

SOUTH AFRICAN & U.S. BLACK FEMALE ATHLETES COMPARED:
A CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY FOCUSED ON IMAGE, PERCEPTIONS, AND
NARRATIVES

By

Rachel Gayle Laws

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

African American & African Studies

2012

ABSTRACT

SOUTH AFRICAN & U.S. BLACK FEMALE ATHLETES COMPARED: A CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY FOCUSED ON IMAGE, PERCEPTIONS, AND NARRATIVES

By

Rachel Gayle Laws

An athlete is a human being that participates in some form of organized sports competition as an amateur or professional, at local, national, or international levels. The historical and present experience of the Black female athlete is not the same as her male counterpart. This is a comparative case study that critically examines the past and present state of the Black¹ female athlete in the United States and South Africa, primarily within the 1990s and early 2000s, focusing on image, perceptions, and narratives. Unique and interdisciplinary, this study draws upon oral interviews, archival research, images, and cinematic and literary theory and analysis. Much can be gained from a comparative pairing of Black women's lives at a specific historical moment using a particular method of analysis. Ultimately, this project argues that the ideological beliefs and values of white supremacy—the doctrine that places the White race as superior to all other races, but especially the Black race—in South Africa and the U.S. has shaped the (under)development, image, and daily experiences of their Black female athletes. For both Americans and South Africans, this study should be especially illuminating because it allows each country to view each other's gendered, racial, and class issues through the lens of their own female athletes' experiences, images, and narratives.

¹ It is important to note that for the purposes of this study, my use of the term “Black” female athlete in reference to South Africa, includes those women who were legally classified as or currently self-identify as being a member of the racially distinguishable Black or Colored populations of South Africa (Refer to South Africa's Population Registration Act of 1950 for full exposure to the complex racial classifications that existed/exist within the country).

I aim to present and challenge the acceptance of the current perceptions and imagery surrounding the Black female athlete, and unearth and identify the shared experiences and narratives of these athletes in the U.S. and South Africa; a connection that has not yet been explored through scholarship. The significance of this study lies in its implications for the construction of a new voice, vision, and theoretical framework for a group of women athletes who have largely been ignored, forgotten, and oppressed by two similar, yet distinct nations. Additionally, this study has the power to spark a deeper appreciation and investigation into the power of biographical and autobiographical narratives produced by athletes themselves, as most famous athletes' stories are presented to the public via secondary and tertiary interpretations. It is important to allow Black female athletes the vital space in which to define for themselves the contours of their experiences, aspirations, and opinions.

The chapters of this study explore a wide-range of issues, relationships, themes, and theories concerning modes of understanding and analyzing Black female athletes and their role within the sports world and society in general. Significant historical periods and events, Black-White race relations, media and visual modes of cultural production, perceptions, and narratives, are presented and analyzed. The concluding chapter of this study offers insight into the future state of Black female athletes specifically and female athletics generally, in the United States and South Africa.

Copyright by
Rachel Gayle Laws
2012

This dissertation is dedicated to the late Martha Fenty. On earth and in heaven, your support for me as scholar *before* athlete has never ceased. I am eternally thankful.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost I must give praise and thanks to God. It is “by God’s grace” that I exist on a daily basis and through my faith and trust in the Lord, that replenishes my endurance.

I would like to thank my committee members, who have supported me and believed in me throughout my graduate education. My advisor, Geneva Smitherman, who can best be described as “the Jay-Z of the academy,” provided invaluable guidance, wisdom, and sisterhood from the first day I walked into her class my first year of graduate school. To my mentor, Pero Dagbovie, whose historical knowledge, brotherly love and encouragement provided me with a strong academic and mental foundation that was essential to my progress. To Peter Alegi, whose knowledge of and insight into South African sporting history and culture was priceless. And to an amazing professor and filmmaker, Jeff Wray, whose cinematic artistry, vision, and comprehension, is certainly coveted.

Thanks to my undergraduate professors at Binghamton University—Michael West and Isidore Okpewho—for first instilling my passion for Africana Studies and pointing me in the direction of Michigan State for my graduate education. Thanks to my professors and colleagues at Michigan State University in the African American & African Studies Program and its current and former Directors for cheering me on through this process. A special thanks to the MSU museum Curator of Folk Arts, Marsha MacDowell and the Curator of Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Kurt Dewhurst, for their encouragement, professional development, and shared passion for the arts, culture, and heritage within museums. Also a special thanks to Dr. James Pritchett, Director of the MSU African Studies Center for his particular belief in my academic success and this research study.

Thanks to my South African brothers and sisters in the struggle—especially Cheryl Roberts, Nadia Sanger, Masutane Modjodi, Vanessa Mitchell, André Odendaal, and the staff members of the Nelson Mandela National Museum—who gave me immense support, mentoring, conversation, smiles and laughs during my stay in their beautiful country. Thanks to my close friend Tracy Robison for her love, support, and fun times through the rough times, throughout our grad school journey.

Most of all, I thank my family; my number one fans. My husband Aaron, for all his love, support, and patience. I thank my father and mother, Dan and Myra Laws, for working so hard and sacrificing so much to create new opportunities and life experiences for my sister and me. I thank my sister Ivy for being my athletic hero, my fashion role model, and confidant. I could not have come this far without the support of my extended family members as well. A special thanks to my athletic family—my dissertation collaborators, my college basketball coaches, and my former gymnastics, track & field, and basketball teammates—for making my athletic career and experience more fun and life-changing than I thought possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	x
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xi
INTRODUCTION: Being Black, Female, and Athlete.....	1
CHAPTER 1: Piecing Together the Literature.....	8
South Africa & The United States: A Case for Comparison.....	8
Image and Perceptions.....	27
Narratives.....	31
CHAPTER 2: The Method behind Oral and Written Narrative.....	34
Rationale for Qualitative Ethnography and Oral Narrative Research Approach.....	35
Situating Myself Within My Research.....	39
Problematizing the Oral Narrative.....	42
The Research Sample.....	43
Data Collection.....	45
Analysis and Synthesis of Data.....	47
Limitations of the Study.....	48
Chapter Summary.....	50
CHAPTER 3: Uncovering Her Story: South Africa.....	51
Visual Representation.....	52
Perceptions.....	53
Complex Racial Relationships.....	53
Future Recommendations & Expectations.....	54
Theme One: Visual Representation.....	54
Action Media	55
Print Media	57
Black vs. White Media Portrayal.....	58
Theme Two: Perceptions.....	59
Perceptions.....	60
Coping with Perceptions in South Africa.....	72
Theme Three: Complex Racial Relationships.....	74
Positive Complex Racial Relationships.....	75
Negative Complex Racial Relationships.....	77
Theme Four: Future Recommendations & Expectations.....	81
Recommendations.....	81
Expectations.....	87
Chapter Summary.....	88

CHAPTER 4: Uncovering Her Story: The United States.....	90
Visual Representation.....	90
Perceptions.....	90
Complex Racial Relationships.....	91
Future Recommendations & Expectations.....	91
Theme One: Visual Representation.....	92
Action Media	92
Print Media	96
Black vs. White Media Portrayal.....	97
Theme Two: Perceptions.....	99
Perceptions.....	99
Coping with Perceptions in the United States.....	108
Theme Three: Complex Racial Relationships.....	111
Positive Complex Racial Relationships.....	112
Negative Complex Racial Relationships.....	114
Theme Four: Future Recommendations & Expectations.....	117
Recommendations.....	118
Expectations.....	119
Chapter Summary.....	121
CHAPTER 5: Why Her Story Matters: Visual Representation and Perceptions.....	123
Theme One: Visual Representation.....	123
Similarities.....	123
Differences.....	145
Theme Two: Perceptions.....	148
Similarities.....	148
Differences	169
CHAPTER 6: Why Her Story Matters: Complex Racial Relationships & the Future.....	177
Theme Three: Complex Racial Relationships.....	177
Similarities.....	177
Differences.....	180
Theme Four: Future Recommendations and Expectations.....	182
Similarities.....	183
Differences.....	187
CONCLUSION: She’s Only Just Begun to Live... In Academia.....	189
Image, Perception, and Narrative.....	191
Implications for Future Research.....	201
APPENDICES.....	203
Appendix A.....	204
Appendix B.....	205
Appendix C.....	209
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	215

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Informant data key.....52

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. South African women’s field hockey captain Marsha Marescia in the June 2009 issue of <i>Road To London 2012</i> magazine ad for SPAR grocery stores.....	205
Figure 2. A photo of this researcher and an opponent during a high school basketball game in 2002.....	206
Figure 3. “Serena’s Glam Slam” article title page in the July 2010 issue of fashion magazine, <i>Harper’s Bazaar</i>	206
Figure 4. Photo featured in the August 30, 2009 issue of Cape Town’s <i>Sunday Times</i> depicting a digitally altered photo of the World Championship 800m race in Berlin.....	207
Figure 5. Photo of Baylor University basketball player, Brittney Griner.....	208

INTRODUCTION: Being Black, Female, and Athlete

I blow by him easily with a “jab and go” move to the baseline side of the basket, square up for my shot, and begin to jump. “Ah!” I shout as I am bear-hugged from behind by my defender. Jeers come from some of the awaiting 3-on-3 teams who are watching. I am livid. Not livid because I was fouled, but livid because of the way I was fouled and why. It was just like the opening scene of Gina Prince-Bythewood’s film, *Love and Basketball* (2000). Like the character of Monica, I successfully beat my male defender to the basket and went up for my shot, only to be harmfully denied. Just as the young character of Q, my defender decided that he would rather cause me bodily harm than to have a female score on him publicly. I am the only female participating in this tournament, and as usual, am perceived as *having* to be an inferior athlete in comparison to my male teammates and opponents. An experience like this is typical in the lives of most female athletes. But what about the life experiences specific to the Black female athlete? The life experiences of women athletes born Black, in a white supremacist society; women like me?

Purpose and Background of Study

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, an athlete is defined as “a person who is trained to compete in athletics,”² and the definition of athletic is an adjective meaning vigorous, active, sturdy, or muscular. The dictionary definition of athletic is satisfactory, but the definition of athlete reads too broad. For the purposes of this dissertation, an athlete is defined here as a human being that participates or has previously participated in some form of organized sports competition as an amateur or professional, at the local, national, or international level. This means that an athletic individual is not necessarily an athlete. For example, a person who runs three miles a day to stay in shape is athletic and not an athlete. If that same person begins competing in organized marathon events, however, they should then be deemed an athlete.

The purpose of this qualitative, ethnographic case study is to critically examine the life experiences of a number of Black³ female athletes in the United States and South Africa comparatively, focusing on the images, perceptions, and personal narratives that have shaped

² Incorporated Merriam-Webster, “The Merriam-Webster Dictionary,” in *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, ed. Frederick C. Mish (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 1997). 62.

³ Refer to Appendix A for the “Notes on Terminology” of this research study.

their lives. Although this research study shines importance on the year 1972 to U.S. female athletes and the 1970s for South African informants, the bulk of this research study centers on informants who participated in sports in the 1990s and early 2000s. I argue that comparing the images and perceptions of Black female athletes, and the narratives written by them in both South Africa and the United States is both valuable and necessary. This study is significant because it challenges the current perceptions and imagery surrounding Black female athletes and identifies and unearths their shared *and* differential cross-cultural experiences and narratives, a topic which has yet to be scholarly explored. Furthermore, this research has implications for the construction of a new voice, vision, and theoretical framework for a group of athletes who have been largely ignored, forgotten, and oppressed by two respective nations. The Black female's choice to participate in athletic competition has been met with disdain, misperception, and adverse conditions. This critical ethnographic research seeks to properly contextualize the histories and experiences of these U.S. and South African athletes by providing the athletes themselves with the opportunity to identify and confront misperceptions, analyze visual and media representation, present their own narratives, and acknowledge the obstacles and hopes they believe still lie ahead for the future development of women's athletics.

Interdisciplinary, this unique ethnographic study utilizes oral interviews, narrative analysis, history, photographic and media imagery, and sociological and cinematic theoretical perspectives and concepts, to examine the state of Black female athletes in South Africa and the United States. This project looks specifically at the daily lives and activities of a small group of Black female athletes in two different countries with similar yet unique histories and connects it to how these women identify themselves and fellow athletes, as well as analyzes how they are affected by outside factors they can not control—such as media representation, sponsorship, and

societal pressures and perceptions about them as women and athletes. The documented history on the Black female athlete's daily life and activities is very limited, especially when discussing South Africa, and neither country's Black sporting history will be complete without equal recognition of the important role played by women. The majority of scholarship silences women athletes' experiences, or gives minimal detail, or suggests that this is a task for future scholars. Sexism within academia, particularly on the subject of sport, is a problem that has to be addressed through new scholarship grounded in the recognition that the historical and present experience of the Black male athlete is not the same as that of his female counterpart.

This study begins in 1972 because it marks the year the United States Congress signed the Education Amendments of 1972 into law, which included a section addressing the issue of sex discrimination: Title IX. Section 1681 of Title IX states, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance."⁴ In other words, Title IX put an end to legal gender discrimination and called for full equality between men and women in all institutions. This legislation expanded college opportunities for all U.S. female athletes, including Black athletes, thereby changing their access to collegiate sports participation and educational success forever. In fact, a 2000 study revealed that "Black female athletes outpace Black female non-athletes in graduation rates

⁴ U.S. Department of Education. "Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972." edited by U.S. Department of Justice. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, November 13, 2000.
<http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/cor/coord/titleixstat.php>

(62 percent to 42 percent) and tend to reflect a sense of satisfaction with their lives, despite ongoing navigation of racialized and gendered norms.”⁵

For South Africa, the year 1972 marks the first Olympics that took place after the country was officially expelled from Olympic competition. In addition, the 1970s overall is a crucial decade in South African history with regards to race relations and sport. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) officially expelled South Africa in 1970, which led the apartheid government to create numerous new sports policies and even the allowance of Black American visitors—including tennis great Arthur Ashe— into the country as “honorary Whites.” A deeper international focus on South Africa with regards to their politics and sports also emerged in the 1970s, yet discussion of South Africa’s Black female athletes within the international focus is nearly absent. Black female athletes persisted in apartheid South Africa before and after 1972, however, there is not an extensive work that has been published specifically about their athletic history. It is hoped that this study adds a great deal of understanding to the personal and social experiences of these South African female athletes during and post-apartheid.

Should South African and U.S. Black female athletes be compared? What are the historical and contemporary similarities and differences of the experience of Black female athletes in each country? Chapter 1 serves as a review of literature that discusses the comparative works that have already been produced about South Africa and the United States. These works assist in establishing how South Africa and the U.S. can in fact be compared and contrasted via the historical experiences of their Black female athletes. In addition, the first chapter provides a

⁵ Todd Boyd and Kenneth Shropshire, *Basketball Jones* (New York: New York University Press, 2000). 6

discussion of background literature on image, perceptions, and narratives that is necessary to fully appreciate the value and significance of this research study.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the methodology behind this research study. This interdisciplinary, qualitative research study employed three methods: 1) oral/written interviews and personal narratives; 2) archival research and theoretical and cinematic analysis; and 3) collection and analysis of media images of Black female athletes. Although each method was necessary to the completion of this study, the methodology behind the collection of oral/written narratives and the inclusion of this researcher's personal experiences are given critical attention. Therefore, this chapter includes discussions of the following areas: rationale for qualitative and oral narrative research approach; situating myself within my research; problematizing the oral narrative; the research sample; data collection; theoretical framework; analysis and synthesis of data; and limitations of the study.

The data collected in this research study is provided in Chapter 3 for South Africa and Chapter 4 for the United States. These chapters present key findings as obtained from interviews with a total of 29 informants that self-identified as one of the following: Black female athlete, Black male athlete, Black male non-athlete, Colored female athlete, Colored female non-athlete, Colored male athlete, Colored male coach, or White female athlete. An informant key (Table I) is provided in Chapter 3 to assist the reader in following along with informant references throughout the study. The questions posed to informants were formulated based on the following research questions: Do Black female athletes in South Africa and the United States have similar visual representations produced about their bodies? How has the lifestyle of the Black female athlete been portrayed in South Africa and the United States cinematically? How do the athletes themselves feel about the visual representations produced about them by larger society? Do

perceptions exist about Black female athletes and if so, how are athlete informants affected emotionally and socially due to these perceptions? How do Black female athletes cope with the perceptions that are placed on them publicly and privately? Are these identified perceptions *misperceptions*, or do the athletes themselves feel the existence of certain perceptions are justified? What role, if any, does race play in the relationships between Black and White female athletes? What is the dynamic between relationships of Black and White female athletes and their coaches, fans, and romantic partners? What can be gained from examining these assorted athletic racial relationships? What do athletes and fans expect to see for the future of South African and U.S. women's athletics? Is what they expect to see different from what they *want* to see? And what do they see for the future of Black female athletes specifically within their countries? Based on the interview data, four major themes were identified: Visual Representation, Perceptions, Complex Racial Relationships, and Future Recommendations & Expectations. These chapters present informants' narratives through extensive quotes, and also inserts this researcher's personal experiences and views in hopes of providing a glimpse into the life experiences and relationships of a small number of Black female athletes in South Africa and the United States.

In Chapters 5 and 6 the data presented in the third and fourth chapters is interpreted and analyzed for each country. These chapters are presented with titles and subheadings that directly align with the themes that emerged from the data and this study's research questions. Chapter 5 covers visual representation and perceptions, while Chapter 6 covers complex racial relationships and the future. In the analyses, this researcher first explores the categories and subcategories of each theme to compare and contrast South African and United States informant data. Then at a secondary level of analysis, the relevant theory, media and photographic analysis, and

autobiography content are tied into these comparisons and contrasts within each theme. These chapters aim to provide a more holistic insight into the life experiences and treatment of U.S. and South African Black female athletes, as well as an understanding of why her story matters. The conclusion of this study provides critical final thoughts with regards to the comparative understanding of the state of the U.S and South African Black female athlete, her experience, and her future with regards to image, perception, and narrative. The conclusion also discusses future implications for research based on this study.

CHAPTER 1: Piecing together the Literature

This first chapter serves as a review of important literature that informs this research study. There is no previous research precisely on the comparison of South African and U.S. Black female athletes, nor is there previous research that discusses the experience of Black female athletes through image, perception, and narrative. There is however, a significant body of scholarly literature that is necessary background for understanding this research study. After making a case for the comparison of South Africa and the United States, the chapter examines important background literature on the treatment of U.S. and South African Black female athletes through image, perceptions, and narratives.

South Africa & the United States: A Case for Comparison

According to George Fredrickson, “the great advantage of comparison with South Africa is that it compels recognition that race relations are not so much a fixed pattern as a changing set of relationships that can only be understood within a broader historical context that is itself constantly evolving,”⁶ therefore altering the terms under which Blacks and Whites interact. Although the legalized systems of white supremacy (apartheid and segregation) are gone, the attitudes and belief system of white supremacy is still present and being internalized by many Whites. Comparison is made possible because of these broad similarities in the kinds of white attitudes, ideologies, structures and policies that have emerged within sport and its athletes.

South Africa and the United States are nations grounded in white supremacy. As George Fredrickson states in *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American & South African History*, “white supremacy refers to the attitudes, ideologies, and policies associated with the rise

⁶ George M. Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study of American and South African History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981). xvii

of blatant forms of white or European dominance over ‘nonwhite’ populations...It suggests systematic and self-conscious efforts to make race or color a qualification for membership in the civil community.”⁷ In this definitive work, Fredrickson presents a comparative history of South Africa and the United States through their patterns of settlement, slavery, race mixing and racial classification systems, politics, and labor. Fredrickson understood that the study of the historical development of white supremacy in South Africa and the United States would provide new insights and theoretical understanding for scholars of comparative race relations. Through the white supremacist systems of apartheid and segregation, and the white supremacist beliefs that remain after their legal dismantling, South Africa and the United States have manifested over long periods of time a tendency to push the principle of differentiation by race to its logical outcome—a society in which non-whites, regardless of their numbers or efforts to assimilate, are treated as outsiders.

In *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy*, John Cell investigates the specific system of segregation and unlike Fredrickson, argues that in both South African and U.S. society, segregation was an essentially new creation and not a notion conceived before the late nineteenth century. When analyzing the Black female athlete through the lenses of image, perception, narrative and race relations, the periodization of Fredrickson and Cell are of equal value. Segregation should be understood as “the separation of a race, class, or ethnic group by enforced or voluntary residence in a restricted area, by barriers to social intercourse, by separate educational facilities, or by other discriminatory means.”⁸ According to historian Pero Dagbovie,

⁷ Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study of American and South African History*, xi.

⁸ John W. Cell, *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy: The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1982). 1

formal segregation in the United States can be said to have spanned the years from 1896 to 1954, while “the years from 1865 until 1965 were marked by African Americans’ struggles for basic civil and human rights.”⁹ According to Cell, South African society was indeed segregated for some time, but in 1948, it began to harden into apartheid by the new National Party power. Therefore, apartheid can be understood as a series of acts that formed a socio-political system within South Africa that demanded the total separation of the races. As sport and nation are inextricably linked, the experiences of both Black male and female athletes in South Africa and the United States were shaped by each nation’s white supremacist system.

Within the invaluable work, *What Racists Believe: Race Relations in South Africa and the United States*, Gerhard Schutte presents a descriptive investigation into South African society from a White perspective, leaving the reader with a theoretical framework that attempts to explain the type of social solidarity and identity Whites share. Eventually, Schutte insightfully reflects on the differences and similarities in White racial attitudes between the United States and South Africa. As Schutte points out, “The first important historical difference between the United States and South Africa, as far as black-white relations are concerned, has to do with the way in which black presence was established.”¹⁰ The Black population in South Africa is indigenous. Black oppression at the hands of the White settler population came slowly in South Africa. South African Blacks had to be pushed off of their own land first and then be conquered by the White settlers. The Black population in the United States was involuntarily established through the system of chattel slavery, which placed zero value on preserving any African culture

⁹ Pero G. Dagbovie, *Black History: "Old School" Black Historians and the Hip Hop Generation* (Troy, MI: Bedford Publishers, Inc., 2006).70

¹⁰ Gerhard Schutte, *What Racists Believe: Race Relations in South Africa and the United States* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc, 1995). 339

or social structures. This means that eventually, most Blacks born on U.S. soil were left with little memory of a life or cultural history void of racism and oppression at the hands of Whites.

Perhaps, it is this difference in the establishment of the Black presence that ultimately differentiates the struggle of the Black female athlete in South Africa and the U.S. The South African Black female athlete is indigenous to her country and therefore, she ultimately struggles to carve herself a legitimate and respected space in a country that began without Blacks suffering under white supremacist government. These Black women, “always had a cultural heritage that gave meaning to their blackness, even in the eyes of whites”¹¹—which included an involvement in sport. The U.S. Black female athlete on the other hand, ultimately struggles to carve herself a legitimate and respected space in a country that never wanted her to exist as more than a slave or domestic servant. Therefore, as Schutte points out, “this comparison between the United States and South Africa, calls for an understanding of the meanings white people attach to the phenomenon of the racial other and of the motivations that lead them to act in ways, or establish structures, that have discriminatory consequences.”¹² This dissertation expands on Schutte’s point and takes it a step further by seeking to understand the impact these white supremacist structures and beliefs have had and continue to have on the racial experiences, perceptions and images produced about Black female athletes.

In his work, *Glory Bound: Black Athletes in a White America*, David Wiggins makes clear that “the differences between participation patterns of black and white athletes are primarily a consequence of different historical experiences that individuals and their particular

¹¹ Schutte, *What Racists Believe: Race Relations in South Africa and the United States*, 339.

¹² Schutte, *What Racists Believe: Race Relations in South Africa and the United States*, 338.

racial group underwent.”¹³ The same can be said of participation patterns of Black and White athletes in South Africa. South African sport administrator Sam Ramsamy had his work, *Apartheid, the Real Hurdle*, published in England with the help of The International Defense and Aid Fund for South Africa because it was subject to censorship to do so under apartheid. In this thorough work addressing the international importance of the boycott of apartheid South African sports, Ramsamy declares that “Sport has always played a major role in propagating apartheid internationally. Internally the South African government has used international acceptance of its sports teams as a way of boosting white morale.”¹⁴

Another difference between South Africa and the United States historically and presently has to do with racial classifications. In the United States, Black and White racial classification appears to be quite simple. Operating by the “one-drop” rule, anyone who has a drop of African-American blood in them is technically considered Black by White racist standards. A White person is technically anyone who is of European lineage. The word *technically* is used because since enslavement, Whites and Blacks have been procreating with one another, both forcibly and by choice. The majority of the “mixed” population—meaning those Americans with one Black parent and one White parent—are usually identified as Black, unless they can “pass” for White. Put simply, United States racial classification is based upon individually recognized racial difference.

South African Black and White racial classifications are definitely more complex than in the United States. From early in the 19th century, White residents of South Africa identified

¹³ David Wiggins, *Glory Bound: Black Athletes in a White America*, 1st ed. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997). 177

¹⁴ Sam Ramsamy, *Apartheid, the Real Hurdle: Sport in South Africa & the International Boycott* (London: International Defense and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1982). 6

themselves as either “English” or “Afrikaner,” based on language, religion, location, racial ideology, and preferred sport.¹⁵ The sport of the “Afrikaner” is rugby, while the “English” hold cricket as the superior sport. Unlike in the United States, an individual’s percentage of “Blackness” is extremely important in South Africa. Under the apartheid regime, the classification as “Black” included indigenous Bantu-speaking “Africans,” “Indians,” and often times individuals who were “Coloured.” “Coloured” people are popularly regarded as being of “mixed race” and have held an intermediate status in the South African racial hierarchy.¹⁶ Although apartheid officially ended in 1994, many South Africans use the same racial classification categories—Black, Coloured, White—but racial identity is now self-defined, rather than by government.

As both male and female Black athletes in the U.S. and South Africa began to fight for racial integration within sport, focus and acknowledgment of their struggles ultimately centered mostly on Black male athletes and future Black male athletic achievement. And although both South Africa and the United States have legally ended segregation and apartheid, and passed civil rights and gender equity legislation, this study will elucidate just how much their white supremacist patriarchal beliefs and ideals have affected and continue to affect the life experiences of their Black female athletes.

¹⁵ Troy Bielert Connie Anderson, and Ryan Jones, "One Country, One Sport, Endless Knowledge: The Anthropological Study of Sports in South Africa," *Anthropologica* Vol.46, no. No. 1 (2004).

¹⁶ Mohamed Adhikari, *Not White Enough, Not Black Enough: Racial Identity in the South African Coloured Community*, 1st ed. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005). 2

Sport was segregated for most of South Africa's history, meaning that whites played with and watched each other,¹⁷ while Blacks and Coloreds formed their own clubs and organizations, eventually paving the way for non-racial sport. When it came to sports and national identity, the apartheid regime simply felt that only Whites were fit to represent the nation. Social Darwinism had helped to validate White South Africans' belief in the inferiority of indigenous Africans (Blacks) and Colored populations. By 1945 most of South Africa's all-White sports federations had established firm links with national sports organizations in other countries and some Whites managed to earn executive positions in international federations. South African Black sportsmen and women, and sports administrators, frustrated by the uncompromising attitude of whites, appealed to the international and Commonwealth Games associations for help.¹⁸

These early attempts for help were unsuccessful and usually garnered unsympathetic responses from national and international associations. Therefore, the only other choice for Black South African athletes aspiring to participate in athletics internationally was to go abroad. Leaving the country, a seemingly simple thing to do, was actually very hard because Afrikaners knew better than to allow a mass exodus of Blacks into the international spotlight. Only a handful of Black athletes were actually permitted passports to leave. In other nations where political repression is present, "if an athlete has been banned from a nation's competition

¹⁷ John Nauright, *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997). 21

¹⁸ Ramsamy, *Apartheid, the Real Hurdle: Sport in South Africa & the International Boycott*. 10.

because of his political convictions, he has the ability to change those convictions.”¹⁹ However, Black South African athletes could not ever become White.

Soon after the National Party began turning segregation into apartheid in 1948, Black athletes began to challenge the racist structures in sport by forming their own boards and organizations. The Black Table Tennis Board was formed in 1948 and applied to the international federation for affiliation. In the mid-50s the federation agreed to recognize the Black Table Tennis Board rather than the White Table Tennis Union.²⁰ A small victory had been won for Black athletes in South Africa and inspired cricket and weightlifting to try their luck with the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Also of importance was the foundation of the South African Soccer Federation (SASF) in 1951 at a conference consisting of African, Colored, and Indian officials. Barring nobody on the grounds of race, colour, or creed, the Federation was the largest soccer organization in South Africa.²¹ Shared frustrations brought the call for a conference where the South African Sports Association (SASA) was formed in 1958, with much of its membership coming from SASF. SASA, supported by the African National Congress (ANC) and its Youth League, was the first non-racial sports organization formed and “aimed to promote nonracial sport and lobbied international sports federations to withdraw recognition of whites-only South African affiliates.”²²

¹⁹ Richard E. Lapchick, "South Africa: Sport and Apartheid Politics," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 445, no. Contemporary Issues in Sport (1979). 156.

²⁰ Douglas Booth, *The Race Game: Sport and Politics in South Africa* (Philadelphia, PA: Taylor & Francis, Inc., 1998). 75.

²¹ Peter Alegi, *Laduma! Soccer, Politics and Society in South Africa* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004). 107.

²² Booth, *The Race Game: Sport and Politics in South Africa*, 75-76.

The 1950s marked an explosion of mass protests against apartheid laws in and outside of athletics. The first direct intervention by government in the sphere of sport was a declaration in June 1956 by Minister of the Interior T.E. Dönges that no racially mixed sport would be permitted within the borders of South Africa.²³ The government was willing to offer up only “subordinate affiliation” to Black athletes, which meant continued control over their representation on international federations. The Population Registration Act of 1950 (No. 30), the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953 (No. 49), and the Native Laws Amendment Act of 1957 (No.36), all impacted sport in some negative way.

The Population Registration Act provided the complex system of apartheid racial classification. The Separate Amenities Act meant separate public facilities, but it also allowed the regime to exempt foreign Blacks from having to adhere to its provisions. This exemption enabled foreign blacks to be classified as “honorary whites” in 1970s and 1980s South Africa.²⁴ A number of Black American athletes would be welcomed under this exemption in the 1970s, which became very important in the global fight to end apartheid. The Native Laws Amendment prohibited Black Africans from holding functions and gatherings outside of the marked residential areas unless permission was given, ultimately making it harder to keep anti-apartheid gatherings secret. Despite major problems (including police intimidation and the closure of sports grounds), black sportsmen and women persevered with the principle of non-racialism.²⁵

²³ Christopher Merrett, "From the Outside Lane: Issues of 'Race' in South African Athletics in the Twentieth Century," *Patterns of Prejudice* Vol 38, no. No. 3 (2004). 237.

²⁴ Ramsamy, *Apartheid, the Real Hurdle: Sport in South Africa & the International Boycott*. 22.

²⁵ Ramsamy, *Apartheid, the Real Hurdle: Sport in South Africa & the International Boycott*. 13.

Non-racial sport was about human dignity—"whereby anyone could be selected for any team based on merit and not on the basis of race"²⁶—and its pioneers organized athletes under the banner of sport, rather than according to class or race. Sadly, the female pioneers of non-racial sport are rarely recognized and given tribute in post-apartheid South Africa. Black women played league tennis in Langa (located outside Cape Town) in the 1940s; Colored women played basketball, table tennis, tennis, badminton, hockey and softball from the 1940s.²⁷ The fact is, as Cheryl Roberts states, "The women who chose non-racial sport put principles above money and chose to advance a non-racial, democratic society where all South Africans are one nation and are treated equally."²⁸ Some of these pioneering sportswomen are table tennis champions Yvette Petersen and Ursula Sampson; hockey player Minnie Isaacs; Violet Magwacu (boxing); Gawa Samuels (netball); and Nomatyala Malamba (wife of Western Province rugby player Hewitt Pogolo). These women helped to cause the isolation of South Africa from international sport, as racially-based selection was out of step with an international ideology about the universality of sport and sporting opportunities.

In the United States, racial segregation and exclusion had set the parameters for Black women's participation in different sports. Black athletes, whether male or female, often pursued athletic aspirations in YMCAs and YWCAs, independent Black clubs, church leagues, and community recreation programs. Basketball and track emerged as the top sports of choice in the Black community, but baseball and tennis also gained popularity in Black communities. Shortly

²⁶ Nauright, *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa*. 130.

²⁷ Cheryl Roberts, "Hats Off to Our Women: Women's Role in Transforming Sa Sport Is Largely Forgotten," *Sowetan*, August 10 2007.

²⁸ Roberts, "Hats Off to Our Women: Women's Role in Transforming Sa Sport Is Largely Forgotten."

after Jackie Robinson successfully integrated baseball in 1947, other sports soon followed suit and a number of Blacks gained entry into organized sport at the collegiate and professional levels. In 1948, Alice Coachman (basketball and track and field) became “the first Black female athlete to attain a Gold medal in the history of the Olympic Games.”²⁹ In the 1950s, tennis player Althea Gibson became the first Black person (male or female) to win Wimbledon, the U.S. Open, and to be ranked No.1 in the world.

For Black athletes from the United States and South Africa, the thirty years between 1960 and 1990 contain a partially shared struggle and ideological purpose. Black athletes in the United States and South Africa were engaged in increased radical measures to achieve their goals for racial equality within sport and nation. The Sharpeville massacre in 1960 caused the apartheid regime to take drastic measures against anti-apartheid activists, as the event—hundreds of Black Africans were injured and dozens killed when South African police opened fire on hundreds of pass law demonstrators—signaled the start of armed resistance in South Africa. The African National Congress and Pan Africanist Congress were banned, forced to go underground and turn to armed struggle, but the Sharpeville incident also provoked the loudest international outcries against apartheid sports teams. In 1961, SASA launched Operation Sonreis (Support Only Nonracial Events in Sport), but just as the apartheid regime had clamped down on the ANC and PAC so too it acted against SASA.³⁰ In 1962 SASA was banned, but its officials reorganized and created the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC) in 1963 in hopes of getting the South African National Olympic Committee (SANOC) expelled. SANROC called for an international boycott of South African sport and urged the IOC and international

²⁹ A.D. Emerson, *Olympians against the Wind: The Black American Female Difference* (New York, NY: Darmonite Enterprises, 2000). 13.

³⁰ Booth, *The Race Game: Sport and Politics in South Africa*, 78.

federations to expel white South African affiliates.³¹ SANROC was pleased when South Africa's invitation to the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo was withdrawn because the South African Olympic and National Games Association (SAONGA) fell short of disassociating itself convincingly from apartheid. The apartheid regime struck back quickly, imprisoning SANROC's leaders, placing them under house arrest, forcing them into exile, or the underground—all in the name of a government policy of “keeping politics out of sport.”³²

In February 1961, the nonracial South African Soccer League (SASL) was established in Johannesburg. Young, single women came to games to have fun and socialize with men, while other women made profits by selling food, drinks, liquor and other goods during the matches.³³ Also according to Peter Alegi, “In Soweto a group of educated young women led by Jessie Maseko made an unsuccessful attempt to run an Orlando Pirates Women's Football Club in 1962. A similar short-lived effort took place in Cape Town, where Mother City Girls played SASL curtain-raisers and competed successfully against high school boys and mixed teams.”³⁴ Also actively supportive of Operation Sonreis, SASL was not safe from suffocating apartheid policies introduced in the 1960s that directly affected sport. The Bantu Laws Amendment Act (No.76) of 1963 prohibited the entry of non-Africans into an African location, village or hostel without the permission of the officer in charge. The Group Areas Act of 1966 was a breaking

³¹ Booth, *The Race Game: Sport and Politics in South Africa*, 78.

³² Rob Nixon, "Apartheid on the Run: The South African Sports Boycott," *Transition*, no. No. 58 (1992). 77.

³³ Peter Alegi, *African Soccerscapes: How a Continent Changed the World's Game* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010). 15.

³⁴ Alegi, *Laduma! Soccer, Politics and Society in South Africa*, 128.

point for SASL, depriving the league of suitable grounds in Johannesburg, and SASL folded right before the 1966 season began.

The matter of apartheid in South African sport became of critical importance in the United States when it was further incorporated into the revolt of the American black athlete.³⁵ In 1964, the sudden arrival of boxer “Muhammad Ali” and the departure of “Cassius Clay,” caused a huge stir in the United States. Ali converted to the Nation of Islam, was more than willing to speak out about racial inequalities, and refused to be inducted into the U.S. military to fight in Vietnam. Ali’s refusal to succumb to the dictates of the dominant culture was particularly significant because it helped spawn a black athletic revolution.³⁶ Other Black athletes were inspired by Ali’s racial consciousness, as the Civil Rights movement ended and the Black Power movement began. Black athletes also played a significant role in Black student revolts that occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The apex of the Black athlete revolution, however, came in its proposed boycott of the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City.

In 1967, San Jose State College professor of sociology, Harry Edwards, assembled together a number of Black athletes to discuss the possibility of an Olympic boycott. The group called their undertaking the Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR) and announced their plan at a news conference in New York City, with their list of demands ready. According to Wiggins:

The demands included the reinstatement of Ali as world heavyweight champion (illegally stripped of the title by the U.S. government), the ousting of Avery Brundage as president of the International Olympic Committee, an end to the discrimination against blacks and Jews by the New York Athletic Club (NYAC), the appointment of an additional black coach to the Olympic track and field team, the selection of a black man to the United

³⁵ Amy Bass, *Not the Triumph but the Struggle: The 1968 Olympics and the Making of the Black Athlete* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002). 164.

³⁶ Wiggins, *Glory Bound: Black Athletes in a White America*. 215.

States Olympic Committee, and the barring of South Africa and Rhodesia from Olympic competition.³⁷

Apartheid served as a central reference point of hateful racial policy. Black American athletes understood the Black South African desire to be able to integrate and prove athletic ability on a level playing field, representing a nation regardless of race. However, in all of his planning and protesting, Harry Edwards failed to tap into a huge resource—Black female athletes.

The unwillingness to involve Black female athletes in the boycott stemmed largely from what the historian Paula Giddings called the “male-conscious motif” that dominated American society in the 1960s.³⁸ Outstanding Black female athletes, such as Wyomia Tyus and Jarvis Scott, realized that they needed to work at the side of men for the ultimate liberation of Black Americans. Scott disappointedly stated, “While the men issued statements and held conferences, finding out what we felt was only a last minute thing.”³⁹ Some notable Black female athletes of the 50s, 60s, and 70s are track and field athletes Mae Faggs Starr, Mildred Singleton, Wilma Rudolph, Edith DuVall, Barbara Edminson, Madaline Mims, and Rosalyn Clark; Gloria Byard (field hockey); Anita DeFrantz (crew); Nikki Franke (fencing), Lusia Harris (basketball), and Tina Sloane Green (lacrosse and field hockey). Interestingly enough, Black South African male athletes managed to make the same omission as Edwards during the span of the anti-apartheid boycott. Rob Nixon asserts, “the anti-apartheid boycott encompassed female sports teams, but they were involved in none of the decisive controversies.”⁴⁰

³⁷ Wiggins, *Glory Bound: Black Athletes in a White America*, 108.

³⁸ Wiggins, *Glory Bound: Black Athletes in a White America*, 217.

³⁹ Wiggins, *Glory Bound: Black Athletes in a White America*, 217.

⁴⁰ Nixon, “Apartheid on the Run: The South African Sports Boycott.” 73.

The internationalism of the boycott was strengthened “by linking the challenge of apartheid to the colonial legacy of racist nationalism in the white majority nations—Britain, New Zealand, Australia, France, and Ireland—that served as white South Africa’s principal sporting rivals.”⁴¹ Black American athletes were inspired by the global boycott against South African sport to continue the campaign for equality in the United States. In the end, Black American athletes chose not to go through with the boycott, concluding “that achievement in sport was an ideal starting point for wiping out inequities due to race.”⁴² The world looked on as Black American sprinters, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, stood in protest on the victors’ stand at Mexico City. As the U.S. national anthem played, they both stood with bowed heads, clenched fists covered with Black gloves, raised in the air.⁴³ It had been an international radical response to American racism. The personal accomplishments that had been made were fantastic, but in the end America’s racial discrimination was not eliminated. The revolts staged by Black American athletes would decrease dramatically after the early 1970s, as the women’s movement, lessening racial tensions in American society, and problems associated with economy (i.e.- energy shortage, high inflation, and high unemployment) took steam out of the movement.

In 1972, the status of Black American female athletics changed significantly. Title IX legislation expanded college opportunities for Black women athletes, changing the access for Black women to college sports and education. By the end of the seventies, the number of women

⁴¹ Nixon, "Apartheid on the Run: The South African Sports Boycott," 71.

⁴² Wiggins, *Glory Bound: Black Athletes in a White America*, 216.

⁴³ Although many nations witnessed the Mexico City incident, Black South African athletes did not get to experience it as the National Party of South Africa outlawed television because it was thought to transmit a 60s counter-culture, which would lead to the ending of apartheid and the nation itself. (see Bass, 2002) In fact, television was not brought to South Africa until 1976. There was also a general censorship of the press by the Nationalist party in South Africa, which meant newspapers and radio were regulated by the apartheid regime as well.

competing in intercollegiate sport had doubled, many of them assisted by athletic scholarships.⁴⁴ The U.S. female athlete informants involved in this study have all benefited from the Title IX legislation.

South Africa's official ban by the IOC came in 1970, forcing the South African government to make more drastic attempts at non-racialism in sport in hopes of making it to the 1976 Montreal Games. In the 1970s, Afrikaner politicians resorted to the acceptance of Black American visitors into the country as "honorary whites" again. In 1973, Arthur Ashe agreed to play in the South African Open held at Ellis Park. This was the first event under apartheid rule to have integrated seating and there were black ball boys, and a few black South Africans competed in the tournament—dressing side by side with whites in an integrated locker room for the first time."⁴⁵ Upon returning to the U.S. from his trip, Ashe argued that the situation for Blacks in South Africa under apartheid was much worse than any situation facing African Americans. The United States did not tell Ashe where he could live or that he could not travel freely within the country and abroad, while in South Africa, Blacks were forced to live in segregated, closely policed townships. Ashe hoped to raise consciousness about the continued dire situation in South Africa among U.S. pro athletes and hoped international media would begin to put pressure on white South African athletes.

The year 1973 marks the inception of the South African Council on Sport (SACOS), which took the lead in the campaign to establish non-racial sport inside South Africa and expose of the hypocrisy of "multi-racial" sport. In 1976, the South African government created a new

⁴⁴ Susan K. Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1994). 254.

⁴⁵ Cecil Harris, *Charging the Net: A History of Blacks in Tennis from Althea Gibson and Arthur Ashe to the Williams Sisters*, ed. Cecil Harris and Larryette Kyle-Debose (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, 2007). 85.

sports policy called “Multi-racialism.” Multi-racialism “allowed white teams to compete with non-white teams at all levels with the Minister of Sport’s permission, but still left league and club teams segregated.”⁴⁶ As a photo of a dying Hector Petersen being carried away from the chaos of the 1976 Soweto uprising made its way out onto the front page of newspapers abroad, the apartheid regime launched a crackdown, banning newspapers and organizations, arresting and murdering political leaders—such as Steve Biko, leading founder of South Africa’s Black Consciousness Movement—while in police detention. In 1979, the Minister of Sport, Punt Janson, announced that Group Areas Act permits would no longer be required when sport was the prime activity, and under the Urban Areas Consolidation Act, a ticket to a sports event in an African area now constituted a permit.⁴⁷ For Black South African athletes, this did not mean very much because policy had not been changed, only the word “permit” was replaced with “ticket.”

By the end of the 1980s white administrators insisted that they had integrated South African sports.⁴⁸ The apartheid government claimed that the sports world was merely anti-South African and did not value sport as much as the proud Springboks. Of course, research evidenced an entirely different story. In the 1980s, a Human Sciences Research Council survey revealed that Whites controlled 73 percent of all athletics tracks.⁴⁹ South African athletics had avoided censure during the first half of the twentieth century because racism, both overt and covert, was

⁴⁶ Lapchick, "South Africa: Sport and Apartheid Politics." 157.

⁴⁷ Merrett, "From the Outside Lane: Issues of 'Race' in South African Athletics in the Twentieth Century." 248.

⁴⁸ Booth, *The Race Game: Sport and Politics in South Africa*. 137.

⁴⁹ Merrett, "From the Outside Lane: Issues of 'Race' in South African Athletics in the Twentieth Century." 248.

common throughout the western world. South Africa was not readmitted to international sport until after Nelson Mandela was released from prison in 1990, when he asked the international boards of rugby, cricket and soccer to confirm South Africa's re-entry even though the new laws governing sport in South Africa had not yet been written.⁵⁰ South Africa was officially readmitted by the IOC in 1992 and participated in the Barcelona Olympic Games, twenty-eight years after it was first banned. However, as Rob Nixon pointed out in a 1992 article, "The South African Olympic team ventured to Barcelona more as a wager of hope than a reflection of any existing, or even imminent, national unity."⁵¹ There was no South African flag, no anthem, and mostly White athletes represented the country.

Once apartheid had crumbled, the new South African government's role in sport was motivated by the belief that sport could be enhanced and used to bring about optimism in building a new society. Therefore, on the first of July, 1994, the Ministry of the Department of Sport and Recreation was established and since then, important post-apartheid sports and gender legislation has been passed. South Africa's broad-based women's movement of the early 1990s made gender equity an important aspect of post-apartheid South Africa. A series of workshops, research, and activities aimed at women's sports development took place in 1996 and 1998 in South Africa. Some of these workshops and activities included: a national strategic planning workshop on gender and sport; a gender training course for national and regional Women and Sport South Africa (WASSA) coordinators; workshops for national federations and the women's committees of the National Sports Council (NSC), National Olympic Committee of South Africa

⁵⁰ Connie Anderson, "One Country, One Sport, Endless Knowledge: The Anthropological Study of Sports in South Africa."

⁵¹ Nixon, "Apartheid on the Run: The South African Sports Boycott." 87.

(NOCSA), United School Sport Association of South Africa (USSASA), and South Africa Student Sport Union (SASSU); and Women's Day programs.⁵²

Across the ocean, women's sports development was taking place in the United States during the 1990s and into the new millennium. There was increased sponsorship and marketing for U.S. Black female athletes, as well as new professional leagues, such as the WNBA and its ABL predecessor. However, both South African and U.S. informants interviewed for this study reveal that much more work needs to be done in regards to gender equity and the transformation of societal perceptions of female athletes overall, and Black female athletes in particular. For example, sociologist Cynthia Fabrizio Pelak points out that by the end of the 1990s, the male South African Minister of Sport, Steve Tshwete, reorganized the sporting organizations in South Africa "in an attempt to streamline the DSR [Department of Sports and Recreation] and strengthen the national umbrella organization for sports in South Africa."⁵³ The NSC became the South African Sports Commission (SASC), many staff members of the DSR were transferred to SASC, and the DSR was eliminated completely. Unfortunately, what resulted from this transformation, is a lack of designated staff members to handle gender issues and the grouping of gender equity issues under the division of "Access and Equity" within SASC, which "has framed gender equity issues within sport in terms of 'women's access.'"⁵⁴ This framework unjustly takes away the focus from men's privilege and power within sport and makes gender equity a

⁵² Robert Chappell, "Race, Gender and Sport in Post-Apartheid South Africa," *The Sport Journal* Vol. 8, no. 4 (2005), <http://www.thesportjournal.org/article/race-gender-and-sport-post-apartheid-south-africa>.

⁵³ Cynthia Fabrizio Pelak, "Nation Building in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Transforming Gender and Race Relations through Sports" (Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2002). 107.

⁵⁴ Pelak, Cynthia Fabrizio. "Nation Building in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Transforming Gender and Race Relations through Sports," 108.

problem strictly for women. Another important difference to consider when comparing the experience of the South African and U.S. Black female athlete is the time between the ending of U.S. segregation and the ending of apartheid—just shy of thirty years. The development of U.S. women's sports has had a huge head start in comparison to the women's athletics of South Africa.

Image and Perceptions

Unfortunately for Black female athletes, the cultural imagery produced about them—meaning the “depictions of a particular group and its members in public presentations and artifacts, such as monuments, exhibitions, athletic contests, etc...”⁵⁵—is usually oppressive because control of mass cultural production is dominated by Whites with beliefs, attitudes and values grounded in racial oppression. When harmful incidents happen to successful Black female athletes, the media and consequently society, either focus debate on the sexism of the incident or the racism of the incident, depending on the context and the individual(s) sharing their opinion. This has been problematic for the Black female athlete because as scholar Ange-Marie Hancock states, “Black female athletes are victims of both sexism and racism, possessing what feminist theorists conceptualize as a ‘both/and identity’: both Black and female.”⁵⁶ Most available literature dealing with image and perceptions is not devoted solely to the experience of Black female athletes, but rather to female athletes in general. However, a number of these scholarly sources aid in building a framework for understanding the South African and U.S. Black female athlete experience through image and perception.

⁵⁵ Richard M. Merelman, "Cultural Imagery and Racial Conflict in the United States: The Case of African-Americans," *British Journal of Political Science* Vol. 22, no. 3 (1992). 316.

⁵⁶ Ange-Marie Hancock, "Black Female Athletes," in *African Americans and Popular Culture Vol.2: Sports*, ed. Todd Boyd, *African Americans and Popular Culture* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2008). 4.

When faced with researching the image of the U.S. and South African Black female athlete through various modes of media, there are strong scholarly resources to gain insight from. The dissertation by Romona J. Bell entitled, "Competing Identities: Representations of the Black Female Sporting Body from 1960 to the Present," examines how different forms of media have constructed meaning around the Black athletic bodies of Wilma Rudolph, Debi Thomas, and Serena Williams. Through her study, Bell found that "the attitude toward the Black female form has changed very little since the 1960s and African American women are often marginalized due to the way race and gender has been socially constructed."⁵⁷ The media coverage of contemporary South African women's sport is discussed in Pelak's "Nation Building in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Transforming Gender and Race Relations through Sports." Through case comparison analysis of women's competitive netball and soccer in post-apartheid South Africa, Pelak investigates the female athlete's contributions to transforming gender and race relations. In her study, Pelak found that "women netball and soccer athletes generally believe that the media coverage of women's sports has recently gotten better...however the persistent lack of media coverage dominated by women suggests that sport is still a male preserve in contemporary South Africa."⁵⁸

Though largely concerned with the role that sport played in shaping national and group identities within South Africa, John Nauright adds insight to the treatment of South African female athletes in the post-apartheid era in his work, *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa*. It is hard to argue with Nauright as he boldly states, "A new black elite led by ANC

⁵⁷ Ramona J. Bell, "Competing Identities: Representations of the Black Female Sporting Body from 1960 to the Present" (PhD Dissertation, Bowling Green State University, 2008). 164.

⁵⁸ Pelak, "Nation Building in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Transforming Gender and Race Relations through Sports". 100-01.

officials readily endorse a masculinist sporting culture that has its roots in the imperial sporting experiences...The transition to a new South Africa has not led to a new South African sporting culture, or one that is more inclusive of women on the field and positive towards women off the field.”⁵⁹ In *Heroines of Sport: The Politics of Difference and Identity*, Jennifer Hargreaves chronicles the struggles of different groups of marginalized female athletes and includes a chapter on South Africa entitled “Race, Politics and Gender: Women’s Struggles for Sport in South Africa.” In discussing gender, Hargreaves makes a statement similar to that of Nauright, asserting that “women see the changes of restructuring and equalizing relations between men and women in sport slipping away, because in the post-Apartheid period men have successfully re-established dominance both in practical ways and at the level of ideas.”⁶⁰

There is not much literature on the Black female athlete’s cinematic representation, but that’s because there has not been much cinematic representation of South African or U.S. Black female athletes—unlike male athletes. Michael T. Martin’s work *Cinemas of the Black Diaspora: Diversity, Dependence, and Oppositionality* includes the essay of Keyan Tomaselli entitled, “[South Africa] Independent Cinema.” Though not focused on Black female athletes within cinema or on females within cinema generally, Tomaselli’s essay serves as a great source in understanding South African filmmaking as “South Africa offers a unique opportunity for making films about interracial relationships, social problems, class conflicts and political

⁵⁹ Nauright, *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa*. 192-93.

⁶⁰ Jennifer Hargreaves, *Heroines of Sport: The Politics of Difference and Identity* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000). 28.

despotism.”⁶¹ Similarly, Donald Bogle’s *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*, offers an insightful historical examination of the images of African Americans in film, spanning from the 1920s and into the 2000s. Bogle does mention the film, *Love and Basketball* (2000), which is analyzed within this research study. However, Bogle’s analysis of the film serves as a cinematic critique, rather than an investigation into the accurate portrayal of the life of its Black female athlete main character. It is Aaron Baker’s work, *Contesting Identities: Sports in American Film*, that best serves a cinematic analysis of Black female athletes.⁶² Like Bogle, Baker includes the film *Love & Basketball* within his work, but unlike Bogle, Baker analyzes the film through a gendered lens— supporting the perspective of this research study.

Aside from gender constraints, the research on the Black female athlete also reveals discussions of femininity and sexuality. Susan Cahn’s work, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women’s Sport* includes a chapter specifically on Black female athletes. Cahn elucidates that “the charge that sport masculinized women physically and sexually resonated with scientific and popular portrayals of mannishness and sexual pathology among black women.”⁶³ In *Black Women in Sport*, co-author Carole Oglesby, opens the book with a

⁶¹ Keyan Tomaselli, "[South Africa] Independent Cinema," in *Cinemas of the Black Diaspora: Diversity, Dependence, and Oppositionality*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1995). 129.

⁶² Aaron Baker, *Contesting Identities: Sports in American Film* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

⁶³ Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport*. 127.

chapter on “Myths and Realities of Black Women in Sport.”⁶⁴ This chapter presents some of the stereotypes, silences, and inaccuracies revealed in social/psychological literature on Black women in the United States as well as recounts research on the ways some Black women have overcome the barriers faced daily in U.S. society.

Narratives

Usually, the lives of Black female athletes come become visible from secondary sources, rather than from the athletes themselves. Historically, literate citizens of South Africa and the U.S. have acknowledged the importance and examination of documented narratives. In the United States, the release and examination of slave narratives has been extremely important. Slave narratives allowed a number of former slaves to present their individual realities of slavery on their own terms, helping to dispel widespread misperceptions about their self-identities, intelligence, and everyday lives. While African American women have been producing personal narratives for more than a century, South African Black women’s autobiographical writing did not emerge until the 1990s.⁶⁵

Although contemporary African American autobiography has moved far from the structure and format of the slave narrative, the concept of collective memory and experience along racial and gendered lines continues to be an important fixture thematically and historically. Other than the existence of the autobiographies themselves, there are no scholarly works that investigate the strength of the Black female athlete narrative in the way there are works that discuss the power and impact of slave narratives. The historical record on U.S. and South

⁶⁴ Carole Oglesby Tina Sloan Green, Alpha Alexander, Nikki Franke, *Black Women in Sport*, Aahperd Publications (Reston, VA: American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 1981).

⁶⁵ Gillian Whitlock, *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography* (New York, NY: Cassell 2000).

African Black female athletes has been negligent, as their narratives are certainly a valuable part of each country's national and sporting histories. These narratives not only contain evidence and answers for questions about their daily lives, but also speak to larger issues of gender, race, class, and even politics within sport. With any luck, this research study will inspire other scholars to look collectively at the autobiographies and narratives of Black female athletes.

This first chapter has sought to establish a case for deeper comparison and analysis of South Africa and the United States through the everyday experiences of their Black female athletes, as well as set the stage for a larger investigation into the images, perceptions and narratives about them. It should now be clear that Black participation in sport in both South Africa and the U.S. has been dictated by their histories of racist sport institutions and segregated societies. Both South African and U.S. athletes organized and financially supported themselves when larger society would do nothing to include them equally, participated in boycotts, and were inspired greatly by political movements (i.e. - Black Consciousness Movement, Black Power Movement, and the Soweto Uprising). The most obvious differences between South Africa and U.S. comparison are due to racial demography and the time between the ending of U.S. segregation and apartheid. Sports and gender legislation in South Africa and the United States created more opportunities for athletic and financial success, but the intangible aspects of their racist masculinist societies continue to constrain the life experiences of the Black female athlete.

Images and societal perceptions of Black females and their sexuality began during enslavement and have been recreated in new ways. This study will show that the images and societal perceptions that are produced and perpetuated today about Black female athletes are extensions of those from the past. Today, all female athletes have more power than ever to change the way society perceives them and produces works about them, and they have the power

to change the way they view themselves and one another. Every four years, government officials and citizens around the world watch the Olympics, radiating national pride and athletic adoration and respect. Sport is used as a representation of nationalism and nationhood in countries all over the world. So what do the life experiences of the Black female athlete in South Africa and the United States say about what each nation represents? How does her experience speak to the human condition of the Black female athlete in countries dominated by lingering racially oppressive ideology? I hope that this project honorably reveals an original understanding of my fellow Black female athletes in the United States and South Africa and illuminates the necessity to eradicate lingering White supremacist ideology and beliefs in each country's sport and society.

CHAPTER 2: The Method behind Oral and Written Narrative

This interdisciplinary, qualitative ethnographic research study employed three methods:

1) oral/written interviews and personal narratives; 2) archival research and theoretical and cinematic analysis; and 3) collection and analysis of media images of Black female athletes.

Although each method was necessary to the completion of this study, the methodology behind the collection of oral/written narratives and the inclusion of my own personal experiences must be given critical attention. The purpose of the collection of oral and written interviews was to look at experiences of Black female athletes in two different countries with distinctive histories and connect it to how these women identify themselves and fellow athletes, as well as analyze how they are affected by outside factors they cannot control. Some of these outside factors are media representation, sponsorship, and identified societal pressures and perceptions about them as women and athletes. In addition, I attempted to present varying perspectives on Black female athletes and female athletics. I interviewed some Black non-athletes, White female athletes, and Black male athletes. Although this approach may be seen as unorthodox because these informants are not the subject of this research study, I feel the inclusion of these other narratives is important in providing a glimpse into the way other members of society view, perceive, and interact with these U.S. and South African Black female athletes.

This chapter describes the study's research methodology and includes discussions of the following areas: (a) rationale for qualitative ethnography and oral narrative research approach, (b) situating myself within my research, (c) problematizing the oral narrative, (d) the research sample, (e) data collection, (f) theoretical framework, (g) analysis and synthesis of data, and (h) limitations of the study.

Rationale for Qualitative Ethnography and Oral Narrative Research Approach

This research study is interdisciplinary in that it is a combination of academic disciplines: History, Sociology, and English. 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.⁶⁶ This means that the researcher intends to examine social situations or interactions by gaining access to the world of others and attempts to achieve a holistic understanding of those situations and interactions. Qualitative methodology implies an emphasis on discovery and description, and the objectives are generally focused on extracting and interpreting the meaning of experience.⁶⁷ The particular qualitative approach utilized in this research study is critical ethnography. Critical ethnographic work “is linked to our assessment of our own society as inequitably structured and dominated by a hegemonic culture that suppresses a consideration and understanding of why things are they way they are and what must be done for things to be otherwise.”⁶⁸

The suppressive hegemonic culture at play in this study should be understood as a White supremacist culture that suppresses an understanding and consideration of the Black female athlete experience. Critical ethnography allows us to implicate ourselves in moral questions about desirable forms of social relations and ways of living. Simon and Dippo explain that three fundamental conditions must be met in order to warrant the label “critical” on an ethnographic work: “(1) the work must employ an organizing problematic that defines one’s data and

⁶⁶ L.D. & Volpe Bloomberg, M., *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation: A Roadmap from Beginning to End* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008).

⁶⁷ see Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Merriam, 1998.

⁶⁸ Roger Simon & Donald Dippo, "On Critical Ethnographic Work," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* Vol. 17, no. 4 (Dec. 1986). 196.

analytical procedures in a way consistent with its project; (2) the work must be situated, in part, within a public sphere that allows it to become the starting point for the critique and transformation of the conditions of oppressive and inequitable moral and social regulation; and (3) the work must address the limits of its own claims by a consideration of how, as a form of social practice, it too is constituted and regulated through historical relations of power and existing material conditions.”⁶⁹ This study meets these fundamental conditions through its organized data and analysis, admitted limitations, and acknowledgement that its conclusions should be read as a starting point for a much larger investigation into the lives of Black female athletes through images, perceptions, and personal narratives.

When it comes to oral narrative, “learning and absorbing from other Black women is part of the process of oral narrative research as carried out by Black women.”⁷⁰ In this study, I use oral narratives to uncover the voices and experiences of a small number of South African and U.S. Black female athletes, providing them the platform to generate new insights about their sporting nations and their experiences. Oral narrative research makes it possible for a researcher to know an experience the way their subject knows it. To better understand how the experiences of Black female athletes are shaped and affected through image and perception, one has to be willing to accept the authenticity of their narratives as they remember them. The interview is the best oral narrative research method for capturing the feelings, attitudes, and perceptions of the study’s participants. Christine Obbo, a Ugandan social cultural anthropologist, feels that during

⁶⁹ Simon and Dippo, “On Critical Ethnographic Work,” 197.

⁷⁰ Kim Marie Vaz, “Introduction: Oral Narrative Research with Black Women,” in *Oral Narrative Research with Black Women*, ed. Kim Marie Vaz (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1997). 3.

this interview process “a collector of oral narratives must attempt to familiarize him- or herself with three things: *rapport*, *listening*, and *writing*.”⁷¹

Rapport is important because it will impact the quality of the data gathered. Establishing a friendly relationship with informants can create access to knowledge of sensitive situations that comprise the lives of informants. A bad rapport (stranger relationship) with informants can block access to their important experiences or beliefs that would enrich data collection. Obbo stresses that “with good rapport, one can introduce a tape recorder or even a video camera to capture, for later analysis, ‘all’ that goes on in the research situation.”⁷² Listening and writing become crucial during the interview, transcription, and data analysis processes.

During the interview, active listening is more beneficial than passive listening. Active listening means the researcher is engaging with their informant during an interview, rather than only listening during the interview. Thus, active listening allows the researcher to interact on the spot as informants narrate, showing that the researcher understands what is being said and allows the researcher to seek further clarification on points made by informants. Staying out of the dialogue while at the same time participating in the conversation can be difficult, but passive listening is likely to result in the researcher having to complete multiple interviews with the same informants. During the interview, active listening requires the researcher to be very careful not to impose their personal views to influence answers.

Finally, writing is emphasized by Obbo as an important oral narrative research tool. Taking notes during an interview for future reference can be crucial to data transcription and analysis. Even with a good memory or recording devices, written notes were essential in keeping

⁷¹ Christine Obbo, "What Do Women Know?...As I Was Saying!," in *Oral Narrative Research with Black Women*, ed. Kim Marie Vaz (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1997). 62.

⁷² Obbo, "What Do Women Know?...As I Was Saying!," 62.

the record straight. Furthermore, reading and analyzing written primary source narratives—autobiographies—was crucial to the formulation of interview questions. Experiences, beliefs and emotions surrounding images, perceptions and self-identity were found throughout the autobiographies of six famous U.S. Black female athletes and one coach: athletes Zina Garrison (*Zina: My Life in Women's Tennis*, 2001); Jackie Joyner-Kersey (*A Kind of Grace: The Autobiography of the World's Greatest Female Athlete*, 1997); Chamique Holdsclaw (*Chamique Holdsclaw: On Family, Focus, and Basketball*, 2000); Cynthia Cooper (*She Got Game: My Personal Odyssey*, 1999); Lisa Leslie (*Don't Let the Lipstick Fool You*, 2008); Serena Williams (*On the Line*, 2007); and coach C. Vivian Stringer (*Standing Tall: A Memoir of Tragedy and Triumph*, 2008). A limited amount of information surrounding experiences, beliefs and emotions surrounding images, perceptions and self-identity could be found in the autobiography of famous South African Black female athlete Argentina Senda (*That's Why I Run: The Story of Argentina Senda*, 2008) and brief mini-narratives of Black female athletes Martha Mosoahle and Janice Josephs and White female athlete Zola Budd (all in *Life & Soul: Portraits of Women Who Move South Africa*, 2006).

I treated the autobiographical writings in much the same way I treated my collected oral narrative interviews—as genuine life accounts. Women's autobiography scholar Estelle C. Jelinek states that “a good autobiography not only focuses on its author, but also reveals their connectedness to the rest of society; it is representative of their times, a mirror of their era.”⁷³ These autobiographies and short narratives helped me to begin to develop a quality list of

⁷³ Estelle C. Jelinek, *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism*, 1st ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1980). 7.

questions for informants to answer—which is essential to the success of any project—and were later utilized in conjunction with oral narrative research data analysis.

From an ethical standpoint, oral narrative research must involve ethical procedures that involve obtaining permission from the person or organization, securing informed consent, preserving informant anonymity, and secure storage of field notes and audio recordings. Patricia Green-Powell, Associate Professor of Education at Florida A&M University, points out that “ethical considerations also figure prominently in practices pertaining to trust building, maintaining confidentiality, and reporting results.”⁷⁴ All informants for this research study were administered a Michigan State University IRB approved consent form, which was reviewed with them and signed before data collection began. All participants had a choice about whether to participate in this study and had the choice to withdraw from this study at any time.

Situating Myself Within My Research

My positionality as a Black female athlete conducting research on a group of Black female athletes from the United States and South Africa makes me neither a complete insider nor outsider. I position myself exactly how Nwando Achebe positions herself in her 2005 work *Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960*, as a *relative* insider and *relative* outsider.⁷⁵ I am a *relative* insider because I was born a Black female who became an athlete in the United States. However, I am a *relative* outsider because I am not South African, I did not train as an athlete there, and I was not alive during any legalized system of racial segregation as all of my South African informants were. I

⁷⁴ Patricia Green-Powell, "Methodological Considerations in Field Research: Six Case Studies," in *Oral Narrative Research with Black Women*, ed. Kim Marie Vaz (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1997). 199.

⁷⁵ Nwando Achebe, *Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005). 4.

am also a *relative* outsider because my self-identified heterosexuality was not always shared by my participants; an identity that is of importance within this study. As a Black woman, I identify with the experience of being a female person of color and have my own first-hand experiences of being stereotyped, judged and discriminated against based on my race alone. I also understand gender issues that relate directly to the experiences of female athletes in a male-dominated sporting culture.

More than anything, however, I relate directly to the majority of my participant's self-identification as an athlete. The topic of this dissertation was in part impacted by the now famous 2007 incident between former CBS Radio shock jock Don Imus⁷⁶ and the Rutgers University women's basketball team. Although Imus specifically called the Black Rutgers women "nappy headed hos" after their NCAA women's championship game loss, I felt he had called me one, especially since I grew up playing with and against former Rutgers players. He was fired a week after the incident and the ensuing debate in the media, politics, and sport often focused on either the sexism of the comment or the racism of the comment, depending on the context and the individual(s) sharing their opinion. Imus' comments however, were not directed at Blacks only, women only, or solely Black women. Specific Black female *athletes* were the victims of Imus' comments and should have been the focus of all media debate and discussion thereafter.

Growing up outside of Philadelphia, I began to identify myself as an athlete at the age of 9. I spent the ages of 9-12 participating in competitive YMCA gymnastics and competing in the 4x100, 100, and long jump events for my middle school. After a substantial growth spurt, I gave up gymnastics and track and field, putting my athletic intellect and efforts into basketball. My

⁷⁶ Although he was fired in March of 2007 from CBS, Don Imus was rehired in November of 2007 by WABC. Currently, Imus can be seen and heard on "Imus in the Morning," which airs on the Fox Business network.

father, a former Division 1 college basketball player, sent me to a number of camps and clinics, and in high school, I was a starter for all four years at the varsity level, losing only 7 games in four years. I've won *and* lost a State Championship, won 3 District Championships, 4 league titles, scored over 1,000 points, grabbed over 1,000 rebounds, and was a 2002 McDonald's high school All-American nominee. My play and strong academic record earned me a full athletic scholarship to a NCAA Division I school, Binghamton University, a member of the America East Conference. While at Binghamton, my accomplishments included being a three-time all conference selection, finishing 5th all-time in scoring in school history, finishing 9th all-time in rebounding in school history, being named the America East Sportsmanship Award winner, being a finalist for the NCAA Female Sportsmanship Award, and receiving the Arthur Ashe Sports Scholar Award.

I have first-hand experience of being misperceived by others, interacting with sports media, and have gazed upon numerous images of myself in newspapers and other forms of media. Some of my personal experiences have been included in data and analysis chapters in conjunction with U.S. and South African informants' experiences. Based on who I am and my own experiences as a Black female athlete, I adhere to the belief that the negative images and perceptions produced and placed upon Black female athletes in the United States and South Africa exist because of the male-dominated, racist beliefs and agendas that still thrive in each society. All people, whether consciously or unconsciously, hold prejudiced beliefs, attitudes, and actions that manifest themselves in situations and contexts. Therefore, we are *all* affected by the influence of these beliefs, attitudes, and actions.

It is also important to acknowledge that one's "positionality and location" may affect, for better or worse, a researcher's approach to carrying out research and interpretation/evaluation of

evidence.⁷⁷ This positionality created a good rapport and at times a more candid interview session between my informants and me. Being vulnerable, accessible, and open to questions from my informants certainly aided in dissipating some of the fear and distrust that are inherent in the research environment. At the same time, however, my position as *relative* insider could be seen as a hindrance to this study. Like other researchers operating with this kind of positionality and location, I had to be careful not to over-identify with my informants because that could have resulted in selective data collection and bias. In addition, as an American, I had to keep in mind that my culture placed me as an outsider to the various and rich cultures that flourish within South Africa. I believe that researchers must constantly strive to keep any personal agendas and motives removed from research outcome and data analysis. Therefore, my purpose was to listen to the life experiences and beliefs of my participants, noting the common threads in all of them. I often felt drawn to my athlete participants' lives because so many of their experiences seemed parallel to mine. For this reason, I used my participants' words, taken directly from the transcripts, to illustrate particular themes that emerged. As a researcher, I will always treasure the research time that was spent with each participant and the knowledge and insight that I gained about their life experiences and beliefs.

Problematizing the Oral Narrative

The process involved in oral narrative research is very rewarding, but at the same time can be problematic in certain ways. First, oral narrative research is very time-consuming. Arranging interviews, writing follow-up correspondence, perfecting interview techniques, collecting images, and indexing and transcribing the taped interviews, takes a lot of time and

⁷⁷ Achebe, *Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960*. 2.

energy. For example, transcribing my South African interviews took an agonizing amount of time because of my limited experience with South African English accents. I constantly had to rewind statements on tapes—sometimes more than 10 times—to make an accurate transcription of informants' words. On two occasions, it was necessary to contact certain informants to make sure I had accurately transcribed what they had said.

Second, oral narrative research can be problematic in terms of periodized data presentation. I collected the oral narratives of individuals who participated in athletics between the time frame of 1972-present⁷⁸. With respect to South African informants, however, I was faced with the dilemma of how to best fit these informants' experiences that took place under the apartheid system in data reports and analysis, especially since my U.S. informants did not grow up under legalized segregation. After careful consideration, I decided to present these South African experiences as narrated, but focused my analyses on the root of these experiences—socially (un)accepted White supremacy.

The Research Sample

Two sampling procedures were utilized to select this study's research sample; purposeful and snowballing. Snowballing, also referred to as network sampling, involves asking respondents for names of other women who have similar characteristics.⁷⁹ Purposeful sampling is a strategy used to select information-rich cases for in-depth study⁸⁰ where the size of the

⁷⁸ The year 1972 was chosen as a starting year because U.S. Title IX legislation was passed that year, which caused an increased number of Black female athletes to attend college through athletic scholarships.

⁷⁹ N. & Groves Burns, S.K., *The Practice of Nursing Research: Conduct, Critique, and Utilization*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1993).

⁸⁰ M.Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 2nd ed. (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990).

sample and specific cases depend on the study's purpose. In purposeful sampling, the decision of sample size can depend 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.⁸¹ My criteria for the selection of informants were self-identified Black, Colored, or White female athletes, Black male athletes, and Black and Colored non-athletes who are citizens of either the United States or South Africa. A small number of Whites, males, and non-athletes were included in the informant sample to gain deeper knowledge on how Black female athletes are perceived by persons other than one another—to gauge how “society” perceives these Black women athletes.

This research sample is comprised of 19 South African and 10 U.S. citizen informants. There are less U.S. informants involved in the research sample because much more scholarly work has been produced about U.S. Black female athletes than South African female athletes.⁸² In fact, no books were found that focus only on South African Black female athletes. Nine of the 10 U.S. informants formerly competed or currently compete at collegiate or professional levels and all U.S. informants played sports at the high school level. Seven U.S. informants are Black, two are White, and one self-identifies as mixed. All U.S. participants are college educated and have former or current involvement in the sports of soccer, basketball, track and field, football, and tennis. No U.S. non-athletes were interviewed for this research study because I was more familiar with the views of U.S. non-athletes than those of South African non-athletes regarding Black female athletes.

⁸¹ M.Q. Patton. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002).

⁸² see Bibliography

Sixteen of the 19 South African informants are self-identified athletes while two are self-identified non-athletes, and one identifies as a coach of female athletes. Twelve South African informants are college educated and seven did not attend college. Eleven South African informants currently play or formerly played at the collegiate or professional level. Other South African athlete informants participate(d) in competitive athletics at the high school, club, or Provincial levels. Overall, five Black, twelve Colored, and one White South African participated in this study and athletes have current or former involvement in the sports of netball, soccer, track and field, rugby, squash, softball, and swimming. A complete breakdown of all informants categorized by race, location, age, gender, sport and self-identification as athlete or non-athlete, is provided in Table 1 of Chapter Three.

Data Collection

A total of fifteen consented recorded interviews were conducted, and a total of six were completed via written correspondence. Of the fifteen recorded interviews, two of these were joint interviews, one was a group interview of eight informants, and the rest were one-on-one. However, before interviews and correspondence began, four lists of standardized open-ended and closed formatted questions were created and compiled. Standardized questions provide a means to contrast and compare informants' answers during the interpretive phase.⁸³ The number of questions asked to informants was dependent on race, gender, and location (see Appendix B). My development of a questionnaire went through several edits after distributing questions to friends and getting their feedback. The six informants who participated in this research study through e-mail correspondence were only asked to answer standardized questions from the lists.

⁸³ Diane D. Turner, "Reconstructing the History of Musicians' Protective Union Local 274 through Oral Narrative Method," in *Oral Narrative Research with Black Women*, ed. Kim Marie Vaz (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1997). 181.

These six informants were e-mailed a list of standardized open-ended questions and asked to send them back in two weeks time. A recognized downfall of written interviewing was my inability to observe the informant's body language and hear their voices, as these two things are emotional markers. In addition, I was unable to transform the interview from a structured process to a conversation, which may have allowed for deeper responses.

Once recorded interviews began, they were conducted in standardized format—meaning the researcher asks prepared questions in the order they are listed, without diversion. However, some of my recorded interviews led me to switch to an informal and conversational approach depending on the informant's comfort level and their responses. This informal conversational approach allowed for deeper investigation into responses, clarification, and the emergence of new questions in the immediate moment. In all, I spent eight months conducting oral interviews, starting with two and a half months of interviews in Umtata and Cape Town, South Africa in 2009. These locations were excellent because they have different racial and economic populations and are in different geographic areas. The city of Cape Town is a part of the Western Cape and has a high White and Colored identified racial population, while rural Umtata is located in the Eastern Cape and has a high population that identifies as Black. Economically, the cost of living in Cape Town is higher than the cost of living in Umtata.

Initially, selection of informants in South Africa was completely random. Fortunately, utilizing the snowballing approach was successful and always led to another athlete or non athlete who was willing to be an informant for this study. All South African interviews were recorded with a microcassette recorder and all recorded interviews for this study were properly labeled and securely stored in a fireproof portable safe. Interviews in the U.S. began in June, 2010 and ended in October, 2010. Selection of informants in the U.S. was not completely

random, as I first petitioned Black and White female and male athletes that I knew, to be informants; and fortunately some were more than willing. Other U.S. informants were recruited for participation through the snowballing approach. Therefore, a majority of U.S. informants are from the northeastern part of the United States, as that is where I am from.

The length of interviews varied, ranging from fifteen to eighty minutes in length. All informants chose the location of their interview because I wanted to make sure they felt comfortable in the interview setting. At times, it became necessary to conduct group and dual interviews with informants that did not have a lot of availability. In South Africa, one group interview of seven informants and one dual interview took place. One dual interview took place in the U.S.. Through the oral narrative process—especially in South Africa—I recovered many important documents and was given permission by some informants, museums, and organizations to reproduce photographs, which provided some visual record of past and present South African Black female athletes.

Analysis and Synthesis of Data

Each informant was assigned an interview number for purposes of data management. Each interview was transcribed and coded using *grounded theory*. The method of *grounded theory* “entails the systematic and intensive analysis of data often sentence by sentence or phrase by phrase, from the field notes, interviews, and other documents.”⁸⁴ This enabled me to determine themes and key verbal concepts that would reveal similarities and differences between the responses of my South African and U.S. participants. I then compared the themes from the autobiographies and mini-narratives read for this project with the themes derived from interviews with informants. The four themes that emerged from the oral interviews were: Visual

⁸⁴ Green-Powell, "Methodological Considerations in Field Research: Six Case Studies." 198.

Representation, Perceptions, Complex Racial Relationships, and Future Recommendations & Expectations. These themes were also discovered in the autobiographies and mini-narratives. Ultimately, this research can be viewed as a comparative ethnographic case study of the experiences and beliefs of a very small group of Black female athletes in the United States and South Africa. Case studies using multiple sources of evidence are rated more highly in terms of overall quality than those relying on a single source of information.⁸⁵

Limitations of the Study

The theoretical framework of this research study is constructivist. The constructivist view holds that reality is socially embedded and exists within the mind and that there is no objective knowledge independent of thinking.⁸⁶ The influence of the constructivist perspective on my research accepts inherent researcher subjectivity and frees me from looking for a “correct” or “typical” response from research participants, but it is also limiting. This research study falls within the constructivist framework because it is an exploration of the ways this particular group of South African and U.S. participants interprets and makes sense of their experiences, and how particular forms of imagery and societal perceptions placed upon them may impact their constructed understandings and responses to these experiences. In this view, multiple realities are presumed. Therefore, the conclusions that researchers construct and impose through analyses and interpretations are seen as limited by the frames derived from their informants’ life experiences.

Being a Black female athlete myself, I was familiar with many of the U.S. informants who participated in this study. This familiarity proved to be an asset in gaining access to

⁸⁵ R.K. Yin, Bateman, P.G., & Moore, G.B., *Case Studies and Organizational Innovation: Strengthening the Connection* (Washington, D.C.: Cosmos Corporation, 1983).

⁸⁶ C. Grbich, "Epistemological Changes and Their Impact on the Field.," in *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Introduction* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2007).

informants, but some scholars may argue that utilizing familiar subjects may result in informant's responses that center on the appeasement of the researcher, rather than sincere personal responses. Most questions were in the open-ended format and I was careful to allow informants to finish statements, rather than interject my thoughts and reactions, which could potentially skew their responses. As a researcher analyzing their data, I also had to watch for bias in my analysis based on my past personal interactions with those I knew. To some extent, I believe interviews with informants who previously knew me provided more deeply personal responses to interview questions, as a trusting and comfortable relationship had already been established.

The small sample size of twenty-nine informants also limits the conclusions constructed by the researcher and should not be seen as representative of the experiences and opinions of *all* Black female athletes in South Africa and the United States. The analysis of the narratives of these 29 informants should be seen as a glimpse into what *may* be much more widespread experiences, beliefs, and practices within South African and U.S. society. Language, location, and included sports should also be seen as limitations to this research study, specifically with regards to the collection of data from South African participants. There are at least eleven recognized national languages in South Africa and I am only fluent in English. Obbo believes "it is impossible to do oral narrative research through translators because even when they are very good, they unwittingly edit out the nuances that are transmitted through tone of voice and body language."⁸⁷ However, I believe using a translator would have been beneficial to this specific research project because it would have provided access to a broader range of South African women. Unfortunately, the research budget for this project was not substantial enough to employ

⁸⁷ Obbo, "What Do Women Know?...As I Was Saying!." 62.

the assistance of a translator. Similarly, limited funds circumscribed the geographical scope of interviewing in South Africa and the United States. The precise locations of participant selections and recorded interviews were influenced by pragmatic considerations to stay within budget. The specific sports played by informants in this research study are limiting to the scope of this study because all sports competitively played in the U.S. and South Africa are not included and a majority of the sports included in this study are team sports, rather than individual sports. However, it is also important to recognize that involvement in a certain sport does not limit or prescribe certain beliefs or experiences of Black female athletes.

Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter provided a description of this study's research methodology and theoretical framework. Oral narrative and critical ethnography research methodology was employed to investigate the experiences of South African and U.S. Black female athletes through the spectrum of image and perception. The research sample was made up of 29 purposefully selected informants in South Africa and the United States. Most interviews were microcassette recorded and transcribed. One group interview took place and two dual interviews occurred. Potential bias and limitations were accounted for through various strategies, including the use of multiple sources of evidence. Data was coded and analyzed using grounded theory, which enabled the key themes from findings to be identified.

CHAPTER 3: Uncovering Her Story: South Africa

The purpose of this qualitative comparative study was to gather descriptive data on the life experiences of Black female athletes in the United States and South Africa, focusing on the areas of image, perception, and personal narrative. This chapter presents key findings as obtained from in-depth interviews with 19 South African informants that self-identified as one of the following: Black female athlete, Black male athlete, Black male non-athlete, Colored female athlete, Colored female non-athlete, Colored male athlete, Colored male coach, or White female athlete. Based on the interview data, four major themes were identified: Visual Representation, Perceptions, Complex Racial Relationships, and Future Recommendations & Expectations. Within each theme were categories and subcategories. The South African data for these themes is presented in this chapter, while U.S. data for these themes is offered in Chapter 4.

Some informants have been given pseudonyms, while others gave consent to use their true identity; however, no last names have been utilized nor has any distinguishing feature been applied to decipher which informants consented to the use of their true first name. This has been done in order to protect all study informants who wished to remain anonymous. A data key for all informants of this study is found in Table I.

<i>South Africa</i> <u>Name</u>	<u>Race</u>	<u>Sport</u>	<u>Age/ Sex</u>	<u>City/Village</u>	<i>United States</i> <u>Name</u>	<u>Race</u>	<u>Sport</u>	<u>Age/ Sex</u>	<u>State</u>
Siyoli	Black	Sqash	26/F	East London	Laura	Black	Basketball	24/F	Pennsylvania
Nozodwa	Black	Netball	37/F	Qunu	Dawn	Black	Basketball	32/F	Connecticut
Nomfundo	Black	Soccer	27/F	East London	Chanel	Black	Basketball	19/F	Virginia
Carla	Colored	Softball	26/F	Cape Town	Eve	Black	Basketball	27/F	Pennsylvania
Mia	Colored	Softball	27/F	Cape Town	Victoria	Black	Tennis	20/F	Virginia
Bonny	Colored	Softball	40/F	Cape Town	Ciara	Black	Soccer	27/F	New York
Glynis	Colored	Softball	32/F	Cape Town	Jillian	White	Basketball	26/F	Pennsylvania
Nicolene	Colored	Softball	27/F	Cape Town	Kelly	White	Soccer & Basketball	26/F	Washington
Joey	Colored	Softball	24/F	Cape Town	Kyle	Black	Basketball	30/M	Pennsylvania
Bettina	Colored	Softball	28/F	Pretoria	Ray	Mixed (Black/ Jewish)	Football, Track & Field	32/M	Connecticut
Almarie	Colored	Softball	32/F	Cape Town					
Melanie	Colored	Swimmer	36/F	Cape Town					
Candice	White	Softball	22/F	Johannesburg					
Coach James	Colored	Coach of Softball	40/M	Cape Town					
Clayton	Colored	Rugby	21/M	Cape Town					
Kingdom	Black	Rugby	30/M	Mvezo					
Zolani	Black	Non- athlete	26/M	Tsolo					
Yaasmeen	Colored	Non- athlete	43/F	Cape Town					

Table I. Informant data key

Visual Representation

All informants indicated that they had exposure to visual representations of Black female athletes through some form of media outlet, although not necessarily of Black female athletes

from their country. The categories for Visual Representation are Action Media, Print Media, and Black vs. White Media Portrayal. The categories of Action Media and Print Media were further broken down into subcategories. The following are subcategories for Action Media: Viewing Frequency, Television, and Cinema. The subcategories for Print Media are Newspapers, Billboards, and Magazines.

Perceptions

All South African informants believe that some people within their society hold certain perceptions about Black female athletes. Societal perceptions placed on Black female athletes that were identified by informants deal with conceptions of femininity, sexual orientation, biological and environmental factors, intelligence, style of play, and profit potential. Some informants have been deeply emotionally affected by certain perceptions, while other informants revealed they were emotionally unaltered by the very same perceptions. Categories of the perceptions theme are Perceptions and Coping with Perceptions. Subcategories for Perceptions are Athlete on Athlete, Non-Athlete on Athlete, Racial Perceptions, and Gendered/Sexual Perceptions. Subcategories for Coping with Perceptions are Active Resistance, Internalization and Self-Identity.

Complex Racial Relationships

Most informants described complex racial relationships that have deeply impacted their life and sporting experiences both positively and negatively, namely relationships between herself and her teammates, other athletes, non-athletes and romantic partners. Categories of Complex Racial Relationships are Positive Complex Racial Relationships and Negative Complex Relationships. The following are subcategories of both Positive and Negative Complex Racial Relationships: Teammates, Non-Athletes, Athletes, and Romantic Partners.

Future Recommendations & Expectations

All participants offered recommendations and/or expectations for the future of women's athletics generally, and for Black female athletes specifically. It was interesting to discover that although many of this study's informants had great recommendations for the future, their expectations of the actual execution of those recommendations were mostly pessimistic in South Africa. The categories of Future Recommendations & Expectations are Recommendations and Expectations. Most informants offered recommendations that centered on areas of salary, endorsements, expansion, and organizational structure. Therefore, the subcategories for Recommendations are as follows: Salary, Endorsements, Expansion, and Structural Change. The subcategory for Expectations are Negative Expectations and Positive Expectations.

Theme One: Visual Representation

All informants indicated that they had exposure to visual representations of Black female athletes through some form of action or print media outlet, although not necessarily of athletes from their country. In addition, some informants felt that although they were being exposed to images of Black female athletes, the portrayal of these women was inferior in comparison to their White female athlete counterpart. Two South African informants indicated that they did not see images of South African Black female athletes at all in the media. When asked to describe where one sees images of South African Black female athletes in the media, Kingdom, a 30 year-old Black male from the Eastern Cape who played collegiate rugby, and Bonny, a 40-year-old Colored female softball player both indicated that they'd never seen them in the media. In addition, a couple of informants also indicated that the controversy behind the 800m World Championship win of Caster Semenya was the most that had been reported on about a South African Black female athlete. In a joint interview in the Western Cape with Colored club softball

teammates Carla and Mia, they explained, “ We’ve seen Caster Semenya. If they’re really on top, you’ll find them on the news, but other than that, you don’t really see them.” Clayton, a 21 year-old Colored male rugby player for a large university in the Western Cape explains the impact international Black female athletes are having on South African female athletes.

You don’t really see anything here on South African female athletes, but internationally, female athletes are taking the sports world by storm. Like look at the Williams sisters [Venus and Serena]. And these athletes are making girls athletics more popular.

Action Media

In South Africa, eight informants reported seeing images of Black Female athletes via television, and one informant recalled viewing a film centered on a Black female runner.

Viewing Frequency

As fans and/or participants of female athletics, it became important to assess how often informants actively watched female athletic competition, whether in person or on television. The majority of informants commented that they watched female athletic competitions most frequently in person. Among those who responded that they watched athletic competition often was Black female soccer player Nomfundo, who said, “I do often. Every Saturday I play and watch.” Similarly, former netball player Nozodwa shared that she watches female athletic competition as much as she can because of her sporting background. Male informants also reported frequently viewing female athletic competition, but for different reasons. Clayton said, “Quite a lot, seeing that my sister is doing athletics. So I kind of do support female athletics a lot.” Zolani, a Black male non-athlete, frequently watches female athletics for aesthetic reasons:

As often as I can. In high school, I normally enjoyed watching netball. Mainly because they wore mini-skirts. So yes, I normally enjoy watching them instead of the male competitions.

Some female informants, however, reported low viewing frequency of female athletic competitions, even with live participation and spectatorship. Colored multi-sport athlete Melanie said, “I don’t watch too much sport, but I watch a lot of softball when I play softball. But I wouldn’t say I watch much female sport in particular.” Carla responded similarly stating, “The majority of the time, it’s when I’m on the softball field. There’s not much coverage of female sports anywhere.” Non-athlete female Yaasmeen also placed blame upon the lack of media coverage given to female sport:

Not often. It’s usually when I’m here watching the softball. The T.V. mostly covers international events and here in South Africa it’s soccer, rugby and cricket. And it’s mostly men. I must admit our T.V. coverage makes me most annoyed.

Television

Around half of all South African informants reported seeing images of Black female athletes on television. They spoke specifically of television images occurring on a specific network, during international competition coverage, and through commercial advertisements. Bonny reported usually watching swimming when it comes on television, while Nozodwa described an admiration of viewing Jamaican sprinters during international competition coverage sharing, “I also see them when athletics [track & field] competitions are on. I have always been fascinated with female athletes from Jamaica.” Nicolene, a Colored member of a major softball team expressed her team’s viewing frequency and exposure to female athletics through sports channels on television She said, “ESPN shows a lot, so we watch that...the sports channels show a lot of tennis.” Siyoli, a 26-year-old Black squash player, described the increased use of Black female athletes in television commercial advertisements.

We're seeing a lot more in adverts. Adverts are bringing out whatever brand that they're trying to bring in, that's the image you see them in. You see them in the gym wear and that they have the same ability as everyone. Now they're tapping into the dancing market, so you're seeing a lot more of the dancers in advertisements. So it's got an urban-chic feel to it. Right now it's a cool look in the media.

Cinema

Although some South African informants indicated that they had seen films involving Black female athletes, most could not think of a single film. Only one informant could recall watching a film specifically about a South African Black female athlete. Glynis, a 32-year-old Colored softball player described watching the film *The Long Run* (2001), although she could not remember the title during her interview. She said, "I know I've watched a movie, but I can't think of the name of it. It's where this woman runner is trained by a White coach. The guy coaches her to run the Comrades."

Print Media

The majority of South African informants revealed that they see images of South African Black female athletes through modes of print media. Informants identified magazines, billboards, and newspapers as modes of print media that utilize images of Black female athletes.

Newspapers

The only informants to identify newspapers as a place where one sees Black female athletes were two female softball teammates involved in the group interview. Bettina, a 28-year-old who identifies as Colored, said that "local papers will cover softball." White teammate Candice, a native of Johannesburg, quickly offered addendum:

That's only in Cape Town. They don't do that in other Provinces. Maybe in Limpopo; I don't know. But, in Jo-burg and Durban they don't.

Billboards

Only one South African informant stated that they saw images of Black female athletes on billboards. This informant was 26-year-old Black male non-athlete, Zolani, a native and current resident of the Eastern Cape.

Magazines

Magazines were identified as a locale for images of Black female athletes by eight South African informants. Nozodwa recalled looking at magazines during her time as a competitive athlete recalling, “I used to look at marathon magazines and they always involved a Black cross country runner.” The softball players in the group interview applauded the magazine of self-identified Black female athlete, Cheryl Roberts:

We’ve got a woman; Cheryl Roberts that makes a magazine (entitled *Sparkling Women*). So she normally drops her magazines here and normally some of us are in the magazines so we just keep up with the magazines that she gives us.

In addition to mentioning billboards, Zolani also noted magazines as a site of Black female athlete visual representation and voiced a positive opinion on their portrayal:

I usually see images of Black female athletes in magazines and billboards because normally in a newspaper, you don’t get to see the full picture of the athlete and see the person behind the name. But in magazines, you do see the female athlete. The way that they are posing isn’t sexual. They are usually in sporting gear, so I think they are portrayed in an appreciative way.

Black vs. White Media Portrayal

Historically in both South Africa and the United States, Black populations have frequently been portrayed differently than their White counterparts. The differences that are discussed or depicted through action and print media are usually of negative connotation with regards to the Black person(s). Therefore, it was of interest to ask some informants their opinions on how they currently feel about the portrayal of Black female athletes vs. White female athletes.

Two South African male informants were asked if they thought there is a difference in the way the media portrays or discusses White female athletes vs. Black female athletes. Both of their responses allude to the continuation of a racist idealization of the White female athlete aesthetic through South African media outlets. Clayton shares a progressive outlook:

They have [portrayed or discussed White female athletes vs. Black female athletes differently]. The media is also in that stage where they're working on it. Back during apartheid, they certainly discriminated against Black athletes, but slowly they're kind of changing things and as these athletes and our races of Black and Colored people are getting through, they will have to be forced to change the way they think because of athlete's performances. As we've seen in the news, they're dominating and they're going to change the media's thought of mind by the performances of our people... That's the only way we can change the way the media portrays and perceives them.

Initially, Zolani expressed that he did not feel the media portrayal or discussion of Black and White females was very different. However, after further questioning his initial response, he shared a critical observation.

I wouldn't say it's that different because normally, the White female athlete is always skinnier than the Black female athlete. So they tend to associate with that and then they still try to create some dominance or whatever for the Black one—so they try to create some space—that's not necessary to put in-between.

This Researcher: You mentioned that the White athlete's usually skinnier. Does that mean you feel the media tries to shape the White athlete as the "standard" of what you're supposed to look like?

Yes. And if you're into sport, the products that they do advertise are normally weight loss things, right? So if you are a White female athlete and then you're perceived by everyone as the standard—I mean on the local, national, and international levels—no one will want to look like her heavier Black female counterpart. So everyone will go for the slimmer look of the White. I find that that's what look Black female athletes are going for in the long run.

Theme Two: Perceptions

Informants from South Africa identified a number of perceptions of Black female athletes in their respective countries. Some of the informants from South Africa were also asked questions regarding their coping mechanisms and feelings. At least one person responded that

they absolutely do not feel that some people within society hold certain stereotypes or perceptions about Black female athletes. In addition, informants were also asked questions about how they perceive Black female athletes specifically and female athletes generally.

Perceptions

Thirteen South African informants were asked if they think some people within society hold certain stereotypes and perceptions about Black athletes. Ten informants responded affirmatively and three responded negatively. The perceptions identified by the South African informants and those uncovered by my particular questions, have been categorized based on gender/sexuality, race, or source of perception. There were a total of nine perceptions that were self-identified by South African informants that are believed to be held by some people within society:

1. Black female athletes are lesbians based on appearance or sport played—*mentioned by 4 informants*
2. Black female athletes are “manly” or lack of “femininity”—*mentioned by 4 informants*
3. Black female athletes are naturally superior athletes—*mentioned by 2 informants*
4. Black female athletes cannot think for themselves
5. Black and Colored athletes are more aggressive than White athletes
6. Black athletes don’t know how to swim
7. Female athletes are not worth investing money into
8. Women are unable/unfit to play sport (held largely in rural areas)
9. When a woman excels in her sport she is “playing like a man”

The first three perceptions were mentioned by multiple informants, while all other perceptions were only mentioned once.

Athlete on Athlete

In order to immediately gauge each informant’s personal perception about the Black female athlete, informants were first asked to reveal the first person, place, or thing they immediately thought of after hearing the phrase, “Black female athlete.” South African athlete

informants responded interestingly. Only two South African athletes were thought of: sprinter Caster Semenya and former table tennis player Cheryl Roberts. Having interacted with Cheryl Roberts personally, Melanie had this to say:

I think of quite a few people, but the one who stands out is Cheryl Roberts. She's one of the best women I knew in sport—in particular in South Africa—because I played table tennis as a child and met Cheryl. And actually you know, she started doing her research and started sharing her research with some of the people in table tennis.

Nozodwa said the thought of “South Africa” in general came to mind, and Black soccer player Nomfundo answered the question with emotion sharing, “I feel a positive feeling. It makes me feel good because Black athletes are very talented. I'm proud, I'm proud.” However, most other athlete informants immediately thought of Black female athletes from the United States. Carla thought of U.S. track & field athlete “Marion Jones,” while Glynis, Nicolene, Joey, Bettina, Candice and Siyoli immediately thought of U.S. tennis stars “Venus and Serena Williams.” Due to the dominance of international athlete popularity and coverage, Bonny and Kingdom responded disconcertedly:

Bonny:

Well, we don't have any role models because it's like a joke to the media. We're more familiar with international sports stars.

Kingdom:

The first thing I think about is that there needs to be more of them.

Non-Athlete on Athlete

Black male non-athlete Zolani thought of South African Siya Mahlakatha, when asked what person, place or thing he thought of after hearing the phrase “Black female athlete”:

Siya Mahlakatha, former South African women's rugby team member. She has a diploma in sport management and she still plays today.

Yaasmeen, a Colored female non-athlete, could not think of anyone when asked the same question with the phrase “Colored female athlete”:

I can’t think of anyone. You see, we are being marginalized. Our people should be getting a lot more exposure in this country and that is why we can’t answer you...we’ve got absolutely no exposure, no coverage anywhere on the radio or television for us to know when a Colored person performs. We do not know. It’s sad.

Some informants were also asked questions that dealt with either their views as non-athletes or how they feel non-athletes perceive athletes. In their group interview, softball players Candice, Joey, and Glynis described how they feel non-athletes perceive Black female athletes:

Joey:

Non-athletes perceive us as arrogant.

Glynis disagreed with Joey:

No, I don’t think so! I had friends and I’d say, “Look, I can’t go, I can’t go to your wedding because I’ve got sport,” and they don’t understand. They don’t understand the commitment, the time. They can’t understand that sport can be that important, especially when you’re not getting paid for it. They just don’t understand. I get that a lot actually—“You’re not coming to my wedding? You’re not coming to my party?” –and I’m like “I’m sorry, I gotta go play.”

Candice added on to Glynis’ sentiments:

People don’t understand the passion that drives us in the sport. They don’t understand. My sister doesn’t understand. I mean, she thinks I’m ridiculous to play sport and my job must come first.

During her interview, Melanie recalled a recent incident in her life and stressed a desire for non-athletes to view her as more than just an athlete:

The other day I had bumped into someone who went to school with me and we were talking about what we do and I said, “I studied linguistics and German” and he said, “I had no idea. I pictured you as a sports person. I thought you’d be doing something in sport. I had no idea you were interested in languages.” But I was in the German class at school. People define you by your sport. Even the parents and people I was at school with over twenty years ago will look at me and say, “Hello Melanie. Melanie the swimmer.”

You know, sometimes I think that's my surname—Melanie TheSwimmer—and that's the only way they know you.

Nozodwa was asked to describe how she feels *female* non-athletes perceive Black female athletes such as herself. She responded very positively, reflecting on the change that has occurred since the days of apartheid:

Honestly now, it's the thing to try and do. Nowadays, athletes form clubs and they have so many supporters financially and otherwise. An example is last year; we were organizing a marathon with the Department of Arts and Culture here in Umtata. There were athletes from all over. There was an athlete here from Botswana that won for the female athletes and she won a car. These days, you can actually go places with your athletics. It's not like the olden days. Athletes are being supported by the government, by the private institutions, by everybody that supports sport. If you look at the olden days, there were few female athletes. Sport in general was being dominated by males. Few Black females were into sport. They were in sport, but they were not at the level where you could actually see them on television and hear about them on radios. But nowadays it is publicized all over.

Racial Perceptions

Of the nine perceptions that were cited by South African informants, the perceptions that “Black female athletes are naturally superior athletes,” “Black female athletes cannot think for themselves,” “Black and Colored athletes are more aggressive than White athletes,” and “Black athletes don't know how to swim” are grounded in racism. Four informants mentioned that they feel society perceives Black female athletes as “natural athletes,” but further investigation took place surrounding this perception when eleven informants were asked if they personally feel that biology/genetics plays a role in the success of Black female athletes. Nine informants—8 athletes, 1 non-athlete— said that they do feel biology/genetics plays a role in the success of Black female athletes. Athletes Clayton, Siyoli, Almarie, Joey, Glynis, and Nicolene had insightful explanations:

Clayton:

Definitely, I would say yes because genes and so if it comes to your family and your mother and father were athletes, then it's most possible that you'd also be an athlete. So yea, I think genetics play a big role.

Almarie and Nicolene responded similarly to Clayton.

Almarie:

I never thought there was something fishy going on or anything. I just think the athleticism is natural.

Nicolene:

Also, while the competition in Berlin was happening, they interviewed Tim Noakes—he works over at the Sports Science Institute—and he said that some people don't like to hear it, but research shows that most runners are Black and it is genetics that somehow gets in there because a lot of runners that are winning competitions are Black.

Siyoli discussed how she used to think about biological athletic superiority, but now believes it must be more than genetics that plays a role:

Growing up as a kid, my answer would have probably been yes. I would have said run if you're Kenyan... The sprinters, classically, we've seen more of the Jamaican and U.S. sprinters coming through and be successful. And they have a typically much more powerful build... Growing up as an athlete myself, I've never been in a stereotypical box. Even in practice, whatever scientific things they were trying to check out, I was never in the stereotypical box, but yet on the field or the court I could perform. There was a day when I probably believed that the classic shape of the leg—which comes in, has a dent, small knee, and then comes out—growing up, I thought that was a typical White leg. And then thinking well if White people have legs like that, then Black people have different shaped legs because mine were different—I have a bigger thigh, a bigger knee, and then less muscles up top. Then growing up and seeing and hearing more about a lot of these girls who have done ballet and gymnastics early on in their lives, and getting to know people, I saw how that sport can actually shape a body. It can't *just* be genetics. It also might be the discipline of the sport.

Joey and Glynis also believe more than genetics plays a role in the success of Black female athletes:

Joey:

Genetics obviously has to play a part, but it's not specific to each person or each country.

Glynis:

I mean, let's face it though, most long distance runners are from Africa. I don't think it's necessarily genetics but maybe it's where they're from.

Non-athlete Zolani and softball player Carla explained why they *do not* believe biology or genetics plays a role in the success of Black female athletes:

Zolani:

That would be kind of tricky because in the olden days, Black females were familiarized with being the heart of the house, not outgoing and doing things. Nowadays, there is more freedom. They get to do what they choose. So the toughness that they have is the toughness that they had in the beginning, but it wasn't realized. It's a different mental toughness.

Carla:

Honestly, no because if it was then the majority of sporting athletes would be Black, whether male or female, but it's not. There is a good ratio. Probably, they just excel more in certain things or that's how they were raised—that you're on the field the majority of the time.

The fourth identified perception, "Black female athletes cannot think for themselves," was cited from Siyoli. The fifth and sixth perceptions, "Black and Colored athletes are more aggressive than White athletes," and "Black athletes don't know how to swim," were offered by Melanie.

Addressing the "aggressive" perception, she shared a memory from a return trip to Germany she made at age nineteen:

Because I'm a sporty person, when I was at the language school, I'd go and play table tennis or whatever and get involved...a Canadian guy said to me, "You're very aggressive," and you know, I just shrugged it off. And then when I met my friend's husband—I had met my friend during my first trip when I was 16 and so when I came back on my second trip, I met her husband—and we were playing a board game and he passed the same remark. That made me realize that to those Westernized men, seeing a woman—a Black woman—being that aggressive, that I think that in their societies, they're not really used to seeing that. And then I tried to explain to him—obviously after some introspection—and said, "I realize why I must be coming across as an aggressive woman. It's because I've grown up in South Africa, oppressed as a Colored person, *and* a woman." So it was a double disadvantage that I had to battle with. And I didn't realize it

because I just took it for granted that that's the situation in South Africa. It's just the order of the day here, so you're just stuck with it. And overseas, I still had that same attitude, but I didn't need to have it.

Melanie also shared a memory from her days as a collegiate swimmer:

I went to college to study teacher training—you know swimming isn't really a sport that a lot of people of color have been exposed to, whereas practically all White kids grew up in a home where they had a pool, their schools had pools, and everybody could swim. As Colored kids, we never had pools at our schools, but because swimming was my sport, I practiced outside of school and was obviously a confident swimmer—So when I got to college, I was the only swimmer for my whole college... so I swam my first event and then I went to enter and the bigger college which we had merged with, the Cape Town College of Education, was a multi-racial college. There was one Colored guy who was behind the desk doing the entries and I happened to end up talking to him about the entry and he asked "which events?" I gave him my list of events and he was shocked and had this look of dismay because I could swim every event. By the time I got to the last event, the individual medley, he turned to me and asked me, "Which school were you at?" I clearly understood that to mean he was implying, how can *you* swim? Because the only way you can be a competent swimmer in all these events is if you have gone to a White school. I just smiled politely and said, "I went to Livingston High School," which was a Colored school—one of the best Colored schools that you could go to in Cape Town.

Informants were also asked a few questions that dealt with racial perceptions. Informants were asked to name what they feel are the "main" sports Black female athletes participate in.

According to the South African informants of this study, South African Black female athletes mainly participate in netball, soccer, rugby, basketball, track & field, hockey, and swimming—these sports being named by more than one informant. Other sports that were named for having Black female participation are boxing, karate, table tennis, tennis, and squash. However, White softball player Candice pointed out that in South Africa, the racial composition of sports teams has a lot to do with location as well:

It depends on the area though as well, like what part of the country you're in because here in Cape Town, softball is predominantly Colored and netball as well. But our country, like in Joburg, you don't see many Black girls. For example playing netball, you've got predominantly White. So it also depends on the area.

Informants were also asked if certain sports are considered “Black,” “White,” and “Colored” in South Africa. All informants said that certain sports are in fact thought of in affiliation with a specific race. According to informants, the following sports are broadly associated with each race:

Black—Soccer, Netball, Softball

Colored—Running, Soccer, Rugby, Netball

White—Swimming, Tennis, Cricket, Rugby, Hockey, Table Tennis, Gymnastics

Athletes Nozodwa and Clayton, as well as non-athlete Zolani, all discussed the slow transition to actualized non-racial sport, despite government efforts:

Nozodwa:

Yes. Rugby is a White sport. Cricket is a White sport, table tennis, and tennis too. Soccer, netball, and softball are for Black people. And if you look at South African sports even today, like cricket, you can notice there are only 2 Black people on the team. I can’t actually say Coloreds are Black because they’re partly Black and partly White, so they don’t fall into that category. And when you look at soccer in South Africa, you can actually see few Whites on the soccer field. The government is trying by all means to fight hard, but it’s difficult...especially in rugby. Even the young people in rugby, you have few Blacks and it’s mostly Colored and White.

Clayton:

Yea, there’s quite a stigma there I would say, as some people still believe that. But, the generation that I’m in, the thinking isn’t like that...but things have been like that in South Africa because of apartheid. And only the Whites could play rugby and cricket and all that and they had to play in different leagues. So, after 1994, things became democratic and things began to change and they’re still changing, you know, but it’s at a slow pace. So there’s not complete change, but it’s coming along. There’s still discrimination against races and religions, but it’s not affecting people as much as it did.

Zolani:

I would say certain sports are considered “White,” “Black,” and “Colored” because of a combination of things because the government is no longer a factor now. Government has brought in programs that encourage everyone to play a sport. So now there is still that social/cultural thing that is still lingering and stopping a lot of people from playing any sport or certain sports.

Gendered/Sexual Perceptions

Informant identified perceptions “Black female athletes are lesbians based on appearance or sport played,” “Black female athletes are ‘manly’ or having a lack of ‘femininity’,” “Female athletes are not worth investing money into,” “Women are unable/unfit to play sport,” and “When a women excels in her sport she is ‘playing like a man’,” fall under the category of gendered/sexual perceptions. Aside from identifying these perceptions, South African informants were asked a number of questions that sought to investigate their own perceptions of gender and sexuality issues within sport. First, nine informants were asked if they feel there are any sports women should not play. Five informants said “No”—3 female athletes, 1 female non-athlete, and 1 male athlete. Clayton’s refuting response, however, was muddled:

I don’t discriminate against sex. No, I think they’re capable of doing anything males can do. It’s just funny seeing women play rugby and kinda physical sports.

Four informants said “Yes”—3 female athletes and 1 male non-athlete—and identified the sports rugby, boxing and soccer as sports they feel women shouldn’t play or don’t personally enjoy seeing women play. Non-athlete Zolani cited the physical condition of women:

Yea. Rugby is too rough and physical for them. Women are normally frail human beings so they shouldn’t be treated as tough as us guys.

Nozodwa responded similarly to Zolani, but also stressed the potential danger to a woman’s ability to conceive a child:

Yes. Rugby and soccer. They are not for women because rugby is a bit tougher for women and the tackles and other things. Women are supposed to bear children and if you’re training so hard like that, it is more difficult to conceive. For soccer, you know the field is too wide and you sometimes have to play with males. It is not good because males can be tougher than the female, so when they kick you, you can actually feel the pain.

Almarie and Bettina shared a dislike of watching women play rugby and participate in boxing.

Almarie stated, “I don’t like watching women play rugby or boxing. I’m sorry, but that’s just me.” Bettina added, “My first thought is also rugby. I’m not against them playing it, but I don’t like seeing it.”

The first two informant identified perceptions, “Black female athletes are perceived as lesbians based on appearance or sport played” and “Black female athletes are perceived as ‘manly’ or having a lack of ‘femininity’” were investigated at a deeper level with informants. Four athletes revealed that they had been perceived as “manly” or a lesbian by others. When asked where she feels the lesbian perception comes from, soccer player Nomfundo noted possible emulation of males:

Men could play a role in why some women might be perceived as lesbians because men’s soccer players are very popular—like Ronaldo—and then girls want to copy their style of dress and play like that player. So they change completely.

Mia revealed she had been perceived as a lesbian based on her athletic style of dress and aversion to “dressing up.” Melanie also discussed outer appearance as people’s justification of perceiving female athletes as lesbians:

There’s also the perception that if I play sport and I play hard and I have my hair short—which I did when I was swimming—that you must be a lesbian. How I have my hair doesn’t mean anything about my sexual orientation. I’ve never understood it because a lot of things people will say to me like, “Oh no, but we can see that you’re not butch,” or whatever. I mean, my sister and I—we’re quite masculine—we would have guys tell us over the years things like, “Oh we were watching these body builders on television and we thought of you and your sister.”

Mia and Siyoli cited the sports of soccer, basketball, rugby, and hockey as sites where an increased lesbian perception exists. Siyoli went on to discuss the perceived lack of femininity:

In the soccer world and hockey world, you have a stereotypical view that you will find lesbians or your sexual orientation is a question mark...Generally, elite athletes are perceived to have a lack of femininity. That’s a challenge.

Zolani feels that appearance may not be the only basis for perceived homosexuality, but also based on assumed self-perception of the female:

Actually, it wouldn't necessarily be the way they look, but that way they tend to perceive themselves. And some of us guys—I don't know whether some of them are scared or what—so now maybe the Black female athletes—are also seeing themselves as on the same level as their male counterpart...So they seem to want chicks or girls who are less physical.

Furthermore, a perceived lack of femininity could certainly cause difficulty in finding a romantic partner, particularly one of the opposite gender. Therefore, informants were asked to share how they feel men perceive Black female athletes when it comes to pursuing them for dating, relationships, and marriage. Both male and female informants were asked this question.

Melanie discussed a feeling of intimidation:

I think to a certain extent men do feel intimidated because I'm aggressive in my sport...but I can be very different in my relationships, but I think they just see that perception. I meet people all the time and they say, "Oh, we had a crush on you, but we were too scared to come up to you because you know, you'd give us a smack. You'd wallop us." And I'm not like that. That's the persona that you'll see at school and on the sports field, but that's not who I am.

Nozodwa responded in a relatively similar way:

Sometimes they do not like them because when you're an athlete, you must be fit and your toes don't look like an ordinary persons. They will look at you and say, "Wow. She looks like a man!" And the physique of your body...they will always complain about it, like, "Yo. She will beat me." So there's not much more than friendship between them. They are always afraid of pursuing a real relationship with them. They would rather become friends than marry that person or have them become a girlfriend.

Zolani's response validates the views of Melanie and Nozodwa:

As for marriage, no. I would say that in a physical sense, having a girlfriend might be somewhat hazardous...maybe she would bully me, who knows! And I tend to associate the sport that she's into with her personality. Because for instance, if it's a rugby player, I might label the person as a rough person and she's not fearing me in any way because she's used to more physical things than maybe I am. So maybe I won't be attractive to her anyway...and that would lead her to not respect me as her man, you know? Just looking at the athletes, yea, they're quite fascinating and impressive than your non-athlete because they're physically fit. Their bodies are nice. If you look at a person with a firm

body structure, then you find the person attractive...but not necessarily to say, build a future with or something.

Siyoli found this question difficult to answer, sharing the importance of what things are

“acceptable” to the interested male:

Is it a sporting male or is it not? A male athlete who is active and not just watches television and likes what the people do, actually has an appreciation of a female sportsperson and often, I find more encouragement in that. There's a real understanding that people don't just wake up being good, that there's real intensive work and they appreciate you and want to try and be a part of things. I'm generalizing—you might still find males who play sports and still be intimidated. They probably come in levels of success—if the girl's becoming more successful than the guy, then there are other issues. Then there's the non-sporty male who probably just watches and doesn't really have the full sense of understanding of the expertise that's involved. And then the question is, what do they see as a stereotypical woman? And if it's a more media woman—who might have a slighter or less masculine body—he wouldn't go after the sportswoman. So yea, some will be intimidated or some will be encouraged. And often you probably find that certain expectations follow. Once they know you participate, if you're good at it, that's a huge surprise, but with all the attention on you, he may begin to belittle your success by saying something like, “Oh yea, she's good, but she just enjoys it.” So it depends on what's acceptable to the man.

Carla and Mia both responded similar to Siyoli. Male athletes Kingdom and Clayton are both attracted to female athletes because of the athletic commonality and physical appeasement.

However, Clayton also shared an understanding of why some male athletes prefer to date non-athletes:

You do feel kind of intimidated when it comes to girls playing contact sports and kind of 'male' sports, but I'm the kind of guy that prefers having a female that's into sport because of the physical side. The sport side of it, if you look at it that way, I'm into that also. I would like if someone else also enjoyed sport. On the physical side of things, men do quite look at it and sometimes they might feel intimidated by it.

Lastly, due to the fact that this researcher was in the country when the controversy surrounding the uncertain gender of South African sprinter Caster Semenya was just beginning to explode, she was interested to know how informants felt at the time. Melanie expressed

surprise that it was athletes who initially accused Semenya of being a male. She also discussed how people's perceptions of ideal bodies, looks, and even race have affected Semenya:

You know, when you talk about the body, whether it's male or female, that's always going to be a controversial topic because people have their own perception of what makes someone athletic or what makes a beautiful body... her body wasn't "approved" and everybody's gotten involved. Like I said, there's always that perception that when you're too muscular that something's not right... I am surprised though, that it's not the novice, not the people who are not involved in sport, that have recommended the gender testing. I think there are other factors as well. I always wonder why only certain people can push the limits and achieve certain achievements in sport. Like Maria Mutola, the Mozambican 800m runner for example, was a great athlete. Everybody kept saying, "well she looks like a man." So what? What has that got to do with the performance as an athlete? So for me, we can't deny the fact—that is the time, the achievement. Also, as far as race, I do tend to think that people of color have been achieving and in all these years you've seen them at the top of their sport. So it wouldn't surprise me to find them talking about a Black South African woman, or a Kenyan woman or Mozambican.

Coping with Perceptions in South Africa

Four South African athlete informants were asked questions about how they coped with perceptions of race, lesbianism and lack of femininity. All of these women revealed using certain coping mechanisms and that the existence of these perceptions placed on them, has affected how they self-identify—that is, how they perceive themselves in regards to an infinite number of characteristics. The methods of coping informants discussed have been broken down into the categories of Active Resistance and Internalization.

Active Resistance

Nomfundo and Melanie described using active resistance as a coping mechanism when confronted with other people's perceptions of them based on their female athlete identities. Melanie shared her rejection of socially acceptable gender roles, recalling a memory from childhood:

I remember arm wrestling with boys and teachers would ask the boys to carry desks and I'd say, "Excuse me, why aren't you asking me?" It's got nothing to do with gender so I think my view has always been to this day that when I look at people, first and foremost I don't see gender. They're all people. So I can sit and have a conversation with a man as I can with a woman because I don't see gender. I don't categorize them on that level first...I first see them as people and I think that's because I want to be treated like that, not only through sport identity. Mostly, I think it's because of having come through apartheid that this perception of being more "mannish" for playing sports is still rampant.

While interviewing Nomfundo during the 2009 SASOL League National Women's Soccer Championships, she discussed how she enjoys playing for her current team because they all actively resist being labeled as lesbians:

I've learned a lot. I played for a team in the township and now I play for this team. This one is not like other teams because we're trying to reach more to other girls because they have this mindset of lesbians—if you play soccer you must be a boy—so our team is the only team that is only *girls*. Most of the teams are lesbians, like her (*she points to one of the handful of bald Black females playing in the game*).

Internalization

Melanie, Siyoli, and Nozodwa all experienced instances where they internalized the lesbian perception, causing them to question themselves. Siyoli admitted to a constant awareness of her perceived femininity:

On a personal note, you always feel that element of a lack of femininity. When we're not in that "average woman" field, it can come down to the clothes we wear in between competitions from one place to another.

Melanie and Nozodwa both described how the lesbian and masculine perception made them question themselves. Nozodwa alluded to a feeling of abnormality:

It is painful because when you go home, you sit down and you recall what they said, and you actually ask yourself "Am I normal? Is it a good thing that I'm doing?" You begin to question yourself.

Melanie responded similarly:

A few things come to mind. The one is that I'm 36 now and I'm single. I don't have kids or anything. So I do ask myself sometimes, "Why is that?" Also, I came out of a long relationship and now it's been two years and you think, "What's happening? Where am I?"

Siyoli and Melanie also spoke about handling racial perceptions placed upon them. Siyoli self- reflected on the difficulties she experienced as a Black female playing the perceived "White" sports, tennis and squash in South Africa:

I'm constantly analyzing everything about my own sport—that looking back and thinking and challenging myself in thinking "Did I want to be White? Did you want to do this? What was it?" And obviously with South Africa where the White person is considered the superiority, yes, there was the element that 'anything White is better.' So even if you were out and a White person showed interest in you, you wouldn't perceive them as an equal in my response...Here in South Africa, after awhile you build a tolerance. And then there is just sheer ignorance. By now, there is a level of expectation that Whites should know a bit about Black people after integration...and if not, why don't they know? You can answer White's questions about Black culture, but if you answer, you should answer in a way that shows that you're challenging them to educate themselves further because even with all the formal institutions people go to, there is a lot of life ignorance that needs to be addressed.

Melanie recounted feelings of frustration during her first trip to Germany, where she had to give explanation for her knowledge of the German language and her swimming capability:

When I went to Germany for the first time, people started asking me questions because I have a German surname. And they asked, "Did your grandfather teach you German?" So I told them "No." I showed them photos of my family and my home and they said, "Well this is a perfect South Africa because we heard people of color are supposed to be poor, but you've got a pool in your home, so you must be rich." And I said, "We're not rich, but we have a pool." People really did ask me a lot of questions and I did a lot of introspection and asked myself, "Who am I?" For a long time as a child, I asked myself, "Why did I have to be born in South Africa?"

Self-Identity

During her interview, Melanie shared a lot of moments of self-reflection on her time spent in competitive athletics. Melanie talked about how her father never treated her and her sister like "girls" or "boys," but as people who should give their best effort in all they do.

Melanie also discussed her unaffected demeanor at people mistaking her for a boy in the past

because she believes in herself and tries not to judge others. Most insightful, however, are Melanie's reflections on the moment she gained perspective on herself through the lens of her experience as a woman of color in South Africa:

That first trip to Germany when I was 16 made me realize that I had been born in South Africa for a reason...to make myself tolerable and live my life tolerable of other people and other cultures. To be able to adapt to any situation and just learn how to treat people because I know how I want to be treated. And those were the valuable lessons I learned growing up...not only as a sportsperson, but a person of color and woman in South Africa. And those are the things that are going to stay with me forever.

Theme Three: Complex Racial Relationships

Informants from the United States and South Africa were asked questions about the different racial relationships and encounters they've had with members of the same race or a different race. Both South African and U.S. informants shared negative and positive personal experiences and feelings. The complex racial relationships identified into some of the following subcategories: Teammates, Non-athletes, Athletes, Coaches and Romantic Partners.

Positive Complex Racial Relationships

Six athlete informants and one non-athlete informant described being a part of, or at least the existence of, positive racial relationship experiences within South Africa. These relationships are between romantic partners, athletes and non-athletes, athletes and other athletes, and fellow teammates.

Teammates

Joey, Nicolene, and Nozodwa were asked to describe any differences they may have in friendships or bonds with White female teammates and other Black teammates. Nozodwa fondly discussed her former friendship with a White netball teammate:

After school, I played for a police club and the police force is almost every color. So when we played in Port Elizabeth, I had a friend and it was to me, it was an experience, because she used to visit me in my home. Her name was Cordelia. She was studying at

the University of Port Elizabeth at the time... So we used to laugh about things and pick things in the field when we were playing and we would go back to the hotel and laugh about those things and I used to ask her how normally Whites trained in netball. She would tell me everything... it was a wonderful thing and an exciting thing because it was the first time I had a White friend... You know being a sportsperson you happen to travel a lot and you see places that you cannot actually go on your own. You experience so many things. It's a good opportunity to learn so many things about female athletes of other races.

Joey shared a light-hearted memory involving a White softball teammate:

I've never had any *bad* incidents. It's funny because the one I'm thinking about was Bronwyn, the only White girl who played for our club, a Colored club... I think it was somebody's kitchen tea or something... so we had to bring a grocery item. And we call fish oil, "fish oil." So Bronwyn goes to the shop and she's like "what the hell is fish oil?" because they call it "cooking oil." We Coloreds call it fish oil, but it's actually called cooking oil.

Nicolene credits the young ages she and many of her fellow teammates were when they began to play softball for the positive racial relationships she has:

Most of us started playing softball at under-11 and under-13 and at that age we were mixed. And when you're that young, you're not worried about "Oh, she's White or she's Black or Colored." When you're young, all you want to do is play sport. So like in softball, some of my first White friends I made was under the age of 10, so I think if you meet them early enough there's no barriers, ya know?

In addition, youngest South African informant Clayton feels he learned a lot from his interactions with White teammates, a benefit of being a member of his generation:

Yes. I went to a White dominated primary school and high school and I didn't have a problem with it. I've been in that generation where it wasn't an issue. I mean, I've got a lot of White friends and I've got a lot of Colored friends and this race thing is not anything to me. I don't have a problem with being on the same team with other races... that's not the way I grew up. I take it that everyone's equal. I don't judge on race or religion... that's not the way I grew up.

Non-Athletes

As an outsider looking in, Zolani replied somewhat positively when he was asked if he thinks Black female athletes are still treated differently than White female athletes. Overall, he feels that sport in South Africa has been a site of racial healing:

On a Provincial level, I think there are some shortfalls because if you take a Western Cape, which is highly White dominated—especially in their sporting arenas—and the Orange Free State, which is also White dominated, there is not a good vibe in those two spots. When you come to a National level however, then the world is excellent. The athletes are even taught to speak the various languages that each other speaks...even the Whites. And if you notice, our national anthem has four languages. Two are Black and two are White. In that way, I believe the color barrier is being eradicated in that way through sport.

Athletes

Siyoli discussed the slow, but positive process of building friendships with White squash players she's competed with and against for years:

Actually, in the last year or two, I've found that even in my own squash friends—you know, people you see year after year at the same tournaments—last year was the first year where I felt that the relationships finally got a little bit deeper. When I was at a competition in Joburg, for that week, I was allowed into their homes a lot more than just at dinner or a meal. I was just there. And then actually seeing the genuineness of that and thinking, “hang on, yea, they've really accepted me. And now I can be friends with these people and that they are real.” A lot of them were at my wedding....it excited me a lot that my core group of friends were becoming composed of all colors and not just one in particular. That excited me a lot.

Romantic Partners

Athletes Kingdom and Siyoli discussed interracial marriage. Kingdom recalled his White collegiate rugby teammate asking for his help in the romantic pursuit of a Black woman:

I did make close friends—Johaann and Richard—so those are my friends even still today and they treat me very well...My friend Johaann likes Black women. I was helping a Black female friend of mine from East London and we all went to dinner and Johann was looking at this girl all night! He asked me, “Can you please help me with this girl?” I thought, “Why is this guy telling me this?” So I said, “Ok.” Right now, they are married. So it's very nice to see a White guy marrying a Black woman.

Siyoli smiled as she brought up her recent marriage to a White English soccer coach:

I've just married a White Englishman, so above the Black and White, one of the huge things is that early on—call it a God-given gift of whatever—that I can look at people and see people. That “This is you? Great.” Whatever you choose to tell me about yourself, that's all I'll believe. If through your own actions I find it was false then I'll take it, that's it. Until I get to know you myself, then I leave the gossip aside and get to know that person.

Negative Complex Racial Relationships

Four athlete informants and one non-athlete informant described negative experiences or views of a Black and White liaison as teammates, romantic partners, athletes, and non-athletes.

Teammates

Although Kingdom ultimately maintains close friendships with two of his White former rugby teammates, he discussed some of the negative memories surrounding him and his teammate's racial difference:

At first it was difficult when I was playing rugby because when you are at the rugby field you are always with White people. So when you get on the field you must tell yourself, "Okay, I'm gonna do this for myself and the team because it's all about the collective leaderships, it's all about the team, not myself." So in the first weeks of the training session, it was difficult, but I proved myself that I'm a man—coming from a poor family—but I can stand on my own. I proved to the coach, even if I'm Black, I can do this. So everyone was surprised to see me play well with the Whites... sometimes they would question me about my culture, but you know of course my culture is going to be different than theirs. They were always asking about my "manhood" and I would tell them that when you become a man you go to the mountain for 6 months, spending 6 months there, then you return home and the elderly people talk to you and tell you that you must behave like a man. So, they always ask us those questions... And when I would go to the shower, every White guy wanted to take a shower with me just to see what is happening. And I'm like "No, you can't see my dick!" It was stuff like that that happened.

Nozodwa also discussed negative interactions with her White teammates:

Even in the training session, they would not field you. They will tell you, "You have so many faults. You can't play this." Or, "You can't play that." It puts this thing in you that you can't do it. It was hateful and it was painful.

Siyoli, who grew up a multi-sport athlete playing hockey, tennis, netball, and squash, recalled differences between the friendships she had with White teammates in team and individual sports:

In the team sports, it was hard to tell, it was more individual. With the individuals if there was a bit of nervousness or whatever, a lot of the White friendliness started once I'd beaten them. Once it was clear cut that I was better than them because the ranking says so, because the score says so...then a lot of the walls dropped a lot more I found and people were more willing to accept me and be their friend in that particular case, but it

was once those walls were dropped. With the team sports in mind, yea, I think there are differences...it was usually fine, but what I noticed was that I became the Whites' only friend. And then little comments which then I couldn't understand, but now looking back, I remember they'd say, "Oh no, but you're different." But to take the other ordinary Black person who hadn't grown up in multiracial context, who didn't know much about hockey, who wasn't as fluent in English as me—you know, whatever characterizes a "typical" Black—that was a huge thing for them...I didn't fit inside the box that they had. But funny enough, now that this Black person had broken their stereotypes they could accept that one, but they couldn't accept the others—which I found very hard...I was their first Black person to break a bit of the stereotypical views, to be their friend, to teach them. But some, horribly I think to this day that sadly I might be their only friend. On a team you know, you can bond, but I think it would be harder for them to accept others.

Non-Athletes

Yaasmeen recalled the negative outcomes of the integration of Whites onto the Colored softball team she once affiliated with in Johannesburg and even discussed what she heard currently:

We had a Colored team and the Whites joined us...with the thought they'd come and "show us the way." We are not cave people where we need your leadership. We eventually left Joburg and came back to Cape Town and the Whites did take over the club like they wanted to—and within two years, the club was defunct. That is the distinction between bonds between White and Black female athletes. Back in Johannesburg, there still is some interracial softball. I still have some contacts there. The Coloreds there are constantly complaining that the Whites run the teams there and the Whites get to play.

Siyoli and Melanie focused more on the racism within society. Melanie recalled a negative experience with White Afrikaners while on a trip to Germany:

I was about 16 when I found myself overseas in Luxemburg, Germany as an exchange student. We were a party of two hundred people and five of us stayed behind because we wanted to stay on another week. So I stayed with four, White Afrikaners from up North—it was a teacher and his wife, a pupil of his, and another girl from Bloemfontein and I was the only person of color....we ended up going to a cinema. We didn't know until we went inside that they were screening a film that was born in South Africa—*A Dry White Season* (1989) based on the novel by André Brink. And outside in the foyer, they had a petition and I went up and signed the petition. And I had a big argument with the teacher because he could not understand how I could be a South African and sign a petition that encouraged sanctions against my own country. I said to him, "It doesn't

matter if there are sanctions against South Africa because that doesn't come close to injustices that I've suffered as an oppressed person. Until you are a person of color, you will not understand it."

Siyoli commented on what appears to her to be voluntary racial separation that exists within institutions of higher education:

Even now, with all our education, even in classes you have your Whites all sitting here and all your Blacks sitting there and then maybe one or two rows of students mixing...why is it that even though the country is being educated and if you go off to University now, you'll still find separation—which might come down to the end of the day, well, besides color—forget color, you just might like talking about different things or still have different views, I don't know. Should we just put it down to color or do we just like different things? I don't know.

Athletes

Nozodwa discussed instances of racism in her club sports involvement and within the National level of netball as well:

In the Transkei we were playing a team that was part Black and part White so you could feel the racial tension. Even the referees were White...and when you go to the finals, they make it a point that you don't win because you were Black. There were so many things that I felt during that time, even though I didn't put my mind on it. But I can actually feel that apartheid was really, especially in sport, was really a main point for White people to suppress the Black people. No matter if you were good in that particular sport...they would never, they would *never* agree to take you to another level. Even if they were forming a South African squad, they would never take a Black person. Or they will pick maybe two of them, will take them, and they will sit the bench and will not be put in the field. I remember one time there was a woman who was picked for our team...she was going to play for South Africa in New Zealand and she was just watching. The white people didn't give her the ball or she just didn't play. It was terrible.

Siyoli found that in her playing a White dominated sport, relationships she had with other Black female athletes were also affected:

I found that even with Black friends of mine that used to be good at sport would even hold on to the racial separation. They'd be good at what they'd do, but they did not desire to be friends with everyone—"Yea, we could hang," but that's it—they weren't desiring anything more or "I don't need to go to your house and be your friend" kind of thing. I think there was a stage where I think I was—not caught between the two—but there was

a period where because you feel more accepted by the Whites, you thought hey, why are the other Black girls trying to bring me down? Here I am playing and doing my thing and they come and say “Why are you playing all these White sports? You should not be. You should be sitting on our side.” And when they found that I used to play netball in primary school...there was an element of “well why didn’t you play netball? Why would you play hockey? Are you trying to be White?”

Romantic Partners

While Siyoli is now happily married to her White husband, she spoke of challenging and questioning his feelings for her and her feelings for him, based on the racial perceptions placed on them by society:

I think now, marrying my now husband, in the period of being with him—as much as I know in my heart that what we have is real—I did challenge myself at times to just check, actually to double check his loyalty, specifically because of the country we’re in—and especially at a time where you look at the media and there’s other South Africans who are doing it...where I challenge myself that I’m not following a fad. Because there does seem to be a stereotypical curiosity fad where people are just interracially mixing or also that there are fears of me being perceived to be doing that. Or fears of me as a Black person trying to be White or some superiority reason....Especially when you’re in a culture where economically a White person is considered superior. Clearly, as a woman, you’re under scrutiny whenever you get married. Now as a Black woman, you’re under more scrutiny when it appears he would have more money than you. Therefore, are you going for his money? And you’re a young one, so why are you choosing to get married so quickly?

Theme Four: Future Recommendations & Expectations

South African informants were asked to share their thoughts on what they feel the future holds for women’s athletics in their country. Informants were also asked to give any recommendations to their country they felt would improve the life experiences of Black female athletes.

Recommendations

Before sharing South African informants’ recommendations for the future, it’s important to share some of where the athlete informants have been because all but one of my South African

informants were born under apartheid. South African athlete informants were asked to talk about what it was like growing up under apartheid or right after apartheid's end, trying to play sport. Informants were also encouraged to discuss how things have changed for them as athletes since apartheid's end—creating a vision of the sports transformation process in South Africa from a generational observation.

South African informants stressed the importance of parental support, a lack of sporting materials and sporting options. Melanie, Nozodwa, and Siyoli had resonating responses.

Nozodwa discussed the experience of playing sport under apartheid without proper equipment and funding, which required much parental and community collectivity:

It was very difficult. In the first place, we did not have any kits or training materials. As Blacks, we did not have sponsors or money to buy all of those things. And even the grounds that we're training on were not good for us. But when you go to white schools, you always see that their grounds were fine and the grass was always cut and they were always neat...you can actually identify them easier when they were in sport. You know that this group comes from that area...unlike us; we had to wear anything that you were able to find in order to pursue your athletic career...our parents and the school teachers did a very good job because at times, they had to buy us many things that we didn't have... In the olden days we used to play in our schools and move to another area and go to town, and from town you have to play for a district, and from your district you have to play for your country. So you know if you go to all these places, you have to have money and to have clothing for all those occasions. Our teachers, they used to buy us even the underwear because we didn't have money for those things...So they had to give up money from their monthly salaries—the teachers and our parents— or go out there and look for money so that they can go out and support their children's sporting initiative. There were matches that were organized by Black schools, as well as the communities. They used to have clubs in our rural areas, like soccer clubs, where they would always play nearby communities in a number of games throughout the year.

Melanie recalled being very aware of the basis for apartheid and discussed how she and her family became connected with the South African Council on Sport (SACOS):

My father always explained to us what the difficult situation was in the country, even though I was 8 years old. I did understand that I was discriminated against because of my color and that's the reason why I stayed in a certain area, went to a certain school and played sport a certain way...we were all associated to a non-racial sporting body called SACOS—South African Council On Sport—and because of the politics we were

involved in, some of the stalwarts of SACOS were involved in swimming and athletics and so forth. So my father became friends with these people as a sports administrator and everything we did was always informed by the political dispensation at the time. We'd have workshops during tournaments...we'd have somebody making a speech, we'd have newsletters. I would read about Sam Ramsamy for example, he would write newsletters. I knew he was a man writing in the U.K. who was rallying for support and sanctions against apartheid...you realized you were playing sport, but it was also non-racial sport as opposed to apartheid racial sport. You knew that you were playing in the bigger political picture of the country.

Siyoli reflected on what it was like playing sports perceived as “White” right after apartheid, discussing an increased awareness of her race:

Before 1994, before Mandela was President, the schools were segregated. The first school to open up was a private school, which was of English rank as opposed to Afrikaans rank. I don't know how my parents could afford for us to go there, but they saw an opportunity and that's where we went. I probably didn't feel my color that much directly because I was young. It was only when I went to a government public school and more integration was happening at the same time, where I recognized, having played these sports where I didn't see a barrier before...and then coming into a more government school and being efficient at all these previously classified “White” sports (hockey, tennis) and making those teams straight away and then realizing from both parties—the Blacks saying “How or where did you learn this?” and the White people saying “Why are you good at this?”

Salary

Four South African informants recommended increased salaries and funding for women's athletics in the country. Bettina and Joey explained the amateur status of their sport, softball, and the desperate need for funding:

Bettina:

In South Africa, there's certain sports that get recognition and get the money. We're considered an amateur sport so we don't get funded. Even our Federation's got to find their own money. We go on tournaments and we've got to fork out money from our own pockets.

Joey:

Yes. There are like six [softball] Federations now [Eastern Cape, Gauteng, Kwazulu Natal, Limpopo, Free State, and Western Cape] and some of us might be going to the World Series next year in the States and you're looking at R25,000-R50,000 [\$3,650-

\$7400] to play...So in the sense of money, that's what we're talking about. There's no funding, absolutely none.

Nozodwa called for financial support from the nation to support South African women's athletics:

What we can do as South Africans, we need to support them financially because without finances, they can't do anything because everything starting from administration and downwards has to do with money. So if we can support them, they can go places.

Endorsements

Nozodwa, Glynis, and Candice all felt that South African women's athletics would benefit from increased endorsements. Nozodwa used the Netball South Africa organization as an example:

I heard one time that Netball South Africa does not get sponsorships so that they could carry on playing to another country. So I think it's one of those things that our communities and our country has done wrong with because they don't see any need for South Africans netball, as well as female soccer in South Africa.

Glynis and Candice measured the promotion of South African women's athletics with the promotion of women's athletics in the United States:

Glynis:

That would be good if we had more endorsements. If we could get to the level the States is at with promoting female sport that would be great.

Candice:

But the difference is that in the States, each college plays and you have the NCAA. Here in South Africa, the colleges don't compete. The Technikons don't compete. So for us to get to that level, I just don't see that happening. Not in *twenty* years time I don't see that happening.

Expansion

Coach James, Kingdom, and Siyoli recommended the expansion of South African women's athletics. As we spoke in Turfhall Stadium Coach James talked about the need for building proper facilities for South African softball teams:

This facility was actually the chosen Olympic venue and also there will be championship games here, so the facility will be upgraded because of that. It will get funding from the council and the sports department to do the upgrade for the 2010 games... So we as clubs, we can't use this venue. We only come here to play. So each club has to go find their own training facilities and sometimes that's just a field with no outside lights. So I mean, if it gets to 7 o'clock and it's dark you know it's "Sorry, you can't play." This is not the facility clubs have. Clubs play on school grounds, parks, and things like that. So we need more proper facilities.

Siyoli feels the country needs to expand through increased exposure and written sports histories:

I think that the country needs to do a better job at showing young Black girls that they can be *that good* at their sport and that they can choose themselves and not have someone else choose their sport for them. And I guess that will come with a lot more exposure and more money and hopefully more female sporting history is written so these girls can know the history.

Kingdom remarked similarly to Siyoli:

There is something that must be done to encourage them to participate in sports... We need to go out there and hunt for those young girls who are running in the rural and urban areas. Just to have a competition with those girls staying in those areas to see who's got an effort to compete.

Structural Change

Nine informants recommended various structural changes they feel need to take place to improve South African women's athletics. Nozodwa, Zolani, and Melanie all recommended improvements in existing facilities. Melanie, who is also a devoted swim coach, discussed the need for increased swimming facilities in the Colored community:

I can say there still aren't enough facilities for swimming. Swimming's been on the map for a long time for South Africa—since Penny Haynes—but it's still all White. Now, they have identified a few swimmers, but the sad thing is, those swimmers first have to go to traditionally White clubs and they poach swimmers. They'll pay this and they'll do that. But what about community based clubs? They round up all those community based clubs and poach from kids from those clubs and take them into the rich clubs. Build those clubs

because they're doing valuable work in the community...What happens is many of those rich clubs, when they take the kids from the community clubs, they just do it because they need numbers. They need Black faces, kids of color. But what are they actually doing for those kids? It's just numbers...just a statistic. It doesn't mean you're necessarily going to climb the ranks there...unless your parents also have money or they like you and then they'll push you into the national training center and the national sport and the Olympics.

A recommendation for more grassroots level girl's sports programs was made by several informants. Clayton feels that those in charge of South African women's athletics have been moving too quickly to compete with other countries:

The standards at this moment are quite high, but we aren't seeing the athletes coming through. They put the standards at International standards and I mean, you're competing against other countries like Jamaica and the U.S., where sport-wise, they're a step ahead—a few steps ahead. You've got to take it to that lower level and get them through step-by-step and not just push them through. The government must put more structures in place at the grassroots level and get these athletes through because there is a lot of talent.

During their group interview, Coach James and five of his players also discussed the need for grassroots sporting structures, but also for softball coaching structures and collegiate level sporting organization:

Bettina:

I think we definitely need some structure. I mean, primary school and high school is fine, but I mean as soon as you leave and go to college or technikon, sport is non-existent.

Candice:

Yea, it just falls away. I mean in university, they don't push people to play sports. In high schools and primary schools they do push you to play sports, but when you get to universities you don't. I didn't get anybody asking or push me to play sport. I mean, coming up I was on varsity and they never asked me to play anything. I had to go physically find out for myself if there was anything. They didn't have leagues for anything. They didn't have a softball league, so I ended up playing hockey and then played club here.

Nicolene:

I think the only varsity code that actually works is rugby. That's the only sport that is played at varsity so that league is established.

Glynis:

Before we even get to have an organization for the colleges, we have to start at the primary school levels with hiring a sports instructor at the primary school level. A lot of the schools in the Colored communities don't even have physical education in their day plan because the teachers have to do it...I think before we get to the college, we need to start implementing at the primary schools because that's where you learn all your coordination, ball skills, and so on.

Coach James:

That's why we need a Coaches Association. Then that way you can earn a certificate and go to community schools. So you can have proper coaching or a board of coaching or whatever you call it, but it must be funded. And then you have to take those people and bring them to the schools so that leads to your properly monitoring progress through high school and from high school it could lead to scholarships for colleges...Within our Federation we have a coaching forum type of thing, but that is basically just to get new coaches and the focus is on new coaches in terms of what to do within our league...We do not have certification as coaches within our sport in South Africa. So basically we need, probably from the Americas or from wherever that plays softball, their coaches to come down here and do coaching courses type of thing. And as a coach, you don't play, so your involvement to the game takes more strain on your family because there is also no funding for the coach. You do it for the love of the game. So I mean, what good is it for the players? I mean, these women here are the South African players, but you go and you wonder in the next 10 years, are these people going to come back to the game in the coaching capacity? There's no funding, there's no allowance or anything like that for these coaches, so they've got to get day jobs as well.

Expectations

Three South African informants shared their expectations for the future of South African women's athletics. These expectations are subcategorized as being positive or negative.

Negative Expectations

Melanie and non-athlete Zolani shared negative expectations for the future of South African women's athletics. Zolani explained his negative view was due to race and gender issues:

I hope things progress and get even better. However, if that hope becomes truth it might be problematic and I'll tell you why. If you look at our soccer team, it's not as successful as our rugby team...it's not as successful as our cricket team. I do not know whether to pose the question to the management or maybe to the media or whatever, but if something is Black dominated, then there tends to be a problem. Honestly, I doubt women's athletics will ever be on the same level as men's athletics in South Africa because when you're looking at your rugby for instance, the guys now have got a higher success rate compared to the womens...meaning that most people are accustomed to supporting the guys. Even the sponsorships flow easily for the men's sports, making it more sustainable compared to the females. So maybe if the females could make up some strategy of maybe winning some more or at least show great improvement it would get better.

Melanie also focused on race, discussing certain codes she feels are not as feasible to bringing racial unity within sport as South Africa's government and sporting bodies may have thought them to be:

Maybe a lot of other people that you've surveyed will be positive, but I'm not as positive. I'm still very skeptical because I think amalgamation in certain codes, especially happened prematurely. I think a lot of those multi-racial unions wanted us on their sides, so that they could gain access to international sport again. But in terms of what they were doing for transformation and development, you know, sometimes they'd keep people of color in what they'd call developments and they say "We need to develop the sport," so they have certain rules and they call it a development division or something, but you'll find it's just people of color. For example, I'm coaching in swimming and when you look at the development league, it's mostly people of color and they stay there! Those kids they stay there year in and year out, whereas you're supposed to be in development, you meet all your qualifying times, and you move up to the next league, but it doesn't happen...in some instances, inclusion and transformation is occurring based on having a "x" amount of athletes on the team of color. And if it's that, they need to look at other ways of including people of sport at the highest level, starting at the grassroots level, but not the way they're doing it now, so I still have my doubts for the future.

Positive Expectations

One South African informant, Nozodwa, shared a positive expectation for the future of South African women's athletics. At the time of her interview, the 2010 Men's World Cup was less than a year away and she is hopeful for the impact it will have on South African women's soccer:

I hope that after the soccer World Cup for the males is here, the next World Cup held here will be for women. I'm hoping for that so we can actually see the hard work that they're doing for their country...that they can be proud of at the end of the day.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the four major themes uncovered in this study for South Africa: Visual Representation, Perceptions, Complex Racial Relationships, and Future Recommendations & Expectations. The theme of visual representation was framed through print and active forms of media. The second theme described informants' perceptions that they feel exist about Black female athletes. The informants stated perceptions and experiences that were categorized into gender, race, and athletic or non-athletic identity, and revealed how these perceptions trigger coping mechanism and shape self-identity. The third theme identified some complex racial relationships that impact the experience of the Black female athlete positively and negatively. And the fourth theme focused on the future recommendations and the positive and negative expectations the South African informants have for their country's female athletic future. Data from individual and group interviews revealed research informants' perceptions of their experiences as Black female athletes in South Africa. In addition, this data captured research informants' perceptions and feelings about Black female athletes from a coach, male, and/or non-athlete experience.

CHAPTER 4: Uncovering Her Story: The United States

This chapter presents key findings as obtained from in-depth interviews and e-mail correspondence with a total of 10 United States informants that self-identified as one of the following: Black female athlete, Black male athlete, Black male non-athlete, or White female athlete. Based on the interview data, four major themes were identified: Visual Representation, Perceptions, Complex Racial Relationships, and Future Recommendations & Expectations. Within each theme were categories and subcategories. The data key for all informants is found in Table I on page 52 of this research study.

Visual Representation

All informants indicated that they had exposure to visual representations of Black female athletes through some form of media outlet. The categories for Visual Representation are Action

Media , Print Media, and Black vs. White Media Portrayal. The categories of Action Media and Print Media were further broken down into subcategories. The following are subcategories for Action Media: Viewing Frequency, Television and Cinema. The subcategories for Print Media are Newspapers, Billboards, and Magazines.

Perceptions

All but one informant believe that some people within their society hold certain perceptions about Black female athletes. The U.S. informant who does not believe people within society hold certain perceptions about Black female athletes is a self-identified White female athlete. Societal perceptions placed on Black female athletes that were identified by informants deal with conceptions of femininity, sexual orientation, biological and environmental factors, intelligence, style of play, and profit potential. Some informants have been deeply emotionally affected by certain perceptions, while other informants revealed they were emotionally unaltered by the very same perceptions. Categories of Perceptions are Perceptions and Coping with Perceptions. Subcategories for Perceptions are Athlete on Athlete, Non-Athlete on Athlete, Racial Perceptions, and Gendered/Sexual Perceptions. Coping with Perceptions has the subcategories: Active Resistance, Internalization, Passive Resistance and Self-Identity.

Complex Racial Relationships

Most informants described complex racial relationships that have deeply impacted their life and sporting experiences both positively and negatively, namely relationships between herself and her teammates, other athletes, non-athletes and romantic partners. Categories of Complex Racial Relationships are Positive Complex Racial Relationships and Negative Complex Racial Relationships. The subcategories for Positive Complex Racial Relationships are

teammates, athletes, and coaches. The subcategories for Negative Complex Racial Relationships are teammates, athletes, coaches, and romantic partners.

Future Recommendations & Expectations

All participants offered recommendations and/or expectations for the future of women's athletics generally, and for Black female athletes specifically. It was interesting to discover that although many of this study's informants had great recommendations for the future, their expectations of the actual execution of those recommendations were mostly pessimistic in the United States. The categories of Future Recommendations & Expectations are Recommendations and Expectations. Most informants offered recommendations that centered on areas of salary, endorsements, expansion, and organizational structure. Therefore, the subcategories for Recommendations are as follows: Salary, Endorsements, Expansion, and Structural Change. The subcategories for Expectations are Negative Expectations and Positive Expectations.

Theme One: Visual Representation

All informants indicated that they had exposure to visual representations of Black female athletes through some form of action or print media outlet. In addition, some informants felt that although they were being exposed to images of Black female athletes, the portrayal of these women was inferior in comparison to their White female athlete counterpart. All U.S. informants identified a media source that provided them with images of Black female athletes.

Action Media in the United States

Six informants from the United States identified seeing images of Black female athletes on television and in movies.

Viewing Frequency

Three informants revealed that they watch female athletic competitions often. Ciara, a Black female soccer player from New York, responded that she watches female athletic competitions “quite a lot.” Laura, a Black former field hockey player and current player in the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) said she watches:

A few times a week. I watch basketball, volleyball, and tennis. I watched soccer the other day too.

Ray, a 32-year-old former football and track & field standout of Black and Jewish ancestry, responded similarly to Laura and also discussed why he enjoys watching female athletics:

I watch some form of female athletic competition a couple times a week. I enjoy watching track & field, women’s tennis, NCAA basketball, gymnastics, soccer, and the Olympics. In basketball, the game seems to be played from a much more purist perspective. One can see the game-plan unfolding, or appreciate passing, shooting, and movement just a little bit more. Female athletics can be much more fluid and finessed than their male counterparts. It is natural for me to prefer to watch the beauty of a floor routine in gymnastics, performed by a female, as opposed to a male.

The remaining seven U.S. informants reported that they infrequently watched female athletic competition. Some of the infrequent viewers stated that they watched specific sports, teams, or individuals when they did choose to watch female athletic competition. Usually, the sport that they choose to watch is also the sport they have personal experience with as well.

Dawn, a Black 32-year-old former high school basketball player said, “There aren’t too many to watch on television. I generally watch NCAA Women’s basketball during March Madness.” Eve and Kyle, Black former collegiate basketball players and couple engaged to be married, responded similarly in their joint interview:

Eve:

I would say I watch female athletic competitions maybe five or six times a year. I’ll watch the women’s NCAA final four basketball, but other than that, no, nothing really.

Kyle:

I watch very little female athletic competitions. I'll watch Serena [Williams] or if UConn women are playing...I enjoy competition whether male or female when they're good at what they do. I recognize Serena's really gifted on the tennis court...I also like to watch the UConn games.

Victoria, a Black 20-year-old current collegiate athlete at a school in her native state of Virginia, also usually limits her viewing to her sport, tennis.

I watch women's tennis whenever it's on T.V., especially the major tournaments like the US Open, French Open, Australian Open, and Wimbledon. I watched a little bit of women's college basketball this year but never an entire game. I also watched a little bit of the NCAA softball tournament but again, never an entire game. So basically, the only women's sport I really follow would be women's tennis.

Television

Six informants referred to television as a media outlet that depicts images of Black female athletes. Ciara, Dawn, and Kyle all shared encouraging feedback of the media's image of Black female athletes via television. Ray and Laura shared criticism of the portrayal of Black female athletes on television, and Victoria had both encouraging and critical response. Five of these informants referenced commercials or specific sports network coverage as examples of how they see Black female athletes portrayed on television. Dawn, Ciara, and Victoria discussed commercials in a positive light.

Dawn:

I see images of Black female athletes in Gatorade and sports apparel commercials, and in cosmetic/beauty commercials...In the Gatorade and sports apparel commercials, the emphasis isn't on them as Black women and they, along with other athletes, are portrayed as strong, unstoppable, enduring, tough, etc. In the cosmetic/beauty commercials, they are portrayed as beautiful and strong.

Ciara stated, "I see them in commercials...they are portrayed as strong, muscular women," while Victoria added:

...even in commercials they're usually doing something physical. More often than not, it's them playing their sport. For example, in the new Tide Sport detergent commercial,

Venus Williams is seen playing tennis sweating and they talk about how she doesn't let sweat and odor stop her from playing tennis or something along those lines.

Kyle gave a positive reaction to the ESPN sports network's coverage of Black female athletic competition.

If you watch ESPN, you'll see a good amount of tennis and women's basketball. You see UConn games a lot.

Ray also cited watching the ESPN network and called himself an avid watcher of their program "Sportscenter," which shows Black female athletes performing in various sports.

However, Ray, Laura and Victoria feel that television as a whole is falling short in their coverage of the Black female athlete experience.

Ray:

In television on the whole, the Black female athlete is definitely a focal point of varying degrees. I would say however, that unless the program pertains to basketball or track and field, where Black female athletes excel and prove a strong demographic, they only seem to receive attention in regards to being the lone standout or as the tale of a person who faced adversity.

Laura:

I don't think Black female athletes are portrayed well enough on T.V. Obviously, for games they are, but like mainstream T.V., female athletes aren't really portrayed.

Victoria:

I feel like the intensity of Black female athletes in their sports is sometimes mistaken for anger by the media. An example of this would be Serena Williams at the US Open in 2009 yelling at the linesman for making a poor call. As a tennis player, I saw that as being caught up in the moment, adrenaline pumping, but I feel like others saw it as an 'angry Black woman' yelling at an official.

Cinema

Ciara and Chanel could not name any films that they had seen or knew of about Black female athletes. The films *Love & Basketball* (2000), *The Longshots* (2008), and *Higher Learning* (1995) were cited by some of the remaining informants. Dawn, Eve, Victoria, and Ray discussed why they did or did not like these films:

Dawn:

I did enjoy these films. *Love & Basketball* was entertaining and *The Longshots* was a great “feel good” film based on a true story.

Eve was not as satisfied with *Love & Basketball* nor with the lack of Black women in cinema:

I enjoyed *Love & Basketball* for the most part because they had real athletes in it. You could tell though that the main characters weren’t real basketball players. I just thought some of it was over-exaggerated as far as the college experience with basketball. I also think it was more of a love story, rather than basketball. But what if they made her a lesbian in the movie? They made it so she would marry the man and they didn’t even touch on homosexuality. They always make women athletes straight if they’re the main character. There have not been too many images of Black women in movies. I’m sure there might be some autobiographical pieces, but not like the football movies you hear about like *Friday Night Lights* and films like that.

Victoria responded similarly to Eve:

The only movie I can recall watching that might have portrayed what it’s like to grow up as a female athlete is *Love & Basketball*, but I know that it isn’t really based on a true story. But, to this day, it’s still one of my favorite movies. I can honestly say I can’t name a movie based on a true story that is about a Black female athlete. I feel like most of the movies I grew up watching that had to do with athletics were about the stories of boys—usually football movies.

Ray discussed his reaction to *Higher Learning* and explained why he has yet to see *Love & Basketball*:

I enjoyed *Higher Learning* because it reflected the societal and cultural pressures prevalent in a collegiate environment. Though I have heard of *Love & Basketball*, it would probably be disappointing to some to know that I haven’t seen it. I can tell you what actors were in the film, but it didn’t grab my attention to go see it.

Print Media in the United States

The majority of U.S. informants revealed that they see images of Black female athletes through modes of print media. Informants identified magazines, billboards, and newspapers as modes of print media that utilize images of Black female athletes.

Newspapers

Two informants reported that they see images of Black female athletes in newspapers. Some informants were also asked if they liked the photos of themselves and wording used about them in newspaper print media. Most informants reported having no problem with the way they were depicted verbally or visually in newspapers, but Ciara recalled a couple of questionable experiences:

There was one picture where I looked really bad, but when I was younger I used to experience them taking credit away from me and not giving me the credit that I deserved. For example, they often gave credit to another girl if I scored a goal. They also called me a “stallion,” but I wasn’t offended by it.

Billboards

Only one U.S. informant replied that they saw images of Black female athletes on billboards. This informant was 27-year-old, Black female soccer player, Ciara.

Magazines

Seven U.S. informants identified that they see images of Black female athletes in magazines. Eve noted:

Most of the images I see of Black female athletes are in magazines, like the “Got Milk” ads and Serena Williams since she’s in fashion. Sometimes she’ll be in the magazines like Bazaar and Vogue.

Kyle added to Eve’s response:

...I’ve seen Lisa Leslie in a couple model magazines.

Also, Ray discussed his subscription to FLEX magazine:

As far as print media is concerned, I subscribe to FLEX magazine. In bodybuilding, Black female athletes are highlighted quite often, having had former Black female champions in the sport. I would say it is very notable that Black female athletes have succeeded in the heavier weight-classes of bodybuilding rather than the fitness, figure, and bikini classes—where White female athletes have been the predominant winners.

Black vs. White Media Portrayal

Historically in the United States, Black populations have frequently been portrayed differently than their White counterpart. The differences that are discussed or depicted through action and print media are usually of negative connotation with regards to the Black person(s). Therefore, it was of interest to ask some informants their opinions on how they currently feel about the portrayal of Black female athletes vs. White female athletes.

Of the eight U.S. informants who were asked if they felt there was a difference in the way the media portrays or discusses White female athletes versus Black female athletes, only White female athlete Jillian, said “No.” Some of the informants who responded affirmatively had more to say. Ciara supplied a short list of words:

Black: strong, muscular, tough
White: tough, lean, sexy

Dawn, Kyle, and Victoria all mentioned the media portrayal/discussion of a physical difference between Black and White female athletes.

Dawn:

Yes—for the Black female athletes, the focus is generally on their physical dominance of the sport, whereas for a White female athlete, the focus is more on their intelligence and their perceived physical attractiveness.

Kyle:

I don’t know that the media is really into making us [Blacks] appear as great as we are and one of the ways they do that is advertise as big bulky, you know, not the most

aesthetically pleasing of talented people. I think Black female athletes are suffering from that.

Victoria detailed her feelings on this topic:

I feel like we see White female athletes being portrayed as great role models for kids and doing good in society. Basically, they are seen more doing things off the court than on the court. I feel like the media sometimes portrays White female athletes as sex symbols rather than athletes... Then I think about the Black female athletes in the media, such as the Williams sisters, or the various WNBA players and they are always portrayed as if all they do is their sport. I feel like whenever some Black female athletes are seen in the media it's because something negative has happened to them in their sport. For example, Serena Williams yelling at the linesman during the 2009 US Open; if a WNBA player gets in a fight during a game; or Marion Jones testing positive for steroids in track & field followed by her being stripped of her Olympic medals.

During her interview, Laura brought up the 2007 incident where Don Imus called the predominantly Black women's basketball team from Rutgers University, a bunch of "nappy headed hos." She also discussed ways coaches combat racial stereotypes in the presence of the media:

I was definitely appalled with the Rutgers situation with the whole Don Imus thing. I thought that they [Rutgers] all looked really nice and I thought that Coach Stringer had done an amazing job with how she had her team represented. I know that she made her girls cover up their tattoos on their hands, arms, and legs and they all had their hair done. Dawn Staley, at Temple, she made all her girls get their hair done. Like some girls couldn't travel if their hair wasn't done. She was really big on combating the stereotypical image of what having an all Black team was.

Theme Two: Perceptions

Informants from the United States were able to provide this researcher with a number of perceptions they feel exist with regards to Black female athletes. Some of the informants from the United States were also asked questions regarding their coping mechanisms and feelings. At least one person responded that they absolutely do not feel that some people within society hold certain stereotypes or perceptions about Black female athletes. In addition, informants were also

asked questions about how they perceive Black female athletes specifically and female athletes generally.

Perceptions

All ten U.S. informants were asked if they think some people within society hold certain stereotypes and perceptions about Black athletes. Nine out of ten said, “Yes.” Only one informant, White female athlete Jillian, said “No.” The perceptions identified by the U.S. informants and those uncovered by my particular questions, have been categorized based on gender/sexuality, race, or source of perception. There were a total of six perceptions that were self-identified by U.S. informants that are believed to be held by some people within society:

1. Black female athletes are naturally superior athletes
2. Black female athletes are unfeminine/manly
3. Black female athletes lack academic intelligence and rigor
4. Black female athletes don’t desire to play sports that require a lot of running.
5. Black female basketball players are most likely lesbians
6. Black female athletes are anti-social

The first three perceptions were mentioned by multiple informants, while all other perceptions were only mentioned once.

Athlete on Athlete

Informants were first asked to reveal the first person, place, or thing they immediately thought of after hearing the phrase, “Black female athlete.” U.S. informants gave many repetitive answers and some informants thought of more than one person, place, or thing. Serena Williams was thought of most often. Venus Williams, Lisa Leslie, and the sport of track & field were mentioned second most. The remaining responses of “basketball,” “myself,” and “Laila Ali” were not repeated.

In addition, it was Ray who offered the existence of U.S. perception #6—“Black female athletes are anti-social”—based on what he observed of the social environment for female athletes that existed during his years as a collegiate athlete in New York City:

In college, they were thought of as less social than the White female athletes. At a given party you might find the entire field hockey team or the swimming team—all White females—but not one party seemed engineered in that the whole basketball team was present.

Non-Athlete on Athlete

Five U.S. informants were also asked how they feel non-athletes perceive them as athletes. Former high school basketball player Dawn, and current college tennis player Victoria, feel that non-athletes probably view athletes as intense or aggressive:

Victoria:

I think they see them as really intense on the court. I feel like in my personal experience non-athletes see Black female athletes as if we are only our sport. Like at my high school, I was just “the tennis player,” as if there wasn’t any more to me than the sport that I play.

Dawn:

I feel non-athletes perceive Black female athletes as manly, lesbian, rough, and aggressive.

Collegiate basketball player Chanel, feels non-athletes are intimidated by Black female athletes, while Jillian stated non-athletes are “probably jealous they were not given that talent.” When asked the same question, Laura particularly referred to how she feels Black non-athletes perceive Black female athletes:

You don’t usually have the same interests. Most of the other Black girls that don’t play sports, with the exception of the few that actually like sports, don’t like getting sweaty. They only really like male sports...they want to talk to the guys. I feel like they kind of hate on you because you’re friends with the guys. So they’re just like, “Eh, no, don’t really like you.” They think you’re overly masculine and not into your feminine side enough. Well I guess in high school it’s just like that. When you get to college, it’s more

mixed. But then even there, I was still friends with the Black girls that were super-feminine, which were the track girls that I hung out with. I never was really friends with the non-athlete students.

Racial Perceptions

Of the six perceptions that were cited by U.S. informants, the perceptions “Black female athletes are naturally superior athletes,” “Black female athletes lack academic intelligence and rigor,” and “Black female athletes don’t desire to play sports that require a lot of running” are grounded in racism. Six informants mentioned that they feel society perceives Black female athletes as “natural athletes,” but further investigation took place surrounding this perception when informants were asked if they personally feel that biology/genetics plays a role in the success of Black female athletes. Six informants said that they do feel biology/genetics plays a role in the success of Black female athletes; 5 Black athletes, and 1 White athlete. Four informants said they do not feel biology/genetics plays a role in the success of Black female athletes; 3 Black athletes and 1 White athlete. Of those informants who responded “Yes,” Kyle, Eve, and Ray responded further. Kyle and Eve used athletes to back up their response:

Kyle:

Absolutely, I think so. Like Laila Ali would be an example of genetics. She’s just amazing at boxing and I think a lot of guys wouldn’t be able to win in the ring with her. Her dad, Muhammad Ali, was just a super athlete.

Eve:

I would have to agree. I do think so. I initially think of men first, but the more talented athletes as far as females—with the exception of people like Diana Taurasi and Sue Bird—are Black. But I can’t even say those two women are athletic. It’s more like they’re just talented at what they do, but they’re not really as athletic as the Black girls.

Ray pointed out that he feels biology does not go unaffected by other factors:

Yes. I would also say that exposure to sporting facilities, equipment and training influences the likelihood of success of anyone and any group in a given sport. I believe biology is affected by experience.

Victoria and Ciara would rather attribute the success of Black female athletes to their hard work:

Victoria:

No... I think success in a sport is attributed to hard work and genetics plays a very minor role in how good a person can be. For instance, height is a genetic trait that does help an athlete in any sport, but I think it's up to that athlete to do something with that gift and work hard to perfect their craft.

Ciara:

No, because I know Black female athletes that are built like "an athlete" but are horrible at sports.

And Chanel believes biology plays a role in the success of all athletes, not just the Black ones:

Society has the perception that Black female athletes tend to jump higher, run faster, look stronger, and are overall more athletic...Genetics and biology play a role in the success of athletes as a whole. To say one race has an advantage over another based on their genetic or biological makeup is impossible to prove.

The perception that Black female athletes lack intelligence and rigor was stated by two informants. Kelly said:

Some people perceive them to have inferior intelligence to White female athletes and are probably going to need more academic help in college.

Eve recalled two instances where she felt she was being treated differently than a White student athlete:

As far as in the classroom, I remember being in my math class during my freshman year and my professor saying "I didn't know you played basketball. You're really bright." I was getting 100s on everything and he was like, "You wouldn't normally expect that from an athlete." And I was like, "Oh, okay." And I remember coach S one time, he said, "Me and Kim are probably going to be the best off after we graduated." So, that stereotype might kind of tie into socio-economics when recruiting black inner-city kids, but I've always been capable in my studies and I think people recognize that.

I personally had similar experiences as Eve did while I was a college athlete:

On more than one occasion, a White fan or classmate would hear or see an interview I did after a game and let me know how surprised they were I could speak with eloquence. They never said that to any of my White teammates who were interviewed. However, even my Black professors of Africana Studies were surprised at my academic rigor. One of my professors didn't know I was on the basketball team until I came in with a boot one day due to injury. He kept up with my games after that, which I felt was his way of showing me respect for working hard in his class.

Informants were also asked to name what they feel are the “main” sports Black female athletes participate in. According to the U.S. informants of this study, U.S. Black female athletes mainly participate in track & field, basketball, tennis, and volleyball. Moreover, nine of ten U.S. informants feel that sports are considered and labeled “White” and “Black.” According to informants, the following sports are associated with each race in the U.S.:

Black—Basketball, Track

White—Soccer, Field Hockey, Softball, Tennis, Golf, Swimming, Lacrosse

One informant also stated that the sport of volleyball is considered racially mixed with fairly equal amounts of Blacks and Whites participating. Victoria discussed how she feels these labels impact youth's decisions of what sports to participate in:

I think Tennis is considered a “White” sport and for the longest time I had always wondered why I was only one of a few girls playing tennis and everyone else was White. I feel like basketball and track & field are labeled as more “Black” sports and that to me is why you see more Black boys and girls playing them. I guess what I'm trying to say is that sports that some people may call “country club” sports—such as tennis, golf, swimming etc.—are considered “White.”

These labels can also affect White athletes who play “Black” sport, like White former basketball players Jillian and Kelly. Kelly felt like some of her teammates lacked confidence in her, while Jillian said:

Playing basketball, some Black athletes think I am only a shooter because I am White, but that is not true, as they found out.

Gendered/Sexual Perceptions

U.S. Informant identified perceptions that “Black female athletes are unfeminine/manly” and “Black female basketball players are most likely lesbians” fall under the category of gendered/sexual perceptions. Aside from identifying these perceptions, U.S. informants were asked other questions that sought to investigate their own perceptions of gender and sexuality issues within sport. First, all informants were asked if they feel there are any sports women should not play. Seven informants said “No”—6 females, and 1 male. Dawn explained her view:

Although there are several sports that I personally would not consider playing, I don’t believe that women should be denied the opportunity to play any sport.

Three informants identified sports they feel women should not play. These sports are football, rugby, and wrestling. Kelly feels these sports are too taxing on the female body:

Yes. Football, rugby and wrestling because they’re too physically demanding for women’s bodies.

Kyle named rugby and football, but was hesitant to commit to those choices:

I don’t know about that. I don’t know if there are any sports that women shouldn’t play. If it was one, I’d say football and maybe rugby. I think it’s just a stereotype that women can’t play sports that men can play.

The informant identified perceptions “Black female athletes are unfeminine/manly” and “Black female basketball players are most likely lesbians” were investigated at a deeper level with some informants as well. Three Black female athletes revealed that they had been perceived as “manly” or a lesbian by others. Basketball players Laura, Chanel, and this researcher have all experienced this perception. Laura feels there are negative connotations to playing basketball:

Just playing basketball like I said, a lot of people just think that all Black basketball players are gay. There are just a lot of negative connotations with that.

Eve had the opposite experience playing basketball due to her body type and hyper-feminine demeanor:

I think I've always heard the opposite my whole life. People always tell me that they didn't know I played sports. I think people have always perceived me as a non-athlete. They think I'm prissy.

Ray and Kyle were asked if they felt White female athletes are more likely to be lesbians than Black female athletes. Neither Ray nor Kyle truly felt capable of answering the question assuredly, but responded interestingly nonetheless:

Ray:

I feel that female athletes are more comfortable around each other than in any other social environment. They can be themselves. Softball teams, for whatever reason, always seemed to have a larger proportion of lesbian females than any other team. I think the level of comfort is extremely relevant to the in-group function of being an athlete, perhaps one that transcends gender issues on some teams. I would say that the female teams that are more predominantly white would sustain a greater level of comfort as it relates to being lesbian. But, since I've never been a female or competed on a team as one, it would be impossible to give a reasonable answer as to whether Black female athletes are more likely to be lesbians than Whites.

Kyle:

I don't know enough about White athletes to answer that accurately, but I would speculate that might be true because there's not a lot of options for Black women. A lot of us are in jail or standing on the corners hustling and doing some things that aren't necessarily productive. So when you don't have a lot of options, sometimes you go to what may be your better option.

Victoria was not perceived as a lesbian, but much like Serena Williams, her muscularity has been referred to as "manly:"

The only time I've ever been told that I look manly was when I was with my friends who don't play sports and they saw my muscles....I think that Black female athletes are seen as more "manly" or "tomboyish" than feminine by society.

Dawn discussed the stereotype of unfeminine Black female athlete:

The stereotypes focus on their physical strength and brawn of the Black female athletes. They are not normally perceived as sexy or feminine.

This perceived lack of femininity could certainly cause difficulty in finding a romantic partner, particularly one of the opposite gender. Therefore, informants were asked to share how

they feel men perceive Black female athletes when it comes to pursuing them for dating, relationships, and marriage. Both male and female informants were asked this question.

Informants opinions ranged from feeling men would be intimidated to having no problem at all.

Laura discussed intimidation:

With the exception of a few, most men are intimidated and feel like most female athletes are gay. The intimidation factor is a big thing just because they exude such a confidence in their sport, but guys want to be on top as opposed to feeling some kind of female testosterone from sport—for lack of a better phrase.

Victoria responded similarly to Laura:

I think men are more hesitant to pursue the black female athlete...the fact that I don't mind being sweaty is a little intimidating to some guys. And I think a lot of guys like to be the center of attention in a relationship but when you date an athlete, their sport is the center of attention. I think in the media Black women are seen as strong, independent, "don't take no mess," and sometimes confrontational kind of women and I think in the minds of men those traits may be amplified in an athlete because we're not only mentally strong but physically strong. Independent in a sense that we have a direction in life and if I don't take nonsense on the court, I'm not going to take it from you in our relationship.

Chanel and Ciara also feel men might be intimidated, but also admit they can be attracted to Black female athletes as well. Eve is in agreement, discussing how looks matter and certain sports shape the way you look:

I think it really depends on how the girl looks. I think with any initial relationship, that aesthetics of a person is the first thing they see. So I do think if a girl is on the manly side—and when I say manly, I mean big muscles, broad shoulders—you know, automatically, they're not attracted to it. But, it depends because take tennis players like Anna Kornakova. She's a sex symbol...Serena, she's big and I think a certain man has to like that—I think she's dating Common or something. I'm trying to think of a Black woman athlete who's a sex symbol and there's not one—like Laila Ali might be the closest, but she even is kinda big and has this deep voice...I think most men probably aren't trying to date women basketball players. It takes a certain man to date a track star because they have huge legs. I think men like volleyball girls. Not softball because they're kinda "rough around the edges"...They like soccer girls too...I think men don't really like gymnasts either because they're extremely strong. They don't have any body fat and then they have body issues—their bodies are bad. Swimmers have issues too with men because they have big backs and shoulders.

Kyle, who is marrying Eve in May of 2011, talked about feeling foolish for not seeing himself in a romantic relationship with an athlete:

I just know when I play basketball, I sweat a whole lot profusely—there's just this whole idea that girls shouldn't perspire at that level. I just didn't like the whole image to be quite frank. And you know with my significant other, my fiancé, it's funny because I didn't believe her when she said she played basketball... I thought she was playing. So I don't even have a good reason. I think that beauty of Black female athletes is suppressed. Certainly this has been the case for me growing up—to the point where I'm looking like an idiot.

Jillian and Dawn feel that men would not have a problem dating a Black female athlete and would embrace the opportunity. Male athlete Ray revealed his life-long attraction to female athletes:

Black female athletes, to me, possess an aesthetic superiority to all other races. I would say I am biased because I was an athlete in track and field; runners were in fantastic condition and had an alpha-female way about them. Aside from that, I have always dated women of color, and in consideration to my marital future, it would be with a woman of color. I always have said that there is a certain unique independence inherent in the nature of a Black woman—more so than that of any other race—an expressionistic independence, assertive, competent, powerful.

Lastly, two informants were asked if they feel that Black female athletes are usually less-feminine or are perceived to be less feminine than White female athletes. Ray feels that race and femininity are disconnected:

I do not feel that race is a predetermining factor as it relates to femininity. All the female athletes that I have had the fortunate experience of knowing, cared to compete, enjoyed sharing, cooked, and almost always laughed together.

Dawn feels that Black female athletes are usually perceived as less-feminine than White female athletes. She explained why:

Yes. I believe that perception is based upon how Black women are perceived by this American society in general. It is changing, but there is still a long way to go to completely change perceptions.

Coping with Perceptions in the United States

Four U.S. informants were asked questions about how they coped with perceptions of race, lesbianism and lack of femininity. A few of these informants revealed using certain coping mechanisms and that the existence of these perceptions placed on them, has affected how they self-identify. The methods of coping informants discussed have been broken down into the subcategories of Active Resistance, Passive Resistance and Internalization.

Active Resistance

Two informants described using forms of active resistance when they were encountered with the perception of being “manly” or lesbian. Chanel used laughter as a way to resist the perception she is a lesbian:

I more than often laugh and make some remark about why it is that I can’t be a homosexual athlete.

Laura discussed how she, as a lesbian, actively rejects the labeling of female athlete’s sexuality and wishes more lesbian athletes would resist presenting themselves in the “stereotypical” way of how society perceives them:

First off, I don’t like the whole labeling thing that comes from a lot of female athletes that actually enjoy doing the stereotypic way of presenting themselves outwardly that they’re lesbians. Their style of dress—you know, all of it—the way they talk, they way they just carry themselves. Just all of that. And to me, I think all of that is overdone and unnecessary because it shouldn’t change who you were before you come out that you are gay.

As a player in the WNBA, Laura was also asked to talk about the clear efforts the organization has made through its marketing to actively resist the lesbian perception placed on the players in the league. As a player, she understands the heterosexual marketing strategy:

Candace Parker is perfect person to market because she is super-feminine. They don’t want the crowd to just be lesbians. Right now the fan base is like 80% lesbian, so they’re trying to sell tickets and in an effort to do that, they’re trying to feminize the sport more, which I’m not opposed to. But then at the same time, there’s like a happy-medium—there’s a team like the Tulsa Shock, a new team, and they all just look straight from the hood, like they have no kind of care about their upkeep, which is not a good image. But

growing up playing sports and that's all they know, they think it's okay, so there needs to be a happy-medium where people can feel comfortable in their own skin. I don't know if that's possible. It's like a "don't ask, don't tell" thing for sure. A lot of these girls if they're older especially are gay. But they don't come out if they don't appear to be okay with pushing into the mainstream. It all comes down to the WNBA wanting to market the league for all viewers—heterosexual and lesbian viewers—because lesbians are gonna watch the WNBA regardless because they're obsessed with it. So that's never gonna be a problem. So they have to market to others to come and enjoy the sport.

Passive Resistance

Unlike any of the South African informants, two U.S. informants described a passive demeanor when encountering the perception of being "manly" or a lesbian. Both Eve and Dawn described being unaffected by the perceptions:

Eve:

It didn't bother me. I played basketball in high school and college and I never had an issue with the lesbian stereotype because I was kinda always in a relationship and when people saw me play or saw my film tape, they were more impressed. They were like, "Oh wow. I didn't know a girl could be this—be both." So it didn't bother me.

Dawn:

I haven't heard those comments personally, but I have heard those comments made about others by some parents who don't want their daughters to participate in sports. It doesn't elicit any feelings from me, but I point out that sports are empowering for young women and boost self-esteem and can provide opportunities for higher education through scholarships.

Internalization

Three informants expressed that they had internalized the perceptions of their manliness and homosexuality at some point in their lives. Victoria described feeling self-conscious during her high school years:

It made me a little self-conscious early in my high school years when I had friends of mine saying things like this to me...

Laura also felt uncomfortable in high school, leading her to hide her homosexuality:

What I found was, when I was in high school, it wasn't as accepted then when I *knew* how I felt. So it was more repressed strictly to my circle of friends who were like me and

I never really changed how I was or my physical appearance because I never felt like it was anyone else's business. I don't think that sexual orientation should be anyone else's business because straight people don't walk around saying, "Hi, I'm straight."

Although Chanel used laughter to resist people's perception of her as being homosexual, she admitted to being hurt by it stating, "At first it made me upset, but now it doesn't bother me at all."

Self-identity

Four informants discussed how their self-identity has been shaped by their experiences with racial, gender, and sexual orientation perceptions that are placed on them by larger society and fellow athletes. Chanel shared information about how the lesbian perception has affected her self-identity as a heterosexual person:

Chanel:

Now I know my sexuality and people that matter know that I'm heterosexual. So it doesn't really matter what people say.

Laura discussed how the lesbian perception impacted her self-identity throughout her "coming out" process:

When I got to college, I was still trying to find myself. I began to identify myself more and felt more comfortable and I knew that this is what I wanted. I think I strayed a little bit from the strength of just "being me," and reverted a little towards overly masculine ways, which is not me. And I think once you get comfortable, you can say "This is me and this is not me." I think a lot of people are struggling, especially in sport, as to what their comfort level is and they just go to "Oh, well I play basketball, so I'll just look like a boy," because that's what everyone expects them to be and that's the easiest way to do it. I think it's deeply rooted issues, more than just being gay or straight. So now, it's a lot easier just to be me. I'm in a very solid relationship, so I don't feel as though I need to act a certain way or be a certain way to be approved of... And that doesn't mean that I have to wear dresses everyday because I hate dresses. It means that when I walk down the street, people aren't just like "Oh hey, look she's a lesbian." I don't think that's cool. I don't think society should be like that and if you want to ultimately succeed and be at the top of where people place you, you just need to be even keeled and "do you"... the whole coming out to my family actually happened after I graduated from college... Now, for sure my mom is seeing that I'm happy and it's a way of life. This is the first year that she can actually acknowledge my girlfriend as my girlfriend and this is what we do... Before

then, I think she like many, thought it was a phase—that was just a basketball thing, that I was just going with the norm and just being with my friends—but now that I’ve stepped out of that environment, I think she gets that it’s real and it’s a big difference of how she views it...I haven’t fully had the conversation with my dad. I’ve been planning to do it for over a year now...He’s just waiting for me to tell him myself. My brother found out in college and he’s like my biggest supporter. So now, I feel like I can live my life and nobody really judges or really places that bad stigma on being a lesbian. But at the same time, I know a big part of it is the fact that I’ve feminized myself more so now it’s just like we’re two “feminine” females that are together that can figure into the stigma of everyday life.

Victoria discussed how she doesn’t worry about being perceived as “manly” anymore:

...now I’m comfortable with my body and I understand that my muscles serve a purpose on the court and I’d rather be muscular or look physically strong because I’ve looked this way for so long than to look soft or have cellulite anywhere.

As a male athlete of mixed race, Ray reflected on how he has been affected by the racial perceptions placed on him by society:

Not having allegiances to any one group had its advantages in other affairs. I do not know if being a Black Jew isolated me or if it was just lonely at the top. Either way, I didn’t care. I was too poor at the early ages to learn Hebrew, so the White Jews didn’t approve, and the Blacks seemed so pre-occupied with hairstyles and clothes—the popularity race—that they came off as self-absorbed...Being a Black Jew meant you had to play, perform, achieve above-standard, and still suffer the consequences...I never chose to suppress one part of me for another. Oh, that was a potential detriment of socializing with mainly Black friends. While the Jews condemned you—disregarding your mother’s blood, that your Hebrew speaking capacity borne of poverty was insufficient and inferior—the Blacks resorted to the one-drop rule! They reassured me at every instance that I was wholly Black because of my father’s blood...To be a mixed athlete is to encounter discovery at every turn. You have an innate alertness and you play the same way.

Theme Three: Complex Racial Relationships

Informants from the United States were asked questions about the different racial relationships and encounters they’ve had with members of the same race or a different race. U.S. informants shared negative and positive personal experiences and feelings. The complex racial relationships identified into some of the following subcategories: Teammates, Non-athletes, Athletes, Coaches and Romantic Partners.

Positive Complex Racial Relationships

Five U.S. informants described being a part of, or at least the existence of, positive racial relationship experiences within the United States. These identified relationships are under the subcategories of athletes, coaches, and teammates.

Teammates

Five U.S. informants experienced positive racial relationships through playing sports with teammates of a similar or different race. Although both Ciara and Chanel maintain friendships with White female athletes, they admit to a difference in the bond they have with Black teammates:

Ciara:

I'm closer to my Black female teammate friends because we have many similarities and experiences within the U.S.

Chanel:

I guess you can say that I can relate on certain levels with my fellow Black teammates on certain issues better, but for the most part the differences are very slim.

Laura responded similarly to Chanel and Ciara, but alluded to her current WNBA White teammate friends' ability to adapt to their Black majority environment:

The specific White teammates that I hang with, there's not really a difference in my friendships with them and my Black teammates because I think that now since they're such in the minority, they've learned to just kind of "fit in" more or less at this level.

Eve discussed the positive friendships she developed with White teammates during her days participating in a local Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) girl's basketball team:

You form friendships with people you aren't usually around all the time. I think it's a good experience. I don't know how AAU is today—because I hear it's different—but for girls, I think it's a good way to bond and build friendships and play with good talent. From my personal experience, I remember being the only Black girl on the AAU squad and I remember we had a debate once about wearing your hair out versus down. When I have my hair out of a ponytail, I said I have my hair "out" and they said, "You mean

down?” I said, no, it’s out. And they were like, “No, it’s down, like you have your hair down.” I just said “ok.” I think they just didn’t get it. I don’t think there was any racism ever because the group of girls that I was with—there might have been some racism among the parents, but they weren’t raised like that—we all listened to the same music. Me and Anne used to sing Lauryn Hill. I really think our generation is going to be better at race relations than those before us because I think we’re able to interact with each other more.

Kyle emphasized how powerful sport is to U.S. Black/White race relations as he reflected on his friendships with the two White collegiate basketball teammates he had:

That’s the crazy thing about being involved in sports. In college, off the court, we called the only two White boys on the team “niggas.” We meant it as a term of endearment and out of high regard and respect for them. They had no problem with it and they understood boundaries of course—they never went out and would refer to us as their “nigga”—they understood that we were trying to befriend them by using that kind of terminology. There are a lot of layers in that whole Black/White dynamic for sure, but those two guys, we spent a lot of time with off the court. We went to frat parties first, go to the White bars second, and go to the Kappa house third. We were all together. Sports are one of the real places where diversity is authentic. I mean, you’re going to war with these people. When you’re down by 7 points with 2 minutes left, you just want the best players on the court—the one’s you can trust—whether they’re brown, White, or whatever. That’s who you want to be out there with. That’s what I mean when I say authentic diversity....as you get older, you realize how genuine those experiences were—being on a team with White people who you feel like you can trust—and those are the same White people who are willing to go to the Black Kappa party in a possibly all-Black neighborhood.

Athletes

One informant remarked on their positive racial relationships with other athletes of different races. Jillian explained how she has come to have current friendships with Black female athletes:

I currently have female friends that are Black athletes through playing sports throughout my life. I don’t have any differences in my friendships with Black athletes than with other White female athletes.

Coaches

One U.S. informant mentioned a positive experience within a complex racial relationship with a coach. Laura discussed the way in which her AAU girl's basketball coach seemed to shelter her from potential harms to her basketball and personal development—including racism:

My coach was White. He was one of those coaches that loved Black people, so I was always under his care, so I never noticed what was really going on—it was always just me and my coach—and I kinda feel like he sheltered us from things when we would travel to different tournaments. He would always tell us to just go shoot and he would handle all the other things. So with regards to racism, I was kind of hidden from those experiences in AAU.

In this researcher's personal experience as a competitive gymnast, sprinter, and basketball player, she has had at least a dozen White male or female coaches. She only felt a hint of racism from one of these coaches, which will be shared in the negative category.

Negative Complex Racial Relationships

Four U.S. informants described negative experiences or views of complex racial relationships between teammates, athletes, coaches, and romantic partners.

Teammates

All four informants described having negative complex racial relationships with teammates of a different race. Laura and Ciara, who were both involved in sports perceived as “White” beginning at young ages, recalled their acceptance by White teammates being determined on their level of play:

Laura:

I played field hockey for 6 years. And that was really interesting because I was the “token” Black girl on the team and no one ever understood how I was good or why I enjoyed playing. I mean, I went to over ten field hockey camps growing up and it's just interesting how people perceive different sports as a “Black sport” or a “White sport” even though for me, I just like being competitive. Some of the girls looked at me like, “Why was *I* there?” But then when I got on the field it was okay because I could actually play.

Ciara:

I experienced some racism when I was younger. There were girls that didn't want me on the travel soccer team, until I started scoring most of the goals.

On the reverse end, White athlete Kelly, explained how she felt treatment as a viable teammate from her Black point guard on her high school basketball team may have been due to her race in a sport perceived as "Black."

I mean, sometimes in high school I felt like D— wouldn't pass me the ball during games because she didn't have the same confidence in my abilities as she did the Black players. It just seemed like she rather pass the ball to anyone other than me.

After some thought, Ciara offered another uncomfortable racial experience with her White soccer teammates. This time, Ciara was in college:

On road trips to our away games, I would sit all the way in the back on the 3-seater because I would get to have three seats to myself and could lie down easily, instead of trying to be comfortable on two seats. One day, one of my White teammates asked me if I felt like Rosa Parks sitting at the back of the bus. Everyone laughed. I even laughed a little myself because I've known her for years and never had any problems with her, but it did make me feel a little uncomfortable that that thought even came to her head.

Interestingly, during their interviews, Laura and Eve began reflecting and explaining why they didn't form positive friendships with different kinds of White teammates. Laura discussed failed friendships with a "nerdy" and then a closeted lesbian teammate:

In high school, we had M— and she just wasn't gonna deny her super-nerdness. She was gonna go to Harvard or she was gonna go to Yale. Basketball was not the main concern...so that made a huge difference in the friendship I had with her. But then again every once in awhile, you'll get a college athlete that's just too focused on the basketball—like we had one at the University of — who felt like we were just a bad representation of the University and she transferred because she felt like we weren't focused enough on the basketball. Man, have some fun! She felt like we weren't a good representation of what our school's basketball team should be because we partied too much or pretty much we were all gay. But, she was gay too, but we were all *out* and gay and all the girls were attracted to us and you know, we didn't go to class all the time. So she didn't feel comfortable with that lifestyle.

Eve alluded to lacking bonds with collegiate White teammates at two different schools; this was due to different cultural barriers she wasn't comfortable with:

As far as college, I didn't really hang out with the White girls at the University of —. Most of them were all from Yugoslavia. I do remember when 9-11 happened and there was some tension on the team because they didn't understand why we were upset because they said "Americans bomb people all the time." That was an interesting dynamic that I never had to deal with before. Meanwhile, H—, the team captain, used to be in the army and there was a whole heated argument about 9-11. Then when I went to — University, those girls were prissy White girls. They'd go out and play beer pong [*a popular drinking game among college students*]. I played beer pong with them for the first time and quarters—I thought it was kinda nasty. It was really unsanitary.

Athletes

One informant shared that they witnessed an experience of a complex racial relationship between athletes. After giving up basketball to play collegiate soccer at a University in the deep south, Kelly recounted a disturbing game experience between her White teammate and a Black member of the opposing team:

I remember we were playing this pretty much all Black team and one of my White teammates was going at it verbally back and forth with her defender. Well I guess the Black girl got her really upset because next thing I knew, she called her a nigger really loud. The refs heard it and my coach heard it too. She didn't get a yellow card and my coach didn't say anything to her about it at all. I definitely think that racist incidents aren't as shocking down south as they are up north. At least that has been what I've observed.

Coaches

One informant shared an instance of a negative complex relationship with a coach. Ciara recalled a comment referencing the U.S. period of racial segregation, made to her as she coughed drinking water too quickly:

One time I ran to the sideline during a game to get a quick sip of water and I ended up coughing because it went down the wrong tube, and my coach goes, "Sorry, that was White water," and laughed.

I also have a bad recollection of the racial relationship between myself and one of the White female coaches I had during my freshman year of college in New York. Unlike Ciara however,

rather than a specific negative incident, my relationship with this White female coach was due to her consistently uncomfortable racist behavior. For example:

During my freshman year of college, I was one of only two Black players on the team. This particular coach would constantly call me by the name of my Black teammate and vice versa, but get all the White players names correct. When we would try and correct her, she would just say, “Oh, you know you both look alike.” The only thing similar about my appearance and my Black teammates was our skin color. In addition, when we had Black recruits come to campus for official visits that year, she would always make sure to tell them that she once dated a Black man—as if to say covertly, “If you come here, your being Black won’t be an issue with me.”

Romantic Partners

One U.S. informant discussed having a negative experience with a romantic partner due to their complex racial relationship. Laura, who is openly homosexual, shared an unsettling memory after ending her relationship with a White cheerleader at her university:

In college I dated a White cheerleader...I think that some people, especially White people, are brought up in a way that they only think that people should act one way. Even their tone, the way they talk—like one day after we had broken up, she was talking about this guy she dated and he made her mad and she was just like, “Oh my God, such a nigger!” And she said it just slipped out and I thought, “This is normal for her probably!” because her family talks like this and where she’s from. I was just so super hurt and it made me think back to all the bullshit I listened to in college.

Theme Four: Future Recommendations & Expectations

U.S. informants were asked to share their thoughts on what they feel the future holds for women’s athletics in the United States. Informants were also asked to give any recommendations to their country they felt would improve the life experiences of Black female athletes.

Recommendations

Four U.S. informants offered recommendations for improving women’s athletics and the overall female athlete life experience in the United States. These recommendations have been subcategorized into structural change, expansion, endorsements, and salary.

Salary

Although none of my U.S. informants mentioned ideas pertaining to salary, it is this researcher's recommendation that the women in the WNBA begin to be compensated for their work equal to that of their male counterparts. Many of the women in the WNBA play basketball three hundred and fifty-five days out of the year or take on second jobs as coaches, just to earn a decent living doing what they love. This researcher believes much can be changed about the perceptions of gender in sport if we begin to put female athletes on an equal level as male athletes when it comes to their compensation.

Endorsements

One informant offered recommendations about endorsements in women's athletics. Victoria would like to see endorsements for female athletes expand beyond those products specifically marketed to female consumers:

I think it's almost annoying that women only receive endorsements from products that are seen as only being used by women. In the future, I'd love it if there was a female athlete that became the face of something like Sprite™ instead of athletes like Kobe Bryant or LeBron James.

Expansion

Three informants gave recommendations of some form of media expansion for women's athletics. Ray commented on what he feels is a lack of a proper media outlet for the endorsement of female athletes:

Men constitute a proportionate amount of the viewership and attendance for male sports. Rather than make women's sports viability a moral argument, why not just say that the stakeholders—women—are lacking a proper vehicle in terms of a media outlet, to market their sports?

Eve and Kyle both would like to see a show focusing on the lives of Black female athletes:

Eve:

I think in women's sports in general, they're doing a better job at hiring women's coaches—whether Black or White—I just think a woman can relate to another woman better than a man who's playing sport. As far as the media—I think it would be interesting if they made a show that touched on Black people and their lives outside of sport because there's more involved to their lives than sport. I think that would be interesting to give that type of aspect of their lives. It could be reality or written. You could have a person with a different sexuality and maybe someone who is more high profile person and that would help with stereotypes.

Kyle:

It would be great if there was a show dedicated to female athletes—especially Black female athletes. The closest thing to a show about Black female athletes is *Basketball Wives* and that's a horrible example to set for young Black girls because the wives chosen for that show are clearly not the best examples of what wives or marriages should be or will be.

Structural Change

One informant discussed a form of structural change for women's athletics. Kyle expressed his desire for visible change in the perceived racial structures within certain sports:

I'd also like to see some more tennis racquets in the Black community because I think there's a racial perception within tennis that needs to change.

Expectations

Seven U.S. informants shared their expectations on the future of women's athletics in the United States. Most informants had negative expectations for the future, while a few were positive.

Negative

Chanel, Dawn, Eve, and Ray all shared negative expectations about the future of women's athletics in the U.S. Chanel and Dawn both feel that change from the present U.S. female athlete experience is not in the near future:

Chanel:

I'd like to say that the issues of salary increases, increased professional organizations, more endorsements, etc... would change soon, but I think that is a long stretch. Women's athletics, although they've come a long way, still lack the support and popularity that men's athletics have. Change will come hopefully, but the time in which it happens I believe is in the far and distant future.

Dawn:

I don't see much changing in the upcoming years. A woman has to be pretty spectacular for her to command a significant salary and endorsement deal.

This researcher's expectations are similar to those of Dawn and Chanel because she feels it will take significant time for society to fully shift its conceptions of acceptable gender roles. Ray on the other hand, feels that women's sports will always suffer from a lack of exposure and investment until a media network is devoted to the female athletic experience:

While a program like *Sportscenter* may provide coverage of female athletes' stories with a sense of equity, it is incomparable in volume to the coverage of male sports. I believe that until a network for women's sports becomes attractive to investors, the advancement of professional women's sports will suffer from a lack of exposure to a prospective audience. While an athlete can appreciate purist sports, it is the spectacle that matters most to the average fan. Legendary teams became so because they represented their communities but, it wasn't without the tooth-loosening hits, the blood on the floor collisions, clearing the benches against a rival.

Former collegiate basketball player Eve, predicts the collapse of the WNBA:

I think the WNBA is gonna fold, just like the ABL did, because they're not making any money. They probably get a lot of money from donations and the commissioner. They only play 3 months out of the year and unless they get a whole bunch of money, they're going to fold because they don't have the viewers or the ratings. In fact, they're probably losing money in the WNBA.

Positive

Four U.S. informants have positive expectations about the future of women's athletics in the United States. Ciara, Victoria, and Jillian all believe that there will be more female sporting events and athletes on television, as well as more endorsements for them in the future:

Ciara:

I think there are going to be more professional sports and endorsements such as commercials. I'm already seeing it in the soccer world.

Victoria:

I feel the future is a bright one for women's athletics. Women have just recently achieved equal prize money as men in tennis at the Grand Slams. I think that soon we will get to a place where there will be just as many women's sports on television as men's sports. I think at some point the big companies will have to put women on the covers of their products so that just like little boys have someone to look up to, little girls can have someone too.

Jillian:

I think that we will see an increase in woman athletes on television, either in endorsements or professional sports franchises. I also think that women athletes will become more well known and more of household names throughout the world no matter which sport they play.

Eve's positive expectation is of the caliber of athletes she feels will be present in the future:

I think there will always be good female athletes. As long as there are scholarships out there, there will be female athletes.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses four major themes in the data on U.S. informants in this study. The first theme focused on the visual representations of Black female athletes from the United States through print and active forms of media. The second theme described informants' perceptions that they feel exist about Black female athletes. The informants stated perceptions and experiences that were categorized into gender, race, and athletic or non-athletic identity, and revealed how these perceptions trigger coping mechanism and shape self-identity. The third theme identified some complex racial relationships that impact the experience of the Black

female athlete positively and negatively. And the fourth theme focused on the future recommendations and the positive and negative expectations the U.S. informants have for their country's female athletic future.

Data from individual interviews, joint interviews, and e-mail correspondence revealed research informants' perceptions of their experiences as Black female athletes in the U.S. In addition, this data captured research informants' perceptions and feelings about Black female athletes from a male athlete and White female athlete experience.

CHAPTER 5: Why Her Story Matters: Visual Representation and Perceptions

This chapter analyzes comparative findings from the data provided by U.S. and South African informants with regards to the themes of Visual Representation and Perceptions. The chapter has been organized by subheadings that directly align with the themes that emerged from the data and this study's research questions. In the analysis, I searched within the categories and subcategories of each theme to compare and contrast informant data. As a secondary level of analysis, the relevant theory, media and photographic analysis, and autobiography/biography content are tied into these comparisons and contrasts within each theme.

Theme One: Visual Representation

The first part of this study's broad research question focused on visual representation. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions: Do Black female athletes in South Africa and the United States amass similar visual representations produced about their bodies? How has the lifestyle of the Black female athlete been portrayed in South Africa and the United States cinematically? And how do the athletes themselves feel about the visual representations that the larger society produces about them?

Similarities

Informants from South Africa and the U.S. reported seeing and reading about Black female athletes through print media (newspapers, billboards, and magazines) and active media (television and film) forms. With regards to viewing frequency, athlete informants in each country reported having a tendency to watch female athletic competition *only* or most frequently in the sport(s) they play(ed). I believe this is a commonality for two reasons. First, it is of course normal for an athlete to be interested in watching competition in the sport(s) which they also play. Second, I believe these informants' shared low viewing frequencies demonstrate a negative effect of male-dominated athletic media coverage; perhaps a resulting low opinion of the overall entertainment value in watching female athletic competition compared to men's athletic competition? Male informants revealed enjoyment in watching female athletic competitions for a few reasons: (a) female style of play is different or more enjoyable than men's; (b) watching females is aesthetically pleasing to heterosexual males; and (c) to support family/friends/pro-athlete athletic pursuits.

Informants in the U.S. and South Africa feel that overall, there is a lack of media coverage given to female sport in comparison to male sport and that there is a major lack of

media coverage of Black female athletes. The higher value placed on male athletics over female athletics and White athletics over Black athletics within each society has to do with each nation's history of female and Black athletic development and participation. Coverage of sporting events and athletes in South Africa and the United States continues to place Whites and males at center stage, continuing to devalue and create disinterest in women's sporting events and female athletes—especially Black female athletes and the sports they excel in.

Overall, magazines are where most South African and U.S. informants read about and see images of Black female athletes, via print media, and on television via active media. Informants reported seeing Black female athletes in some magazine advertisements and in some magazines centered on fashion, bodybuilding, running, and fitness. A majority of South African and U.S. informants reported seeing Black female athletes on television and both countries' informants cite ESPN and other sports channels for opportunities to see *some* female athletic competition.

When it comes to television, “sports news and highlights shows make a statement about what they consider ‘real’ sports—or the most important sports—by the amount of time devoted to coverage of various sports, and by the production values committed to coverage of various sports.”⁸⁸ The reality is that most television viewers in South Africa and the United States may not see *any* televised coverage of women's sporting events for days at a time. For example, in a U.S. repeat study on female athlete coverage on televised sports news in 1999, Messner & Duncan revealed only a small increase in the proportion of sports news devoted to the coverage of women's sports over a ten-year period. There were several occasions where 3 or 4 days went

⁸⁸ M.A. Messner, M.C. Duncan, et al., "Silence, Sports Bras, and Westing Porn: Women in Televised Sports News and Highlights Shows," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* Vol.27, no. 1 (2003). 44.

by without news commentators uttering a single mention of women's sports.⁸⁹ Additionally, in her 2000 autobiography, former WNBA basketball standout Chamique Holdsclaw commented on the lack of Black female athletes showcased on television during her childhood: "There weren't too many female athletes for me to look up to, certainly not on television. Jackie Joyner Kersee was probably the one I followed most, and I wasn't even all that into track."⁹⁰

During the time this researcher spent in South Africa, it seemed that domestic women's sports competitions were rarely televised; certainly not aired daily. When they were televised, the only women's sports she saw covered were international track and field and tennis competitions, and national soccer and netball games. There was plenty of South African male sports competition television coverage. As former Olympian turned scholar/activist Cheryl Roberts pointed out back in 2005, "The power which men have over sponsorship and media, not forgetting officialdom, must be challenged and corrected...SA's [South Africa's] girl and women sports talent is plentiful, but financial, government and media support is necessary if we are to unlock this talent and grow our sports wealth so that we may reap more international success."⁹¹

It is clear that televised coverage of women's sports is and has been marginal, token, and sporadic in South Africa and the United States. What is worse, however, is that when women's sport is covered and commentated on via television and other media outlets, it is often times treated as though women's sport is inferior to men's sport and female athletes are not discussed

⁸⁹ Messner, "Silence, Sports Bras, and Westing Porn: Women in Televised Sports News and Highlights Shows," 40.

⁹⁰ Chamique Holdsclaw, *Chamique Holdsclaw: On Family, Focus, and Basketball* (New York, NY: Scribner, 2000).

⁹¹ Cheryl Roberts, "Bold, Beautiful, Talented and Battling the Odds," *Athlone News*, August 10 2005.

and depicted in the same way male athletes are. The best recent example lies within the treatment of the 2008-2011 University of Connecticut's (UConn) women's basketball team and their record breaking 90-game winning streak. These women beat the previous record of 88 consecutive wins held by the University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA) men's basketball team of 1971-1974, yet some male sports commentators devalued the women's achievements citing insulting differences between men's and women's basketball. For example, journalist Dick Jerardi of the Philadelphia *Daily News* made the following statements after UConn earned their 89th win:

I may be wrong about this, but I never hear comparisons about women and men, except in college basketball. And I'm not sure why. The ball is different. A few rules are different. The games are not the same. Yet, when a woman scores more points than a school's all-time men's scorer, she is said by some to be her school's all-time leading scorer. Same thing with conferences. At the risk of being politically incorrect, I don't get it.⁹²

Other than size of the ball, the recent different placement of the three-point-line, and length of shot clock, the rules and game of men's and women's basketball *are* the exact same. Why is it so hard to understand? Why not celebrate and hold the achievements of women athletes on the same level as men? Points are scored in the same way—by putting the orange ball in the hoop.

Both U.S. and South African informants were torn in their feelings about the media's portrayal of Black female athletes. Informants described positive reaction towards media portrayal of Black female athletes as "strong, unstoppable, enduring and tough," and when they are portrayed visually doing something positive (i.e.- playing sport or doing something physical). U.S. and South African informants reported negative reaction to the media's depiction of Black

⁹² Dick Jerardi, "You Can't Compare Uconn's Women's Team to UCLA's Men Team," *Daily News* (December 22, 2010), http://articles.philly.com/2010-12-22/sports/26356032_1_geno-auriemma-coaching-men-college-basketball. 1.

female athletes lives as all being “tragedy to triumph” stories. For instance, former U.S. tennis player Zina Garrison discusses her dislike of the media’s presentation of her life as a “tragedy to triumph” story in her 2001 autobiography:

Some people, especially those in the media, want to believe that I am a typical poor little black girl from Texas who made good. That’s not the way I see myself. I lived in a decent neighborhood, had plenty of food, and never went to school without lunch money. I was spoiled and had everything I wanted. How can I say I was poor?⁹³

Informants also dislike when the media only presents Black-dominated sports, only presents the athletic side of the athlete rather than the personal, and misperceives athletic intensity as a negative personal character trait of the athlete (i.e. “angry Black woman” stereotype).

The negative ways in which the media discusses and presents the Black female athlete has been overt until recent years. The negative presentation and discussion of Black female athletes in the media stems from people’s acceptance and belief in historically racist and sexist perceptions about Black women—perceptions that ultimately center around physical difference, gender and sexuality norms, and racial inferiority. Overt negative discussion and visual depiction still occurs today; however, the negative messages and imagery produced by the media about Black female athletes has become, for the most part, much more covert. On the one hand, South Africans and Americans can drive past billboards, pick up magazines, and read newspapers that feature stories, advertisements, and see photographs of Black female athletes depicted in the ways which emit positive feelings for informants of this study. For example, look at Figures 1 & 2. Figure 1 depicts South African hockey player Marsha Marescia in action, wearing typical athletic competition attire, but also advertising the sponsorship of the hockey team by the well known food retail company, SPAR. Figure 2 is a photograph of this researcher during a high

⁹³ Zina Garrison, *Zina: My Life in Women's Tennis* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2001). 180.

school basketball game in 2002 from a local paper in Pennsylvania. The photograph is not unflattering and the caption below correctly describes the action of the photo and the results of the game. The caption even highlights this researcher's achievement of 1,000 rebounds during the game.

South African and U.S. informants acknowledge the great job *some* magazines, local television stations and newspapers do in covering and including content about Black female athletes. They also appreciate that companies are choosing Black female athletes for their advertisements. On the other hand, South Africans and Americans are also exposed to the overt and covert negativity within different forms of media in their presentation and descriptions of Black female athletes. South African and U.S. informants feel that media doesn't always use positive wording or flattering pictures. Furthermore, many informants feel there is a difference in the way the media portrays and discusses Black female athletes versus White female athletes due to lingering White supremacist patriarchal ideals, perceptions and agendas. These lingering ideals, perceptions, and agendas are also the reason why U.S. and South African informants feel that media usually presents an *unattainable* stereotypical image of what a Black female athlete should physically look like. Unattainable in that the media usually promotes an ideal image of a female athletic body to be that of a White woman—something a Black female athlete can never be.

South African researcher Nadia Sanger rightly claims that, “much of the mainstream media appears to reproduce and reinforce imaginary binaries of gender (woman/man), race (black/white) and sexuality (heterosexual/homosexual), amongst others, at a time when

transformation is a priority in our country.”⁹⁴ Even though Sanger references South Africa specifically, the same can be said of much of the mainstream media in the United States. There are a number of great examples to support the claim that White supremacist patriarchal ideals, perceptions and agendas still overtly and covertly permeate the print and active media sources in South Africa and the United States. These examples key in on how media reinforces imaginary binaries of gender, race, and sexuality—binaries with heteropatriarchal⁹⁵ racist foundations. Heteronormative pressure refers to the pressure to conform to prescribed ideals and behaviors of White heterosexual femininity in order to remain or become desirable and accepted within a society based on heterosexual White normalcy. These examples demonstrate how the media places a huge amount of heteronormative pressure on Black female athletes specifically.

Consider the headline of the July 2010 issue of *Harpers Bazaar* magazine on Serena Williams (see Figure 3). At first glance, it appears the fashion magazine is celebrating Serena’s fashion style, utilizing enlarged font to announce her “GLAM SLAM.” However, the caption that follows—“She’s won 26 Grand Slam titles, but the tennis champion’s NEW BODY is her biggest victory yet”—is covertly insulting to Serena and potentially harmful to other Black female athletes and potential athletes. First, her athletic achievements are devalued by the greater value the magazine has placed on her new figure. Secondly, this caption suggests that there was something wrong with Serena’s body before—if her new body is a victory then her old body symbolizes loss and defeat.

⁹⁴ Sanger, "There's Got to Be a Man in There': Reading Intersections between Gender, Race and Sexuality in South African Magazines," 277.

⁹⁵ According to Sanger, “Heteropatriarchy suggests an institutionalized system of male domination over women within a heteronormative society. This system legitimizes the subjugation of women and has been naturalized within most cultural, economic, social and religious spaces including the media” (2008, 289).

If young Black female athletes and potential athletes read this caption and article, they could potentially believe that if they do not look like the slimmer version of Serena Williams, that they have undesirable bodies. This can ultimately lead to a negative body image and eating disorders. Some South African and U.S. Black females have already been affected by pressures to have bodies like White women. Former tennis star Zina Garrison continues to struggle with bulimia and admits in her autobiography that her negative body image partly stems from comparing herself to White female athletes:

I was never comfortable with the way I looked, especially when I compared myself to the trim white girls on tour. For more than three years I threw up every day, hoping to alter an image of ugliness I saw when I looked in the mirror at my naked body.⁹⁶

Furthermore, in a 2002 cross-cultural study conducted among 40 Black female students from rural University of Zululand in South Africa and 40 White British students at Northumbria University, researchers found that “Black South African women are depressed about their weight and becoming victims of eating disorders in their quest to follow the waif-like, fashionable ideals promoted by the West.”⁹⁷

For some, the body has historically been a site of oppression and degradation, but the interlocking oppressions of African American women further complicate the female body as a contested site of competing ideologies. For South Africa and the United States, the practice of pointing out physical differences in the bodies of White and Black women, with ideal and “normal” bodies being White, began long ago with the public display of women like Saartjie Baartman and Joice Heth. It was then that the White female body became the “standard” (South Africa informant, Zolani) for non-Whites to aspire to in appearance, as stereotypical images of

⁹⁶ Garrison, Zina: *My Life in Women's Tennis*. 16.

⁹⁷ "Eating Disorders; Prevalence High among Black Women in Rural South Africa," *Obesity, Fitness & Wellness Week* (Nov 16, 2002).

Black womanhood were used to justify their inferior status and continued placement on the lowest tier of South African and American society. Therefore, what society considers heteronormative—that is heterosexual and normal—accepted behavior and appearance for female athletes in South Africa and the United States, is supposed to remain unattainable for those of color. Today, “the categorization of black women’s bodies as hyper-muscular and their targeting for lascivious comment mirrors the public and pseudo-scientific response to nineteenth century exhibits of Saartjie Baartman.”⁹⁸ Certain magazine images and advertisements demonstrate this hypersexuality, while wording is often a weapon for media to point out undesirable features of certain Black female athletic bodies. As informants have pointed out, these undesirable features deal with visible muscularity and projected appearance (i.e. style of dress, hair, and other forms of visual presentation on the body).

The informants of this research study have also made it clear that expressed femininity and physical appearance matter. The way in which the media—and some of its subscribers—has visually and verbally discussed South African sprinter Caster Semenya and U.S. athletes Brittney Griner and Serena Williams supports informants’ sentiments. The bodies of Caster Semenya and Britney Griner have been observed with a grotesque fascination, while Serena Williams’ body is frequently hypersexualized within the media.

On August 19, 2009, Caster Semenya crossed the 800-meter finish line in world record time at the Berlin World Track and Field Championships. Rather than focusing on her triumph, however, world media focused on her gender and physical appearance. Initially, South African newspaper articles in Cape Town seemed to maintain a stance of nationalism and support for

⁹⁸ Janell Hobson, "The "Batty" Politic: Toward an Aesthetics of the Black Female Body," *Hypatia* 18, no. 4 (2003). 87.

Caster with headlines such as: “Golden Girl! Caster Semenya takes gold as family reacts with rage to gender slur” (*The Times*, August 20, 2009) and “Caster’s our golden girl!” (*Cape Times*, August 20, 2009). The very next day and in the several months that followed however, the media articles surrounding Caster in South Africa and the United States locked the focus onto her assumingly questionable gender, physical appearance, and sexual orientation.

The scientific aspect of gender and gender testing was often discussed throughout media reports as the world waited to hear the results of the ensuing International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) testing. The social constructions of gender that were brought into discussion are most important to this research study. Kenichi Serino, a reporter from the *Cape Times*, reported on August 21st the existence of “public scrutiny of Semenya’s masculine facial features, her powerful running style and complaints by rival teams.”⁹⁹ This quote alludes to the fact that negative sentiments held by members of society focus on Caster’s perceived lack of *appropriate femininity*. In other words, as Sanger points out in her *Cape Argus* article, “the controversy is not about Semenya’s chemical make-up nor is it about her taking illegal substances. It seems to be about what she ‘is’ based on how she looks...it’s about difference—about Semenya’s audacity to blur what we think of as normal in terms of gender.”¹⁰⁰

Research has shown that “appropriate” femininity is described with words like small, weak, beautiful, dependent, graceful, not aggressive, not victorious.¹⁰¹ Caster Semenya was victorious and aggressive on the track. She is not small, weak, nor seen as beautiful. It is when she and other female athletes put their “irregularities” out for the public to see, that society

⁹⁹ Kenichi Serino, "Multiple Tests to Check Gender," *Cape Times*, August 21 2009. 1.

¹⁰⁰ Sanger, Nadia, “Spotlight of Curiosity Shines Harshly on Semenya,” August 21, 2009.

¹⁰¹ see Messner, "Silence, Sports Bras, and Westing Porn: Women in Televised Sports News and Highlights Shows."

“makes a spectacle of them, interrogates and tests them until it can categorize them appropriately.”¹⁰² Satirical cartoons and images like the one depicted in Figure 4 were created and delivered to the world. Without actually stating he feels that Caster Semenya is a man and that her medal should be taken away, columnist Ben Travato makes his opinion known through the inclusion of an altered photo and a small caption. Without any consent from Caster or concern for her well-being, an eighteen-year-old Black female body that hours previously heralded national pride, quickly became a site of grotesque fascination.

In the United States, the body and expressed femininity of Brittney Griner (see Figure 5) has been a site of grotesque fascination in the media. The current Baylor University women’s basketball 6’8 sophomore center, Brittney Griner, began causing gender discomfort among sports fans and media back in high school, where she first dunked in a game. In April 2008, someone posted a link to a YouTube video of Griner dunking. The subject line read, “Brittney Griner, Juwanna Man, HS ‘Girl’ Dunker.” The comments to the video that followed were shameful and ultimately a cyber attack on Griner’s inability to adhere to society’s prescribed version of heteronormativity. One post read, “*It* better be able to dunk if *it’s* fucking 6’8...I wonder how many opposing teams ask to see her vagina before games...you know, if they’re into that shit or whatever,” while another person followed up with a comment of “that GUY is disgusting.” Just another example of a successful Black female athletic body being gazed upon with grotesque fascination.

Two months later, ESPN.com writer Glenn Nelson made it a point to address Griner’s level of femininity. In an article based on a one-on-one interview with Griner, Nelson writes:

¹⁰² Ariel Levy, “Either/Or: Sports, Sex, and the Case of Caster Semenya,” *The New Yorker* (2009), http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/11/30/091130fa_fact_levy?printable=true.

“Besides a basketball necklace, she owns no other jewelry. She once wore a dress to a cousin’s wedding, but otherwise favors t-shirts and basketball shorts.”¹⁰³ This information is irrelevant to Griner’s basketball abilities. Finding a sports article that mentions how much jewelry a male athlete owns or how often he wears a suit would be difficult; perhaps impossible. The inclusion of binary gender role markers in media representations of female athletes works to uphold the strong value placed on these societally prescribed typical/atypical gender behaviors.

The body of Serena Williams serves as a great example of how Black female athletic bodies can be criticized, yet also hypersexualized by the media—very similar to the body of Saartjie Baartman. A soon to be 30 year-old tennis player known worldwide, Serena Williams is all too familiar with being in the public eye. Just as some South African and U.S. informants mentioned, Serena admits to being very aware of her appearance. She states in her autobiography, “Appearances *do* count. I firmly believe this. No, appearances aren’t everything, but they’re definitely part of the equation. That’s why I spend so much time on mine.”¹⁰⁴ It seems however, that no matter how much attention Serena gives to her outward appearance, media outlets often criticize her choice of attire and body.

The famous Serena designed Puma branded “catsuit” worn during the 2002 U.S. Open “turned a lot of heads and caused a lot of controversy.”¹⁰⁵ Most recently she garnered criticism from a U.K. media outlet on her body and attire while at the beach. *MailOnline*, a website published by the Associated Newspapers Ltd, featured an article entitled “Curvy tennis star

¹⁰³ Glenn Nelson, “Greatness and Griner Go Hand in Hand,” in *ESPN.com* (ESPN.com, June 24, 2008).

¹⁰⁴ Serena Williams, *On the Line*, ed. Daniel Paisner, 1st ed. (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2007). 124.

¹⁰⁵ Williams, *On the Line*, 130.

Serena Williams gets her beach wiggle on... but her tiny bikini is barely fit for purpose” along with six photos of the recuperating athlete. The fact that Serena was recuperating from emergency surgery that removed a blood clot from her lung didn’t stop columnist Chris Johnson from letting the world know how horrible he thought she looked. Johnson questions Serena’s style by referring to her bikini as “mis-matched” even though it was not—the bottoms are leopard print with hot pink seams and her top is a hot pink strapless style. Johnson continued his critique: “The 29-year-old came close to a double fault - her strapless bikini top clearly struggled to contain her ample bosom.”¹⁰⁶ Referring to her bosom as “ample” and describing her top as “struggling to contain” creates an overly sexual presentation of Serena—a hypersexualized presentation. The focus of comments left by readers varied from hypersexualization and grotesque criticism to supportive praise.

Johnson ended his brief article by referencing a hypersexualized un-aired video game commercial that featured Williams. “A television advert featuring her curvy figure was recently released to promote Top Spin 4, a tennis game... But it is unlikely to be seen by many—the game’s maker 2K Sports rejected it because it was deemed too raunchy.”¹⁰⁷ The commercial, which was accessible on YouTube for a short time, features Serena as the “World’s Sexiest Tennis Player” and an unknown White female actress as the “World’s Sexiest Tennis Gamer.” Both women are barely wearing anything, but especially Serena. Within the first few seconds of

¹⁰⁶ Chris Johnson, "Curvy Tennis Star Serena Williams Gets Her Beach Wiggle On... But Her Tiny Bikini Is Barely Fit for Purpose," Associated Newspapers Ltd., <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-1377735/Serena-Williams-gets-beach-wiggle--tiny-bikini-barely-serves-purpose.html>.

¹⁰⁷ Johnson, “Curvy tennis star Serena Williams gets her beach wiggle on... but her tiny bikini is barely fit for purpose,” <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-1377735/Serena-Williams-gets-beach-wiggle--tiny-bikini-barely-serves-purpose.html>

the commercial, you get a rear view of Serena in a pair of *too* small black booty-shorts. The commercial continues with Serena and her unknown opponent playing Top Spin 4, bouncing, moaning, and running. To increase the sexiness of the video, close-ups of each woman's chest and mouth are inserted rapidly along with images of fire and water. The commercial ends with a last rear view of Serena as she walks away saying, "You know this is a fantasy, right?"

Initially leaked by the White actress featured in the commercial, the representatives of 2K Sports have said the commercial will not air and denied claims that the commercial was a part of its final marketing strategy. Serena has yet to comment on her participation in this commercial, but she certainly should. It will be interesting to find out her motive for participation in such an explicitly hypersexual commercial. In her autobiography, Serena shares, "Most times, I see my reflection and what I get back is hot and sexy and all that good stuff, but I have my low moments, same as everyone else."¹⁰⁸ These low moments support Hobson's argument that "contemporary African American women struggle to articulate a positive and sustaining discourse of black female beauty that enhances their agency and subjectivity, and works continuously to challenge dominant discourses of black women's bodies as 'sexually grotesque.'"¹⁰⁹ Based on informant narratives and South African scholarship, Hobson's argument can be expanded to include contemporary South African women as well.

I turn now to a discussion of cinematic media portrayal. Based on informant responses it appears that films produced about South African and U.S. Black female athletes have yet to depict any realistic situations and/or are over-exaggerated, regardless of whether the viewer enjoyed the film overall. The films mentioned by some U.S. informants are *Love & Basketball*

¹⁰⁸ Williams, *On the Line*. 205.

¹⁰⁹ James and Helen Johnson McKay, "Pornographic Eroticism and Sexual Grotesquerie in Representations of African American Sportswomen," *Social Identities* 14, no. 4 (2008). 493.

(2000), *The Longshots* (2008), and *Higher Learning* (1995). The South African film that was alluded to by informant Glynis is entitled *The Long Run* (2001).

Although some U.S. informants also cited the film *Higher Learning*, this film is *not* centered on a Black female athlete, but merely features one. The featured Black female athlete—a sprinter named Deja who is played by model/actress Tyra Banks—is a love interest for the main character, Malik Williams (played by Omar Epps). Deja appears in few scenes and her back story is not told to viewers. This failure to create a character-to-audience connection leaves the audience emotionally detached from Deja. Therefore, when Deja is killed at the end of the film, the audience emotionally connects with Malik's sense of loss, rather than with the actual death of Deja. The films *Love & Basketball*, *The Longshots*, and *The Long Run*, however, do indeed focus on a Black female athlete and warrant close analysis and critique.

Of these three films, *Love & Basketball* is the only one that was written and directed by a Black female athlete, but it was produced by two males— (Black) Spike Lee and (White) Sam Kitt. A former high school basketball player herself, writer/director Gina Prince-Bythewood shared *Love & Basketball* with the world in 2000 and made history. The film “earned \$22.5 million in U.S. box office sales and \$27 million internationally, making Prince-Bythewood the largest grossing Black female director ever.”¹¹⁰ As successful as the film may have been at the box office, not all U.S. informants had actually seen or enjoyed the film. Informant Ray shared that he had heard a lot about the film and knew the actors involved, but was not actually compelled to go see the film. Female athlete informants who had seen the film found it entertaining or enjoyed the use of real athletes within the film for added authenticity, but two informants also acknowledged what they feel is an inauthentic storyline and main characters.

¹¹⁰ Bonsu Thompson, "Love & Basketball," *Juicy*, Winter 2010. 59.

Essentially, the storyline of *Love & Basketball* features a Black female athlete's quest to have both loves of her life—basketball and her boyfriend—coexist without having to choose one over the other.

The Longshots, directed by (White male) Fred Durst—who is better known as the lead vocalist for the band Limp Bizkit— and produced by (Black) rapper turned actor/producer Ice Cube, is based on the true story of Jasmine Plummer. At age eleven, Jasmine Plummer became the first female to play in a Pop Warner football tournament. The audience watches Jasmine navigate through her recreated and perhaps over-dramatized home, personal, and athletic experiences.

The South African film, *The Long Run*, was written by (White male) South African, Johann Potgieter, and directed by (White female) New Zealand native, Jean Stewart. The storyline of *The Long Run* focuses on an aging White male German emigrant of South Africa. A former marathon runner turned coach, he becomes obsessed with training a young illegal Namibian woman for the world-famous Comrades Marathon when he sees her jogging through the rural South African plains one day. The audience gets to view the interesting relationship that develops between two main characters that differ in race, age, and gender, as they attempt to prepare for the marathon at the end of the film.

Informants of this study acknowledge the lack of existence of films focused on Black female athletes in South Africa and the United States and research shows that “despite the recent growth of women's sports, such a self-reliant identity is still strongly associated with masculinity, so that movies about athletes, with a few exceptions, involve women only as they

support male self-definition.”¹¹¹ *The Longshots*, *Love & Basketball*, and *The Long Run* are such exceptions in that they ultimately break the traditional cinematic and societal gender binary structure in their cinematic endings. *Love & Basketball* ends with Black female athlete Monica actually surpassing her Black athlete husband in athletic success. The screen fades to black as Monica takes the court as a team member of the WNBA’s Los Angeles Sparks, while her husband Q and their baby girl cheer her on in the stands. Thus, the film ends with the male athlete in a supportive role for the female athlete. Similarly, *The Long Run* also ends with the main Black female athlete character, Christine, surpassing the athletic success of her White male coach, Berry. After training with and without the help of Berry, Christine is able to not only finish, but *win* the Comrades Marathon. In the opening scenes of the film, the audience learns Berry was twice unable to complete the marathon as a young man. In the final competition scene of *The Longshots*, the audience witnesses Jasmine’s team barely lose in the championship football game, but her making it there at all is what’s significant. The real-life success of Jasmine Plummer in the male-dominated sport of football promotes societal revision of gender categories via sport participation.

Even though these three films depict Black female athletes succeeding in athletic competition and transgressing dominant notions of gender roles, they still contain scenes that promote heteronormativity. There are scenes within each of these films that aid in establishing the Black female athlete protagonist as heterosexual and/or possessing acceptable levels of femininity. Film and Media Studies professor Aaron Baker contends that in films centered on female athletes, “strong, accomplished women athletes evade the dominant assumptions about

¹¹¹ Aaron Baker, *Contesting Identities: Sports in American Film* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003). 11.

the distinctness of masculinity and femininity, at least until the stories—as they often do—pull them back into the ‘binary structures’ of gender and away from their transgendered identities.”¹¹² The storylines in each of these three films do just that at certain moments, even though each Black female athlete protagonist ultimately proves she can be athletically superior to her male athlete co-star(s).

In examining the film *The Longshots*, it is very easy to take note of feminine markers—meaning visual behavior and/or verbal dialogue that are generally accepted by society to be associated with the female gender under a binary gender archetype—utilized by the director. Throughout the duration of the film, Jasmine’s hair is styled in pigtails while playing football, which translates to the audience that Jasmine does not desire to have a masculine appearance. Jasmine’s femininity is also stressed in a scene where she secretly tries to sign up for the fashion club at school. A popular White cheerleader named Tammy spots Jasmine and cruelly makes fun of her, referring to her as “JasMAN.” This scene is significant because it shows the audience that Jasmine desires to participate in feminine activities in addition to her participation in football. It also sends a message that females participating in hyper-masculine activities (i.e. football) will be ostracized by other females. Similarly, *Love & Basketball* “reassures us that Monica can still be feminine despite her masculine athleticism on the basketball court by showing her in one scene in a tight spandex dress.”¹¹³ Interestingly, it is only when Q sees Monica at the school dance in the tight, white spandex dress that he realizes his attraction to her. Monica loses her virginity to Q that same night, which sends a message to the audience that athletic males will only be attracted to athletic females who display a certain kind of femininity.

¹¹² Baker, *Contesting Identities: Sports in American Film*, 77.

¹¹³ Baker, *Contesting Identities: Sports in American Film*, 91-92.

It also appears that films about sports in South Africa and the U.S. rarely depict lesbian characters utilizing athletics for positive self-definition, something U.S. informant Eve mentioned in her dissatisfaction with the film *Love & Basketball*:

...But what if they made her a lesbian in the movie? They made it so she would marry the man and they didn't even touch homosexuality. They always make women athletes straight if they're the main character.

Aside from the heterosexual marriage between Monica and Q at the end of the film, there is a brief dialogue on undesirable homosexuality that takes place at the end of the film's "Second Quarter"¹¹⁴ between Monica (a then high school senior) and her mother. In this particular scene, Monica and her family are having dinner after a basketball game. Monica threatens her mother with lesbianism after her mother tells her she wishes Monica would grow out of her "tomboy thing." Monica's sister laughs at her comment, but their mother insists joking about being a lesbian is not funny. Ultimately, Monica's mother worries that her daughter is a lesbian because she'd rather play basketball than participate in feminine activities and dress differently. This scene can work to make audience members feel legitimized in placing a lesbian perception on Black female basketball players.

The Long Run also stresses heteronormativity through the character Christine, even though Christine's femininity and sexuality have nothing to do with her winning the Comrades Marathon. After Berry moves Christine into his home after rescuing her from immigration officers, his daughter and grandchild come for a visit and find Christine sleeping alone in his bed. When his daughter asks who the woman sleeping is, he replies, "That is not a woman, that's an athlete." Berry's response reinforces the stereotype that female athletes are unfeminine or are

¹¹⁴ The film *Love & Basketball* is presented in four parts, which correspond to the number of time periods played in a high school or professional basketball game—First Quarter, Second Quarter, Third Quarter, and Fourth Quarter.

somehow incapable of being “real” women. The director of the film, however, makes sure the audience knows Christine is both attracted to and desired by men, through insertion of a dating scene and portrayal of Christine in dresses. At the close of the film, the director makes the ultimate rescue of Christine’s femininity, as Berry and Christine kiss one another after she wins the marathon. Rather than possessing inherent femininity, it appears to the audience that Christine *gains* femininity and heterosexual desirability through her time spent with Berry, who goes as far as picking out Christine’s clothing and toiletries.

The similarities that exist between these Black female athlete feature films can be accounted for by an examination and application of cinematic theory. In her well-known essay, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” Laura Mulvey enlightens the reader on the place of woman in patriarchal culture as it relates to cinema. According to Mulvey, woman “stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning.”¹¹⁵ In other words, cinematically in patriarchal cultures, women are meant to be seen and not heard. In the decades since the original publication of Mulvey’s essay, the position of woman in relation to cinema has clearly changed. The characters of Monica, Jasmine, and Christine *are* makers of meaning through athletic achievement in each of their respective films. However as women, they continue to be presented for appeasement of what Mulvey refers to as a heterosexual “male gaze”—where women are “simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975): 6-18, 7.

¹¹⁶ “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975): 6-18, 11.

Jasmine's pigtails, Monica's tight white dress, and the dresses Christine wears have a strong visual impact for the heterosexual male spectator.

When race is added into the cinematic analysis of these films lawyer Margaret M. Russell's concept of the "dominant gaze" applies. An extension of Mulvey's feminist critique of Hollywood movies' acceptance of a patriarchal worldview that is broadened to account for racial inequalities and biases, the "dominant gaze" describes "the tendency of American popular cinema to objectify and trivialize the racial identity and experiences of people of color, even when it purports to represent them."¹¹⁷ In *Love & Basketball*, racial identity and racist encounters are completely ignored, even though the film was written and directed by a Black woman. Race is not an issue; only prescribed gender roles and sexual orientation. This gives incompleteness to Monica's character and brings an inauthentic quality to the film as a whole. *The Longshots* also trivializes the racial identities and experiences of its Black characters. Many glimpses of racism and significant issues within the Black community are included in the film, but never fleshed out. Some of these issues are: single parenting with an absentee father, failed professional athletic dreams, and unemployment. And why doesn't the audience learn how Jasmine feels about the pretty, popular, White cheerleader Tammy always picking on her? For a film based on a true story, it does not materialize as a *full* story of Jasmine Plummer, her family, or town.

The South African film, *The Long Run*, also adheres to the "dominant gaze" in that it sends distorted messages about racial and gendered relations in the country. Berry's whiteness is never an issue, as he is shown being easily accepted by the group of Black male runners he first

¹¹⁷ Margaret M. Russell, "Race and the Dominant Gaze: Narratives of Law and Inequality in Popular Film," *Legal Studies Forum* 15, no. 3 (1991). 244.

coaches before shifting focus to Christine. Much like *The Longshots*, there are glimpses of significant issues that afflict the majority of the Black South African community that are never given substance (i.e. poor living conditions, interracial relationships between Black women and White men, and xenophobia due to high unemployment). American journalist Sean Axmaker also feels the film did an incomplete job at reflecting racial relations and inequalities in South Africa, titling his cinematic review, “Lazy Directing Spoils Race Metaphor in ‘The Long Run’.”¹¹⁸ Critiquing director Jean Stewart, Axmaker feels she “isn’t merely clumsy with character; she hasn’t the chops to show us the joy and exhilaration Christine feels in the freedom of solo runs, or the way Berry’s training and timing and rigorous control saps her soul.”¹¹⁹ In other words, *The Long Run*—like *Love & Basketball* and *The Longshots*—is presented to audiences as an incomplete and inauthentic presentation of the experience of the Black female athlete.

Differences

United States

Based on the data collected from this research study’s informants, it appears that U.S. Black female athletes have more opportunities to see domestic and local female athletic competition and coverage through forms of print and active media than South African Black female athletes. This difference exists because domestic and local media coverage of women’s athletics is much larger in the United States than it is in South Africa. In the 1920s post-World War I era, well established Black newspapers reported regularly on women’s events with a

¹¹⁸ Sean Axmaker, "Lazy Directing Spoils Race Metaphor in 'the Long Run'," *The Post-Intelligencer* (2001), www.seattlepi.com/ae/movies/article/Lazy-directing-spoils-race-metaphor-in-The-Long-1053782.php.

¹¹⁹ Axmaker, "Lazy Directing Spoils Race Metaphor in 'the Long Run'," 2001.

respectful tone. Of course as the years went by, segregation laws and limited competitive opportunities resulted in media “blackouts” for Black female athletes, leaving them to face tremendous barriers to participation. The post-World War II era did not help coverage of women’s sport, as female athletes were propagandized as unfeminine during this time. The women’s movement of the 1970s, however, forced media attention onto women and their call for empowerment in a number of societal realms, including athletics.

Between 1972 and 2002—thirty years since the Title IX legislation—the number of females participating in high school sports grew from around a few hundred thousand to a few million. Media coverage of female sport has improved drastically since the 1970s, although not satisfactory in comparison with the numbers of female athletes who participate in athletics at the high school, collegiate, and professional level. A strong example of the increase in media coverage of women’s athletics is the American sports television network ESPN, which first launched in 1979 and has since grown into a domestic and international sports networking powerhouse. ESPN has held and continues to hold significant programming rights for the WNBA, FIFA Women’s World Cup (soccer), Women’s NCAA basketball tournament, and LPGA tour (women’s golf). ESPN has co-owned the cable rights to all four of tennis’ grand slams since 2009, televises other major tennis events that sisters Venus and Serena Williams regularly compete in, and provided the most extensive coverage of the NCAA women’s softball championship in 2011. In December 2010, ESPN even launched the website ESPNW.com, which boasts being “dedicated to serving female athletes and fans...shining a brighter spotlight on women’s sports, and putting you in touch with top female athletes from across the globe.”¹²⁰ So for the United States, more than South Africa, the larger issues Black female athletes have

¹²⁰ From espnW website, www.espn.go.com/espnw/about

with their visual representation through various forms of media deals with the *type* of coverage they receive, more than with amount of coverage overall.

South Africa

Analysis of South African informant data in this research study revealed two differences under the theme of visual representation in comparison with the United States. First, there is a greater lack of media coverage for Black female athletes and female sport overall, specifically at the local and national levels—which effectively helps to explain why most South African informants reported watching female athletic competitions in person most frequently (other than their enjoyment of watching fellow athletes compete). This lack of media coverage also accounts for international Black female athletes being better known to South African informants than domestic athletes. The simple explanation for this disparity in media coverage aligns with South Africa’s media history, especially television.

The African Broadcasting Company was replaced by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) in 1936. With media being highly centralized and the state owning radio and television, SABC functioned under a policy that promoted White nation building, while almost completely ignoring Blacks until the 1980s. Sports scholar John Nauright explains, “As a result of these policies and white ownership of the media, white-dominated sports always received a disproportionate amount of sporting coverage.”¹²¹ It appears that coverage of female athletics in post-apartheid South Africa will eventually catch up to levels of coverage of women’s athletics in the U.S.. After all, South Africa had its own women’s movement in the early 1990s, which impacted gender equity within the country’s government structure and

¹²¹ John Nauright, *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997). 13.

legislative practices. *Quantity* of coverage may eventually reach a similar status to that of the United States over time, but in the process South Africa may encounter the increased levels of harmful coverage *content* that exist in the United States.

There has yet to be a major film focusing on a Black female athlete that is written and/or directed and/or produced by a Black or Black female South African. Due to the historic monopolistic control of cinema and marketing of films in South Africa to primarily White audiences, there has been an impact on the types of stories that are funded and developed into feature films. In addition to alleviating racial imbalances, South African filmmaker Maganthrie Pillay explains “It is important that gender imbalances in the film industry are challenged so that feature film becomes a space for women as well as men.”¹²² One film centered on a Black female athlete is not enough, especially when this film is not written, directed, or produced by Black persons. In South Africa, questioning whether a White person can tell the story of a Black person and *vice versa* is an important area for cultural debate and there is no film regulatory body to monitor production support on the basis of race and gender. There is yet to be a seat at the cinematic table for Black women in the new South Africa and certainly no South African version of Spike Lee to fund the production of her cinematic presence.

Theme Two: Perceptions

The second part of this research question sought to determine what can be gained from comparing and examining informant identified existent perceptions about Black female athletes in the United States and South Africa. Specifically within the theme of perceptions, this researcher sought to answer the following questions: Why do these perceptions exist and how are athlete informants affected emotionally and socially due to these perceptions? How do Black

¹²² Maganthrie Pillay, "Who Is Making the Black Woman's Film?," *Agenda*, no. 49 (2001). 64.

female athletes cope with the perceptions that are placed on them publicly and privately? Are these identified perceptions *misperceptions*, or do the athletes themselves feel the existence of certain perceptions are justified?

Similarities

Based on data analysis, it can be concluded that a majority of informants feel that perceptions and stereotypes about Black female athletes are held by some people within South African and U.S. societies. Here are a list of perceptions identified by both U.S. and South African informants:

1. Black female athletes are naturally superior athletes
2. Black female athletes are lacking in intelligence—either academically or athletically
3. Black female athletes lack the desire to play certain sports
4. Black female athletes possess negative social demeanor
5. Black female athletes are “manly” or lacking in “femininity”
6. Black female athletes are probable lesbians based on appearance or participation in certain sports

The perceptions listed above can further be sorted into categories of racial perceptions and gendered/sexual perceptions. The first four perceptions are rooted in racism. Perceptions (5) and (6) stem from sexism and homophobia. Consequently, one could contend that the United States and South Africa are racist, sexist, and homophobic societies and Black female athletes suffer from all these discriminatory viewpoints.

The identification of racial perceptions by Black female athletes is not new. Many Black female athletes’ autobiographies and short narratives talk about or at the very least, mention, personal experiences and feelings about the racial perceptions held by their respective societies. Two African American female athlete autobiographies utilized in this research study have included statements about the perception that they are “natural born athletes.” Lisa Leslie refutes this perception in the very first chapter of her autobiography, which opens, ““You were born to

play basketball.' People tell me that all the time, but I can tell you for a fact that Lisa Deshaun Leslie was not born with a basketball in her hands or with any desire to play the game."¹²³

Jackie Joyner-Kersey provides a similar refutation of the natural athlete perception in her autobiography: "People have always assumed I succeeded at sports because I was a natural talent. Not quite. I had talent and determination, but I needed someone to help me develop it."¹²⁴

South African runner Argentina Senda's autobiography reads similarly as well. She proclaims, "Argentina had never run in her life, other than playing with friends as a little girl. She had never thought of being a runner or ever wanted to be any sort of athlete, and yet here she was trying to figure out a way to run, and not just run for fun, but to become a professionally trained runner."¹²⁵

The sentiments of Leslie, Senda, and Joyner-Kersey corroborate the feelings of some South African and U.S. informants of this study in that certain informants feel there are other factors besides biology/genetics that play a role in the success of Black female athletes. The non-biological/genetic factors cited are "hard work," "specific sport played," "mental toughness," and "where the athlete comes from." However, it appears that many informants feel that biology/genetics does play a role in the success of Black female athletes, whether that role is large or small. Both South African and U.S. informants explained that their position was due to beliefs in "genetic inheritance," "natural athleticism," and "scientific reporting (South Africa informant, Nicolene)."

¹²³ Lisa Leslie, *Don't Let the Lipstick Fool You* (New York, NY: Kensington Publishing Corp., 2008). 5.

¹²⁴ Jackie Joyner-Kersey, *A Kind of Grace: The Autobiography of the World's Greatest Female Athlete* (New York, NY: Warner Books, Inc, 1997). 53.

¹²⁵ Argentina Senda, *That's Why I Run: The Story of Argentina Senda*, ed. Evelyn Higginbotham (Houghton, South Africa: STE Publishers, 2008). 63.

These opposing views are commonly referred to within scholarship as the “nature vs. nurture” debate. The non-biological/genetic sentiments fall under the side of “nurture,” which draws upon sociological, environmental, and cultural factors as explanations for Black athletic dominance. It is important to know that environmental factors in studies of athletic performance are not necessarily restricted to Black athletes. For example the large number of Scandinavian (particularly Swedish and Finnish) athletes who ranked among the world’s greatest middle-and long-distance runners during the 1930s and 1940s was explained, basically, by the fact that cooler regions were innately superior to the tropics.¹²⁶ The “nature” side of the debate relies on published scientific research and biological/genetic explanation. Many lines of research actually suggest that the secret of Black success lies simply in a “superior” biology. It is true that all muscles contain two kinds of fibers. One is a fast-twitch and the other is a slow-twitch. A fast-twitch produces an explosive burst of energy, while the slow-twitch sustains muscle effort over longer periods of time. An NBC special entitled “The Black Athlete: Fact or Fiction,” narrated by Tom Brokaw and aired in the spring of 1990, proclaimed that Blacks dominate sports because they have more fast-twitch muscle fibers, which give them an advantage in the sports where power, speed, agility, jumping, and sprinting are important.¹²⁷ Jumping to such broad conclusions and presenting them to the public can be very misleading, especially when it remains inconclusive in scientific research whether physical differences between Blacks and Whites contribute significantly to the dominance of Blacks in sports.

¹²⁶ Bale, John and Joe Sang. *Kenyan Running: Movement Culture, Geography and Global Change*. London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd; 1996. 144.

¹²⁷ Gary Sailes, "The Myth of Black Sports Supremacy," *Journal of Black Studies* Vol. 21, no. 4 (June, 1991). 481-82.

Interestingly, the perception that “Black female athletes lack the desire to play certain sports” is also connected to myths surrounding physical differences between races. Take the sport of swimming for example. Many people believe that Blacks can’t swim because they are heavier than Whites. The assertion is that an absence of body fat, a solid musculature, and a heavier skeleton make Blacks less buoyant and contribute to their lack of success in swimming.¹²⁸ This is of course, not true. Blacks desire to compete in swimming and have been successful doing so; South African informant Melanie is a perfect example of a successful swimmer and attests to the desire of young Blacks and Coloreds in South Africa to have swimming careers.

A general belief in physical differences between the races in connection with athletic dominance could also serve as an explanation as to why all but one informant acknowledged that sports in U.S. and South African society are easily labeled based on race. The bodies of athletes of certain races allows them to excel at certain sports. For example, basketball and track & field were identified as “main” sports played by Black female athletes in both South Africa and the United States. This labeling of sports according to race is acknowledged by informants to be a deterrent for young people—both Black and White— to try playing or continue playing a certain sport that is perceived as atypical of their race.

Black informants, Laura, Siyoli, and Ciara encountered resistance and speculation about their general interest and playing abilities when they took interest in sports that are perceived as “White” by general society. Similarly, White informants Jillian and Kelly remind us that the same resistance and speculation can be placed upon non-Blacks that compete in sports generally perceived as “Black.” Serena Williams and Zina Garrison both discussed racism faced in the

¹²⁸ Sailes, "The Myth of Black Sports Supremacy," 481.

sport of tennis in their respective autobiographies. Tennis is perceived as a “White” sport in both South Africa and the United States. Garrison comments on being treated like she and other Black girls didn’t belong in USTA (United States Tennis Association) matches against White girls while growing up in Texas in the mid 1970s:

...many white tennis parents and officials didn’t take kindly to their kids getting beat consistently by a couple of black girls from a public park...When we went to Dallas to play the Texas sectionals, one of our chaperones was in the area where the draw was being made. She heard them say, ‘Throw all those niggers in the same bracket.’ Sure enough, they put all the black players in the same bracket.¹²⁹

At the 2001 Indian Wells Masters in California, an extremely racist incident occurred for a then nineteen-year-old Serena Williams, which affected her so much that she wrote an entire chapter in her autobiography about it, called “The Fiery Darts of Indian Wells.” In reflecting on the racism of the incident she shares:

I have to believe there was some racist component to all of this...Nobody would have booed some blond, blue-eyed girl. And nobody would have shouted down her father with cries of, ‘Go back to Compton, nigger!’¹³⁰

To this day, Venus and Serena Williams boycott the Indian Wells tournament because they feel it would send the wrong message to young Black girls that look up to them. This researcher is in agreement with their decision because neither Black nor White athletes should grow up under the impression that racism is routine if you choose to play a certain sport. Racism must be combated, not ignored.

The last two similar racial perceptions, “Black female athletes are lacking in intelligence—either academically or athletically” and “Black female athletes possess negative social demeanor” are best understood through a theory presented by South African social

¹²⁹ Garrison, *Zina: My Life in Women's Tennis*. 48.

¹³⁰ Williams, *On the Line*. 76.

anthropologist, Gerard Schutte. He found that when White Afrikaners were challenged about their beliefs and treatment of Blacks, they began to use processes of rationalization. Of the three rationalizations he cites, the *rationalization of common sense* is significant to the analysis of this research study's data. In the context of Schutte's work, *rationalization of common sense* worked this way:

Real-life examples of the incompetence of blacks, their inferiority, and a host of other negative characteristics were given by informants. The informants never regarded these as prejudice or interpretation; they were facts. The anecdotes had the ring of truth because they were not only produced by persons predisposed to see blacks negatively but they were formulated as accounts in the interactional field of people sharing those beliefs and experiences about blacks.¹³¹

In simpler terms, Whites were making generalizations about Blacks overall based on their limited face-to-face experiences with them, rumors, anecdotes, and gossip they heard. While some Black female athletes may struggle academically or make mistakes on the playing field, it should not be generalized that this is so for *all* Black female athletes. Nor should it be generalized that all Black female athletes have negative social demeanor.

In fact, it should be reiterated that a number of informants in this research study talked about how much they desire to be seen as *more* than just an athlete. These informants are not alone in their sentiment. Jackie Joyner-Kersey discusses the disappointment she felt when members of her own community doubted her future academic success at UCLA even though she had been a standout high school student:

Even though I'd already achieved a lot on the national level athletically, had a 3.5 grade point average, ranked thirteenth in the class, and had received several athletic scholarship offers, some people still considered me a dumb athlete... 'There's no way you can go to California and be successful,' one man said to me in the store after reading in the paper that I signed a letter of intent to UCLA... Here were black people implying that because I

¹³¹ Gerhard Schutte, *What Racists Believe: Race Relations in South Africa and the United States* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc, 1995). 243.

was a black girl from a small city I couldn't handle myself in a big place like Los Angeles.¹³²

In addition, South African former national netball team captain, Martha Mosoahle, offered the highest and lowest points of her life—which deal with racism and educational opportunity—in her personal narrative within the book *Life and Soul*. Mosoahle shares, "...the lowest point for me during the apartheid era was being judged for my colour, and not for who I really was...but the highlight of my life has been my education. I now have a master's degree in Sociology."¹³³

Black student athletes constantly have to prove themselves in the classroom in a way White student athletes are not pressured—whether that pressure comes from coaches, fans, media, professors, or other Black people. It is the Black female athletes who are outshining their Black male counterparts. A 2009 report released by the NCAA on overall Division I Graduation Success Rate (GSR) of the 2002-03 freshman cohort,¹³⁴ reports that the Black female student athlete GSR was 76 percent, while the GSR for Black male athletes was a lowly 57 percent. The GSR for White female student athletes was 90 percent, while the GSR for White male student athletes was 79 percent—a meager 3 percent higher than the GSR for NCAA Division I Black female student athletes.

Of course the media rarely reports on the successful graduation rates and positive social influences of Black female student athletes, specifically, nor female student athletes generally. As is evident in the visual representation data analysis, the media plays a huge role in making

¹³² Joyner-Kersee, *A Kind of Grace: The Autobiography of the World's Greatest Female Athlete*. 95.

¹³³ Karina Turok, *Life and Soul: Portraits of Women Who Move South Africa*, ed. Margie Orford (Cape Town, South Africa: Juta and Company Limited, 2006). 134.

¹³⁴ NCAA, "Overall Division I Freshman-Cohort Graduation Rates 2002-03," (The National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2009).

perceptions seem rational or common sense. For example, in her autobiography, coach Vivian Stringer discusses issues of an imbalanced team portrayal in a 2000 Emmy-nominated documentary film by Peter Schnall entitled *This Is a Game, Ladies*. Stringer critiques, “If I have one complaint about the documentary, it’s that they focused more on the troubled elements of the team than on all the ways in which we were a cohesive group. I understand that a girl who’s flamboyant or one who’s not succeeding makes for a better story than the one who gets straight A’s, does everything she’s supposed to in practice, and goes to church on Sundays, but I still believe there was an imbalance, with the emphasis on the negative.”¹³⁵ The 2007 incident with Don Imus merely repeated this media trend, as he focused on sharing his negative perception of the outer appearance of the Rutgers women’s basketball team, rather than on positive praise and empathy towards their hard play in the championship game. These racial perceptions that are generalized by media and society sting not only Black female athletes, but also Black coaches. Coach Stringer admits to almost feeling guilty for being Black in her reflections on the Imus incident. “I couldn’t help but wonder if the fact that I was black had made our team seem *blacker*, and therefore more open to ridicule and hatred.”¹³⁶ No one should ever be made to feel guilty or badly about being born with dark skin in the United States or South Africa.

As discussed previously, the media also plays a role in dispersal of gendered and sexual perceptions about Black female athletes. When the media often refers to certain sports as being a “man’s sport” or relating the triumphant play of female athletes in certain sports to “playing like a man,” general society and even athletes themselves will sometimes internalize these statements and ideals, ultimately accepting them as rational and common sense. Perhaps more significant

¹³⁵ C.Vivian Stringer, *Standing Tall: A Memoir of Tragedy and Triumph* (New York, NY: Random House Inc., 2008). 239.

¹³⁶ Stringer, *Standing Tall*, 268.

however, is the way in which general society and athletes interpret binary concepts of gender, as well as definitions of masculinity and femininity. Ultimately, based on this research study it appears every person within society comes to their own interpretation of appropriate femininity—that is physical and emotional attributes or behaviors deemed acceptable for women— based on the way they are raised by parents, and a lifetime of social and cultural influences. Generally, South African and U.S. society immerses its citizens in the belief that “*appropriate femininity* focuses on traditionally feminine physical and emotional characteristics or behaviors (e.g. small, weak, beautiful, graceful, emotionally unstable, dependent, self-sacrificing, and concerned for others).”¹³⁷

Fortunately for women, interpretations of appropriate femininity are not fixed. This is why some members of informant’s families and communities were supportive of their athletic participation, although others were not. This is also why informants from the U.S. and South Africa were very split on their feelings of whether there are certain sports women shouldn’t play. The gender and athlete/non-athlete status of the informant did not appear to be an intervening factor in informant response to this question. Therefore, gender appropriate sporting perceptions seems to be reliant on what each individual deems as an appropriate or acceptable behavior for a woman. This notion is supported by informant responses and a number of Black female athlete autobiographical sources. For instance, Coach Stringer, who grew up before the opportunities of Title IX came into effect, shares a memory of being lectured about—and her rejection of—expected gender roles. In her autobiography she recalls, “Once I hit eleven or twelve, adults started talking to me about what girls do and what they don’t do, and a lot of them thought girls

¹³⁷ Emma Wensing and Toni Bruce, "Bending the Rules: Media Representations of Gender During an International Sporting Event," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* Vol.38, no. No.4 (2003).388.

didn't have any place playing sports. It didn't matter—I put my shorts into a paper bag so the neighbors wouldn't know that I was going to play basketball after church.”¹³⁸ Similarly in her autobiography, Chamique Holdsclaw—who grew up reaping the benefits of Title IX, having been born in 1977—discusses her annoyance with the ways in which prescribed gender roles hindered her childhood sports participation at the Boys and Girls Club:

I hated it because the activities were organized by gender. The boys played sports in the gym. The girls were supposed to do arts and crafts and other things like that. I wasn't an arts and crafts kind of girl, that much was obvious...I'd watch the boys in the gym, and already—I was eleven or twelve—I knew that's where I wanted to be. That's where I belonged: in the gym, playing ball.¹³⁹

Optimistically, many South African and U.S. informants feel women should play any sport they desire. In fact, the only sport mentioned by both South African and U.S. informants that *should not* be played by women was rugby. U.S informants also cited the sports of football and wrestling, while South African informants also cited boxing and soccer as sports some feel women should not play. The reasons given by those South African and U.S. informants who feel there are sports women should not play has to do with the physical contact involved in those sports and a belief that those sports are “too rough” for women's bodies to handle. Again, these sentiments have a direct connection to the specific informant's belief of what is appropriate gender behavior and that certain sports are in fact “men's sports,” regardless of whether women are capable of performing the same athletic skills within those sports as men.

The perceptions that “Black female athletes are ‘manly’ or lacking in ‘femininity’ and “Black female athletes are probable lesbians based on appearance or participation in certain sports” can be explained in part by individual interpretations of “appropriate femininity.” For

¹³⁸ Stringer, *Standing Tall*, 28.

¹³⁹ Holdsclaw, *Chamique Holdsclaw: On Family, Focus, and Basketball*. 37.

example, Jackie Joyner-Kersey is best known for her track and field accomplishments, but she also desired to play basketball in junior high. Her parents were supportive of her participation in track and field, but had to be persuaded to let her participate in basketball because “while they were comfortable with the notion of girls’ track, they associated basketball with men and boys and didn’t think girls should be playing it...I’m embarrassed to admit it, but my parents thought if I played basketball, I’d become a lesbian.”¹⁴⁰ Never once feeling “unfeminine” throughout her sports participation, Joyner-Kersey offers a stance on the lesbian-label within sport similar to that of some informants of this research study:

Despite the advances female athletes have made and the growing popularity of women’s tennis, golf, basketball, softball and soccer, the negative attitudes persist. It’s true that there are gay women participating sports. But I don’t know whether they are more prevalent in athletics than they are in other professions...I believe that many of the people who continue to label all female athletes as lesbians and shy away from women’s sports for that reason are not only intolerant and prejudiced, they’re also enemies of women’s athletics. The labels and scare tactics are a way to justify their narrow-minded opinions and keep female athletics from succeeding.¹⁴¹

Sociologists Blinde and Taub explain that “the lesbian label, representing a violation of sexuality norms, is based on the idea that women who challenge traditional gender-role behavior cannot be ‘real’ women.”¹⁴² The existence of these “manly” and “lesbian” perceptions is also explained by history as well. South African gender roles kept young girls busy with domestic chores, affording them very little leisure time, “while the organization of rural production afforded boys substantial freedom from parental supervision and encouraged the development of a male athletic

¹⁴⁰ Joyner-Kersey, *A Kind of Grace: The Autobiography of the World's Greatest Female Athlete*.

83.

¹⁴¹ Joyner-Kersey, *A Kind of Grace*, 86.

¹⁴² Elaine Blinde and Diane Taub, "Women Athletes as Falsely Accused Deviants: Managing the Lesbian Stigma," *The Sociological Quarterly* Vol.3, no. 4 (1992).

culture.”¹⁴³ Historically in the United States, “the upper class stereotype was certainly not a robust and athletic female...sport or any systematic physical exercise was seen as having deleterious rather than beneficial effects.”¹⁴⁴ Therefore, these historical notions of female athleticism as being uncharacteristic of a woman are still lingering in the minds of those who place the manly/unfeminine perception on Black female athletes, which ultimately works to deter some females from sports participation altogether. For instance, Zina Garrison’s sister tried to tell her mother that she shouldn’t let Zina play sports “because girls shouldn’t be sweating like that all the time. She thought it was unladylike to sweat.”¹⁴⁵ Cynthia Cooper points out in her autobiography that, “some girls are leery of playing competitive sports because they’re afraid of being labeled too masculine.”¹⁴⁶

It’s true that the sports of basketball and track & field remain highly concentrated with Black female athletes in the U.S.—two sports that have been historically associated with the lesbian label—but there is absolutely no statistical data that establishes a relationship between lesbians and sport. Although interviews with lesbian athletes reveals a “sense of comfort” and “shared understanding” within the sports community among those they trust, most are hesitant to publicly embrace the label; especially high profile athletes. Based on informant responses, the perception of lesbianism that is placed upon Black female athletes is extremely controversial and is often fiercely denied or hidden by some athletes and professional athletic organizations. As

¹⁴³ Peter Alegi, *Laduma! Soccer, Politics and Society in South Africa* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004). 8.

¹⁴⁴ Padma Prakash, "Women and Sports: Extending Limits to Physical Expression," *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 25, no. 17 (1990). 19.

¹⁴⁵ Garrison, Zina: *My Life in Women's Tennis*. 85.

¹⁴⁶ Cynthia Cooper, *She Got Game: My Personal Odyssey* (New York, NY: Warner Books, 1999). 180.

U.S. informant Laura discussed, the WNBA seems to operate under a “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy, as the organization desires to market women’s basketball as a predominantly heterosexual group of women athletes. In her autobiography, Lisa Leslie shares a similar sentiment to informant Laura about the image of the WNBA:

I believe the best and strongest image is one that shows the unique beauty and strength of women. I think it is important for us to have our hair combed and to look presentable when we go out on the court... What happens in the bedroom needs to stay in the bedroom, regardless of a player’s sexual orientation. Just focus on upholding the integrity of the game and the positive image of the league. If more players took that approach, the WNBA could flourish indefinitely.¹⁴⁷

For the players of the WNBA then—both heterosexual and lesbian—it seems that the smart choice is to support a public display of heterosexuality, regardless of one’s sexual orientation because failure to do so will jeopardize the longevity of one’s career. Within tennis, Zina Garrison shares that “the gay lifestyle is one of those seldom-discussed issues of concern on the women’s tour,”¹⁴⁸ but what she didn’t like about touring “was if you didn’t have a relationship with a guy or somebody didn’t know that you liked guys, people just assumed you were gay because you were a tennis player... In any type of sport, we are thought of as being gay first and then a woman—until we prove otherwise.”¹⁴⁹

There is a huge difference between the struggles of homosexual male and female athletes. The harmful stereotype of manly lesbian “sustains the masculine symbolism of sport, while within athletic culture lesbian athletes are shunned as secretive figures whose dangerous

¹⁴⁷ Leslie, *Don’t Let the Lipstick Fool You*. 280.

¹⁴⁸ Garrison, *Zina: My Life in Women's Tennis*. 154.

¹⁴⁹ Garrison, *My Life in Women’s Tennis*, 155.

sexuality could topple all the painstakingly won achievements of women's sport.”¹⁵⁰ Society assumes male athletes are heterosexual, even though a handful of professional male athletes have publicly admitted their homosexuality. Heterosexual male athletes don't have to consciously or subconsciously support homophobia because they (most likely) don't think any of their teammates or male athlete friends are gay.

Heterosexual female athletes like Garrison, Leslie, several informants of this study, and this researcher, have all consciously or subconsciously supported homophobia in our rejection/anger/humiliation at being labeled lesbian—even though many heterosexual Black female athletes have at least one lesbian teammate or fellow athlete they consider to be a good friend. Clearly, popularity and economics can play a huge role in the reasoning of many professional Black female athletes who may hide their homosexuality or vehemently assert their heterosexuality since revealing one's homosexuality can result in a loss of fans, sponsorship, and endorsement money, not only for individuals, but also for all female athletes. Overall revenue could drop due to lack of fan support (i.e- WNBA's heterosexual marketing scheme as discussed by U.S. informant Laura).

Based on data from this research study, another reason why heterosexual Black female athletes may feel increased pressure to denounce homosexuality is for fear that men will not approach or consider them for dating, relationships, and marriage. Informants from the United States and South Africa both stated that they feel men are probably “intimidated” at pursuing Black female athletes for dates, relationships, and marriage. Informants stated this intimidation stems from the Black female athlete's “muscularity,” “fear that she is a lesbian,” and the “overall

¹⁵⁰ Susan K. Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1994). 268.

U.S. media presentation of Black women.” South African and U.S. informants also feel men may be discouraged or encouraged to pursue a Black female athlete romantically depending on his accepted gender norms for them. In her autobiography, Cynthia Cooper recalls being completely ignored by boys while she was growing up, but noticed a difference in male attitude towards dating female athletes in the late 1990s:

When I was growing up, my involvement in athletics didn’t just keep me off the A-list of girls to date, it kept me off every list, period. Boys wouldn’t look at girl athletes as anything other than friends. A generation later, attitudes have changed. Many men who would never have looked twice at female athletes now find themselves attracted to us. They respect our accomplishments.¹⁵¹

Although things are looking up for heterosexual Black female athletes desiring romantic relationships, not every man has changed his tune. U.S. male athlete informant Kyle discussed his apprehension about dating a Black female athlete. He now admits the error in his perceptions, as his fiancée, Eve, is a former collegiate basketball player like himself. Lisa Leslie’s non-athlete husband Michael Lockwood prejudged her based on her athlete status when a friend initially told him to telephone her. In Leslie’s autobiography he writes, “I already knew she was a basketball player; but I will never forget telling him, ‘Man, I don’t know. Those girls can be kind of rough.’”¹⁵² In addition, Coach Stringer mentions just how important dating and social acceptance by boys can be to some female athletes:

Although it’s unfortunate, I’ve heard many female athletes deny who they are for the sake of the men in their lives...I’ve seen a lot of very talented athletes drop out, especially in their teens, when dating and getting social acceptance are so important, and it’s a shame. I always tell my girls to find someone who allows them to be who they are.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Cooper, *She Got Game: My Personal Odyssey*. 180-181.

¹⁵² Leslie, *Don't Let the Lipstick Fool You*. 242.

¹⁵³ Stringer, *Standing Tall: A Memoir of Tragedy and Triumph*. 40-1.

On the optimistic side of things, however, based on the informants of this study, it seems that male athletes are perhaps more open to pursuing Black female athletes for dating, relationships and marriage than non-athlete males. Male athlete informants of this study said this is because athletes are generally attracted to other athletes. They like that female athletes share interest in sports, and they prefer the physique of athletic women. Male hesitation in romantic involvement with Black female athletes is supported via some Black female athlete autobiographies, while some of these autobiographers would also likely support the informant sentiment that male athletes are more open to romantic involvement with Black female athletes. Coach Vivian Stringer is married to a former male collegiate gymnast and Jackie Joyner-Kersey married a former collegiate track & field coach.

According to this research study, athletes tend to understand the lives of athletes more so than non-athletes do, as both U.S. and South African athlete informants revealed feeling that non-athletes generally don't understand the commitment and passion behind playing sports. A few U.S. and South African athlete informants cited non-athletes having "different interests" than they had and at times lack of understanding about why athletes would choose sport as a career over a "normal" job. Additionally, a few South African softball informants, who play at the highest level for their country, expressed frustration at non-athlete friends who get upset at them when they cannot make certain functions organized by these friends. This lack of understanding seems to be why the majority of U.S. and South African informants also reported feeling that non-athletes perceive them in negative ways, using words like "arrogant," "aggressive," "rough," "lesbians," and "intense," to describe how non-athletes likely perceive them.

Overall, the similar perceptions of Black female athletes in the United States and South Africa are deeply rooted in racist and sexist ideology. No Black female athlete should feel badly for being born with dark skin or feel pressured to reveal their sexual orientation. It was important to capture how these research informants self-identify and cope with the perceptions placed on them. When South African and U.S. Black female athlete informants encounter perceptions based on race, sexual orientation and lack of femininity, they use the coping mechanisms of active resistance and internalization. In their 2004 article on “Conceptualizing Resistance,” Hollander and Einwohrer explain that resistance comes in variable forms—with acts of resistance that may be collective or individual, locally confined or widespread—and “the targets of resistance also vary, from individuals to groups and organizations to institutions and social structures.”¹⁵⁴

Active resistance, which can also be referred to as “overt resistance, is behavior that is visible and readily recognized by both targets and observers as resistance and, further, is intended to be recognized as such.”¹⁵⁵ U.S. informants actively resist perceptions placed on them through laughter and through overall rejection of society’s binary gender/sexuality construct. South African informants actively resisted perceptions placed on them by personally confronting the position of the person(s) misperceiving them and by choosing to surround themselves only with other people who have the same beliefs that they have about race, gender, and sexuality. Two autobiographies of well-known Black female athletes share similar tales of active resistance. As an adolescent, Chamique Holdsclaw would not let the gender roles prescribed on her by society stop her from playing basketball at the Boys and Girls Club,

¹⁵⁴ Jocelyn Hollander and Rachel Einwohrer. “Conceptualizing Resistance.” *Sociological Forum* Vol. 19, no. 4 (Dec. 2004): 533-54.

¹⁵⁵ Hollander and Einwohrer, “Conceptualizing Resistance,” 536.

proclaiming in her autobiography, “I didn’t tolerate it when people told me I couldn’t do something or be something just because I was a girl...It only took a few weeks before the counselors at the Boys and Girls Club were letting me out of pottery classes and into the basketball games in the big gym...I was the only girl who played.”¹⁵⁶ And Zina Garrison explains in her autobiography that she never enjoyed getting immediately perceived as a lesbian, but she did not let that lead to a resistance in forming friendships with lesbian and gay athletes, stating, “forming friendships with gay people was never a problem for me because I have people in my family who are gay...My attitude has always been if that’s what a person wants or needs to do, that’s okay. God loves us all, and he loves our different ways.”¹⁵⁷

Internalization, which we can define generally as the processes through which people become invested, emotionally or cognitively, in cultural information,¹⁵⁸ is a potentially hazardous coping mechanism employed by some Black female athletes in South Africa and the United States. Internalizing perceptions based on gender and sexual orientation caused Black female athletes of this study from the United States and South Africa to become hyper-aware of their own outward appearances, question their “normality” within society overall, question their decisions to participate in sports, and question whether sports involvement has had a direct negative impact on their romantic relationships. Internalization, however, should be viewed as an expected coping mechanism of some Black female athletes. Hargreaves (2000) explains that when heterosexual female athletes are confronted with the lesbian label, the compulsion to overemphasize heterosexuality is found to be more common in women’s sports that are

¹⁵⁶ Holdsclaw, *Chamique Holdsclaw: On Family, Focus, and Basketball*. 44.

¹⁵⁷ Garrison, *Zina: My Life in Women's Tennis*. 154-55.

¹⁵⁸ S.G. Carlisle, "Synchronizing Karma: The Internalization and Externalization of a Shared, Personal Belief," *Ethos* Vol. 36, no. 2 (June 2008). 198.

perceived as traditionally male, which are most at risk as being labeled lesbian—and Black female athletes in the United States tend to be highly concentrated in sports perceived as traditionally male. Internalization of perceptions can even affect successful famous Black female athletes in negative emotional and physical ways. For example, Jackie Joyner-Kersey shares in her autobiography, “I’ve never had an easy time ignoring negative comments—particularly unjustified ones. I’ve always been sensitive to them, allowing them to upset me more than they should.”¹⁵⁹ Zina Garrison internalized a perception of negative body image in comparison to White female bodies to the extent that she made herself physically ill. She shares painfully in her autobiography that, “I was never comfortable with the way I looked, especially when I compared myself to the trim white girls on tour. For more than three years I threw up every day, hoping to alter an image of ugliness I saw when I looked in the mirror at my naked body.”¹⁶⁰

It’s clear that sports involvement, combined with the perceptions placed on them by society, shapes the self-identity of South African and U.S. Black female athletes significantly. Informants connected their athletic experiences with more informed perspectives on racial and national identities, as well as definitions of sexuality and femininity. Although the process was admittedly harder for some than others, South African and U.S. Black female athlete informants also expressed that their experiences as athletes aided in their eventual devaluation of negative opinions and societal perceptions, ultimately building their self-esteem. A building of self-esteem and increased positive self-identity was discussed within a few Black female autobiographies as well. Now a former bulimic, Garrison asserts to readers that “you’ve got to be happy with your own self-image and not worry about how you think others might see you...I’ve

¹⁵⁹ Joyner-Kersey, *A Kind of Grace: The Autobiography of the World's Greatest Female Athlete*. 46.

¹⁶⁰ Garrison, *Zina: My Life in Women's Tennis*. 16.

come to appreciate the importance of developing strong self-esteem because mine was so low for so long.”¹⁶¹ Coach Stringer also shares a message with her readers that she shares with her players, which is “By all means, appreciate the opportunity you have to be involved in sports, but *don’t let it define you*... There’s far more to me than simply being a basketball coach, and my girls are far more than just basketball players.”¹⁶² Cynthia Cooper reflects on her experience as a woman and an athlete in her autobiography: “The self-confidence I gained as an independent woman capable of making her own decisions made me a more assertive athlete, and my success as an athlete gave me more confidence as a woman.”¹⁶³

Based on U.S. informant Laura’s narrative about her “coming out” process as a Black female athlete lesbian, it appears that the life experiences of the U.S. lesbian Black female athlete can be confusing, stressful, and complex due to the impact of societal perceptions on self-identity. The Black female athlete’s management of the lesbian stereotype is very important. According to Blinde and Taub, lesbian athletes (as well as heterosexual athletes) have a choice of three stigma management mechanisms—concealment, deflection, and normalization. To prevent association with the lesbian label, women athletes sometimes simply conceal information about their athleticism.¹⁶⁴ Deflection occurs when the stigmatized athlete “attempts to accentuate the significance of nonsport roles and attributes.”¹⁶⁵ Through normalization, “the individual has no

¹⁶¹ Garrison, *Zina: My Life in Women's Tennis*, 136.

¹⁶² Stringer, *Standing Tall: A Memoir of Tragedy and Triumph*. 241-42.

¹⁶³ Cooper, *She Got Game: My Personal Odyssey*. 108.

¹⁶⁴ Elaine Blinde and Diane Taub. "Women Athletes as Falsely Accused Deviants: Managing the Lesbian Stigma." *The Sociological Quarterly* Vol.3, no. 4 (1992): 521-33.

¹⁶⁵ Blinde and Taub, “Women Athletes as Falsely Accused Deviants: Managing the Lesbian Stigma,” 530.

choice but to directly confront the stigma.”¹⁶⁶ With the way U.S. and South African societies are today in their unsteady acceptance and ineffective protection of homosexual citizens, it is understandable why many lesbian athletes choose to publicly conceal their true lesbian self-identities. In the U.S., the political and social debate over homosexual rights and marriages rages on. In November 2010, South African representatives at the United Nations voted in favor of removing the words “sexual orientation” from a resolution that condemns extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions and other killings. This happened despite the fact that “sexual orientation” is a phrase explicitly included in the South African Bill of Rights. The South African LGBTI organization, Gay Umbrella, expressed their concern with South African government, stating, “The recent vote at the UN is a warning sign that LGBT rights in South Africa are not guaranteed and we will do everything in our power to mobilize our members to stand strong to protect their rights.”¹⁶⁷

Differences

On the whole, South African non-athlete and athlete informants expressed feelings of being marginalized on a national sporting level. They shared that this marginalization is the reason why they usually think of foreign (i.e. U.S. and Jamaican, rather than other Africans) athletes when they hear the phrase “Black female athlete.” However, South African informants expressed their knowledge of the existence of great Black female athletes within their own country and that great Black female athletes have been present throughout their country’s history, even under apartheid. This difference in national and local marginalization is clearly

¹⁶⁶ Blinde and Taub, “Women Athletes as Falsely Accused Deviants: Managing the Lesbian Stigma,” 530.

¹⁶⁷ Joint Working Group. “South Africa’s Vote at the Un Undermines Its Own Constitution.” (November 23, 2010), www.jwg.org.za.

connected to the amount of national media coverage that is devoted to South African female athletes and their sports competitions. When the majority of female sporting coverage is of international women's teams and individuals, South Africans are going to begin identifying with those women athletes, rather than those from their own country.

Two additional perceptions about female athletes in general were identified by South African informants:

1. Women are unable/unfit to play sport
2. Female athletes are not worth investing money into

The perception that “women are unable/unfit to play sport” is said to be held largely by individuals living in rural South African areas, which points to a cultural differences as explanation for the existence of this perception. Alegi explains that in the pre-colonial period, Xhosa, Sotho, and Zulu girls initially shared in more physical recreations with boys (like stick fighting), but then developed separate, less physical amusements (such as role-playing, dancing, and singing) around the time they reached puberty. Eventually, the demand for work in the home truncated young girls' freedom to play, while rural labor afforded boys much more freedom and encouragement to develop their athleticism. With many Black South African rural men *and* women continuing a cultural practice which includes the role of women and young girls tending to tasks within the home, it is understandable why many girls living in rural areas lack sporting opportunities. As many informants commented, more needs to be done at the grassroots level for females who want to participate in South African sport. Without more grassroots sports organization in rural areas, a majority of girls may continue to shy away from sports participation based on the perception that they are unfit to do so.

The perception that “female athletes are not worth investing into” was mentioned by Black athlete informant Siyoli, who further explained that investors may fear the female athletes

they do invest in will unexpectedly get married and/or pregnant and quit sport all together. This perception was not mentioned by any U.S. informants, but U.S. informants did recommend an increase in female athlete sponsorship for the future. This perception is perhaps a rational fear for corporate sponsors to have, due to the male inability to become impregnated and sidelined from sports competition. However, this perception also likely stems from the dominant South African (and U.S.) societal perception that male athletics is superior to female athletics—and therefore more lucrative for sponsors. Publications by Cheryl Roberts support this researcher's reasoning for this perception, as she stated back in 2006 that, "...sportswomen get little recognition in the media or financial support to pursue their participation, particularly at the elite level. Why do men's sports receive most of the sponsorship and media coverage?"¹⁶⁸

Along the lines of racial perceptions, it seems that economics and class structure also plays a part in why both South African and U.S. informants acknowledge that certain sports are rightly labeled "Black" and "White." In South Africa and the United States, economic well being and social class positioning are historically linked to each country's history of racially discriminatory practices and ideologies. These divergent sporting and economic histories are why the sports considered "Black" and "White" in the U.S. are not exactly the same sports identified by South African informants. In an article published in the scholarly journal *Anthropologica* back in 2004, researchers explain that in South Africa, "soccer has always been characterized as a Black sport, so much so that apparently White individuals who play soccer are said by many Whites to be coloured."¹⁶⁹ In the United States however, soccer has always been

¹⁶⁸ Cheryl Roberts, "Let's Put Women First," *Athlone News* August 9, 2006.

¹⁶⁹ Troy Bielert Connie Anderson, Ryan Jones, "One Country, One Sport, Endless Knowledge: The Anthropological Study of Sports in South Africa," *Anthropologica* Vol. 46, no. 1 (January 1, 2004). 47.

characterized as a White sport, while basketball and track are sports which have continued to have rather high percentages of Black participants. Researchers have suggested that these relatively high percentages in basketball and track “are a function of the inexpensive nature of these sports and the access to them in public facilities and in school physical education.”¹⁷⁰ This researcher was told by a few informants in South Africa that the popularity of netball among Black females is similarly tied to the sport’s inexpensive nature and accessibility within schools.

In addition, location was noted by a few South African informants as a factor that affects the racial composition of sports teams. One example given was that in Johannesburg, softball teams will probably have a higher composition of White players, whereas in Cape Town, the racial composition will be mostly Coloreds. This means that location also affects racial populations of sports teams in South Africa.

Lastly, there are differences when it comes to non-athlete on athlete perceptions and perceptions based on gender/sexual orientation. One South African Black female athlete informant feels as though female non-athletes become more interested in getting involved in sport when they see Black female athletes compete. No U.S. informants reported feeling this way about how non-athletes perceive them, nor did the majority of South African informants. Along the lines of the lesbian perception, one South African non-athlete male informant stated that he feels the lesbian perception exists because some Black female athletes perceive themselves on the same level as men. This particular informant’s belief could stem from his cultural beliefs and/or a general acceptance of societal sexism and homophobia.

¹⁷⁰ Carole Oglesby Tina Sloan Green, Alpha Alexander, Nikki Franke, *Black Women in Sport*, Aahperd Publications (Reston, VA: American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 1981). 9.

The perception that “Black female athletes lack intelligence” seems to be placed upon and affect U.S. Black female athletes more so than South African Black female athletes and it is not quite clear why this occurs based on this study. In the United States, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) was founded in 1906 and began administering women’s athletics programs in 1980. In comparison, the South African collegiate sporting organization, USSA (United Sport South Africa), is still in its infancy. Established on December 8, 1992 as the South African Student Sports Union (SASSU), “SASSU based its founding principles on a commitment to promote a peaceful, united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society through the medium of sport and sporting contact, where all persons are equal, where all students may compete equally in sporting competition and where the tenets of affirmative action apply based on the equitable provision and distribution of sporting facilities.”¹⁷¹ The NCAA was established for the protection of young men who played football at colleges in order to protect them against the dangerous and exploitative athletics practices of the time. The intellectual value of the student-athlete is not explained in either organization website history.

Based on U.S. informant data and previous case studies, it appears that the expectations for academic success are much lower for Black female athletes than their White counterparts. U.S. informant Eve discussed the different expectations some college professors *and* athletic administrators have about Black female athlete academic success. This researcher has had university professors surprised at the fact she was an athlete due to her academic success. Additionally, in a 2003 published case study dealing with the control and surveillance of Black female athletes in a Midwestern university, anthropologist Kevin Michael Foster noted that “staff

¹⁷¹ University Sports South Africa. "The History of a Unified Student Sport Movement in South Africa." ZAbra.co.za, www.ussa.org.za/1history.htm.

members routinely ascribed black student athletes with a racial identity that characterized them as immature, academically deficient, and sexually overactive”¹⁷² and “coaches, advisors, and others routinely prejudged how student athletes were likely to perform as students according to their ascribed racial identity.”¹⁷³

The majority of U.S. and South African informants reported feeling that non-athletes likely perceive female athletes in a negative way. However, White U.S athlete informant Jillian, reported feeling that female non-athletes are probably jealous of female athletes. She cited that female non-athletes are probably envious of their athletic talents and the fact that many female athletes are often good friends with male athletes that female non-athletes wish to spend time with and date. Sadly, this jealousy could prompt female non-athletes to purposely place perceptions of lesbianism and unfemininity on female athletes in order to make themselves feel more valuable for male athletes to associate with.

It’s not clear whether U.S. Black male athletes feel that Black female athletes are more likely to be lesbians than White female athletes or vice versa. As an explanation as to why Black female athletes may seek homosexual relationships, one male athlete informant pointed to the lack of Black male options—as many Black males in the U.S. are incarcerated and not enrolled in college. In addition, it was offered that women in general may seek homosexual relationships because of certain “levels of comfort” that exist between women. As was previously stated, there is no evidence to suggest a predominance of lesbianism within sport itself, nor is there evidence

¹⁷² Kevin Michael Foster, "Panopticonics: The Control and Surveillance of Black Female Athletes in a Collegiate Athletic Program," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* Vol. 34, no. No. 3 (2003). 303.

¹⁷³ Foster, "Panopticonics: The Control and Surveillance of Black Female Athletes in a Collegiate Athletic Program," 310.

of a predominance of lesbianism among Black female athletes in comparison to non-Black female athletes.

On the issue of femininity as it relates to race, U.S. informants feel that it is not that Black female athletes are usually less-feminine than White female athletes, but that they are perceived as such because of how Black women in general are perceived in U.S. society. Throughout U.S. history, Black women were never thought to possess the same level of femininity—if any—as White women. Historians of African-American women agree that African-Americans generally adhered to a much more active ideal of femininity than did their white counterparts,¹⁷⁴ meaning that unlike White women, participation in physical activity and labor was not seen as an inhibitor of femininity, motherhood, or matrimony among Black women. African American women's achievements in what White supremacist patriarchal society has historically deemed “mannish” sports have worked to reinforce painful stereotypes of Black women as less feminine or womanly than White women.

Finally, aside from utilizing internalization and active resistance as coping mechanisms, some U.S. informants also coped with negative perceptions through passive resistance. Although widely associated with nonviolent political protest, passive resistance should be understood as “covert resistance, which refers to acts that are intentional yet go unnoticed by their targets, although they are recognized as resistance by other, culturally aware observers.”¹⁷⁵ These U.S. informants reported being emotionally unaffected by the lesbian perception and did not verbally or physically act against their accusers; however their continuing presence within sport as

¹⁷⁴ Cindy Himes Gissendanner, "African-American Women and Competitive Sport, 1920-1960," in *Women, Sport, and Culture*, ed. Susan Birrell and Cheryl Cole (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1994). 88.

¹⁷⁵ Jocelyn Hollander and Rachel Einwahrer, "Conceptualizing Resistance," *Sociological Forum* Vol. 19, no. 4 (Dec. 2004). 545.

heterosexual Black female athletes effectively combats the validity of the broad perception that all Black female athletes (or all those who play certain sports) are lesbians. These women did/do not quit playing sports when faced with unwarranted perceptions about their sexuality and femininity—a great example to set for young girls desiring to play sport. Similarly, those Black female athletes who are perceived as likely to be academically deficient yet do well in school without directly confronting those who doubt(ed) their intelligence, are effectively combating the perception that Black female athletes lack intelligence.

CHAPTER 6: Why Her Story Matters: Complex Racial Relationships & the Future

This chapter analyzes and interprets the findings. The chapter has been organized by subheadings that directly align with the themes that emerged from the data and this study's research questions. In the analysis, I searched within the categories and subcategories of each theme to compare and contrast informant data. As a secondary level of analysis, the relevant theory, secondary source analysis, and autobiography/biography content are tied into these comparisons and contrasts within each theme.

Theme Three: Complex Racial Relationships

As South Africa and the United States are countries grounded in past and present complex racial relationships, other research questions sought to investigate the various positive and negative racial relationships Black female athletes encounter within their unique life experiences. Specifically: What role, if any, does race play in the relationships between Black and White female athletes? What is the racial dynamic among relationships of Black and White female athletes and their coaches, fans, and romantic partners? And what can be gained from examining these assorted athletic racial relationships?

The research informant data revealed that complex racial relationships exist for Black female athletes among teammates, other athletes, non-athletes, romantic partners, and coaches. Here, the similar positive and negative complex relationships experienced by South African and

U.S. informants are presented and analyzed first, followed by the differences. Differences are organized under subheadings for each country.

Similarities

Both U.S. and South African informants shared that they have experienced positive and negative racial relationships with teammates, other athletes, coaches, non-athletes, and romantic partners. Both U.S. and South African informants acknowledge the positive impact sports participation has had on their Black/White racial relationships. Black and White female athletes learn about one another's culture, which helps to dispel myths and identify societal misperceptions. In some instances, sports involvement is how these women got to know people of other races better, whether those other people were teammates, other athletes or non-athletes. A few South African and U.S. female athlete informants discussed how starting sport at a young age helped them see things within teammates of different races that have nothing to do with skin color, and South African non-athlete informant Zolani acknowledged his belief that sport can be a site of positive racial healing. For instance, White former South African Olympic runner Zola Budd recalls that her childhood was shaped by Black athletic friendships, rather than White friendships. In her mini narrative, in *Life and Soul*, Budd writes, "I did not have white friends. My friends were black boys who were ingenious at devising different kinds of games...the lowest moment for me, even today, is that people associate me with the apartheid regime."¹⁷⁶

Negatively, some U.S. and South African Black female athlete informants reported experiencing racism from teammates while participating in White-dominated sports. These informants described their racist athletic experiences as being "hateful" and "painful." This

¹⁷⁶ Karina Turok, *Life and Soul: Portraits of Women Who Move South Africa*, ed. Margie Orford (Cape Town, South Africa: Juta and Company Limited, 2006). 64.

experience of racism even caused one South African informant to quit playing the sport of tennis, which she had enjoyed playing very much. General shock and disappointment was felt by some Black female athletes when racist comments came from teammates, as these Black female athletes were under the impression that their White teammates had gained an ability to view them and other Blacks outside of skin color, rather than seeing their Black female teammates as the “exception” to certain stereotypes or as a Black friend they could share racist jokes with (i.e. the experiences of South African informant Siyoli and U.S. informant Ciara).

U.S. and South African informants also shared negative complex racial relationships between Black female athletes and non-athletes and Black female athletes and other athletes. Non-athlete fans who are White can create negative experiences for athletes because of the racism held by the non-athlete fan. For example, during her collegiate career at the University of Tennessee, Chamique Holdsclaw experienced the difference in treatment by White non-athletes of her in comparison to other Blacks. In her autobiography she writes:

People would treat me differently than they would other blacks because I was a popular athlete. I’d catch them at it sometimes. I would go to a store and a lady would be acting like she had this attitude, and someone nearby would say, “Oh! That’s Chamique!” and all of a sudden her attitude changed....I hated that. I hated it when they treated me different than they treated one of my friends who is black but didn’t play sports.¹⁷⁷

The athletic involvement of Black females in White-dominated sport can also lead to complex racial relationships between those Black females participating in White-dominated sports and Black females participating in Black-dominated sports. Black athletes of Black-dominated sports teams may question the other Black sportswoman’s race pride and why that sportswoman spends time getting to know her White athlete teammates when she could just be

¹⁷⁷ Chamique Holdsclaw, *Chamique Holdsclaw: On Family, Focus, and Basketball* (New York, NY: Scribner, 2000). 79.

friends with other Black athletes. South African informant Siyoli discussed this during her interview, and this researcher also encountered questions about her race pride when she was involved in private club and competitive YMCA gymnastics. This researcher's childhood peers would ask if she "wanted to be White" because she participated in the sport of gymnastics and spent time outside of the gym getting to know her teammates, rather than spending social time only with her Black friends.

Lastly, U.S and South African athlete informants also shared having negative racial relationship experiences between themselves and coaches and themselves and romantic partners. Informants from both countries described negative racial relationships being played out on the sporting field, whether it was referees not making proper calls during competition because of one team's race, a coach's allowance of a player's use of racial slurs towards an opponent, or a coach indifferently sharing a racist joke/perception openly with their Black female athlete(s). Two informants also mentioned negative experiences while involved in interracial romantic relationships—South African informant Siyoli discussed her negative internal struggle with self-identity and true romantic feelings due to racist societal perceptions placed on her during the pre-marital phase of her interracial relationship with her now husband. Black U.S. informant Laura shared her revulsion towards a former White female romantic partner who effortlessly referred to a Black person as a "nigger" during conversation.

Differences

South African and United States informants shared a few differences when it came to their experiences of complex racial relationships. Presented first are the South African positive and negative differences within the theme of complex racial relationships, followed by the positive and negative differences from U.S. informants.

South Africa

A difference between the U.S. and South Africa exists in outlooks on romantic relationships between Black athletes and White partners. Two South African athletic informants discussed their positive outlook on the impact of sports involvement in the development of interracial marriages. On the negative side, one Colored non-athlete South African informant mentioned the lingering negative relationship that exists between White female softball players and Colored female softball players—specifically in Johannesburg—as a result of past unfair integration practices.

United States

One U.S. informant and this researcher shared experiences of positive racial relationships with a few White coaches. Though some U.S. Black female athlete informants discussed positive friendships with White female teammates, a couple of these informants feel there is a difference between their White and Black friendships. These informants cited feeling “closer” and “relating better” to Black female teammates and the existence of “cultural barriers” between themselves and White female teammates. Zina Garrison discusses feeling socially closer to other Black tennis players than White players while on the women’s tour. In her autobiography, she explains that “the few blacks who were a part of the women’s tour at the time frequently spent their social time together. We were able to reach a comfort level with each other that we can’t reach when whites are among us.”¹⁷⁸ Similarly, basketball player Cynthia Cooper had trouble adjusting to her White teammates at the University of Southern California. She had attended a high school that only had two White students enrolled. She reflects on her time at USC in relation to White

¹⁷⁸ Zina Garrison, *Zina: My Life in Women's Tennis* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2001). 149.

people. In her autobiography she notes, “I had a particularly difficult time relating to white students. I’d never had a single white friend in my life.”¹⁷⁹

A view was also shared that White female athletes learn to “fit in” on predominantly Black sports teams, which alludes to the notion that these White athletes are unable to be their true selves on predominantly Black sports teams. No scholarly research has been done regarding this view. It would be of interest to investigate this notion in the future from the perspective of White athletes on predominantly Black sports teams. Interestingly, a U.S. White female athlete informant on a predominantly Black basketball team, reported instances where she felt racial perceptions resulted in a negative racial relationship during athletic competition with her team’s Black point guard. This particular experience is a great example of how Schutte’s concept of rationalization of common sense can work both ways racially. The Black point guard on this White informant’s team may regard her real-life examples of the athletic inferiority of Whites in the sport of basketball not as prejudice or interpretation, but as fact—therefore giving her a justification in her lack of athletic confidence in the White informant teammate.

Theme Four: Future Recommendations and Expectations

The final section of this study makes recommendations for the future planning and practice of women’s sports and charts expectations of South African and U.S. informants regarding female athletics in their respective countries. Specifically, I sought to answer the following questions: What do athletes and fans expect to see for the future of South African and U.S. women’s athletics? Is what they expect to see different from what they *want* to see? And what do they see for the future of Black female athletes specifically within their countries?

¹⁷⁹ Cynthia Cooper, *She Got Game: My Personal Odyssey* (New York, NY: Warner Books, 1999). 52.

The research informant data revealed that these men and women are recommending and/or expecting the future of female athletics generally and Black female athletes specifically, to center around the aspects of economics, public support, exposure, and structural change. Here, the similar future recommendations and positive and negative expectations held by South African and U.S. informants are presented and analyzed first, followed by the differences. Differences are organized under subheadings for each country.

Similarities

Informants from the United States and South Africa share a number of similar recommendations they feel will improve the state of women's athletics in their respective countries. In both South Africa and the U.S., Black female athlete informants stressed the importance of continued support of athletic pursuits from family and community. South African Olympic heptathlon athlete, Janice Josephs, stresses the importance of fan support to her athletic success in her mini-narrative, in *Life and Soul*, stating "The fans play a big role. It always makes me hungry for more, makes me train harder in order to give them a good game."¹⁸⁰

Increased endorsements for female athletes were also recommended by U.S and South African informants. In South Africa, increased endorsements were recommended for women's netball and women's soccer, while more unisex product endorsements were recommended for future U.S. female athletes. Endorsements are important for increased respect and economic development of Black female athletes in South Africa and the United States, as the autobiographies of U.S. tennis player Zina Garrison and South Africa's marathon runner Argentina Senda point out. Garrison pointed out in 2001 that "Black superstars receive the same endorsement opportunities as white superstars, but some segments of white America are slow or

¹⁸⁰ Turok, *Life and Soul: Portraits of Women Who Move South Africa*. 96.

reluctant to give black stars the same respect and recognition that they do white stars on the same level.”¹⁸¹ And as Senda began achieving success in her competitions, “sponsors started to call, and free shoes and training supplies started to come her way.”¹⁸² For many South African athletes, particularly those in rural areas, acquiring necessary training supplies can be very difficult, which makes the dispersal of endorsements that much more vital to future Black female athletic success.

Informants from South Africa recommend increased salaries and this researcher recommends increased salaries for WNBA players. While male basketball players belonging to the NBA and a great number of overseas clubs can earn millions in a single basketball season, the majority of female basketball players in the WNBA have to play basketball *all year* in the WNBA and overseas (or take on second jobs) to make a comfortable living. According to the electronic version of the WNBA ‘s Collective Bargaining Agreement,¹⁸³ the team salary cap for the upcoming 2012 season is \$878,000, with rookies drafted in the top four picks making *at most* \$47, 589 in the first year. Team salary caps for the NBA have been between \$55-\$58 *million* dollars in the seasons spanning 2007-2011, with an NBA rookie picked 30th in the NBA draft making \$877,300 in the first year.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Garrison, Zina: *My Life in Women's Tennis*. 91.

¹⁸² Argentina Senda, *That's Why I Run: The Story of Argentina Senda*, ed. Evelyn Higginbotham (Houghton, South Africa: STE Publishers, 2008). 76.

¹⁸³ The Women’s National Basketball Association Collective Bargaining Agreement can be found online at <http://www.womensbasketballonline.com/wnba/wnbacba08.pdf>, with team salary information beginning on page 59 and rookie salaries on page 255.

¹⁸⁴ The 2011-2012 NBA Rookie salary scale can be found online at http://basketball.realgm.com/nba/info/rookie_scale, while NBA team salary cap information can be found online at www.cbafaq.com.

Both U.S. and South African informants are also recommending future expansion within women's athletics generally and for Black female athletes specifically. South African informants recommend expansion of facilities, publication of Black female sporting history, and establishing grassroots sports organizations in rural areas. The former South African Minister of Sport, Makhenkesi Stofile (2004-2010), also agreed with the need for grassroots sports expansion as he was quoted in a 2009 interview with Cheryl Roberts as being in support of government intervention in sport—intervention that “should be focused on the grassroots level where community sport need resources.”¹⁸⁵ Having a Minister of Sport with this mindset towards grassroots expansion certainly shined a light of hope for the future of South African female athletics, particularly for the many potential Black female athletes living in rural and underprivileged economic communities. Unfortunately, the current South African Minister of Sport, Mr. Fikile Mbalula, has not offered much hope for the future of South African sportswomen through support of grassroots expansion. U.S. informants, on the other hand, recommend expansion of media, geared towards female athletic competitions and entertainment programs that include Black female athletes as characters. While the creation of the website espnW is certainly a step in the right direction for U.S. female athletics, one would hope to see it expand to television in the near future. Regrettably, it seems very unlikely that any future televised entertainment programs will include Black female athletes as main characters.

Lastly, U.S. and South African informants both recommend structural changes for women's athletics. In South Africa, structural changes are desired through national quota policies, coaching, collegiate sports organization, and effective grassroots programming. U.S.

¹⁸⁵ Cheryl Roberts, "Corporates Play a Different Game: Minister of Sport Makhenkesi Stofile Tells Cheryl Roberts Why Sport Can't Be Left to the Mercy of Market Forces," *Cape Argus*, July 29 2009.

informants recommend an effort be made in structurally changing racial perceptions through atypical sports exposure (i.e. putting more tennis racquets or soccer fields within Black communities). In order for these South African structural changes to take place in the future, this researcher believes the effort must be two-fold. First, there must be strong national government intervention when it comes to altering South African national quota policies, coaching policies, collegiate sports organization, and of course grassroots programming. Second, there must be organization among athletes and community members themselves to put pressure on government officials and to come up with plausible agendas, goals, and demands they want to see met through these structural changes.

Creating change in racial perceptions of sports in the United States through structural changes will be difficult, as this researcher feels it will take more than increased numbers of Black athletes participating in sports associated as “White” to change people’s overall perception of that sport as a “White” sport. As George Schutte found in his analysis of Black-White race relations in the United States, “the association of African Americans as a category with poverty, unemployment, low-status jobs, and violence gives rise to stereotypes”¹⁸⁶—that is, an increase in Blacks within sports dominated by Whites will not necessarily change the way in which those Blacks are perceived by society. However, that does not mean it would hurt to try and increase more interest and access to White dominated sports within Black communities. Zina Garrison feels that “to get more minorities involved in tennis, we have to get out there in inner-city

¹⁸⁶ Gerhard Schutte, *What Racists Believe: Race Relations in South Africa and the United States* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc, 1995). 346.

schools, parks, and recreational centers to let them know it's possible and to make them want to play.”¹⁸⁷

When it comes to future expectations, South African and U.S. informants have no similar positive expectations for women's athletics. This is due to the fact that most U.S. and South African informants have similar negative expectations about the future of women's athletics within their respective countries. Informants from both countries expressed hopeful sentiments, but feel change is far away. Informants feel women's athletics won't be on the same level as men's athletics in the near future because women's athletics and athletes don't get the sponsorships, fan support, media exposure, and investments that men's athletics and athletes receive.

Differences

South African informants based in Cape Town recommended increased funding for women's athletics nationally and especially for women's softball, which is considered an amateur sport. South African informants also noted the need for a new sporting infrastructure at the collegiate level that is similar to the NCAA in the United States. Along the lines of future expectations, there are different positive expectations held by South African and U.S. informants. Four U.S. informants have positive expectations about the future of women's athletics. These U.S. informants expect increased professional athletic competitions, increased endorsements, television exposure that equals that of men's sports, and more female athlete popularity. South African informant Nozodwa shares a positive expectation at the impact the men's 2010 World Cup will have on women's soccer within the country—hoping that South Africa will also host the women's World Cup in the future.

¹⁸⁷ Garrison, *Zina: My Life in Women's Tennis*. 193.

There are also different negative expectations held by certain South African and U.S. informants. South African informant Melanie does not have high expectations for a future with true racial unity within sport because of what she feels are ineffective sports practices and policies in transformation and development (i.e. racial quota systems and development leagues). U.S. informant Eve expects the WNBA will fold in the future due to the organization's lack of fans and low television viewing ratings. The WNBA certainly could fold in the future, but this could perhaps be avoided if the WNBA considered moving the season from the summer months to the same months as the NBA—maybe even try to organize double-header games with NBA teams in the same or nearby cities. Only time will prove whether informants of this research study had correct positive and/or negative expectations about the future of U.S. and South African women's athletics generally, and for Black female athletes specifically. One thing is certain however—as long as there are sporting opportunities for women in South Africa and the United States, small or large, talented Black female athletes will continue to emerge.

CONCLUSION: She's Only Just Begun to Live...In Academia

In the final paragraphs of their 2010 work, *Out of Bounds: When Scholarship Athletes become Academic Scholars*, authors and current University of California-Berkeley professors of Education, Jabari Mahiri and Derek Van Rhee, share poignant remarks about how identities are shaped and interact within the spaces of sport and school:

The social construction of identity through participation in these fields will inevitably be shaped by the particular cultural and historical conditions. These conditions are affected at all times by the reigning structure of power within and between cultural identities based upon race, class, gender, and sexuality. As such, the determination of who possesses the social power to participate within these social practices (i.e., the power to play, which positions to inhabit, as well as the strategies and tactics of play) depends upon the historical structures confining or affirming social and physical mobility within particular spaces. However, players as active agents continually confront these cultural systems of power, at times trespassing within spaces previously thought closed to them, culturally forbidden arenas of activity.¹⁸⁸

In other words, athletes can be socially (and even physically) confined during their athletic experience based on dominant ideologies surrounding race, class, gender, and sexuality—a confinement the athlete himself/herself has the power to break through. Although Mahiri and

¹⁸⁸ Jabari & Derek Van Rhee, *Out of Bounds: When Scholarship Athletes Become Academic Scholars*, ed. Joe L. Kincheloe and Shirley R. Steinberg, vol. 363, *Studies in the Postmodern Theory of Education* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2010). 131.

Van Rheenen focus on collegiate student athletes who became academic scholars, the same conclusions could be made about the shaping and interaction of identities through the sporting and life experiences of the Black female athletes in this study. These informants serve as active (and in some instances, passive) agents who challenge and/or accommodate prescribed cultural systems of power based upon race, class, gender, and sexuality.

The purpose of this study was to comparatively examine the past and present state of the Black female athlete in the United States and South Africa, focusing on the years between 1972 and 2010, through the lenses of image, perception and personal narrative. Unique and interdisciplinary, this study utilized oral narrative and critical ethnography research approaches to collect and analyze qualitative data through face-to-face and e-mail correspondence interviews, the incorporation and analysis of archival, theoretical, and cinematic research, and the collection and interpretation of media images of Black female athletes. The study included a total of 29 informants—19 South African and 10 U.S. citizens—and was based on the following central research question: What can be gained from comparing and examining the experience of the Black female athlete in the United States and South Africa with regards to their visual representation, the perceptions they face, and the narratives they publicly and privately share?

The purpose of this final chapter is to answer this question by providing a comparative understanding of the state of the U.S and South African Black female athlete, her experience, and her future. As this research study has shown, the visual representations and perceptions of Black female athletes across geographical boundaries is similar. The data from this study point to several conclusions about Black female athletes in the U.S. and South Africa: (1) General society does not hold many—if any—positive perceptions about them as athletic and/or female symbols; (2) The women in the study have internalized and/or used forms of resistance to cope with racial,

gendered, and sexual perceptions placed upon them by society *and* by one another; (3) Class status is a major factor in racialized sport specific perceptions; (4) Coverage of Black female athletes in various media forms is sporadic, sometimes demeaning, and often inauthentic; (5) The media has the power to change the amount and content of their coverage and images of Black female athletes; and (6) Progressive transformation and positive changes for female athletics in both countries will be a long time coming.

In terms of factors specific to South Africa alone, the data in this study point to the following conclusions: (1) Media representation of Black female athletes is so inadequate that foreign Black female athletes are predominantly referenced as role models, rather than indigenous athletes; (2) Regionalism appears to play a significant role in racial identity and in local media coverage of Black female athletes (e.g. Colored informants from Cape Town shared that South Africans of mixed race living in Johannesburg are more likely to self-identify as “Black” even though they are the same complexion as those identifying as Colored in Cape Town—a point of data that deserves future investigation in the Johannesburg region); (3) Diverse South African cultures *may* have an effect on the number of Black females—particularly from rural areas—that participate in athletics; and (4) There are athletes who desire the restructuring of South African collegiate sporting organizations and the establishment of coaching organizations that mirror those established in the United States.

Image, Perception, and Narrative

Images and perceptions contain racialized and even racist ideology in post-apartheid South Africa and post-segregation United States. Without the legalized structures in place to keep races apart and overt racism raging, White supremacy must rely on what is seen, heard, and believed by the citizens of these two formerly legalized White supremacist societies. The media

continues to hold great power over both the visual representations and generalized perceptions about the Black female athlete body and lifestyle in South Africa and the United States. This study has shown that the negative visual representations and perceptions are usually covertly placed within print and active media forms, among what *some* informants have admittedly recognized as generally well-mannered and, at times, empowering media coverage. Evidence of increased visual racial and gender diversity within media makes it more difficult to claim that the ideals of White supremacist patriarchy still linger within the “Rainbow Nation” (South Africa) and the “Post-Racial” nation (United States). While more difficult, such a claim is not impossible, particularly when it comes to the presence of Black females within sports media positions. Journalist Varsha Gupta d’Souza reported in 2003 that, “The South Africa Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS) said only 6 percent of media workers in South Africa were black women...and women’s voices were least sourced in the sports and mining categories.”¹⁸⁹ It is doubtful that these statistics have changed much since 2003 based on the sentiments of this study’s South African informants and this researcher’s personal observations during her stays within the country in 2008 and 2009. As long as “sports commentary remains a world dominated by men, who serve up a staple of images and commentary that reinforces the idea that sports are a man’s world,”¹⁹⁰ the quality of media coverage will remain an issue for both South African and U.S. Black female athletes.

The media hold the power to construct new and uphold old perceptions about Black womanhood generally and Black female athleticism specifically. One of the most troubling

¹⁸⁹ Varsha Gupta d'Souza, "Africa: South African Women Poorly Represented in Media," *Global Information Network* (2003).

¹⁹⁰ M.A. Messner, M.C. Duncan, et al., "Silence, Sports Bras, and Westing Porn: Women in Televised Sports News and Highlights Shows," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* Vol.27, no. 1 (2003). 49.

negative media presentations of the Black female athlete is of a body standard which holds White female athletic bodies as positive and superior to Black females. Research in South Africa and the U.S. has shown that some South African and U.S. Black females have already been affected by public pressures to have bodies like White women. The media often present the bodies of Black female athletes in the United States and South Africa as either hypersexualized or grotesquely fascinating, as demonstrated in this study by South African sprinter Caster Semenya, and U.S. athletes Brittney Griner and Serena Williams. Ultimately, the bodies of U.S. and South African Black female athletes remain a site of cultural and self-identity contestation, which allows representations of Black female athletic bodies to signify the struggle for Black women to thrive in a self-defined space within South African and U.S. societies.

Black female athletes from the United States and South Africa share a predominantly similar experience and mindset when it comes to their visual representation. They agreed that there is an overall lack of media coverage given to female sport in comparison to male sporting coverage, as well as an even greater lack of media coverage of Black female athletes within each country—with magazines and television being the media outlets to most frequently discuss and display images of Black female athletes.

Cinematically, South African and U.S. films about Black female athletes are over-exaggerated and/or unrealistic in their portrayal of Black female athletes. In discussing the films, *The Long Run, Love & Basketball*, and *The Longshots*, it is clear that a traditional gender binary structure was broken in their cinematic endings; endings which displayed female athletic triumph in comparison to her male athletic counterpart. However, realistic investigations and portrayals surrounding the aspects of (homo)sexuality and racism were ignored in each of these films—giving in to Mulvey’s cinematic concept of the “male-gaze” and Russell’s cinematic concept of

the “dominant gaze.” Therefore, the realistic cinematic portrayal of the Black female athlete experience in South Africa and the United States is incomplete and inauthentic. There hasn’t been a U.S. film focusing on a Black female athlete since *The Longshots* in 2008 and there has yet to be a film about a South African Black female athlete that has been written, directed, and/or produced by a Black South African. This difference between the United States and South Africa is due to the remaining majority control of cinema production and marketing within South Africa by White males for the appeasement of White audiences.

Both South African and U.S. informants in this case study identified six perceptions about Black female athletes: (1) Black female athletes are naturally superior athletes; (2) Black female athletes are lacking in intelligence—either academically or athletically; (3) Black female athletes lack the desire to play certain sports; (4) Black female athletes possess negative social demeanor; (5) Black female athletes are “manly” or lacking in “femininity;” and (6) Black female athletes are probable lesbians based on appearance or participation in certain sports. The first four perceptions are rooted in racist ideology and the fifth and sixth perceptions are rooted in binary gender/sexuality construct ideology. Print and/or active media forms have played a hand in perpetuating each of these perceptions within U.S. and South African society. The perpetuation of these perceptions within South African and U.S. society has led to sport specific racial perceptions within their societies (e.g. tennis and rugby are “White” sports, while basketball and track & field are “Black” sports.). It has also led to explanations of the validity of perceptions based on what scholar Gerhard Schutte referred to as *rationalizations of common sense*—sweeping generalizations about Blacks (or Whites) based on their limited face-to-face experiences with them, as well as rumors, anecdotes, and gossip they heard about Blacks (or Whites).

It is true that in the United States “several leading black athletes have utilized their star status and media attention to fashion their own public image, asserting a commanding, energetic personal style that simultaneously demanded recognition of their femininity and their strength,”¹⁹¹ but at what cost to the majority of Black female athletes existing outside of the public spotlight? Informants of this study and the majority of autobiographies analyzed within this study have made it clear that appearance matters for South African and U.S. Black female athletes and being hyper-aware of their own appearance and perceived level of femininity is a part of the Black female athlete experience. Sadly, when some high profile Black female athletes choose to publicly over-emphasize femininity and heteronormativity in order to alter perceptions (e.g. Serena Williams’ Top Spin commercial and Caster Semenya’s public magazine makeover), it is often interpreted by larger society to be an exception rather than the norm—thus working to uphold perceptions of mannishness and homosexuality—which further alienates everyday and other high profile Black female athletes who do not hyper-feminize themselves.

Thankfully, the belief in the perceptions that “Black female athletes are ‘manly’ or lacking in ‘femininity,’” and “Black female athletes are lesbians based on appearance or participation in certain sports” varies due to an individual’s interpretation of appropriate femininity and a belief that heterosexuality is normative. This research study presents variable interpretations of appropriate femininity—physical and emotional attributes or behaviors deemed acceptable for women—for athletes and non-athletes in society. This means that just because some people may view an athlete as “manly” or unattractive, does not mean other people won’t view them as “feminine” and attractive. Many South African and U.S. informants of this

¹⁹¹ Susan K. Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1994). 270.

research study seem to reject binary gender and sexuality constructs when it comes to female sports participation, as they feel women should play any sport they desire. An acceptance of binary gender construct by some informants from South Africa and the United States, however, did cause a similar belief that rugby is a sport which should not be played by women in either country. Football and wrestling in the U.S. and boxing and soccer in South Africa were also believed by some informants to be sports that women should not play.

South African and U.S. Black female athlete informants cope with perceptions based on race, sexual orientation and lack of femininity in a similar manner. Black female athletes in these countries utilize the coping mechanisms of active resistance, passive resistance, and internalization when faced with the perceptions identified in this research study. Although these mechanisms may not always be viewed as beneficial methods of coping, South African and U.S. Black female athlete informants expressed the view that their experiences aided in their eventual devaluation of negative opinions and societal perceptions of them; ultimately building their self-esteem and increasing a positive self-identity. For Black female lesbian athletes, coping with perceptions, forming high self-esteem and a positive self-identity can be particularly difficult based on this research study, as being honest about their sexuality could affect their personal well-being. As Hargreaves points out, “the idea that heterosexuality is ‘natural’ and that homosexuality is ‘unnatural,’ pathological and socially damaging remains engrained in commonsense thinking and is materialized through the processes of law and in everyday behavior and discourse.”¹⁹² Until there is less heteronormative pressure placed on Black female athletes specifically and less homophobia amongst the general population in the U.S. and South

¹⁹² Jennifer Hargreaves, *Heroines of Sport: The Politics of Difference and Identity* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000). 129.

Africa, lesbian *and* non-lesbian athletes will struggle to cope with perceptions of unfemininity and homosexuality.

The perceptions identified within this research study also have a direct effect on the personal relationships Black female athletes experience in South Africa and the United States. Athlete informants reported feeling perceived in a mainly negative manner by non-athletes and prospective male romantic partners. In addition, this research study has shown that race—and racial perceptions—plays a large role in the relationships U.S. and South African Black female athletes have with teammates, fellow athletes, coaches, fans, and romantic partners. Black female athletes in both countries acknowledge the positive impact sports participation has on race relations, as sports involvement is how many of these athlete informants got to know people of other races better, whether those people were teammates, other athletes, coaches, or fans. It is clear that sport is a site where positive racial and cultural learning and healing can occur. When discussing South Africa, Anderson, Bielert, and Jones posit that “if the experience of playing on mixed-race teams changes players’ evaluation of other races and cultures in a positive way, schools and other organizations have a simple, easily-accessed tool of great power: to manipulate team membership in order to decrease racism.”¹⁹³ Unfortunately the sports participation of athletes of diverse racial backgrounds, whether in South Africa or the U.S., does not result in the elimination of negative racial relationships and interactions for Black female athletes. This is one of the reasons why some South African informants of this study feel the racial quota system in place within the sports structure of South Africa is a failure. In South Africa, forcing racial

¹⁹³ Connie Anderson, Troy Bielert, Ryan Jones. "One Country, One Sport, Endless Knowledge: The Anthropological Study of Sports in South Africa." *Anthropologica* Vol. 46, no. 1 (January 1, 2004): 47-55. 53.

equality numerically on sports teams is creating animosity between the races and undermining the “meritocratic” ideal of sport. Therefore, the different sports that have issues with these quotas have to organize and give government legitimate cause to investigate.

Similar perceptions of Black female athletes in the United States and South Africa are certainly connected to lingering ideals of White racist patriarchy. However, in South Africa the perception that “women are unable/unfit to play sport”—particularly those women in rural areas—appears to be connected to cultural beliefs more so than blatant sexism or White supremacy. Furthermore, the differences that exist in the popularity of certain sports among different races in each country have to do with U.S. and South African divergent racial and sporting histories. What becomes most clear from this study then, is that even with South African and U.S. Black female athletes’ participation in different types of sports and divergent racial, cultural, and sporting histories, the Black female athlete in each country is going to be portrayed similarly through image, face similar societal perceptions about herself, and hold similar recommendations and expectations about the future of Black female athletes and female athletics within her country.

These similar recommendations and expectations exist due to the failure of each country’s various governing sports bodies, sports fans, and even athletes and coaches to consider the ways in which sport is *both* a complex racialized and gendered institution. For both countries, racial and gender inequalities still exist in organizational and physical sports structuring, in sports media coverage and production, in overall sporting economy, and in the scholarship of sports history. In post-apartheid South Africa, change within sport has largely focused on achieving racial equality rather than gender equality. In 2009, Cheryl Roberts stated in an article written for the *Cape Argus*, “We should not leave the future of South Africa’s sportswomen at

the mercy of corporations, South Africa's post-apartheid ministers of sport—Steve Tshwete, Ngconde Balfour and Stofile—while being strong on racial transformation of sport, have sadly not been as vocal or demanding when it comes to the elimination of gender inequalities.”¹⁹⁴ The lack of protection shown to sprinter Caster Semenya by her South African coaches and athletic administrators only a few months after this article was published, only places greater value to Roberts' stance on the poor handling of gender inequality within South African sport. The United States on the other hand, seems to have placed greater value on gender equality, rather than racial equality. In his 2006 work, *40 Million Dollar Slaves*, William Rhoden states that “the tragedy of the feminist movement in sports is that, in ignoring race and in many instances embracing the exclusionary practices of their male counterparts, the movement as a whole is weakened, though individuals may gain.”¹⁹⁵ In asking Black female athletes of this research study directly what they recommend for the improvement of both female athletics generally and athletics for Black females specifically, the groundwork has been laid for a more expansive investigation into the needs of the current and future South African and U.S. Black female athlete—a larger investigation, that would hopefully lead to tangible organization and fruition of their personal recommendations. Being double-burdened as being women and being Black in societies still rife with White supremacist patriarchal ideology means these athletes must be given more opportunities to speak for themselves about their experiences, self-identity, and recommendations for change.

This ethnographic study provided a detailed look at the life experiences of U.S. and South African Black female athletes and gave them an opportunity to tell their own stories of athletic

¹⁹⁴ Cheryl Roberts, "Sport for One and All Needs Balance," *Cape Argus*, May 13 2009.

¹⁹⁵ William Rhoden, *\$40 Million Slaves: The Rise, Fall, and Redemption of the Black Athlete*, 1st ed ed. (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 2006). 225-26.

and personal growth. As Kim Marie Vaz puts it, “Through the story process, we invent meaning, preserve cultural identity, and give and receive emotional support; and we learn that women are not always victimized and curtailed by circumstances but that many have, in June Jordan’s words, ‘made a way out of no way.’”¹⁹⁶ Collecting and analyzing the personal narratives and written autobiographies of the Black female athletes utilized within this research study can assist in altering perceptions, cause individuals to pick up on the deeper messages within imagery, and delineate what aspects of the athletic experience need improvement; making the process of connected reading so important to the reading of Black female athlete autobiographies in the greater understanding of the Black female athlete experience. Through the process of connected reading, this researcher was able to piece together collective knowledge and experiences that alone would probably remain unnoticed within each of the written autobiographies and mini-narratives utilized within this research study. Connected reading pulls at the loose threads of autobiography, and uses them to make sutures between, across and among autobiographical narratives.¹⁹⁷ Through connected reading, shared thematic experiences with race, gender, sexuality, media, and self-identity were linked together to aid in configuring the similar and differential experience of the Black female athlete in South Africa and the United States. Utilizing connected reading is getting to know autobiographies as they cannot know themselves and to use critical comparative analysis and reading as a means of suggesting new ways of thinking not only about Black female athletes, but also ourselves in relation to these women.

¹⁹⁶ Kim Marie Vaz, "Social Conformity and Social Resistance," in *Oral Narrative Research with Black Women*, ed. Kim Marie Vaz (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1997). 227.

¹⁹⁷ Gillian Whitlock, *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography* (New York, NY: Cassell 2000). 204.

Implications for Future Research

This researcher is optimistic about the future expansion of this research study to include even more South African and U.S. informants—informants that play different sports, come from different regions within each country, and have different educational backgrounds than those included in this study. This research has important implications with regards to sporting race relations, gender equity within media and sport, sporting policy, and the treatment of diverse sexual orientations among female athletes within each country. This study could (and should) be used as a starting point for larger studies focusing on these specific issues. For instance, the Black female athletes of this study who participate(d) in predominately White sports experienced discrimination and racism more so than when involved in sports that are predominately Black. This racism and discrimination can come from White athletes, teammates, coaches, referees, fans, and even other Black athletes. It would be of interest to conduct research in the future with White athletes on predominantly Black sports teams to see if they experience a similar situation to that of Blacks participating in predominantly White sports. Similarly, a deeper investigation into the Black/White teammate relationship would prove insightful for race relations in both countries, as some U.S. Black female athletes in this study and Black female autobiographers reported feeling their friendships with White teammates are not as solid as their friendships with Black teammates. Can we discover plausible solutions to this racial discrimination and mistrust on sports teams through discussions with the athletes themselves? And will sporting bodies in power in the United States and South Africa move towards making any of the recommendations provided by informants of this study a reality?

It's clear from this study that more autobiographies of Black female athletes need to be written—particularly in South Africa where women's autobiography is still in its infancy. More personal narratives also need to be collected if sports scholars, historians, and sociologists are to cease the marginalization and oversimplification of the Black female athlete experience in United States and South African scholarship. The problem does not appear to stem from a lack of desire on the part of the Black female athlete to share her story, as informants in South Africa and the United States were eager to be given a voice within this research study. I believe there are two reasons for a lack in production of written Black female athlete autobiographies in South Africa and the United States. One reason may be that there is a lack of interest on the part of publishing companies to print the autobiographies of Black female athletes; or two, these Black female athletes are not writing their autobiographies because they do not trust that their stories will be honored by the editors of their works.

Ultimately, this research study has shown that the images produced about Black female athletes, the perceptions in existence about them, and their personal life experiences, are closely linked to lingering ideals of White supremacist patriarchy in South Africa and the United States. Like the Sankofa bird of African mythology, we have to look backward to see our way forward.¹⁹⁸ White norms can no longer represent the standard of eligibility to survive in social and cultural spheres publicly and through the shaping of self-identity privately for Black female athletes in these countries. Properly contextualizing the histories and experiences of these U.S. and South African informants through the identification and confrontation of misperceptions, analysis of visual and media representation, and presentation and analysis of personal narrative

¹⁹⁸ Rhoden, *\$40 Million Slaves: The Rise, Fall, and Redemption of the Black Athlete*. 8.

and autobiography, allow us to see the experiences of the Black female athlete for what they are and what they might become in the future.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Notes on Terminology

Apartheid is the official policy of racial segregation formerly practiced in the Republic of South Africa (1948-1994), involving political, legal, social, and economic discrimination against non-Whites. Under the apartheid regime, South Africans were classified into four primary racial groups: White, Asian or Indian, Colored, and African. *Colored* is a term referring to Khoisan (nomadic pastoralists and hunter gatherers who occupied the Cape at the time of European arrival), their descendents and the offspring of interracial assignments. *Black*, denotes those groups collectively referred to by the government as non-White. Therefore in this research study, *Black* is used to include self-identified Black and Colored South Africans unless otherwise specified.

Legalized segregation in the United States spanned the years 1896 through 1954. Segregation refers to the separation of a class, ethnic group, or race by enforced or voluntary residence in a restricted area, by separate educational facilities, barriers to social interaction, or by other discriminatory means. White supremacy refers to the attitudes, ideologies, and policies associated with the view that White people are supposedly culturally and genetically superior to all other races of people and are therefore justified in ruling over them. Today, White supremacy survives due to modern racism—social science reports from anthropologists and psychologists grossly legitimizing the view that physical features explain deficient social attributes among races. The reality of modern racism in turn justifies continued racial discrimination, where race has determined identity and the allocation of resources in South Africa and the United States.

APPENDIX B

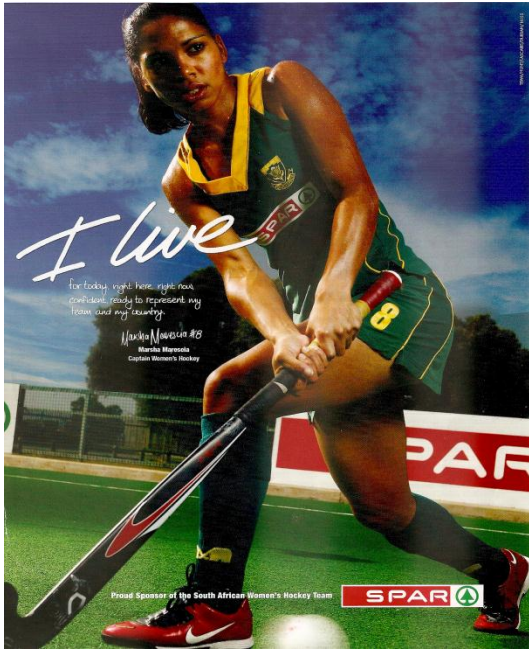
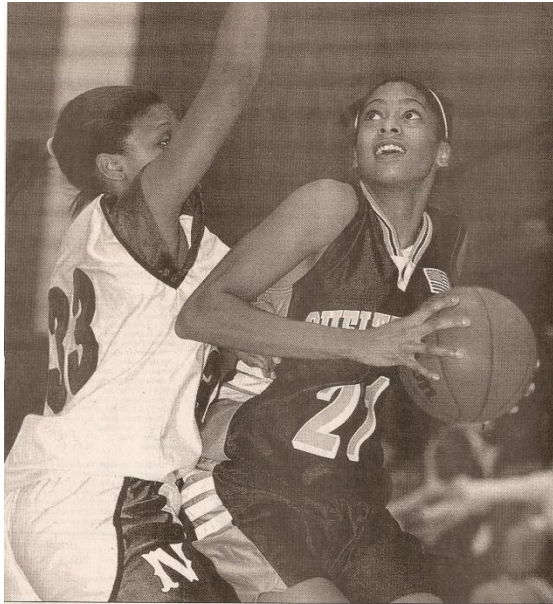


Figure 1. South African women's field hockey captain Marsha Marescia in the June 2009 issue of *Road To London 2012* magazine ad for SPAR grocery stores. (For interpretation of the references to color in this and all other figures, the reader is referred to the electronic version of this dissertation.)



Chronicle / News photo -BILL FRASER
Cheltenham's Rachel Laws looks for an open shot in the Panthers division-clinching 50-48 victory Tuesday night at Norristown. Laws pulled down her 1,000th rebound in the victory.

Figure 2. A photo of this researcher and an opponent during a high school basketball game in 2002. From the weekly local newspaper, *The Times Chronicle*. Photo by Bill Fraser.

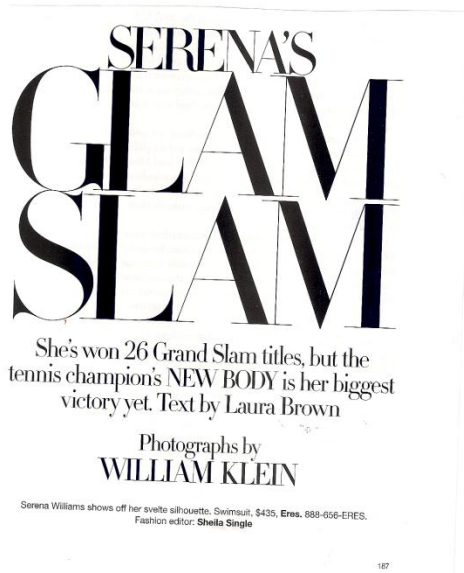


Figure 3. "Serena's Glam Slam" article title page in the July 2010 issue of fashion magazine, *Harper's Bazaar*.



Figure 4. Photo featured in the August 30, 2009 issue of Cape Town's *Sunday Times* depicting a digitally altered photo of the World Championship 800m race in Berlin. The caption reads "BIG CHEETAH: Ben Trovato refuses to take a gender test on the grounds that it is blindingly obvious he is a girl."



Figure 5. Photo of Baylor University basketball player, Brittney Griner. Photo: Bill Frakes/SI.
Source:<http://www.sikids.com/photos/29707/breakout-athletes-of-2010/13>

APPENDIX C

Rachel Laws' Research Study Questions

Michigan State University

African American & African Studies

Dissertation: "The Black Female Athlete: Image, Perceptions, and Narratives (South Africa & the United States Compared)"

General Questions for ALL interviewed:

- 1) What person, place, or thing do you immediately think of when you hear the phrase, "Black female athlete"?
- 2) Where are you from originally? ...and where do you reside currently?
- 3) What is your current age?
- 4) Did you attend college? If so, what college and in what years?
- 5) How often do you watch female athletic competitions?
- 6) Are there any sports you feel women should not play?
- 7) Describe where you see images of Black female athletes in the media?
-Describe how these Black female athletes are portrayed.
- 8) Do you feel that biology/genetics plays a role in the success of black female athletes?
- 9) What would you say are the "main" sports that Black female athletes participate in?
- 10) Tell me how you think men perceive black female athletes when it comes to pursuing them for dating, relationships and marriage?
- 11) Can you name some famous Black female athletes of the past and the present off the top of your head?
- 12) Can you name any films about Black female athletes?
- Did you enjoy these films? Why or Why not?
- 13) Tell me if you think some people within society hold certain stereotypes or perceptions about Black female athletes.
-If yes, can you please name some of the stereotypes and perceptions you feel exist?

Questions for Black Female Athletes

- 1) What sport(s) did/do you play?
- 2) How old were you when you began to identify yourself as an athlete?
- 3) What or whom inspired you to play sports?
- 4) Were you ever encouraged to play a certain sport because of your race?
- 5) Did you participate in AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) as a child OR Club Sports if you are South African?
 - a. Did it benefit you as a player/person?
 - b. Did you ever have an experience or instance of racism in your AAU or Club Sports involvement?
- 6) Did people ever perceive you as or tell you that you were being “manly” or that you are a lesbian?
 - a. If yes, can you explain how that made you feel?
 - b. How do you usually react to comments such as these?
- 7) Describe how you feel non-athletes perceive Black female athletes?
- 8) Tell me one or some of your most cherished memories regarding your participation in athletics.
- 9) Describe any differences you might have in your friendships/bonds with white female athletes/teammates than with other Black athletes/teammates?
- 10) Tell me about the academic support your coaches and athletic administration gave you in your collegiate student-athlete experience.
 - a. Did you ever feel that you were being treated *differently* than white athletes?
- 11) What was your interaction like with media about athletic competition?
 - a. Did you like the photos they used of you in print media?
 - b. Did they ever use wording to describe your athletic ability or appearance that offended you?
- 12) Can you name any films about Black female athletes?
 - Did you enjoy these films? Why or Why not?
- 13) Do you remember the first time you ever played your sport with a White teammate?

- 14) What perceptions of White female athletes did you have *before* you began playing on a team with one?
 - Did your perceptions change or remain the same?
- 15) Do you currently have any female friends that are White athletes?
 - a. Can you explain how you became friends with them?
- 16) Have you ever felt “intimidated” or “uncomfortable” in the presence of White female athletes?
 - a. If yes, did it result in you quitting a team or even a sport?
- 17) Do you feel certain sports are considered “Black” and others “White”?
- 18) Have you ever witnessed or experienced an incident that you felt was racism against yourself or another Black female athlete you know?
 - What about an incident you may have felt was racist against a *White* female athlete?
- 19) Do you feel that Black female athletes are usually perceived as less-feminine than White female athletes? If yes, why do you think this is?
- 20) Do you think there is a difference in the way the media portrays or discusses White female athletes and Black female athletes? (i.e.- Anna Kornakova vs. Serena Williams)
- 21) What do you think the future holds for women’s athletics? (i.e.- salary increases, more professional sports like WNBA, more endorsements for women, etc..)

Questions for White Female Athletes

- 1) Were you ever encouraged to play a certain sport because of your race?
- 2) Do you remember the first time you ever played your sport with a Black teammate?
- 3) What perceptions of Black female athletes did you have *before* you began playing on a team with one?
 - Did your perceptions change or remain the same?
- 4) Do you currently have any female friends that are Black athletes?
 - a. Can you explain how you became friends with them?
- 5) Describe any differences you might have in your friendships/bonds with white female athletes/teammates than with other Black athletes/teammates?
- 6) Have you ever felt “intimidated” or “uncomfortable” in the presence of Black female athletes?
 - a. If yes, did it result in you quitting a team or even a sport?

- 7) Do you feel certain sports are considered/labeled “Black” and others “White”?
- 8) Have you ever witnessed an incident that you felt was racism against a Black teammate or other Black female athlete you know?
 - What about an incident you may have felt was racist against *you* as a white female athlete?
- 9) Do you feel that Black female athletes are usually less-feminine than White female athletes?
- 10) Did people ever perceive you as or tell you that you were being “manly” or that you are a lesbian?
 - If yes, can you explain how it made you feel at that time?
- 11) Describe how you feel non-athletes perceive Black female athletes?
- 12) Do you think there is a difference in the way the media portrays or discusses White female athletes and Black female athletes? (i.e.- Anna Kornakova vs. Serena Williams)
- 13) What do you think the future holds for women’s athletics? (i.e.- salary increases, more professional sports franchises like the WNBA, more endorsements for women, etc..)

South Africa Questions

- 1) What sport(s) did/do you play?
- 2) How old were you when you began to identify yourself as an athlete?
- 3) What or whom inspired you to play sports?
- 4) Were you ever encouraged to play a certain sport because of your race?
- 5) Did you participate in Club Sports?
 - Did it benefit you as a player/person?
 - Did you ever have an experience or instance of racism in your Club Sports involvement?
- 6) Did people ever perceive you as or tell you that you were being “manly” or that you are a lesbian?
 - If yes, can you explain how that made you feel?
 - How do you usually react to comments such as these?
 - **OR** If you are openly a lesbian, can you discuss your coming out experience (i.e.- how was the reaction from friends, family, teammates and your own emotional experience)?

- 7) Describe how you feel non-athletes perceive Black female athletes?
- 8) Tell me one or some of your most cherished memories regarding your participation in athletics.
- 9) Describe any differences you might have in your friendships/bonds with white female athletes/teammates than with other Black athletes/teammates?
- 10) Tell me about the academic support your coaches and athletic administration gave you in your collegiate student-athlete experience.
 - Did you ever feel that you were being treated *differently* than white athletes?
- 11) What was your interaction like with media about athletic competition?
 - Did you like the photos they used of you in print media?
 - Did they ever use wording to describe your athletic ability or appearance that offended you?
- 12) Can you name any films about Black female athletes?
 - Did you enjoy these films? Why or Why not?
- 13) Are women encouraged to participate in athletics?
- 14) Describe how you think South Africans perceive non-white female athletes.
 - Are there differences between perceptions of Indian, Black or colored athletes?
- 15) Are there certain sports that are considered “White”, “Black” and “Colored”?
- 16) What was it like growing up under apartheid and trying to play sports?
- 17) How have things changed for Black and Colored athletes since apartheid’s end that have specifically affected you?
- 18) Tell me if you think Black female athletes are still treated differently than white female athletes and, if so, how (by whom, in what context, etc.)?
- 19) What are the main sports Black female athletes participate in?
- 20) What do you think the future holds for South African women’s athletics?
 - what about for Black South African women athletes?
 - Does the government need to do more?

Specific Male Questions

- 1) As a male athlete (or non-athlete), do you find yourself more attracted to women who are athletes or non-athletes?

- Why is this?
- 2) Do you feel that female athletes are more likely to be lesbians than non-athletes?
 - If yes, are Black female athletes more likely to be the lesbians or are White female athletes?
 - 3) Why do you watch female athletics?
 - 4) Do you think there is a difference in the way the media portrays or discusses White female athletes and Black female athletes? (i.e.- Anna Kornakova vs. Serena Williams)
 - 5) Were you ever encouraged to play a certain sport because of your race?
 - 6) What do you want the future to hold for women's athletics in general? (i.e.- salary increases, more professional sports like WNBA, more endorsements for women, etc..)
 - Is there a difference in what you *want* the future to hold for women's athletics and what you *expect* the future holds for women's athletics?
 - What changes/opportunities (if any) would you like to see specifically for sports dominated by Black women and the athletes personally?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Achebe, Nwando. *Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960*. Edited by Allen Isaacman and Jean Allman, Social History of Africa Series. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005.
- Adhikari, Mohamed. *Not White Enough, Not Black Enough: Racial Identity in the South African Coloured Community*. 1st ed. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005.
- Alegi, Peter. *Laduma! Soccer, Politics and Society in South Africa*. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004.
- Alegi, Peter. *African Soccerscapes: How a Continent Changed the World's Game*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010.
- Anderson, Connie, Troy Bielert, and Ryan Jones. "One Country, One Sport, Endless Knowledge: The Anthropological Study of Sports in South Africa." *Anthropologica* Vol.46, no. 1 (2004): 47-55.
- Axmaker, Sean. "Lazy Directing Spoils Race Metaphor in 'the Long Run'." *The Post-Intelligencer* (2001), www.seattlepi.com/ae/movies/article/Lazy-directing-spoils-race-metaphor-in-The-Long-1053782.php.
- Baker, Aaron. *Contesting Identities: Sports in American Film*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003.
- Bass, Amy. *Not the Triumph but the Struggle: The 1968 Olympics and the Making of the Black Athlete*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.
- Bell, Ramona J. "Competing Identities: Representations of the Black Female Sporting Body from 1960 to the Present." Doctor of Philosophy, Bowling Green State University, 2008.
- Blinde, Elaine and Diane Taub. "Women Athletes as Falsely Accused Deviants: Managing the Lesbian Stigma." *The Sociological Quarterly* Vol.3, no. 4 (1992): 521-33.
- Bloomberg, L.D. & Volpe, M. *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation: A Roadmap from Beginning to End*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008.
- Bogle, Donald. *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*. New York, NY: Continuum, 2001.
- Booth, Douglas. *The Race Game: Sport and Politics in South Africa*. Philadelphia, PA: Taylor & Francis, Inc., 1998.

- Bruce, Toni and Emma Wensing. "Bending the Rules: Media Representations of Gender During an International Sporting Event." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* Vol.38, no. 4 (2003): 387-96.
- Burns, N. & Groves, S.K. *The Practice of Nursing Research: Conduct, Critique, and Utilization*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1993.
- Cahn, Susan K. *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport*. New York, NY: Free Press, 1994.
- Carlisle, S.G. "Synchronizing Karma: The Internalization and Externalization of a Shared, Personal Belief." *Ethos* Vol. 36, no. 2 (June 2008): 194-219.
- Cell, John W. *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy: The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- Chappell, Robert. "Race, Gender and Sport in Post-Apartheid South Africa." *The Sport Journal*, no. 4 (2005), <http://www.thesportjournal.org/article/race-gender-and-sport-post-apartheid-south-africa>.
- Cooper, Cynthia. *She Got Game: My Personal Odyssey*. New York, NY: Warner Books, 1999.
- Dagbovie, Pero G. *Black History: "Old School" Black Historians and the Hip Hop Generation*. Troy, MI: Bedford Publishers, Inc., 2006.
- d'Souza, Varsha Gupta. "Africa: South African Women Poorly Represented in Media." *Global Information Network* (2003): 1.
- "Eating Disorders; Prevalence High among Black Women in Rural South Africa." *Obesity, Fitness & Wellness Week* (Nov 16, 2002): 11.
- Einwohrer, Rachel and Jocelyn Hollander. "Conceptualizing Resistance." *Sociological Forum* Vol. 19, no. 4 (Dec. 2004): 533-54.
- Emerson, A.D. *Olympians against the Wind: The Black American Female Difference*. New York, NY: Darmon Enterprises, 2000.
- Foster, Kevin Michael. "Panopticonics: The Control and Surveillance of Black Female Athletes in a Collegiate Athletic Program." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* Vol. 34, no. 3 (2003): 300-23.
- Fredrickson, George M. *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study of American and South African History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Garrison, Zina. *Zina: My Life in Women's Tennis*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2001.

- Gissendanner, Cindy Himes. "African-American Women and Competitive Sport, 1920-1960." In *Women, Sport, and Culture*, edited by Susan Birrell and Cheryl Cole, 81-92. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1994.
- Grbich, C. "Epistemological Changes and Their Impact on the Field." In *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Introduction*, pp. 3-15. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2007.
- Green, Tina Sloan, Carole Oglesby, Alpha Alexander, Nikki Franke. *Black Women in Sport*, Aahperd Publications. Reston, VA: American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 1981.
- Green-Powell, Patricia. "Methodological Considerations in Field Research: Six Case Studies." In *Oral Narrative Research with Black Women*, edited by Kim Marie Vaz, 197-217. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1997.
- Hancock, Ange-Marie. "Black Female Athletes." In *African Americans and Popular Culture Vol.2: Sports*, edited by Todd Boyd, pp.1-10. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2008.
- Hargreaves, Jennifer. *Heroines of Sport: The Politics of Difference and Identity*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2000.
- Harris, Cecil. *Charging the Net: A History of Blacks in Tennis from Althea Gibson and Arthur Ashe to the Williams Sisters*. Edited by Cecil Harris and Larryette Kyle-Debose. Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, 2007.
- Harrison, Keith C. "Black Athletes at the Millennium." *Society* Vol.37, no. 3 (2000): 5.
- Hobson, Janell. "The "Batty" Politic: Toward an Aesthetics of the Black Female Body." *Hypatia* 18, no. 4 (2003): 87-105.
- Holdsclaw, Chamique. *Chamique Holdsclaw: On Family, Focus, and Basketball*. New York, NY: Scribner, 2000.
- Jelinek, Estelle C. *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism*. 1st ed. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1980.
- Jerardi, Dick. "You Can't Compare Uconn's Women's Team to UCLA's Men Team." *Daily News* (December 22, 2010), http://articles.philly.com/2010-12-22/sports/26356032_1_genoa-auriemma-coaching-men-college-basketball.
- Johnson, Chris. "Curvy Tennis Star Serena Williams Gets Her Beach Wiggle On... But Her Tiny Bikini Is Barely Fit for Purpose." *Associated Newspapers Ltd.*, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-1377735/Serena-Williams-gets-beach-wiggle-tiny-bikini-barely-serves-purpose.html>.

- Joyner-Kersey, Jackie. *A Kind of Grace: The Autobiography of the World's Greatest Female Athlete*. New York, NY: Warner Books, Inc., 1997.
- Lapchick, Richard E. "South Africa: Sport and Apartheid Politics." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 445, no. Contemporary Issues in Sport (1979): 155-65.
- Leslie, Lisa. *Don't Let the Lipstick Fool You*. New York, NY: Kensington Publishing Corp., 2008.
- Levy, Ariel. "Either/Or: Sports, Sex, and the Case of Caster Semenya." *The New Yorker* (2009), http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/11/30/091130fa_fact_levy?printable=true.
- Mahiri, Jabari & Derek Van Rheenen. *Out of Bounds: When Scholarship Athletes Become Academic Scholars*. Edited by Joe L. Kincheloe and Shirley R. Steinberg. Vol. 363, Studies in the Postmodern Theory of Education. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2010.
- McKay, James and Helen Johnson. "Pornographic Eroticism and Sexual Grotesquerie in Representations of African American Sportswomen." *Social Identities* Vol. 14, no. 4 (2008): 491-504.
- Merelman, Richard M. "Cultural Imagery and Racial Conflict in the United States: The Case of African-Americans." *British Journal of Political Science* Vol. 22, no. 3 (1992): 315-42.
- Merrett, Christopher. "From the Outside Lane: Issues of 'Race' in South African Athletics in the Twentieth Century." *Patterns of Prejudice* Vol 38, no. No. 3 (2004): 233-51.
- Merriam-Webster, Incorporated. "The Merriam-Webster Dictionary." In *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, edited by Frederick C. Mish. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 1997.
- Messner, M.A., M.C. Duncan, et al. "Silence, Sports Bras, and Westing Porn: Women in Televised Sports News and Highlights Shows." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* Vol.27, no. 1 (2003): 38-51.
- Nauright, John. *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa*. London: Leicester University Press, 1997.
- NCAA. "Overall Division I Freshman-Cohort Graduation Rates 2002-03." *The National Collegiate Athletic Association*, 2009.
- Nelson, Glenn. "Greatness and Griner Go Hand in Hand." In *ESPN.com*, 5: ESPN.com, June 24, 2008.

- Nixon, Rob. "Apartheid on the Run: The South African Sports Boycott." *Transition*, no. 58 (1992): 68-88.
- Obbo, Christine. "What Do Women Know?...As I Was Saying!" In *Oral Narrative Research with Black Women*, edited by Kim Marie Vaz, 41-63. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1997.
- Patton, M.Q. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. 2nd ed. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990.
- Pelak, Cynthia Fabrizio. "Nation Building in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Transforming Gender and Race Relations through Sports." Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2002.
- Pillay, Maganthrie. "Who Is Making the Black Woman's Film?" *Agenda*, no. 49 (2001): 61-65.
- Prakash, Padma. "Women and Sports: Extending Limits to Physical Expression." *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 25, no. 17 (1990): WS19-WS29.
- Ramsamy, Sam. *Apartheid, the Real Hurdle: Sport in South Africa & the International Boycott*. London: International Defense and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1982.
- Rhoden, William. *\$40 Million Slaves: The Rise, Fall, and Redemption of the Black Athlete*. 1st ed ed. New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 2006.
- Roberts, Cheryl. "Bold, Beautiful, Talented and Battling the Odds." *Athlone News*, Wednesday August 10 2005, 28.
- Roberts, Cheryl. "Hats Off to Our Women: Women's Role in Transforming Sa Sport Is Largely Forgotten." *Sowetan*, August 10 2007, 1.
- Roberts, Cheryl. "Corporates Play a Different Game: Minister of Sport Makhenkesi Stofile Tells Cheryl Roberts Why Sport Can't Be Left to the Mercy of Market Forces." *Cape Argus*, July 29 2009, 1.
- Roberts, Cheryl. "Let's Put Women First." *Athlone News* August 9, 2006, 1.
- Roberts, Cheryl. "Sport for One and All Needs Balance." *Cape Argus*, May 13 2009, 1.
- Russell, Margaret M. "Race and the Dominant Gaze: Narratives of Law and Inequality in Popular Film." *Legal Studies Forum* Vol.15, no. 3 (1991): 243-54.
- Sailes, Gary. "The Myth of Black Sports Supremacy." *Journal of Black Studies* Vol. 21, no. 4 (June, 1991): 480-87.

- Sanger, Nadia. "New Women, Old Messages? Constructions of Feminities, Race and Hypersexualized Bodies in Selected South African Magazines, 2003-2006." *Social Dynamics* Vol. 35, no. 1 (March 2009): 137-48.
- Sanger, Nadia. "Spotlight of Curiosity Shines Harshly on Semenya." *Cape Argus* August 21, 2009, 1p.
- Sanger, Nadia. "'There's Got to Be a Man in There': Reading Intersections between Gender, Race and Sexuality in South African Magazines." *African Identities* Vol. 6, no. 3 (August 2008): 275-91.
- Schutte, Gerhard. *What Racists Believe: Race Relations in South Africa and the United States*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc, 1995.
- Senda, Argentina. *That's Why I Run: The Story of Argentina Senda*. Edited by Evelyn Higginbotham. Houghton, South Africa: STE Publishers, 2008.
- Serino, Kenichi. "Multiple Tests to Check Gender." *Cape Times*, August 21 2009, 2.
- Shropshire, Todd Boyd and Kenneth. *Basketball Jones*. New York: New York University Press, 2000.
- Stringer, C.Vivian. *Standing Tall: A Memoir of Tragedy and Triumph*. New York, NY: Random House Inc., 2008.
- Thompson, Bonsu. "Love & Basketball." *Juicy*, Winter 2010, 56-59.
- Tomaselli, Keyan. "[South Africa] Independent Cinema." In *Cinemas of the Black Diaspora: Diversity, Dependence, and Oppositionality*, edited by Michael T. Martin, 129-44. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1995.
- Turok, Karina. *Life and Soul: Portraits of Women Who Move South Africa*. Edited by Margie Orford. Cape Town, South Africa: Juta and Company Limited, 2006.
- Turner, Diane D. "Reconstructing the History of Musicians' Protective Union Local 274 through Oral Narrative Method." In *Oral Narrative Research with Black Women*, edited by Kim Marie Vaz, 177-96. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1997.
- Vaz, Kim Marie. "Introduction: Oral Narrative Research with Black Women." In *Oral Narrative Research with Black Women*, edited by Kim Marie Vaz, 1-3. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1997.
- Vaz, Kim Marie. "Social Conformity and Social Resistance." In *Oral Narrative Research with Black Women*, edited by Kim Marie Vaz, 223-49. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1997.

Whitlock, Gillian. *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography*. New York, NY: Cassell 2000.

Wiggins, David. *Glory Bound: Black Athletes in a White America*. 1st ed. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997.

Williams, Serena. *On the Line*. Edited by Daniel Paisner. 1st ed. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2007.

Yin, R.K., Bateman, P.G., & Moore, G.B. *Case Studies and Organizational Innovation: Strengthening the Connection*. Washington, D.C.: Cosmos Corporation, 1983.