relationships		D-Rel	WDT: Suicidal	WDT-Su
D: Disappointment		D-Dis	WDT: Depressed	WDT-D
D: Involvement		D-Invol	WDT: Uncomfortable	WDT-U
D: Feelings		D-Feel	WDT: Passionate	WDT-P
D: Rejection		D-Rej	WDT: Loud	WDT-L
			WDT: Excited	WDT-Ex
			WDT: Strong	WDT-St
PHRASES THEY USE		PH	WDT: Fighter	WDT-F
PH: Forget this		PH-FT	WDT: Tough	WDT-T
PH: Unfair		PH-Unf	WDT: Confrontational	WDT-Co
PH: I'm done		PH-Imd	WDT: Feisty	WDT-Fis
PH: Don't cry		PH-DCry	WDT: Black	WDT-Bk
PH: Whatever		PH-Whte	WDT: Minority	WDT-Mi

Table 1 (continued)

WDT: Foreigner	WDT-FR
WDT: Foreign	WDT-FR
WDT: Accent	WDT-AC
WDT: Naïve	WDT-Nv
Perceptions of White people's response to them	
PWP: "Oh sorry"	PWP-SR
PWP: "I didn't mean it like that"	PWP-MT
PWP: "I didn't think it was a big deal"	PWP-DL
PWP: "I can't read your mind"	PWP-MI
PWP: Fake apology	PWP-FA
PWP: Fake	PWP-F
PWP: Patronizing	PWP-Pa
PWP: Afraid of me	PWP-AF
PWP: Scared	PWP-SC
PWP: Negative body language	PWP-NB
PWP: Generalize [us]	PWP-GZ
Expectations of college experience	EXP
EXP: Friends	EXP-FR
EXP: Social	EXP-SO
EXP: Party	EXP-PA
EXP: Idealization [of college]	EXP-ID
EXP: Husband	EXP-HS
EXP: Boyfriend	EXP-BO
EXP: Relationships	EXP-Re
EXP: Friendships	EXP-Fr
EXP: Fun	EXP-Fu
EXP: Mother figure	EXP-MO
EXP: Father figure	EXP-FA
EXP: Support	EXP-SU
EXP: Trust	EXP-TR

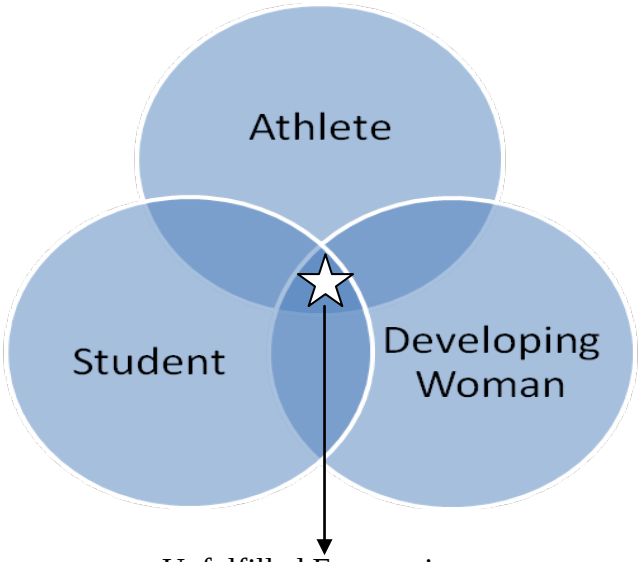
Next I began a cross analysis of the data looking for categories and themes across participants (Merriam, 1998). Working only with the codes, I formed initial categories and themes. (See Table 2.)

I assigned each participant a color and highlighted quotations (in her color) from her transcripts that seemed most relevant to the initial themes. I cut out the highlighted quotes and began a sorting process. Units of data from the transcripts that were not highlighted were saved and placed in a bag marked "Miscellaneous."

Table 2. Initial Themes and Categories

Themes	**Categories**
Expectations	Athlete Student Development
Experiences	Athlete Student Development
Survival	Isolation Immersion Strength

During sorting, I looked for processes and outcomes that occurred across the participants. Quotes that did not fit into any of the three themes were placed in the bag labeled "Miscellaneous. This second round of sorting resulted in the revision and expansion of the initial themes. Four major themes emerged: "unfulfilled expectations," "'being treated differently than White women," "complex relationships," and "resistance." The four themes seemed to apply directly to the participants' experiences as athletes, students, and developing young women; therefore, I kept those original three categories. The intersection between participant experiences and the four main themes is illustrated in Figure 1.



Unfulfilled Expectations

Being Treated Differently than White Women

Complex Relationships

Resistance

Figure 1. Intersection of Experiences and Study Themes

I assigned each theme a color: Unfulfilled Expectations (Pink), Being Treated Differently than White Women (Blue), Complex Relationships (Green), and Resistance (Purple). I used 5 in. x 7 in. index cards in those colors and pasted the quotes belonging to each theme on the card. I then labeled each index card by theme and category. I worked within each of the four themes to develop subcategories and dimensions, and labeled the cards accordingly. At the conclusion of this process, which occurred over a 3- to 4-week period, I revisited the data and the quotes labeled "Miscellaneous." I determined that most of the data I had labeled "Miscellaneous" was not relevant to the study in that it was small talk or clarification questions posed by me or the participant.

The majority of the miscellaneous quotes were placed in subcategories, or new subcategories were created based on emergent descriptors. After placing all of the quotes, I tabulated the number of quotes for each theme, category, subcategory, and dimension. I also tabulated the number of cases (number of participants) for each category and subcategory. (See Table 3.)

In an attempt to examine the themes in more depth, I conducted member checks with the participants following the data analysis by providing each participant a copy of her own individual interview transcripts for her review, copies of the codes, and initial study results. I encouraged the participants to provide written feedback on the transcripts, and I scheduled meetings with them to discuss their feedback. Due to the time of year, some of the meetings occurred over the phone. None of the 8 participants submitted revisions.

In an attempt to lend further credibility, I engaged a third auditor to review the findings. I selected an auditor with an "insider" perspective because I, due to my race, ethnicity, and athlete status, have an outsider perspective on the population I am studying. Auditor 3 identifies as a Black female and former NCAA scholarship athlete. She is 33 years of age and has no affiliation with the institution or the study. I selected her specifically because she shares the experience of being a Black female student athlete with the women in the study, an experience that I as the researcher do not have. Cross-racial analysis can be complex and those researchers who do not share the same race, ethnicity, or experience with the population they are studying may miss nuanced messages or meanings rooted within a culture with which they are unfamiliar (Winkle-Wagner, 2009).

Table 3. Themes, Categories, Subcategories, and Dimensions

Theme	Categories	Subcategories	Dimensions
Unfulfilled Expectations (Q129)*	Athlete	Misleading recruitment (Q7, C5)	
		Expectations of coaches (Q35, C8)	Trust (Q6, C4) Care (Q11, C8) Support (Q2, C2) Coaching style (Q16, C8)
		Expectations of self (Q14,C7)	
		Expectations of team (Q8, C7)	
	Student	Classes (Q11, C8)	Difficult (Q8, C8) Easy (Q3, C3)
		Goals (Q2, C2)	
		Academic major (Q5, C3)	
	Development	College experience (Q9, C5)	
		Peer Relationships (Q10, C10)	Boyfriends (Q4, C4) Friendships (Q6, C6)
		Environment (Q28, C8)	Social (Q7, C3) Culture (Q21, C8)
Being Treated Differently than White Women (Q123, C8)	Athlete		Positive (Q6, C6) Negative (Q14, C7)
		Team (Q7, C7)	
		Stereotyped (Q13, C4)	Coaches (Q1, C1) Teammates (Q5, C1) Staff (Q7, C4)
		Discrimination (Q47, C8)	Coaches (Q21, C8) Staff (Q10, C8) Teammates (Q16, C8)

Table 3 (continued)

Theme	Categories	Subcategories	Dimensions
		Harassment	Coaches (Q6, C5)
	Student	Stereotyped (Q24, C8)	Classmates (Q13, C8) Teachers (Q10, C6) White Men (Q1, C1)
		Discrimination (Q20, C8)	Peer (Q2, C2) Teachers (Q10, C8) Community (Q8, C4)
Complex Relationships (Q97, C8)	Teammates		Positive (Q8, C5) Negative (Q6, C5)
	Black men	Dating (Q50, C8)	Black Men (Q27, C8) Football players (Q21, C8) Non-athlete (Q1, C1) White Men (Q1, C1)
		Sibling Relationships (Q12, C7)	
	White women		Positive (Q2, C2) Negative (Q22, C8)
	Black women amongst one another	African American and African American (Q7, C4) Black *Foreign and African American (Q12, C5)	
Resistance	Suboptimal	Depression (Q16, C8)	
		Isolation	Team (Q7, C4) Classroom (Q16, C8)
		Silencing	Team (Q7, C5) Classroom (Q6, C3)

Table 3 (continued)

Theme	Categories	Subcategories	Dimensions
	Optimal	Involvement (Q8, C8)	
		Support systems	Family (Q6, C6) Fans (Q1, C1) Friends (Q7, C5) God (Q2, C2) Academic (Q6, C4)
		Belief in self (Q30, C8)	Strength (Q16, C8) Purpose (Q10, C6) Competence (Q8, C4)
		Advocacy/ Confrontation	Maturity (Q11, C8) Advocacy (Q12, C6)

* Numbers in parentheses: First number indicates number of quotes, second number indicates number of cases.

I contacted Auditor 3 via e-mail and she agreed to audit the findings. The first step of the auditing process was to have her place quotes into each of the four themes (Hill, 1997). I sent her the four themes: Unfulfilled Expectations, Being Treated Differently than White Women, Complex Relationships, and Resistance, as well as all of the quotations that had been selected for inclusion in the thesis. The quotes were numbered so she could more easily report her findings. Approximately 1 week later, Auditor 3 sent me her findings via e-mail and we scheduled a time to speak over the phone. I sent her via e-mail a list of three questions for her to consider before we spoke: (a) What did you observe about the relationship between the four themes and the data?; (b) Did you notice any discrepancies in the data and the four themes?; and (c) Did you notice themes or ideas found in the quotes that did not bear out in the four themes?

After reviewing her findings, I used the same reliability equation that was used with Auditor 2. I counted the number of quotes she had placed into each theme that matched the quotes I had placed into each theme and then divided her number into mine. Auditor 3 placed 31 of the 35 quotes I had selected for the first theme, Unfulfilled

Expectations, into that theme. I divided 31 by 35 indicating an 89% match. For the second theme, Being Treated Differently Than White Women, Auditor 3 placed 26 of the 28 quotes into that theme indicating a 90% match. For the third theme, Complex Relationships, she placed 26 of the 30 quotes into that theme indicating an 87% match, and finally for last theme, Resistance, she placed all 29 quotes into that theme indicating a 100% match.

Auditor 3 and I discussed the findings a few days after our e-mail exchange. She indicated that she had read through all the quotes first and then went back to read through the quotes and consider the themes. In answer to the questions I posed to her, she stated that the only relationship between the four themes and the quotes that she noticed was that she felt they could have gone into more than one of the themes. I asked her to indicate those quotes along with the alternate theme. She indicated two quotes she had originally placed in theme three that she felt could have gone into theme two. And she indicated four quotes in theme two that she felt could have gone into theme three.

Auditor 3 also indicated that within the themes she had "grouped" some of the quotes into "little themes." I asked her to indicate those, and she stated that for theme one, she had grouped the quotes by "Expectations related to athletics," "Expectations related to school," and "Expectations related to college in general." For the second theme she had grouped the quotes by "Stereotyping," "Discrimination," and "Harassment." For the third theme, she had grouped them by "Relationships with women" and "Relationships with Black men." And for the fourth and last theme, she had grouped them by "Healthy" and "Unhealthy." Auditor 3's initiation of categories was similar to my own which revealed consistency in our interpretations of the voices and stories of the women in the study.

Auditor 3 did not report any discrepancies in the quotes and the four themes, and she could not think of any themes or ideas that were in the quotes that did not bear out in the four themes. She did comment that although she found it fairly easy to place the

quotes in one of the four themes, she did not actually relate to the experiences she was reading within the quotes. She explained that she had grown up in what she described as an all-White area and disclosed that as a Black woman, she actually felt more comfortable around White people and in White culture. The implications for this disclosure will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 5; however, the "insider" perspective from which Auditor 3 approached the data offered another valuable perspective on how I understood the data as a researcher conducting a study across racial lines.

Ethical Considerations

For this study, I attempted to make confidentiality and informed consent priorities. I secured the storage of all research-related records and data. I provided participants with a copy of the informed consent form prior to participation, and I also read aloud the informed consent form at the beginning of the initial interview.

Following the formal defense of this dissertation, it was decided unanimously by the committee to make changes to protect the identities of the study participants. A number of the participants in this study had not graduated by the conclusion of the study and so both they, and the many of the coaches and staff mentioned in the study, remained on the college campus. These decisions were weighed heavily with the responsibility to protect the integrity of the findings; however, it was decided that the higher priority was protecting the participants.

As agreed upon by committee members, I did the following: (a) removed participant bios; (b) removed a section that disclosed information that would have put participants' and staff identities as risk; (c) altered participant stories so that references to their sport were replaced with an identifier as either a team or an individual sport; (d) altered descriptors of coaches that clearly identified them, such as gender, race, and sport; and (e) added a sentence to the beginning of the Chapter 4 paraphrasing these decisions.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility. To enhance the credibility of this study, I conducted two member checks during the process. The first member check occurred after I had typed all of the transcripts. I mailed copies of the transcripts to each of the study participants and requested their feedback. I conducted the second member check following data analysis. I provided each study participant copies of her transcripts, codes, and initial study results including categories, subcategories, and dimensions. Finally I made an attempt to clarify my assumptions and perceived bias and then reflected on the complexities of the process of conducting research across racial lines.

Dependability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that dependability in qualitative research involves whether the findings are consistent and dependable with the data collected. Toward this end, I engaged three different auditors to offer their perspectives on the data. In addition, I tried to maintain an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) that chronicled the rationale my choices and decisions throughout the research process.

Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter provided a detailed description of this study's research methodology. Qualitative methodology was employed to illustrate the experiences of eligible Black female student athletes at a large Midwestern Division-I institution. The participant sample was made up of 8 purposefully selected individuals. Two in-depth interviews were used for the data collection method. Credibility and dependability were accounted for through various strategies, including member checks and the use of three outside auditors. Data were coded and analyzed into categories. A process analysis enabled the key themes from the findings to be identified.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to gather descriptive data on the experiences of Black female student athletes. A better understanding of the experiences of Black female student athletes as students, as athletes, and as developing young women may help student affairs practitioners better understand the Black female student athlete experience; provide the practitioners with information to make decisions about student affairs programs, policies, services, and practices; and offer a subgroup of students who have historically been underrepresented in research an opportunity to share their stories. This chapter presents the key findings as obtained from 16 in-depth interviews with 8 participants. Four major themes emerged from this study: Unfulfilled Expectations, Being Treated Differently than White Women, Complex Relationships, and Resistance. Within each theme were categories, subcategories, and dimensions.

Participants have been given pseudonyms and their stories have been changed in order to protect the study participants; however, the essence of the meaning remains untouched.

Unfulfilled Expectations

All participants indicated that they had expectations as students, as athletes, and of their college experience in general that have been unfulfilled during their collegiate careers. The categories for Unfulfilled Expectations are Athlete, Student, and Development. The categories were further broken down into subcategories. The following are subcategories for Athlete: Misleading Recruitment, Expectations of Coaches, Expectations of Self, and Expectations of Team. One subcategory, Expectations of Coaches, was broken into four dimensions: Trust, Care, Support, and Coaching Style.

The following are subcategories of Student: Classes, Goals, and Academic Major. Classes has two dimensions: Difficult and Easy.

Subcategories of Development include College Experience, Peer Relationships, and Environment. Peer Relationships has two dimensions: Boyfriends and Friendship. Environment has two dimensions: Social and Cultural.

Being Treated Differently Than White Women

Each participant perceived that she had been treated differently than her White female peers. The women stated that they felt used, stereotyped, and discriminated against by their peers, teammates, coaches, teachers, and staff. Categories of Being Treated Differently than White Women are also Athlete, Student, and Development. Subcategories of Athlete are Team, Stereotyped, and Discrimination. Dimensions of Stereotyped are Coaches, Teammates, and Staff. Dimensions of Discrimination are Coaches, Teammates, and Staff. Subcategories of Student are Stereotyped and Discrimination. Dimensions of Stereotyped are Classmates, Teachers, and White Men. Dimensions of Discrimination are Peers, Teachers, and Community.

Complex Relationships

Each participant described complex relationships that have deeply impacted her experience in college both positively and negatively, namely relationships between herself and her teammates, coaches, teachers, Black men, and White women. Categories of Complex Relationships are Teammates, Black Men, White Women, and Black Women amongst one another. Dimensions of Teammates and White Women are Positive and Negative. Subcategories of Black Men are Dating and Sibling relationships. Dimensions of Dating are Black Men, Football Players, Non-athletes, and White Men. Subcategories of Black Women amongst one another are African American and African American, and Black Foreign and African American.

Resistance

All participants expressed a form of resistance in response to their experiences at college. Resistance was manifested first in two different resistance strategies: Suboptimal/survival and optimal/empowering. Although their experiences were

somewhat unexpected and difficult, they perceived that on the whole the experiences had made them stronger and better people.

Two categories of Resistance are Suboptimal and Optimal. Subcategories of Suboptimal are Depression, Isolation, and Silencing. Dimensions of Isolation are Team and Classroom. Dimensions of Silencing are Team and Classroom. There are three subcategories of Optimal: Involvement, Support Systems, Belief in Self, and Advocacy/Confrontation. Dimensions of Support Systems are Family, Fans, Friends, God, and Academic. Dimensions of Belief in Self are Strength, Purpose, and Competence. Dimensions of Advocacy/Confrontation are Maturity and Advocacy.

I want to provide a brief note regarding terminology used throughout the quotes that I have included. In Chapter 1, I defined *Black* as a term used in reference to a racial group with a dark skin color. I also stated that the term has been used historically to categorize a number of diverse populations into one common group, as I do in this study (Brooks & Althouse, 2000). However, the women defined themselves differently during the interviews. The women in the study who identified as West Indian or Caribbean often referred to themselves as *Black foreign*, *Foreign Black*, and at times as simply *Foreign*. These same women often referred to Black women from the U.S. as *Black American* or *African American*. To alleviate confusion, when needed, I delineated between the two groups of women by referring to them as women who were born outside of the U.S. (the women who identified as West Indian and Caribbean) and women who were born in the U.S. (the women who identified as Black).

Theme 1: Unfulfilled Expectations

All participants indicated that they had expectations of their experience as athletes and as students, and of their college experience in general, that had been unfulfilled during their collegiate careers. Participants perceived a disconnect between what they thought their experience would be like and the reality of their collegiate experience.

Expectations of the Institutional Climate

As athletes, many of the women felt that the incongruity between their expectations and reality began during the recruitment process during which they felt misled about a variety of issues that played into their decision to choose the institution. Participants felt the racial composition of the institution, including the students and staff, was misrepresented. Lisa described her recruitment visit to the institution:

> First of all I got a different version of what it really is. On the visit they made it seem like I was only meeting but a few African Americans, but really I met a large majority of the African Americans here. Ha! I think I met all of 'em. So, once I got here I realized I had met every single African American that was here and had thought I'd met just a few. I thought I was meeting just some of the African American athletes too and when I got here I'm thinking there's more, but no, so it was disappointing.

Leah felt misled regarding the team.

> What is really frustrating is that they don't recruit Black girls. They expect us to go out there and work miracles against a team like [team name]. It's not goin' happen. I didn't sign up to the do the work of two people ya' know, but when they recruited me they had like a full team and I mean, it was strong, I guess.

And Tia shared her experience related to a coaching change.

> I came here because I liked the coach. Going away for the first time I wanted to be around someone I could trust. I wanted to be around someone like a parent. So it didn't matter where, I wanted to know I'd be taken care of. So, but things turned out the way they did and it's just been miserable since the switch. I never would have come here if I'd known. It's a mess. Yes, it really is. It's worse than some other schools that recruited me and I turned them down.

Participants also felt that during their recruiting visits the institution was represented as being committed to diversity and supportive of Black students. They heard this from coaches and other staff throughout their visits. However, after arriving on campus as student athletes, they felt they had not experienced the support they had been promised. Tia recalled her experience:

> On my visit all these Black folks was talkin' about how great [the institution] was and how everyone had a place. The coaches was introducin' us to all these Black folks, like teachers and students and they kept saying how they was all there to support us and help us through whatever. So I wanted to trust them, or as much as I can trust them. So I got here and realized they don't care about us. It was all lip service. Yea. We all feel that way. They don't have no one that looks like us workin' as coaches or in the Learning Center and the teachers, that was a joke. I

> don't know who we was talkin' to during recruitment but I've never had no Black teacher since I've been here. Obviously it's White here, I'm not stupid, but don't sell us something you don't got. It's like fraud, it's like selling us bad goods you know?

Sandra had a similar experience:

> I came here and knew it was going to be cold and White. [Laugh]. But um, they told us that there was a strong Black community here and then we be findin' out that the cultural center, Afro House, whatever, is stuck back in some woods. What? Black people aren't goin in no woods, and that there are only two parties a year for Black kids, one at the beginin' of the year, and one at the end [laugh]. There is no one to talk to, no role models. There are no Black women around and that's what we need sometimes, someone who knows what we're goin' through, someone who can talk to us without judging us, we get enough of that already. But anyway, they was not upfront so we was sort of blind-sided you know?

Expectations of the Coach

Each of the participants described in depth the roles they had expected their coach to play in their collegiate experience. They spoke specifically about issues of care, support, and trust. Among the many comments cited were those by Veronica, who said:

> I guess it's our fault for not realizing sooner that it's not the coach's job to care about us. We really need to get it into ourselves and say "Hey, these people really don't care." Then I think it would make this whole thing much easier on everyone. It's not their job to care about us so we need to understand that and move on. I guess we just lucked out with our previous coach.

Allyson felt much the same way:

> Well this one coach wanted me to win because there was genuine care about me. I mean I wanted to do well for the coach because I knew there was care there. Now this coach just cared about winning and his job. It's all about winning and there is no care.

Many of the women, for various reasons, felt they could not trust their coaches. Kim described interactions with her coach.

> Trust is a big thing and I don't know the coaches, and they don't know me and don't try to know me. And they don't even know what to do with me. The coach now didn't recruit me I mean I was really sick, and well I just don't think anyone knows what to do with me. How can I trust a group of people who can't even coach me? They think I'm just supposed to get better and are frustrated with me because I'm not improving. I guess we just don't have that level of trust where I feel comfortable they have my best interest in mind. It feels like a business, like they're viewing me as a points machine.

Leah also experienced a lack of trust with her coach.

> I hurt my ankle and the coach kept pushing me and pushing me. I was like "Hey this hurts" and the response was I had to just push through the pain. I was really skeptical but I just pushed through it and guess what? I re-injured my ankle. Now I am really upset because I knew I was doin' something that wasn't right, but they kept telling me to push through it. No, no, you don't do that. I stop when I feel pain. So I feel like they don't really care about us you know, just want us to perform and don't care if we're genuinely hurt or injured. Now I don't trust them. No I don't. That sounds bad. But now I'm even that further behind and really it's not even my fault.

Candace expressed her distrust of the coaching staff as well:

> I like this [institution], that wasn't the problem, it was who I was around. Like my coaches are supposed to be like a parent figure to me. I see them more than I see my own parents. Every day all the time. But I can't trust them. Whatever, I just can't. They have showed me time and again that they are not here for me. They do things I can't even talk about and it's not right. I didn't trust them, I couldn't, and I still don't. For instance they decide who they like and who they don't and who they like is White girls that play. If you don't play because you're injured or you're having problems with school, they act like you're not there. They walk right by you without saying hi and the last week when you hit all your shots and the crowd was ohhing and awing, they were slapping your ass and high fiving you. It's all a smoke screen, a façade. I know ya' all don't like to hear it, but that's the God's honest truth.

Expectations of Coaches' Values

Finally the 8 women felt there was incongruity between the values of the coaching staff when they were recruited and the values they experienced once they began competing. Leah observed:

> The previous coach didn't put a lot of pressure on us and it was really comfortable you know? Because there was not so much pressure, you actually wanted to do well, you didn't want to let the coach down. Now our coaches are always mad at us and threatening our scholarships. It makes us feel kinda, well, no good you know? I wish they would speak to us, listen to us, don't threaten us.

Kim shared the differences she observed her first year to the present.

> I don't know, it feels more like a business. Like if you're on full scholarship then you must produce. So it's like even if you're not fulfilling your personal goals, as long as you're scoring points for the team. As long as that's happening. To me it's a bit hard because it's such a big change from before. It's like you should be running well. I'm trying to get it into them somehow that it's difficult, but it's like they just keep telling me I need to score points. Yea, so like points, that seems to be their main concern.

Expectations of Themselves as Athletes

Most of the women came to college with high expectations for themselves as athletes. Each participant had had success to varying degrees in her sport prior to coming to college. All but two of the women expressed disappointment in their achievements as collegiate athletes. The women talked about having to make an adjustment from high school to college athletics. Lisa found herself in a situation that was unfamiliar to her:

> I'm not playing a lot this year and I'm not used to that at all. Like I'm not used to not playing. And there's been a couple of things that happened on the court between the coach and myself. That also have never happened to me. I mean well you know, like getting yelled at and chewed out and I'm just thinking this is all a surprise. I don't know what I need to do or what I need to work on if I do wanna play. And like I said that's never happened to me. I always played. Growin' up I always played no matter what.

Allyson also stated that her experience as an athlete in college was different from her experience in high school:

> Well not to sound arrogant, I'm not trying to pump myself up but I was the best in high school. I mean the best in my school. The only other person that could beat me was my sister. You come to college and you know, everyone is good, suddenly you're not the star. You have to be on your guard and deal with the competition.

And Leah, as with the others, expressed disappointment in her personal development as an athlete:

> Well of course when you do a sport you always want to do better and strive to be the best and not be stagnant. You always want to be working towards the next year, and I mean the way I've performed, or lack of performance really since I've been here has just been disappointing. I'm not moving forward. I'm letting down my team and I'm letting down myself.

Expectations of the Team

Finally, most of the participants held high expectations for being part of a close-knit team. However they expressed that had not been their experience. Tia stated:

> I don't know. I mean we've [Black teammates] talked about the obvious separation between Black and White on the team. Our last coach was good at not having that separation, making sure we were a family, but now we do everything separate, we eat separately, we ride in totally different vans to meets, we don't even know each other's names. Yeah, I'm serious. I was riding on a bus one day and recognized this girl but couldn't decide from where and then that afternoon I realized she was on the team. [Laugh] That's sad right?

Leah also spoke about the divide:

> I expected things to be so much different on the team. Like I thought we'd eat together and just spend lots of free time together and our team just doesn't do that. We are completely separate from the [team sport] girls. When we're at a competition we see other teams that have just as many White and Black on their teams but you can definitely see they supported each other whether they were Black or White. They were all out supporting each other and cheering everyone on. And then it really did help like their overall team and you could definitely see for us that there was such a divide and that divide probably hurt us in a way.

Candace expressed her perceptions of team dynamics:

> Well, I don't know, I mean I have friends on the team but well not really friends because really the only people I really truly trust is the Black girls and the Black assistant coach. I can be friendly and all that, but um, [laugh] yea, I really only trust the other Black girls, as I've already said, the White girls are either intimidated by me or whatever. It's like this, we can hang together and practice together and all that, but we ain't goin' be friends, like the way I [emphasis] think of friends.

Expectations of Themselves as Students

Along with expectations the women had for their athlete experience, they also came to college with expectations for themselves as students. Each of the women found classes to be more difficult than they had anticipated. Leah a junior stated:

> I expected myself to be better than I am now. I did expect to be better than I am now. Um, I guess I'm still working towards really working hard on my grades. But I guess this is an experience I just have to grow from. My semester was really bad, I had a 2.7 but every semester after that I've kept my grade point at a 3.0. After that first semester I kind of got myself together.

Lisa stated:

> I don't think these classes out here are easy. They're really not, and then of course they shouldn't be, you should have to work. But it's hard.

The women from the Caribbean were disappointed by the quality of the teaching, which they felt negatively affected their success in the classroom. Sandra explained:

> Because we are ranked a third world country most of the Caribbean countries undergo like rigorous testin'. It's a competition for the job world so you have to be on point. So in high school we start college work, we're already doin' the basic classes that freshman here take in 7th grade. So we're prepared when we come here. The one thing is that the teachin' here is shallow. Like I remember stuff I could do in high school. I could walk down the street and say "Oh this is what she was talkin' about in class". This is how to apply it. Now here it's not like that. We don't apply nothing we learn. I can't learn like that. All of us [Caribbean women] feel like this. I'm used to real learnin', and not someone

> lecturin' at me for three hours and then expectin' me to just regurgitate things. I'm regurgitatin' text books and not learnin' anything. In Jamaica they taught us well so when the exam came it was really hard, but because we knew the information well and we understood the concept well enough, even though it was a stretch for us we could apply it and be successful.

Tia added:

> The teaching here is so different. They [teachers] don't motivate students. I mean I've had teachers who on the first day are like this class is hard so if you don't think you can do it, just drop it. How is that motivatin'? Why can't she say, "This class is hard, but if you study and apply yourself you'll do well." Now that's a different approach. I mean the other way is discouragin' and really half the students end up droppin'. In Jamaica the teachers try to motivate us to learn they want us to like um, I guess find some enjoyment from what we're learnin'.

In addition to adjusting to course work, the majority of the participants had chosen a major upon coming to college and were surprised when they either discovered they didn't enjoy their intended field of study or felt forced out of their major. Allyson shared her experience:

> I was recruited by several universities but the reason I chose [this school] was because I wanted to study medicine. Like, I've always thought I wanted to be a doctor. I mean, since I was a little girl I've wanted to be a doctor. And after the first year of being on the pre-med track I decided I no longer wanted to work with, or I guess work around, sick people. So then I was just really confused and bounced around from major to major not really knowing what I was going to do and it was definitely a struggle. The funny thing was that I always sort of looked down on people who came to college without a plan and now here I am one of those people.

Tia spoke about her and her teammates' experiences with the Biology department:

> Basically we think they be screeinin' for the med school. They don't want no women from the Caribbean in their department. They do all in their power to get us out. They don't support us and take every advantage it seems to move us along a track to be failin'. I had a teacher once who agreed to meet with me at a certain time to do an experiment I missed because we was travelin' at the time. I showed up and he wasn't there, but when I was tellin' him the next day I was there and you were not, he got mad and said he was there. How is that possible? No. No, that is not right. They be doin' that stuff. Yes.

Expectations of the College Experience

Many of the women came to college with expectations of "the college experience" based on American media depictions of college life. They felt their experiences fell short of their expectations. Allyson shared:

> Like in high school you see all these movies and think of college as being a place where people are doin' the slippy slide down the hall, and [laugh] just having a lot of fun and for me it was more, I didn't experience that at all. I mean there wasn't like fun where you could just be you, like just hang out and have a good time and be silly. Um, for me like I said, it was hard for me to find my niche. But you know, the movies aren't real [laugh] and if that's what I was basing my experience on that was my bad.

Related to their social experience, the women were surprised that there was not more do on campus. Tia expressed this in the context of things she shares with recruits:

> I tell recruits, don't come here if you want to have a good time. You gotta take [institution] for what it is. Don't make the mistake of comparing it [the institution] to where you're from like I did. [Laugh]. I mean it would drive you crazy. This is not New York City, there are no Black people, you will not meet guys. I mean I'm honest with recruits. It's not fun. It gets boring and lonely. There is nothing for Black people to do here period.

Kim expressed similar views:

> I was expectin' a lot more going on. I like having things to do. You get maxed out here because you're seein' the same people, same on Friday, same on Saturday, same things weekend after weekend. Well [laugh] I'm sure the White people don't be sayin' that [laugh]. Seriously it is actually really strange. My mom came to visit me and the first day we shopped, went out to eat, and saw a movie and she was like "Now what?" and I told her we'd done three weeks worth of stuff. I mean she was like "I don't understand what you do?" But I mean I live [home] 20minutes from the heart of [large city] and at any given time I can go do something. The city never sleeps you know?

Sandra, Allyson, Tia, and Veronica shared that they had hoped to find their future spouse during college and were disappointed at their lack of social life as it pertained to dating. They felt that due to what they'd seen in the media and heard about from friends', college was a time when they were supposed to find their future spouse.

Sandra:

> Um well, my mom makes fun of me that I haven't had a boyfriend yet. She knows that's part of the reason I feel so depressed. I'm almost 23 and I don't have a boyfriend and you know you're expectin' that and even more than that is just having that male companion. You know, just someone go to the movies with and like, let's go eat. It would be nice to have a boyfriend and so I guess you could say that has been a big disappointment, but not like, well not like totally I guess.

Allyson:

> This is going to sound stupid but I think you always think you're going to find your husband here, I mean in college. I mean you hear like you're goin' to college and you'll probably meet the man you're going to marry and so like the

> next step after college is to get married and um, well now I'm graduating and [laugh] that's not happening, so I mean, uh, it's weird.

The women all commented on how White the town and university were and that this was something very new and unexpected to them. Sandra stated:

> I would never stay here, never. It is so White. I've never been someplace so White. It makes me laugh that White people here think they are so "cultured" sometimes I hear them talkin' about how much diversity there is here and I just want to laugh, I do laugh at them. I think they are probably from very small towns where there is no Black or color, they think [town] is like the mecca of diversity [laugh].

Leah had a similar reaction:

> I've never seen so many White people in my life. It is the truth. I mean I've been to other small towns in the Midwest but this is just a culture shock for me because where I come from there is just a big mix of people. It is hard to find people to relate to here.

And Allyson who was from the Midwest had this to share:

> Moving to [state] wasn't exactly a cultural shock to me but I still can't believe how White it is here. It is very White. I guess if I think about it IS the Whitest place I've ever been. I mean I come from a White area, but this is even more White.

Finally each woman at some point in her interview brought up how unexpectedly "nice" the community was, some contextualized it to the university community and others to the larger, surrounding area, Candace stated:

> I was really surprised at how nice this place is. You don't gotta worry about walkin' down the street in the wrong area, or what color you have on. The only word I can think of is "nice". It's nice.

Veronica made similar observations:

> There are a few things you can really appreciate [about the university]. Like goin' on the bus and you can just strike up a conversation with the bus driver. Well at home that would never happen and people walk by each other and never say "hi." But here people are a bit more friendly and most will sort of half smile, it's nice. Life here is just way more laid back so at first I was surprised, but now I've come to appreciate this slower pace which is nice.

And Kim observed:

> I mean, it's nice here. We're in the middle of nowhere, nothing can happen to you like it can in the city. It's definitely not a scary place which I was surprised at first but I guess I like it because you don't have to be on guard 24/7 and think about your safety at every turn like you do at home.

Theme 2: Being Treated Differently Than White Women

Participants' perceived they had been treated differently than their White female peers. The women stated that they felt used, stereotyped, and discriminated against by their peers, teammates, coaches, teachers, and staff.

Positive Experiences Being Treated Differently as an Athlete

In relation to their experience as athletes, participants felt they had been treated differently than their White female peers in both positive and negative ways. Positive ways they felt they were treated differently related to their "status" as athletes. Leah commented:

> So I guess I feel like I'm someone more important than normal students, it's special to be an athlete because you get more attention and people look up to you.

Candace shared her experience as it related to fans:

> The fans are just amazing. They are so great to you and it's just really rewarding, especially signing autographs and having people recognize you, it's really a trip, but yea I love it.

Negative Experiences Being Treated Differently as an Athlete

Negative ways they felt they were treated differently included issues between being a student and an athlete. Tia shared her frustrations with the athletics department:

> I think the athletic department is coming from the bare perspective of just keeping us eligible, to hell with what we want to do. It's just that simple. It's like they just want us to get the bare minimum, the bar for us as athletes is set really low. I mean if the child is tryin' to get into med school she's always goin' to be eligible by athletics standards, they are just protecting your eligibility and news flash we're not all football players tryin' to go pro. They treat us like we're not capable of takin' higher level courses and we are.

Feeling Stereotyped by Coaches, Teammates, and Athletic Staff

Many of the women felt they were stereotyped by their race by their coaches, teammates, and staff. Allyson shared her experience with her coach:

> To put it lightly, I think the coach had never worked with a Black athlete before, I felt a bit uncomfortable. I definitely was very aware of being Black when I was around that coach. The coach would make comments, and a few things to where I actually considered transferring my freshman year. I think the coach had all these

> preconceived ideas about how a Black athlete was, like the coach would comment that I wasn't as aggressive or loud as they had expected.

Candace shared a story involving one of her teammates:

> One day we were outside and I guess it was a pretty hot day and I was kinda complaining about having to be outside in the hot weather. Well one of the girls was like "Oh, I thought you'd like this heat." And I said "Why on earth would you think that?" and then I got it and so I said "Oh, because I'm from Africa and it's hot in Africa?" and she said "Yeah" and was like all embarrassed. I was like "You're a moron, I'm not even from Africa you idiot, I've never even been to Africa". So I had those types of experiences with these White girls from God knows where and yeah, like I was taken aback a bit I guess and made to feel very aware of my skin color.

Veronica shared an experience where she felt stereotyped by a staff member.

> Once this person asked me why all the Black girls are so into science and I just thought that was so weird. The person asked me what it was about "all of us Black girls" wanting to go into science fields. I was like, well I don't know, I mean not everyone is. I found it strange and I was like "What, we shouldn't do biology, we shouldn't do chemistry?" I didn't like that, I'm not sure what the person was actually saying, it was confusing. We all have different majors so I don't know why we was like being grouped together into one major and making it seem bad. It was almost like the person didn't even believe we'd be interested in science. I don't know.

Feeling Discriminated Against by Coaches,

Teammates, and Staff

All of the women reported feeling discriminated against by their coaches, teammates and staff. Candace shared an incident that occurred during a team meeting:

> I mean, I think the coach is a racist. I mean I do. I don't think the coach knows or understands what they are saying. The coach don't realize it, but um... Well I'll tell you there was two times in practice and the coach was pointing out a girl who was Black, but there was like four of them, and so she got frustrated and goes "The one with the nappy hair". Yes, it happened and this was after Imus. Nope, I'm not kidding you. And I was like "aught". I was so mad but what am I supposed to do? They have my scholarship and I can't risk that.

Allyson shared an incident that occurred to her while she was traveling with the team:

> This one time we were traveling and I was in the van with the coach and it was dark outside and I was in the back of the van. All of a sudden the coach said, "Hey, turn around and smile so I can see your teeth, see if you're still back there". I guess because my teeth are white and I'm Black, you know, you know…I mean what was I supposed do? What was I supposed to say? It was humiliating.

And Lisa shared her perceptions of being discriminated against by her coaches based on her physical appearance as well as her race.

> Well coach thinks I'm fat. Yep, the coach said that Black female [athletes] don't look like me, that I need to lose weight. I mean, yeah I've gained a few pounds, but I'm by no means the heaviest on the team and I just don't know why I'm been called out on this. I remember this one time, and I'll NEVER do this again, I went to grab a cookie at dinner and I swear, I'm not dumb, but I swear all the coaches' eyes like went on me. I was like that's the last damn cookie I'm ever goin' take. I swear. I'm just upset because I'm not the heaviest so like why is the coach doin' this to me, why am I the only person the coach is picking' on?

The women told many stories of discrimination by their teammates. One story was brought up by many of the women, and I have chosen to include Veronica's version of events as it seemed the most comprehensive:

> We were traveling and we were staying' at this hotel. They had all this breakfast food laid out like on a buffet. One of the other Black girls wanted a slice of bread to go and I remember seein' her go towards the bag of bread but that was all. Well for some reason we ended up in the same van as some of the White girls, which I might add, we never do, they go in one van and we go in another van. Anyway so um, there were three of us got stuck in that van and this White girl starts talkin sayin' "Can you believe it, they stole that entire loaf of bread?" And my roommate and I were like, are they talking about us? So they just kept going on and on "Why would those girls do that?" And so when we got there I asked the girl who took the bread if she took the whole loaf and she was like "no, I just took a slice" and so I told those girls "We're not like what you think we are." And they were like "No, no, I didn't mean it like THAT", you know how White girls are always sayin' that "No, I didn't mean it like that". So that just made me even more mad because she generalized all of us to her idea of Black women being thieves I guess. I mean that's a silly story but it caused a lot of anger between us and them.

Candace shared an ongoing issue she dealt with regarding a teammate who she felt continually used derogatory language toward her.

> So it started when we was going to this girl's house for a barbeque. Me and this other girl who happened to be Black were like 45 minutes late when we walked in she was like "What did I tell all ya' all, CPT time." And I was like "What the hell do you mean?" and she says "Colored People Time" and I was like we better go. Let's go. We got in the car and I was so mad, I was like "Just drive, drive or I'm going to lose it". Then we was down on a trip and me and this other Black girl was in the elevator with [the same girl] and we was on the way to practice and running late and she looks at us and says "CPT again, huh?" And I said "Let me tell you something, you ain't never going to say that again because if you say that again I'm going to knock your front teeth out, I mean honestly I'll do it right now." And she was like "Why? I'm not tryin' to be …" and I said "What, RACIST? Do you even know what it means? You just called me colored, that's racist bitch. Don't ever say that to me again. I mean unless you want me to call

> you a cracker, if you wanna go there then let's go there." So whatever, of course she just said "sorry" in that little White girl way. I mean I just let it go the first time but I knew if I kept letting it go she'd just keep sayin' it. In a weird way it was like she thought she was like "my girl" by using it, you know, like we was on the same level or something'.

Each of the women also relayed incidents where they felt discriminated against by staff. Among them was Sandra:

> I was in the Computer lab working on an assignment with my father who was helping me over Instant Messenger. While we're not allowed to be on Messenger with our friends, this was for class and my dad is a Math professor in the Caribbean and that was the only way we could do it because you also can't use the phone in there. So this staff member came in and sat down with some footballer and was talking and laughing, also breaking rules because you're not allowed to talk in the computer lab. They had all this big laughter and joking and then the staff person left. And then later the same staffer came back and saw me on Messenger and I tried to explain but was still blamed by the same staff person. I got extra hours and it was just so unfair. Here they could be in there breakin' all the rules, talking, laughing causing this commotion but then I get in trouble and I was actually doing my work.

Tia shared an experience she had with an academic coordinator that she perceived as discriminatory:

> This person, [laugh] didn't know what they was doin' and on top of that I think the person was scared of me [laugh]. Always was questioning if I could handle the classes I was takin'. "Well are you SURE you can take two science classes? Science classes in the U.S. are probably different than from where you come from." [Laugh]. Oh and this one time the same person asked about my hair, why did I wear it in such tiny braids, wouldn't it look nice in a pony tail. Pony tail! [Laugh].

Experiences as Students of Feeling Stereotyped

and Discriminated Against

Within the context of their lives as students, the women reported feeling stereotyped and discriminated against. Most of the women had experiences of feeling stereotyped by faculty. Leah, who is from the Caribbean, had a faculty person tell her she spoke English very well. She responded by saying, "I only speak one language, English!".

Tia described her experience:

> Teachers always expected me to know everything about being Black. Well I'm not American. Like even I learned about the KKK and I was gettin' scared, I've never heard of that. They assume I can speak on what it means to be Black, but

> they mean Black American and I'm not that. I can't even speak for all Blacks from the Caribbean.

She went on to describe an incident with a teacher:

> I remember I went in to speak to this one professor because I was dissatisfied with how I did on the test because I'd worked really hard studying for it and I felt like it was an "A" effort but it wasn't an A grade. So I went in and said "I don't understand why I got this grade." And he [professor] just assumed I'd gotten a bad grade and he's like "You have to study hard for this class you can't just slack off and think you're going to pass. Maybe you need extra help or maybe this class is above your ability." So I was like "What?" and he then he looked at my test and saw that I'd gotten a "B+" and he goes "Oh, you did well." I was like, "Yea, but I need to understand what I didn't get so that I can do better next time, I felt like I should have gotten an A and since I didn't I need to make sure I know what's going on because I thought I did. Anyway, he just automatically assumed I had failed the test.

The women also felt stereotyped by their classmates. Veronica shared an experience she had with a classmate:

> I remember in my calculus class there was this girl I studied with. I thought we were cool and then for some reason she just stopped talking to me so I called her and I was like why did you stop calling me back or whatever and she was like "Oh, no…no, I just…" you know all patronizing like people are here, and I wasn't getting angry but I started to speak a little louder and I was like clearly this is a situation where you were using me for my knowledge and she was like, "Oh, no, no, no…" and I was very adamant and she was like "See I was afraid you'd act like this, there's no need to get angry, you guys always get so angry, your tone is starting to sound very violent and angry." I was like whatever please. White girls always think you're angry or gonna get violent. Trust me is not a violent tone honey, trust when I say this is not violent.

Kim also felt she had to combat stereotypes with classmates:

> I mean like I remember showing up for my section of my advanced chemistry class and the people were all just like, "Oh you're an athlete…what do you do?" And I just thought it was so sad that they automatically assumed I was an athlete. I just told them "No, I'm here to be a doctor, just like you." A lot of them were taken aback. Then I told them that actually I was an athlete, but that the reason I was here was for an education, just like them. And that not all Black people are athletes! I always sit in front and I guess I'm trying to make a statement would break both the stereotypes of Black women and of athletes. I don't want people think that all athletes are retarded or ignorant. I'm trying to prove a point.

Lisa perceived her classmates stereotyped her because she was Black and because she was an athlete:

> Well the first thing that happens when I walk into any new class is that people just assume I'm an athlete. I always get this look. Like, I can't describe it, or tell what the look is. I get this look like, "Oh, you're going here for free." Like I don't know that that's what they're thinkin' but I just get this look. I always get

> these questions like "Oh they buy you a car, oh they buy you presents"…well they think that athletes just get a bunch of money, gifts, like we can just walk around and do whatever we want. Like we don't have to go to class all that stuff. I don't know where all these views come from but it's like totally tiring to have to explain it to them. It makes me mad sometimes because most of them don't work as hard as I do and they have way more free time on they hands. They don't get that we have all these demands on our time and we have to go to class too and do well in class too.

The women felt that White people stereotyped them in general as scary, intimidating, and unapproachable. Kim shared:

> My experience with the White kids here is that they tend to be a little scared of Black women, they either have these ridiculous stereotypes about us, or they just think we're really scary. A lot of them have had little or no interactions with Black women before so I think as educated Black women we spend all this time trying to prove that we aren't anything like the video ho's they see on BET and stuff like that.

Tia had a similar view:

> You always have to fight the stereotypes every day. It's frustrating because in classes you have to fight the stereotype of being lazy or not interested. So if there's a discussion going on you try to be excited or passionate about what's goin' on, you know show the teacher you're there. But then it comes back on you because people in the class then mistake that for being angry or violent. Always angry, always angry. I remember this one time, this girl was like "don't get angry, don't get aggressive, we were just talking, why you are so angry?" I mean I was just talkin' and I was definitely not aggressive, but it got all blown out of proportion because this girl saw it was angry and aggressive.

Experiences of Discrimination by Teachers

Each of the women shared an experience where they felt they had been discriminated against by a teacher. Candace gave an example of an incident that occurred in class:

> So one time I was sittin' in this big lecture class and um sometimes I do talk but this time I was payin' attention. And a couple of White girls was talkin' behind us and the teacher turns around and looks right us and says "You girls be quiet" and I was like "Girls?" and it wasn't even us. And then later in the class he did it again, yelled at us when we wasn't talkin' to nobody. It made me mad 'cause I was like, oh, is he callin' us out 'cause we're Black? What so because we're Black we're the ones that get in trouble while Whitey's over there getting' over. Again. [Laugh]. It's always us though, the Black girls getting in trouble, it'd be one thing if they just walked around thinking we was bad, but they actually like punish us, or um, like we get in trouble in you know, just because they think it's us.

Experiences of Discrimination on Campus and

in the Surrounding Community

The women shared experiences where they felt discriminated in their personal lives outside of athletics and school. Kim told a story about an incident that occurred to one of her teammates in the residence halls:

> The strangest experience I've gone through was when me and my roommate, another Black girl on the team first moved into the dorms. She walked to the bathroom and I think she was like wearing all black. Anyway, after she came out another girl on the floor, who was White, was standing outside the door and asked her if she'd finished cleaning. And she [the roommate] just stood there and was like "Have I done what?" And the girl was like "Are you done now, can I use it?" My roommate was so upset. She came back to the room and just stood in the doorway trying not to cry. I mean and that was like the within the first two weeks after we got here.

Tia shared an incident that occurred with a male she was "talking to":

> One time I was on the phone with this guy and like we was talkin' and everything and then he asked me to describe myself and when I told him I was Black he was like, "Cute Black, or Black, Black. Like my roommate was listening and she was like "Don't tell that boy you're jet Black or he ain't gonna wanna talk to you." And I was like, "But I am jet Black." Like, clothing Black. I mean I'm like Black, Black is Black, but I guess there's this light skin and there's this dark skin and well whatever, I'm Black.

The women all reported racial incidents that occurred in the surrounding community of the university. Sandra recalled:

> This one time we all went to Sam's Club and we were walkin' down the aisle and this White guy in a blue baseball cap looked at us and said "Niggers." And that was when we first got here, we were in shock, but our coach was with us and he just started cussin' and yellin' back at that man.

Veronica recalled an experience at a local restaurant:

> One time we went to Applebee's and for some reason that day and that time the restaurant was totally empty. I mean there wasn't one customer at all in the restaurant. But for some reason the server looked around the entire restaurant as if to say there were people taking up all of the tables and then he proceeded to walk us all the way to the back of the dining room by the bathrooms. I mean we were in the way back. We looked around, we looked at each other and we were like "Hey, there are empty seats here, why are we all the way in the back?" The guy was like, "Oh, okay, sorry, sorry, I thought you'd want some privacy". Yea right. He was afraid we'd be too loud.

Allyson recalled an experience that took place at a local mall:

> Well one of my teammates sort of dresses like a homeless person in the winter, you know sweats and stuff and we went out to the mall and I remember we was comin' from practice and her hair was like [laugh] well it wasn't combed or nothin'. So we went into [department store] and all of a sudden this security guard approached us and escorted us to the front of the store in front of all the employees and people and asked to see what was in our bags and to take off our coats. He was like "Where are the clothes?" and they were grilling her for what seemed like 20 minutes and kept asking her "Where is it?" because they thought she'd stolen something. Only to realize after all that the clothes were still in the dressing room where she'd left them. It was totally humiliating and we were so angry after that.

And finally, Kim described an experience that occurred at a hotel after she'd come back to campus following her year off to be treated for cancer.

> I was at the motel and I was feeling really really ill, and I just collapsed right there in the lobby. I had shorter hair at the time and I was wearing sweats. The paramedics came and I was awake and conscious but I guess they hadn't realized it. They said "look at this ghetto black boy" and then they approached me and asked me what drugs I was on. I was so mad but I was really weak so I didn't say anything and my mom finally showed up and she was irate.

Perceptions of Different Experiences

Finally, the women in the study who identified as being from the Caribbean or West Indies felt they had a different experience from Black women born in America.

Sandra shared:

> The Black American girls have a hard time too, it's true, they struggle with the same things we do, but the difference is that they're still part of the US culture. They can go home whenever they want, they're eatin' the same food.

Veronica shared similar views:

> If you're Black American you live here [U.S.]. You have parents here, you have a whole support system right here. You can buy an $80 ticket and fly home. A Caribbean athlete can't do that. If we don't have a full scholarship we can't come to a school like this. Everything is riding on our scholarship.

Leah added:

> Well, we [Caribbean women] stand out here and it is very weird and awkward. I think Black American girls can sort of blend in, they're used to being the only Black person around all White people, we're like…[laugh] deers in head lights. I mean, as a foreigner people don't understand you, [laugh], our accent or our culture. Thank God there are other Caribbean girls here that I can relate to.

Theme 3: Complex Relationships

Each participant described complex relationships that have deeply impacted her experience in college both positively and negatively, namely relationships between herself and her teammates, coaches, faculty, Black men, and White women. Participants shared that they had been impacted by both positive and negative relationships during their college experience.

Relationships with Teammates

Participants shared that relationships with their teammates were highly impactful. Most of the women described having formed some positive relationships that had been a source of support for them. Allyson shared:

> I became close with to a couple of my teammates starting the end of my freshman year. One girl who was also Black became a great friend and when she was on the team that was probably the most fun I had. Just because she was a Christian as well, so we'd go to church together and pray together and we did a lot outside of athletics. She was someone I could go to if I was upset and I knew she understood what I was goin' through.

Kim shared how important her relationship with her teammates had been for her.

> Well we are all from outside the U.S. so we are all really far away from home and it's kind of like we are each other's support network. Without them I could easily get distracted. They keep me grounded and when you're homesick it's nice to know there are people in your corner. Like if you've done something great, they'll be the first person congratulating you. If I hadn't had them I would have found it really hard to continue on here. It would have been depressing and lonely. What would I have done without them here? We are like family. My mom says she doesn't have just one daughter, she has five, and she's just as likely to tell off one of the girls as she would me, so you know, you just kind of build up this extended family.

Veronica added that despite the divide in her team, the individual relationships she had formed with some of her teammates were instrumental in her success:

> I can definitely tell you the team is divided so when I think of my teammates I'm really saying my friends, who are all Black women. So even though the team is divided, it is also the place where I am the most comfortable and feel the most welcome. Just having people on the team who look like, unlike when I'm outside of athletics, and share similar interests and just bein' able to relate to one another…they can understand where I'm comin' from because they're all havin' these same experiences in classes and such, bein' the only Black woman you know?

Relationships with Coaches

Each woman also spoke of the role her relationship with her coach had played in her experience. Candace relayed a positive experience she had with one of her assistant coaches:

> Somebody was there for me, one of my assistant coaches who knows where I'm comin' from. This coach kinda figured out that I was at my breakin' point, you know crying sometimes and stuff. We went to lunch and we talked and well I ended up sharing what was goin' on, about the depression, the whole thing about wanting to leave and how I'd already made up my mind I didn't want to be here anymore. Done. Bam. You know? But we had maybe four, five lunches after that, things like that. And uh [makes motion with her hands], obviously I'm still here now. I mean it kinda made a difference because um, well we was able to talk about things about the team and about me as a Black athlete that I don't think anyone else could've talked about or understood.

All of the women who had been recruited and coached by one particular coach talked at length about their experience with this person. They cited the coach as a parental figure, protector, and in general commented on how great a person the previous coach was.

Among the many reflections Kim remembered her coach:

> I mean this coach was an exception to any coach I've ever had. Understanding, willing to listen, a parent figure that we could talk to about our feelings or if there was something going on. Meeting this person impacted my life even though it was just for a short time. This coach was just such a positive person and who cared about us. I mean we knew this coach really, really cared about us as people, not as just as athletes, but me, like me, Kim. The coach would break rules sometimes, [laugh]. I mean if we were sick the coach would take us in their car to fill our prescription or would take us to the grocery store because here we're thousands of miles away from home and we don't have cars. This coach was kind to us. This coach would encourage you, but when you were doin' crappy also tell you straighten up too. This coach was just a really great person and who I really do miss.

The women also shared experiences of relationships with coaches that they perceived as impactful but in a negative way. Veronica shared:

> Our head coach now says "Earn your keep", that is the saying and the coach says it all the time. The same coach sends up texts and e-mails with that message. I'm not sure if it's supposed to be motivatin' but it makes us feel like shit. My problem with this coach is that with this coach you're only recognized if you are doing well. I remember my freshman year when I was a NCAA qualifier and the coach was like "Oh, you're so awesome" and was always sayin' "Hi" to me and stuff. Then I injured my hamstring and I clearly remember walking by the same

> coach and saying "Hi Coach" and the coach just looked at me with no recognition and then said "Earn your keep." To this coach we have a job we're supposed to do and that's it. It's a business. Not fun, not family, a job.

Sandra shared her feelings about her relationship with her coach:

> This one coach, speaks to us like we're not tryin'. Don't tell any athlete they're not tryin'. You, you haven't built up a relationship to know what they're feeling. You don't know me. You don't know when I am or when I'm not givin' 100% and it seems like don't wanna know me anyways. You never talk to me unless I'm doin' well or winnin' points for the team. That's it. We have no relationship. But if I mess up or whatever then he just goes into this long tirade. It's frustratin' and like I know, I know, I went into this long depression for like the last two years, and yah, it's just really really sad and frustratin'. It does nothing for your morale and just makes you want to not even try.

Relationships with Faculty

Although participants seemed in agreement that many faculty "hate student athletes" and shared a few stories of negative treatment (discussed in "Being Treated Differently") they also shared examples of positive relationships they had formed with faculty members.

> I remember this one science teacher because I went to him for help and it turned out he'd run cross-country at Harvard! He was so excited to have me be so proactive about my grade and he worked with me. He never made me feel dumb which I appreciated you know? We met throughout that semester and I just really liked him because he seemed to care about me and I guess we could like relate to one another, he knew what I was goin' through and that I was really trying hard.

Kim shared her experience with a faculty person:

> I had this one teacher, she was really good. She was not from here, I think she was from Oklahoma or somewhere and when I met with her and we got to talkin' she was sayin' how she didn't understand how people here could think it was a diverse place. She kept saying that this city is not a good representation of America and I just well, like I just related to her then. She was really accommodating to me and could see that I was like takin' on two jobs between school and being an athlete. She was really cool and would comment on stuff she'd read in the paper, like "Good job" you know? She would let me choose when I turned in my work, like before a trip or right after and I always turned it in before because I don't like all that hangin' over my head, but it was just nice to have a choice, you know? We still stay in touch sorta by e-mail.

Although the women cited instances of positive interactions with faculty, none of them shared of any ongoing positive relationship with a faculty or staff member.

The women spoke at length about the complex relationships they had with Black men and White women on campus.

Relationships with Black Men

The participants began talking about their relationships with Black men within the context of the dating. Many of the women felt that "all" the Black men on campus had a reputation that they did not want to be associated with. Kim shared:

> For us [Black women] it's like, if you know a guy has a reputation you just have to try to stay away, it's kinda sad because then a lot of Black female athletes tend not to date on campus.

Veronica had her own unique explanation:

> It's a recycling process. It's like drawing from a jar of ten choices. [Laugh]. You have to choose and just hope that the guy you're talkin' to isn't someone that got arrested, or something and the biggest problem is with other girls who are also talkin' to the same guy. See? We are like fightin' amongst ourselves. So like you see a guy, ten other girls have seen that guy, and then ten other girls and you're like, omigosh my friend used to talk to him. Basically every guy here, once he's talked to just one girl is blemished, just because it's such a small pool to choose from.

The women discussed the importance of maintaining a good reputation as a Black female athlete that meant not 'sleeping around' but waiting until they met someone with whom they could form a more long term relationship. Veronica shared:

> There's so few Black female athletes it'd be so easy to kind of pick up a reputation for…bein' a certain type of female or certain kinda girl and I think we [Black female athletes] understand that it would take only one of us to tarnish everybody else so everyone just tries to keep their noses clean and stay outta the limelight in order to stop that kind of reputation from goin' around.

Leah discussed the same issue:

> You gotta be careful, you can't just go out and be with anyone. It's not a good look and not a good reputation. You're sort out there representin' all Black women.

Each woman talked about the Black football players on campus. They shared that they were disgusted by their behavior, did not wanting to date them, but at the same time engaged in a "brother/sister" or sibling relationship with them in order to have a support system. Kim shared her thoughts around the platonic relationships between Black women and Black men on campus:

> Well everyone tells you you're going to university and you're going to find the boyfriend of your dreams all "Love and Basketball" stuff and I know it's an

> idealization of college but it's not turned out to be what I expected. I mean I didn't need more brothers and that's what I got. I mean, it's cool and because there are so few of us it's nice because we come together more as a family. We know we can go to each other with stuff and they'll be able to relate to what we're talkin' about. So I mean it just kind of plods along and there's no kind of big fireworks of anything.

Sandra added:

> Some of them [Black football players] just miss having Black female friends to just hang out with you know? I think as much as it's strange for us to be the only Black females, it's strange for them to be like the only Black faces they see too. So the guys I hang out with just like to be around us [Black females] like a brotherly, sisterly thing. I think you just need to be around your own so to speak to kind of be in that comfort zone. You don't have to be a footballer or certain kind of athlete you can just be whoever you are.

Leah also talked about the sibling relationship:

> The footballers get real protective of us. I mean, they like protect us from other footballers which I think is funny considering they're all just as bad. But they kind of get protective in this older brotherly way and it's nice in terms of makes you feel like family. But the datin' part of it never kind of progresses. It feels good they have our back on the one hand, but then it's a loss on the other. It is a loss.

Tia shared her frustration with the dating experience:

> I think most Black women you know have standards, but you know it's still lonely. I mean DAG, we're sexual creatures too you know? And even more than that it's like just wanting to have the feeling of being wanted. Hmmm. I don't know. I mean it's frustrating because like they'll think we're cute, but they won't have us. We still hang, but they don't wanna have us. They don't want a relationship, period. I mean most Black girls aren't willing to accept that. If we're going to hang out we're going to have a relationship.

Many of women in the study felt that Black men were intimidated by them and thus reluctant to pursue a relationship. Sandra explained:

> For example, there was this guy and he told someone he liked me but I come from a culture where if you like a girl, you come and tell them. The woman's not to make the first move or you'll look desperate. So then they're like intimidated by us. Yes. It's true. I mean especially the guys here, they have all these White women fallin' all over them and I'm not goin to do that. My friends aren't goin' to do that. And they [Black men[find that intimidating. I not goin' to take no bullshit and they learn that quick.

Tia had similar thoughts:

> They [Black men] say we're too clingy, you know like we demand to be in an actual relationship. But also they're just straight up intimidated by us so they don't come to us, they don't approach us. They think we look mean. Maybe it's the muscles [laugh]. There's that too. I mean it's hard for Black girls [laugh].

> There was a time when muscles were not cute, but in America it's very embraced and in Jamaica now more so. So yah, they don't approach us, no. I mean I was talkin' to these other black girls on the team and I mean you just start wonderin' if you're ugly, you know? Are we ugly?

Candace shared her opinion about what Black men really want:

> The reality is that Black men want Black women. I mean once they find the person that just doesn't put up with their shit, you know what I'm sayin', because they're intrigued. So, that's why I knew why everybody was tryin' to talk to me because I wasn't that normal girl that they're used to. I didn't care what they did, I thought they were disgusting and told them so. I'm a girl with high standards so I guess that kept them intrigued. They'll get tired of all this [waves hands] and mark me, they'll get tired of White girls. They want a Black woman. Once they find someone that's, as they say "wifey material", that's who they bring home to mom. That's the one, and guess what? Nine times outta ten, she's Black.

Relationships with White Women

As the women reflected on their relationships with Black men, each of them drew a link between their inability to find Black men on campus to date and the choice of Black men on campus to "mess" with White women. Veronica stated:

> And then there's the White girl thing. I mean I guess just because I'm here and I'm like uh, why do you do that? Why? I guess with the Black guys I'm just like, why are you with them? Then again, Black women are feisty, they're not going to be like "Okay, I'll give you what you want right now", or whatever. These stupid White girls are like literally tripping over themselves to get to these guys, buying them TVs, giving them money, so I guess who wouldn't want to go with them? But like I'm always just kind of like "Geez, couldn't you find a Black woman you know?"

Many of the women's reflections moved into a discussion about White women. Tia expressed her views of White women:

> Those nasty White women. They'll let them [footballers] drive her car, she'll buy them shit, you didn't know that? We're [Black women] like "What the hell?" I mean they [White women] just have no shame. The ballers don't even want these women for a relationship. They want sex and that's about it. They can't bring them home because they momma's will shoot em'. [Laugh]. But it sucks so bad when you see a guy with them ugly White girls. Them ugly fat White girls [laugh]. But we can't compete. I mean we don't got cars or money and there's this whole thing out there that like White girls got money, they let you drive their cars, and we've [Black women] have been told this explicitly.

Candace also expressed her opinion of White women:

> Now see White girls are pushovers and Black men know that. White girls do things for them we [Black women] would never do. Why they so weak I don't know? Don't they have no self-respect? Don't they know the ballers just want they ass? I mean, hey I'm not payin' your rent and then we don't go out. You're

> not borrowin' my car and then leave me somewhere. You're not borrowin' my car and then pickin' up some other girl [laugh]. This HAPPENS too! I'm sorry. Hell no. Stuff these girls do for them…ahhh…where do they find them?

Some of the women shared their thoughts about their interactions and relationships with White women that they found confusing. Veronica shared:

> For some reason White girls are like afraid of you, or pretend to be your friend when it's just you but when they're with their friends they don't even acknowledge you. Last week there was this girl in my dance class and I saw her on the street and so I said "Hi" and was trying to be really friendly and she just walked by me. At first I did the whole "all Black people look alike" thing you know? But then we got the next dance class and she was all "Hi" and super friendly and that made me so mad. It's all so very fake. But then there's this other White girl and she is SO White. I mean super White [laugh]. But the difference is she's so genuine. When I see her on the road or whatever she like runs up to me and screams [my name] at the top of her lungs and gives me a big hug. I mean this girl has her Coach bag and designer sunglasses and like I just don't see her associating with people like me, you know who are from a different culture, but she just always want to talk and learn and I don't know. I mean she's just so genuine so it's easy to be around her.

Leah shared her thoughts:

> Well when I came here I really wanted to try to make new friends, all different kinds of friends and you know I'm not saying I haven't become friends with some White girls on my team or that all White girls are horrible. I've met some really good like White friends, but um there are just some [White] people who don't want to understand you or even get near you. I remember one of the first things that happened when I got here, we went to this party and with some of our friends on the basketball team [men] and this White girl who had this reputation for sleeping around was all up on him and we [Black female friends] were definitely giving her the evil eye [laugh] and she just freaked out, said we were threatening her and were scaring her and [laugh] yea. It was funny, but not really because there is nothing threatening about me. That's what they always sort of revert back to, that we're scary or threatening so it's hard to make friends or trust someone enough to make friends with them if you don't know if they're going to someday accuse you of threatening them or whatever.

Candace shared an on-going issue she was experiencing with a White teammate who "thought she was Black."

> It's been real weird and my coach [Black female coach] has had to kind of explain it to me. I guess this girl considers herself like a hip hop girl or something. She's from some White, rich suburb but she thinks she's Black. Like, tries to talk Black and I guess learns all these dances she thinks are Black. I mean it's totally offensive. But she acts like this and my coach explained it to me that before I got here all the other girls on the team considered her to be like the "Black girl". Isn't this totally bizarre. I mean I guess they went to her to ask her questions about how to be Black. Now here I come with my normal self, I'm not tryin' to be nobody but I AM Black. [Laugh]. Yo, I am all those things you're tryin' so hard to be. So of course I'm better at all this stuff she's workin so hard at and I guess

> she just felt threatened and tryin' to prove herself. I'm just like totally confused because here's this girl who is racist, says racist shit and stuff, but is tryin' so hard to be Black. I mean, what? WHAT? Beats the hell outta me.

Two of the women spoke about feeling used by White women who they thought were their friends. Kim told a story about being in a bar with one of her Black male friends:

> This girl just walked up to me in this bar and started talkin' to me and I thought she was nice and all. Then she started asking me about my friend and if I'd give him her number or talk to him for her and I was mad at myself because I thought she was nice and then pissed because she was just using me to get to him. You always have to watch out for that too. They think you know someone they want to know so they try to get to close to you.

Candace had had similar experiences:

> Like the only way I usually ever come in contact with White girls is they act like they want to be my friend to just try to get to the guys I know. The funny thing is that they're like all scared of me at first. But they know I'm an athlete and then they act like they want to know more, and then really they just either want info on some guy or want to seem like they're my friend so the guy will think we're friends, follow? They also wanna know if I know about them, see? Like if the guy has said something to me about them. It's something I'm conscious about because they're acting like they wanna be my friend but they're just using me to get to somebody else.

Relationships Between Black Women Born in and Outside of the U.S.

Finally, in addition to discussing relationships with White women, the women born outside of the U.S., discussed their relationships with Black women born in the U.S.. The women from the Caribbean discussed how they felt different from "Black American" women. Sandra explained:

> It's like this [laugh]. We're [Caribbean girls] at the bottom of the rung. So we all experience that bias from the Whites. That's just a given [laugh]. The Whites look at the Black Americans in a certain way and they have all kinds of like, well there is a long history between White and Black in the U.S. so those White girls have never been around any Black people. So there are biases and what you all call "racism" between the White and Black girls, Black Americans I should say. But there are levels The White girls look at the Caribbean girls even worse. Well, different and worse. Like not only are we Black, like our skin is Black, but we are also foreign. They are not used to any kind of difference and so then there is another level and that is that the Black American girls look down on the Caribbean girls. See?

Sandra also shared a story about an interaction she had with a few Black American women:

> I went downtown with my friends and these Black girls stepped to us and tried to intimidate us, you know those Chicago girls. They always down there tryin' to pick fights and like one tried to do that one time to me and I'm just tellin' you this, like so, somebody had bumped into her and wasn't me but she turned to me and started to curse. And I just stepped to her and my friend was tellin' me there was a cop over there and I said "I don't care, I'll pack my bag and go home after I beat your ass." I don't care, I had to defend myself. I think, I don't know maybe it just the different culture.

Kim shared:

> I'm sure that when they [Black American] walk into a lecture hall and they are the only Black girl in the room, they don't actually realize they ARE the only Black girl. [Laugh]. I mean I've been friends with a Black American girl and she came home with me and I live in an all Black area and she was definitely uncomfortable. I mean, we are separate from them [Black Americans]. I think they are actually a little scared of us too.

Veronica also shared:

> And like really, the Black American girls are really so White. [Laugh]. They really are. Like they dress in clothes that no Black woman, not even real Black American girls would wear, like Ralph Lauren and Tommy Hilfiger, like they're just tryin' so hard to be White. They pop their collars and comb their hair like White girls, and just try to blend into White culture. But in a weird way they think they're Black and try to kind of hang out with us sometimes.

Theme 4: Resistance

All of the participants expressed a form of resistance in response to their experience at college. Resistance was first manifested in two different resistance strategies: Suboptimal/survival and optimal/empowering. Although they spoke about their experiences as being somewhat unexpected and difficult, they perceived that on the whole the experience made them stronger and better people.

Suboptimal/Survival Resistance

The women exhibited suboptimal resistance strategies such as depression, isolation, and self-silencing.

Depression. Each woman shared that she had gone through a period of confusion and depression during her college experience, mostly during her first or second year at

the institution. A number of the women spoke of experiencing depression during their college experience. Lisa, a first-year student shared:

> Some days I just feel depressed. I can't really like share it with nobody though. Like I'm not crazy or nothin' but I just feel tired. Like really tired and a little sad and then [laugh] that makes me feel like not doin' nothin'. I kinda talked to my Grandma about it and she just said to get over it and be strong and so that's like what I'm doin' I guess.

Other women like Candace and Sandra spoke of debilitating depression. Candace shared her experience:

> Everything was just comin' down on me, the team, the coaches, the media getting' on me. The coaches actin' like they didn't know me no more, the team changing too, just kinda everything. I was like forget this I can't do this no more. I don't wanna be here. I started not eating, losing weight, not sleeping. All that. The depression like killed me, I didn't wanna do nothin' and it was like a cycle. The more I couldn't sleep the more I didn't want to move and not movin' around and doin' stuff made it so I couldn't sleep. I'd never gone though that before. It was a bad time. My mom had to come and basically sort like nurse me back to health. Now she lives here and the whole thing is just easier.

Sandra experienced a long period of depression that lasted almost 2 years. She described her experience in detail:

> Well I did think of suicide. I mean, well maybe just short of that. Thank God my mother grew me up in a church because one of the main things is that if you commit suicide you can't go to heaven. If I was not in the church then there probably would've been something because I was so low [emphasis]. It was like, when am I goin' be happy again? It all started after the coaching change. We was a mess, and it's still a mess. No one cares or listens to us when we try to tell them. But anyway, it started with me havin' to use the bathroom very often at night, and then it became such that I had to have it absolutely quiet all the time, I mean QUIET. I would not go out. I woke up and then I would just sit in the bed all day and watch these old cartoons they had on. I started not doin' well in my classes and that made me even more mad because that's just not me. I started just bein' real angry all the time. I'd just start screamin' and cursin' at my mother and like if someone even just [she moves a paper on the desk] I would curse them and throw things around the room. I had the experience with water where every time I heard water running I just start crying. Like deep, gut wrenching crying. Like just to bathe myself I'd start to cry. It was just a low time. The whole time it was like I was outside my body, like this isn't me, but I couldn't stop it. I finally started seeing a counselor and found someone to listen to me and even he helped me figure out that I needed more UV sunlight on my skin because in Jamaica my body is accustomed to sunlight. So even little things like that. I started bein' on meds and that was horrible too because they gotta try to regulate everythin' and it was just horrible. There's other girls from the Caribbean on the team goin' through this too, I know. They are not as bad as I was, but I recognize it in them even though they don't wanna talk about.

Isolation. Each of the women talked about feeling isolated on the campus. Kim shared:

> The strangest thing is always feeling so very isolated and different. I've just felt so very, very different since coming here. I mean in a class of 300, or 100, or even 50 people I'm the only Black person. It feels overwhelming. You come and here you almost get lost in the crowd without getting lost in the crowd. It's being left out, it's everyone else knowing each other and they can find someone they something in common with.

Lisa experienced a similar feeling and expressed it within the context of "not caring":

> I mean I don't care. I don't' think about it. Really, it's the last thing I'm thinkin' about. I mean, I notice though. I come into a class and I'm like [she crouches down in her chair]. I know they thinkin' I'm all mean and whatever else they be thinkin'. I wasn't expectin' this. I wasn't expectin' to come into all my classes and be the only Black girl and I mean ALL my classes. I mean, it feels like isolating in a way and I mean havin' one or two other Black people would be nice, but like I said, I don't care. Now I'm like, "Okay, yeah, I see how this is goin' go."

The women expressed that at some point during their college experience they chose to isolate themselves from their teammates and classmates. Allyson explained why she isolates herself:

> The weird thing I've noticed as I've traveled and observed other teams and also other teams here is that most of the teams are predominantly White so it's weird though because the only person of color is usually like the [pause] best person on the team too. So maybe it's the top people not wanting anyone to get too close to them? So I mean, I'm not sure why I isolate myself, maybe to protect myself, I'm not sure. I guess for me part of it is that I'm super competitive and I don't want to get to a point where I feel like I might let a relationship with a teammate get in the way of competing. I've always been more focused on doin' well than making friends or anything. Um, but sometimes I think that has a huge part in why I've never had as much fun as you know, other girls on the team have had. Because I've kind of blocked myself away from that.

Candace shared:

> I would never, never [emphasis] hang out with those girls [teammates]. I practice and I contribute to the team. I do. But I don't talk to no one and I don't get close to no one. No. I wouldn't do that. I don't have relationships with the coaches, well except for the one. Why would I want to open up to them when they prove time and time again that they're just racist, they want relationships with the White girls [on the team]. Period. So, I stay away.

Silencing. Most of the women also reported making a conscious effort to silence herself as both an athlete and a student. Lisa shared:

> I don't really know what my coach wants outta me. I get yelled out and chewed out and I'm just very confused. Yeah. I'm confused because I JUST DON'T KNOW [yells]. So I just deal with it. I keep my mouth shut and I don't say nothin'. If I'm told to do something, or if I'm suggested to do somethin' well of course I'm just goin' do it. I don't talk to no one or ask no one questions. I just keep my mouth shut or like shake my head and say "Yessum' I got it."

Candace explained why she doesn't speak up to her coaches:

> You can see I'm not shy. No, and I don't shy away from stuff. But. I don't know. The thing is [she lowers her voice to a whisper] you just never know what they're goin' to do to you. First, the coaches hold your scholarship in their hand and second, you can just be benched. You know? Make you suffer in ways no one can really prove. I mean, what are you goin' say after they say some racist shit about nappy hair? WHAT? "That coach is a racist." How you goin' prove it? You have to think first, you have to use your head. You don't have no power in the situation, if you try to take a stand for yourself then what? It could work out to be bad, so you just leave it alone.

The women also provided examples of how they silenced themselves in class. Lisa explained:

> Like I know the answer [in class], I really do, but for some reason I just don't raise my hand. I never do that. I mean I'm a real chatter bug, but like in class I just sit there really quiet and just be takin' my notes.

Tia shared her experience:

> It's funny, you're in class and put your hand up and give your opinion and nobody [emphasis] else thought of it that way. For that, sometimes I just don't respond because whatever I say no one else will see it that way and they'll probably just think I'm stupid so let me just keep my mouth shut. That's what I've hated the most about this experience because I've felt like I was always an experiment. I know that my decision that I'm not goin' to open my mouth has affected my grades. I remember back in Rhetoric I didn't get no participation grade. I pretty, well I was pretty invisible for a good two years of my college career because I just would not participate in class. But you know, nobody cares so…um. Yea, it affected my grades I know.

Veronica believed there were negative consequences to being silent in class:

> I feel like its [not participating] affected my grades because teachers definitely like people who talk and if you don't talk, they just don't know who you are, you're just another statistic when they're grading your paper.

Optimal/Empowering Resistance

The women exhibited optimal or empowering resistance strategies such as getting involved, finding social support, developing a strong sense of self, becoming an advocate for others, and developing goals and life purpose.

Involvement. The women spoke of different ways they chose to be involved outside of athletics in the campus and surrounding community that provide fulfillment and an opportunity to establish relationships with others. Allyson talked about the importance of being involved in her church:

> Every Sunday, Wednesday, and Thursday we had a meeting, it was like Bible study but also a chance to just have fun. The church rented this gym and we'd go over and play basketball or whatever with these little minority boys and girls. You know, they'd come and get dinner and we'd play games with them and then have Bible study. It was really cool and I made some good friends with people from the community that didn't even attend [the institution]. Bein' with the kids and just interacting with them sort just puts stuff in perspective you know? Like it was a good chance to get away from it all and maybe you know, not take things so seriously.

Candace shared her choice to pledge a sorority on campus:

> It takes a lot of time but it's important to me, they just had Delta week a couple weeks ago and I couldn't go to anything but now I have more time and so I'm finally goin' to and you know they have a lot. They do a lot for the community you know? We've made cookies for the Ronald McDonald house, promoted HIV testing, and this past fall we got real involved with the Obama campaign. I met a lot of people and it was cool, some people didn't even know I was an athlete and you know it was kinda nice.

Social support. The women talked about building and sustaining support networks while in college including those with: Family, friends, fans, God, and academic support. Each woman cited her family and her mom specifically as the biggest support in her life. Teammates, that turned out to be their friends, were also a big source of support. Tia stated:

> My teammates became like my family. They were the only ones that I could turn to and we supported each other through everything. Sometimes that meant we had to kick each other's ass, but [laugh] if that's what we needed, that's what we needed! We were virtually strangers when we first came here but we ended up buildin' up friendships that will, or at least I hope they will last a life time. They are the only ones that truly understand, even more so than my family. My family is just always goin' be there, but there's a different relationship there now with these girls.

Candace talked about feeling supported by the fans:

> One time we were leaving [institution] and there was a line of these little Girl Scouts and they all wanted my autograph and it just made me feel so good. The fans have been there for me through everything, even when they were writing all these lies about me in the paper and stuff. The fans have always been supportive.

> They kept sayin' "You'll be back next year, right? You're not goin' anywhere?" Good ole' [institution] fans. They were really the only reliable people during all that which is quite funny. Don't know me, don't see me really, don't have all the facts about what happened, but they're supportive. They're encouraging and like they're really proud of me now that I've had this enormous sort of comeback. They're like respectful, like they recognize I overcame this hard struggle. You know last year didn't work out my way, but the fans, they were always there believing everything would work out for the best. If they believe, I guess I have to too.

Several women discussed the role of God in their life. Allyson shared:

> Despite how difficult it's been here I've always been rooted and grounded in my relationship with Jesus. I joined Campus Crusade for Christ and they had Bible studies and really my faith just strengthened through all this. I've stayed pretty involved in the church my whole time here and it has really been foundation, I never got swayed away.

Finally, the women talked about the importance of the academic support they had on campus. Leah commented:

> The academic support center is really important because even though at first it felt like I was in this jail I realized that having to go to the center really made it easier to do my work and get things done. We get tutors for every subject if we want and all the staff seems like they want to help you do well. The facility is nice and there's comfortable couches and stuff. Also, we have a computer lab and just, it's a nice place to go and get stuff done.

Sandra had similar feelings:

> I love the academic support center because it's a place where I can study in peace. They actually keep it quiet. At first I thought it was a drag because they made it mandatory that we go. But after awhile I realized it was really a place to go where you can get help with your homework, meet other athletes, like from different teams, and just sort of hang out. So it has been a good time and probably been one of my favorite memories. I can come ask staff support person questions and oh, you can get a tutor if you need to. It's like your fault if you don't do well cause they got it all set up for you in that place.

Personal strength. Each of the women talked about discovering their own personal strength during their college experience that enabled them to persevere through difficult times. Candace reflected:

> This whole thing has changed me in a lot of ways. Good ways. I'm glad I went through all this because now I know the ropes. If I can get through all that, have everybody against me and still come out on top and just taught me a lot about myself and what I can handle. I hear people say "I'm a strong Black woman." I say, "Are you? Are you really sure?" They say "I'm strong and independent." And I say, "Are you sure? Don't just say that." Because the whole perception is that the Black woman is always strong but the reality is we're not. We're not just automatically strong because we're Black. You're strong because you've been

> through something. Just because you're a Black woman you're supposed to be strong, you're supposed to be independent, doin' things on your own. No. First of all you don't have to do everything on your own. Second of all you don't have "Do what I gotta do", that's the other Black woman quote. Third, you don't have to be independent. Yea, you can have a husband, you don't have to be dependent on him but you have that…you can lean on your friends when it gets hard, and it irritates me because all of those three things you don't need.

Veronica also talked about finding her strength:

> I mean to be here and be a Black woman, you gotta toughen up. I mean, you gotta just focus on the positives. They are there, you just gotta start puttin' your energy into that instead of what's makin' you crazy. I think it was along about the end of my sophomore year I just said I don't care. I mean I'm just goin' pass all this [waves her hand] and just keep on going. This experience is makin' me stronger and better. My mom says this is a test for the real world and even though it's hard it is preparin' me for life in the board room, or the interview, or wherever else. I've learned a lot and I know I'm much stronger now than I when I first got here.

Allyson reflected on her experience as well:

> I learned to be strong. I mean I got to know myself very, very well. As far as dealing with the pressures and things that go on. I went through some things, especially at the beginning, but I learned to deal with it and I learned to be very, very strong. Looking back I can't believe how far I've come and things I've learned, not only things like in books, but I mean just life lessons. I wouldn't have guessed that's what I'd take away from this experience.

Advocacy. The women shared that as they began to feel stronger, they felt compelled to confront and advocate for others. Veronica stated:

> Well, I'm a very vocal person. I had to learn to pick my battles, but if I'm going to disagree with someone I'm going to disagree. I've learned it's okay to bring stuff up. At first I didn't say nothin' but now I'm like "What you guys have been doing is wrong." I know people listen to me, even if they don't change, I know they hear me.

Tai shared:

> So I went to [a staff member] and told them they need to start implementin' programs to help us athletes. That person said they don't have no time or resources, but I didn't care. I just sat there because where could the person go [laugh]. I said it was so important and I didn't just complain, I had a plan and I tried to explain it. It wasn't that that person didn't listen, it was more like they didn't think they could actually get it done. But I'm going to keep talkin' about it and we'll see what happens.

Sandra spoke about advocating for other Black female athletes who she thought were also depressed:

> I see my fellow teammates goin' down the same road as me. I'm like something needs to be done right now to get them help. I went to [a staff member] and gave the example of a stress management class or an introductory class that maybe they can find another Black woman to teach. Or just find an older Black woman, like to be like a mom, to come talk to us. I just sat in the office and cried because the experience was so intense I needed that person to know how important this was. The person kept sayin', "I don't know if this can be done" and I'm like "I'm tellin' you, you need to do this, you need to do something." This stress is going to affect them academically and I thought that would make the person see, I mean they make THAT a priority. I hope this interview helps others too. I mean, it's just been in the past six months or so I can even talk about all this stuff. But I maybe it will help other girls. I don't know if you're goin' to share it around but if you do I bet girls won't feel so isolated. Like they won't feel so, …they will know that other girls have gone through it.

Allyson shared a time she stood up for another Black teammate

> So some of the older girls were sort of just I don't know, heckling this new girl, letting her know which van "we" ride in and I don't even know if she got it, but just because of all I'd gone through I just couldn't stand there. I told them there's not law about riding in vans unless they wanna go back to Jim Crow. They didn't even know what I was talkin' about. I don't think that she is as strong a person as I am. I think she's more of um, a team player. I am too, but I'm more into myself as well, and I think that helps me. I think she was like "these are my friends." I guess I feel like I need to kinda take her under my wing and just be there for her.

Goals and life purpose. Finally the women talked about developing goals and purpose for their lives. Leah shared:

> I'm really proud of coming here. The degree is the most important thing. Someday I'm goin' to work in an Ad agency at maybe a big magazine. You know, like "Devil Wears Prada" [laugh]. You know, it's important for me to make money so that I can give it back to my parents. I want to make my parents proud and give back, they've sacrificed for me to be here so yah, I want to give back. I think I'll live somewhere like in a big city, in New York City, or Chicago, or LA.

Candace had specific goals related to her sport:

> I'm going to go pro. I love my sport and even through all this I've never stopped loving my sport. I have goals you know? I'm not going to let a few bad experiences or other girls on the team get in the way of me achieving that. I'm not going to just be quiet and not be the person I am, than I probably wouldn't be the athlete I know how to be.

Sandra shared her goals as well:

> You know the last time I saw my grandmother before she died I didn't think she could even hear me or recognize me, she hadn't spoken since I'd been home [for the summer]. I said "Grandma, I'm goin' back to the U.S." When you tell someone that in Jamaica it's a big deal because you know it's the dream, everyone wants to go to the U.S. So I said, "I'm goin' to be a doctor." And all of sudden she spoke and said "Good girl, good job. I'm proud of you and God loves

> you. Remember do everything you can for everybody you can, just as long as you can." This is a good moment for me that I can talk about this [Sandra begins to cry]. She died the next week. She had waited the entire time and that was her goodbye to me. So even though I've been through very bad experiences, I can see the big picture. I've had people who genuinely cared about me, like that first coach and my teammates. I wanted to succeed and coming here was my personal goal for so long. I come from a country with nothing and I made it here. Yes. I can survive myself. Things may not have gone the way I wanted, maybe how I took the long route instead of the short route, but I'm set to move to [different state] and I'll be done with nursing school in two years. I want to work for awhile and then go back to school to fulfill my dream to be a doctor. Maybe God is usin' me as an example to show others.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the four major themes uncovered in this study. The first theme focused on unfulfilled participant expectations of their experience as a student, as an athlete, and of their college experience in general. The second theme described participants' perceptions that they had been treated differently than their White female peers. The women stated that they felt used, stereotyped, and discriminated against by their peers, teammates, coaches, teachers, and staff. The third theme described complex relationships that impacted participants' experiences in college both positively and negatively. And the fourth theme focused on forms of resistance participants engaged in response to their experience at college.

Data from individual interviews revealed research participants' perceptions of their experiences as athletes, students, and developing young women. By using participants' own words through extensive quotes, I hope to have provided an illustration of the experiences of these 8 Black female student athletes at this particular institution and at this particular time in their lives.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to gather descriptive data on the experiences of Black female student athletes. A better understanding of the experiences of Black female student athletes as students, as athletes, and as developing young women may help student affairs practitioners better understand the Black female student athlete experience; provide them with information to make decisions about student affairs programs, policies, services, and practices; and offer a subgroup of students who have historically been underrepresented in research an opportunity to share their experiences.

This research used naturalistic inquiry to collect qualitative data by conducting in-depth interviews. Participants in the study included 8 Black female student athletes at a large, Division I (D-I) Midwestern public institution. The data were coded, analyzed, and organized using categories and subcategories to assist with theme development. The study was based on the following research question: What are the experiences of Black college female student athletes during athletic eligibility at a large, predominantly White, D-I, Midwestern, public university?

Four major themes emerged from the data: unfulfilled expectations, being treated differently than White women, complex relationships, and resistance. The first theme was participants' unfulfilled expectations during their college experiences as athletes, students, and developing young people. The second theme was participants' perceptions of being treated differently than their White female peers. The women stated that they felt used, stereotyped, and discriminated against by their peers, teammates, coaches, teachers, and staff. The third theme focused on complex relationships that deeply impacted participants' experiences in college both positively and negatively, specifically those between herself and her teammates, Black men on campus, and White women. The final theme centered on both positive and negative forms of resistance in which participants engaged in response to their experiences during college.

This chapter analyzes, interprets, and synthesizes the findings. The chapter is organized by categories that directly align with the study's research question and were used to code the data and present the findings in the previous chapter: Black females' experiences as athletes, students, and developing young people. In the analysis, I searched primarily within the categories to find connecting patterns to the four themes.

As a secondary level of analysis, the relevant theory and research are tied in as these themes are compared and contrasted to issues raised by the literature. The chapter concludes with a summary that incorporates a note regarding the effect of possible researcher bias in interpreting the findings.

Black Females' Experiences as Athletes

The first part of the research question sought to determine the experiences of Black female student athletes within the specific context of athletics.

Participants felt misled during their recruiting visits to the institution. They felt both the athletic program and the institution were misrepresented as being more racially diverse than they were. This led to feelings of mistrust and "fraud" as Tia stated. This sentiment, shared by 5 of the 8 women, supports previous research that even though institutions may enroll a racially diverse student body and/or campus constituents perceive there to be a diverse student body, students of color do not necessarily experience a diverse campus cultural climate (Hurtado et al., 1998). This means that although PWIs may strive to increase the numbers of faculty, staff and students of color, they remain predominantly White and this affects and means something to students of color. According to Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), adjusting to the campus climate is especially difficult: "The academic, social, and psychological worlds inhabited by most non-White students on predominantly White campuses are substantially different in almost every respect from those of their White peers" (p. 644). Research studies support the idea that students of color at PWIs perceive less racial and ethnic diversity, less

support, and more racial-ethnic conflict than do their White peers (Ancis et al., 2000; Museus, 2008).

Participants also indicated that they had expected a surrogate parent-like relationship and were disappointed in what they perceived as the cold and business-like relationship that ensued. Research to determine the impact of coaching relationships on student athlete's perceptions of their experience may be useful. There is some empirical research supporting that student athlete relationships with coaches can impede a student's development, specifically pertaining to a student's ability to achieve autonomy and independence (Cornelius, 1995). However I did not locate specific research examining cross racial coaching relationships. Relevant to this study would be research examining coaching relationships from a Black female student athlete perspective that takes into account cultural expectations intertwined with coaching expectations.

The women in this study also felt their coaches treated the White members of their team with more care and concern. The disconnect between their experiences and their perceived unequal treatment seemed to lead to a distrust of their coaches. This may be related to perception of a lack of Black female role models within athletics and their subsequent inability to find someone who could not only sympathize but also empathize with them. If the women felt there were no models they could relate to or turn to for support, and they felt disconnected from their coaches due to not feeling cared for and experiencing a different coaching style than they expected, then it is logical that they would not trust their coaches. The lack of trust then impeded any hope for relationship building that is so influential on student success and development.

Researchers continue to study the representation of minority coaches, administrators and staff in athletics on college campuses (Cunningham & Sagas, 2005; Gaston, 2003; Lapchick, 2003). And results continue to indicate declining numbers of minorities and women across all divisions and all sports. These studies quantitatively confirm through numbers that a lack of minority and female representation; however,

findings from this study provide a few “real life” accounts that help illustrate both the consequences of not having role models and the effect role models can play in the success of some Black female athletes. Most of the women in the study discussed at length feeling isolated, depressed, and some even suicidal. The perception from the women in this study that there were few Black female role models, and the importance they seemed to place on this, suggests a possible connection to previous research findings. Lee and Rotella (1991) suggest a link between having a Black female role model by whom the athlete feels cared for and whom she trusts, and her ability to successfully navigate through her athletic experience at a PWI.

Participants in this study shared that they were disappointed in themselves as athletes. They felt they had not excelled in their sport at the D-I level as they thought they would. Research indicates that this is a common feeling for many athletes, especially those recruited to compete at the D-I level (Sellers & Kuperminc, 1997). Those athletes recruited to compete at the D-I level are especially vulnerable to difficult transitions (Sellers & Kuperminc, 1997; Valentine & Deborah, 1999; Wiechman & Williams, 1997). Not only are many athletes unprepared to deal with the high level of competition within and outside of the institutional team, unforeseen circumstances like those of Leah and Kim, who experienced injury and illness, can also be devastating for the athlete. Although not necessarily related to being a Black female, the transition process can be made easier or more difficult depending on the support, care, and trust the athlete perceives she has around her (Lee & Rotella, 1991). This is supported by the fact that participants in this study struggled through the transition from high school to collegiate athletes and referenced how deeply they were affected by not having a supportive coach or staff member who “looked like” them.

Many of the women spoke at length and provided specific detailed examples of the racial divide between team members and their subsequent disappointment in the lack of team cohesion. As a result of feeling disconnected from the team, the women stated

that they had made conscious decisions to isolate themselves from their teammates and in some cases even from their coaches. The women also chose to silence themselves, supporting findings from previous research focused on the experiences of Black female student athletes (Bruening et al., 2005). Silencing and isolation are behaviors in line with suboptimal resistance (Robinson & Kennington, 2002), which is characterized by powerlessness and dysfunctional short-term adaptations to an oppressive environment. Based on the descriptions of their experiences related to their perception of unequal treatment between themselves and their White teammates, the women may have chosen to silence themselves due to feelings of inferiority and insecurity.

The women born outside the U.S. indicated a hierarchy on the team with White women at the top, Black Americans in the middle, and them at the bottom. They felt being "foreign" put them at even more of a disadvantage in terms of their accent and cultural differences. Although this finding seems to indicate different experiences between Black women from the U.S. and Black women from other countries, data from their actual experiences pertaining to expectations, treatment, relationships, and resistance were quite similar.

The racial divide within the team also played out in how the women perceived they were treated. Similar to previous research focused on the experiences of Black female student athletes (Bruening et al., 2005; Sellers et al., 1997), each woman in the study provided painful details of instances within the context of athletics where they experienced both subtle and blatant forms of discrimination and prejudice from coaches, athletics staff, and teammates.

The racial divide on the team seemed to lead the women in the study to form strong relationships with other Black female athletes, connecting to previous research that in the absence of Black adult role models, Black students rely heavily on other sources of social support including the Black community that does exist on campus (Brown, 2008; Webster & Fretz, 1977). This finding is in line with research focused on forms of

psychological resistance used to defend against oppression. The formation of positive relationships refers to an optimal resistance strategy in line with *umoja,* the first principle of Nguzo Saba. Adopting an optimal resistance modality oriented to liberation and empowerment results in a woman's celebration of membership in community (Robinson & Kennington, 2002, p. 168). The close relationships the women in this study formed helped foster the women's feeling of community and belonging, thus counteracting some of the negative experiences they were encountering.

Black Females' Experiences as Students

The second part of the research question sought to determine the experiences of Black female student athletes within the specific context of academics.

The women in this study reflected on the difficult transition from high school to college academics. The women from the Caribbean shared their observations of and frustrations with the differences between American and Caribbean educational systems. Three of the women in the study discussed frustration in direct relationship to their majors. Although it is common for students to struggle during the transition from high school to college academics (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), student athletes face additional challenges that include 20-hr per week practices, rigorous travel schedules, poor and disconnected advising, lack of information, and being stereotyped by teachers as dumb, privileged, and unmotivated (Ferrante et al., 2005).

In addition, 5 of the 8 women transitioned from different educational systems. Adjusting to different ways of teaching, test-taking, and general delivery of education as well as cultural norms emanating from educational systems are common for international students (Abe, Talbot, & Geelhoed, 1998; Sacker, Schoon, & Barley, 2002).

Supporting previous research that Black students at PWIs experience stereotyping and discrimination (Ancis et al., 2000; Chang, 2000; Pettigrew, 1998), students in this study reported experiences of some form of direct personal racism in the classroom environment.

Research on both faculty and staff attitudes toward student athletes continues to find that athletes contend with negative stereotyping from their peers and faculty especially in regard to academic competence, special services, and recognition (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1991; Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995). In addition, research has found that misperceptions of student athletes as "dumb jocks" or as an over-privileged group of academically under-motivated individuals have led to a lack of understanding and a lack of support for one of the most diverse student populations on college campuses today (Ferrante et al., 1996). More revealing is the disturbing link between those perceptions and race (Parham, 2002). The women in this study seemed unsure at times whether they were being "targeted" because they were Black, an athlete, or both.

As with their experiences in the athletic context, the women in this study also exhibited negative forms of resistance within the academic context. As a form of negative resistance (or survival), the athletes in this study made conscious decisions to silence themselves in the academic context, just as they had in the athletic context. This finding corroborates previous research (Allen, 1992; Bruening et al., 2005; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003) that when Black females athletes feel invisible they often use silencing as a way to survive in environments they perceive as oppressive. The women spoke of experiencing what Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) termed racial microaggressions in the classroom that perpetuated their silence. Microaggressions are subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously (Solorzano et al., 2000, p. 60). Racial microaggressions, or unconscious and subtle forms of racism, though pervasive, are seldom investigated (Delgado & Stefancic, 1992). The findings from the current study regarding racial microaggressions in the classroom mirror to some extent findings from Solorzano et al.'s 2000 study. The women in the current study noted that being in the numerical minority seemed to translate into being ignored in the classroom. They also provided examples of racial microaggressions in faculty-student interactions such as instances when faculty

maintained low expectations of them, even in the face of contradictory evidence such as in Tia's experience. These negative interactions seemed to perpetuate feelings of isolation, in line with results of previous research (Moses, 1999). Each woman in this study mentioned the importance of having other Black females in their classes to provide support against stereotype threat. The effects of racial microaggressions within the academic context had real consequences for the women in this study. Most of them stated they chose to withdraw from class participation, from their peers, and from initiating interactions with their faculty. By isolating themselves, they had to negotiate the academic world with little support or guidance from those around them. In addition, they may have been forced to navigate through the negative stereotypes that fueled the racial microaggressions.

The women in this study also noted that being the only Black person in most of their classes placed them in a position where they were perceived by others to represent the voice of their entire race. Steele and Aronson (1995) identified this "spokesperson pressure" as a part of stereotype threat. Some of the women spoke of how their academic performance had been negatively affected by the racial climate. Others spoke of feeling motivated to be the person who eradicated the negative stereotypes that White students and teachers held.

As a form of positive resistance, the women all searched out co-curricular ways of becoming involved in the university and the local community. The interest and willingness to engage in co-curricular activities exemplifies the first, second, and fifth principles of Nguzo Saba: (a) *umoja*, which refers to the unity, solidarity, and harmony that transcends differences; (b) *kujichagulia*, meaning self-determination, which refers to persons who are self-determined and use this optimal, liberating resistance to define themselves through a subjective knowledge base; and (c) *nia*, which represents purpose that benefits not just the self but the collective body as well. Optimal resistance that is oriented toward empowerment emphasizes meaningful work and purposeful relationships

in order for life to be as fulfilling as it can be in a community with others (Robinson & Kennington, 2002).

Black Females' Experiences as Developing Young Women

The final part of the research question sought to determine the experiences of Black female student athletes within the specific context of development as young women.

Each of the women in this study spoke at length about the complex relationships they had with the few Black men on campus. The women spoke candidly about their disappointment regarding both the lack of Black men on campus and the quality of the Black men on campus. Peer group influence and involvement is a major factor affecting campus survival for students of color (Haralson, 1996). Relevant to the findings of this study is the issue of male/female representation at PWIs. Using figures from the U.S. government and the American Council on Education, Littleton (2003) reported that Blacks at PWIs have the lowest male-to-female proportion (38% male and 62% female) when compared to all other ethnic groups. Based on the data provided by the women in this study, the low numbers of both Black males and Black females at this particular institution created friction between the following groups: Black females and Black males, Black females and White females, and within the Black female population.

Six of the 8 women spoke about the relationship among Black males and Black females as a sibling relationship. They perceived that the Black men on campus wanted them as friends and indicated that they engaged in "protective behavior" that they perceived as "brotherly." This corroborates research findings from a study that indicated Black females perceived a necessity to have a "brother and sister" relationship with their Black male peers in order to establish support, sacrificing the potential for romantic involvement (Littleton, 2003).

When speaking about their relationships with Black men, the women in the study also cited interracial dating as a source of great conflict and distress for them. They cited

White female peers as competition for Black men to date on campus and seemed fairly hostile toward them using words like “nasty,” “hos,” “stupid,” and “fake” to describe them.

The women in the study reported having had few positive experiences with White women both socially and in the classroom environment. The women gave examples of feeling used by White women for their expertise in the classroom and then used by them to get to Black men on campus, namely athletes. They perceived that White women had low standards for themselves and were generally “loose” or “easy” when it came to Black men.

The women also perceived that because there were so few of them [Black females], instead of banding together to form a community, they saw themselves as competing against one another specifically when it came to dating Black male peers. The result of interracial dating between Black males and White females seemed to affect the women in this study negatively in three ways: (a) their self-esteem, (b) their respect for their Black males peers, and (c) their relationships with White female peers. While reflecting on their dating experience, the women questioned their appearance and beauty. For example Tia stated “I mean you just start wonderin’ if you’re ugly, you know. Are we ugly?” The women seemed to lose respect for their Black male peers because they dated White women. Compounding the issue, they did not have positive relationships with the White women they saw dating Black men and therefore thought less of both their Black male and White female peers. These situations resulted in fewer opportunities for the women in this study to connect not only with one another but also with their White and Black student peers.

This study reveals that the long, complex history between Black males and White females may be manifesting in younger generations. Although there are limited studies assessing inter-racial dating attitudes and practices amongst college students (Giordano et al., 2005; Knox, 2000), there does not appear to be research specifically related to the

effects of interracial dating between Black men and women other than Black women and its effects on Black women. There also does not appear to be research examining Black college women's perceptions of their White female peers or vice versa. Testing contact hypothesis theories may be a useful way to pursue future research in this area.

In line with previous research (Barbee, 1992; Roberts, & Sobhan, 1992) each woman discussed experiencing a period of depression at some point in her collegiate experience. Referring again to Robinson and Kennington's (2002) research on optimal and suboptimal resistance, depression is a manifestation of feelings associated with a disempowered state. It is somewhat surprising that each woman chose to share her experiences with depression. Mental health issues have long been stigmatized in the Black community (Blank, Mahmood, Fox, & Guterbok, 2002) making their admissions that much more powerful.

Findings from this study are similar to previous research conducted by Williams and Williams-Morris (2000) that found that experiences of discrimination and perceived racial prejudice can induce physiological and psychological reactions that can lead to adverse changes in mental health status. If Black women either do not recognize their depression or feel stigmatized by it, they may not seek out the help they need.

Finally, it is important to note that the women in this study reported that although they experienced many challenges and difficulties during their collegiate experiences, they felt their experiences had given them a stronger belief in self, made them better prepared for life, and had fostered advocacy in them for others. These are all optimal forms of resistance (liberation; Robinson & Kennington, 2002), and they are important findings as student affairs practitioners consider how to best meet the needs of Black female student athletes.

Developing a stronger sense of self is indicative of the second and seventh principles of Nguzo Saba. The second principle, *kujichagulia*, means self determination. Possessing knowledge of the oppressive dynamics that exist in society and having a

healthy sense of self, the person is empowered to confront and repudiate dominating messages (Robinson & Kennington, 2002). All of the women described reaching a point where they felt empowered to speak up for themselves in the race of oppressive circumstances. Finding their voices gave them confidence in themselves and the belief that they could succeed. They all felt that their experiences had made them stronger individuals.

The seventh principle, *imani*, means faith. In optimal resistance, there is an ability to be patient and to believe that good is happening independent of external appearances (Robinson & Kennington, 2002, pp. 174-175). Faith is manifested through belief in one's self-knowledge and in the goodness of the wider community and the universe, independent of what a person is able to see at the present time (Robinson & Kennington, p. 175). The women who participated in this study were at different stages in their collegiate careers and had come to *imani* at different stages in their experience; however, each of them spoke about realizing a "bigger picture" and that while their experience had been disappointing in many respects, they could still learn and grow from it. Most of them did not internalize negative stereotypes; rather, they believed that going through negative experiences and disappointments had, and would, make them stronger and better prepared to confront issues in the "real world."

The women's development of a sense of advocacy for others was another important finding. This form of optimal resistance is related to *ujimi*, which represents collective work and responsibility. Liberating resistance that is optimal and healthy is evidenced by the willingness to offer and to ask for help and support when needed (Robinson & Kennington, 2002). The women seemed highly conscious of the experiences of their Black female peers. The older women in the study spoke of wanting to make sure they protected and educated the younger Black female athletes on their team. They did not want them to make the same mistakes they had made, or encounter the same issues with which they had struggled. The women reported taking different

forms of action, some went to staff members with ideas for programming, others confronted specific acts of racism and discrimination, and others worked one-on-one with their peers to assist them in navigating through the system.

Study Limitations

There are limitations to this study that should be considered. First, the research sample was very small, comprising interview data from only 16 interviews. Second, as a researcher, I could have engaged in more rigorous triangulation of data collection methods, including conducting focus group interviews and participant observations instead of only conducting interviews. This would have greatly enhanced the "essence" of the findings. Third, although interviews have strengths, there are various limitations associated with interviewing. Not all participants are equally cooperative, articulate, and perceptive; interviews require researcher skill and I consider myself a novice interviewer; and interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering. They are the result of the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee and the context in which they take place (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). On that note, the following should be considered: (a) My analysis is subjective, and participant stories could have been misinterpreted or misunderstood; (b) some participants had a difficult time recalling experiences; thus, my perception of our interaction engagement was that it was not as "deep" as with others; and (c) 5 respondents felt obvious comfort with me as both a researcher and a staff member at the Learning Center with whom they were familiar. This comfort was evident in the depth of their responses and the personal nature of some of their stories. However, the other 3 participants had not met me prior to the study, and so rapport was developed during the interview process creating a different dynamic.

Fourth, not all D-I institutions recruit international athletes, and so this study, with over half of the participants identifying themselves as international or foreign, does not represent an "average" ethnic make-up for Black female student athletes at D-I institutions and should be considered when interpreting the findings. Further, the fact

that five of the women were “foreign” born was not a direct context for the study. The fact that some of the women were international students from the Caribbean and West Indies could have been more important than what I explored. I do not know what I may have found had I pursued further the impact of their country of origin with the women. Likewise, although religion did not come up frequently, several of the women did reference “God,” but I did not explore issues of faith, religion, or spirituality with the women. This too could have led to a more textured analysis.

Fifth, the focus of the study was on Black female student athletes within a very specific context. The perceptions of women at different D-I institutions, from different regions of the country, and in different athletic conferences are not represented. Thus, implications that can be drawn are specific only to the experiences of this sample group. Although the sample size and selection in qualitative research are not focused on size or breadth, an analysis of the experiences of Black female student athletes across athletic conferences (e.g., PAC 10, Big 10, SEC) and across divisions (D-I, D-II, D-III) could yield significantly different results.

Sixth, Auditor 3 shared that although she felt that she was able to place the quotes into the themes provided to her, she did not relate to the experiences of the women in the study. Given that Auditor 3 was herself a Black female and former student athlete, her disclosure emphasizes that the findings from this study should in no way be generalized to all Black female student athletes and that they serve only to shed light on the experiences of these 8 women at this specific institution, during the period of time in their lives when this study was conducted. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that it is not possible to know whether the experiences of the women in this study are distinct. If it were a quantitative study, we might have established the realm of the student athlete experiences by asking questions that compared Black women with White female athletes or Black male athletes. We do however consider them a valuable contribution to our knowledge of this student demographic as they capture the essence of “lived” experiences

of 8 Black female student athletes within a particular context at a particular time in their lives.

Finally the subjective nature of this study must be considered. Aside from the potential biases involved in the researcher as instrument and those disclosed in Chapter 3, I acknowledge bias in analyzing the findings. Conducting research across racial lines involves constant reflection on how one's own perceived dominant and marginalized status may be affecting how one interprets the data. I brought to this study my own assumptions of what it means to be Black, female, and an athlete, and those assumptions are inextricably linked to my own race, gender, and identity, and thus affected how I heard or interpreted the women's experiences. Although my aim was to report what they said using their words to illustrate their experiences I found it difficult at times to balance my understanding of "transparency" in qualitative research that includes who I am and honoring the stories of the women.

Summary

In this chapter I attempted to analyze, interpret, and synthesize the findings. The chapter is organized by categories that directly align with the study's research question: Black females' experiences as athletes, students, and developing young people. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the study's limitations.

CHAPTER 6

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The purpose of this study was to gather descriptive data on the experiences of Black female student athletes. An analysis of findings was presented in the previous chapter. The chapter was organized using three categories: Black females' experiences as athletes, as students, and as developing young women. Relevant theory and research were tied to the analysis.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide implications for practice based on the findings from the study. An understanding of the experiences of Black female student athletes may provide insight into the decisions student affairs practitioners may make about student affairs programs, policies, services, and practices specifically directed toward this subgroup of the population. This qualitative study provided a detailed look at Black female student athletes and gave them an opportunity to tell their own stories of life and learning, benefiting the students and those who wish to learn more about them (Baxter Magolda, 1997, in Blimling & Whitt, 1997, p. 107).

I present five implications for practice based on the data as well as four specific programming considerations. Implications for practice are cultural competence, validating experiences of racism, collaboration with athletics, climate issues at PWIs, and Black female role models. Four programming considerations are Afrocentric models of development, race- and gender-specific programming, cross-racial and intra-relationship building, and broadened involvement.

Implications for Practice

Cultural Competence

The women in this study seemed to be impacted by the racial divide on their teams as well as the ensuing feelings of being stereotyped and discriminated against. These findings have two important implications. First, in order to deal with issues of race, we must first acknowledge that race does matter. Second, it is becoming essential

that educators who work with minority students must be culturally competent. The second cannot be accomplished without the full acknowledgement and understanding of the first.

For those of us whose work surrounds issues of race within the context of privilege, power, and oppression, we are living in a seductive, yet dangerous time. The election of our first Black president gave rise to the notion that the U.S. is now a "post-racial" society. However, progress should not be confused with equality. Equality suggests that we as a society have achieved equal access and opportunity, and that systemic and institutionalized discriminatory practices have been eradicated. This is not the case.

Black female student athletes exist within two highly oppressive systems still dominated by a White male system: athletics and higher education. To counteract systems that privilege White males and perpetuate demeaning racial and gendered stereotypes, it is essential to have culturally competent allies working with students from underrepresented groups.

A number of the women cited examples of how different the team culture was currently from their first or second year when they had a coach who recognized the potential for racial divide and made intentional efforts to ensure that it did not occur. The women gave examples of the efforts the coach made, including having weekly barbeques, making different rooming lists each time they traveled to intentionally pair White and Black women together, and having high expectations that all members of the team support one another.

Beyond addressing overt and in some cases individual instances of discrimination and harassment, ideology that privileges the dominant culture must be addressed. Insisting upon and integrating cultural competency into the current culture is one way to perpetuate a shift in ideology. It is a daring call for change in the heavily White male-dominated world of athletics. Cultural competency includes knowledge of cultural

dynamics and knowledge of how ethnicity, race, and power influence human functioning (Person, Benson-Quaziena, & Roger, 2001). There are five elements of cultural competence (Coleman, Jussim, & Isaac, 1987; Cross, 1991; Pinderhughes, 1989; Priest, 1991; Sue, 1981, in Person et al., 2001). The first is acknowledging cultural differences and becoming aware of how these differences affect practice. Person et al. (2001) wrote that there should be more than one office, one person, or one place where students from diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and talents can feel connected and supported. Again, it is not enough to meet quotas or hire a token Black person to engage with all the student athletes. This practice actually perpetuates the myth that just because someone is of the same race, he or she fully understands the experiences of every other person of that race.

The second element is fully appreciating cultural differences (Person et al., 2001). This requires that educators have an understanding of the influence of their own cultural background on how they behave and think (Person et al., 2001). Awareness of self is necessary in order to have a truly authentic interaction with students. Educators working with Black student athletes may be unaware of the bias they hold because of long-held stereotypes perpetuated through institutions such as the mainstream media. Taking time to reflect on their own biases and how they may have come to understand issues of race may assist them in working with students who come from different racial backgrounds.

A third element is understanding the dynamics of differences (Person et al., 2001). Difference often creates fear that can manifest in a variety of ways on both a personal and an institutional level (Person et al., 2001). Personally, as mentioned above, educators must reflect on their own biases and how they may potentially affect their practice. Fear manifested at the institutional level can be reflected in policies. For example, in this study, Kim spoke at length about her perceptions of the policies set forth by the department that unfairly privileged the White [sport] team.

The fourth element of cultural competence is to understand the meaning of behavior within a cultural context (Person et al., 2001). Staff needs to create intentional

opportunities to engage in discussions about the values of students from a cultural perspective and become increasingly aware of the differences and similarities. This requires confronting the “color blind” myth that negates the importance and influence of one’s racial and cultural identity.

Finally, the fifth element is knowing where or how to obtain specific cultural information (Person et al., 2001). Learning about students’ history, values, traditions, family systems, immigration patterns, rituals, celebrations, and language are all part of the culture and are essential in forming authentic relationships. Asking students’ questions and being genuinely open to learning from them is an important step in bridging cultural gaps.

Cultural shifts must be driven by motivated and passionate individuals in positions of power to effect change. However the prospect can be overwhelming even for the most motivated of individuals. Whitt (1993) suggested performing a culture audit, which is described as a flexible framework for the process of discovery whereby the investigator(s) seeks and finds many and varied perspectives of a given culture (p. 83). Manning and Eaton (1993) argued to effectively address such campus issues as racial and ethnic strife, interventions are needed (p. 106). Manning and Eaton (1993) proposed a five-step model toward cultural change: (a) identify values and assumptions, (b) assess level of commitment to values an assumptions, (c) create opportunities for wider expression of alternative values, (d) introduce cultural interventions, and (e) assess behavior changes.

It should be noted that disingenuous commitment to culture or value change may be more damaging as it can corrode the trust and cohesiveness that bind a culture together. Five of the 8 women in the study reflected on the disconnect between the values relating to diversity that were espoused to them during their recruitment visits and the reality of culture when they arrived. The women stated that they felt they had been lied to and tricked, and that the athletic department had blatantly misrepresented itself

and the institution as a whole. These behaviors signal that something is amiss within the culture. The value is acknowledged but not lived. Without action by people who have the power to create change, and whose intentions are grounded in a genuine effort to understand, cultures remain stagnant.

Validating Experiences of Racism

Although each woman experienced discrimination in her own unique way, she also dealt with negative effects including depression, isolation, and silencing. Many educators do not agree that racial discrimination is still prevalent in today's society and are skeptical when they hear stories of "perceived discrimination." The reality is that the women in the study felt they were being discriminated against, and so to rationalize their experiences or blatantly doubt them invalidates their experience and invalidates them as Black females functioning within predominantly White institutions and structures such as athletics and higher education.

Validating experiences of racism takes courage, as it may challenge our own assumptions about racial equality. We may need to acknowledge privilege in our own lives that presents potential barriers to our understanding of experiences held by individuals experiencing racial discrimination. Acknowledging privilege is uncomfortable and requires us to continuously reflect on our own identities and how we may benefit from systems that privilege one group over another.

Johnson (2006) suggested that as practitioners we spend time talking about issues of privilege, and reading literature within the growing body or work on issues of privilege. Johnson (2006) also noted that as we are confronted with racial discrimination we need to learn to be better listeners which he claims is difficult for dominant members of society to do. Johnson stated, "Don't tell people they are being too sensitive, need a better sense of humor or that they probably meant something different by it" (2006, pp. 140-141). Johnson encouraged practitioners to "step off the path of least resistance" and become more aware of the dynamic relationship people and social systems including

patterns of privilege and oppression. Johnson asserted that this awareness will create opportunity for personal change.

Collaboration with Athletics

Student affairs practitioners and faculty must familiarize themselves with the athletic world. College athletics today has exploded into a multi-million dollar enterprise and brought with it a host of issues, including the exploitation of student athletes, student athlete academic success issues and low graduation rates, cheating by student athletes and staff, and misbehavior and/or crimes committed by student athletes, coaches, and athletics staff. Each of the prior examples contributes to a generally low perception of student athletes and athletics in general by members of the university community including student peers, faculty, and staff. As student affairs practitioners, we often feel separate from the world of athletics and in many cases actually *are* separate from athletics. But the issues our student athletes confront are relevant, and because of the intense spotlight under which they now operate, they are a sub-population that urgently needs our attention.

Perhaps the first steps toward bridging the chasm between athletics and educators working with student athletes involves examining our perceptions of student athletes and athletics, educating ourselves about the student athlete experience, and finding ways to collaborate in meaningful ways with athletics staff and other educators interested in supporting the learning and development of student athletes.

Our perceptions of student athletes and athletics in general may impact how we work with both athletes and potential collaborators/allies in athletics. We need to think deeply about our socialization into an athletic culture that in many cases values the story over the truth and examine how we have come by our own perceptions and perhaps even stereotypes of student athletes and athletics. We need to ask ourselves why we continue to hold onto those negative perceptions, when we fight so hard to shed ourselves of other negative stereotyping. How do we know what we know about student athletes?

The women in this study felt they were negatively stereotyped by their non-athlete peers, faculty, and even student affairs professionals. We must commit to being allies to student athletes by being accurately informed and critical in the information we consume. And we need to communicate that we support them and then act in ways that demonstrate our knowledge of their experience and genuine interest in helping them succeed.

We can educate ourselves about the student athlete experience. We need to gather accurate information about our institutions' athletic program including the policies and regulations to which our student athletes must adhere, and offer our assistance and support with programs that may be in place such as the CHAMPS life skills and diversity programming sponsored by the NCAA. If we are to learn more about our student athletes, we must know more about their experiences, and that means having an understanding of their roles and responsibilities as scholarship athletes.

Many institutions, especially D-I programs, have student service offices for athletes with academic coordinators working to support student athletes. However, these offices are often isolated from the rest of campus and from other student affairs professionals on campus. There appears to be a gap on many college campuses between professionals who are essentially working for the same purposes and goals. Collaboration could mean shared expertise and support in which the student benefits from intentional programming grounded in informed research and practice.

Climate at PWIs

PWIs have a difficult challenge when it comes to addressing the needs of racial minorities within the academic context. Although there is an ever-present mandate to increase the number of students of color, the reality is that the demographics of most PWIs will remain unchanged (Solorzano & Villapando, 1998). Therefore it is up to educators to think deeply about ways to address the racial climate for students of color at PWIs. One solution is the formation of "counter spaces" as outlined in a study by Solorzano et al. (2000). "Counter spaces" are sites where deficit notions of people of

color can be challenged and where a positive collegiate racial climate can be established (Solorzano et al., 2000, p. 70).

Another solution is to formalize faculty mentoring programs focused on students of color. In an economy where programs deemed "non-essential" are being drastically cut, it seems the formation of new programs is unlikely. However, one solution could be institutional practice that reflects the value of mentoring activities by instituting faculty reward systems. For example, institutions might provide release time for faculty mentoring activities or reward "credits" within the tenure package for those faculty mentoring students or engaging in activities to promote the institution of such programs.

Finally, although not wildly popular, formalized diversity training programs are a first step in introducing and educating faculty and staff about issues pertaining to students of color. Reviewing the format of these training sessions may be a way to invigorate attitudes toward participation. For example, instead of mandatory sessions in which a speaker talks at the audience, programs can be re-formatted to include small group dialogue within departments where people are more familiar with one another and thus more likely to engage. Many departments or colleges have already formed "Diversity Committees" that could be charged with college-wide training programs.

These solutions are of course not enough. In many cases any form of diversity training is viewed as peripheral and "forced." Two solutions include (a) utilizing faculty who are already engaged and passionate about issues of diversity and reward them for participation and leadership in these endeavors, and (b) distributing studies such as this providing first-hand accounts of real-life experiences that contribute to a growing body of research focused on the experiences of students of color at PWIs.

Black Female Role Models

This study supports previous research that having role models who care for Black female student athletes, and whom they trust, is related to their being able to navigate through the educational experience. It also creates an impetus for increased and

intentional hiring practices that make hiring women and minority coaches and staff a value, not a necessity.

Moses (1999) recommended finding creative strategies to both locate and attract Black female candidates. Moses suggested contacting minority colleagues to ask for nominations, familiarize search committees with ways they may be de-valuing Black women candidates, conduct exit interviews with Black females who are not hired to determine how they were treated throughout the process, establish working relationships with colleges and universities that are graduating high numbers of Black female students, and form task forces or committees to examine departmental or college policies to ensure Black women are not being treated unfairly. Black women need to feel that they and their concerns are integrated into the missions, goals, and social structures of college campuses. Changing the culture by increasing the number of Black females working on college campuses may in turn increase and enrich the level of support Black female students perceive.

Programming Considerations of Black Female Student Athletes

Afrocentric Models of Development

Educators working with Black women have long used racial identity models as guiding tools in their work. We must have an understanding of the distinct psychology of Black women as a whole that is directly linked to their culture (Johnson, 2001). Therefore we must familiarize ourselves with racial identity theories that are Afrocentric in nature.

Using theories such as the Nguzo Saba allow for the incorporation of authentic Black-based values into the development of Black American college students. *Umojo* suggests a creation of programs and experiences that include the family or community of Black college students. *Kujichagulia* encourages asking their opinion on matters that uniquely pertain to them. There should be no feeling of guilt associated with their right

to make decisions for themselves that may exclude White peers from the decision making but will call upon their assistance, because they are the power bases on most campuses (Johnson, 2001, p. 418). *Ujimia* suggests collaborative problem solving within the group and the encouragement to use systems outside of the Eurocentric norm. It fosters collective mobilization to address current issues within their communities through community service and public outreach. *Ujamma* also suggests collaborative efforts to raise funds for charity. It encourages the development of life-long relationships among members of the Black community. *Nia* educates and in some cases reacquaints students with their Black history including values and traditions often marginalized by systems and institutions that privilege White history and culture. *Kuumba* encourages Black students to be proud of their Black perspective and to be proud to contribute to the world from that perspective. Finally, *imani* can be encouraged by fostering spirituality on campus in all forms, including but not limited to religious services, open spaces on campuses for students to reflect, and music and art that reflects Black culture and the Black experience.

The argument for the application of Afrocentric theories with Black students attending PWIs will be met with calls of separatism. Johnson (2001) wrote, however, that Afrocentrism is a means to include, and not continue to exclude, the values of other cultures from theory and practice in higher educational administration. The argument against using Afrocentric theories is a tribute to how deeply embedded the Eurocentric worldview is in not only our values but our practice as well.

Race/Gender-Specific Programming

The findings related to optimal and suboptimal resistance strategies employed by the women in this study are important for educators as they consider the needs and plan support programs for, Black female student athletes. Knowing that the Black female athletes in this study relied on one another for support emphasizes the importance of providing opportunities for Black females to interact with one another in common

experiences that promote community membership and empowerment. The extensive social support networks of African Americans are a cultural pattern that has contributed to their ability to overcome adversity (Pipes-McAdoo, 2002). These internal support systems may serve as their first line of defense when dealing with psychological distress (Constantine, Wilton, & Caldwell, 2003).

Opportunities to interact may vary from informal gatherings meant as safe places to share and vent frustrations to more formal activities including leadership seminars, and guest speakers who are successful Black females in the community. As educators, many of us have been groomed to "be color blind" as a way of avoiding any hint of racism. This mindset clouds our ability to see the power and impact of shared common experiences by people of the same race. As Tia said, "If someone gave me a chance to give any input at all, I'd say, get some folks that look like me. Don't underestimate how good it would make us [Black female student athletes] feel to have someone around we could relate to. I'm not sayin' I haven't had good experiences with White people around here. I'm just sayin' there's a difference."

Previous research indicates (Constantine & Watt, 2002; Watt, 2006) that the intersection of race and gender may impact how Black females experience college. Therefore it seems relevant to implement programming that addresses the complexities and fosters the development of both racial and gender identity in Black female college students. Collaborating with faculty, specifically Black female faculty, could have an even greater impact as a means of both educating and providing social support.

Cross-Racial and Intra-Racial Relationships

Student affairs practitioners have a difficult task in confronting the delicate issues related to cross racial relationships. The racial dynamics played out within the complex relationships described in this study have subtle nuances, grounded both historically and culturally, that educators who are not culturally competent may have difficulty in understanding or relating to.

Given this study's findings regarding the complex relationships in which Black women are a part and the severe depression they reported experiencing, we as educators must go beyond mentoring programs, collaboration, and outreach. These solutions are implicit in our work with all students. What is needed is not duplication of services, but specific interventions designed for and targeted toward Black female students. Three suggestions are offered here: (a) intentional interactions designed to promote healthy interactions between Black and White female peers, (b) conflict management programs designed to address specific issues related to the Black female student experience, and (c) educational programming designed to educate Black females about mental health issues and provide them a safe space for discussing issues they may encounter or may currently be encountering.

The interventions require culturally competent individuals to design and implement them. The women in this study did not reject the idea of White educators assisting them, but they did place emphasis on role models who looked like them. The women believed that they could relate better to people who looked like them and also stated that they felt those role models who looked like them could better empathize with their experience. We should not dismiss this finding regardless of the racial tension it may create, or how rejected if may make some feel. Research indicates that close association with and adherence to Africentric cultural values (Constantine et al., 2006) and culture- and gender-specific interventions for Black females (Belgrave et al., 2000) are effective ways to promote and nurture positive resistance and empowerment in Black females.

There are a number of places on a college campus where one might envision the implementation of such interventions. Due to the current economy, it is not practical to assume strong support for the implementation of new programs. We cannot rely on "traditional" areas of support such as Residence Life, Orientation, and Black student organizations. Many of these areas are overextended and underfunded. It is important to

reflect on pre-established or untapped resources on college campuses. First, Women's Centers both on campus and in the local community may be an excellent starting place. It seems logical that their inherent spirit of support and commitment to women's issues could be easily directed toward issues pertaining to Black women. Second, many D-I universities have medical schools that may have a wealth of resources. Likewise campus health centers generally have a mission of educational outreach in addition to clinical services. Health professionals may be an excellent resource in designing programs that confront the stigma of mental health issues such as depression as well as providing services to those students in need. Third, coaches and staff working with Black female athletes should consider the use of former female student athletes of color as mentors both on and off the court. C. Vivian Stringer cited this technique as highly effective to the development of her teams and the individual development of the women on the team (2008). And fourth, developing community partnerships is another way to not only connect Black female athletes with role models in the community but also give them a chance to develop relationships and hone skills in "real" world context.

Involvement

Finally, for those working with Black female student athletes, it is important to promote and provide involvement in the overall university community. Understanding the demanding schedule of student athletes, it is difficult to know where they might incorporate involvement within the larger university community. We know that involvement is an important part of the collegiate experience (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) as is cultural congruity, which correlates with student's perceptions of how their values align with those of the institutional culture. Therefore, it may be time to examine ways to either incorporate student athletes into the mainstream of university life or reduce the amount of time they spend engaging in athletic opportunities. Both of these suggestions require collaborative efforts between athletics and student affairs staff. Although it seems an unlikely shift given the increasingly high profile of collegiate sports

at D-I institutions, the women in this study were clearly searching out opportunities to engage in different ways, whether through sororities, volunteerism, campus organizations, or purely social activities. We must begin to think outside the box in terms of how to support their interests, even if our ideas challenge long-held institutional norms.

Summary

This chapter outlined five implications for practice: cultural competence, validating experiences of racism, collaboration with athletics, climate issues at PWIs, and Black female role models. Four programming considerations were also discussed: Afrocentric models of development, race- and gender-specific programming, cross-racial and intra-relationship building, and broadened involvement.

Finally, it is worth noting that the women in this study and the two Black female auditors commented on the opportunity to give voice to their experience. Unsolicited, each woman spoke about how relieved she was not only to be asked about her experience but also to have the chance to tell her story for an audience that might actually believe her. These comments indicate three things. One, the women in this study know they are marginalized from the college student narrative; two, they do not trust that their stories will be honored; and three, the experience of being part of this study may have been the only opportunity they have had thus far not only to give voice to their experience but also to hear themselves as well.

If we listen, the students are telling us what they need. As educators we cannot be dismissive of needs that we do not relate to or fully understand. We must do everything in our power to make sure we hear what they are saying. If we are to enact a cultural shift, we must reflect at the individual and the institutional levels. Do we have biases that affect our practice? Are we consistent in our behavior toward all of our students? Are our actions in congruity with our values? Do our policies impact all of our students

equally? All of these questions must be considered when examining how to best meet the needs of not only Black female student athletes but all students on our campuses.

APPENDIX A

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA SHEET

Biographical Data Sheet

Please fill out this biographical data sheet to the best of your ability. You are free to skip any questions you prefer not to answer. Thank you!

Name:_____

(Last) (Middle Initial) (First)

1. Please indicate your age_____

2. Please indicate your hometown _____Country_____

3. Please indicate your preferred telephone number by which you may be contacted_____

4. Please indicate your preferred e-mail address by which you may be contacted_____

5. Please indicate the best times of the day when you may be contacted

6. What is your class level?_____

7. What is your major?_____

8. Please indicate your race/ethnicity_____

- Black
- African
- West Indian

9. What is your sport?_____

10. How long have you competed in your sport (including Jr. high, High school, and college)_____

11. What is your year of eligibility currently?_____

12. What is your religion?

- Protestant
- Catholic

- Jewish
- Islamic
- Hinduism
- Buddhism
- Other (please specify)_____
- None
- Prefer not to answer

13. Please indicate whether you hometown is considered rural or urban _____

14. Please indicate the extent you identify as an athlete.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

15. Please indicate the extent you identify as a student.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

16. Please indicate the extent you identify as a Black.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

17. Please indicate any activities you participate in outside of athletics on your campus:

_____

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Interview Script

You have agreed to participate in a study to gather descriptive data on the experiences of Black female student athletes at a large, Midwestern, Division I, predominantly White institution (PWI). I great appreciate your time and willingness to be part of this research. You will be asked to reflect and share on your experiences as a Black, female student athlete who is currently attending a PWI. We will visit for one hour. May I have your permission to tape record this interview? The tapes will only be used for my own purposes to analyze our interview.

Please take as long as you wish to respond to questions, feel free to ask for clarification if my question is confusing or unclear to you. I hope we can schedule a second, follow up interview in about a week, so if there is a question you need to think more about, we can come back to it at our next meeting.

First Interview:

You are a Black female student athlete at a large PWI. During this interview I will ask you to reflect and think about being Black, female, a student, and an athlete.

Athlete

1. Can you start by briefly telling me how you first got involved in your sport?

2. How did you come to be at this university as a student athlete?

3. Can you describe your experiences as a student athlete at this university?

4. Can you tell me a few stories to help illustrate the way the team, including the coaches, interacts with one another?

5. Suppose I was a Black female recruit and you were chosen to be my host for a weekend. What would you tell me about being a Black female athlete at this university?

Student:

6. Can you tell me about your experiences as a student at this university?

7. Think for a minute about your life outside of athletics and the students you interact with that are not athletes. How are those students similar or different from you?

8. In general, who do you hang out with socially?

9. Can you describe your perception of the dating experience for Black female athletes at this university?

Developing young person*:*

10. Life at college can be much different than life in our hometowns. Can you give me some examples of adjustments you have made in your life or things have you had to get used to about being at this university?

11. Think back to when you first arrived on campus. If I asked someone to describe you then, and then describe you now, what would they say?

12. Has there ever been a time (on or off the court/track) when you felt out of place? Can you give me some examples?

13. Can you recall a time when you were consciously aware of being Black during your experience here at Iowa?

14. Can you recall a time when you were consciously aware of being a woman during your experience here at Iowa?

15. Are there any experiences that have had a significant impact on you (positive and negative) since you've been here at this university?

16. Would you say that your experience at this university thus far is different from what you expected?

Follow-Up questions (to be used throughout the interview):

1. Who experiences this differently than you do?

2. What is unique about your [this] experience here at this institution?

3. If I want to learn more about [this], who else should I talk to?

Second Interview

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of a follow up interview! During this interview I will review what I think I heard you discuss from our first interview and you will have a chance to provide me feedback, make corrections, etc. You may also feel free to elaborate and/or add any additional thoughts regarding the issues we've talked about. I will also ask you follow up questions that I have based on the information you shared at our first interview and possibly a few additional questions. This interview will last about 45 minutes and again I thank you for your time as I know you are busy. Since we've had a couple of weeks since our first interview I wanted to see if there were any other experiences you've thought of since our last interview.

- Were there any other things you thought about that you wanted to be sure tell me?

- Okay, well let's pick up now where we left off… OR since we've finished the interview…

Athlete

1. Can you think of any experiences related to competition, practice, team interactions, coach interactions?

Student

2. Can you think of any experiences specifically to faculty interactions?

3. Can you think of any experiences related to student interactions?

4. Can you think of any experiences specifically related to staff interactions (both in athletics/LC/other)?

Developing Young Person

5. Can you talk about ways you gotten involved on campus since being here at this university.

6. Can you talk about your goals for the future?

7. Can you talk about how your thinking may have changed since you've been here at college?

8. Can you talk about what motivates you to continue at this university as an athlete and a student?

9. What has been most important to you about your experience at this university thus far?

10. Can you think of any other experiences here at college that you've had that I haven't asked about?

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

[Insert date]

Dear [Insert student name],

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study to gather descriptive data on the experiences of Black female student athletes at a large, Midwestern, Division I, Predominantly White Institution. You are one of only 12 students chosen to participate in this study. We hope this study will help us better understand the experiences of Black female college student athletes.

This study will use consist of two interviews where participants will be asked to reflect on their experiences as Black, female, student athletes. If you agree to take part in this study, your involvement will last for approximately one-two months. You will first be asked to complete the enclosed Biographical Data Sheet and return it to the researcher in pre-stamped mailing envelope. You will then be asked to take part in three interactions:

1) Initial contact to set up interview times to last no longer than one hour
2) Follow-up interview approximately 2weeks later, using same format as initial interview and lasting no longer than one hour.
3) Follow-up for participants to cross-check analyzed data, occurring approximately 2-3 weeks after the last interview. Participants will be sent data via e-mail.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this study although you will be asked to reflect on your experiences as an Black female college student athlete. You may feel emotionally upset or uncomfortable during the interviews if you have experienced any form of discrimination/harassment since being a college student. The experience itself may uncover emotional feelings related to your experiences as an Black female student athlete. You are certainly free to skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answer, or withdraw from the study if you feel uncomfortable. The researcher is not receiving any payments from other agencies, organizations, or companies to conduct this research study.

Your participation in this research study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. None of the personal demographic information will be linked specifically to you. However, it is possible that other people may become aware of your participation in this study. If the researcher writes a report or article about this study or shares the study data set with others, it will be done in such a way that you cannot be directly identified.

Taking part in this research study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in this study, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to be in this study, or if you stop participating at any time, you won't be penalized or lose any benefits for which you otherwise qualify. By completing the attached biographical data sheet and returning it via mail to the researcher, you are acknowledging that you have been fully informed of the purpose of the study, it's benefits and risks, and your rights as a participant and are consenting to participate.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact me at 319-321-7835 or noel-harmon@uiowa.edu.

If you wish to participate, please return the enclosed biographical data sheet by _____

Thank you in advance for your participation in this study!

Sincerely,

Noël Harmon
Doctoral Candidate
The University of Iowa

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