Race, Gender and Interuniversity Athletics:
Black Female Student Athletes in Canadian Higher Education

by

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Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
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Abstract
Despite the documented history of women’s athletics and minority students’ participation in Canadian postsecondary institutions, little is known about Black female student athletes and their experiences within Canadian higher education. This dearth of information is paradoxical considering the academic and athletic legacy of this subgroup, as well as the noted importance of the student experience and athletic participation within Canadian universities. The aim of the study was to gather data on the experiences of Black female undergraduate students involved in varsity athletics. The goal was to gain an understanding of their experiences as students, as athletes, and as Black women. Additionally, the study intended to help fill a gap in the existing literature on race, sport, and the student experience in the Canadian context. The study employed an intersectional framework to examine how race, gender, athleticism and the student role intersect to shape the student experience. The investigation utilized a mixed method approach consisting of an online survey and in-depth interviews. This national study included participants from each of the four Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) regions. Twenty-eight Black female student athletes completed the online survey, while an additional thirty-two Black
female student athletes were interviewed. The findings were divided into seven major themes: 
University Expectations versus Reality, Pressure and Positivity, Complex Relationships, Unique Experiences, Negotiating and Navigating, Hiding and Highlighting and Levels of Blackness. In a number of ways, the Black Canadian female student athlete’s experience is similar to that of other student athletes. However, it also was found that Black female student athletes have a unique experience due to the intersection of their race, gender and athleticism. Thus, Black female student athletes have a distinct experience as they deal with racial, gender, and athletic stereotypes; the underrepresentation of Black females and Black female athletes in higher education; the intricacies of Black dating and intimate relationships; and the complex interactions within the Black communities on campus.
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Along this journey I have been truly blessed, and my hope is that one day I can return the favor to all those who have so graciously helped me, and that I can successfully pay it forward.

But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. – Isaiah 40:31
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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Black female student athletes have participated and excelled in Canadian universities for decades. However, the literature regarding Black females participation in postsecondary academics and athletics is scarce. The available literature reveals that Sylvia Sweeney attended McGill University in the early ‘70s and was a star of the McGill basketball team. Molly Killingbeck enrolled at York University in the early ‘80s, and set numerous varsity records and became the first student at York to win an Olympic medal. In the mid-1980s, Jillian Richardson set and broke Canadian track and field records while attending the University of Calgary. However, even though Canadian institutions have educated some notable Black female student athletes, in addition to many other successful Black females, scant research has been conducted about the student experiences of past or present Black Canadian female student athletes in their postsecondary level of education (Humber, 2004). While the names and athletic achievement of these student athletes are known, little else is known about these individuals.

The dearth of information on the student experience of Black female student athletes is paradoxical considering the academic and athletic legacy of this subgroup of students and the noted importance of the student experience and athletic participation within Canadian university culture. In Canadian universities, the student experience -which refers to how students perceive and participate in academic and social situations - is widely embraced as an important factor in the delivery of education, for positive or negative student experiences can lead to educational engagement or withdrawal (Danylchuk, 2001) (see Appendix A: Definitions). In addition, Canadian universities agree that sport enhances the quality of student life on campus since participants gain valuable lessons in the pursuit of excellence. As well, university athletics are beneficial to the university as a whole because university athletics helps to build the overall university image, and the university community as spectators, gains pleasure from watching friends, family and students compete (Danylchuk & MacLean, 2001).

Both scholarly attention and institutional efforts have been directed toward understanding and improving the student experience at Canadian universities. However, in the Canadian context the focus on student experience has emphasized the general undergraduate student populations, while little attention has been placed on the experiences of specific student subgroups, such as Black Canadian students or student athletes. Additionally, given federal and
provincial stated priorities to increase participation in sport, (particularly for under-represented
groups), to elevate the level of Canadian athletes, and to promote equity in all social institutions
(Canadian Sport Policy, 2002), there still remains a lack of direct focus on specific groups in the
population. Thus, given institutional and governmental priorities with regards to the student
experience and equity in sports participation, it seems sensible that universities develop
programs, policies and initiatives that address the concerns and experiences of specific student
populations. However, this becomes problematic when there is little to no research or
documentation with which to work.

As well, despite the widespread interest in race and gender equity in the field of higher
education, there remains a paucity of literature and research concerning race, ethnicity and
higher education in the Canadian context. As well, less than a handful of studies have focused
on the complexity of Black women’s experiences in higher education. Furthermore, there is little
to no research and documentation with regards to race, higher education and sport in Canada.

To date, the research in the Canadian context with regards to student athletes has mainly
focused on academic achievement (i.e., GPA, graduation rates) (Chinn, 1991; Curtis & McTeer; 1990)
and athletic and student identity development (how an individual’s student identity or
athletic identity increases or decreases over his or her tenure in the university) (Lally & Kerr, 2005; Miller & Kerr, 2003). In addition, the research in the Canadian context with regards to
Black women has focused generally on Black women faculty and their challenges in the
academy (Elabor-Idemudia, 2001; Henry & Tator, 2009; Koboyashi, 2009).

Therefore, as research on student athletes and Black Canadian students in Canada is
sparse, a number of existing sources focusing on the student experience of Black women and
intercollegiate athletics in the United States have informed this exploration of the Black female
student athlete experience in Canadian higher education (Adler & Adler, 1991; Bruening et al., 2005; Brooks & Alhouse, 1993; Carter, 2008; Carter & Hart 2010; Corbett & Johnson, 1993;
Green, 1993, Harmon, 2009; Person et al., 2001; Sellers et al., 1997; Stratta, 1995a; Wilson, 2008). However, it is important to keep in mind that while the U.S based literature was helpful
in guiding this research, due to contextual differences it could only be useful to a certain extent.
The U.S and Canadian systems of higher education (academically and athletically) vary in
history, development, and function. The development and structure of intercollegiate athletics
also have distinct differences. As well, based on an examination of the U.S and Canadian literature, there are a larger number of studies in the U.S, that focus on identifying, recognizing and promoting the importance of measurable diversity and varied experiences within higher education. Nonetheless, the U.S based findings were used to guide this Canadian study to develop context specific findings.

Moreover, as mentioned, since this study utilizes U.S based literature as its starting point, and given that the Canadian history and system of intercollegiate athletics has some similarity to that of the U.S., the study briefly compares the experiences of Black female student athletes to African American female student athletes (see Appendix A: Definitions) in the discussion section of this paper.

As well, based on the findings south of the border, it can be argued that there are obvious nuances and challenges particular to African American female students due to the combination of race and gender. Therefore, there is a need to know more about the Black Canadian females’ postsecondary experiences, for a lack of contextual data will make it difficult to know how best to recruit, educate, support and empower this particular group of students.

Furthermore, since this study is a national study concerning the experiences of Black female student athletes in Canadian universities, it looks comparatively at women’s experiences across the Canadian provinces. The comparisons will be noted in the section on findings and summarized in the discussion.

Since this study serves as an investigation into the experience of Black female student athletes attending Canadian universities across Canada, it identifies and highlights systemic patterns of this subgroup of student athletes. This provides an initial step in helping to fill the gap in the existing literature on race, sport and the student experience in Canadian higher education. In addition, this study has provided a space for Black female student athletes to share their experiences. Furthermore, this study’s collection and analysis of empirical data provides evidence to faculty, coaches and university administrators, as well as the scholarly community, that giving clear focus to people of color and the student athlete’s experience is an essential part of constructing suitable institutional policy and practices. As well, it will help to ensure the acknowledgment and contribution of diverse groups of students.
Research Question

The research question for this study is as follows: “What are the university experiences (academic, athletic, and social) of Black female student athletes attending Canadian universities?”

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gather descriptive data on the postsecondary experiences of Black female student athletes in Canada, and to gain an understanding of the experiences of Black females as students, as athletes, and as Black women. In addition, the purpose of the study is to fill a gap in the existing literature on race, sport and the student experience in Canadian higher education, and to provide a benchmark for subsequent studies in the areas of higher education, sport and comparative studies. More specifically, this study aims to expand the knowledge base concerning Black Canadians, universities, and intercollegiate sport as the dearth of literature and research on Black Canadians and female student athletes in postsecondary education makes current evaluation of the impact of gender, race, academics and athletics on these subgroups tenuous.

Thus, a baseline description of the experiences of Black female student athletes helps provide an important reference from which to evaluate and plan effective educational policy and practice that will benefit these students and lead to a greater number of academic and professional success stories. Also, rather than generating definitive conclusions where this study topic is concerned, the goal of this study is to present some preliminary insights into the perceptions and experiences of Black female student athletes and to highlight related areas in need of future research.

Significance of the Study

As mentioned, the primary focus of this study was the postsecondary experience of Black female student athletes in Canadian higher education. Given the scope of this study and the lack of analysis and research within this area, this piece of work was necessarily exploratory,
and one of the main objectives was primarily to raise questions and awareness. Thus, this study is significant as it raises new questions in the field of education, sport and Canadian studies.

This study has several unique features which differentiate it from past studies. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been utilized. Previous research on student athletes in the Canadian context has been solely quantitative (Chinn, 1991; Curtis & McTeer, 1990; Danylchuk, 1995; Dawson et al., 2002; McTeer & Curtis, 1999) or solely qualitative (Lally & Kerr, 2005; Miller & Kerr, 2003). In addition, existing studies on Black students in Canadian higher education (Gosine, 2007; Hamilton & Shang, 1999; James 1997) also employ exclusively qualitative methods. With quantitative methods it is difficult to ask for details or gain deeper insight that might be useful in understanding experiences. In addition, the repeated use of quantitative methods produces a limited understanding of the student experience in sport. On the other hand, the constant reliance on qualitative methodologies does not allow for generalizations. Moreover, Black female student athletes in the Canadian context have never been studied either quantitatively or qualitatively. Therefore, this study's design in itself is significant, as the shift in methods used in this study offers a clear contribution to the understanding of student athletes in Canada.

As well, the research completed on university student athletes' identity and experiences have been conducted primarily in the United States. However, the philosophy and context of U.S. intercollegiate athletics differs in many ways from Canadian interuniversity athletics, and therefore U.S.-based research has limited generalizability or applicability to Canadian universities. Thus, the paucity of research on university student athletes applicable to the Canadian setting makes clearer the need for research in this area. Research on this group is needed to portray accurately the intricacies and complexities of the student and student athlete experience in the Canadian context.

In addition, this study represents an important step in addressing the paucity of research on Canadian student athletes of color. To date, the research in the Canadian context has mainly focused on the academic experience of student athletes more generally (Chinn, 1991; Curtis & McTeer, 1990) and on athletic and student identity development (Lally & Kerr, 2005; Miller & Kerr, 2003). As well, previous research has only constituted disaggregated data based on gender. Thus far, researchers have ignored the discourse of race and ethnicity. Further, these studies are
limited in their ability to illuminate the unique experiences of individuals and groups. Therefore, this study will examine the student athlete experience in relation to race and ethnicity and it will allow a subgroup of students who have historically been underrepresented in Canadian research an opportunity to share and document their stories.

As well, the available studies on students and student athletes in the Canadian context have failed to examine the intersection and complexity of multiple identities. Research has tended to isolate some forms of identities from others, such as concentrating on the gender of a student athlete while not taking into consideration class, race or ethnicity. Thus, a greater understanding of how race, gender and athleticism intersect for women athletes will help in examining and explaining the experience of Black female student athletes with regards to sport and higher education in Canada.

Furthermore, for institutions to make decisions that benefit students and the student experience, they must better understand the needs and experiences of different groups of students. While Canada is described as a multicultural nation, there is a lack of studies that look specifically at racial and ethnic groups within higher education. This omission may therefore contribute to the development of, or promote the notion of, a homogeneous student and athletic experience amongst undergraduates. However, this study helps illuminate a broader understanding of the student experience and identifies divergent perspectives. Additionally, this study provides data that will help faculty, coaches, staff and administrators establish policies and programs for such issues as recruitment, retention and academic success that are informed by specific empirical evidence rather than conjecture.

Another unique and significant feature is the within-group comparative aspect of this study. Within this study the researcher compares the experiences of Black female student athletes from various universities across Canada. The researcher examines the experiences of Black female student athletes across the four Canadian Interuniversity Sports regions to determine if similarities or differences exist. The Black female student athlete experience may vary by region or province since higher education is a provincial responsibility in Canada, …higher education is a collection of different provincial and territorial systems operating in parallel… As there is technically no Canadian “system” of higher education, that is no federal department of education and no integrated national system of education, each
Canadian province and territory can be said to have created a unique network of postsecondary structures and policies (Jones, 1997, x-1).

Therefore, with differing provincial systems, there are varying approaches to policy with regards to higher education in the various provinces, and this can lead to the student experience also varying by province. At this point in time, a few reports and studies on Canadian athletics have had a comparative element which have crossed regions (CIS annual report on Athletic Financial Awards 2010-11; Donnelly, Kidd & Norman, 2011; Krukowska et al., 2007); however, they have been highly quantitative, focused mainly on the comparison of policy (rather than student athletes’ experience), and they all have failed to take race into consideration. Thus, the comparative regional aspect of this study is significant, as it will for the first time compare qualitative data across regions, and includes the racial variable in these comparisons.

Furthermore, as mentioned, since the literature review in this study is based on U.S literature and research, there is an inevitable comparison of Black women athletes across the two societies (i.e., United States and Canada). Comparative aspects can help students, scholars, administrators, and educational organizations to appreciate regional dimensions, which is essential in today’s society as both educational and social trends are increasingly operating on a global and diversified scale. Additionally, making comparisons can lead to a deeper level of understanding of local systems and the organization of athletic and educational opportunities. Therefore, the comparative aspect of this study generates information that may be helpful in shaping and adjusting regional policy and practice in higher education and athletics for greater effectiveness.

**Rationale for the Study**

*Why Study Student Athletes*

Student athletes within higher education are a unique subgroup. Research has shown that the student experience of student athletes differs from their non-athlete peers. While both the general student population and student athletes face the same challenges with regards to social and academic adjustment to university, student athletes have additional pressures imposed on them by their sport, which creates a more challenging student experience (Ferrante et al., 1996;
Jolly 2008; Watt & Moore, 2001). Student athletes spend a considerable amount of time on practice, travel, team meetings and game attendance. They often spend more than 40 hours a week on sports-related activities (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). Additionally, for those who participate in university sport, there are the added dimensions of mental and physical fatigue and injuries (Eitzen, 2009). Furthermore, in comparison to the general student populations, student athletes have less time to devote to academic pursuits and other educationally productive activities (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011).

As well, with regards to socialization, the experience differs for student athletes, “…whether by choice or heavily influenced by the athletic structure, student athletes also live, eat, study, and socialize together and are even tracked into the same majors, which lead, in part, to academic and social isolation from the rest of the campus community” (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011, 236). Therefore, student athletes are "one of several identifiable categories of students on campus with unique abilities or histories which set them apart from the rest of the student body” (Mihalich, 1982, 97; Miller & Kerr, 2002). Thus, the student athlete experience is divergent from the general student body and their unique student experiences deserve focused attention.

Moreover, specifically in the Canadian context, with regard to intercollegiate sport and Canadian higher education, it is popular opinion that student athletes are “students first and athletes second” (Miller and Kerr, 2002, 362). Darwin Semotiuk, professor of kinesiology and sports expert at the University of Western Ontario, states that the Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) association places the interest of the student first and athlete second, and views their member athletes as “students first and athletes second” (Zeliger, 2011). However, there is a paucity of research in the Canadian context to support or disprove these assumptions and claims. Therefore, more research on student athletes is needed as a lack of empirical research to support these claims renders all views in this area simple conjecture.

Lastly, it has been questioned whether Canadian student athletes have the same kinds of athletic and academic experiences as their American counterparts (Miller & Kerr, 2002). In the Canadian context the tendency to downplay athletic rigour and the limited attention ascribed to interuniversity athletics (there is very little media attention on Canadian intercollegiate sport), contributes to the belief that student athletes have a vastly different experience than American Division I varsity student athletes. When compared, more often than not, Canadian athletics
have been paralleled with Division III institutions in the United States, “…characterizing both a less competitive and less time consuming [experience]” (Miller & Kerr, 2002, 362).

However, the limited research in the Canadian context reveals that the Canadian student athletes may experience role conflict, role overload, and time limitations from the dual role of student and athlete, proportionate to that experienced by U.S student athletes in Division I (Miller & Kerr, 2002). The results from Miller and Kerr’s (2002) study has uncovered similarities between the experience of Canadian student athletes and Division I student athletes. The study found that Canadian student athletes had similar experiences to U.S student athletes; “…including the strong focus on sport in their junior years, and the staggering time and physical demands of intercollegiate athletics” (Miller & Kerr, 2002, 362). Thus, further study is needed in the Canadian setting to determine if previous findings are typical of the Canadian student athlete experience.

**Why Study Black Students in Canada**

While Black people have been influential since the earliest construction of Canadian society and they continue to play an influential role in many aspects of the community, there is still limited research—particularly educational research—that focuses solely on this particular group. Black people have been in Canada since the 1600s, and became more numerous in the 1700s and 1800s, helping to establish the first Canadian settlements, which included educational institutions. Yet there is relatively little attention paid to Black Canadians in research, Blacks in education, and specifically how race influences the university experience of Black Canadian students (Grayson, 1995). Thus, a contribution to this area of research is needed to have a more comprehensive and inclusive body of educational literature.

As well, in addition to the general lack of information and research on Black students in Canadian education, there is a paucity or unavailability of statistics on the racial and ethnic makeup of Canadian students in higher education. This omission of information poses the problem of helping to reinforce false assumptions—most specifically that Blacks, as a group, are socially, culturally, and economically homogeneous; that Blacks have achieved equity/equality in higher education; and that Black people are sufficiently represented within Canadian higher education. While there may have been less cause to question these assumptions in a mostly-
white Canada before the reforms to Canadian immigration policy in the late 1960s, there is
certainly enough diversity now, in the country and within the Black community, to re-visit the
situation in an empirical study.

**Why Study Black Women**

While Black women have always been underrepresented in North American higher
education, they have nonetheless been present. However, there has been only a nominal amount
of research concerning Black women in academe. The lack of research is problematic as
common sense dictates that in order to create a hospitable climate for Black women, and in
order to determine which environments promote and which restrict success, information is
needed regarding their experiences, needs and concerns. Therefore, to create welcoming
environments and improve the student experience of Black women, more research is needed.

In addition, Black women deserve focused attention as their experiences are different
from those of other women, and those of Black men, as a result of the “…historical progression
and ideology of Black people in North America” (Lloyd-Jones, 2009, 608). While Black
women’s experiences of femaleness may be similar to those of both White women and other
women of color, their experiences also differ in significant ways. As well, while Black women’s
experiences of Blackness may intertwine and parallel with those of Black men, their experiences
significantly differ from them as well (Lloyd-Jones, 2009). As in the past, Black women exist in
a society that continues to denigrate women of African descent and relegates them to
subordinate status within the Black and Euro American culture. Essentially, Black women are
relegated to the bottom of both the racial and gender hierarchy (Zamani, 2003).

More specifically, with respect to gender, Black women are females in a male dominated
society, and this includes the higher education setting. Despite the fact that there are more
female students than male students on most higher education campuses, “…there is still a
disproportionately high number of men who occupy major leadership positions within higher
education. Women continue to be underrepresented in the upper echelons of the higher
education hierarchy and the numbers are more dismal for African American women” (Mabokela
& Green, 2001, ix). Further, with regards to race, Black women also face inequities within the
Black community. Although Black men and women’s struggles are inextricably intertwined,
there is continuing disparity that has compromised the accomplishments of Black women (Jones, 2004). In the academy, Black women have a differing and often more challenging experience compared to Black men, due to the simultaneous experience of racial and gender stereotypes, and the gender hierarchy that exist within the Black community of scholars (Jones, 2004).

Thus, although there are commonalities that may resonate across cultural, racial and gender divides, there are tangible differences (Patton, 2009). The intersection of race and gender places Black women “…in a unique category, and positions them to experience, in tandem, the effects associated with being Black and women” (Collins, 1990, as quoted in Lloyd-Jones, 2009, 609). Black women’s experiences differ from those of Black men and White women in their severity and complexity. Also, Black women have their own sociocultural traditions, “patterns of discrimination, and points of resistance that impact their unique experiences” (Smith, 1992, 229). Therefore, given Black women’s unique standpoint more attention should be paid to the educational, social and political locations of Black women within higher education.

Lastly, it has been noted, that significant variations in experiences can exist within a racial group (Museus & Truong, 2009), thus Black women “…should not be placed into the one size fits all framework of ‘Black people’…” because it disregards the differences within the group and the ways the differences affect individual experiences (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003, 103). Given this reality, it is essential to consider how race and gender might mutually shape Black women’s experiences by studying Black women in and of themselves.

**Why Study Black Women in Canadian Sport**

Black female student athletes have participated and excelled in Canadian university academics and athletics for decades. However, even though Canadian institutions have educated some notable Black female student athletes, in addition to many other successful Black females, scant research has been conducted about the student experiences of past or present Black Canadian female student athletes in their postsecondary level of education (Humber, 2004). While the names and athletic achievement of these student athletes are known, little else is known about these individuals. As such, research in the area is warranted.
As well, studies in the U.S context have found that female Black student athletes, unlike non-minority student athletes, often face cultural and racial barriers (Brooks & Althouse, 2000). Black female student athletes also face isolation and developmental struggles when they find themselves to be the one and only, or one of a few persons of colour, on their team (Brooks & Althouse, 2000). In addition to this, Black female students are often confronted with stereotypes and discrimination, and a consistent lack of coaches and staff of colour to act as role models and mentors (Harmon, 2009). Thus, when viewed in the context of race, ethnicity, and gender, the challenges of a student athlete become even more complex (Harmon, 2009). Therefore, since it has been found in the U.S context that the experiences of Black female student athletes are more complex and significantly different from that of other student athletes (Sellers et al., 1997; Smith, 1995), it is important to study Black female student athletes in the Canadian contexts, to determine if similar challenges and complexities exist.

Conceptual Framework

The aim of this study is to explore and examine the experiences of Black female student athletes in Canadian higher education. More specifically, the goal of this study is to examine how factors related to race, gender and athleticism influence the experiences of this subgroup in Canadian postsecondary education. This investigation has been informed by the integration of two theories: Intersectionality and Schlossberg’s Theory of Marginality and Mattering. However, prior to discussing Intersectionality and Marginality and Mattering, the utility of a few other theoretical and conceptual frameworks will be discussed in order to explain the challenges this research had with existing conceptual frameworks.

Finding and applying theoretical constructs that are appropriate to explaining and understanding the experience of Black women in Canada is challenging, especially because in the fields of higher education and student affairs, student development and student affairs theories have often been constructed based on populations that have not experienced racial and gender oppression, and this often misses the issues that women face or attributes exemplified by Black women. Thus, the use of traditional frameworks is problematic because “when traditional theories are used in working with black students, conclusions are often reached that are not accurate” (McEwen, Roper, Bryant, & Langa, 1990, 434). As well, traditional theories within
the higher education and student affairs literature are often focused on developmental stages and changes. While incorporating the developmental issues of Black students into existing theoretical models can be useful to an extent, the researcher in this study wanted to utilize a more open, theoretical framework for this initial exploratory study.

Utility of Traditional Student Development Theories

Time-honoured student development theories have been the central, guiding models for research on and working with students within higher education (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Institutions have accepted and adopted theories developed by Chickering (1969), Perry (1968, 1981), Kohlberg (1976), Tinto (1975, 1993), and Astin (1984, 1999) (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Howard-Hamilton, 2003) to serve as frameworks for understanding and explaining the development of postsecondary students. More recent theoretical frameworks and models with a specific focus on women, people of color, and other marginalized groups have also been researched and developed (Cross, 1995; Gilligan, 1993; Josselson, 1998; Torres, 1999; Wijeysinghe & Jackson, 2001). However, many of the traditional and often used theories and frameworks in student affairs were not deemed appropriate for this study as most student development theories fall into the categories of psychosocial and identity development theories and cognitive structural theories.

Psychosocial and identity development theories such as Chickering’s Theory of Identity Development (1993), Josselson’s Theory of Women’s Identity Development (1987), Cross’s Model of Psychological Nigrescence (1995) or Phinney’s Model of Racial and Ethnic Identity Development (1989) are about personal growth and development. They examine “…the content of development, the important issues people face as their lives progress, such as how to define themselves, their relationships with others and what to do with their lives…[and this]...development takes place across the life span in a series of age-linked sequential stages” (Evans et al., 1998, 32). In these stages, individuals are confronted with developmental tasks and are presented with various questions and issues that must be resolved. These theories focus on the nature and process of change, and are helpful in understanding the issues students face at various points in their lives (Evans et. al, 1998).

For example, Arthur Chickering contributed to the field of student affairs and student
development theories with his Seven-Vector Theory of Student Development. This was the first major theory to specifically examine the development of postsecondary students (Evans et al., 1998). Chickering noted seven vectors of development that contribute to the formation of identity: (1) Developing Competence; (2) Managing Emotions; (3) Moving through Autonomy toward Independence; (4) Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships; (5) Establishing Identity; (6) Developing Purpose; and (7) Developing Integrity. According to Chickering, “…an individual may work through more than one vector concurrently, but each stage is the central focus at any given time. Unlike stage theories, Chickering’s theory implies fluid motion of development” (Evans et al., 1998, 37). Chickering also noted that “…students move through the vectors at different rates and that no two individuals will work through the vectors at exactly the same time as his or her peers” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, 33). Chickering’s vectors are not firmly in order, so an individual can move backwards and forwards, retracing steps. However, “vectors do build on each other leading to greater complexity, stability, and integration as the issues related to each vector are addressed” (Evans et al., 1998, 37).

Further, with the help of Linda Reisser, Chickering updated and republished his theory in 1993. They made adjustments to his original seven vectors and the revised theory was said to “incorporate new research findings, to summarize the work of other theorists as it relates to his theory, and to be inclusive of various student populations” (Evans et al., 1998, 37). However, there was still no discussion of race and how it might intersect with the seven vectors.

More so, in this study, psychosocial theories of student development were not utilized because they focus on the formation of identity and process of change, (how individuals relate to themselves and others) and the present study did not intend to look at identity development or the developmental process of Black female student athletes.

Cognitive structural theories such as Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development (1976), Perry’s theory of Intellectual and Ethical Development (1981) or Gilligan’s Theory of Women’s Moral development (1993) explain changes in the way people think. These theories are not particularly concerned with what individuals think. These theories examine “…the process of intellectual development during the college years…and…focus on how people think, reason, and make meaning of their experiences.” (Evans et al., 1998, 124). They emphasize the significance of genetics and environment in intellectual development and reveal the different
ways an individual develops cognitively. According to these theories, the mind is thought to have stages, and these stages “…are viewed as arising one at a time, always in the same order, regardless of cultural conditions.” (Evans et al., 1998, 124). The age of an individual and the rate at which an individual passes through each stage varies, and each stage builds upon the previous one. Thus, each consecutive stage is different and more complex than the one before it (Evans et al., 1998). Cognitive-structural theories can help in understanding how students view situations they are facing and can help provide direction on how to communicate effectively with students.

For example, Kohlberg developed a Theory of Moral Development and reasoning. Kohlberg argued that moral reasoning is an important factor of moral behavior. More so, Kohlberg proposed that moral reasoning develops through a six-stage process. Therefore, Kohlberg’s theory had six stages, grouped into three levels, and individuals would move through these stages attempting to reach a universal level of moral reasoning. At Level I “…individuals have not yet come to understand societal rules and expectations; their perspective is concrete and individually focused” (Evans et al., 1998, 174). At Level II individuals identify with the rules and expectations of others, and at Level III “…individuals separate themselves from the rules and expectations of others and base their decisions on self-chosen principles” (Evans et al., 1998, 174). An individual begins by obeying laws and regulations out of fear of punishment and grows to treat others based on what is fair, out of reciprocity, or based on an agreement. Further along, the individual’s moral obligation to others develops as individuals take on more deliberate approaches to justice.

Again, cognitive structural theories were not deemed appropriate to guide this study, as the present study intends to focus on the content of Black female student athletes’ experiences; it is not the intent of the study to focus on how Black female student athletes’ ways of thinking change, how they view their experiences, or how they make sense of their experience.

Typology theories such as Holland’s Theory of Vocational Personalities and Environment (1992), The Briggs-Myers Personality Type Indicator (1980) and David Kolb’s Theory of Experiential Learning (1984) “reflect individual stylistic differences in how students approach their worlds” (Evans et al., 1998, 204). These theories are not made up of stages through which individuals need to progress. Typology theorists, “…identify factors that create
consistent ways of coping with change and the demands of life. When faced with similar
developmental challenges, environmental factors, or living situations, people will respond
differently, depending on their [personality] type” (Evans et al., 1998, 204). These theories
examine individual differences in how students perceive and relate to the world. As well, these
theories help explain interpersonal interactions and provide guidance concerning the design of
classes, workshops and other structured educational experiences.

For example, Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) provides a model of the
learning process. Kolb’s theory regarded learning as a cyclical series of four steps consisting of
“concrete experiences (CE), a feeling dimension; reflective observation (RO), a watching
dimension; abstract conceptualization (AC), a thinking dimension; and active experimentation
(AE) a doing dimension” (Evans et al., 1998, 208). The first stage is where a learner takes part
in an activity; the second stage is when the learner reflects back on the activity. The third step is
where the learner tries to come up with a theory about what was observed, and the fourth step is
where the learner plans how to test the theory. Each of the steps provides a foundation for the
following step. The learning cycle shows how an individual can reflect on an experience and
then develop concepts, which are used as guides for experimentation and the choice of new
experiences. Kolb also identified four learning styles, which correspond to the learning stages.
The learning styles highlight settings under which learners learn better. These styles are (1)
Diverger (CE/RO)- learn best when allowed to observe and gather different types of information
(2) Assimilator (AC/RO)- learn best when given logical theories to consider (3) Converger
(AC/AE) – learn best when provided with practical applications of theories or concepts (4)
Accommodator (CE/AE)- learn best when provided with “hands-on” experiences. As such,
Kolb’s theory and information on learning style could be utilized to help design diversified
courses, which would support the learning experiences in classrooms. Thus, typology theories
are helpful in guiding course construction or identifying learning strategies or helping students
understand or identify possible career interests.

However, while issues of interpersonal interaction may arise in this study, the researcher
is not in search of explaining these interactions, as much as the researcher is interested in
documenting the interactions. Therefore, typology theories were not deemed useful for this
study.
Person Environment Theories and Models examine the connection between the environment and the individual student. While other theories acknowledge the role of the environment in shaping student behavior and development, Person Environment theories and models, “…focus in detail on the environment and how it influences behavior through its interaction with characteristics of the individual” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, 46). These theories and models do not attempt to explain the nature or processes of student development, but attempt “…to identify some origins of behavior and provide frameworks for discussing student change and college effects” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, 46). As well, Person Environment theories and models are divided into four categories: physical, human aggregate, organizational, and constructed. Holland’s theory of Vocational Personalities and Environments (1992) and Baker’s campus Ecology Theories (1986) are examples of Person Environment theories. These theories and models may help in career counseling or assist in the design of student orientations and student activities.

For example, Holland’s Theory of Vocational Personalities and Environments (1992) begins with four assumptions. The first assumption is that “people may be characterized by their resemblance to one or more personality types” (Evans et al., 1998, 226). There are six basic personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. Individuals usually have characteristics of all six types, but it is suggested that each individual’s behaviour has one or two of these personality types appearing more strongly than the others. As well, Holland states that “The more similar they are to a particular type, the more they exhibit the behaviors and attitudes associated with it” (Evans et al., 1998, 227). A second assumption is that there are six model environments that correspond to each of the personality types. For example, artistic individuals dominate artistic environments, and these environments promote the development of distinctive attitudes, interests, values and competencies of artistic individuals.

The third assumption suggests “…people seek out environments that provide them with opportunities to use their talents and express their values and attitude” (Evans et al., 1998, 227), so Artistic types look for Artistic environments, Investigative types look for Investigative environments, and so forth. Lastly, Holland states that behavior is a result of the interactions between the person and the environment; therefore, the corresponding person-environment interactions (an Investigative type in an Investigative environment) lead to vocational choices.
“that are predictable and understandable from the knowledge of the personality types and the model environments” (Evans et al., 1998, 227). Consequently, Holland’s theory assumes that ones choice of vocation or a college major is an expression of personality. Individuals choose occupations or fields of study that are consistent with their personality types; and the model environments (e.g., academic majors) display attitudes, interests, values and abilities of the personality types who dominate the particular environment. As well, vocational and educational achievement and satisfaction are a result of similarity between the individual and his/her environment.

As such, in this present study, while the researcher acknowledges the role that environment plays in the Black female student athlete’s experience, the study did not intend to focus on the detail of the environment and how it influences the behavior of Black female student athletes.

Furthermore, the set of models referred to as “college impact models of student change” or “impact models” focus on the processes or origins of growth and change. They examine the ways in which change occurs. These models do not focus on a particular internal processes or a measurement of student change. Models such as Astin's Theory of Involvement (1984), Tinto’s Theory of Student Departure (1987) and Schlossberg’s Marginality and Mattering (1989) are considered impact models.

For example Tinto’s Theory of Student Departure is today still one of the most notable models in higher education research. In general, Tinto’s model seeks to explain the postsecondary student’s withdrawal process from higher education. Tinto theorizes that,

Students enter a college or university with varying patterns of personal, family, and academic characteristics and skills, including initial dispositions and intentions with respect to college attendance and personal growth. These intentions and commitments are subsequently modified and reformulated on a continuing basis through a longitudinal series of interactions between the individual and the structures and members of the academic and social systems of the institution” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, 54).

The theory also puts forth that positive interactions with the formal and informal academic and social areas of postsecondary institutions lead to greater student integration in postsecondary environments, and thus lead to persistence. As a general approach, Tinto’s model offers
direction to those working with students who seek to design programs and experiences that will promote students’ educational growth and persistence.

Thus, given the exploratory nature of this study, the theory was not deemed appropriate to guide the study, as it focuses specifically on educational growth and persistence. Also, while Astin's Theory of Involvement is considered to be a more general theory, and different from popular developmental theories (Astin, 1999), it still has a specific focus on involvement, educational growth, and the behavioural methods or processes that facilitate development, rendering it less than ideal to guide the study.

Overall, while the above mentioned theories could be applied to minority students, and while a handful of the theories were specifically geared towards minority students and non-traditional groups (Cross, 1995; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Torres, Jones & Renn 2004), they were not considered the best choices for the proposed study. Many of the theories, which often have their base in the field of psychology, were too focused on the developmental processes and paths of students. In addition, the above-mentioned theories were also deemed less than ideal as many of the student development theories and models are based on the findings of populations consisting of mostly traditional university populations (i.e., White, upper middle class, traditional-aged men), which may contribute to a limited understanding of what is important in the lives of students, particularly those students who do not fall into the “traditional student” group.

More importantly, the differing circumstances and cultural factors of minority students were often overlooked in these theories. As well, these theories tend not to consider multiple identities, and how these identities intersect for diverse students. However, the researcher does recognize the inherent value of using established and well-tested student affairs theories to help make sense of the research process, and thus utilizes the theory of Marginality and Mattering to help guide the study.

Moreover, the study employed one traditional, less often used, student development theory and one alternative theory. Schlossberg’s Theory of Marginality and Mattering (1989) and the concept of Intersectionality were utilized to explore the experience of Black female student athletes in Canadian higher education. The theory of Marginality and Mattering will be discussed first.
**Schlossberg’s Theory of Marginality and Mattering**

Unlike the theories summarized above, the lens of Mattering and Marginality was deemed useful and appropriate to illuminate the postsecondary experiences of Black female student athletes in Canadian higher education. This theory was deemed suitable for this study as it did not focus on one particular aspect of education (i.e., involvement or departure), and it was a non-hierarchical theory. Nancy Schlossberg’s theory of Marginality and Mattering is an important concept recognized in postsecondary student development and success (Evans et al., 1998). Schlossberg pointed to “…the importance of considering the concepts of marginality and mattering when examining the impact of the college experience on student development” (Evans et al., 2009, 31), as student success is dependent on the degree to which students feel they “matter.”

Schlossberg (1989) defined marginality as “a sense of not fitting in” and stated that students feel marginalized when they feel they do not fit in. The feeling of not fitting in leads to undesirable outcomes such as “self-consciousness, irritability, and depression” (Evans et al., 1998, 27). As well, marginality can refer to a temporary or permanent condition. For example, for members of minority groups or visible minorities, marginality is a way of life and these feelings can be permanent. In addition, students may experience temporary marginalization during a time when they are uncertain about what their new role entails, such as when they start university for the first time. Additionally, a clash of institutional and student characteristics can cause feelings of alienation and disconnectedness, and the student may feel as though he/she does not fit in. However, the feeling of marginalization dissipates as the student meets and interacts with other students in the educational institution.

Additionally, feeling marginalized causes students to question whether they “matter to someone else” (Schlossberg, 1989, 9). Mattering is defined as the “belief, whether right or wrong, that we matter to someone else” (Evans et al., 1998, 9). As Schlossberg states, mattering “…is a motive: the feeling that others depend on us, are interested in us, are concerned with our fate or experience us as an ego extension exercises a powerful influence on our actions” (1989). In the university environment, students must believe they matter and that others (peers, faculty, staff, and family) take a personal interest in them. In order to succeed students must have a sense
of belonging. Schlossberg investigated five aspects of mattering. The five features of mattering are as follows:

Attention: the feeling that one is noticed; Importance: the belief that one is cared about; Ego extension: the feeling that someone else will be proud of what one does or will sympathize with one's failures; Dependence: the feeling of being needed; and Appreciation: feeling that one's efforts are appreciated by others (Evans et al., 1998).

Schlossberg (1989) noted that when college students have feelings of belonging, feel connected to the environment, and feel they matter to others, their feelings of marginality diminish. Students in postsecondary education succeed in a multitude of ways when they perceive they are appreciated by others and receive positive support.

Schlossberg (1989) states that many researchers and administrators have identified supportive campus communities and students’ active involvement in the university as a precursor to success. Therefore, creating supportive campus communities where students feel welcomed, cared for and respected will facilitate student development and increase student retention. When students feel that they are valued and there is a "fit" between themselves and the environment, they have increased satisfaction and academic persistence (Gossett et. al., 1996). As well, Schlossberg (1989) states that,

[Student] Involvement [the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience (Astin, 1984, 297)] creates connections between students, faculty and staff that allow individuals to believe in their own personal worth. This involvement also creates an awareness of mutual relatedness and the fact that the condition of community is not only desirable but also essential to human survival. Therefore, the concern over involving students, although appropriately related to satisfaction and retention, is the very process that creates community (p.5-6).

Thus, involvement in the university creates an environment in which students feel they matter, and this increased involvement and feelings of mattering can influence student satisfaction with the university, promote academic achievement, as well as increase academic persistence (Astin, 1977, 1984, as cited in Schlossberg, 1989).

Schlossberg’s Theory of Mattering and Marginality has been applied in various studies focusing on different populations. In a study by Rayle and Chung (2007), Schlossberg’s (1989) Theory of Marginality and Mattering was revisited. Rayle and Chung conducted a quantitative study of 533 first-year college students. The participants were all students in a College of
Education class at a large, predominantly White institution (PWI), located in the southwestern part of the United States. The relationships between gender, mattering to college friends and the college environment, and friend and family social support with academic stress were examined. Female students reported, “…higher levels of family support, mattering to friends, mattering to their college, and academic stress” (p. 21). For both male and female students, college friends’ social support was the most important factor influencing mattering. As well, mattering to the educational institution was the most important factor influencing academic stress levels. This study did not disaggregate data based on race; comparisons were only based on gender. As well, only one school was included in the study and only quantitative measures were utilized.

In a study conducted by Gossett, Cuyjet, and Cockriel (1996), the researchers looked at African American students’ sense of mattering and marginality. The researchers compared the perceptions of African American students and non-African American students on issues of mattering and marginality. They also identified the specific areas within the university environment in which these differences were most evident. In order to compare the opinions of the students a survey was conducted at four large, public, predominantly White institutions (PWIs) in the Midwest. The study found significant differences between the perceptions of African American students and non-African American students on issues of mattering and marginality. African American students “…reported feeling more marginal than non-African American students,” (Gossett et al., 1996, 27) and non-African Americans did not really understand the perceived discrimination experienced by African American students. This study was significant as it focused on and included students of color. However, while the study disaggregated the data based on race and included multiple institutions, it still relied on solely quantitative measures of mattering and marginality.

Similar to Gossett, Cuyjet and Cockriel’s study, Phillips’ (2005) study compared the perspectives of African American and White students at two predominantly White institutions. Both schools were four-year public institutions, and both schools were located in the northeastern part of the United States. As well, the two institutions were considered teaching colleges, and they were both located in rural areas. The researcher’s survey instrument was created based on the work of Schlossberg (1989) and it examined six areas in the undergraduate environment: “academic advising, administrative climate, classroom climate, faculty interaction, peer interaction, and student services” (p. 298). The results showed that African American
students felt marginalized in comparison to White students. In addition, White students were not cognizant of the various challenges that African American students dealt with within the university environment. This study was also useful as it disaggregated data based on race and it contributed to the literature as it examined rural schools. However, a limitation existed as the study focused on only two schools.

As noted above, according to Schlossberg’s theory, students are positively affected (more satisfied and more successful, etc.) when they are involved and when they feel they matter to peers, faculty staff and/or the educational institution on the whole. Schlossberg (1989) stressed, “…that institutions of higher education need to help people feel like they matter. She saw this goal as a precursor to students becoming involved in activities and academic programs that would facilitate development and learning.” (Evans et al., 1998, 27). On the basis of Schlossberg’s theory, given that the Black female student athletes in this study are heavily involved in a campus activity—collegiate sport—the assumption could be made that these students will feel as though they matter and therefore will be less likely to feel marginalized.

Thus, Schlossberg’s Theory of Mattering and Marginality (1989) provides a different way in which to explore student athletes’ involvement and perceptions of their experiences in higher education. No previous studies have explored this construct with student athletes within a Canadian context or with a qualitative framework. As well, the previous studies that utilized Schlossberg’s theory focused on similar environments (i.e., predominately White universities), employed quantitative methods, concentrated on the general student population, and focused on U.S students. Thus, Schlossberg’s theory was utilized to guide this study and the findings were partially discussed through the lens of Marginality and Mattering, as it relates to fitting into the university environment, feeling connected to the campus and involvement in the university experience.

Utility of Black Feminist Thought and Critical Race Theory

Within the past few decades as more studies have begun to emerge on Black women in higher education, researchers have begun to utilize more appropriate conceptual frameworks. Two conceptual frameworks that define factors central to developing insight into the developmental and societal issues of Black women have become standard: Black Feminist
Thought and Critical Race Theory. While the researcher recognizes the inherent value of using these two established frameworks to help make sense out of the experience of Black female student athletes, the researcher briefly describes the two major frameworks and then explains why they were not utilized in this study.

Black Feminist Thought, which was conceptualized and articulated by female scholars of color, “has contributed significantly to contemporary and critical thinking about the social condition of Black women in the United States” (Lloyd-Jones, 2009, 190), and it suggests that racism, sexism and class oppression are indivisibly linked. At the center of Black Feminist Thought is the argument that Black women are positioned “…within structures of power in fundamentally different ways than other women and African American men” (Bruening et al, 2005, 83). As well, Black Feminist Thought is committed to social justice and the empowerment of Black women. Conceptualized by Patricia Hill-Collins, the Black Feminist Thought framework incorporates three themes to reveal the overlapping oppressions experienced by Black women (Collins, 2002).

First, the framework is shaped and produced by the experiences black women have encountered in their lives, even though others have documented their stories. Second, although the stories and experiences of each woman are unique, there are intersections of experiences between and among black women. Third, although commonalities do exist among black women, the diversity of class, religion, age, and sexual orientation of black women as a group are multiple contexts from which their experiences can be revealed and understood (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, 21).

The first theme suggests that individuals other than African American women have shaped Black women’s identity, and in doing so they have created inaccurate and stereotypical representations, ultimately resulting in oppression. Therefore, it is important that “…self-evaluation, self-definition, and knowledge validation replace the negative self images in the minds of these women” (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, 22). Through self-definition and self-evaluation, Black women can redefine the historic and stereotypical images of Black women and replace them with “authentic” images.

The second theme suggests that Black women’s multiple identities are intersecting and immersed in dual/simultaneous oppression and subordinate status. African American women have been relegated to the bottom of several identities, which has been central to their continued experience of domination.
The third theme suggests that Black women “…develop, redefine, and explain their own stories based on the importance of black women’s culture” (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, 22). Thus, Black Feminist Thought stresses the importance of voice and visibility of Black women, and Black women must speak for themselves to reclaim the power that has been seized by dominant groups. Further, Howard-Hamilton (2003) states that these themes may not be obvious to African American women at first, therefore “…one role of Black female intellectuals is to produce facts and theories about the Black female experience that will clarify a Black woman’s standpoint for Black women” (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, 21).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is another theoretical framework that was created by scholars of color, and it was initially utilized in legal studies. These scholars were concerned about racial subjugation in society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, as quoted in Howard-Hamilton, 2003, 22) and they utilized Critical Race Theory to examine how legal policy is used to subordinate racial groups. The scholars found that those in power designed laws and policies that were purported to be race-neutral but ultimately maintained racial and ethnic oppression (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Then Critical Race Theory spread to various disciplines, including the field of education. Thus the goal of Critical Race theory in the field of higher education is “…to develop a pedagogy, curriculum, and research agenda that accounts for the role of race and racism in U.S higher education and work towards the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination in higher education” (Solórzano & Villaolpano, 1998, 211). Thus, generally speaking, Critical Race Theory is a framework from which to explore and critically “examine the racism in society that privileges Whiteness as it disadvantages others because of their Blackness” (Hylton, 2009, 22).

As such, Critical Race Theory is an approach that offers a lens through which to make sense of, deconstruct and challenge racial inequality in society. The basic principles that guide the Critical Race Theory framework are as follows: “(a) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination, (b) the challenges to dominant ideology, (c) the commitment to social justice, (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (d) the transdisciplinary perspective” (Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000, 63). More specifically, Critical Race Theory acknowledges that racism is engrained in American society,
… It expresses skepticism toward dominant claims of neutrality, objectivity, color blindness, and meritocracy; it challenges ahistoricism and insists on a contextual and historical analysis of institutional policies; [it] insists on recognizing the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing society; [it] is interdisciplinary and crosses epistemological and methodological boundaries; [and it] works toward eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression” (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, 22).

According to critical race theorists, concepts of neutrality and color blindness systemically disadvantage people of color, and continue to privilege Whites by camouflaging and reinforcing deep structural inequalities. Avoiding the issue of race allows for the acknowledgment of only overt racism, and in turn, covert racial cruelties are dismissed, excused or ignored. In addition, while Critical Race Theory is centrally concerned with racial inequality, it does not operate to the exclusion of other forms of oppression. It recognizes that individuals have multiple identities and therefore may experience the intersection of multiple forms of subordination. As well, theorists stress the importance of viewing policies, policy making, paradigms, methods, texts, etc., in their historical and cultural context in order to analyze the racialized content. Furthermore, narratives or counterstories in the form of discussions, archives and personal statements, contribute to the centrality of experiential knowledge of people of color (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, 23). To tell previously untold stories and to analyze the myths and presuppositions that make up the common narrative about race helps fight the attempt to keep Blacks and other minorities at the bottom of the social, economic, and racial hierarchies.

Moreover, Critical Race Theory examines everyday interactions and looks critically at the race relations that exist in society. In naming, acknowledging, and analyzing racism and racial inequality, it is hoped that there will be a reduction of racist acts in society.

However, the theoretical frameworks of Black Feminist Thought and Critical Race Theory were not deemed appropriate for this study, as the researcher did not want to privilege or overemphasize the significance of race and racism since the study was exploratory. As well, the study at this point in time is not focused on transforming structures, as much as it is about finding out what is going on in the educational lives of Black female student athletes. The researcher does acknowledge that racism is present in Canadian society and wants to express scepticism towards neutrality, multiculturalism and color blindness. The researcher is further committed to social justice; and recognizes the experiential knowledge of people of color. Nevertheless, the researcher did not want to be proactively presume the centrality of race and
racism in the participants’ student experience. The researcher did not intend to ignore race, as is evident from the noted importance of race within the introductory chapter. However, the researcher did not want to put the notion of race and racial inequality in the foreground but, rather, observe if and when it came to the foreground. The researcher sought to observe to what extent the salience of race evolved in the Canadian context and, therefore, the study in turn utilized the broader general concept of Intersectionality in an attempt to explore the student experience of Black female student athletes in Canadian higher education.

**Intersectionality**

While the majority of student affair theories, Black Feminist Thought and Critical Race Theory were not deemed appropriate to guide this study, the concept of Intersectionality – which is related to Black feminist Thought and Critical Race Theory – was considered to be an appropriate conceptual framework to guide the study.

At present, there are various definitions associated with the term “intersectionality” and its theoretical approach. Most commonly, intersectionality is defined as a theory that suggests and seeks to examine how various socially and culturally constructed categories such as race, gender, class and other categories of identity interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, contributing to systematic social inequality (McCall, 2005). Intersectionality suggests that the traditional forms of oppression within society, such as those based on race/ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, class, or disability are not experienced separately. These various forms of discrimination intersect, producing a system of oppression. More specifically, the basic idea is that race, gender, class, sexuality, disability, etc. intersect to a degree where it is not possible to separate any one from the others. As well, intersectionality posits that society cannot focus exclusively on one form of discrimination because oppression cannot be neatly segmented. Further, intersectionality was also established around the notion that those who experience multiple forms of oppression are constantly left behind by movements that focus on a singular identity.

Intersectionality does not just identify diversity and differences among groups. It stresses the importance of gender, race and class power systems and it examines the structures of domination and privilege. Thus, intersectionality “makes way for the examination of both
privilege and oppressed identities and acknowledges the possibility of individuals inhabiting both” (Dill et. al, 2007 as cited in Torres, Jones & Renn, 2009, 589). Intersectionality also allows researchers to view people's identities as multi-layered and context-specific, “…wherein the meaning of people’s locations and identities as well as their salience is the result of history, culture, and society” (Torres et. al., 2009, 590). As well, intersectionality is based on the assumptions that no single category of identity is automatically more important than another, and not all members of a single social group share the same experiences. Furthermore, an intersectional framework is characterized by a major emphasis on the lived experiences of individuals; an exploration of identity importance and complexity as influenced by systems of power and privilege; and an overall goal of contributing to a more socially just society (Collins, 2002).

Further, for this exploratory study, the researcher worked with a broader definition of intersectionality, which states that “intersectionality is the process through which multiple social identities converge and interact and ultimately shape individual experiences” (Shields, 2008, as cited in Museus & Griffin, 2011, 6). This definition does not make mention of oppression or domination. As well, this definition of intersectionality was utilized in this study as the researcher broadly explored the intersection of multiple identities (racial identity, gender identity and athletic identity) and how they intersected to shape Black female student athletes’ experiences within Canadian universities. As such, while the researcher believes that there is a matrix of domination which occurs when identities intersect, the researcher did not necessarily start with the supposition that inequality and oppression are salient parts of the participant’s experience. Furthermore, the researcher’s focus was not exclusively a question of highlighting structures of inequalities that exist, but more of understanding the general university experiences.

The concept of intersectionality gained popularity in the late 1980s and early 1990s, in legal discourse with two studies by Kimberlé Crenshaw and one by Angela Harris. Crenshaw’s (1989) first article Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex, analyzed Black women’s employment struggles in order to contrast the multi-axis analysis of Black women’s experience with the “single-axis analysis that distorts these experiences” (Crenshaw, 1989). Crenshaw’s (1991) second article, Mapping the Margins, addressed sexual violence against women of color, while Harris’ (1990) article Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory argued that in
general, feminist legal theory was essentialist, assuming the ideal White woman as model. Nonetheless, while intersectionality originated in the field of legal studies, it caught on in other fields, particularly in women’s studies and sociology.

As such, intersectionality emerged primarily from the scholarship of women of color who disagreed with the idea that women were a homogeneous group sharing characteristically similar experiences. They believed Black women had unique experiences that warranted attention. Thus, intersectionality was intended to focus on the experiences of marginalized individuals and groups by highlighting structures of inequality that influenced their experiences. However, since Crenshaw’s explanation of the utility of the intersectionality perspective, scholars have noted that while the theory began as an exploration of the oppression of women of color within society, intersectionality as a theoretical approach can be applied presently to all people and to many different intersections of group membership. It can be used to examine any group or community by placing them at the center and understanding how their multiple social identities interact, and where they sit within society.

However, there have been noted concerns with the use of intersectionality. It has been stated that intersectionality can paralyze progressive work and thought because whatever unit one chooses to work with (i.e., Black women), another individual may come along and point out another category that was excluded (i.e., class) or a new subgroup (Black female Muslims) may want to be recognized separately. Thus, the unit of analysis once believed to be the end (Black women), is not the end, as “categories are potentially, infinitely divisible” (Delgado, 2011, 1264). Both Yuval-Davis (2006) and Harris (1990) noted the same dilemma, stating that intersectional analysis has no logical stopping point, the potential differences within a large group are innumerable, and they cannot all be taken into account (Ludvig, 2006). However, it should be noted that this situation is not particular to intersectionality. Within all areas of research and with all units of analysis, categories can potentially be broken down into smaller categories. This is why researchers delimit their area of focus and move forward.

In addition, it has been put forth that identifying a new subcategory can end up harming members of the very category one thinks they are defending, “One may intend to empower the smaller group by calling attention to its difficulties and unique voice and perspective, but things might not work out that way” (Delgado, 2011, 1265). For example, it has been found that while
judges state that the law is color-blind, as a way of condemning discriminatory laws, there is actually greater discrimination and inequity occurring. For example it was stated that,

...certain Canadian judges have been using intersectionality to increase the severity of sentences they hand down to indigenous women convicted of certain crimes. On learning the defendant’s identity, they reason that the crime is especially dangerous, so they impose an especially harsh sentence to discourage other Indians from behaving similarly (Delgado, 2011, 1265).

Thus, intersectionality can invite unfavourable attention to particular subgroups. However, the advantages of intersectionality, such as giving voice to new groups and helping to establish a rallying point, may offer hope for a group that has been suffering unfavourable or neglectful treatment, such as the Indigenous women noted above. The gains of intersectionality must be weighed against the potential dangers.

Furthermore, Delgado (2011) argues that “...focusing on the micro, on what is going on at the intersection of two or three or four categories containing smaller and smaller numbers of people” (1282), while important, should not be the focus when looking at race and inequality in the present day, as most oppression at present “...emanates from broad social forces, not quarrels among friends” (1282). Thus, Delgado believes that focusing on the unique needs of a small subgroup of minorities or women (e.g. Black female student athletes) can set up the larger group to be blindsided by larger forces. However, while intersectionality may emphasize and focus on the micro, it does not have to result in the elimination of the macro.

As well, within the research process, it has been noted that it is difficult for participants to fully articulate intersectional identities (Torres et al., 2009), which “…leaves considerable authority to the researcher to interpret mutually constitutive identifies when participants may not yet acknowledge these themselves…” (589). However, strategies such as reflection on researcher positionality and other measures consistent with assuring trustworthiness can be utilized to alleviate this concern.

Moreover, while there are some concerns with the general theory, intersectionality has its benefits. For example, while most sociological theory and student development theory make the mistake of examining one variable at a time or using the additive approach, intersectionality examines how race, gender, and class (or a combination of other identities) simultaneously
intersect within an individual to shape his/her experiences. Intersectionality breaks out of the boundaries of traditional student development theory by exploring the complexities of the lived experiences that rarely fall into neat categories, and by situating individuals within structures of power and oppression that influence that lived experience.

In addition, intersectionality frameworks allow for a more accurate reflection of the diversity within institutions, organizations, groups, categories etc. Additionally, intersectionality allows for the voices and realities of those at the margins to be brought to the forefront, and intersectionality promotes a better understanding of how intersecting identities can contribute to inequality. As well, intersectionality works to prevent the advancement and perpetuation of inequality.

Furthermore, intersectionality is a lens for bringing awareness to the issues and concerns of marginalized groups. Intersectionality draws attention to members of groups that experience multiple forms of oppression. Intersectionality also aims for contextualization and examining the experiences of marginalized groups (e.g., Black women) and renders certain exclusions more visible (Guidroz & Berger, 2009). As well, it emphasizes how things appear to small groups and it aims to prevent the error of making sweeping judgements and generalizations. Further, intersectionality reminds society to check, every now and then, to see if the tools, concepts, policies and practices are disadvantaging or leaving out specific groups. Moreover, while intersectionality may do little to advance a radical agenda, it does identify legitimate concerns of those lying at a particular intersection (Delgado, 2011).

Despite the reservations put forth by scholars, intersectionality provides an appropriate framework to guide this study, as intersectionality is interdisciplinary in its design and application. It provides a framework for new approaches to understanding and researching student identity, diversity issues and the student experience, and it also focuses on the transformation of practice to address inequalities and promote social change (Torres et al., 2009). Thus, intersectionality was utilized to analyze how race, gender, athleticism and the student role intersect to shape the university experience of Black female student athletes and for exposing the complexities of this intersection not typically accounted for by the traditional theoretical models.
**Delimitations**

This research study has presented fixed parameters that created boundaries of exploration. The researcher only selected universities and participants who were members of the Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) association. As well, the researcher only sought to investigate the experiences of undergraduate Black female student athletes in Canadian universities. Therefore this study did not attempt to reveal how all women or all minorities experience university as a student athlete.

In addition, this study did not attempt to compare the experience of Black female student athletes to other racial groups or non-athletes. No attempt was made to examine the experience of Black male athletes, White athletes, or other minority student athletes. Rather, an attempt was made to collect perspectives of a select group of Black women athletes, in an effort to give their perspectives attention. Therefore, this study was a vehicle to bring to the forefront the experiences, issues and concerns of one group, Black female student athletes in Canadian universities.

**Situating the Study**

One of the main reasons the researcher chose this area of research was because of her own experiences as a Black female student athlete in higher education. The researcher completed her undergraduate degree at a private liberal arts university in the United States, and competed as a Division I intercollegiate athlete. As a result of the researcher’s experiences as a Black female student athlete in higher education she consistently had questions regarding her own experiences and that of others. There were questions regarding transitions from high school, university choice, access, academic and athletic pressures and race, gender and class issues. Thus, these questions and experiences were the impetus for this study.

**Organization of the Thesis**

The thesis is organized into five chapters including this introductory chapter. Chapter 2 provides a brief review of student athletes in higher education and then an in-depth review of the literature on Black women in higher education. Since there is minimal literature on Black
women and the academy in Canada, the literature review in this area is mainly based on literature and research conducted in the United States context. Finally, a review of the available literature on Black female student athletes, solely based on U.S findings, is presented. Chapter 3 outlines and explains the research methods used in this study. The mixed methods approach and rationale are described. The research design, recruitment and sampling, data collection and analysis are outlined.

Chapters 4 and 5 present the substantive findings of this study and the discussion. Chapter 4 presents descriptive statistics and then integrates the quantitative data alongside the qualitative in order to present the notable experiences of Black female student athletes in Canadian universities. Chapter 5 synthesizes and interprets the major findings in terms of the academic, athletic and social experiences of Black female student athletes. As well, this chapter highlights the unique aspects of Black female student athletes in Canadian higher education. Consideration is also given to the limitations of the study, both methodologically and conceptually. Finally, the implications for higher education and recommendations for future research are summarized.
CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the existing literature examining the student athlete experience and the experience of Black women within higher education. The review of literature is framed around five bodies of literature. First is a brief review of the vast amount of literature on the general student athlete experience within higher education. The second section reviews the handful of studies on student athletes in Canadian higher education. The third section of this chapter looks at the experiences of Black women in higher education, and the fourth section reviews the handful of studies that have concentrated on Black students in Canadian higher education. The final section examines the literature on Black female student athletes in higher education.

Student Athletes in Higher Education

Intercollegiate athletics have generated substantial interest both within higher education and outside it with regard to their effects on the educational institutions and on the athletes who participate (Shulman & Bowen, 2001). Research has found that as a result of their athletic status, all student athletes are faced with a unique set of academic, personal and social issues and challenges in comparison to the general student populations. Student athletes report challenges balancing academic and athletic obligations as a result of travel and time away from the classroom, social restrictions, challenges developing interpersonal relationships, coping with injury, role conflict, and challenges managing time and maintaining energy (Chen et al., 2010; Ferrante et al., 1996; Parham, 1993). On a more positive note researchers also suggest that student athletes gain valuable life-long skills (e.g., time management), improved health and a sense of empowerment. As well, athletic participation enhances self confidence; provides interaction and enjoyment; expands life experiences; and builds character (Chen et al., 2010; Coakley, 2008; Eitzen & Sage, 2008) Thus, the student athlete in higher education is a unique subgroup that has warranted focused study and, as a result, a vast array of literature has evolved in the area of sport and higher education.
Numerous researchers have studied the impact of intercollegiate athletic participation on learning – the cognitive skills and intellectual growth of student athletes. There is a consistent body of literature to suggest that intercollegiate athletes, and in particular those who participate in football and basketball, may not be deriving the same cognitive benefits from university as their non-athlete peers (Astin, 1993; Stratta, 1995a; McBride & Reed, 1998; Pascarella, Truckenmiller, Nora, Terenzini, Edison & Hagedorn, 1999). There is also evidence to suggest that any negative influence of athletic participation is more pronounced for men than for women (Stratta, 1995a; Pascarella, Bohr, Nora & Terenzini, 1995; Pascarella et al., 1999). Other studies reveal “no differences between student athletes and non-athletes with regards to cognitive development (Pascarella, Bohr, Nora & Terenzini, 1995; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996)” (Umbach et al., 2006, 710). And still, in contrast, some research showed that intercollegiate athletic participation can influence athletes’ cognitive development in positive ways (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Furthermore, researchers have studied the impact of intercollegiate athletic participation on a student athlete’s attitude and value changes; however, this area has much fewer studies. There are a few studies that have looked at the effects of athletic participation on student’s racial-ethnic attitudes (Adler & Adler, 1985, 1987, 1991; Wolniak et al., 2001). The study looked at student athletes’ openness to diversity over time and how the value they ascribe to learning for self-understanding changes over time. As well, in Adler and Adler’s influential work with a men’s college basketball program it was revealed that although athletes entered university with a positive attitude towards academics, their attitudes became increasingly negative and, subsequently, their academic plans were altered as they repeatedly lowered their educational goals.

In addition, a sizable amount of the research on athletics and postsecondary education examines the impact of intercollegiate athletics on academic achievement. The relationship between academic persistence, graduation rates, grade point average and intercollegiate athletics has been widely studied (Pascarella et al., 1995) and the findings have been mixed. While some researchers have noted positive connections between athletic participation and academic achievement, such as increased educational motivation and commitment (Astin, 1993; Defour & Hirsch, 1990; Long & Caudill, 1991; Chu, 1989; Harris, 1993; Ryan, 1989; Shulman & Bowen, 2001; Simons et al., 1999; Pascarella et al., 1996; Pascarella & Smart, 1991; Stoecker et al.,
others have found that athletic participation has a negative effect on the academic achievement and persistence of student athletes, such as a reduced interest in academic success, academic failure and non-completion (Adler & Adler 1985, 1987, 1991; Danlychuk, 1995; Eitzen & Purdy 1987; Martens, 1985; Shulman & Bowen, 2001).

As well, some of the studies noted that the impact of athletic participation on academic achievement varied by sport, school year, race and/or gender. Meyer (1990) noted that the academic disconnect demonstrated amongst male basketball players did not appear among the female athletes. Instead, the female athletes faced conditions in their athletic, academic and social lives that fostered academic achievement and, thus, they displayed an increased commitment to academic persistence and graduation. As well, Adelman (1994) found that the impact of athletic participation varied by race and states that “Intercollegiate sport participation appeared to be somewhat more advantageous for African-American athletes, as Black football and basketball players who earned bachelor’s degrees were more than twice as likely to complete graduate degrees, in comparison to White student athletes” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Thus, in reviewing the literature on the impact of athletic participation on academic achievement, it is evident that study results will always slightly differ as multiple intervening factors are at work.

With regards to athletic participation and social interactions, some researchers asserted that social interactions and social life were compromised as a result of intercollegiate athletic participation (Blinde, 1989; Ferrante et al., 1996; Meyer, 1990; Miller & Kerr, 2002; Parham, 1993; Riemer & Chelladurai, 2001; Wolf-Wendel et. al, 2001). In contrast, another group of studies stated that social interactions were positively impacted by athletic participation (Adler & Adler, 1991; Astin, 1993; McTeer, 1987; Pascarella & Smart, 1991). Ferrante et al., (1996), reported that student athletes were often isolated both physically and socially from non-athletes, and had little time to explore other aspects of their identity or engage in academic and co-curricular experiences. By contrast, Adler and Adler (1985, 1987, 1991) found that student athletes’ social development was not negatively impacted by participation in intercollegiate sports.

A subset of the student athlete literature directs a focus towards minority student athletes, particularly African American student athletes. The available studies have revealed notable
differences between African American male and female student athletes, and African American student-athletes as compared to White student athletes. These issues and challenges include, but are not limited to: academic issues or hardships, exploitation, stereotypes, media portrayals, and racism (Brooks & Althouse, 2000; Hawkins, 1995; Lapchick, 2006; Person et al., 2001; Sailes, 2010; Singer, 2005; Simiyu, 2012; Winbush, 1987).

Summary

The literature on student athletes in higher education reveals that in an attempt to study the impact of intercollegiate participation on student athletes’ academic achievement and persistence, researchers have used diverse measures of academic achievement ranging from high school GPA and ACT/SAT scores, to graduation rates and honor status. Researchers have also used diverse indicators of academic persistence and distress such as departure from initial academic majors, and years required for degree completion. The use of various indicators of academic achievement and persistence has complicated the integration of empirical findings. Some studies demonstrate that athletic participation can impact athletes’ academic achievement, persistence and graduation in positive ways, while other studies reveal the negative impact of intercollegiate athletics.

As well, researchers have often collected data from official university documents (e.g., student transcripts), purposive surveys, or regional/national databases which rely heavily on the use of standardized assessment and measurement tools (Adelman, 1994; Astin, 1993; Curtis & McTeer, 1990; Danylchuk, 1995; Kohl et al., 1990; Martens, 1985; McBride & Reed, 1998; Pascarella et al., 1995; Pascarella et al., 1999; Pascarella & Smart, 1991; Ryan, 1989; Wolniak et al., 2001). Far fewer studies have directly explored and examined the personal attitudes and perspectives of student athletes (Adler & Adler, 1985, 1987, 1991; Meyer, 1990; Blinde, 1989).

In addition, the available literature also reveals that the majority of studies have focused on specific subgroups of student athletes. In the U.S context, student athletes on Division I teams, and student athletes in revenue-producing sports (i.e., basketball and football) are usually the focus of study. Additionally, with respect to racial break down, African American student athletes, particularly males, are the focus of many studies.
Lastly, studies have also used different comparison groups. For example, researchers have compared the academic performance of student athletes against the general student population (Marten, 1985; Pascarella & Smart, 1991; Pascarella, Bohr, & Terenzini, 1995; Pascarella et al., 1999) students within the same major, as well as students matched on variables such as race (Adelman, 1994), gender (Danylchuk, 1995; Miller & Kerr, 2002; Meyer, 1990; Shulman & Bowen, 2001), sport type, athletic division (i.e. Division I, II or III), socioeconomic status and university type (i.e., predominately White institutions, historically Black university and colleges etc.). The use of different comparison groups has made direct comparison of findings difficult.

**Student Athletes in Canadian Higher Education**

While Canadian institutions of higher education acknowledge the importance of athletic participation in enhancing the quality of student life on campus (Danylchuk & MacLean, 2001, 375) and continue to partially fund and support intercollegiate athletics, research in the area of sport and Canadian higher education has lagged.

As studies in the area of student athletes in Canadian higher education are few and far between, Martens’ (1985) study, from a few decades back, has been included in this review. Martens’ study contrasted the academic performance of Canadian student athletes and non-athletes between 1970 and 1980. Both groups were matched on gender, high school GPA and program of study. Academic performance was evaluated using high school GPA, annual and overall university GPAs, and years required to complete degrees. It was found that student athletes achieved annual and overall university GPAs significantly lower than their non-athlete peers, concluding that student athletes were at a slight disadvantage academically. The GPAs of non-athletes significantly surpassed athletes’ GPAs across the time span reviewed. The finding also revealed the difference was significant only for students entering from 1970 to 1974. The research suggested that while there seemed to be a slight disadvantage associated with athletic participation, the lack of marked differences between athletes and non-athletes beyond 1975 inferred advancements in the academic abilities of university student athletes. Martens concluded that athletes were at a slight disadvantage academically in comparison to non-athlete students, but cautioned that this trend might be fading. Martens’ study was extensive and it
utilized an appropriate sample for the time period. However, since the study results are dated, the usefulness of the study was limited. Since the time of Martens’ study, many aspects with regards to athletics and Canadian higher education have changed. The student population, and in turn the student athlete population has become more diverse – there are more women, and there are more visible minorities; entry into university has become more competitive; greater emphasis has been placed on athletic priorities and winning; and athletic scholarships have been introduced. Thus, the changes that have occurred in Canadian athletics and higher education since the time of Martens’ study would definitely have an effect on the applicability of the findings to today’s varsity athletes.

As well, McTeer (1987) examined athletic participation in two Canadian universities. McTeer looked at the student athlete’s experience with regards to role conflict, role negotiation, role accommodation and reduction. Student athletes at the two universities participated on the men's football, basketball, and hockey teams. The athletes completed a questionnaire regarding their “…involvement in activities associated with student life, the approximate number of hours devoted to each activity…” (p. 94), and whether or not they expected to graduate on time. A sample of non-athletes also completed the same questionnaire. The researcher found that athletes at both universities did not have to decrease their social interactions or activities in order to accommodate the demands of school and sport. While McTeer’s study was one of the few studies focusing on Canadian student athletes in the 1980s, generalizations were limited as the research only included two universities.

In an unpublished dissertation, Chinn (1991) examined the academic, athletic, and social roles of student athletes who participated in the Canada West University Athletic Association (CWUAA). A survey was administered to student athletes and 370 survey responses were returned. The results showed that being a student athlete was challenging due to the large number of hours devoted to academics and athletics. It was found that social activities and social life were limited as a result of athletic and academic commitments. As well, while students balanced their athletic and academic commitments, some student athletes felt a conflict between their student role and athletic role as a result of limited time, energy and money. Thus, many student athletes compromised their education for their athletic activities. Chinn’s unpublished dissertation was a contribution to the study of student athletes in Canada as it looked at student athletes in one of the regions (CWUAA) that had been under-researched.
In a study of two Canadian universities, Curtis and McTeer (1990) looked at the graduation rate, graduating on time, and cumulative GPA of student athletes compared with non-athletes. Athletes from both universities were equally or more likely to graduate, particularly in honors programs, yet they took longer to complete their degrees. No significant difference emerged between cumulative university GPAs of athletes and non-athletes. Furthermore, athletes in honors programs did achieve slightly higher grades than non-athlete peers. Overall, athletes performed as well as non-athletes, and in some cases, better. Data revealed that student athletes were at a slight advantage over non-athlete students and that this was particularly so for student athletes in honors programs. However, in a follow up study (McTeer & Curtis, 1999), the findings differed.

In the follow up, McTeer and Curtis (1999) focused on student athletes at the smaller of the two universities (enrollment approximately 5,000). They compared the academic attainment on various measures of varsity athletes and non-athletes at one university. The study looked at a five-year period. The data for this study was gathered for 1988-1993. The study had a sample of 200 student athletes (149 males and 51 females) and 196 non-athletes. It was found that student athletes did not perform as well academically. McTeer and Curtis discovered student athletes were less likely to graduate and obtain a degree compared to their non-athlete peers. As well student athletes achieved a lower grade point average than their non-athlete peers. Across the different measures athletes had poorer attainment than non-athletes. Further, the pattern was more pronounced for male athletes versus male non-athletes, and less marked for females. While Curtis and McTeer’s studies added to the field with regards to the academic achievement of Canadian student athletes, again, generalizability was limited as only two universities were included in the study.

In Danylychuk (1995), the academic performances of male and female athletes from one large athletic program at a Canadian university were compared across types of sport, academic faculties, and between athletes and non-athletes. The academic performances of the student athletes were examined over a two-year period. The researcher found lower grades from male and female athletes than their matched non-athlete peers. No consistent or significant finding related to type of sport or faculty emerged. The researcher determined that athletes performed less well than non-athlete students, although the margins were modest, which confirmed earlier finding (Martens, 1985) that participation in Canadian university athletics had a detrimental
impact on academic attainment. The academic averages disaggregated by gender revealed that females had significantly higher averages than the males for both years. In addition, both female and male non-athletes had significantly higher averages than student athletes for both years. Furthermore, no significant differences were found between males and females for both the student athletes and non-athletes, with regards to entrance average. Findings showed that female student athletes achieved significantly higher GPA’s than their male peers and grades equivalent to female non-athletes during their first and second years of university. Danylchuk suggested female athletes placed greater emphasis on academic pursuits and considered athletics only one of many activities in their lives, while males allowed sport to dominate their time and efforts. When comparing the academic performance of the student athletes by type of sport there was no significant difference according to CIAU versus non-CIAU sport, but there was a difference based on the length of the athletic season. Further, “comparisons across academic faculties generally reveal inconsistent findings for both student athletes and non-athletes” (Danylchuk, 1995, 78). Danylchuk’s study appropriately disaggregated the data by gender revealing differences in academic achievement between men and women. It also differed from previous studies as it looked at student athletes over a two-year time period. However, Danylchuk’s study only included one university.

In Dawson, Bray and Widmeyer (2002), the researchers set out to describe the types of goals that are set by intercollegiate team athletes using Zander’s (1971) four-dimensional conceptual framework of group goals. Participants were intercollegiate athletes (155 males and 80 females) representing two Canadian universities. Participants competed in various team sports. Athletes ranged in age from 18 to 24 years old and competed on the team for an average of 1.9 years. All participants completed a questionnaire halfway through the season, during a regularly scheduled practice. Within the sample of student athletes it was found that the athletes’ goals for themselves and team goals for the team were prevalent. Secondly, “…athletes reported a greater number of goals for themselves and team goals for the team for competition compared to practice” (p.14). Athletes also stated that personal goals helped them to concentrate, persist and devise strategies for academic navigation and success. In addition, all athletes clearly identified both team goals and individual goals. In general, the study found multiple types of goals exist within sport teams. As one of the more recent studies, Dawson et al.’s (2002) study focused solely on student athletes. There was no comparison group in the
study. Also, the researcher’s study was unique in that it focused on a different area of the student experience – goal setting. Again, only two universities were included in the study.

Further, Miller and Kerr (2003) conducted a study on Canadian student athletes at one large Canadian university examining the role experimentation of university student athletes. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with male and female student athletes in their senior year. The participants competed on the basketball, volleyball, track and field and swimming teams. The sample consisted of four male and four female student athletes. Two participants were from team sports and six participants were from individual sports. The study found “…the lives of Canadian student athletes revolved around three central spheres: an athletic, academic and social sphere.” (p. 346). It was found that the three spheres were competitive and there was ongoing negotiation between the three. Also, the prominence of each sphere changed from the time the participant entered university to the time of graduation. With regards to academics, participants described difficult transitions into university. It was found that students aggressively pursued athletics during their early years of university, often compromising their academics.

Furthermore, student athletes shifted their focus to academics in their final years of university. Athletically, the result showed that participants invested a large amount of time and energy in intercollegiate athletics. Participants noted that their academics were compromised as a result of their athletics. With regard to the social sphere, participants noted “…teammates provided an immediate social network on campus and alleviated sentiments of loneliness and stress that often accompany major life changes [such as starting university away from home]” (p. 360). However, it was also found that participants experienced social restrictions. Student athletes adjusted their social activities as they progressed through university and time previously allocated to their social lives decreased as they progressed through university. Participants stated they were unable to sustain relationships they had developed in their initial years of university. Hence, student athletes’ “…social needs were met almost exclusively through friendships with teammates and often within the context of athletic events” (p. 361). Student athletes use social restriction as a time management strategy, to manage their athletic and academic commitments. Thus investment in one sphere meant limited exploration of role identities in the other two. Miller and Kerr’s study contributed to the literature as it utilized qualitative methodologies for the study of Canadian student athletes, as well as focusing on role experimentation. However, generalizability was limited as only eight senior students from one university were interviewed.
Lally and Kerr (2005) examined the career planning of university student athletes and the relationships between their career planning and athletic and student role identities. Eight student athletes (four men and four women), selected from a large Canadian university (enrollment of approximately 50,000), were interviewed. Participants ranged in age between 22 and 24. Half of the participants were in their fourth year of undergraduate study while the other half were in their fifth year. Each participant was interviewed twice. The first interview was completed when the participants were in school and actively competing in their sport. The follow-up interview took place when all participants had completed their athletic seasons and were within weeks of graduation. The researchers found that “…participants entered the university with limited awareness of their non-sport vocational interests and vague or nonexistent career objectives” (p. 275). As well, the participants had more developed career plans by the time they reached their fourth and fifth years at the university. Thus, the findings suggest that student athletes’ career planning may be delayed during their early years of university but career planning tends to pick up as students progress towards their final years. The study does not state whether this pattern differs from that of non-student athletes.

Furthermore, it was found that not only did students have poorly defined career goals in their early years of university, but they also had strong and exclusive athletic identities. In their later years, as participants began to seriously considering professional occupations, they reported investing less in their athletic identities. In turn, as the exclusivity of the participants’ athlete role identities diminished, their student role identities gained greater importance. When the investment in athletic role identities weakened, the athletes’ enthusiasm for sports-related careers also decreased and, consequently, as students gradually invested more into their student role identities, they began to explore other career options. Further, the findings suggest that student athletes may invest in both the athlete and student role identities simultaneously, and investing in the student role identity may permit the exploration of non-sport career options. This study is limited by its lack of a comparison group, small sample size and lack of generalizability. Lally and Kerr’s study also focused on an un-researched area within the Canadian context – career planning. Again, the study was only based on eight participants, and it appears that it was the same eight participants that were included in the Miller and Kerr (2003) study, thus, lacking representativeness.
Summary

In the Canadian context, the available studies (Danylchuk, 1995; Martens, 1985; McTeer, 1987; Lally & Kerr, 2005; Miller & Kerr, 2003) have focused on the general student athletes’ population, only giving some attention to gender comparisons, but not to other differences. In addition, the more recent studies are comprised of small sample sizes. As well, the repetitive focus on specific subgroups of student athletes may result in a skewed perception of intercollegiate athletics in Canada.

Thus the literature review reveals the paucity of studies on student athletes in Canadian higher education. The findings of the few studies conducted have been relatively inconclusive (Danylchuk, 1995; Martens, 1985; McTeer & Curtis, 1999). Thus, additional research primarily using innovative methodologies and alternative indicators of success, persistence and experience are warranted. Special attention should be given to the Canadian setting; more specifically to specific subgroups of student athletes; to similarities and differences between student athletes in various regions across Canada; and to the ways in which these divergent or common experiences affect the student athlete.

Black Women in Higher Education

A second area of literature relevant to this study is that concerning Black women in higher education. To date there are a limited, albeit a growing number of studies on Black women in higher education, but the majority of available published studies are now dated. The available literature on Black women’s experiences within higher education reveals that Black women have found life inside higher education institutions to be fraught with numerous contradictions and dilemmas. There are various psychological and social issues that Black female undergraduate and graduate students contend with in postsecondary education (Carty, 1991; Blackwell, 1983; Fleming, 1983; Mabokela, 2001; Moses, 1997; Myers, 2002; Sule, 2009; Turner & Thomson, 1993) including, but not limited to the following points: Black women are often put in the position of representing their race to a predominately White system (Turner, 2001, as in Zamani, 2003, 9). Black women are often burdened with the additional pressure to be family and community caretakers at the expense of individual development (Evans, 2008). Black women in higher education may also have limited access to role models of the same race.
or gender within their academic fields, and this may affect how attainable they perceive their career goals to be (Constantine & Greer, 2003, 48; Carroll, 1982; Hendricks, 1994; Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003). As well, they experience tokenism (Elabor-Idemudia, 2001; Koboyashi, 2009) and relationship challenges (Caroll, 1982; Cuyjet, 2006; Elise & Rolison, 2003; Henry, 2008). Moreover, as a result of systemic racism and stereotypes, Black women in higher education are often considered incompetent and inexperienced and as such are “…treated as second-class citizens who must meet different demands and expectations from their majority counterparts” (Hughes & Hamilton, 2003, 97). However, most frequently referred to are the issues of mentorship, marginalization, isolation and stereotypes.

**Lack of Mentorship**

This issue of mentoring is central to the experience of Black women in higher education. It has been widely recognized that the mentoring process within academia is an important factor in the successful navigation of the university experience (Moses, 1997) and a key ingredient in the development of a successful career. However, studies have reported that Black women are less likely than non-Black students and men of color to have access to, engage in and benefit from mentoring relationships or supportive networks (Benjamin, 1997; Blackwell, 1983; Ellis, 2001; Jordan-Zachery, 2007; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). Black female students have expressed that there is an overwhelming lack of mentoring relationships and supportive networks for their postsecondary education and they often find it challenging to locate appropriate mentors with whom to build connections (Evans, 2008; Patton & Harper, 2003; Sule, 2009).

Mentoring in the context of postsecondary education is defined as a process that provides individuals with support and protections during graduate training (Bova, 2000). Mentoring also refers to “a more intense, extended and idealized relationship than advising…mentoring would be the stronger concept, evoking a long-term investment in the welfare of a protégé” (Acker, 2011, 1). The term mentor is used to denote someone who:

Serves as a teacher to enhance a young person’s skills and intellectual development, acts as a sponsor using influence to facilitate a person’s entry into a career and later on for further advancement, acts as a guide and a host, welcoming the initiate into a new occupational and social world—acquainting him/her with the customs, values, resources,
and the cast of characters, who through virtue, achievement, and a way of living, may be an example which the mentored may admire and seek to emulate and may provide counsel and moral support in times of distress (Blackwell, 1983, 320).

Thus, within the definitions, the importance and significance of having a mentor can be seen. Unfortunately, with regards to Black women in higher education there are a number of reasons why they experience a lack of mentorship.

One factor that detracts from Black female students’ mentorship and support is the underrepresentation of people of color within academia. Black women are less likely to have access to mentoring relationships because their small numbers in the academy can result in a condition in which potential mentors are unavailable to students or there are fewer opportunities to establish relationships. The absence of faculty of color, in addition to the reluctance and difficulty that White faculty have in mentoring students of color, exacerbates the situation for these students. As well,

…professors tend to teach and provide mentoring services only in topics in which they are well versed. More often than not, male professors of European origins take an interest in subjects that reflect their own life experiences. Even when they do show interest in the study of people of color, their perspectives may not reflect the interests of those they are studying…. Even in universities that operate under liberal-democratic ideological principles…people of color continue to be marginalized (Dhruvarjan, 2002, 104).

Also, Okawa (2002) noted that cultural similarity is significant in mentoring, although not the only factor to consider. Consequently, since in many institutions of higher education the faculty is still predominately White and male, Black female students are confronted with role models and images that are unattainably different and thus they may find establishing mentoring relationships more challenging. Moreover, support systems are necessary in helping Black women overcome “the dual-edge burdens of race and gender, particularly when they attempt to find mentors within the ‘old boys’ network” (Allen, Jacobson, & Lomotey, 1995, as cited in Patton, 2009).

Another factor that has been found to contribute to Black female students’ lack of mentorship is the fact that Black female students inhabit two marginalized statuses. The Black female student is both a person of color and a woman. The dual oppression of sexual and racial discrimination has been cited in studies as a formidable deterrent that especially prevents Black
women from benefiting from informal support networks in which social relationships could possibly generate career benefits (Sule, 2009). For example, because higher education still remains a White, male-dominated institution, a racial minority and female student may have a more difficult time locating an individual who will be able to thoroughly understand and relate to their social and academic experiences and be an effective personal guide. Patton and Harper (2003) state that women of color who attempt to establish mentoring relationships with faculty of a different race, culture, gender and/or class background often find unexpected problems. For example, ways of knowing and ways of interacting may differ or conflict with non-minority faculty because of racial or cultural differences. Hughes and Howard-Hamilton (2003) noted that some Black women “… in attempting to make a connection with their White advisers or faculty members were rebuffed” (p. 101). Therefore, inhabiting two statuses that have historically been oppressed is detrimental to Black female students as it limits the availability of mentors or support networks that can truly relate to these students.

In a study conducted by Margolis and Romero (2001) the researchers focused on the structural aspects of mentoring as an essential element of the legitimization and reproduction of academia. The interviews of Black women in the academy focused on mentoring experiences and their perceptions of the experiences of other students in their program. The research was based on open-ended interviews with twenty-six women of color graduate students in sociology. Five of the participants described mentoring relations they had with department faculty, and with each participant it was a traditional academic model. “Traditional” meant that the students were single, young, and enrolled full-time and embraced the career goal of a tenured academic position in the university sociology department. The majority of the women interviewed did not fit the model and were not mentored by faculty; these women were older, had previously established careers and were married. The un-mentored students were aware that they violated the expectations held by faculty and attributed the violation to their failure to attract mentors. The students’ assessment of the mentoring relationship brought to light the inequities of mentoring relationships that were not offered to everyone or operated to reproduce the traditional discipline and its network. The majority of the women that were interviewed defined themselves and their intellectual careers in opposition to the department and the types of knowledge that were being privileged and reproduced. Numerous women that were interviewed reported alternative support networks. Finally, for most of the women interviewed, the situation
of having no mentor, an inappropriate mentor, opposing the power structure, and seeing peers benefit from relations unavailable to them, was a painful experience resulting in a lot of uncertainty.

Woods (2001) examined the experiences of Black women doctoral students in the social sciences at the University of Michigan and highlighted the struggles and obstacles the students faced in their pursuit of their doctoral degrees. The author notes that one of the major challenges faced by almost all of the women in the study was the establishment of mentoring relationships with faculty members. When students discussed the situation they noted situations where White faculty members rebuffed their attempts to develop a relationship; in other interactions with faculty members the students found their opinions and ideas were devalued; and in the search for a mentor, the students note the clear absence of women of color on the faculty which hindered their ability to find mentors. Another major problem faced by Black women was the marginalization of their research areas. The women in the study noted that White professors were concerned with their choice of topic or criticized their work when they decided to focus on issues salient to communities of color or race/gender issues. Further, participants in the study also raised concern about being viewed as unintelligent. The women in the study asserted that White faculty viewed them as unintelligent and this affected interactions with the faculty. The study concluded that Black women in pursuit of doctoral degrees at historically White universities face a plethora of obstacles. They operated in a system that is largely unsupportive; they have difficulty establishing good mentoring relationships; they have their chosen research topics and areas of interests marginalized and demeaned; and their intelligence is questioned despite their previous educational achievements.

In a more recent study, Patton (2009) used qualitative methods to examine the mentoring experience among African American women in graduate and professional schools. The study looked qualitatively at how participants defined mentoring, their perspectives on their current mentoring relationships and the significance and availability of having African American women as mentors. The author utilized Black Feminist Thought as a framework for understanding mentoring relationships among African American women in postsecondary education. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight participants. All participants acknowledged the difference that having an African American female mentor could make in their educational experiences. They felt that an African American female mentor would have
the ability to relate to them in a unique way. All the participants had dealt with similar challenges such as oppression, but they experienced and related to them in different ways. There were diverse responses regarding the expectations of mentors in general. Participants also made purposeful searches for mentors beyond their academic departments and beyond the university; they were open to alternative types of mentors. The findings also revealed that despite race, mentoring is a vital component in the academic experience of African American female students. Finally, participants who did not have mentors continued with their education even in environments they found oppressive, realizing they still had to press forward to complete their degrees.

Confronted with the challenges of finding mentors of color, particularly within one’s own academic department, Black women in the academy have begun to build cross-disciplinary connective relationships and they have begun to explore mentoring options outside of the university (Moses, 1997, 27; Essien, 1997; Patton & Harper, 2003; Woods, 2001). For example, Black female students have stepped out beyond the borders of their departments to find faculty of color or same-race mentors. Additionally, Black female students in higher education have utilized the strategy of identifying external sources from which they can develop mentoring relationships, such as the church, social organizations, family, etc. (Jordan-Zackery, 2007; Patton & Harper, 2003). Patton (2009) noted “because finding a mentor is difficult for African American women, they often seek alternative sources of support or non-academic mentors” (p. 514). Black women broadened their range of potential mentors to friends and relatives – specifically their mothers and aunts (Patton & Harper, 2003). An institution-wide mentoring program could make the mentor-protégée association less intimidating and elusive. However, mandating and structuring mentoring relationships may be problematic, as mentoring is often personally valued and personally espoused (Acker, 2011); and a dictated or prescribed mentor-protégé relationship or a supportive network may not fully evolve.

As such, a number of researchers (Robertson et al., 2005; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003) have found that encouraging interaction with faculty members stimulates positive cognitive development of students, it increases retention (Johnson-Bailey, 2004), and it enhances career-related development (Bova, 2000; Patton, 2009). Additionally, the more formal mentoring relationships can lead to greater academic and intellectual development, academic persistence, and a greater commitment to their respective educational institutions. Thus mentoring is a
significant element for contributing to the success of Black women in academia (Myers, 2002; Patton & Harper, 2003) and a lack of mentorship poses a dilemma.

**Marginalization**

Another central theme that arises in the experience of Black women in higher education is marginalization. Issues of marginalization are a consistent theme in the literature (Williams, 2001), whether it is marginalization of the individual, or marginalization of the individual’s research interests. Marginalization has been defined as the process of being relegated and confined to a lower social standing. A marginalized individual experiences separation from the rest of a society, institution, group, etc. and must occupy the fringes and edges; hence, they are not at the centre of the activities and decisions (Collins, 2000). Research on Black females in the academy suggests that this group of students experiences severe marginalization within these institutions of higher education (Williams, 2001).

Some factors that contribute to feelings of marginalization are often noted to be the devaluing of Black female scholars’ qualifications, stereotypes, lack of mentorship, lack of critical mass, and the devaluing of their areas of interest and research. Black female students report feeling marginalized as their colleagues and instructors continue to question their presence and qualification within postsecondary settings (Myers, 2002; White, 2007; Williams, 2001; Woods, 2001). In addition, Black women have been confronted with stereotypes overtly and covertly, which suggests that most Black female students are poor, academically unprepared, and not qualified to be in higher education. “The perception that African American women are incompetent pervades much of their career, forcing upon them the undeserved stress of providing a defence they should not need to give and fighting to prove merit when merit is unquestionably apparent” (Myers, 2002, 21). Black female students report that when they are labelled and treated as unqualified to be in a higher education institution, they are essentially separated from their peers as they try to outperform these peers simply to prove their academic qualifications.

Black female students’ feelings of marginalization are also augmented by a lack of mentoring relationships within the academy. When Black female students see non-Black
students establishing and accessing mentoring relationships without difficulty, the notion of not being at the same standing or level as non-Black students is reinforced.

In addition, feelings of marginalization in postsecondary institutions can be intensified due to a lack of critical mass or proportional representation of Black women in the academy. A critical mass exists “whenever there are enough individuals from a particular group that they feel comfortable participating in conversations and enough that other students see them as individuals rather than as spokespersons for their race” (Miller, 2003, para. 3). Critical mass is an important concept in recruiting and retaining African American students. Critical mass is also important as it alleviates some of the challenges, such as marginalization, that African Americans contend with while on university campuses (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Myers, 2002), as women in the minority “inhabit a context characterized by…being more isolated and peripheral” (Turner, 2002, 76). The number of African American women on campus is important as it relates to the sharing of ideas and concerns that may be prevalent amongst African American women. African American women state that residing on campuses where there is a critical mass of African American women is less stressful than at those without a critical mass. Also, while the desire for critical mass is similar to that reported by most women in general, Black women’s desire for critical mass differs because their experiences are embedded in racism as well as sexism. Thus, when Black female students are the only Black students or are one of the few Black females in their department they feel they have no one with whom they can share their ideas and concerns and this leads to feelings of marginalization.

Furthermore, Black female students experience marginalization in regards to and as a result of their research choices. The marginalization of Black women’s research is a major issue within postsecondary institutions (Myers, 2002; Woods, 2001). Black female students often choose research topics with relevance to their background or they may focus on issues important to communities of color. However, many students report concerns that faculty trivialize, depreciate and marginalize their research if it focuses on issues pertaining to minorities or issues of a social, activist nature (Myers 2002; Moses, 1997; Woods, 2001). Studies found that Black female graduate students felt intellectually devalued and hindered from developing professionally because of their research focus (Margolis & Romero, 1998; Sule, 2009). Black female students have been “accused of not having objectivity or being too close to the topic to conduct quality research” (Woods, 2001). Interestingly enough, White students are not
considered to lack objectivity when they are studying European history or Imperialism. Nonetheless, Black female students report marginalization of their research as their ideas and interests are suppressed, dismissed, or devalued and not considered traditional scholarship by the majority members of the postsecondary setting.

In Woods’ (2001) study, the researcher highlights the struggles of Black female graduate students who attempt to succeed in doctoral programs. Woods conducted interviews, focus groups and informal conversations with twelve Black women who are advanced doctoral students and seven recent doctoral recipients in the social sciences at the University of Michigan. Woods (2001) found that in addition to other issues doctoral students face, Black women face additional difficulties on multiple levels. Black women had difficulty establishing and maintaining mentorship relationships, their scholarly work was demeaned because it focused on issues related to people of color, and Black women were viewed as being less intelligent than other students.

**Isolation**

Another consistent theme in the literature on Black women in higher education is that of isolation. Black female students have consistently expressed feelings of loneliness and isolation, particularly on predominately White campuses (Benjamin, 1997; Carroll, 1982; Collins, 2001; Elise & Rolison, 2003; Evans, 2008; Fleming, 1984; Myers, 2002; Robertson et al., 2005; Williams, 2001). Again, a lack of critical mass, a lack of mentoring, inhabiting two minority statuses and a lack of Black-focused studies contribute to feelings of isolation.

Black women often experience isolation as a result of a lack of critical mass (Gregory, 1999; Myers, 2002). Educational institutions’ failure to increase the number of Black women contributes to a continuing feeling of isolation amongst Black female students (Myers, 2002). Many Black women have reported that they need other Black women and minority peers, within or outside the department, to share common ideas and concerns and to support each others' presence when the institution fails to do so. In addition, it is reported that residing on campuses where there is a lack of critical mass creates more stress for Black women (Myers, 2002). The number of Black women on campus is important as it gives Black women a space and
opportunity to share common ideas and concerns in an understanding and supportive environment (Myers, 2002).

In addition, a lack of mentoring, support and collegiality also contributes to Black female students’ feelings of isolation on the postsecondary campus, as “feelings of isolation are greatest when African American women are unable to access valuable networking opportunities” (Myers, 2002, 10). Robertson (1995) suggested that Black students who have supportive and inspiring interactions with faculty tend to be more satisfied and less isolated in the university environment. As well, they are more likely to experience healthy educational, social and personal development. However it has been noted that Black women in higher education often experience a lack of faculty support and collegiality, particularly in predominantly White institutions (Constantine & Greer, 2003; Schweitzer, Griffin, Ancis & Thomas, 1999; Stage & Hamrick, 1994; Trippi & Cheatham, 1989). The lack of understanding, support and collegiality in departments isolates Black women from professional networks, research grants and publishing. Without positive collegial relationships, Black women may be excluded from the ‘information loop,’ informal social groups, and professional networks, therefore “missing out on properties [co-authoring papers, peer feedback, recommendations, student teaching and obtaining academic positions, etc.] held by the ‘in group’” (Myers, 2002, 10). Similarly, Howard-Vital (1989) stated, “African American women in higher education are not part of the informal social groups in which peer feedback and recommendations can be gathered” (Howard-Vital, 1989, 187). As a result African American students can be left behind as the move up and through academia depends heavily on the support of peers and faculty. Further, when Black female students do not have access to mentors or support systems, or individuals who can introduce them to the larger academic community and guide them through the ambiguous processes of postsecondary education, they feel further cut off from the academic community.

Black women also experience isolation due to their experience of “double jeopardy.” The term “double jeopardy” is used to describe the dual discrimination of racism and sexism that subjugates Black women (Beale, 1970). Black female students deal with the effects of both racism and sexism. Beale (1970) wrote,

As blacks, [black women] suffer all the burdens of prejudice and mistreatment that fall on anyone with dark skin. As women, they bear the additional burden of having to cope with white and black men (as quoted in King, 1988, 43).
Thus, “double jeopardy” contributes to the experience of isolation of Black female students as
gendered racism can only be felt and understood by those who are immersed in it: “the
experiences of Black women may be inaccessible to other women and to men of color, which
further isolates Black women” (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998, 52). Consequently, the dual minority
status of women of color can limit Black female students’ opportunities to interact with
individuals who will understand their experience with gendered racism, thereby leaving Black
females isolated in the postsecondary setting.

Further, a lack of potential dating partners and a lack of connection to the Black
community also leads to feelings of isolation for Black women in higher education. In Elise and
Rolison’s (2003) study of Black student experiences and retention at a predominately White
state university, the researchers interviewed Black students in first to fifth year regarding their
experiences and survival strategies. When the authors separated the group by gender they found
that Black women felt more isolated than Black men. Black women also noted that friendship
and conjugal relations were part of their expectation for university. As well, Black women
noted there was a paucity of dating partners available and there was an expressed sense of
loneliness and isolation for these women especially if there were no on-going ties with a Black
community.

The theme of isolation has been evident in the literature since research started to emerge
on Black women in higher education. In Constance Carroll’s chapter *Three’s a Crowd: The
Dilemma of the Black Woman in Higher Education*, Carroll (1982) assesses the situation of
Black women in higher education. When examining Black undergraduates, faculty, and
administrators, Carroll found that Black women in higher education were isolated, underutilized
and demoralized. She stated, “There is no more isolated a subgroup in academe than Black
women” (p.119). As well, Carroll noticed a fierce single-mindedness in Black women’s
preparation for careers. More than half of the women she encountered expressed a desire to
pursue careers in ‘traditional’ areas such as education and social work (p.119). Additionally,
Black women had very few models or champions to encourage and assist them in their
department. “Black women have had to develop themselves on their own, with no help, in order
to “make it” in academic institutions. This has taken its toll on Black women in all areas of life
and work” (Carroll, 1982, 119). Carroll also noted that Black students must look to each other
for support and role models, stating that Black women often form peer groups similar to extended family structures. Further to this, the study also noted that Black women undergraduates felt the pressures of both racial and sexual discrimination and chose education and the hard struggle of career mobility as the “way out”. Further, it was noted that the greatest degree of social mobility and freedom among Black female students exists in larger institutions, those in which the Black student population is sizeable. However, it is also noted that even on large campuses, the situation is far from ideal. With regards to socialization and relationships, it was found that Black men have more freedom than Black women to date both Black and White students. As such, “…While nearly all Blacks on White campuses often feel isolated and confined, it is the Black women who feel it most heavily…our data indicated that the dating situation may be a function of the absence of opportunities” (Willie & Levy, 1982, as noted in Carroll, 1982, 120). Ultimately Black women undergraduates feel locked-in socially; they are not awarded leadership roles in Black student groups; they do not see impressive role models with whom to identity; and as a result they turn to their studies in hopes of escaping their dilemmas sometime in the future.

For Black women in the postsecondary education feelings of isolation are a serious concern, as isolation can lead to dissatisfaction and withdrawal. Researchers frequently cite isolation as a major factor influencing the decision of Black and other minority students to withdraw from school (Myers, 2002). Also, isolated students cannot take advantage of informal learning opportunities such as study groups, which ultimately inhibits their academic performance. Further, isolation can lead to stress when coupled with racial issues (Partitu & Hinton, 2003). Hence, feelings of isolation are attributed to various challenges within the campus environment, and research reveals that Black women often have to contend with feelings of isolation within the postsecondary environment.

On a positive note, researchers have also noted that Black female students have utilized a number of strategies to cope with their feelings of isolation. One strategy has been to join extracurricular activities and to connect with others through community or professional organizations. Students have also attempted to get involved in clubs and groups that acknowledge and support their ethnicity and gender or racial background (Walpole, 2009). As well, African American university students often turn to spiritual beliefs to cope with the
isolation and various other struggles that come with campus life, particularly on predominately White campuses (Watt, 2003).

**The “One and Only”**

Black women in higher education often report challenges or issues with being one of a few, or the ‘one and only’ Black person or Black woman in their class or academic departments (White, 2007). In addition to this, when a Black woman is in a place or area where she is underrepresented or the only one, there is often a link made, accurately or not, to tokenism. Obiomon et al (2007) note that “…being in a location where one is underrepresented or the only one of a kind leads to a stressful environment, as underrepresentation leads to high visibility and sets into place a variety of negative perceptions of persons labelled as tokens” (para. 14). Thus, the small numbers of Black women are often seen by the dominant group to be tokens and are thus treated as a representative of their group or as a symbol. As well, when there are so few Black women on campuses, there is a tendency for non-Blacks to see these women as spokespersons for all Blacks rather than as individuals. Black women are often turned to in classes when racial issues arise. Therefore, being treated as a token or a spokesperson takes a heavy toll on Black persons as they often find themselves isolated from peers or colleagues, with few outlets to express their frustrations and disappointments.

**Stereotypes**

Stereotypes that presume Black and female inferiority are also a central theme in the experiences of Black women in higher education (Evans, 2008; Woods, 2001). Obviously, stereotypes are embedded in society and stereotyping is a barrier that is present in every environment. They shape and represent the ways that people understand—and misunderstand—those from marginalized groups.

Many Black women are seen and judged through a race and gender-based stereotypical lens. While some may argue that both Black women and White women are victims of race and gender based stereotypes, the stereotypes differ and are often opposite. For example, Black women are “…portrayed as aggressive whereas white women are pictured as passive or non-
assertive. Other stereotypic African American/White opposites include (a) independent-dependent, (b) loud-coy, (c) dominating-submissive, and (d) castrating-seductive” (Gump, 1975 as stated in Corbett & Johnson, 1993, 180). Studies show that stereotypes of Black people are more negative than those stereotypes of other ethnic groups (Simiyu, 2012).

In higher education, women of color, despite their advanced education, are still the subject of a racist ideology used to subordinate Blacks and other people of color (Woods, 2001). In her book, *Too Much to Ask*, Higginbotham (2001) states that in most parts of the country, Black women have always been subjected to stereotypes that adversely affect the academic climate and their ability to achieve their academic goals. African Americans have been stereotyped as poor, lazy, lewd, nurturing, active in sports, entertainers, and academically unprepared (Myers, 2002; Obiomon et al., 2007; Williams, 2001). With regards to sport, there is a view that Black women can only excel in track and field and basketball (Lewis, 1997) and Black women in higher education have reported being stereotyped by both peers and faculty (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003).

Consequently, many Black women feel the need and pressure to disprove preconceived stereotypes and to prove themselves. They may alter their behaviours as they feel they have to say the right thing, not say too much, or agree to fit in. Stereotypes affect Black women as large amounts of time are spent strategizing and legitimizing one’s place in the institution (Obiomon et al., 2007).

The various stereotypes that Black students contend with (e.g., being seen as intellectually inferior) affects many interactions Black women have with White faculty and peers (Woods, 2001) and lead to the process of “proving oneself”. Black women face constant pressure to “prove themselves” as legitimate members of the educational environment. The notion of “proving oneself” was well articulated in the autoethnography of one Black female scholar, White (2007):

I, on the other hand, had taken several weeks to research and write my presentation, not merely because I wanted to be memorable, but for another reason: I knew that I carried my race and my gender out on that stage. I knew that for so many of the hundreds in the audience, I would be an anomaly….I, a black female academic with “Dr.” in front of my name, was someone who was not supposed to be there. For them, I would be “matter out of place…and as usual on some unconscious level I understood that I would have to
prove that I was in fact in the right place—where I was supposed to be” (White 2007, 5). [Matter out of place refers to black women who are capable and competent, women who excel at what they do, but who do not fit in the ever-changing demeaning stereotypical boxes that have been constructed for us by any number of people in the United States. To be a “matter out of place” is to be a disquieting disruption of convention” (White, 2007, 6)...

The process of ‘proving oneself’ does not only have an effect on academic, athletic and social experiences within higher education, but also has been noted to affect the psychological and physiological state of the Black woman in higher education.

I know my high blood pressure had something to do with having to carry my race and gender with me to such gatherings [i.e., Conferences]. It has always been a burdensome duty; some might say it is too heavy a load...My point is really that any discussion of what seems to be the higher incidence of sickness and death among African American women academics needs to start with this concept of ‘matter of place.’ It needs to take into account the stress factors involved in always having to prove ourselves, in feeling we must always represent the race, in the feelings that we must not, may not fail, even when, or despite the fact that, our colleagues and employers do not know or cannot remember or will not say our names” (White, 2007, 6)

Clearly negative stereotypes of Black women pervade much of their academic career, forcing upon them the undeserved and added stress of proving themselves and “providing a defense they should not need to give and fighting to prove merit when merit is unquestionably apparent” (Myers, 2002, 21-22)

**Dating Dilemmas**

Furthermore, a long-existing challenge for Black women in higher education, but a much less studied area, is that of dating and intimate relationships. Scholars (Hill, 2004; hooks, 2001) suggest that significant intimate relationships “…as well as a healthy racial identity (Cross, 1995) and cultural identity (Helms, 1990) are crucial to the welfare of Black women…” in university (Henry, 2008, 17). While there is limited research in this area, there is a definite discourse regarding the current dating dilemmas that Black female students are dealing with on university campuses. Studies reveal that Black women, especially on predominantly White campuses, are affected by the disproportionate ratio of Black men to Black women and interracial dating (Rosales & Person, 2003)
A feminization of Black education has occurred, which has serious implication for the selection of mates (Zamani, 2003). Black women have noted that there is a paucity of dating partners available (Elise & Rolison 2003). In times past, part of the university experience for women and men was to find a compatible university educated partner with whom to date and eventually marry. This has changed partially because women are enrolled in university in larger numbers than male students. In particular, enrollment of Black women compared to Black men is even more pronounced. As Broussard observes, “…the harsh truth is that even if every Black man in college selected a Black woman as a mate, there would still be a shortage of 39% for this female cohort” (2006, para. 2). The campus dating scene is unbalanced (Henry, 2008; Cuyjet, 2006). Therefore, Black university women “…interested in a Black mate of comparable academic status, are not as optimistic about their future for dating, marriage and family, due to the dwindling numbers of eligible Black men in university” (Henry, 2008, 18).

Not only is finding a Black mate with a comparable educational background a challenge for Black university women, it has been suggested that Black women are also experiencing difficulties when trying to date outside of their racial group. Opportunities for interracial relationships can be limited not only by one’s own dissonance about interracial dating, but also by how the relationship will be viewed and accepted by family and friends. When Black women date outside their race, the community responds in a very different manner than they would respond to a Black man doing the same. Black women who engage in interracial dating receive intense scrutiny from other Black people and this contributes to psychological stress for the women that choose to date outside their race. Therefore, this is an added factor of stress for university women (Rosales & Person, 2003). At the same time, research findings are mixed regarding Black women's desire to take part in interracial relationships (Henry, 2008).

According to Cuyjet’s (2006) study, a considerable number of Black women did not have a desire to date outside of their race. It has been speculated, “…perhaps some Black women choose to remain single or date only within their cultural group because they believe it is their duty to uphold the race” (Henry, 2008, 19). It has also been speculated that Black women who have positive Black male family role models may have a strong sense of connectedness with Black men and this may lead them to seek out the same type of relationship with other Black men. In addition, since interracial dating tends to be more acceptable for Black men, “…some Black women may feel that a major burden falls on them: namely to "preserve the
torch” of Black culture by continuing to produce a future race of Black children” (Henry, 2008, 16). Additionally, Cuyjet found that for many Black women, the idea of interracial dating is not attractive because of the amount of stress that might be placed on the relationship due to discrimination or disapproval. Furthermore, some women believe interracial dating would be complicated due to the fact that a non-Black partner would lack cultural understanding.

Henry’s (2008) article discusses the aforementioned challenges facing Black female university students in relation to dating decisions and opportunities. The article begins by noting the trend of higher enrollment patterns among Black females in comparison to Black males and states that in 2005:

… females comprised 65% of the Black student population on college and university campuses in the United States and it was noted that the grave imbalance between Black women and Black men in college raises several issues that have been ignored regarding the social adjustment and psychological well-being of Black women college students (Porter & Brozaft, 1995) (Henry, 2008, 17).

The article states that the topic of the Black woman’s dating situation usually focuses around the issues of the unbalanced campus dating scene, interracial dating and personal beliefs. As well, Henry’s article is a literature review on the limited information and studies that are available on the topic. Henry’s article, while short, appears to be one of the most comprehensive of the handful of articles on the dating experience of Black female students in higher education. This article is helpful as it provides information which will likely spark further investigation.

In addition to the discussions that Black women are having with regards to Black dating and interracial relationships, Black women are also having conversations that include:

… disputing notions that there is a lack of available Black men; remaining in relationships with mates who have multiple sex partners, rather than settling for a life without a mate; debating whether or not standards regarding the educational and financial achievements of Black partners are too high; and considering dating options that potentially involve much younger men. In essence there are a multitude of cultural and social issues that confront millennial Black women in their quest to date within or outside of their racial group (Henry, 2008, 19-20).

The dating dilemma is an added burden associated with, and a result of, being Black and female. The gender gap is an issue and “it has implications for future gender relationships in the Black community” (Malveaux, 2002, 2). As well, interracial relationships can be harder on the Black
female psyche, mainly due to reasons such as feeling betrayed, rejected, culturally responsible, judged and alone. These feelings are often directed towards Black males who sometimes choose a White female partner instead of a Black woman (Hill, 2005; Jones, 2004). Additionally, “the stereotypical portrayal of some Black female university students as saucy, demanding, and money-driven” (Henry, 2008, 20) or the traditional view of Black women as “dominating and emasculating”, may prevent some women from securing dates and, in turn, generate feelings of rejection and isolation, leaving them with little hope of finding a partner. These issues, alone or in combination, can have a negative impact on the social adjustment and the personal well being of Black women in higher education.

At the Intersection of Race and Gender

The barriers Black women often face in higher education (i.e., marginalization, isolation, stereotypes, etc.) stem from the fact that they live at the intersection of two forms of oppression (i.e., racism and sexism) and they constantly have to work to overcome the racial and gender bias (Myers, 2002). Black women “… have been subjected to all the restrictions against Blacks and those against women,” (Zamani, 2003, 7) therefore, although gender is important in shaping identity and defining the different aspects of women’s postsecondary experiences, race is also important, and these two identities in conjunction make known the complexity and differences of the Black females experience.

In the chapter, “Coming to terms with being a young, Black female academic in U.S higher education”, Williams (2001) attempts to illuminate and highlight some of the major issues which impact young Black women in higher education. The chapter is written in a narrative format and Williams approaches the task by centering on her own experiences as a doctoral student, faculty member and researcher. Williams states that being both Black and a woman jeopardizes young Black women in higher education, as they must struggle against racism and sexism and many other “isms.” She states that the relative absence of Black women on campus leads to the belief that Black women are not qualified to be scholars, and this dilemma results in many Black women reporting that their qualifications are constantly challenged. Another consequence of these stereotypes is that Black women are led to feel they are unqualified to be in higher education despite their persistence to achieve. The central
message of Williams’ chapter is that Black women are continuously assaulted on many different levels despite their academic and intellectual accomplishments. Additionally, Williams makes reference to the lack of proportional representation of Black women in higher education and in turn mentorship positions. The author goes on to state that the small number of Black female students within the academy is a disadvantage for current Black students and it will be an issue for future Black female students. Small numbers of Black female students means there will be no emerging Black females in the faculty pipeline able to serve as mentors for future generations.

In an unpublished dissertation, Adams (2003) examined the impact of the academic climate on Black women’s experience in graduate education institutions in the United States. The study utilizes Black feminist thought to guide the study and incorporates a critical narrative analysis of interviews with seven Black women about their experiences at several graduate programs in the United States. Overall, the narratives of the participants were a combination of both positive and negative experiences. The study found that Black women in graduate school have to deal with racism and sexism. They noted that they were able to find support and mentors during their tenure in university. The participants expressed semi-positive outlooks of achieving their goals. While respondents noted their experiences in university were worthwhile and something they would encourage other Black women to do, they identified a number of occasions in university in which they had experienced marginalization. The narratives provide a general sense of optimism, rather that pessimism.

Myers (2002) devotes an entire book to addressing the interlocking systems of race and gender in institutions of higher education in the United States. The book is based on a study of African American women at predominately White institutions (PWIs). The study is based on data collected from African American female faculty and administrators. The female faculty and administrators work in various disciplines and the study “…focuses primarily on narratives of the women in terms of how they are affected by racism, as well as sexism, as they perform their duties…” within higher education (p.6). The findings suggest common themes exist in the women’s university experiences. The book challenges and disproves the notion that African American women are fully accepted in higher education and inequalities no longer exist.
The chapter written by Zamani (2003) examines the history of exclusion and the struggle for inclusion by African American women in higher education, and it addresses the impact of race and gender on educational participation. The chapter also aims to determine which types of postsecondary institutions appear to provide African American women with “…a sense of agency in meeting their educational needs” (p.5). The author states that Historically Black Universities and Colleges (HBCU) and single-sex institutions have many strengths such as “…their culturally based educational efforts that promote academic and social growth, leadership development and matriculation to degree completion” (p. 6). Given this situation, these types of institutions are better suited to Black female students.

Furthermore, Watts (2006) conducted a study on 111 African American female college students and the issue of self-esteem. The author examined their racial identity attitudes, woman identity attitudes, and levels of self-esteem. The participants were students at two historically Black higher education institutions. The findings from the study suggest that African American women use a number of coping strategies to get through experiences they perceive as oppressive and to negotiate and navigate the university environment. As well, it was also found that the ways the women in the study were coping, and the challenges they continue to experience as a result of racism and sexism, are negatively impacting their self-esteem (Watt, 2006, 328). This study supports the idea that African American college women are having difficulty negotiating and navigating the college experience because of their membership in two de-valued groups (Watt, 2006, 329-330).

**Summary**

It is clear the experiences of Black female students in postsecondary institutions are varied and there is no doubt there are Black female students who progress through postsecondary education without the aforementioned experiences; however, the literature reveals that a solid form of institutional patterns exist, and it confirms a lack of mentorship, feelings of marginalization, isolation and stereotypes are some of the central themes present in the experience of Black female students within postsecondary education.

From the available literature, it has been noted that studies on African American women in higher education in the United States mainly began to take root in the 1980s (Howard-Vital,
While research focusing on African American women in higher education has increased in recent years, much more work remains to be done. Many articles and chapters with titles suggesting sole focus on the experiences of Black women in higher education in fact covered general topics such as equity with a brief and minute focus on Black women in higher education (Elabor-Idemudia, 2001; Henry, 1994; Zamani, 2003). As well, many of the studies illuminate the trials and tribulation of Black women in the higher education. The research has not provided clarity about how Black women are able to achieve and accomplish goals despite the obstacles they face within institutions of higher education. The review of the literature also suggests that more analysis of coping strategies and the intersections of Black women’s identity are needed.

Moreover, the studies on Black women in higher education have been primarily qualitative. While qualitative methods help to explore the meaning behinds Black women’s student experience, the data collection method can be limiting, as the chosen method often requires smaller sample sizes which eliminate the chance of generalization. However, it could also be argued that the small sample size in studies of Black women in higher education could be the result of a lack of critical mass.

In addition to this, the majority of studies on Black women in higher education took place on campuses considered to be predominately White institutions (PWI), and most studies focused on Black female faculty, administrators and graduates students. It was an arduous task locating research which focused primarily on Black female undergraduate students. Lastly, analysing the gap in the research was challenging as the studies have crossed the map in terms of academic degree level, variables and methodologies. However, one area clearly in need of further research would be Black women and dating/intimate relationships on university campuses.

Black Students in Canadian Higher Education

Many of the themes mentioned above in the U.S.-based research literature were interwoven in the handful of studies conducted on Black students’ experiences within Canadian
higher education. However, no Canadian studies have specifically concentrated on Black women alone, and the studies that have mentioned Black women did so briefly.

James (1997) conducted a study with a sample of African Canadian teacher candidates in a Faculty of Education with an “access program” [a special program intended to increase underrepresented groups in the university]. Ten African Canadians, five males and five females, participated in a group discussion. The participants were of mixed citizenship. The study demonstrated how the existence of an access program within the Faculty of Education they attended contributed to the difficulties they encountered in higher education. Participants in the study indicated they were conscious that peers and faculty perceived them as less qualified. Participants also noted the existence of inequities in the educational systems, but also supported having merit as a criterion for university admission. The Black university teacher candidates “often identified working hard, individual perseverance, and having the right attitudes as the dominant means to overcome perceived obstacles” (158). Other participants stressed the importance of goal setting and the required determination needed to achieve their goals. As well, a “…recurring theme was the need for participants to work hard to ‘prove themselves’ in order to demonstrate that they deserved a place in their chosen fields and professions” (p.158). Thus participants “…employed the individualistic values of this merit system as a means of overcoming perceived obstacles” (173). James’ study was comprehensive and detailed, but the small number of participants and the focus on one faculty limited generalizability.

Hamilton and Shang (1999) conducted a study on Black students in one Canadian university. They conducted in-depth interviews with nine students, three men and six women. The participants varied by school year. Both current undergraduate students and students who had recently graduated participated in the study. The sample also included both Canadian citizens and non-citizens. They did not disaggregate the data based on gender. All the participants were from one mid-sized, undergraduate and graduate degree granting university in southern Ontario. One of the researchers also identifies herself as a White female. The researchers found that racism was a part of the university experience, students felt isolated due to a lack of critical mass, the curriculum was non-inclusive, the professors were distant, and the small Black community was both supportive and repressive. However, at the same time, it was found that respondents had an “…overall positive university experience, they maintained and developed a positive sense of self worth in the context of their own ethnic group, they
recognized that the existence of a strong Black community was an important factor, and they identified strongly with being a ‘new’ or immigrant Canadian” (p. 52-53). All but two participants had general feelings of satisfaction. Hamilton and Shang’s study contributed to the study of Black students in Canada as it focused on a number of areas of the student experience (i.e., self-worth, interaction with the Black community, immigrant status). However, the researchers failed to disaggregate the data by gender and had a small number of participants from only one school and one faculty.

As well, Gosine (2007) conducted a study on the experiences, motivations and perceptions of academically accomplished Black Canadians. The researcher interviewed 16 “high achieving” black university students. The participants were either current graduate students or recently graduated students from various programs in Canada. Nine participants were female and seven were male. The mean age of the participants was 27.8, and four participants reported being of mixed race. The sample consisted of self-identified Black students who were either Canadian citizens or who had lived in Canada since the age of 12 or earlier. The study found that participants were motivated to achieve academically due to “…a desire for monetary rewards and prestige, [and] most participants were at least equally motivated by a desire to challenge racial stereotypes, to be role models for Black youth, and to put themselves in a position to improve the general situation of Black Canadians” (Gosine, 2007, 3). The study found that participants experienced Canadian higher education in very different ways. Level of Black identification, gender, and field of study combined in unique ways to shape the schooling experience of the participants. Thus, the findings problematized the notion of a monolithic Black experience within Canadian higher education. Furthermore, with regards to the underrepresentation of Black students in university, most participants tended to downplay the systemic explanations, choosing instead to highlight individual and community based factors. In addition, almost all female participants reported more instances of frustration and hardship within the university environment than their male counterparts, thus gender appeared to significantly influence how Black university students experienced higher education. As well, the participants made mention of many racial and gender related issues revealing that both race and gender play a notable part in the university experience of Black students. Gosine’s study sufficiently contributed to the literature on Black students in higher education as it focused on
Black students who had graduated and gone on to graduate programs (a group which seldom receives focus).

In Henry and Tator’s (2009) edited edition, the authors explore how racism is manifested in the Canadian academy and how it impacts people of color. They found the experiences of students of color characterized by self-doubt, apprehension, frustration, and disappointment. The authors state that racism is deeply embedded in the culture of academia, as reflected in the curriculum, pedagogy, hiring, selection and promotion practices, and in the lack of mentoring and support for faculty of color (Henry & Tator, 16). As well, all of these structural inequalities and omissions affect the quality of education received by students in the university. It was also found that “…despite two decades of scholarship documenting the problem of racism in our universities, and endless recommendation, there remains huge resistance to change” (Henry & Tator, 2009, 17).

In chapter two of Henry and Tator (2009), written by Audrey Koboyashi, the author focuses on how women of color in Canadian academia are notable for being unseen. It is noted that even when women of color are present in the academy, they experience the effects of racism through the practice of Whiteness. The impact of Whiteness that defines the experience of women of color is identified as including: denigration, deflection, and exotification (Koboyashi, 2009). Denigration refers to how the works of academics of color are denigrated, if not directly, then subtly by valuing the Eurocentric. For example, Asian Studies are seen as the domain of “Asian Studies” rather than Canadian Studies. Deflection refers to individual and institutional claims of diversity and colorblindness, which perpetuate the myth that racism no longer exists. And Exotification places a high premium on difference but fails to engage in meaningful ways with real people of color. It collects people of color as testaments to its openness. Koboyashi argues that universities need to acknowledge the adverse effects of racialization such as marginalization, the scarcity of bodies of color on almost all Canadian university campuses and the overwhelming culture of Whiteness that in turn leads to exclusion.

In chapter four of Henry and Tator (2009), Camille Hernandez-Ramdwar focuses on students of color and their experiences within university. Her interviews with 14 undergraduate and graduate students reveal that graduate students had the most to say on the subject of racism in the academy and identified a lack of mentoring and lack of support as key barriers to
academic performance. The author found a positive correlation between the number of years spent in the university and increased accounts of racism in the educational institutions.

Whether this was due to increments of racist instances as years go by, to higher levels of racism in graduate school, to a greater awareness of issues of racism as one progresses through university, or to an increasing political awareness due to maturing realization about the society one lives in is uncertain (Henry & Tator, 2009, 115).

It was found there was an additional burden placed on students of color. They had to be “superior, do better, strive higher, and basically, be extraordinary and exceptional to change the status quo” (119). As racialized students, they felt they had to work harder and continually prove themselves to their professors. As well, students noted the impact of family problems, burdens due to financial problems and feelings of marginalization in the Eurocentric environment of the university. In spite of this, all participants in this study felt that attending university was worth the experience and it would, or already was, paying off for them.

**Black Women in Canadian Higher Education**

What is known from the few available reflections on Black women in Canadian higher education is that Black women in Canadian higher education are also confronted with numerous challenges. It has been noted that Canadian institutions of higher education are often sites of struggle for Black women, “a place where they have to fight to get in, have their voice heard, have their work recognized, and be seen as competent. Their experiences continue to be fraught disproportionately with struggles, hardship, and suffering” (Elabor-Idemudia, 2001, 196).

Elabor-Idemudia (2001) maintains that from its daily routines to decision-making, the Canadian academy remains organized to facilitate cultural indoctrination and social control of its students and employees. The article highlights the social relations and practices of domination, marginalization and exclusion that occur within Canadian higher education institutions. It focuses on how racism and sexism are “…key components of the politics of exclusion continue to disempower minorities especially Black women restricting the degree to which they can effectively progress through higher education” (p.196). The author problematizes the notion that postsecondary education’s new focus on internationalization, diversity and educational equity provides the ultimate solution to racism, sexism, and other forms of social injustices that
persist in Canadian educational institutions (p.197). Elabor-Idemudia concludes that Canadian higher educational institutions must take responsibility for the differential advantages bestowed upon some groups, otherwise the issue of equity cannot be sufficiently addressed and the current situation will continue to be perpetuated (p.193). Further, it has been put forth that,

…the struggles the Black woman face in the academy mirror their experiences of being 'Othered' in the larger society. Indeed, as the quintessential Other, Black women and people of color in general, are not imagined as belonging to the Canadian nation-state at all [and similarly the Canadian academy] (197). They are subjected to a process in which they are taken for “immigrant-ed” (p.134)—that is, they are seen as foreigners with little education and viewed as permanent members of the working class (Bramble 2000)” (Elabor-Idemudia, 2001, 197).

Moreover, for Black women in Canadian higher education, survival means fighting this belief on many levels. While all women must fight against the ideological discourse of sexism, Black women must struggle additionally against the ideological discourse of racism (p. 199).

Essentially, the author concludes that the Canadian academy is still dominantly Eurocentric and marked by tokenism, Othering, and marginalization. Thus, the article attempted to highlight the struggles confronting people of color in general, and Black women in particular, in Canadian higher education. While Elabor-Idemudia’s article does not solely focus on Black female students (she looks at Black women in general, including Black female faculty), she does focus specifically on Black women in Canadian higher education, which is significant as the literature on this specific subgroup is minimal.

In the article “Black Women in Academia: A Statement from the Periphery,” Carty (1991) begins by reflecting on her experiences as a Black female student and professor in Canadian higher education. The author goes on to discuss some of the challenges Black women contend with while in Canadian institutions of higher education. Carty states that Black peoples’ presence and histories are not recognized; the curriculum is Eurocentric and it marginalizes and devalues the Black histories that are included. As well, Carty states that professors continue to communicate racist views and/or they continue to have poor views of Black people. Also, the author makes note of the underrepresentation of Black faculty and students as she discusses often being the one and only, or one of a few, Black students in the classroom. As such, Carty states that Black women experience extreme marginalization in Canadian higher education and “In Canadian society, Black women as a group, tend to
experience their social world differently than do men and other women” (p. 16). In the article, Carty also goes on to discuss the role of “outsider within,” which is the experience of being in a place or situation and not being seen or acknowledged. Furthermore, Carty stated that the “outsider within” status has more drawbacks than benefits, noting the relations of race, class and gender work to keep Black women subordinate and on the periphery of Canadian higher education. Carty explains that the Black female student experience in Canadian higher education is unique, and she states, “Not only do we have to address the oppression we experience as women by whites, but often we have to work separately from Black men because though we share a great deal as victims of racism, patriarchy allows them certain privileges which we are denied” (p.36). Moreover, the author goes on to discuss her struggles and relationship to feminism. She states that feminism has inadequately addressed the issue of race, thus leading Black women to develop alternative epistemologies for dealing with their “outside within” status. Further, Carty reiterates that despite all the challenges that Black women have encountered, Black women have been more than victims, “…[Black women] have been actors, conscious builders of relations from which they can benefit” (p. 40).

Additionally, Mogadime (2002) looked at Black female graduate students in Canadian higher education. Mogadime notes that the experience for Black women in Canadian higher education differs from that of their White colleagues because of their racial and gender locations. In the chapter, the author provides a critique of the institutional constraints and limitations that contribute to the continued oppression of Black women in Canadian higher education. More specifically, the author looks at the role that the social environment and socialization process plays in the development of academic careers. Mogadime conducted a study in which 10 graduate students from two universities were interviewed. The participants were Black women and other women of color. The study found that Black women in Canadian higher education are underrepresented; they lack Black role models; they lack collegial support; they experience a lack of mentorship; and they are excluded from the socialization process, which could assist them in developing academic careers.

Further to this, Wane (2002) examined the challenges faced by Black women in Canadian higher education. In the book chapter, Wane notes that Black women have a difficult time gaining acceptance in Canadian postsecondary institutions. The author also makes mention of how Black women must continually validate their position within the institution and similar
to Mogadime, Wane states that Black women’s gender and race intensify their experiences. As well, Wane stated that African Canadian women experience challenges in higher education due to differing familial responsibilities; an absence of collegiality; the marginalization and devaluing of their research. More so, the author reaffirms that even in the mist of the various challenges, African-Canadian women in higher education have not remained silent or inactive.

In chapter four of the edited collection, *Whose university is it anyways?: Power and privilege on gendered terrain*, White (2008) contributed the article “The Hot seat: The Black Scholars Perception of the ‘Chilly Climate.’” In the chapter, White presents an autoethnography of her experience with Canadian higher education. The author discusses her experience as a racialized student with Canadian postsecondary education, and notes that she experienced a “chilly climate.” The author begins by stating that Canadian campus conflicts revolve around the concept of the “chilly climate.” White also states that the “chilly climate”, as it is traditionally described, is slightly different than what she experienced. The author suggests a new understanding of the “chilly climate”, and states that the “chilly climate” in regards to Black women is one that is premised on an intense set of exposures which in turn promotes exhaustion. White makes note that ‘female’ is not a homogenous label, but one that is further deconstructed (and compounded) by race and ethnicity. In fact “it must be recognized that white/Anglo women have more power and privilege than Hispanics and Black women, etc.” (Lugones & Spelman, 1983, quoted in Jones, 1999, 305, quoted in White, 2008, 80). Therefore, White states that skin colour colours similar experiences differently. In this chapter, the author states that Black women’s academic interests are often policed and/or marginalized. Moreover, Black women are told what their interests are. As well, over-studying the Other (i.e., Black women) or putting them in the spotlight objectifies the Other and mediates a new type of “chilly climate”, as

…the rushed attempt to include the voice of racialized and gendered individuals have positioned the Black woman as a specimen rather than a student…When imposed on the Black female student, even if for the sake of fostering an understanding and empathy for her position and stories, the spotlight creates somewhat of a hot seat (p.81).

The author also discusses how Black women experience pressure from having to constantly defend their race, “Having to speak almost exclusively about the Black experience has placed undue pressure on the racialized student who is still becoming acclimatized to the terms of her
own acceptance” (p.82). White also mentions the challenges Black women experience when having to discuss race and racism or other oppression within higher education,

What’s more, being expected (on a moments notice!) to articulate how dominating discourses have affected public and private selves is a pressure that racialized scholars must resolve and master at the risk of undoing the ambitious reparations that have occurred within the space of a generation (p.83).

Additionally, the author felt that being one of the few racialized females in a classroom actually garnered her more attention. In these classes she was singled out by professors and was pressed or forced to speak on, or for race topics, thus the feeling of being “overexposed” created a “chilly climate.” Further, the author discusses the lack of racialized [Black] faculty, stating “…having not been taught by more than one racialized faculty (male or female) in almost ten years of full-and part-time studies in Canada’s multicultural core (Toronto) is somewhat disconcerting” (p. 84). More significantly, in discussing her experience as a Black faculty member, the author also talks about the reoccurring “hot seat experience”, stating that even when there is no short supply of racialized teachers she is often tagged as the “speaker” of the group. Moreover, while the author recognizes and applauds the equity ambitions inherent in higher education’s policy and practice, she cautions that higher education may burn out racialized and gendered individuals due to unreasonable expectations. As well, Carty is clearly unhappy with the culture in Canadian higher education that wants to understand the Black female on their own terms.

Summary

In reviewing the limited literature on the Black female student experience in Canadian higher education, it is evident that many experiences parallel that of the African American female student experience in the U.S, while a few aspects differ. Black women in both Canadian and American higher education experience marginalization; lack of role models and mentorship; lack of academic socialization; and systemic racial and gender discrimination. As well, both Canadian and American Black women note that they have greater community and familial responsibilities; they often have to represent and/or defend their racial or cultural group; they are underrepresented both as students and as faculty; and they have complex dating and intragroup relations within the Black campus communities.
However, there are some slight differences between the Black Canadian and African American female experience, such as the extent to which racial and gender issues are expressed, and the merging of the Black experience with that of other racialized peoples. In the Canadian context, race issues are brought to the forefront of discussion less often than in the U.S context. As well, when individuals discuss or refer to the Black experience in Canada, they often discuss it within or in conjunction with other minority groups. These differences are a result of the overall socio-political context and the character of the Canadian higher education system. In Canadian society, it is often considered taboo to talk about race. As well, the multicultural and diversity mantra that pervades much of Canadian discourse often hides or denies the inequities that do exist between racial and cultural groups. Furthermore, specifically in Canadian higher education, there are much less explicit critical examinations and discussions of race and racism, which results in faculty and students having a more difficult time expressing and analysing race related issues in comparison to the U.S.

In addition to this, it is apparent from the literature review that the study of Black women in Canadian higher education has suffered from scholarly disinterest. There is little record of the experience of students of color on Canadian postsecondary campuses and even less focusing on Black women specifically. This disinterest could be a result of the fact that demographically the percentage of Black postsecondary students in Canada is low in comparison to other minority groups. However, while the percentage of Black students in Canadian postsecondary institutions is not as high as other visible minority groups, it must be taken into consideration that Black people have had a much longer history within the Canadian educational system and therefore their histories and experiences have been excluded for a much longer time frame. Moreover, producing more research on Black women in Canadian higher education will provide groundwork for dispelling myths, relating their experiences, establishing identity in higher education, and enhancing the development of this field of inquiry.

Black Female Student Athletes in Higher Education

Despite the considerable amount of research and literature focusing on athletes in higher education, Black female student athletes remain a subgroup of the student athlete population that is less well represented in both the research and literature. Research on racial minorities in
intercollegiate athletics has focused mostly on African American student athletes, and more specifically on Black male student athletes (Parham, 1993). However there is a growing field of inquiry on Black female student athletes, and the literature has begun to provide information about the athletic, academic and social experiences of Black female student athletes in the United States (Adler & Adler, 1985, 1987, 1991; Bruening et al., 2005; Carter, 2008; Corbett & Johnson, 1993, 2010; Harmon, 2009; Person et al., 2001; Stratta, 1995; Wilson, 2008).

Researchers have mentioned several institutional barriers affecting Black female student athletes in higher education. Researchers have found that Black female student athletes experience racism and discrimination by teammates, coaches, faculty and staff (Bruening et al., 2005), limited access and social support (Suggs, 2001), negative stereotyping by peers and faculty (Engstrom & Seldacek, 1991; Engstrom et al., 1995), and negative stereotyping by the general public as maintained by the mainstream media (Corbett & Johnson, 1993; Schell, 1999). As well, many Black female student athletes have more difficulty transitioning into university as many are the first in their family to attain university status, and thus receive little to no help and direction from family members as they lack the knowledge and intricacies of obtaining a postsecondary degree (Hyatt 2003). It has also been found that Black female athletes are also overrepresented in revenue-generating sports such as basketball, track and field and volleyball, and underrepresented in the general student population (Wilson, 2008), lack role models, and experience high visibility (Person et al., 2001). While the backdrop of the Black female student athlete’s experience within higher education appears to be dismal and fraught with challenges, researchers have also noted positive aspects in the experience of Black female student athletes, such as financial assistance, being a role model, stimulus toward working harder, and increased confidence and skills (Sellers et al., 1997).

In one of the earlier studies in the form of an unpublished dissertation, Murphy (1980) conducted a quantitative study, utilizing a questionnaire and statistical analysis to investigate the involvement of Blacks in women’s athletics in member institutions of the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW: the AIAW was the association that governed collegiate women’s athletics before the NCAA governed both men and women’s athletics). Of the 1978-79 member institutions, 205 participated in the study with approximately half of the schools classified as private and the other half classified as state schools. Approximately half were classified as colleges and the other half as universities. Five percent of institutions were
predominantly Black and ninety-five percent of schools were predominately non-Black. Of the participating schools, 30% were Division I, 38% were Division II, and 32% were Division III. All nine AIAW regions were represented in the study. Furthermore, 8% of the 13,398 collegiate female athletes were Black female athletes and they were concentrated more on the basketball and track teams rather than on 12 other sports. Forty-eight percent of the eight percent received some type of athletic scholarship. There appeared to be a significant difference in the number of Black and non-Black female athletes who occupied specific positions in softball and hockey. There was also a significant difference in the number of Black and non-Black female athletes who occupied certain events in softball, track and field volleyball, and field hockey. Results indicated no significant differences in the number of Blacks and non-Blacks who occupied positions in basketball.

Corbett and Johnson (1993, 2010) explored the relationship between racism and sexism and African American female collegiate athletes. In the essay, the authors discuss the historical and sociological perspectives of African American females; African American women in sport and society; the impact of Title IX at historically Black higher education institutions; racial and sexual barriers in women’s collegiate sport; and media’s attitude toward the female African American athlete. Included in the updated version of the essay, Corbett and Johnson (2010) discuss the notions of sexism and racism, and in which ways they influence the daily lives of Black female collegiate athletes. Corbett and Johnson’s (2010) essay additionally includes a section on the nature of inclusiveness of the African American women in sport, Proposition 48 and 16’s (see Appendix A: Definitions) potential race and class bias; and it specifically highlights women’s basketball coaches as overlooked stars. Corbett and Johnson’s chapter focused more on women in sport as opposed to Black women’s athletics and in higher education. Even in sections that claimed to focus on Black women in higher education, it was unclear if the findings are for collegiate women or Black women in general.

In Green (1993), the author began by providing a historical and social overview of African-American women’s participation in college athletics. The author then presented the findings, which were based on the author’s discussions and interactions with African-American female athletes, administrators and coaches. As well, the essay discusses the future of the elite African American female athlete. Specifically, attention is given to women’s capitalization on the commercial market and media exposure. With regards to African American women in
college sport, the author found that there is a lack of participation of African American athletes in collegiate sport programs. Also, it was noted that although African American female athletes may attend college for academic achievement, sport forces them to devote long hours to practicing, traveling and competing, with little time left for their academics. In addition, some athletes in Green’s study complained about being forced to compete when they were injured; about being prohibited from going home for holidays; and about being restricted in their social development. The article was a little confusing in its organization. It was unclear if the article was a historical essay, an advice column or a literature review, and it was unclear who was the focus of the essay – the elite athletes, college athletes, the recreational athlete, or Black sportswomen in general.

In an ethnographic study, Stratta (1995) examined the meaning of intercollegiate sport for African American female athletes. Data was collected through field observations and unstructured interviews. The predominantly White university was located in an urban area and had a student body of approximately 31,000, in which 20% were African American. One hundred female athletes participated in the study and 30% of the 100 female participants identified as African Americans. African American athletes reported that at times they were treated as “slaves” and not teammates. In addition, African American athletes noted that teammates also ignored or disrespected African American cultural aspects. It was found that teammates were generally unaware of the cultural experiences and needs of African American female athletes. Further, it was also found that “…whenever the parents or fans of white athletes formed cliques that socialized before, during or after sport games, many times they neglected to invite the families of African American athletes to participate in these activities” (p.54). As well, African American female student athletes stated a desire to meet with other African American women in order to share experiences and vent frustrations. The researcher put forth recommendations for institutions to follow to better the experiences of the Black female student athlete in higher education.

Sellers et al. (1997) explored the life experience of African American women athletes in college. The quantitative study was based on a national sample of 39 NCAA Division I universities. The study sample consisted of 154 African American women student athletes, 793 White women student athletes, 250 African American women non-athletes, and 628 African American male student athletes. Comparisons were made between the four areas of college life
experiences: 1) academic performance, 2) alienation and abuse, 3) perceived social advantage as a result of athletics, and 4) life satisfaction. Sellers et al (1997) found that African American student athletes were experiencing little racial tension, were “performing adequately academically, integrating socially within the university, perceiving some social advantages as a result of being athletes...” (p. 699), and in general were satisfied with their lives. Further their experiences appear to be more consistent with African American women non-athletes, even after accounting for background differences. Further, it was noted, “African American women student athletes’ college life experiences differed in meaningful ways from both White women and African American male student athletes” (p. 715). Thus, Sellers et al (1997) concluded that the athlete factor did not weigh as much on experience as that of race and gender.

In an unpublished dissertation Lewis (1997) conducted a qualitative study of the self-perceptions of African American female athletes in a predominantly White university. The study included nine participants and data was gained through the use of in-depth interviews. The African American female student athletes reported a lack of recognition, a lack of diversity in relation to the presence of other Blacks and challenges due to personal, racial and sport related obstacles. The participants noted both the advantages and disadvantages of being an athlete. The former constitutes receiving academic support, preferential treatment, support of other African American female athletes, respect, being a role model, and financial assistance; while the latter includes absence of free time, lack of opportunity to obtain job experience, racial bias by faculty due to stereotypes, lack of privacy, communal and athletic pressures to perform and difficulty maintaining eligibility. Over half of the participants noted that being female influenced them through an assumption about one’s abilities and having to prove oneself. The majority of the athletes felt that being an African American female had both negative (stereotypes) and positive influences (stimulus toward working hard, getting exposure, and being impacted by other Black women). The majority of participants also noted that economics had been influential. Furthermore, the participants stated that being an African American female positively influenced the ways in which they saw themselves as women and as athletes. The participants stated they were more confident, had feelings of pride, and had a positive view of self intellectually and physically.

Bruening, Armstrong, and Pastore (2005) conducted a qualitative study involving twelve African American female collegiate athletes. The participants attended a large mid-western
university, and data was collected during the 1998-99 academic year. Findings indicated that these student athletes felt silenced through a lack of media attention, lack of Black student athlete representation on campus, and because of racist and sexist treatment by administrators and coaches. Further, participants in the study felt they could not express their feelings or opinions to others, and they felt there was a lack of recognition with regards to Black female student athletes’ achievements. In a more recent study by Bruening, Armstrong, and Pastore (2008), the authors aimed to examine African American women’s socialization experience, and in particular their socialization experience with regards to sport at one major Division I university. In the study, the researchers sought to analyze the current state of sport participation for African American females and the factors affecting it. Social systems theory and a Black Feminist Thought perspective were used to examine the socialization process in sport. The study consisted of document analysis, focus groups with twelve African American women athletes, and individual interviews with four of the athletes. The participants in this study proved that,

…not all African American females are destined to play basketball or run in track and field. But that ‘issues of power and agency’ (King, 2001, p.8) affect the socialization process for African American females creating a perception of limited options in sport. Socialization agents and social structures influence their sport participation decisions (p. 172).

However, it must also be acknowledged that Black women can be involved in making decisions and shaping their own experiences with regards to sport.

Potuto and O’Hanlon (2007) conducted a large quantitative study of student athletes at eighteen Division I institutions. The study gathered data on the participants’ experience as students and how they rated those experiences. It was found that student athletes generally reported a positive experience with college life. Student athletes also noted that to some extent they regretted their athletic involvement as it caused them to miss out on some aspects of college life. However, at the same time, student athletes also noted that they valued their athletics participation and believed that it “…instilled values independent of those derived from other aspects of college life and it enhanced particular skills and their overall college experience” (p. 955). Further, the participants also reported that the compromises they made in order to participate in varsity athletics were acceptable. While Black female student athletes were not the
focus of this particular study, it was found that Black female student athletes provided a positive assessment of their overall college experience.

The qualitative study by Wilson (2008) explored the academic, athletics, and social experiences of Black female former student athletes. Fourteen women who had participated in various sports during their tenure at university were interviewed. The researcher asked the participants questions regarding pre-college experience, the university experience, and the transition into retirement from sport. The study allowed Black female student athletes to share their experiences in the form of narratives. There were twenty-one themes resulting from the interviews. Themes related to pre-college experiences consisted of: athletic exposure, athletic identity, support versus opportunity, academics in high school, advice about college, and factors related to college selection. Themes related to the college experiences consisted of: integration within the university, academic adjustment obstacles and hardships, college sport as a business, athletic injury, team as a “sisterhood”, positive aspects of sport participation, the intersection of race, class and gender (e.g., stereotypes, prejudice, sexism, exploitation), coach as support and family members as support. Themes relative to the transition out of sports, or retirement from sport, consisted of: ready versus not ready for the end, the “bittersweet” experience, loss of the “love of the game”, personal life attributes developed through sport participation and transition from sports. The findings indicated that the exposure to athletics was filled with anticipation, motivation and determination, and retirement from sport was manageable for some but difficult for others. Coaches and administrators often failed to provide adequate support once recruitment was completed, and when the time came for a student athlete’s transition out of sport, she did it alone. Nonetheless, participants reported that while participating in collegiate sports, they matured and gained a sense of discipline and resilience that aided them in subsequent years (p.157). Wilson’s study was a unique contribution to the literature on Black female student athletes as the author looked at the experience retrospectively, possibly allowing for greater time for reflection on the part of the student athletes.

Carter (2008) conducted a mixed methods study of the experiences of African American athletes and their identity formation in the context of a predominantly White university. Employing Critical Race Theory and Black Feminist thought, the researcher attempted to determine how African American female athletes expressed their identity in college; the factors used to shape athletic identity; and the impact of race, gender and sport on the formation of
identity. A questionnaire was distributed and 12 African American female student athletes were interviewed. The finding revealed the experiences and interactions of the African American female athletes to be isolated and alienated; and their experiences outside of the sport context to have had a significant impact on identity. Further, it was found that the participants had highly racialized experiences. Carter’s study was significant as it was one of the first to employ mixed methods. However, no new and/or surprising findings were revealed.

In addition, Harmon (2009) conducted a qualitative study of the experiences of Black college female student athletes at a predominantly White institution. Eight Black female student athletes were interviewed regarding their experience as students, as athletes, and as developing young women. Four major themes emerged from the findings:

- unfulfilled expectation during the college experience, perceptions of being treated differently than their White female peers, complex relationships that deeply impacted participants’ experience in college both positively and negatively; and positive and negative forms of resistance in which participants engaged in response to experiences during college (p.1).

The findings revealed that participants felt misled during their initial visits to the institutions since both the academic institution and the athletic program were misrepresented as being more racially diverse than they were. Participants were also disappointed by the business-like attitudes they received from the coaches and institutions. As well, participants felt that coaches treated the White members of their team with more care and concern (unequal treatment). Most of the participants discussed feelings of being isolated and depressed. Further, a number of participants in the study shared that they were disappointed in themselves as athletes. They felt they had not excelled in their sport at the Division I level as they had intended. It was also noted that a racial divide existed between team members, which led to a lack of team cohesion. The women also chose to silence themselves as a form of resistance to the suboptimal treatment they were receiving as athletes and students. With regards to experiences as a student, the women in this study noted a difficult transition from high school to college academics. Further, the students experienced stereotyping and discrimination in the classroom. Moreover, each woman mentioned the importance of having other Black females in their classroom to provide support and to share concerns. Additionally, the women all searched out co-curricular ways to become involved in the university and the local community.
Lastly, with regards to the participants’ experience as developing young women, each woman in the study spoke about the complex relationship they had with the few Black men on campus. The majority of the participants spoke about the relationship among Black males and Black females as a sibling relationship. The women also reported having had few positive experiences with White women either socially or in the classroom environment. The women also perceived themselves as competing against each other when it came to dating Black male peers. Overall, women in this study reported their experiences had better prepared them for life and developed a strong sense of self despite the challenges and difficulties they encountered. While Harmon’s study was limited to eight participants, she adequately reveals and supports traditional findings as well as presents previously unmentioned areas of interest, such as Black female student athletes’ feeling with regards to initial school visits, and Black female student athletes’ disappointments with their athletic performances.

Further, Carter and Hart (2010) conducted a study in an attempt to understand Black female collegiate athletes’ perceptions of mentors and the characteristics of their current mentors. The researchers utilized a qualitative questionnaire to gather and analyze the voice and perceptions of 38 Black female athletes from two Division I universities. Critical Race Theory and Black Feminist Thought were utilized to capture the “multiple jeopardizes” of the participants. The study found that Black female athletes’ definitions of a mentor were characterized by the traditional mentor qualities such as a guide, supporter, and role model. The study also indicated “…women had three distinctly different persons to fulfill each mentor dimension to include: career/academic support, psychosocial support, and athletic support” (p.382). The persons who fulfilled each dimension were family members, with more influence by the coach on the athletics support dimension. Carter and Hart’s study was unique as the authors focused on one theme – mentorship - in-depth.

**Summary**

The literature reviewed regarding Black females and athletics in higher education reveals a multitude of factors that may contribute to the challenges and negotiations Black women encounter during their tenure as collegiate student athletes. Moreover, while all student athletes face a unique set of academic, personal and social issues and challenges in comparison to the
general student population, the research reveals that Black female student athletes in particular encounter an additional set of unique issues and challenges that impact their student experience. The university experience for many Black female student athletes differs from White female athletes as Black females are usually among the first in their family to attend university (Hyatt, 2003), which in turn results in a more difficult transition into academia as a result of not receiving direction from their family members who may not be knowledgeable about the intricacies of obtaining a postsecondary degree. Also, the Black female student experience differs as a result of professors’ assumptions, insensitive coaches, and racial stereotypes and expectations (Parham, 1993). Black female student athletes are stereotyped as academically inferior and athletically superior. Moreover, the Black female student athlete experience differs from male student athletes due to gender-related stereotypes and expectations. Furthermore, Black women’s experiences are uniquely different from the experiences of Black male student athletes with regards to intimate and dating relationships on university campuses.

In addition to this, the research directly examining the university experiences of Black female student athletes often focuses on their experience at predominantly White institutions of higher education (Bruening, 2004; Carter, 2008; Bruening et al., 2005; Gaston-Gayles, 2004; Harmon, 2009; Hyatt, 2003; Sellers, 1991; Sellers et al., 1997). At the same time, although the majority of the studies focusing on Black female student athletes have been primarily qualitative, both quantitative and qualitative methodologies have been used. With the qualitative studies, sample sizes have been small, which makes it difficult to generalize from the finding. However, while generalization of findings may be challenging, the studies provide evidence of major themes and experiences that resonate amongst Black female student athletes irrespective of location, school type, and time.

Due to both the limited amount of research and the varied methodologies and results in the studies that have been conducted, there needs to be more focus specifically on Black female student athletes to confirm or refute previous research, to add to the general understanding of their experiences, and to allow for the establishment of policies and practices that enhance the postsecondary experience of this subgroup of students.

Finally, the fact that all the included literature is based on the U.S context is a reflection of the dearth of literature in the Canadian context. There have been no studies conducted with
regards to the athletic, academic and social lives of Black female Canadian student athletes. While a few studies provide information about university student athletes in Canada (Chinn, 1991; McTeer & Curtis, 1999; Miller & Kerr, 2002), there has not been much observational or statistical research solely on female athletes in Canada (Young & White, 1995) and an extensive search through available databases revealed no scholarly research focusing solely on the experiences of Black female student athletes in Canada. Consequently, this dissertation addresses a very real need in order to open further investigation and facilitate understanding related to concerns which exist.
Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of the procedures that have been employed to investigate the experiences of selected Black female student athletes attending Canadian universities across Canada with respect to sport, race, and gender. Accordingly, this chapter is divided into the following subsections: design of the study, rationale for research design, participants, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis. First, the purpose of the study and the research questions will be restated. Then the following section will discuss the research design and analysis.

As previously discussed, the purpose of this study is to gather descriptive data, and explore the experiences of Black female undergraduate student athletes within Canadian universities. The study addresses the following research question: “What are the university experiences (academic, athletic, and social) of Black female student athletes attending Canadian universities?”

A mixed method approach was employed to explore the experiences of Black female student athletes attending postsecondary institutions across Canada. As such, the study surveyed Black Canadian female student athletes by way of an online survey and one-on-one in-depth interviews. The data obtained from the survey provided information on demographics, intercollegiate sport participation, perceptions of support and success, and challenges based on race, gender and athleticism. The second phase of the study, which consisted of semi-structured qualitative interviews, also gathered information on demographic, intercollegiate sport participation, perceptions of support and success, and challenges based on race, gender and athleticism; however, the interviews gathered data with more depth and the interviews helped to provide a better understanding and exploration of the significance of the student athletes’ experiences.
Mixed Methods Design

The term *mixed methods* can be applied to widely differing approaches to research since “…there is no one mixed methods methodology” (Bazeley, 2002, 2). Consequently, the definition of mixed methods varies between the leading scholars in the field (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) and it has been given various names. However, the term *mixed methods research* has become the most popular (Johnson et al., 2007) and therefore this term is used in this study.

As well, the term mixed methods research should be considered broadly and it should be noted that *mixing* is not limited to the methods only. For the purpose of this study, the researcher relies on the definition of mixed-methods research as put forth by Johnson et al. (2007) which states that mixed methods research is “the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of quantitative and qualitative research approaches (e.g., use of quantitative and qualitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference technique) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration” (Johnson et al., 2007, 123).

A mixed methods research design “involves collecting, analyzing and mixing both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study or multiphase studies to understand a research problem” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010, 5). More specifically, a mixed methods design is similar to conducting a quantitative mini study and qualitative mini study in one research study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). As noted by Johnson and Onweugbuzie (2004), mixed methods research “…logic of inquiry includes the use of induction (or discovery of patterns), deduction (testing of theories and hypotheses), and abduction (uncovering and relying on the best of a set of explanations for understanding one’s results)” (p.17), and a key feature of mixed methods research is its methodological diversity, which one hopes will result in superior research compared to research which relies on one method.

Thus, the goal of mixed methods research is to draw from the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research and minimize the weakness of both in single research
studies (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The purpose is also to obtain a broader picture and deeper understanding of a phenomenon. Further, mixed methods are used to enrich understanding of an experience or issue through “confirmation of conclusions, extension of knowledge or by initiating ways of thinking about the subject of the research” (Bazeley, 2002, 9).

The mixed method research design applied in this study was a convergent parallel design. In this design the researcher uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to answer one overarching research question. In this particular mixed methods research design, the qualitative and quantitative data are concurrently collected and the data collected are independent (independent in that one form of data does not depend on the results of the other). The two methods are typically prioritized equally. Further, in this design, the qualitative and quantitative methods are analyzed separately using typical quantitative and qualitative analytic procedures, “thus allowing each element to be true to its own paradigmatic and design requirement” (Bazeley, 2002, 3). Then the qualitative and quantitative data sets are mixed in the results stage during the overall interpretation.

The purpose of the convergent design is “to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, 77) and to bring greater insight and a more complete understanding of a topic than would be obtained by either type of data separately. Additionally, this design allows the researcher to bring together the “differing strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses of quantitative methods (large sample size, trends, generalization) with those of qualitative methods (small sample, details, in depth)” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, 77). Moreover, this design type is utilized when the researcher intends to triangulate the methods by comparing and contrasting qualitative and quantitative results for corroboration and validation purposes.

Additionally, the convergent design is used in this study to develop an in-depth understanding of Black female student athletes’ experiences in Canadian universities. Over the course of one academic term, the researcher surveyed and conducted interviews on the topic with the participants. The researcher analyzed the survey data quantitatively and the interviews qualitatively and then the two sets of results were merged to assess in what ways and to what
extent the findings regarding Black female student athletes’ experiences converged and diverged, related to each other, and/or combined to create a better understanding.

Figure 1: The Convergent Parallel Design

(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010, 69)

**Rationale for Research Design**

A mixed method design was deemed appropriate for this study as “Taking a non-purist or compatibilist or mixed position allows researchers to mix and match design components that offer the best chance of answering their specific research questions” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, 15). As well, a mixed method approach was also an appropriate choice for this study as the researcher wanted to utilize both qualitative interviews and an online survey to systematically measure certain factors considered important in the relevant research literature.

The researcher also wanted to gain the broadest picture and understanding of the sample population and therefore utilized this design, as mixed methods research is useful in gaining a holistic understanding of complex phenomena from multiple perspectives (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Johnson et al., 2007).

Mixed methods were also utilized in the study because, when findings are corroborated across different methods, greater confidence can be held in the conclusions. Also, if the findings conflict, the researcher would have greater knowledge with regard to the phenomenon (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).
In addition to this, Greene, Caracellie and Graham (1989) propose five general reasons for conducting mixed-method studies:

(1) *triangulation* (i.e., seeking emergence and corroboration of results from different methods and designs studying the same phenomenon); (2) *complementarity* (i.e., seeking elaboration, enhancement, illustration, and clarification of the results from one method with results from the other method); (3) *initiation* (i.e., discovering paradoxes and contradictions that lead to a re-framing of the research question); (4) *development* (i.e., using the findings from one method to help inform the other method); and (5) *expansion* (i.e., seeking to expand the breath and range of research by using different methods for different inquiry components)” (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner 2007, 116).

As well, it has been stated that a researcher may choose to mix quantitative and qualitative approaches for:

…*participant enrichment* (i.e., the mixing of quantitative and qualitative techniques for the rationale of optimizing the sample; such as increasing the number of participants), *instrument fidelity* (i.e., maximizing the appropriateness and/or utility of the instruments used in the study, whether quantitative and qualitative; for e.g., via a pilot study), *treatment integrity* (i.e., mixing quantitative and qualitative techniques in order to assess the fidelity of interventions, treatments, or programs), and *significance enhancement* (i.e., mixing quantitative and qualitative techniques in order to maximize researchers interpretation of the data) (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006, 479).

Hence, this study utilized a mixed methods research design as this study sought the emergence of results from different methods studying the same phenomenon; it sought to use the findings from the interviews to help elaborate the survey data; it sought to expand the scope of research on Black female student athletes by using different methods for different inquiry components; and it sought to increase the number of participants by providing various ways to participate.

Further to this, Hancock and others suggest that mixed methods research may be best suited for intersectional studies as to limit a study to one methodological paradigm would “reintroduce the reductionist tendencies that proponents of intersectionality have long sought to remedy” (Griffin & Museus, 2011, 14). For example, Trahan (2010) notes that the basic principles of intersectionality align well with a mixed methods analytical strategy as “Intersectionality suggests that there are multiple, overlapping systems of oppression that shape...
our lives and experiences in complex ways. Consequently, this complexity requires truly understanding multiple forms of data and analysis” (Griffin & Museus, 2011, 15).

Lastly, the strength of this design, as mentioned, is that it combines the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative data. With the aim of expanding the knowledge base, and exploring and understanding the university experience of Black female student athletes, this study gathered data specifically on the experiences of Black female student athletes within Canadian institutions of higher education. In this circumstance, and given the complexity of this research, applying either solely quantitative or solely qualitative research methods would have not served the purpose well. Quantitative data are more effective at recording outcomes and qualitative data are more effective at identifying how individuals are experiencing the process. Therefore, the combination of both approaches offers a better interpretation and analysis of the research problems than either research method used alone.

**Design of Study**

As mentioned, this study followed a convergent mixed method design. In this study the qualitative data and quantitative data were collected concurrently. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used simultaneously because the same questions were asked in both the survey and the interviews. As well having similar questions and addressing the same concepts in both the qualitative and quantitative data collection allowed for a smoother merging of the two data sets. The interview data was used to elaborate on the responses that were gathered from the survey, and the survey data were used to supplement and compare with the interview results.

A survey questionnaire was administered to collect quantitative data on the Black female student athlete experience and one-on-one interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data on the student experience. The students surveyed were not the same students interviewed, as both the survey and interviews consisted of very similar questions and both sets of questions led to an investigation of the same phenomena. Thus interviewing students who had also taken the survey would have resulted in redundancy and overload for the participants.

In the quantitative phase of the study the researcher collected demographic data and data related to perceived satisfaction, relationships with peers, coaches and faculty, academic and
When analyzing the quantitative data, the researcher computed descriptive statistics. The qualitative phase, consisting of semi-structured interviews, probed the same issues as the survey. The interviews were transcribed and the text was analyzed using thematic analysis. Mixing of the quantitative and qualitative data occurred in the presentation of results and interpretation phase.

Prior to starting the study, the researcher obtained ethics approval from the University of Toronto Ethics Review Board in order to retrieve the information from the athletes. Both written and oral information was provided to the informants before the interview and survey, stating clearly the purpose of the study and the reasons they were sampled for the study. This was done to ensure that the participants’ rights to be informed and their active role in the study were considered (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010). To further this, the study participants were informed about their rights to decline the interviews or withdraw from the study at any time (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010).

Thus, to begin the data collection phase, the researcher initially looked at the Canadian University Fact Books, the Canadian Interuniversity Sport website, individual university websites, and individual university athletic websites, to determine: the racial/ethnic breakdown of universities; women’s varsity athletic program offerings; school size/student population; and location (rural/urban). However, it was found that there is a paucity or unavailability of statistics on the racial and ethnic makeup of students participating in Canadian higher education and athletics, “…the extent to which Canadian universities have or have not reflected growth of racialized social groups proportionate to the population as a whole is completely unknown” (Richer & Wier, 1995). Therefore, it was not possible to gather or collect statistical information about Black students attending institutions of higher education in Canada, or to determine the true representativeness of this study.

Participants for the interviews and survey were then recruited through several avenues. The Canadian Interuniversity Sports website and individual university athletic websites were used to get the contact information of those associated with each school’s athletics programs. Athletic directors, coaches and team representatives were then contacted via email, and the researcher asked them to post the study flyer (requesting participation in the interview) or send the flyer to student athletes via email. Additionally, athletes were directed to contact the
researcher voluntarily for participation in the study. All four CIS regions were represented in the study.

With regards to the qualitative phase, participants were recruited from all provinces across Canada; therefore, in addition to in-person interviews, the researcher gave the potential participants the choice of Skype and phone interviews. Thus, while the researcher had the opportunity to interview local participants in person, the researcher used Skype as a data collection tool for interviewees located in provinces further away from the researcher’s home base in Ontario, Canada. While the researcher had hoped to interview all participants face-to-face, that method, in some cases, was not efficient in terms of time (participants had busy schedules), and feasible in terms of money (limited funds for the researcher to travel to all provinces). Thus Skype was well utilized in this study.

Skype is a software application that allows users to make real-time, synchronous voice and video calls and converse over the Internet. It is an online communication tool providing “…a range of communication options for research including connecting with other Skype users, phoning landlines, or mobile phones as well as providing messaging and file transfer capabilities” (Saumure & Given, n.d., para. 2). Using Skype to conduct research interviews has many advantages:

…1) it is inexpensive; 2) it is geographically flexible; 3) it is user friendly and easy to install/use; 4) Skype has an instant messaging function, which is a useful tool for managing data collection problems and sharing information among participants; 5) ease of audio-recording is a key benefit, as researchers easily record computer to computer and computer to telephone conversations (Saumure & Given, n.d., para. 6).

Thus, Skype offers researchers the ability to conduct economical, real-time online interviews. Nonetheless, there are a number of noted challenges that exist when using Skype:

…1) there may be time lag in the conversation which can break the flow of the interview; 2) when using Skype video, researchers must ensure that interviewers and interviewee can readily see non-verbal cues; 3) in audio-only mode, non-verbal communication is lost; and 4) the technology itself can fail, resulting in disconnection problems, loss of data, etc.” (Saumure & Given, n.d., para. 6)
However, given the challenges, at this point, the advantages outweighed the concerns, therefore Skype was utilized for reasons related to cost, ease of use, geographic flexibility and time constraints pertinent to the participants.

Prior to starting the interviews, the researcher developed an interview protocol following literature searches. The protocol was piloted prior to the first official interview. The researcher conducted a demonstration interview with two former Black female student athletes. As Ortiz (2003) noted, “…it is important that the researchers pilot interview protocols so that they can receive early feedback about the clarity of questions, flow of the questions and skill of the interviewer” (p.41). The interview guide is included in Appendix B.

With regards to the interview phase of this study, the main focus of the interviews was to gain an in-depth view of Black female student athletes’ academic, athletic and social experiences within Canadian universities; thus the researcher proposed 60 minute interviews, as 1 hour would allow enough time for the researcher and participant to explore issues in-depth. At the beginning of each interview, each interview participant signed a consent form (see Appendix C) and filled out a short biographical data sheet (see Appendix D). The data sheet was utilized to collect demographic data from interview participants. As well, all the interviews were audiotaped. Semi-structured interviewing was used to keep the conversations both focused and flexible. With this technique the researcher was able to pursue the research questions, probe deeper into the participants’ remarks, and allow for new themes to emerge.

Ultimately, interviews were conducted with Black female student athletes from 15 universities across Canada that were members of the Canadian Interuniversity Sport association. While the research had intended to interview an equal number of participants in each region, this did not occur. There were a larger number of interviewees in the Ontario University Athletic region and a much smaller number of interviewees in the Eastern, Quebec, and Western regions. The large number of participants from the Ontario region could be due to the fact that the Ontario region has a larger number of CIS member universities, it has the largest number of female student athletes, and the Black Canadian population is largest in the Ontario region (See Table 9, 10 and Appendix J). The distribution of interviewees is presented in Table 1.
Table 1: Regional Distribution of Participants Interview and Survey Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) Regional Associations</th>
<th>Interview Participants</th>
<th>Survey Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic University Sport (AUS)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada West Universities Athletic Association (CWUAA)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario University Athletics (OUA)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec (RSEQ)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regards to the quantitative phase, the electronic survey was administered via the Internet to collect data on attitudes, opinions, behaviours and demographics of Black female student athletes in Canadian higher education. The survey was national—with an attempt to survey all Canadian universities with female varsity sport teams. The survey was an online survey using the online survey software, Survey Monkey.

Online surveys provide several advantages over traditional paper based survey methods in terms of decreased cost, faster response times, appearance, flexibility, accessibility, usability, reduction in errors and easier data analysis (Jansen & Corley, 2007; Roberts, 2007; Andrews, Nonecke & Preece, 2003; Lumsden, 2007; Singh & Burgress, 2007). However, the researcher was also aware that using the Internet might create challenges resulting from low response rates, potential bias related to sampling, higher drop-out rates, and lack of control over the data collection environment (Ye, 2007; Singh & Burgress, 2007). At the same time, Roberts (2007) states,

…where the representative sample of the general population is required (e.g., epidemiological surveys), the coverage error is likely to be too high to justify recruitment through the Internet. In contrast, where access is required to a hidden or specialized population, it may prove ideal (p. 24).

Therefore, as access to a specialized population was required (time-restricted student athletes), Internet recruitment proved ideal. As well, the survey questions were developed following a literature search conducted by the researcher. The survey included various types of questions: closed ended and open-ended question; magnitude estimate questions; Likert scale/ordinal; rank-
order, categorical, nominal and skip questions. Thus the online survey was deemed suitable as “…any question that is appropriate for traditional paper-based questionnaires/surveys can be incorporated in an online questionnaire” (Lumsden, 2007, 58).

The survey was piloted prior to the general release to identify potential for misunderstanding of questions, instructions or technical issues. This allowed for a greater degree of confidence in the responses obtained. The questions were tested three times. After the first and second pilot test, the questions were amended to incorporate necessary changes and then it was re-piloted a final time before being administered. Once the survey was ready to be administered, notification of the survey and call for responses were published in media most appropriate for the target audience (Lumsden, 2007). For example, the link to the survey was placed on a few official university websites, posted in athletic centres; and included in the email distributions and person specific correspondence.

Figure 2: Diagram of the Research Phase
Participants

The study was carefully designed to attract self-identified Black female student athletes in Canadian universities. More specifically, this study targeted the Black female population of varsity level student athletes competing in Canadian Interuniversity Sports (CIS). The inclusion criteria for the survey and interviews were as follows. The participants were required to be:

1) Black female student athletes
2) Self-identifying as either Black or a person of African descent
3) Active in varsity level sports at the time of the interviews or survey
4) Enrolled in a Canadian university [in an undergraduate program]
5) Born in Canada, or have some form of permanency (i.e. permanent residency) [Participants had to have lived in Canada for at least 5 years to ensure they had some exposure to and experience with the Canadian educational (high school and university) processes. Recent immigrants face a range of issues related to language, culture, adjustment and difference in educational systems that lie beyond the scope of this study.]
6) Willing to discuss their life, education and athletic experiences associated with gender, race and sport
7) In their second, third, fourth or fifth year of athletic eligibility [The researcher did not want to include first year students as she wanted to ensure that the participants had significant exposure to the intercollegiate athletic culture.]

Consequently, all self-identified Black female undergraduate students who were CIS athletes and who had some level of permanency in Canada were eligible for recruitment for the survey and interview. After the initial recruitment attempt, requirement #4 was slightly altered. With regards to requirement 4, participants were included if they graduated within the last 6 months (i.e., as of May 2012). This requirement served to open up the available participant pool.

In addition, the participants in the study were intended to be Black female student athletes at large universities across Canada (large universities were considered universities that had a student population of more that 20,000 students). Twenty-three of the 54 CIS schools have student populations over 20,000 (see Recruitment Procedures section, p.100-106, to see why this “large university” requirement was changed). The survey and interview participants were selected from all the large universities in each of the four CIS regions (i.e., Atlantic University Sport, Canada West Universities Athletic Association, Ontario University Athletics, Réseau du
sport étudiant du Québec). Selecting participants from each of the four regions allowed the researcher to identify patterns or divergent paths within the areas of Canadian higher education and sport amongst this subgroup of students. The picture below shows a breakdown of the four CIS regions.

Figure 3: Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) Regions

*Atlantic University Sport (AUS) - Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island
Canada West Universities Athletic Association (CWUAA) – Alberta, Manitoba, British Columbia, Saskatchewan
Ontario University Athletics (OUA) – Ontario
Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec (RESQ) – Quebec

This study utilized purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is “a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the research issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research” (Neuman, 2006, 222). As well, purposive sampling was utilized in order to increase the range of data collected and to ensure a collection of multiple perspectives. In addition, the researcher also used snowball sampling (i.e., asking interview participants for their recommendation or connection to other possible participants). Therefore, in this study, the researcher utilized snowball and purposive sampling to increase the number of respondents, and in order to recruit the appropriate participants who would be more likely to contribute appropriate data in terms of relevance and depth.

The sample was obtained after an examination of the Canadian Interuniversity Sport website, university websites and university athletic websites. The participants were located
through various calls for participations. An “invitation to participate” in the study, both the survey and interview, was delivered by way of email to athletic directors and coaches for distribution amongst their female athletes. As well, “invitation to participate” posters were posted on university websites and in university athletic centers. Additionally, “invitation to participate” emails were sent directly to student athletes who had available contact information.

Given the small population of Black females in Canadian universities, the lack of a central database on student athletes based on race, and the estimated number of possible participants, this mixed method study aimed to retrieve 50 responses to the survey and 20 interviewees. Adler and Adler, experts in the qualitative field, advise that qualitative researchers aim for between a dozen and 60 interviewees, with 30 being the mean:

In advising graduate students we often suggest aiming for a sample of loosely around 30. This medium size subject pool offers the advantage of penetrating beyond a very small number of people without imposing the hardship of endless data gathering, especially when researchers are faced with time constraints (as quoted in Baker & Edwards, 2012, para. 9).

In the end, 28 individuals responded to the survey and 32 interviews were conducted.

Instrumentation

The data collection instruments used in this study included an online survey that probed Black female student athletes’ perceptions of their university experience and an interview guide which also sought to explore the perceptions and feelings of Black female student athletes with regards to their university experience. Both the survey and interviews were only available in English.

Survey Questionnaire

The survey was constructed using items from pre-existing surveys. The 60-item online survey had a professional, simple layout using a straightforward navigation strategy (see Appendix E). The instrument included demographic questions, and items measuring constructs such as belonging, satisfaction, peer interactions, etc. The survey was developed using both factual questions and questions about subjective experiences. Factual questions—questions
designed to draw objective information from the respondents regarding their backgrounds, environments, and habits, etc. (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2007) - were asked mainly to provide information that would be used to classify respondents, such as CIS region, age, and school year. It was hoped that such classifications would in turn aid in explaining differences in behaviours and attitudes. Additionally, the survey included questions pertaining to subjective experiences involving the respondent’s beliefs, attitudes, feelings and opinions.

Both closed and open-ended questions were included in the survey. With closed ended questions, respondents were offered a set of answers and asked to choose the one that most closely represents their views. For example to measure a respondent’s degree of satisfaction with university academic advising, the following closed ended question was used: “Are you satisfied with the academic advising you received? Yes/No/Unsure/No Answer.” The Open-ended questions were questions that were not followed by any kind of specified choice. For instance, “What are the benefits of being a Black female student athlete at this university?” was one open-ended question included in the survey. Very few contingency questions were included. The survey also had rating scales and matrix questions. Moreover, questions were worded so all respondents could clearly understand them. Lastly, a “thank you” message was provided on survey completion.

The survey was accompanied by an information letter and consent form, which explained the purpose, risks, benefits, confidentiality assurances, as well as the anonymous and voluntary nature of the survey. The form also asked participants to give their permission for the survey (see Appendix F). The purpose of the survey introduction pages was to establish credibility, repeat the survey purpose (as it was noted in the invitation email), offer a non-financial incentive (i.e., a report of the finding), guarantee confidentiality and privacy, and provide access to the researcher via email or phone. As well, a statement of scarcity (i.e., a statement telling potential participants that they have been selected as a part of a small group, and if they choose to participate in the study, they would be contributing to a new area of study) was included as it has been found to have a positive effect on response rates (Ye, 2007, 84). The introduction pages also provided a third-party guarantee of the survey’s authenticity by stating the University of Toronto’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and providing contact information for the IRB. Following the introduction and consent pages, the survey was broken down into roughly five sections: demographic questions, academic related questions, athletic
related questions, social related questions, and questions to establish intersectionality. The survey questions were intended to address the same concepts presented in the interviews in order for the data to be used as supplementary support for the interview data. Respondents were expected to provide answers with a radio button, choosing an option from drop down menus or filling in a phrase in the text box provided.

The survey was pilot-tested on a sample of three former Black female student athletes as it has been noted that, “a conscientious and complete piloting of the survey instrument…creates a high-quality electronic survey” (Andrews et al., 2003, 194). Considering the small sample pool of Black female student athletes the researcher was starting with, it was not prudent to use current Black female student athletes to test the survey. Responses from the former student athletes were taken into account, and poorly worded items or items that required clarification were omitted or clarified. The survey was additionally submitted to the Research Design and Data Analysis Assistant, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, for review. Further modifications and clarifications of the wording were done based on the assistant’s recommendations. It was determined that the language of the survey was at a level that could be comprehended by undergraduate student athletes.

It was also determined that, although the survey was lengthy, it was necessarily so, to achieve the study’s purpose. In addition, in hindsight, with regards to the survey, the researcher acknowledges that a greater effort should have been made to find funding for incentives (i.e. a lottery draw for a gift certificate) as “Cash incentives can increase the number of responses twice as much as altruistic motives” (Andrews et al., 2003, 191).

**Interview Protocol**

The interview protocol was developed to reflect the same constructs that were included in the aforementioned survey. As well, while there was an interview protocol, the researcher retained flexibility to follow interesting threads that arose during the interview, which reflects the semi-structured nature of the interviews (Adler & Clarke, 2008).

The interview guide was developed using questions from pre-existing interview guides. A total of 40 questions were developed and then simplified after the first few interviews. The
first few questions were low risk questions such as “When did you first get involved in sport” and proceeded to high-risk questions such as “Have you had experiences with racism or discrimination while on campus?” The interview protocol included both low and high-risk questions. As Ortiz (2003) noted, “…interview protocols are best designed to flow from low-risk questions to high risk questions” (p. 40). The interview guide included main questions and probing questions that the researcher used at times depending on the flow of the interview. Probing questions were used to encourage the interviewees to dig deeper and reflect on the meaning of their experiences. The probing questions were also used to assist the researcher, as “including probes as part of the protocol also helps the researcher manage nervousness that might arise early in the research process” (Ortiz, 2003, 41). As the interviews progressed some questions were altered when it was deemed appropriate. Additionally, while the precise wording of questions varied from time to time, the intent of the questions were unchanged.

**Data Collection Procedures**

The data collection was guided by the research question, which pertained to the experiences of Black female student athletes in Canadian higher education. As such, two sources of data were collected, survey data and interview data. As previously mentioned, the two data collection phases were conducted concurrently. The recruitment and administration of the survey took place between August 2012 and January 2013. The recruitment for the interviews took place between August 2012 – December 2012 and the interviews were conducted between October 2012 and January 2013.

**Survey Recruitment Procedures**

Several recruitment procedures were used for the different phases of the study. It was necessary to use multiple collection methods because of the “hard to get at” population required for this study. Survey recruitment was accomplished through the posting of recruitment posters in university athletic facilities and by email. The researcher was also able to get the recruitment flyer posted on a few official university websites. As well, participation in the survey was voluntary, and no incentives or rewards were given.
Initial recruitment was accomplished by sending general information about the survey study and “invitation to participate” posters to athletic directors and coaches of female varsity sports at all large universities across Canada (see Appendix G). The athletic directors and coaches were asked to distribute the email and posters to female student athletes since there was no database of contact information for potential participants. Large universities were considered to be universities that had a student population of more than 20,000 students. Large universities were selected (+20,000) in hopes that the larger the student population, the larger would be the Black female population. Of the 54 CIS schools, 23 schools have student populations larger than 20,000. The recruitment email included the “invitation to participate” poster and a hyperlink that logged the participants onto the survey website.

The first batch of “invitation to participate” emails was sent out in August 2012. After sending out the first batch of emails, a noticeable number of responses were received from athletic directors and coaches apologetically stating that they “...did not have any students who fit the criteria,” or “…they did not have any Black women on their team,” to whom to distribute the request. The researcher also received a few email responses inquiring if “mixed or biracial” athletes were eligible to participate in the study. All inquiry emails, whether it included a question or a statement, were responded to within 24 hours.

As the “invitation to participate” posters were emailed out in August, it was anticipated that there would be a low and slow response rate as some directors and coaches would have been on summer holidays at the time the email was sent. Therefore, a reminder email was sent to the directors and coaches in September 2012 as it has been noted that follow-up reminder emails, “…appear to spike participation” (Andrews et al., 2003, 192; Ye, 2007). While the response rate began to increase, the survey responses were still only trickling in. Therefore, due to the disappointing response rate to the online surveys, another recruitment method was implemented. The researcher then decided to turn to direct contact and social media in hopes of increasing the response rate. The researcher scoured the athletic rosters on each university’s website, for pictures and/or contact information (e.g. emails) of athletes who might potentially fit the participant requirements for the study. If email addresses were found, an “invitation to participate” email was sent (the invitation was a shortened and personalized version of the recruitment email (see Appendix H). The “invitation to participate” email that was sent directly to potential participants gave them the option of participating in the interview or the survey. If
an email address could not be located, the researcher searched the potential participant’s name (which were retrieved from the online public athletic roster) on Facebook and sent them an “invitation to participate” message. Again the “invitation to participate” message gave the potential participant the option of taking part in the interview or the survey.

The researcher was slightly anxious that the individuals that were contacted might be offended at being emailed directly, and/or the individual might have been offended that the researcher “assumed” they were “Black.” Thankfully, no negative responses were received to the “direct” recruitment method. Actually, the “direct” recruitment method provided a more rapid and increased response rate, which supports Heerwegh and Loosveldt’s (2007) claim “…a substantial increase in the response rate of the Web surveys may be attained by making email contacts that are personalized” (p.260).

At this point, due to the low response rate, the researcher also decided to eliminate some of the population restrictions mentioned earlier. The researcher initially intended to recruit from only large universities (schools with population +20,000), but when the method of data collection was altered and the researcher decided to directly contact potential participants by email and Facebook, the researcher decided to include all the 54 CIS schools. Consequently, the researcher went back and sent “invitation to participate” emails to athletic directors and coaches of female teams to all the school that previously had been excluded (schools with student populations less than 20,000). In the end, there were 35 survey responses, but only 28 of the surveys were completed and/or usable.

As mentioned, the researcher initially sent the “invitation to participate” to directors and team coaches, so it was possible that some directors and coaches dismissed the email and others may have felt awkward sending the email to their entire teams when, more often than not, there would be only 1 or 2 Black female athletes on their athletic teams.

**Interview Recruitment Procedures**

Interview recruitment was accomplished through the posting of recruitment posters in university athletic facilities and via email (see Appendix I). The researcher was also able to get the recruitment poster posted on a few official university websites. As well, snowball sampling was utilized to recruit participants. With regards to the email contacts, interview recruitment
was initially accomplished by sending general information about the interview study and “invitation to participate” posters to athletic directors and coaches of female varsity sports teams to four large universities across Canada. One large university in each of the four CIS regions (Atlantic University Sport; Canada West: Ontario University Athletics; Quebec Student Sport Federation) were selected. The researcher had limited the interview pool to four universities as the researcher had intended to travel to each of the four universities to conduct the interviews, and this would have limited associated cost.

The “invitation to participate” email was sent out in August 2012. Again, the general information and “invitation to participate” posters were sent to athletic directors and coaches for distribution to student athletes as there is no database of contact information for student athletes. Interested participants were invited to contact the researcher directly in person, by email, or by telephone. Again, as the researcher had sent out the recruitment email in August, a low and slow response rate was anticipated as some directors and coaches would have been on summer holidays at the time the email was distributed. Surprisingly, after the first request for participation was sent out, only one individual volunteered to participate in the interview portion of the study. A reminder email was sent to the directors and coaches in September 2012. Again, only one additional participant for the interview process was received. By the end of September 2012 the researcher decided to turn to direct contact and social media in an attempt to increase the response rate (as described in the section above).

The researcher again decided to eliminate some of the original population restrictions. The researcher initially intended to only recruit interview participants from four large universities, however when the method of data collection was altered and changed to direct contact of potential participants by email and Facebook, the researcher decided to recruit interview participants from all 54 CIS schools. The researcher scoured the online athletic rosters and university email databases for pictures and contact information (e.g., email addresses) of athletes who might potentially fit the participant requirements for the study. If an email address was found, an “invitation to participate” email was sent. If an email address could not be located, the researcher searched the potential participants’ name on Facebook and sent them an “invitation to participate” message. The “invitation to participate” message gave them the option of participating in the interview or the survey. The message also stated that if participants had already completed the survey, participation in the interview was not required.
As well, during the first few interviews, the researcher asked interview participants for their recommendation or connection to other possible participants. These methods of collection proved to be the most successful as 30 additional women volunteered for the interview process. Also, to make sure that interview participants had not already completed the survey, the 30 participants that volunteered to be interviewed were asked if they had already completed the survey. No interviewees completed the survey.

As mentioned, it was intended that all interviews would be conducted by way of in-person interviews, but many participants were situated many miles from the researcher’s location in Ontario, so they were given the option of completing the interview face-to-face, by Skype or by telephone. In addition, given the nature of this study, giving the potential participants a choice of interview mode was deemed important. For instance, interviewees were spread across Canada. Also, potential participants—Black female student athletes—were in-season and busy training and traveling. Therefore phone, Skype and in-person interviews were conducted. As a result of choice in the research mode, 11 participants chose face-to-face interviews, 6 chose telephone interviews, and 15 chose Skype (video) interviews. All of the participants located outside the researcher’s geographical area decided they preferred Skype (video) interviews. This was a result of the location, busy schedules, and possibly, because “…the millennial generation demonstrate an unambiguous preference for Internet-based communication… and Skype’s potential to appeal to this population of increasingly technology-confident early adopters is clear” (Booth, 2008, 161). The option of telephone interviews was also given to participants to avoid alienating potential participants who did not have access to Skype and/or a computer, and for those who did not feel comfortable with the researcher travelling to conduct the interview.

The interviews were scheduled for various dates and times over a three-month period. For the interviews that were conducted in-person, the participants chose the location. All face-to-face interviews took place either at a local coffee shop or in a classroom on the participant’s university campus as it is recommended “…the interviewer establish equality in the interview by conducting the conversation in a neutral, non-threatening place” (Ortiz, 2003, 43).

A consent form (which explained the purpose, risks, benefits, confidentiality assurances, as well as the anonymous and voluntary nature of the interview) (see Appendix C) and a
biographical data form (see Appendix D) were provided to each participant at the time of the interview. The participants were asked to sign the form and they were also provided with a copy. Skype interviewees were emailed the consent and biographical form and returned a scanned signed copy of the consent form to the researcher via email. At the beginning of each interview the researcher repeated the purpose of the study, checked if participants had questions, and shared information about herself. Sharing this information recognized that “…the priority during the beginning of the interview…is to build rapport between the participant and the researcher” (Ortiz, 2003, 41).

Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour and 45 minutes, and all interviews were audio-taped. Patton (2002) notes that using audio-taping for interviews allows for accuracy and allows the interviewer to be more attentive to the person being interviewed. The researcher also took into account the possibility of the audio-taping equipment malfunctioning and therefore attended each interview with two recording devices. In addition, the researcher kept a journal and recorded impressions and reactions that occurred during and after the interviews, a procedure recommended as a useful source of supplementary information (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). All 32 interviews were transcribed verbatim for analysis. As the data collection procedures were slightly complex, a flow chart of the procedures is provided below.
Figure 4: Flow Chart of Procedures

Survey

August 2012
First survey “invitation to participate” email sent to Athletic Directors and Coaches at Large CIS Universities

September 2012
Reminder email sent to Athletic Directors and Coaches at Large CIS Universities

October 2012
Sent survey/interview “invitation to participate” emails directly to potential participants via email and Facebook message

October 2012
Sent survey/interview “invitation to participate” email to Athletic Directors and Coaches at all 54 CIS Universities

November 2012
Reminder email sent to Athletic Directors and Coaches at all 54 CIS Universities

November 2012
Sent reminder “invitation to participate” email directly to potential participants via email and Facebook message

December 2012
Final reminder email sent to Athletic Directors and Coaches at all 54 CIS Universities

December 2012
Final reminder email sent to potential participants via email and Facebook

Interview

August 2012
First interview “invitation to participate” email sent to Athletic Directors and Coaches at Large CIS Universities

September 2012
Reminder email sent to Athletic Directors and Coaches at Large CIS Universities

October 2012
Sent survey/interview “invitation to participate” emails directly to potential participants via email and Facebook message

October 2012
Sent survey/interview “invitation to participate” email to Athletic Directors and Coaches at all 54 CIS Universities

November 2012
Reminder email sent to Athletic Directors and Coaches at all 54 CIS Universities

November 2012
Sent reminder “invitation to participate” email directly to potential participants via email and Facebook message

December 2012
Final reminder email sent to Athletic Directors and Coaches at all 54 CIS Universities

December 2012
Final reminder email sent to potential participants via email and Facebook
**Data Analysis**

The two analytical approaches used for this research study are descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. For both qualitative and quantitative data analysis, “researchers go through a similar set of steps: preparing the data for analysis, exploring the data, analyzing the data, representing the analysis, interpreting the analysis, and validating the data and interpretations” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, 204)

In preparing the survey data for analysis, the researcher cleaned up the database by removing any data entry errors. However, very little preparation of the survey data was needed as the Survey Monkey computer software completed the majority of preparation. The responses to the survey questionnaire were then retrieved from Survey Monkey, downloaded in an Excel document format and then exported and analysed using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics) version 21.0 software package.

The data was explored as the researcher first visually inspected the data and the summaries from Survey Monkey to determine the general trends in the data. Then descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies, means, cross tabulations) were run to describe the distribution of the data and the relationships between major variables.

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the interview data. In preparing the interview data for analysis, the researcher organized the memos, transcribed all the interviews verbatim, and charted the biographical data that was collected. After the initial transcription, the researcher re-listened to the audio recordings and checked the transcription for accuracy. The data was explored as the researcher completed a thorough reading of the transcripts to develop a general understanding of the information. The researcher also read through the transcripts in order to look for regularities and similar phrases.

Throughout the process of data collection and analysis the researcher utilized the process of memoing. Memoing refers to the process of writing of notes and observations concerning ideas, patterns, methodological concerns and themes that occur to the researcher in the process of reading and coding data (Neuman, 2006). Memoing helped link different subthemes and themes into concepts and explanations. The researcher used this process to move analysis from
specific themes to general themes. The researcher made notes in the margins of the transcripts and added to the memo notebook throughout the study.

When this was completed, the researcher began a detailed analysis of the data by dividing the text into large sections, assigning labels to each section. These initial labels were mostly descriptive, non-conclusive codes, which often used words and phrases from the participants. Following this, the researcher further divided the text into smaller sections (i.e., paragraphs) and assigned codes to each section. Coding refers to the “application of labels to strips of data that illustrate ideas and concepts and to the continuing process of identifying, modifying, and refining concepts and categories that sustain emerging themes and patterns” (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2010, 394). The researcher then moved on to grouping similar codes into themes or subthemes. The number of times that certain codes presented themselves was noted, not for statistical significance, but to weigh the relative importance in the identification of themes. As such, the results of the analysis are presented in summary form in tables, and through the discussion of themes in the next chapter.

Validity and Reliability

Depending on one’s philosophical perspectives, the way in which one judges quantitative or qualitative data can differ. It has been argued that the ways in which to evaluate the quality of quantitative data may not be applicable to qualitative data (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2010). Thus, the ways in which to evaluate the quality of quantitative and qualitative data, or the acceptability of judging qualitative research in general, is a matter that is continually debated. As well, the use of mixed methods research further complicates the task of judging the quality of quantitative and qualitative data. However, this section will reveal how the researcher managed to assure validity and reliability of the quantitative methods and the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the qualitative methods.

The quality of quantitative research is often judged on validity and reliability. **Validity** is the degree to which a study measures that which it is supposed to measure, and the degree to which a study’s findings and conclusions are warranted (Neuman, 2006); whereas **reliability** is the degree to which a test consistently measures what it is meant to measure, and its potential for replication (Neuman, 2006). Moreover, the quality of qualitative research is often judged on
credibility- which refers to the confidence one can have in the truth of the findings;
transferability- which involves demonstrating the applicability of the findings of the study to other environments; dependability –which refers to the stability of the findings, for it involves accounting for all changing conditions in what is being studied as well as changes in the design of the study that were needed to get a better understanding of the context; and confirmability – which refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed by others.

Therefore, validity in this study was established through data triangulation. Triangulation is “the process of corroborating findings from different individuals (e.g. teachers and students), types of data (e.g., field notes and interviews), or methods of data collection, and it allows the researcher to be more confident of the study’s conclusions” (Denzin, 2000, 513). Thus, by utilizing multiple sources of data (i.e., survey data, interview data, memos, previous findings) the researcher was able to cross validate the findings. As well, the researcher derived reliability by coding the data in a way that would enable the reader to understand the themes, replicate the study, and arrive at similar conclusions. As well, reliability of this study was also enhanced as an adequate number of participants were included and the sample population was chosen appropriately.

Additionally, credibility was enhanced as the researcher utilized data triangulation. As mentioned, the researcher collected data through multiple methods and the different sources of data were used as a means of crosschecking data and providing confirmation of the emerging themes. In addition, credibility was enhanced as the research utilized peer debriefing. For this, prior to commencing the study, the researcher had qualified outside researchers evaluate the study instruments and design.

However, in hindsight, the researcher acknowledges that by employing persistent observation, credibility could have been further enhanced. As well, the researcher attempted to employ member checking to enhance credibility (member checking involves having respondents check the accuracy of the facts/transcripts), but the participants declined the opportunity to check and confirm the data. Further, the researcher believes that if time had permitted, follow-up interviews would have allowed for adequate checks of information and further exploration of interesting comments.
Furthermore, transferability was established by providing thick description. The researcher provided detailed description of procedures and findings so readers could decide for themselves if the results are transferable into other contexts. Lastly, dependability was enhanced by describing in-detail the changes that occurred in the study. As well, both dependability and confirmability were enhanced by the use of audit trails. According to Denzin (2000), "confirmability builds on audit trails...and involves the use of written field notes, memos, a field diary, process and personal notes, and a reflexive journal" (513). This led to the researcher keeping memos, transcripts, survey data files and journal entries available for potential inspection.

**Summary**

As mentioned, a mixed method approach was employed to explore the experiences of Black female student athletes attending postsecondary institutions across Canada, to help provide a fuller picture and better understanding of the Black female student athlete’s experience.

The exploratory nature of the study and the complexity of looking at the intersections of identities limited the utility of a single-method study. While quantitative methods can provide a broad account of the research topic and can produce data that can be generalized, quantitative methods have been found to be inadequate in addressing the complex nature of identity, and quantitative data have been found to be limited in depth and insight. As well, while qualitative methods can help identify and explain sociocultural information, and qualitative data is rich in detail, qualitative methods have been found to be time and cost intensive, and qualitative data has been found to be challenging to interpret and not generalizable across context. Thus, the strength and rationale for utilizing a mixed method design is that it combines the advantages of both qualitative and quantitative data. The mixed method approach allowed the researcher to conduct a study with depth and it allowed the researcher to expand the breadth and scope of research on Black female student athletes.
Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

The study was designed to investigate the experiences of Black female undergraduate student athletes within Canadian universities. The purpose of the study was to gather descriptive data on the postsecondary experiences of Black female student athletes in Canada and to gain an understanding of the experiences of Black females as students, as athletes, and as women. The research question was as follows: “What are the university experiences (academic, athletic, and social) of Black female student athletes attending Canadian universities?” Thematic analysis was utilized to explore the interview data and descriptive statistics were employed to explore the survey responses.

It is important to note that within this study the researcher intended to interview women who “identified as Black.” However, these same participants could be from various ethnic backgrounds (of West Indian, African, British, American, Canadian descent, and mixed and/or biracial). With regards to those who identified as biracial, all of the biracial students that participated in this study commenced their participation by identifying themselves as “Black,” and their biracial identity unfolded as the interview and questions progressed.

The results obtained from analyzing the data for this study are reported in this chapter. This chapter presents the key findings as obtained by 32 in-depth interviews and 28 survey responses. This chapter is comprised of a descriptive summary of the characteristics of the population, variable frequencies and major themes. The descriptive data on the population sample provided a demographic glance at the population and the thematic analysis revealed the seven major themes that emerged from this study: University Expectations versus Reality, Pressure and Positivity, Complex Relationships, Unique Experiences, Negotiating and Navigating, Hiding and Highlighting and Levels of Blackness. In the presentation of findings, the participants, locations, and school names have been given pseudonyms.
Description of the Sample

Demographic Background of the Interview and Survey Participants

The qualitative dataset were based on interviews with 32 Black female student athletes attending university across Canada. Fifteen participants were interviewed via Skype (video), 11 were interviewed in-person and 6 by way of phone interviews (N=32). The survey data collected by the researcher were used to gain a broad understanding and profile of Black female student athletes’ experiences within Canadian higher education. A total of 34 surveys were submitted for the online survey, but only 28 surveys were completed and usable (N=28). Therefore, overall sixty (N=60) women participated in this study (see Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of Participants by Data Collection Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>N=60</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview Participants</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Participants</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the sample, the ages of participants ranged from 18-26 years old. Survey participants ranging from age 18-20 constituted 53.6% of the study; and 42.9% of the survey participants ranged from age 21-23; and 3.6% of participants were older than 23 years old (see Table 3). Interview participants had the following distributions: 50% of the participants ranged from age 18-20, 34.4% of the interview participants ranged from age 21-23, and 15.6% of participants were older than 23 years old (see Table 4).

Table 3: Distribution of Survey Participants by Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-20 years old</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-23 years old</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;23 years old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students in their first, second, third, fourth and fifth year participated in the study. While the researcher intended to exclude first year students, first year students who had completed one full term of athletic and academic involvement were included due to the limited sample pool. The distribution by school year appears below in Table 5 and 6.

Table 5: Distribution of Survey Participants by Current School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Distribution of Interview Participants by Current School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants in both the survey and interviews were recruited from all four of the Canadian Interuniversity Sports (CIS) regions (i.e., Atlantic University Sport; Canada West Universities Athletic Association; Ontario University Athletics; Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec). A significant number of the participants, 59.4% of interviewees and 60.7% of survey participants were from the Ontario University Athletics (OUA) region (see Tables 7 and 8). It was not possible to determine precisely how representative the sample was, as statistics based on race are not readily accessible for Canadian institutions of higher education and Canadian varsity athletics. The researcher consulted with local, regional, national experts and agencies (e.g., Statistics Canada, Canadian Interuniversity Sport) and was unable to come across available data that lays out the race, or a combination of race and gender of Canadian athlete participating in intercollegiate sport. To see a distribution of female student athletes (not broken down by race or ethnicity) see Appendix J.

Table 7: Distribution of Survey Participants by CIS Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AUS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWUAA</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUA</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSEQ</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Distribution of Interview Participants by CIS Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AUS</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWUAA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUA</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>59.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSEQ</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table (7 and 8): Interview and Survey Participants Distribution by CIS Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) Regional Associations</th>
<th>Interview Participants</th>
<th>Survey Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic University Sport (AUS)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada West Universities Athletic Association (CWUAA)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario University Athletics (OUA)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec (RSEQ)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 reveals the number of member universities in each of the CIS regions, as well as the number of participants (survey and interview) that responded from each region.

Table 9: Distribution of CIS member Universities and Participants by CIS Regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) Regional Associations</th>
<th>Number of CIS member Universities by Region</th>
<th>Total Number of Participants by Region (Survey and Interview)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic University Sport (AUS)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada West Universities Athletic Association (CWUAA)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario University Athletics (OUA)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec (RSEQ)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>54</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Black population in Canada is 783,795, which is 2.5% of Canada’s total population. The Black Canadian population in each CIS region is presented in Table 10, along with the number of survey and interview participants in each CIS region.

Table 10: Total Black Population in each CIS Regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) Regional Associations</th>
<th>Blacks by Number</th>
<th>Total Number of Participants by Region (Survey and Interview)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic University Sport (Provinces Included: Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island)</td>
<td>25,230</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada West Universities Athletic Association (Provinces Included: Alberta, Manitoba, British Columbia, Saskatchewan)</td>
<td>96,140</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario University Athletics (Ontario)</td>
<td>473,765</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec (Quebec)</td>
<td>188,070</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>783,795</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Racial/Ethnicity Identification of Participants**

While all participants identified themselves as “Black”, the ethnic composition of the sample varied. The majority of participants identified themselves as Black (of West Indian, Caribbean Descent) and another significant number of participants identified themselves as mixed and/or biracial. The majority of biracial participants identified themselves as a mixed-race of Black and Caucasian, but there were two biracial participants that noted a mix of Black and Other (see Tables 11 and 12). A larger portion of the survey participants, 64.3%, identified themselves as Black (West Indian, Caribbean), whereas, a larger portion of interview participants, 46.9%, identified as mixed race.
Table 11: Distribution of Survey Participants by Race/Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black (West Indian, Caribbean)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Canadian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed/Biracial</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (African Descent)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (African American)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (British Descent)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Distribution of Interview Participants by Race/Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black (West Indian, Caribbean)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Canadian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed/Biracial</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (African Descent)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (African American)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (British Descent)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Racial/Ethnicity Distribution by CIS Region**

With regards to the survey respondents, in both the CWUAA and OUA region there was greater diversity in how the participants identified ethnically. In the AUS, participants either identified as Black (of West Indian, Caribbean Descent) or Mixed/Biracial, whereas, in the RSEQ, participants either identified as Black (of African Descent) or African Canadian (see Table 13).
Table 13: Race/Ethnicity of Survey Participants by CIS Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>CIS Region</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AUS</td>
<td>CWUAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (West Indian, Caribbean)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Canadian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed/Biracial</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (African Descent)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (African American)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (British Descent)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regards to the interview participants, ethnic diversity was greater in the AUS and OUA regions. In the CWUAA participants either identified as Black (of West Indian, Caribbean Descent) or Mixed/Biracial, whereas in the RSEQ, participants either identified as Black (of African Descent) or African Canadian (see Table 14).

Table 14: Race Interview Participants by CIS Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>CIS Region</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AUS</td>
<td>CWUAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (West Indian, Caribbean)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Canadian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed/Biracial</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (African Descent)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (African American)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (British Descent)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Distribution by Sport**

As well, participants participated in various sports, enrolled in various academic faculties and attended various universities. In this study, participants were members of both team and
individual sports because restricting the study to only team sports or individual sports would have further limited the already limited sample pool. Both the interviewees and survey participants competed in a range of sports. With regards to sport type, basketball, rugby and track and field were the most common sports played by Black female student athletes in this study. Due to the extreme diversity of sport, academic faculty, and schools attended, no significant finding related to type of sport, faculty or school emerged within or across region. Tables 15-20 present the distribution of participants by sport and school.

Table 15: Distribution of Survey Participants by Sport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Hockey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice Hockey</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track and Field</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16: Distribution of Interview Participants by Sport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Hockey</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice Hockey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track and Field</td>
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Table 17: Distribution of Sport by CIS Region - Survey Participants

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Table 18: Distribution of Sport by CIS Region - Interview Participants

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Table 19: Distribution of Survey and Interview Participants

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Table 20 below, provides the pseudonyms and year of athletic eligibility for each of the 32 interview participants.

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Examination of Research Question

In the following section the seven major themes that emerged through thematic analysis of the interview data are outlined, and the available statistics that support or challenge each theme are provided. The themes are presented visually in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Seven Major Themes

Theme 1: University Expectations versus Reality

The first theme was titled *University Expectation versus Reality*. The theme incorporated the participants’ academic, athletic and social expectations of their university experiences versus their actual experience once in university. All participants indicated they had expectations of their university experiences as students and as athletes. In most instances, expectations did not correspond with reality. The subthemes for Expectations versus Reality are: *Expectation of the Student Experience and Expectation of Athletics in University.*
**Expectation of the Student Experience**

Many participants felt there was a difference between their expectations of university and the reality of their university experience. A few of the women found academic experience to be more difficult than they had anticipated. Ayana shared:

In my first year it was definitely a slap in the face. I remember after the first midterms, things were bad. In high school you can study the night before and you can ace the test. But then you try that at university and it doesn’t go as well. Yes, so first year was definitely a slap in the face. You’re not prepared for the workload at all. Things are very different in university. The types of readings that you do in university are very different from high school. You can have 5 chapters due for next class and in high school the teachers say, “read page 25-27” [she laughs]…So, I don’t think we are prepared for the type of work that is expected of us in university… I didn’t expect this amount of work, but now I understand how everything works. I know what to do. I know what to expect…. I now know what is expected of me. It’s definitely a learning process. And by the time you are done [your four years in university] you have everything down, and you know how to go through the readings, and you know how to pull things from a reading. But first year [of university], you have no idea. And even the types of resources that are available in your first year aren’t enough, or maybe people don’t take advantage of what is offered. For example, there are learning centers and other resources, but I don’t think they articulate how to best take advantage of these resources. They do really articulate what is really offered or what is available…

A few other women thought that university would be a “fun” experience but found it to be less than enjoyable. Elizabeth states:

… No. I expected it to be a lot more fun. Universities are a drag, but I'm kind of at that point where you just want to finish [school]. I just want to get out. I want to be done with school…

Similarly Jael also explains:

In my first year of university I was expecting… I thought it was going to be fun. I was excited to be on my own and do all this stuff by myself. I was not going to be living at home. But now I feel that there was definitely no need to be so eager to be independent. Looking back, I realize we take things for granted. The things that you have when you live at home or just being surrounded by family…. and now I live on my own, it’s different. I’ve lived on my own for quite a few years now, and you pay your own bills and you see your family whenever you have the chance. It’s not what I expected.

Other participants noted the expectation and reality of their social experience at university in more detail. The women were surprised with the lack of social life they ended up experiencing
and surprised at how friendships formed. When asked if her experience at university matched her expectations, Olivia stated:

No, not at all. I feel that I am not having that much of a university experience. I feel like all I do is study, study, study. I feel like other people get more of a social life. After university, you are still going to have to study [if you go to graduate school], or you are going to go into the workforce…so you won’t even have a social life after university. So, in terms of the social life aspect… I feel like I'm missing out on the ability to go out or go clubbing [and I might not get to do that ever again] …I really enjoy dancing and stuff like that. I feel like I am missing out [because of my academic and athletic commitments], but it is a sacrifice, it’s something I have to give up if I want to be successful in life, and successful at [this University]. I didn't know you would have to give up a social life to basically do well in your classes.

Naomi’s experience with regard to the social environment also clashed with her initial expectations. She explained:

I didn’t know what to expect coming in to university. I think it is different than what I had expected. You know, walking down the street at 9 o’clock in the morning and there are beer bongs on the side of the road. Yes, I saw that coming. I expected that kind of partying and school spirit – you know, people running down the middle of the street and from head to toe they are painted purple! [She laughs]. Its like, okay I kind of expected that, but umm…party all the time? I didn’t expect it to be as crazy…. People always party, they party all the time! But for me it was [different]. I had to hit the books. You kind of get this notion in your head, “Do other people study? How do people study when they are partying all the time? …You know, I think [my university experience is] different than what I had expected. [The amount of studying people do and the academic intensity is] a little bit more toned down than people made it seem.

Jaia described how her expectations of friendships, and with those whom she interacted, differed from her actual experience:

No. I would say [my experience] is not what I expected it to be, because in my eyes, coming in [to university] I seriously expected it to be just a bigger version of high school. So I thought everyone would have the same mentality and there’d be all these cliques, and everyone would just separate. I also thought it was all going to be a popularity contest… But it's not. It's completely different. Everybody hangs out with everybody…But actually, being in university, I have to say it has opened my eyes a lot. It is not what I thought it would be… I have actually made many friends and changed friends many times. You meet new people every day and then become friends with them for a while, and then it kind of fades off. I [also] have a lot of friends now that are gay. I didn't have a lot of experience with that [in my hometown] so that's different….
Expectation of Athletics in University

Along with the expectations the women had for their student experiences, they also came to university with certain athletic-related expectations. Some participants felt their experiences as student athletes fell short of their expectations. Some participants expected the university experience to be similar to the university experience portrayed in the media, however that did not turn out to be the case. Cathy attributes the divergence in expectation and reality to the fact that she was influenced by the media and also because she initially lived off campus.

I think I watch too much TV [she laughs]. I think I had idealized the American-style student athlete life. And another reason [my expectations did not line up with reality was] I didn't live on campus initially. I did live on campus last year, but not my first year. Yeah, it's definitely not what I thought it would be and I think it's more in part because of the university experience and not the student athlete experience. The university experience as a whole… you know, you watch TV and you expect that university is going to be all fun and games. You think it will be easy to balance everything and you will be idolized because you are an athlete. And then you actually get here and it's definitely not like that. Yeah, I think my university and athletic experience is not what I expected it to be and part of that has to do with the fact that I did not live on campus my first few years.

Naomi expressed similar views that the media influenced her expectations of university and the student athlete experience:

You think you always have an idea of what it's going to be like when you go to university, especially in the beginning you have this idea in your head, this preconceived notion. Especially because of the media, you get this idea about what it is going to be like as a varsity athlete. You get this idea that you will be the “top dog”…there will be so much school spirit ‘rah rah’…but it was nothing like that. You spend your time just trying to balance academics and athletics.

Tricia also stated that her experience as an athlete in university was different from what she had expected:

[University life] was a lot busier than I was anticipating. You spend a lot of hours at practice each week and then there is traveling once competition starts. You are [traveling] every weekend…Yes, I did expect [the student athlete experience] to be a bit different than it is now…I expected the athletic aspect to definitely be very time consuming, but not as much as it has ended up being. And in terms of academics, it is a lot more work than I was anticipating.
As well, some of the participants felt they knew what the university experience would be like. Their experience matched with their expectation. Michelle shared:

Yes, so far [my university experience is exactly what I expected it to be] because I knew it was going to be hard. I knew that it would be challenging academically and athletically. So, I just tried to be really prepared for it and I just hope that I will perform and reach my goal.

Stephanie felt that upon entering university she was expecting to feel like a minority and that is exactly what she experienced. She states:

Yes. Coming into university, I kind of already felt that I was going to be a minority, even though [this school] is pretty good in the sense that they are really diverse. I know people use the word [diverse] a lot to describe [this school] but you can see it. We are in the middle of the city and there is a lot of diversity. But I still do feel like Black females are the minority, yes, we stand out. So yes, [my experience at university] is what I expected in being a Black female student athlete. I knew what I signed up for.

Also, a few women felt their athletic experience in university specifically matched their initial expectations. Sophia noted:

Yes. I have cousins that actually played NCAA tennis, and they are a year or two years ahead of me, so they shared their experiences. Also, I kind of just knew what to expect [with regards to the university experience] because when I was in high school I played elite basketball. When I was in high school I would sometimes spend up to 9 hours on the weekend playing basketball, so I was aware that it takes up a lot of time. So, yes, I would say that I was pretty knowledgeable about what [being a student athlete in university] was going to be like.

Moreover, a few participants found that the experience of university turned out to be more than what they expected in a positive sense. Lela revealed:

I think my university experience has exceeded my expectations. Yeah, I think just the overall experience of being a student athlete… University has been better than I expected because I've been having so much fun. The opportunities I've received, the things I have been able to do, it's been more than I expected.

In the same way, Veronica shared:

Yes, I would actually say the university experience, is even better now that I have become involved with the sports team. I've had the privilege of travelling, competing, making new friends. Yes, it's been really good.
Maya entered university with the expectation that it was going to be a struggle because she had a learning disability, but reality was surprisingly different. She notes:

Yes, definitely. I thought being in university would be a struggle the entire time, but there have been times when it has been fun and there are times when it’s been tough. So, since I’ve been having fun, it turned out better than I expected.

Shannon reported that although she entered university without expectations, she felt the experience exceeded her expectations:

…I guess I didn’t really have any expectation of what it would be like here [at the university], so in that sense, it has kind of exceeded my expectation. And yes, it was really hard to know what to expect in university because I didn’t really have … my mom never went to university, so I didn’t have her knowledge of how it would be, and I don’t speak with my father really, so, it was kind of just going off of my own knowledge.

**Survey Data**

With regards to university expectation and the actual university experience, survey participants were asked to describe their expectations of their university experience on a rate scale. Survey data revealed that 60.7% felt their experience did not turn out the way they expected, 28.6% of survey participants felt that their university experience was exactly what they expected it to be, and 10.7% of the participants felt their university experience turned out to be better than what they had expected.

<table>
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Theme 2: Pressure and Positivity

The second theme identified was Pressure and Positivity, which referred to the pressures that Black female student athletes encountered in their academic and athletic experiences, and the simultaneous positivity they had with regards to fitting in and belonging within the university environment. Many participants described the pressure they experienced from having to prove themselves academically; the pressure from balancing their athletic and academic commitments; the pressure to be an athlete first and a student second; and the pressure they experienced from being commuter students. However, amidst these various pressures, participants generally reported overall positive experiences of belonging and mattering within the university.

Pressure to Prove Oneself Academically

Women in the study felt that as Black female student athletes they experienced pressure from having to prove themselves in a way that non-Black female student athletes did not. Jael shared:

I don’t know if this is just because of where I grew up, but I felt that, especially as a Black student athlete I had to prove myself. I wanted to make sure that everyone knew I wasn’t just here [at the university] because I could play basketball. I want everyone to know that I can do well both athletically and academically. So that was always a personal pressure. I did not feel that pressure from anyone else but myself. I wanted to make sure there was no question why I was at university. I wanted people to know that I deserved to be there just as much as any other person…

Melissa also wanted to prove herself academically to others and she also wanted to prove herself to family members. She reported:

This is the time I really wanted to prove to myself. I wanted to prove myself to my mom, other people and teachers that doubted me. I wanted to prove that I could do really well… and actually, I feel that sports is holding me back quite a bit. I believe the only reason why [I haven’t done well academically] is because I’m on the sports team. I want to prove myself academically and not for any reason athletically. You know? I just want to prove myself academically.

Similarly, Stephanie stated:

Just being a Black female in general, I have to prove myself to other people. There is a certain negative way that people look down on Black females…I try not to take it personally, but sometimes people will joke and say something negative. Often times
they are surprised when I do well on a test...I don't know...people just assume that I am not as smart as I am and it’s just because I'm Black. Yes it’s racist, but people don't mean it, so I don’t take offence to it.

And Naomi expressed the added pressure of having to prove oneself both academically and athletically. While Naomi states that she has to prove herself more as a student than as an athlete, she actually goes on to solely discuss how and why she feels the need to prove herself athletically.

I feel like you have to prove yourself more [when you are a Black female student athlete]...I feel that you definitely have to prove yourself, not so much in the academic aspect, more so as a student ... Also, in the athletic arena, I also feel that you have to prove yourself because people put you on a pedestal. For example, I’m a 5’2 black female athlete built like a sprinter, so, they expect, “Oh, she must be fast.” So in the back of my head I feel that I have to prove that I am fast. I kind of have to work my butt off even more because they are expecting me to be a certain way - not in a negative way - but kind of like your typical push...And so, I feel the need to maintain the [the positive] ideas people have of me...I don’t think most White athletes think about things like that. They might be the star of the team and they may have to worry about different little underlying things, but there are some certain unwritten rules, unwritten thoughts, that are for a Black athlete particularly.... In sports, with the scholarships that are given out [to Black athletes], we need to prove to people that we are not just here for sports... Anyhow, I try not to pay attention to [negative stereotypes]. But you know, I think everyone has to deal with a little bit of racism whether you’re White, Black, or Asian. And you have to just overcome it. Right?

**Pressure to Balance Academics and Athletics**

The women also made reference to the pressures they face with regards to balancing their academic and athletic demands. Maya describes how she has to limit the time she spends on academics to fit in her athletic commitments:

[Due to my athletic commitments] I do not have as much time to focus on [academic] assignments. I’ve put myself on a strict schedule. So, I have a strict schedule that I need to stick to in order to get stuff done. Instead of being able to spend three hours on an assignment... I may only get to spend two hours because I have practice. Time, yes, I have to pay attention to time, which can get stressful.

As well, Rhonda described how she stresses over the balancing of academics and athletics:

Balancing academics and athletics can get stressful. If I were to have a test the next day that I had to study for, but I also had practice that night, I’d still have to go to
practice …[The pressure to put practice before studying comes from] the rest of the team. They make you feel guilty if you miss practice. It’s your responsibility to organize your time and they expect you to be there. But I agree, it’s not really fair to the rest of the team that you have to miss practice because you didn’t organize your time…I guess we put so much time into athletics and it can sometimes take away from school. And it can also add more stress too, especially if you are not performing well or if you don't get along with your teammates. The stress can take away from the whole university experience.

In the same way, Naomi notes:

There are times when you just want to study and you don’t want to go to practice…there are times when it’s almost too much to handle. It does become stressful, especially when midterms start…For example, say I have a midterm on Monday and we have a game on Sunday…how do you study between a game on Sunday and a midterm on Monday? …As a student athlete you can’t expect to cram the night before. Other people can cram the night before because they don’t have practice or a game…so, academics and sports are consuming, and I know people wonder how we do it, and to be honest, I have NO idea, [she laughs].

As well, Gabrielle found that even though she had been a student athlete in high school, she still found it challenging to balance academic and athletics because athletics in university were more competitive and required a higher level of commitment than high school athletics. She states:

It's a tough balance, even though I had been a student athlete in high school, coming into [this city], it was really hard because the level of skill on this team and in this area was higher than it was [in high school], …and now I’m in a huge varsity program. We have to be at practice at least 80% of the time or they will cut you [from the team]. So it's hard balancing school and practice, but if you're good with time management then you're okay, but I know a lot of people have a really hard time with it, even when they are years into the program.

**Pressure from Commuting**

A few participants also noted there was added pressure to being a student athlete that resulted from the need to commute to school or commute to practices. Some participants lived in different cities and commuted by way of bus and car to school and practice each day. Also, some universities had athletic teams with athletic facilities off campus. For example, some universities had Rugby teams, but no available field to practice on, therefore some athletes would travel to community facilities to access practice fields. Elizabeth states:
We have to travel to practice [near the subway station]. It’s by [the] Station. It's not feasible to take a bus there, so we get rides. We are lucky; a lot of people on our team drive, so we can all get a ride. But the school doesn't subsidize gas money or anything, which is weird, because the fact is we have to drive to practice to play for our school! I've heard talk that they might get a field [on campus], but I'm sure that will never happen… maybe in 10 years or something. I feel that how long it's going to take…so we have to drive to each and every practice and we lose hours in traveling - hours that could be used for studying….

Olivia discussed how her athletic team had to take long bus rides to travel to games. Commuting to games took up extra time, which ultimately, could have been spent studying:

Lack of time [is a challenge]. You have to be committed. You have to make a lot of arrangements to play the sport without things interfering… [Playing university sport] you will realize you don’t have much time for studying. You have to attend three practices a week, plus a game on Saturdays, or Friday, depending on which day you have games. So, essentially you are losing four days [out of the week] to practice. It is especially challenging because we travel to games by bus. They are long drives, but we have to drive there, so we lose nearly half a day or more [traveling]. We lose a lot of time, which we could use for studying.

Additionally, a notable number of student athletes also lived at home and commuted to campus, encountering the challenges of commuting. Again, the time consumed by traveling to campus further limited the student athlete’s time to study. Ayana explains:

What really killed me was the commute. I’d have classes in [one city] and sometimes I would have to go to [another city] for different classes. And then I had to come [to this city] to train. That is mostly where the stress comes in. I was trying to be in 12 different places at once. But eventually you work it out; you are always trying to work it out… [Now] I'm in my 5th year, so I just have five classes left…and now I live up here [in the city] and it's only a 10-minute walk to the AC [athletic centre]. It's great!

As well, a few participants noted that commuting caused stress when attempting to plan social activities with teammates who lived on campus. The women noted that if they made plans to attend parties on or near campus, they had to concern themselves with how they would return home. Andrea explained:

Since I commute, it is harder to go out [and socialize] as often as I would like because [the team or my friends] will go out at 10 or 11 [pm] and the subway stops at 1:30 [am]. So, I can say, “Yes, I can come [out to the party/club], but how am I getting home?” So another problem is, if you go out with your friends, you are so stressed out because you don’t want to miss the last train.
Pressure to be an Athlete First and Student Second

Approximately half the women in the study felt that they experienced pressure to be an athlete first and a student second, while the other half of the women denied the existence of this pressure. Rhonda reveals the contradiction she found with the “student first” adage:

Well, the coaches and the University are always saying, “You’re a student first. You’re a student first,” but then the schedule that’s provided doesn’t quite reflect that…with practice, weight training and traveling there is little time for anything else.

As well Elizabeth shared:

Even though your coach and people will always say that academics are first…it’s interesting because I have been asked to miss class just so I can play at a tournament and it was an exhibition tournament—those don’t even count! Also, I’ve been pressured to write tests early, so that I could attend a game… You get pressured to not take certain courses. That's why I have made my schedule the way it is…. So, yes, you do get pressured sometimes…it’s always like “Team! Team! Team!” So, in the heat of the moment, even though I know my intention may be to focus on academics first, when it comes to that point in time, it usually will be team first.

Olivia felt that even if an athlete was not on athletic scholarship, there was still pressure to be an athlete first and a student second:

I always feel as if they want you to put rugby first. It’s interesting because…first of all, it’s different if you are on an athletic scholarship. [If I was on an athletic scholarship] then I would understand [putting my sport first], you know? If I got in [to the university] on an athletic scholarship, then okay. But I didn’t. I came here for the academics. And even IF you came here on an athletic scholarship, you still need to keep up your grades… I don’t think the coaches see it that way. Even the easiest courses take a lot of your time. There are no easy courses here…[But the coaches] they always want you to be sports, sports, sports and I can’t be sports, sports, sports, especially since I want to be a doctor. I have to make sure I understand my work….

Similarly, Angela stated:

Yes, I feel pressure to be an athlete first. [The coaches] do support academics. However, if we have a game, we are expected to miss class [she laughs]…They do tend to say “you’re a student first”, but then, if you miss practice or miss class for doing your homework, or if you have an essay you really need to complete…it’s not really an acceptable reason to miss practice. So, they do support you being a student but they expect you to have time management that doesn’t conflict with their [athletic] schedule.
As well, Jael shared:

If I put in a little more work I could have gotten a couple more A’s. But with basketball and everything going on, sometimes you are just tired. Basketball is seven days a week. Whether it’s for practicing or games. You’re on the road almost every weekend. So, academically it is tough. You’re supposed to be a student athlete, but most of the time you are an athlete first and then a student.

In addition, other women were unsure or hesitant to state if they felt pressure to be an athlete first and a student second. When asked if she felt pressure to be an athlete first, Malia stated:

A little bit…a little bit. But I always try to keep the student first. But when my coaches and teammates are springing things on me as the last minute,… sometimes [the coaches] will ask you to analyze a test game, and you have to do it within the next 24 hours. And at the same time I have an exam or a paper to submit. They will still expect you to do the analysis, and it’s a very big deal if you don’t …so the pressure is not from myself [to be an athlete first].

Jaia hesitantly shared:

Kind of, kind of…Well, my first year [the coaches] were very nice… However, my second and third year I felt like I started to see that [coaches] don't really understand how hard it is to fit everything in. They expect way too much out of a student athlete. It’s interesting, we are paying to be a part of the team - we have to pay our fees to be on the team - but we are also here for our education… [The coaches] kept saying that they understood, but they didn’t show that they understood. They always expected us to be at all these meetings and we had to be at practices at 6 o'clock in the morning. I know [meetings and early morning practices] are a part of it, but if you missed it, they would make you feel very guilty.

Others felt that at, specific times, they felt pressure to be an athlete first and a student second.

For example, Stephanie only felt pressure to be an “athlete first” during competition season, not necessarily during the off-season. When asked if she felt pressure to be an “athlete first”

Stephanie responded:

Not right now, because we are not competing [at the moment]. However, I know when we start competing, everyone starts stressing. They tell you to, “get your marks”, but at the same time [the coaches] have us leaving on Thursday night and coming back on Sunday. I don't know… It’s kind of contradictory. They say to focus on school but then they're taking us out of school for two days a week, every week, for two months…and then there are practices on top of that! And then, I do need to sleep every once in awhile [she laughs]. So it’s hard to get everything done… and everyone is trying to tell you what you should do, but it's not as easy as they make it out to be. So, sometimes, yeah [I feel pressure to be an athlete first] but I try very,
very hard to put my student life first, just because athletics is supposed to be fun and it’s supposed to help you in life, not take over your life…But my student life, it should always come first, so I really, really try to keep it that way. But, at the same time, when you're competing three days a week, and traveling every weekend, it gets hard. Also, it's hard to sit in the corner and do your work, but I do try.

Maya felt that, at times, there was pressure from teammates, solely towards the end of competition season, to be an athlete first and student second. She states:

No [I do not feel pressure to be an athlete first]… Oh…maybe close to the end of the season [I do feel pressure to be an athlete first]. When I have 15 days left of season, I feel the pressure. So now, it's getting down to the end and we want to win CIS. So, all I'm thinking about is winning nationals, winning nationals, winning nationals. Whereas before, if I had an assignment to complete and I had to go to rugby practice, I would do the assignment. But now since the season is almost over, Rugby is all I think about.

As well, the women who felt pressure to be an athlete first and a student second often noted that the pressure was derived from various sources: self, coaches and teammates. Tanya shared:

[The pressure to be an athlete first] comes from both the coaches and myself. It can come from myself, when I know I should be studying, but I decide to go to a workout instead. And then it can also come from your peers and your coaches when they expect you to be doing extra stuff outside of normal training time, but you really don't have time to because you should be working on schoolwork.

Cathy described her experience with her coach:

[The pressure] was coming from my personal coach and I think that is one of the reasons why we don’t have a good relationship. Personality-wise he is not a great person and he does pressure you to do things. For example, he says he wants you to focus on your athletics and then, when you start faltering in your academics, that’s when he starts getting concerned. It’s quite hypocritical of him because there are days when you don’t know what he is trying to get across. There are days when he says, “Your school work comes first. Make sure you are on top of your studies,” and then when you tell him you are going to have to leave practice early, or if you say you can’t come to practice because you have a midterm, then he is all on your case saying that you are not dedicated to the sport. He starts telling you that you are more focused on other things, and that you are not prioritizing well. And then you are confused because you don’t know whether you should focus on your school or focus on your sport.

And approximately half of the women interviewed denied the existence of pressure to be an athlete first and a student second. Ayana as well as others expressed that they did not feel pressure to be athletes first:
I wouldn’t say [I feel pressure to be an athlete first]. No, that’s not my experience at all. There were times when I’d have to write a paper but I also had practice. My coaches were pretty good at asking, “What’s going on, what are you feeling.” If I said I couldn’t make it to practice, they’d say, “Can you get on the bike for a bit? Can you get in a short workout? What do you have time for? Can you do it in [the city]?” …But you were never made to feel guilty for not being at the track. At least, that’s been my experience …[The coaches] are actually really, really good with that. And [the head coach] always has these meetings and he says, “You are students first.”

In a similar manner, Abigail stated:

One of the things that is great about [this school] is that you are a student first. Whenever they do some sort of athletic presentation, they always make it a point to say you are a student first. They constantly tell you to make sure that you are keeping up with your grades. [This school] is very strict on eligibility when it comes to your marks.

As well, Camille reported that there was no pressure to be an athlete first. She states:

No. I do not [feel pressure to be an athlete first]. Sometimes with all the extra stuff we do besides practicing, it can be a little overwhelming, but the coach knows that, and he tries to alleviate it if he can. But I always know my schoolwork comes first. And personally, my schedule has always been great, so I haven’t felt too much pressure.

Further, when asked if she felt pressure to be an athlete first, Naomi stated:

Never, to be honest. Our coach…her big thing is “Student first, athlete second,” and that’s where I found the attraction to [this school]. Her main point was, if you want to be a varsity athlete here, you are a student – athlete and that’s student first - always. Whereas at other schools, athletics may come before your academics…Our coach is really good…she’s flexible, she’s understanding. For example, on Wednesdays we have practices, but I have a class that starts at the same time that practice ends, so she will let me leave early so I can prepare for that class. She doesn’t make a big deal about it. She says I have to get to the class on time, so I go!

**Survey Data**

Additionally, survey participants were asked whether they felt pressured to be an athlete first and a student second. Table 22 reveals the frequencies of responses from survey respondents. Amongst the survey respondents, 50% (21.4%, 28.6%) felt pressure to be “athletes first” and 39% (28.6%, 10.7%) did not feel that they experienced pressure to be athletes first and students second. Pressure to be a student athlete did not appear to differ by sport or CIS regions.
As well, the school year did not appear to influence the degree to which the women felt pressure to be an athlete first.

Table 22: Pressure to be an Athlete First – Survey Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
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<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fitting In and Belonging*

Despite the various pressures that the interview participants encountered, a large number of them also noted that they interacted with a mixed group of peers, felt that they mattered and expressed a positive outlook when it came to feelings of belonging within the university environment. While some women did note that they did not feel a sense of belonging in the university environment, many expressed that their university campuses were accepting, comfortable environments - academically, athletically and socially - in spite of challenges they may have experienced. In relation to this, Maya revealed how welcomed she felt in her university:

I don’t feel out of place at all. It’s a small school, so it feels very welcoming. Even the University president, he knows who I am. All the coaches, all the profs, they have been really friendly, and the people I'm interacting with in classes are really nice.

Sophia noted that she felt she fit in to both the academic and athletic environments:

Yes, [I fit in] for sure. I really like the program I'm in. I really like the team and I understand that those are the most important things for me. So, for me it is really functional. For me it fits, it fits pretty well...Also, the athletes that I’m around all the time - my team, the guy’s team, the guy’s basketball team - they are great people and I like being around them. So yes, I fit in pretty well and I feel like I belong.
Camille noted that in spite of the limited diversity at her university, she was still receiving a valuable educational experience. As well, even though she was a racial minority, she still felt she fit and belonged at the university because she was used to predominately White environments. She shared:

I feel like I belong and fit in. Personally, for me, where I grew up, it was more so a White community. And there are a lot of White people here, so I feel comfortable around them. I've been around them my whole life. But I have also been around African-Americans…African Canadians…around Black people, too. So, when I am around the Black people here, it's nice to be around them too, because you kind of feel like you're… I don't know… Sometimes it just feels like it would be nice to have more Black people here. But overall I feel comfortable. I fit in too.

Even participants who initially felt they did not belong, ultimately experienced feelings of belonging in the university environment. When asked if she fit and belonged at the university, Veronica stated:

When I first got here [I did not feel like I belonged]. It was a cultural shock for me because I grew up in [the city]. At the high school I went to, the majority of my friends were Black. I did have other friends who weren't Black, but my core group of friends were Black. And then when I came here to [this university] there were no Black people to be found. So that was a little bit different for me. But now I’m used to it and everyone is very welcoming and friendly, and they have never made me feel out of place or feel awkward yet [she laughs], so that’s good.

Cathy similarly experienced a gradual increase in her sense of belonging. She reports:

…I feel like I do fit… I do feel I'm part of the student body and I think it took a while for me to feel that way. When I initially got here, I did not feel like I fit in the student body. I was more of an athlete student, then a student athlete. However, when I switched into history I definitely felt that transition [to student] starting. I began to become more of a student and less of an athlete in terms of putting more emphasis on my education. Then I started to feel like I belonged at the university.

However, as previously mentioned, while the majority of women had positive feelings of belonging and fitting within the university environment, there were a few women who simply did not feel a sense of belonging. Abigail did not feel she belonged as a result of personal issues and her perceived competence in her academic major. When asked about her feelings of belonging, Abigail states:

…That’s a good question. I’m not sure. Sometimes I do get the feeling that I don’t belong here, but I think it’s more of homesickness. I think I just want to go home. I
don’t want to be in the city anymore. It’s not home... It is mainly in classes where I find that I don’t belong. In my major - one of my majors is international development... So, in my major, people are kind of different from me. Within classes, I find that people eat and breathe worldviews and politics. And so, sometimes I feel uneducated. I feel that if I don’t know exactly what’s going on, about ever little thing…that’s when I don’t feel like I belong.

As well, Gabrielle did not feel like she fit or belonged in her university environment in general. She shared:

[This school] is a great school...however, I feel like it’s more focused on the graduate programs because they have really good postgraduate program. But as an undergraduate student here, there are so many of us, and I am in the sciences, so there are even more [students] than usual. So I felt like I was kind of just lost and unnoticed [in the flow of students]... I didn't feel like I really fit in with anyone.

Tricia felt that her connection to her athletic team affected her level of belonging with her non-athletic peers:

Well, sometimes when I am with my non-athletic friends, I don’t feel like I belong. In first year I didn’t get to see [my non-athlete friends] as often because I was always at practice. And when I did get to see them, I sometimes felt a little bit out of place because they were all a lot closer to each other.

Angela felt that her racial and ethnic makeup prevented her from fitting into the university environment. She stated:

I’ve NEVER felt like I’ve fit in anywhere. I feel that it’s specific to being biracial. One of the things that I have noticed growing up, is that all minorities have their own culture except for biracial people. We don’t have a culture. Our culture is taking the two cultures of our parents...you never really feel like you fit in because you’re too dark to fit in as White or too light to fit in as Black. So you never really have a place.

Further to this, Cathy attributed her lack of belonging in the athletic environment to the fact that she did not live on campus. She notes:

Sometimes I don't feel that I belong in the athletic community because I don't live at school. I commute to and from school, so there is that feeling of being left out. I cannot stay long after practice to hang out. I always have to make sure I catch the last bus home or else I am stuck.
Survey Data

Survey participants were also asked to indicate whether they felt they experienced feelings of belonging while on their respective campuses. In the following tables, the distribution of “Belonging” (academically, athletically, and socially) is summarized. Table 23 indicates that the majority (71.4%) of the students surveyed reported they felt they belonged in the academic environment. As well, table 24 indicates that the majority (82%) of students surveyed felt they belonged in the athletic environment. Further, table 25 revealed that 68% of respondents felt they belonged in the social realm of their university campuses. Overall the majority of women that responded to the survey experienced feelings of belonging on the respective university campuses.

Table 23: Feeling of Belonging in the Academic Sphere- Survey Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Unsure</td>
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</table>

Table 24: Feelings of Belonging in the Athletic Sphere- Survey Participants

<table>
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<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Table 25: Feelings of Belonging in the Social Sphere- Survey Participants

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 26 reports the mean scores for survey participants’ feelings of belonging in the academic, athletic and social spheres of the university. A score closer to 1.0 (minimum) means the participants had strong feelings of belonging, whereas, a score closer to 3.0 (maximum) means the participants did not feel that they belonged. The mean scores in all categories are closer to 1, which indicates that in each sphere of the university experience, the majority of respondents felt that they belonged.

Table 26: Mean Scores Feelings of Belonging - Survey Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.464</td>
<td>.7927</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belong Athletically</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.321</td>
<td>.7228</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belong Socially</td>
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<td>1.0</td>
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<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>28</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theme 3: Complex Relationships

The third theme revolved around the participant’s experiences with teammates, coaches, faculty, academic advisors and the Black community on their respective university campuses. The women described the relationships that have impacted their experience in university. Some of the relationship experiences were solely positive, others were solely negative, and some were a combination of both. Thus the theme was titled Complex Relationships.

Relationship with Teammates

The way in which the participants bonded with teammates was another category that emerged. The participants noted that being part of the team was instrumental in their lives, and they felt a sense of belonging as a result of their team membership. The majority of the interview participants indicated that their relationships with their teammates were positive and supportive. Camille shared:
I have a great relationship with my team. Everyone gets along with each other. You automatically have twelve friends right away and we’re always together. So that’s great too! That was a huge benefit when I [came to university], I immediately had friends, or people that I knew that I could go to if I needed anything.

Shanika also shared how important and beneficial her relationship with her teammates had been:

It's like with any sport, you are close [with your team]. You become almost like a family… Now, when I go to workout I can ask anyone on the team “do you want to workout” [and someone always wants to go]…Wherever I go, I have the buddy system [she laughs]…It’s much better [having the teams as friends] because when I want to go to one of the sports games I have people to go with. My roommates [who are not athletes], aren’t really big on sports….but the team likes going [to the games], so it works out!

As well, Rhonda described her relationship with her teammates by comparing her team to the other women’s varsity teams at her school:

[My relationship with my team] is really good. My whole team, we are like a family. I can talk to my teammates and coaches whenever. They are really approachable. I would say my team, compared to the rest of the girl teams, we get along really well, and it has always been that way.

In addition, the women in the study made numerous comments with regards to their teammates being “like family.” For example, Maya stated: “Yes, for sure our athletic team is like one big family. I feel completely welcome.” Tricia echoed, “And the people on the team are great. We are like a little family. We get along really well.” And Malia similarly stated, “Yes, we’re pretty good together. Yeah, we are a pretty close team, like a family. We have to be.”

While the majority of the women reported strong positive relationships with teammates, a couple of women reported mediocre or poor relationships that improved over time. Angela, an openly gay participant, reported:

My relationship with my teammates is fine. It’s much better this year. Last year, some of the things about being in a close-knit group were different. There seemed to be a lot more gay girls on the rugby team, and that caused a lot of issues on my team last year. Yes, to the point that I didn’t even know if I wanted to come back this year because there is so much drama with all of them. It’s unbelievable the amount of drama you can have on a team of 35 girls. Oh my goshhhhh! Yes, it’s hectic. But it’s a lot better this year.
Similarly, Veronica recounted how her relationship with teammates improved over time:

In my first couple of years [at university] it was fifty-fifty, hanging out with my classmates and my teammates. But in my later years things changed. I made more connections with my teammates and then I only hung out with them. My teammates became my best friends after I had known them for a few years. I would still see a lot of my classmates but just in passing.

While few participants felt division and problems within their team dynamics, a couple of women spoke about the challenges they had with teammates. Some participants noted that challenges with teammates arose as a result of being a racial minority on the team. Jael describes a negative experience she had with her teammates:

I’m the type of person who knows everybody, who gets along with everybody. But being at [my last school] was so difficult. I couldn’t make friends and the girls [teammates] didn’t like me from day one, for no reasons, or no reason that I knew of while I was there. I felt very alone while I was there. I was the only Black person that was on the team. The only other Black person I would see most of the time was my partner at the time. I had a really rough go, so... what ended up happening... a couple of girls told the coach that they “heard” that I’d been smoking weed with some of the other “island” students, which was completely false because I don’t smoke weed. I play basketball! Also, it’s against the rules to do it at all. If you do [smoke] you can always get tested and get kicked off the team... Anyhow, the coach didn’t believe me. He didn’t even give me a chance to defend myself. He didn’t ask me about it, he just told me I wouldn’t be able to play until I apologized to the team. So I had a horrible experience with that team.

Jael’s experience with racism and teammate challenges led to her transferring schools following the above-mentioned incident.

Gabrielle also noted the challenges she experienced with her teammates. Gabrielle felt that the more time she spent with the team, the worse her relationship became. She shared:

I think in my first year I didn’t actually hang out with track athletes all the time, and that is probably why I liked it a lot more in my first year. I liked the social part of first year because I had a break from being around everyone [on the team]. But then I moved closer to campus in my second year, just for the convenience of it, and so that I could be closer to work as well.... When I moved closer, I spent all my time around track people, and it just started to wear on me because I felt our team was too big. It was like being in a high school all over again. Essentially, everyone gossips about stuff and everyone is always in your business, and that just started to wear on me. And then when I started separating myself from [the team], it really didn't matter
because everyone would still be in my business…[also] it was almost like I was being crucified and left out for just wanting a break from the team.

**Relationship with Coaches**

Most of the participants also spoke positively about their relationships with coaches. Only a few women reported challenging relationships with coaches. Maya was one of the participants who displayed great admiration for her coach. She stated:

My coach and I are best friends. There are approximately 43 girls on our team and he’s like a dad to all of us. He’s a great guy. It will be weird not to see him any more because I go to him for almost everything. He makes fun of me, and I make fun of him. It’s a pretty good relationship. He is definitely a mentor to me…We meet with him [at his office for meetings] and he has a good study hall organized. He always asks us if we need a tutor or any kind of help, and he tries to make sure no one on his team fails.

Similarly, Ayana described her fondness for her coaches:

I love my coaches. I love them, love them, love them!!! I just started working with them when I came here. Well, my coach that is here now, wasn’t around my first year; I had a different coach then. But I have been working with Robert since second year and he’s awesome, and the program is awesome! John does a lot for the team. I’ve had a really great experience here, much better than my experience with my home club.

Other women also described positive student coach relationships, albeit in a more passive manner. Andrea reported:

For me, everything has been positive. There has never been a time when they say anything negative or put me down or said anything inappropriate…and since I have known [my coaches] since high school, we have built a foundation from there, so the boundary was already set and everything has been positive.

Keziah was appreciative that her coaches were supportive,

[Having supportive coaches is] a big deal when you train as much as we train. The coaching staff is really supportive and really understanding and always willing to offer help in academic support or in whatever way. They are really awesome. [The coach] is always saying “Come talk to me. It’s an open door policy.” They take the time to listen. And I think our program is especially athlete centered … it’s very different here. If you’re not ready to compete, or you are not feeling quite right, they don’t force you. It is very athlete centered.
Moreover, some women in the study who trained with multiple coaches described positive experiences with some coaches, and negative experiences with others. Cathy stated:

I do not have a good relationship with [my main] coach, so he is definitely not the first person I'm going to talk to. It's the head coach or the assistant coach. They both know what's going on with my personal coach. So it's better for me to go to them and they will help me with whatever issues I need help with. With the advice that they have given me, I now know what I want to pursue in my future. They are helpful, they are getting me all these resources, [and] they are some of the most wonderful people I have ever met.

Furthermore, a few participants described poor relationships with old coaches and improved relationships with new coaches. Their experiences were very similar to Sophia’s experience:

Last year, I would say the relationship between my coach and myself was not good. But I think that with the new coach that just came in, I think I am a lot better off. I feel really comfortable talking to him and expressing how I feel. So, I think that we have a great relationship. His office doors are always open, and not only for myself but for all the athletes; and yes, he is a really stand up guy.

On the other hand, there were a couple of participants that recounted negative encounters and relationships with their athletic coaches. Veronica stated:

Well, I've never really had a relationship with my coach. We don't really have a relationship. It’s strictly a player-coach relationship. I play for you and that's it. And it's been a rollercoaster of a ride with her. It's not been a positive experience at all. My first-year was the worst. Second year was bad. Third year it got better, and this year I'm kind of indifferent at this point because I'm leaving. I don't like to talk to her at all. If I don't have to talk to her, I don't. I've never experienced that with any other coach in my entire life….

Likewise, when asked about her relationship with her coach, Carla stated:

She’s crazy [whisper]! It’s a female coach. She is one of the best technical coaches in the league, but she just has a very unconventional, sometimes personal approach, which interferes with the game. You know what I mean? Especially with her being female and the players being female, too. The dynamic is a lot different, actually, than if it were a male coach. A male coach screams at you and says something mean and you’re like, “whatever” … or you just do what he says. But my coach, she makes it personal… she’s a woman, and sometimes she gets so mad that she cries. Really…DRAMA…gossip…and I mean, she’s a good coach, but there’s a little baggage there.
Similarly, Malia responded to the question of athlete-coach relationships in the following manner:

[Laughing] That is a touchy subject, but I found that I have not had a really good experience with coaches, especially this one... So I came out [to practice] anyway, and he was bashing me and being very rude. He was like, “What’s wrong with you? You don’t know how to do this? This is how you do it.” And eventually I shut him up because I played better than most of the girls on the team... [However the way he spoke to me] I found it to be very disrespectful...he just kept yelling at me and it was very degrading. I felt like it was a personal thing not even a professional thing... I don’t remember a lot of what he said because it’s been a while and I just tried to push it out of my head, but I found it to be very, very rude and disturbing. He also said, “You can come out next year,” and I was said “No. No, I’m not.” I feel as if he just didn’t want me to play...I am never going to play on the team again. If I ever want to play on a team again, I will play on a different team.

**Relationship with Faculty**

Most of the interview participants reported that they had limited experiences or a positive experience with faculty, while only two participants shared stories of negative experiences. As well, a few women simply felt that they did not have a relationship with faculty, but that the experience was neither positive nor negative. Many participants stated they had limited experiences with faculty on campus. The majority of experiences were similar to Stephanie’s brief account:

At my university.... I don't really have any relationships with my professors. I just go to my classes, and if I have questions I will ask. But so far I have never gone out of my way to introduce myself on a more one-to-one level.

A number of other participants saw limited interactions with faculty as being caused by large class sizes. Most described experiences similar to Elizabeth’s:

I have not interacted with faculty that much. A lot of the classes are really big. I've been trying to get into smaller classes, but those classes still have fifty people. That is as small as it gets. I'm trying to talk to more of the professors, yet I've only maybe talked to a couple. In terms of them knowing my name and really remembering me, I don’t think I have that type of an imprint. But every time I walk into class they know my face. They know I'm in their class.

On the other hand, many participants reported positive relationships and experiences with faculty. Malia shared her experience and relationships with faculty:
This year my relationship with faculty is much better because I have learnt how to manage my time, which has in turn helped me to manage my studies. And therefore I actually have something to talk about when the Profs have office hours. So, now I have been able to go to office hours more often….

Naomi felt that professors really cared about students and the attention helped her progress through university:

The professors care. The fact that they care was a big deal for me. The fact that they cared that much was important because in high school you are told, “university professors, they don't care. They won’t hold your hand. You need to do your own thing.” But they do care. They are people, right? So for me it was a really good experience and it definitely made the years go by a lot easier.

Some of the women described the positive experiences they had with faculty in terms of being a student athlete. Maya stated:

I haven't had a problem. Interacting with professors has been normal. I talk to them about everything. Being an athlete, you have to talk to them often to let them know why you are missing class or if you are going to be away. So the relationship has been amazing. I can’t say anything bad about it.

Similarly, Tricia stated, “Professors have been quite understanding with me being a varsity athlete. There are times where I won’t be in class because I have provincial or national championships, but as long as I give them a good amount of advanced notice, they are very accommodating.”

More so, some women reported that Kinesiology faculty members were particularly easy to relate to. As Talia observed:

I think my relationship [with faculty] is really good. With my Kin[esiology] profs I talk to them a lot. I think I easily connect with them because I'm an athlete, and I think because I’m an athlete they are a lot more lenient. They are more willing to help. But they are very friendly and they seem to like me, so, no bad experiences yet with professors…I think its just Kin[esiology] professors in general. They are very accommodating and the fact that they come out to see you play, that kind of already lets you know that they understand. So I think they are more likely to help you.

In addition, Camille felt that her race played a positive role in her relationships with faculty:

[My relationship with faculty is] really good because there are not very many Black people here, so it’s easier for them to recognize me and remember my name. Sometimes they do get me mixed up with other Black females…. I don’t know, I guess they think we all look the same….I have noticed that they do get mixed up
sometimes. Anyhow, it’s easier to go to them because they recognize you and that’s more positive than negative.

Similarly, Angela felt that her appearance and gender played a positive role in her relationship with faculty:

I’ve always had it easy with professors and with other people. Well, I think it’s just because I’m a girl, but also I’ve noticed that a lot of people feel more comfortable around me than they would feel around someone who is full Black. Because, you know, I’m Black, but I’m not too Black. You know, some people figure that if you are not too dark; you are more docile or whatever. But, yeah, I’ve had an easy time interacting with faculty and people. It’s been pretty easy.

Therefore, as mentioned, while the majority of women cited instances of limited or positive interactions with faculty, only a small number of participants reported negative experiences. For example, Gabrielle was one of the few participants that were clearly disappointed in their relationship with faculty. Gabrielle reported that her negative experience was the result of large class sizes.

For me, it has not really been a great experience. I guess it’s just because of the structure of my program. There are a lot of students. It’s really impersonal. So, I just sit in a lecture hall with 200 other students…Yes, it would be on me to actually have a relationship with the professors, but it's hard.

**Relationship with Academic Advisors**

Another category that emerged in the interviews was relationships with academic advisors. With regards to relationships with academic advisors within the university environment, the majority of interview participants had negative experiences as they described inadequate advisement that resulted in academic hardships. Olivia recounted:

I feel like my GPA is lower than most people's only because of first-year and because the academic advisors steered me in the wrong direction. They told me things that weren't true. They made me go into classes that were more difficult. The classes were at a more difficult level than I had done, especially with calculus. They put me into a higher calculus and I didn’t need to be in that level, so that doesn't really make sense. They also put me in a higher physics class, and I think that really threw me and hurt my GPA. Now it's really hard for me to bring up my GPA, just because those two classes were my lowest score. But I'm still being positive about medical school.
Cathy also felt that academic advisors steered her in the wrong direction:

[I’ve been struggling academically and] it’s because I feel I was not given adequate information. In my first year at [the university] we had that massive strike that went on for three months… Obviously there was some extra time, so I put off certain assignments…my marks suffered and I lost [my scholarship] by .5% of a mark on my GPA. So then I tried to take a summer school courses and there was all this red tape. The academic advisors had previously said that summer school courses factored in to the previous year, but when I went to actually register I was told summer school courses did not factor in to the previous year’s GPA… It's too much to explain, but basically it seemed like they were presenting contradictory information. Giving different information from what had been provided initially…anyhow, based on that advising, there was no chance of me salvaging that year and getting my scholarship back.

Carla also explained:

I’ve had negative experiences with administration and academic advising in particular. I would have graduated by now, but I’m still here because of advice that I have received. I just feel like [academic advising is] very impersonal. I felt rushed. They don’t care. It’s all about statistics. They don’t want to help the student or get to know you. I’ve had a very negative experience [because of academic advising]; I took courses I didn’t need. When I could have gone on the path that I wanted to, to get where I wanted to be. But the academic advisor didn’t take that into consideration. She just pushed me towards something she thought was best.

Similarly Elizabeth described her feelings with regards to academic advisors and what changes would be helpful:

I feel like it’s just [this university]. In general, administratively, they are horrible. They are really bad; they are really rude on the phone. It’s unwelcoming. Every time you go [to see the academic advisors] it's like an annoyance to them that you are asking questions…It would be nice to have someone there to help you, especially at this time. I'm in my fourth year and I need an advisor, someone to help guide me…I miss my guidance counsellor [from high school]. Back then it was so easy to just walk-in and make an appointment. Here, you go to academic advising and they don't care about you. You're just another person or a number. They are going to give you a generic answer.

More so, only one interviewed participant, Naomi, noted a positive experience with academic advisors. However, it is believed that this participant may have confused ‘academic advisor’ with ‘academic liaison.” When asked about her experience with academic advisors, Naomi reported:
Actually, I just came off another concussion. That's the stuff you put up with in rugby. But you know I went in and saw my adviser and he said, “Don't worry about it.” They know that with something like a concussion you can’t just force yourself back into sports and school…. The advisors completely understand if you put the effort in to meet with them and explain. You can’t just walk in and say, “Hey, I have a concussion. Do something about it.” I made sure to talk to my physician, I got the letter that I needed, and then explained [to the advisor] what happened…and because I had demonstrated the background work, the advisors were eager to help me, and they helped me let my professors know [about my limitations]. I found that the advisors were really accommodating.

**Survey Data**

Survey participants were asked to rate their relationship with teammates, coaches, faculty and academic advisors. Participants stated if the relationship was Positive, Negative, Neither Positive nor Negative, or Unsure. The table below revealed their responses.

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**Relationship with the Black Community on Campus**

The participants also discussed the complex relationships they had with other Black people within the university community. These experiences were less then abundant as most participants noted they attended predominately White universities, or universities in which
Black people were significantly underrepresented. However, some women discussed their attempts to be part of the Black community or the challenges they faced fitting in with the Black community. As well, a few other participants discussed their personal relationships, or views of relationships within the context of dating or not dating Black men. With regards to dating and intimate relationships, one participant, Camille, discussed her personal preference with regards to dating and added a comment on interracial dating on her university campus. Camille shared:

I don’t know. I feel…I don’t know. Personally for me, I’m kind of picky, and I'd rather date someone who is Black…. Well, I'm not saying I would never date anybody who’s White. See, there are not that many Black guys, so it's kind of hard. The girls on my team, I think they’d probably rather date a Black guy, but there's not many. The Black guys are here, but there's not many of them, so it’s harder for Black girls…here [at this university]…There are more Black guys dating White girls, than Black women dating White guys.

Similar to Camille, a few others mentioned the topic of interracial dating. Maya shared her views on Black dating and interracial dating. She states, “You don’t see a lot of…a Black girl and a Black guy dating on campus. It’s normally mixed races, so that’s about the only thing I’ve noticed.” As well, Sophia shared, “Yeah, a lot of the Black guys, well I don’t know, if you consider it “dating”, but the ones that are going out with girls, most of them are dating White girls.”

Rhonda shared similar thoughts on Black dating and interracial dating. She reports:

In general, you see a lot interracial couples and it tends to be a Black man and a White woman. You don't really see a Black woman and a White man but that could just be a generalization, or I can just be really wrong. But the way I see it, it is what it is. I’ll date Black or White, whoever you are. If you are going to treat me with respect, then I don't really care what colour you are.

Jael also discussed the challenges of finding a Black man on the university campus. She states:

One of my friends will not date White guys, but then again, there are no Black guys here. I hear that all the time: “There are no Black guy’s here”…So, I think that’s an issue for Black girls…I have another girlfriend who has been here for three years and hasn’t dated anyone. All she wants to date is a Black man. So I’d say, definitely, a lot of Black women want to date within their race, and one of the downside is there’s not a lot [of Black men to] choose from right? So you don’t end up dating as much.
Angela shared her opinion of the dating dynamics between biracial women and Black men on campus in this response:

That’s interesting. That’s another thing I feel that is different because I’m biracial. What I’ve noticed is that, from Black men and White men, biracial women get much more attention than full Black women. [Biracial women get more attention] from White men because they feel we’re Black, but not too Black, and it’s the same thing from Black men…. Biracial seems to be some sort of novelty…When you’re biracial I’ve noticed that when Black men hit on you or try to date you, they expect you to act like you are White. They want to date you because you “look” like you’re Black but they expect you to act like you’re White. And the same with White men, they want to date you because you are exotic, but they still want you to act properly White.

With regards to the dating experience for Black women in Canadian universities, common sentiments were reiterated across the CIS regions. Most participants noted that interracial dating (for Black men) was a common occurrence, leaving less Black men for Black women to date. It was also noted that Black women are more likely to date Black men, but the interracial dating of Black men and the underrepresentation of Black men on campus made attempts to date more challenging. Moreover, participants across regions also noted that dating was limited due to a lack of time [i.e., commitment to studying and training enough was time consuming] and prioritizing [i.e., currently, a boyfriend would be low on the priority list, after school and athletics]

**Black Community on Campus**

With regards to the Black community on their respective university campuses, some women noted their purposeful intent to associate with Black people, while others described their challenges interacting with the Black community. Jael was one participant who made a deliberate choice to connect with the Black campus community. Jael actually chose to attend her university in an attempt to become part of a Black community.

[I came to this university because] I really wanted to come to the city, and to be honest, I just was at a point where I was tired of not seeing other Black people. That was a huge factor for me. On my recruiting trip I hung out with the girls’ team and we went out and did the whole social scene and I met so many different athletes and so many people. You just walk into a room and half the people are Black and half the people are White, and for me it was like, “This is awesome!” It’s great when you
get to hang out with other Black people that aren’t your brother [she laughs]. So that was a huge deciding factor just for me to go into the city, and socially, I loved it.

Some women made an extra effort to seek out and connect to the Black community on campus. Olivia shared:

I hang out with a mix of people. Well, my first year it was mostly Asians or Indians or White people because there weren’t really any Black people here. But now I have more Black friends because I joined the African Student Association. I joined because I felt like I didn’t get to meet any Africans or anyone like that. But other than that, I feel like I have a good mix of friends. Don’t get me wrong, I don’t judge you and say, “you are not Black, so we can’t be friends.” If we are compatible, we will be friends. I don’t care what race you are.

Like Olivia, Angela took purposeful steps to surround herself with other Black people. She states:

It’s hard to have someone always assume that you are going to be someone else, but not have that be who you identify with on the inside. All of my life I have wanted to connect to the Black side of my family and I’ve noticed that over the past couple of years, that most of my friends, and most of the people that I surround myself with are all Black. I look for Black people to hang out with. And if I play it out, it’s because I have absolutely no ties to Black culture in my life, so naturally I just gravitate to Black people more.

In addition, others women experienced an unintentional draw to the Black community. Keziah shared:

I'm the type of person, I want to seek out a medley [of people] and I’m going to sit myself between the Asian and the White [person] and [the person] I think may or may not be from India [she laughs]. We are multicultural here. But I feel like 9 times out of 10 I sit closer to Black people. I try to make friends with anyone and everyone when I go into a classroom, but I get drawn to the Black group. I just fall into that place.

Similarly, while Shannon states that she continues to hang out with White people and has difficulty associating with Black people, she is still in some ways drawn to the Black community:

I don’t know…it’s hard for me to associate with Black people in general, just because I don’t have much of it in my life. With my dad not being there, and no one in my high school being Black, and no one here being Black…it’s hard because sometimes I feel…even though I hang out with White people more than I do Black people, I don’t feel closer to [White people], than I do to Black people. I almost just feel like I’m drawn to Black people. I don’t know why….
Moreover, a few participants expressed their lack of connection to the Black community on their university campuses, while other participants acknowledged their discomfort around other Black people. Gabrielle shared her thought on her experience with the Black community:

I’ve always found that… I was kind of separate from the Black community because I did not grow up in a Black community, and in high school I was always the only Black person. With my friends I am their “Black friend”, so I was never really around a lot of Black females until I got to university. I always felt there was a divide between me and the rest of the Black student community in school because I had never been socialized that way, and even now, I’m almost not drawn to that group of people just because there are so many social nuances that I don’t understand because I didn’t grow up in a Black community. There are a lot of things that are over my head because I just never had that experience. I don’t know if I would have even really had any friends who are Black females had I not been a varsity athlete here.

Melissa expressed the feelings of discomfort she experienced:

Sometimes its a little more… not awkward… but sometimes I have to step out of my comfort zone if there is a Caribbean party or something like that. My whole life I've been associated with… I hang out with White girls…[In] high school, if the Black girls or guys were having a party, I'd show up with the white people, and I’d feel that they were kind of looking at me…I don’t have an accent, I can’t understand patois, so sometimes I feel uncomfortable. Like my dad, my dad never raised me and whenever we did see him, he would just speak in his Canadian accent. I kind of wish I had more connection to my background. Yes. But yeah, sometimes I feel a little uncomfortable around other Black people.

In the same way, Nicole expressed similar sentiments:

… there are a lot of associations that are specifically named BLACK and I never feel comfortable stepping into those realms because you know I don’t “look” Black and certain people don’t speak to me because I don’t act Black. I’m automatically cast out as an outcast…I don’t feel comfortable stepping into something specifically classified as Black because growing up I’ve always had people shoving in my face that I’m not Black and that I’m not White… Yes, especially since I went to a French school. My brother and I were the only ‘Black’ kids, or remotely close to being Black kids, in the entire school. And when I got to high school there were a few more Black people, but we were still definitely the minority.

With regards to interacting with the Black community on campus similar sentiments were mentioned across the CIS regions. The women who noted that they felt discomfort around other Black groups or people were not restricted to a specific region. This sentiment was revealed in
various regions. Similarly, the women who made specific efforts to connect to the Black community on campus were also spread across all CIS regions.

**Theme 4: Unique Experiences**

The fourth theme that emerged from the study was *Unique Experiences*, which highlighted the ways in which the participants perceived that their Black female student athlete experience differed from that of non-Black female student athletes. Most participants perceived that they had a different experience than non-Black female student athletes. In general, the women stated that they felt racially stereotyped, that their peers, teammates and coaches held them to different expectations and that they experienced discrimination in the surrounding community. Subthemes of Unique Experience are: *Experiences of being Stereotyped, Experiences of Added Expectations, Experiences of Discrimination in the Surrounding Community, Different Experiences from Non-Black Female Student Athletes* and *Experiences of Biracial Women*.

**Experiences of Being Stereotyped**

Participants perceived they had a unique experience in comparison to non-Black student athletes because they experienced racial stereotypes. Many of the women felt that their peers and teammates judged them and treated them differently because of racial stereotypes. As well, there were also a small number of participants that did not experience the effects of racial stereotyping and/or believed that racial stereotyping did not exist. Jael described her experience with peers and racial stereotypes:

> As a student athlete of colour, I felt I had a lot of people just asking me, “Oh, what sport do you play?” and things like that, even before knowing that I was there for a sport…but I find a lot of my peers often ask questions such as, “Oh, you must be here or a scholarship, or what sport do you play?” Things like that, before they even knew who I was.

Talia also shared an experience involving her teammates:

> A lot of the girls, they do look up to me, but sometimes they say, “You’re Black T, that’s why you can jump so high,” that type of joking banter and stuff. And obviously it’s going to be said, but I never felt out of place because of it.
Ayana felt stereotyped by people in general:

You hear a lot of that at the track and at competition or just talking to people, that whole stereotype that Black people are stronger and faster and what-not. It is still very prevalent. You still hear that all the time, especially when you are watching a race. They say things like, “Oh, the Black girl is going to win.” …And when the Black athlete doesn’t win, people say, “What’s going on?” Or when we are at a race, my friends will come to me and say, “I’m scared of so and so, or that Black girl.” So people do make those assumptions…they assume an athlete’s level of competitiveness is based on their race.

Stephanie discussed how the stereotypes are both athletically and academically bound:

I feel like I constantly have to work to overcome the stereotype that, “Black people do not care about school,” and “all Black people are sprinters who can obviously run fast.” It's like, no, “I don't run fast because I'm Black. I run fast because I train for it. I excel because I work hard for it,” you know? I feel like I’m always trying work against the stereotypes, which gets frustrating. But if I can be a Black female student athlete that is successful academically and athletically and show other people that they can do it, then why not?

In contrast, a few other participants were adamant that no stereotypes existed within the university experience. Cathy stated:

I wouldn't say there are any stereotypes because it's a pretty level playing field at [this university]. There is no elevation or demotion because you are a certain way. If you run well, if you throw well, or if you jump well, you are getting that spot. I don't think that there is any sense of stereotypes or awkwardness because a person is Black. Our coaching staff is quite diverse, and again the team is quite diverse…But I know for us, everyone hangs out with each other, no one is putting someone up, or putting someone down because of who they are and what they are. I think the experience is pretty much the same, regardless of one’s skin colour. We are all coming from various backgrounds, and once you get to the track, that is all put aside because all we care about is whether you can run or not, or whether you can commit to the program.

Similarly, Elizabeth maintains that racial stereotypes do not exist as a result of diversity on the university campus. She reports:

There are no stereotypes because it's VERY diverse here. It’s not a surprise to see people of colour walking around. It's a very diverse school. Maybe if you go to schools further out, say if you go to places like [University A] or [University B] and those types of schools, or if you go to [University C] and [University D], there's a difference, but here, it’s diverse. There aren’t any real stereotypes.
Survey Data

Survey participants were also asked to rate their agreement on the existence of stereotypes on their respective campuses. The participants were asked to rate their agreement with the following statement: “I have experienced racial stereotypes while on campus.” Table 28 reveals that 25% (10.7% - strongly agree; 14.3% - agree) of survey respondents agreed –at some level- that they had experienced racial stereotypes, 35.7% neither agreed or disagreed, while 40% (25% - disagree; 14.3% - strongly disagree) of respondents felt they had not experienced racial stereotypes while at the university. The distribution of responses is as followed:

Table 28: Experience with Racial Stereotypes- Survey Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While Table 29 reveals that only seven survey respondents agreed they had experienced racial stereotypes, a review of open-ended survey questions revealed that nine different respondents made reference to stereotypes.

Table 29: Survey Responses Mentioning Stereotypes

- People probably think I’m not very smart, and I’m an urban Black stereotype.
- I think Black athletes are seen as athletically superior to other people. This brings many negative stereotypes into the mix that we are not academically inclined.
- It’s a challenge to not be seen as the Black stereotype.
- There are some Black women on campus who perpetuate some of the stereotypes of this group. I feel that they aren’t doing any favours to women in general by acting that way, myself included.
- You may feel stereotyped as being unapproachable, or unfriendly compared to other female athletes of non-colour because they might judge you as a Black female as being intimidating.
- It’s challenging dealing with the negative stereotypes associated with being a Black female. People assume I’m not academically focused (which is wrong), and also assume that the success I’ve experienced in my sport is due to my race rather than my hard work.
- One challenge is the stereotypes.
- I do not believe that black female student athletes deserve to be treated any differently than other student athletes at postsecondary institutions. All humans deserve to be treated equally. What I do suggest however, would be more education to the general public on Black and African-American females to eliminate the negative stereotypes associated with us and education.
- There is also the stereotype associated with the fact that we are Black and we cannot go as far, like Black people are not very smart.

Experiences of Added Expectations

Many of the interview participants felt they were held to different expectations than were non-Black student athletes. Olivia stated that there is an expectation for Black student athletes to be athletically superior:

Yes, I think people believe you are supposed to be faster or scoring all these goals [if you are Black]. I had that [experience] in practice where I was performing better
than most people but I still got yelled at because I was not performing even higher. So, I feel that even if I play better than all the girls on the team, I still have to be 10 times better to be taken seriously or to get playing time. Yes, I have to be a step higher than a varsity athlete.

Veronica expressed a similar opinion. She stated that, as a Black woman, there were expectations that tend to be more rigid for Blacks than Whites, due to pre-existing stereotypes of Blacks and athletics:

I guess there is an expectation. They always expect you to be super-athletic or super-fast, you know? They don’t expect that from the White athletes. Okay, yeah, I'm flattered, but you know not all of us are like that. But there are just those expectations. They always expect you to fall into that stereotype of being super-athletic.

Tanya described how the additional expectations caused added pressure:

Well, in general, Black females or Black athletes, they are expected to perform better than non-Black athletes. Well, at least in my events. So, it does put you under a bit more pressure training wise because you don’t want to let people down. It’s just that [as a Black person] you are viewed differently. You are viewed as if you should be running certain times, you should be winning all the races - and that’s just because I am half Black!

It was also noted that there were expectations with regards to the type of sport a Black female should play. Gabrielle stated:

As a [sports] player, and even playing club [sports], I was always the only Black one. I think that on our varsity team there is only one other Black player, and there have been years when there were none at all - no Black players on either the men's or the women's teams. Being a Black athlete you are just expected to be great. You’re expected be on the track team. You wouldn't see [Blacks] in distance running or pole vault or mid-distance – okay, well I guess you would see it in distance running [she laughs], but it wouldn't be anyone from North America…. But with the power sports like sprinting and jumping, Black athletes dominate those two sports, so they expect [that if you are Black] that is your sport. You are expected to run track.

Similarly, Elizabeth stated:

There are different expectations for people of colour. For example, the say, “you’re Black. You should be on track.” You know what I mean? Like Carla being in [that sport]. No one would ever guess she was on [that team]. A Black person playing in [that sport]? It's like a Black person swimming or in ice hockey. People look at you differently if you are not on the track or Basketball team.
Further to this, Rhonda echoed:

I feel like being a Black athlete, there are assumptions made about the sport that you do partake in. When I tell people that I competed competitively in figure skating, they look at me and go, “You?” and I’m like, “Yeah. And I was good!” Sometimes I think the expectations limit the sports the Black athletes take part in.

Survey Data

In one of the open-ended question on the online survey, participants were asked: “Are there any challenges to being a Black female student athlete?” and a few respondents made references to added expectations as a result of race. This is shown in Table 30.

Table 30: Survey Responses Referring to Expectations of Black Female Student Athletes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectations of Black Female Student Athletes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ Because you are Black, there are higher expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Challenges? I’d say there are so many rules and expectations, particularly if you are a Black female.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ I think there are greater expectations for Black female athletes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ In track, like you’re expected to be in track, you’re not expected to be playing rugby…. I’d say like track and basketball are sports where the black female athlete is expected to be.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Experiences of Discrimination in the Surrounding Community

Most interview participants noted that they did not experience racism or discrimination within their respective university campuses. However, a few participants did report instances of racism and/or discrimination they encountered within the community surrounding their universities. Jael shared:

So when I went [to University A.] I had bad experiences in the city of [City A], so I wasn’t really looking forward to going back after first year. In my opinion, it is a very racist city. I’ve always felt that way. I’ve never really liked that city. I’ve always had very bad experiences because of my race when I’ve gone out into the community.
Similarly, when asked about her overall experience in university, Rhonda stated, “At [the university,] academically, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed it inside the school, not outside the school so much. In the town I’ve had a lot of racist encounters.”

As well, Lela recounted an experience at a local grocery store:

Actually, the other day I was at [the grocery store], and I went in with a RedBull in my hand and I opened it IN FRONT of the security guard, before entering. I continued into the store and then he followed me. He then made me walk with him to the front of the store and I was just asked him, “Why [do I have to go to the front of the store]? I just had a conversation with you. You saw me open the can BEFORE I walked into the store. Why do I have to walk to the front of the store with security?” and he said, “You know what you did. I don't know if you stole it or not.” I was so confused, but I know it had to do with my color.

Elizabeth described an experience that took place at a field hockey club outside of her university, but within the surrounding community:

In terms of [my sport], I think I'm going to be done after this year; I've had too much. I would like to play club still, but it's just the [sports] Association is not a good environment… I feel it's just so catty, it's just not a very good environment…I didn't feel welcome on the club team I played for. I felt that it was because I wasn't White or Brown. See people don't know what I am, and they're always ask, “What are you?” People would just stare at me. I felt so isolated. That was the worst feeling I've ever felt ever… I felt the most out of place ever. I felt like I was in the middle of everything because no one could figure me out. No one knew how to relate to me and they didn’t want to include me.

Nicole described an incident supporting this that occurred at a local restaurant in the town in which her university was located. The incident occurred after she had attended an athletic event. She retells her experience in detail:

My second year at [the university]… I was actually jumped by four girls who played on the rugby team at [University B]. It was awful, and it was something really ridiculous. It was a Saturday night, the women’s rugby team had had a game that day and they were playing [University B]. So some of the [University B] girls were watching and they ended up staying and spending the night in [the city]. I was down at the pizza place getting a slice of pizza and these girls were there. The girls were really drunk. One of the girls said I [cut in line before her]. She wasn’t even standing in line when I got in line. She was sitting down. Anyhow, I just let her go in front of me, and I got my pizza and walked outside.

The next thing I know, there was one girl screaming, “You’re a Black bitch” and then the other girl was screaming, “Nigger! Nigger!” and then I turned around
and two other girls pummeled me. Then I had four girls stomping on me. Then four of my girlfriends ran up, plus my boyfriend, and they got them off of me...

The next thing that happened, which is still upsetting to me to this day is that I was thrown in the back of a cop car. I was bleeding, and the male cop, the first thing he said to me was, “What did you do?”

I was crying and all upset because I thought it was so ridiculous that I was sitting in the cop car watching these girls walk away. Another cop just stood outside with [the girls], talked to them and they just walked away …

That night my boyfriend was almost charged because he was outside yelling, “Why is she in the cop car? Where are they going?” He was yelling, trying to explain to them and they weren’t listening to him. He’s also Black. He tried to explain that I didn’t do anything, and he kept telling them that there were four of them beating on just one of me. I ended up staying in the cop car and they said they were keeping me in the car to keep me calmed down.

And the girls just walked away. That’s all that was done. It was pretty crazy.

And that is what I meant with the school side being good, but the town side being not so good….I have had multiple negative racial encounters.

Sophia noted her university campus was a haven from the racial discrimination experienced in the surrounding community:

Well it’s hard to say. What’s funny with [this city] is that it is so small that when you are in school, in the university environment, you don’t even feel the community [and its racial issues]. It’s such a subculture in itself. At [this] University, people say - its kind of cliché - but the experience is magical. It really is. It’s a really awesome experience. Everyone is really welcoming. Everyone is really nice. You feel really at home when you are here. So, it’s kind of a safe haven here for me - within sports and within the university. It’s always been a place for me, where I feel comfortable, a place where nothing like [racial discrimination] will happen to me, not in class, or not walking anywhere on campus.

Different Experiences from Non-Black Female Student Athletes

Hair Stories

A few interview participants stated that their experience in university was different from non-Black female student athletes as a result of hair issues. For Black women in particular – in contrast to black men or people of either gender from other races -Black women face unique challenges on a variety of levels with regards to their hair. Differing from people of other races, a Black woman’s hair can be an added issue to her experience at a predominately White university and to her sport participation. Most Black women don’t have the ease of wash-and-go
hair like other races, or have the convenience of numerous salons they can attend. Sophia was one of the participants that commented on her hair challenges:

Getting my hair done is a challenge, like trying to find someone who can do Black hair [is a challenge]. Last year I had roommates and two of my roommates could kind of do hair, and actually, both of them did not come back to school this year….This year I have my hair in braids and it’s hard to find a girl who can braid. It’s a struggle. It’s a real struggle, especially in a small town. I mean it would be fine if I were in Toronto or in a bigger city. It probably wouldn’t be as much of an issue.

Carla shared:

Being an athlete is stressful too. You’re constantly working hard and sacrificing your time. You’re traveling, you’re working, you’re studying. It’s a trade off. On top of that, it takes hours to do my hair, and I can’t straighten my hair [Carla laughs]. Finding someone to do my hair is a challenge.

Malia stated:

The only thing that stands out is my hair. [Malia laughs]. My team has seen so many different transitions, so I guess that’s the one thing that really stands out. They ask, “Where did your other hair go?” … The other day the girls on my team helped me with my hair. I had braids and we were on the way back from a trip. We were on the bus and I said, “Hey, guys, I really need help.” If I do my hair by myself it will take me an entire day. Doing [Black girls] hair takes a lot of time; it’s a lot of work.

Standing Out

As well, participants noted that their experiences differed from non-Black female student athletes because they ‘stood out’ visually. Instances of standing out were noted as both positive and negative experiences. Jael thought that standing out racially and athletically led to a positive experience. She states:

It’s a smaller university. Everybody knows who you are. You are in the public eye a lot, but it’s a good thing because we are able to be role models. I like it a lot. I take a lot of pride in people recognizing me and knowing who I am.

Similarly, when asked, “What is it like to be a member of an visible minority group on campus?” Camille responded:

It’s really good because there are not very many Black people here, so, it’s easier for professors to recognize me and remember my name. Sometimes they do get me
mixed up with other Black females. I don’t know. I guess they think we all look the same, but I don’t know. I have noticed that they do get mixed up sometimes, but either way it’s easier to go to them because they recognize you easily and they have some idea of who you are. That’s more positive than negative.

A few other participants felt that “standing out” was beneficial. Nicole reported gaining positive special treatment and rewards due to the fact that she was one of a few Black female student athletes at her university. Nicole stated:

…People know who you are [because we stand out]. Also, since the big thing these days is diversity, it seems like whenever they do advertisements or media projects they want to get more diversity…So the other day they wanted to shoot a scene for a film they are going to be using at an open house – the wanted the cast to be “diverse” - and my coach asked me to be in the film. So it’s just little things like that. Because people know who you are and you stand out, because we are one of the few Black people, they use us for advertisements of diversity.

Similar to Nicole, Talia shared:

Wow, that's a tough one, because I know what a great experience I've had at this [university]. Actually…I think I've probably had a much better experience, a heightened experience, being a Black female athlete because I have actually received benefits because of my race. I've been on university posters for our basketball team, and I've gotten opportunities to represent the school…Also, people say, “Oh yeah, you have such a great story,” and I feel that I am always recognized because I'm the only Black female on the team. I don't know if that's the case, but I've kind of noticed that over the past couple years my coach has often set up opportunities for me to do photo shoots here or there, but no one else on my team has had those opportunities.

In contrast, Melissa felt that standing out from other students proved to be problematic. She states:

The faculty know who you are, so you can’t really hide since [the university is] so small. So you have to be on top of everything. See, that’s the thing about [this university]. I love it but, sometimes I kind of wish I was in a bigger school. Because it’s so small, everyone goes to the same places; everyone knows who you are, especially if you are Black. When we go out, it’s always the same crowd…there really is no way you can do anything out of the ordinary. So the disadvantage is people know who you are and you have to be on your best behaviour. You just can’t blend in with the crowd, and especially being a Black female, too…you can’t really blend in or hide.

A couple of participants stated that they stood out on the university campus as a result of their race, and their visibility caused added pressures. Abigail shared:
Being a visible minority, it’s really hard not to stand out. Wherever I go, I am known. I feel a need to command a certain presence of myself because there aren’t a lot of other Black people that I can be mistaken for. I mean it’s really just… I have to be the best I can be. I think it’s good and it’s kind of bad in a sense because there is pressure to be better.

Olivia felt her identity and distinctiveness, as a Black woman, to be disadvantageous. She explains:

I feel like I stand out and maybe not necessarily in a good way, but I don't know. I feel that if you're not White… I feel if you’re White you get, not preferential treatment, but you get treated better, not necessarily in a racist way. But White people do have more pull. If you are White, you are considered more professional than say someone who is Black, like me. They look at you and they think you are stupid, you know? Some of the professors single you out because you are Black and an athlete. Some of the students look down on you and think you are stupid just because you are an athlete.

Defending and Representing Race

Multiple women in the study felt that their experiences at university differed from non-Black female student athletes because they had to often defend and/or represent their racial/ethnic group. Jael extensively described her experience. She states:

I feel like in every class I have ever had, I’m always kind of defending my race…[I’m] not sure if it’s defending, but I’m always making notes of things. If we are talking about anything racial in class or studying any Black community, or social groups, or things that have happened around the world. If we are talking about the civil rights movement, or Africville - which is a community in Halifax that was bulldozed years ago - or any Black community. Or even if we talk about the native peoples of … Canada, I always feel like I’m the one who has to make a comment… get my voice heard. I’m always voicing my opinion. I feel that I have to make sure that things are said, not properly, but that people don’t get the wrong ideas.

I don’t think it’s the fault of the professors, or the fault of student. Sometime there is a lot of ignorance, even with terminology and the way things are discussed. I have had people in classes say things like “there’s no racism in [this province]” and things like that. So I have to put my hand up and say there is racism! I have to make sure that people understand… I think [the ignorance or denial is] a fault or a flaw of a lot of Canadian schools. Every textbook has about 500 pages of American history and 20 pages for immigrants’ history and then 10 pages for native history. And that’s what students are taught growing up. So it’s ignorance when it comes to any type of African heritage.
I think as a student, I feel like I’m constantly defending my race. I guess that’s a personal choice, it’s just something I feel strongly about. All my feelings on that go back to always being the only Black student in my grade or in my class. So, if you are always the only one - and I always was - I just felt like I had to make sure I said something and make sure people were understanding what was being said. I had to make sure people weren’t being misled, or making comments like, “There is no racism in [this province],” which is totally wrong. And sometimes it puts a little, not stress… yes, it stresses me out.

Camille confirmed Jael’s experience by sharing:

In a lot of my classes, I feel that I have to speak up and speak on certain topics. I’ve always felt that I’ve been an advocate for either myself or even my race, which in a way isn’t really fair…. For example, if a Black person makes a mistake, then people will then judge all Black people by that one person’s actions. They group all Black people together… And that’s something I’ve tried to make sure doesn’t happen. I always try to make sure that I am advocating on behalf of other Black students or other Black athletes.

Stephanie adds:

It’s not that I ever felt personally attacked; it’s just that I feel like I’m just representing more than myself as a Black female. I’m kind of representing all Black females. So, I kind of take that into account with all my actions and how I carry myself.
Survey Data

In one open-ended question, survey participants were asked if the Black female student athlete experience in Canadian universities was unique or different from non-Black student athletes or Black male student athletes, and the following table displays some of the responses:

Table 31: Survey Responses Regarding the Unique Experience of Black Female Student Athletes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Experience is Unique</th>
<th>The Experience is NOT Unique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I sometimes do feel like as a Black female I have a certain stigma attached to me. I</td>
<td>I think my academic experience isn't any different or unique compared to White men, women,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feel like to people who don't know me, I have a lot to prove to them. There are a lot</td>
<td>Black men or other women of colour. I haven't felt my background or colour has had a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of negative stereotypes about Blacks and about females, and I do make an effort to prove</td>
<td>noticeable impact on my experiences in classes, presentation groups or class/school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to people that I am above what may be portrayed in the media or by others. In this way,</td>
<td>atmosphere. Thus far I haven't experienced any racial differences, possibly because my</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my experience is unique because I am constantly trying to prove myself to others,</td>
<td>program is so diverse and I've been able to find friends I can relate to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assuming that they think a certain way about me when I shouldn't.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would say that my academic experience is a little bit unique because the content of</td>
<td>I think that everyone's academic experience is unique because everyone has different factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my classes have been focused primarily on White males and sometimes White females, I</td>
<td>playing in and against their favour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would also say that for the most part the language used in the material covered is</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>androcentric.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe my academic experience was unique only because of the courses I chose for my</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>first year at [this university]. Everybody will have a different course selection and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will handle their academic experience differently but I do not believe that my academic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experience is unique because of race.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was no consensus in responses from participants to the question, “Is the university experience of Black Female Student Athletes unique or different from White female student athletes, or Black male student athletes?”
Experiences of Biracial Women

The majority of women in the study who also identified themselves as biracial felt their experience was the same as those participants who identified as Black [i.e., non-biracial]. Only one biracial participant felt her experiences differed from the non-biracial Black female student athlete.

Jael discussed how the experiences of biracial and non-biracial Black female student athletes were similar:

In my experience [the biracial experience is not different from the Black experience]. If you are visibly not White, then you are Black. So, for me there is no difference. In society, I think it is completely about visible minorities…. It’s all about vision. It’s about what other people see. So, if someone looks at you and says, “Yeah, you are Black, or you have Black in you, or you are part Black,” or whatever - that makes you Black! And they will treat you that way…Right away, whether you’re 50%, a ¼, or ¾ Black, you are Black. You know what I mean? That’s how I personally feel. That is based on my experiences. Light skin, dark skin, biracial whatever, you are still Black and you have the same experiences.

Tanya stated:

I don’t think the experience is different for biracial women because, most of the time, at least in my experience, even when you are biracial, you tend to be more…well…we tend to identify more with our non-White race. You tend to identify to be more Black. Or if you are half Spanish, you identify more with Spanish. You always identify more with the minority side. So people who are mixed end up getting the same treatment as those who are not. It is almost the same effect as being Black because you still get the same judgments and pressures, same stereotypes. It's just that you are not fully Black.

Like Tanya, Veronica felt that the biracial experience was the same as the Black experience because people identified her as Black:

The biracial experience is similar to the Black experience because most people just assume I’m fully Black. They don't really know that I’m mixed unless I tell them, so there aren’t really experiences based on me being biracial.

In contrast, only one biracial participant felt that the biracial experience was somewhat different from the Black non-biracial experience. Angela did not feel comfortable identifying as Black, as well; she felt that being biracial was distinct from the Black experience:
Yes. No, I don’t know. It’s funny. In my Black literature class last year, at the beginning of the class, the teacher asked everyone in the class if they’d be comfortable wearing a t-shirt saying, “I am Black and I am Canadian.” Most people said...they wouldn’t be comfortable [wearing the shirt] because they don’t feel, as Black people, that Canada makes an attempt to include them. I was the only one in the class that said, “no”, I would not wear that shirt, but for a different reason. Although I am Canadian, I don’t feel comfortable saying that I’m Black, because no one allows me to classify myself as Black. So, I feel that my perspective is distinct from others because I’m in-between. There is no biracial classification, there is no biracial culture, we are just hanging in the balance, thrown in-between… yeah… and I never even classify myself as Black really, because I’m in between.

**Theme 5: Negotiating and Navigating**

Another theme that emerged in the study was Negotiating and Navigating. Negotiating and Navigating describes the ways in which participants steered and directed their university experiences, and the ways in which they deal with situations in order to succeed (i.e., graduate) from university. To achieve their goal of progressing through and earning a university degree, the participants noted various ways in which they negotiated and navigated the university experience in order to achieve their goals. The participants utilize strategies such as Non-Athletic Involvement, Role Models, Finding Support, and Dismissing Racial or Discriminatory Situations.

**Non-Athletic Involvement**

The women spoke of various ways that they chose to get involved outside of athletics within the university and surrounding community. They involved themselves in order to give back to the community, to build relationships with others and to network for their future goals. Keziah shared:

I feel like I set myself up for this because in high school I was on an awkward amount of committees and things. Presently, I’m on the varsity board, I’m on the house board, I’m on the social board, I play two varsity sports, I have my full course load, and I also signed up to be a mentor. I think the things I learn from these groups will be helpful in my future.

As well, Ayana shared:
Every year, one of my really good friends...she is president of the African Student Association...[helps] put on a cultural show that is.... a lot of fun. It’s full of dancing, and singing and the performing arts. I’ve helped out with that every year. There is also the Black Association and the Caribbean Association, and I do stuff with that group. I guess that is part of my social time because I can write it off. I’m just not going to the movies, or watching TV. [She laughs] It’s like social time, but I’m doing something productive. I can kind of label it. I’m helping others, so it works.

Shanika also described her involvement:

I go to work, school, sports, and then there’s the...College Student Association. I’m the Professional Development Director, so on top of that I’m planning a leadership conference for the college for next semester. I have to run a bunch of different committees. So, that is what I’ve been doing.

Jael was not involved with campus organizations but was involved in community projects. She reported:

I’ve done a lot of activities, but a lot of them are not directly related with my university. Last summer, I put on a conference for youth in grades 9 to 12. It was a day conference and Black high school students were able to come in, and I had things set up regarding opportunities that were available to them, whether it be jobs, scholarships, information about entrance into university, information about specific programs geared towards Black students in the province...I loved working with the group and helping Black kids in the community develop their futures.

In the same way, Malia shared how she became involved during the off-season:

I’m involved with a lot of humanitarian and social services organizations, like Big Brother/Big Sisters and Rotaract—that’s the young adults version of Rotary-- and I volunteer with the Salvation Army. I help in the soup kitchens. I’m really interested in community service. During the season I don’t have enough time, so I do it once the season is over.

Moreover, a few participants expressed their intent to get involved. Abigail stated:

I was on the Events Planning Committee last year, but this year I’m not doing anything else, not yet, because rugby is a big commitment. I plan to join something next semester or get a campus job, or look into being part of my faculty group.

Naomi also discussed her intention to get involved. She reported:

I tried to get involved. Some people can make it work. Some girls on our team are part of other little community groups. I haven’t [become involved] because I find it hard to balance school and sports. Also, the amount of reading that I do compared to other people is obviously more... [In my major] all we do is read, so it has been hard
to find time to get involved… but I am looking to volunteer outside of the school community and make time for that. It’s a little easier and more flexible than some of the school activities…I find those who aren’t a part of sports have more time to participate in those sort of groups because, for them, that’s their extra curricular activity.

However, while some participants noted their involvement within the university and surrounding community, most participants found it difficult to get involved in activities or events outside of athletics due to a lack of time. Gabrielle’s involvement outside of athletics was further limited because she held down a job during the academic year. She explains:

I haven’t been involved that much outside of athletics. When I was working last year – almost full-time – I didn’t have any extra time. Now I have more time because I’m only a part-time work-study student. But when I was working [last year,] I was trying to get in 20 to 30 hours a week, plus training and going to school. It was a pretty rough year. I was tired all the time.

Talia shared:

I had signed up for the Black Student Association this year but I was never able to make it out to any of the events or meetings because of practice, or I was too tired from practice. So being part of the ASA [African Student Association], my first year was [all I accomplished]. Other than that, I haven’t been [involved in any non-athletic groups]. That was the extent of my involvement.

As well, some women found it difficult to become involved and attend extra educational events due to their busy academic and athletic schedules. Abigail stated:

I know that every week, for my major, a doctor comes in and talks about the various drugs and how they work and what they are used for. I often want to attend the talks, but I can’t really make it because there is no time. This year I didn't have the chance to go to even one talk. I see the emails each week. I know that the doctor will in to talk, and I will miss it … I wish I could go to the talks because it’s essential for my major. It sucks to not have the chance to go.

Similarly, Tanya shared, “I have not been able to go to any medical school talks or MCAT talks because I have training during those times, so that has kind of been annoying. They always conflict with my classes or with practice.”

Like Tanya, Camille reported:

….People come to the university and talk about jobs, internships and stuff like that, and I’ve notice that the timing isn't the greatest. I can’t attend because of basketball. I was able to go to the business [department’s] banquet last week and that was
helpful, but basketball does take up a lot of my time. I can’t do the extra things that are available on campus.

Moreover, some women felt that their social involvement with regards to attending parities and gatherings was limited as a result of their athletic and academic commitment. Rhonda explained:

My ability to go out is definitely restricted because of the time constraints with athletics. I’m completely restricted. See, most teams have a 48-hour rule; some have a 72-hour rule, which means you can’t drink or be at a facility where there is alcohol 48 hours prior to a game. So even if you played on a Sunday and you wanted to go out on Friday, you couldn’t. So, yes, [my social involvement is] definitely restricted in that sense. But I think it’s good because as an athlete you don’t have time to be socializing, you rarely have time to get all your schoolwork done. So if you add partying to the mix, it just really messes with your time….

Echoing the experience of other participants, Abigail shared:

Well, there’s the option [to go to parties] but by the time you get home from classes and practice, you’re so tired you don’t want to go. So, the only parties I’ve really been to are the rugby girls’ birthday parties, so it’s still an athletic team event [she laughs].

As well, Jael felt it was important to foster social outlets and relationships outside of her circle of teammates and other athletes but, again, her unyielding schedule often thwarted her attempts to do get involved. She shared:

You don’t get the same experience as non-athletes socially. University is definitely about academics, but it’s also a social time in your life as well, especially in your first couple of years. You’re supposed to go out and go to events and stuff like that, attend things like frosh week events. But as a student athlete you don’t really get to do that. The only time you really socialize and go out in that respect is when you are done. When the season is done, or when you happen to have one day here, or one day there, or one day when you don’t have a practice or something. It rarely happens, and you don’t have the opportunity to socialize with non-athletes. My friends and I laugh about this. We say we don’t have any friends. Our only friends are on the basketball team and it’s true because you don’t have time. You don’t make friends at university. Other people do. But for us your friends, and ultimately, your family are whatever team you end up on. You don’t get to socialize, so you don’t get to meet other people, and when you socialize you are with your team. The only free time you have is the same free time…other athletes have. I have been here at [the university] for five years, and I think I have two friends that aren’t athletes…so, socially, I don’t think we get the same experience as non-athletes that are in university.

Further to this, a few participants noted that living at home and commuting to campus limited the parties one could attend and the events in which one could be involved. Andrea stated:
Since I commute, it is harder to go out [and socialize] as often as I would like because [the team or my friends] will go out at 10 or 11 [pm] and the subway stops at 1:30 [am]. So, I can say, “Yes, I can come [out to the party/club], but how am I getting home?” So another problem is, if you go out with your friends, you are so stressed out because you don’t want to miss the last train.

Cathy reported a similar experience:

I usually have the opportunity to go out and get involved. I just don’t utilize it because I'd rather be in my bed, [she laughs,.] I'm pretty tired after practice… But if I don’t hang out or go downtown, it's mainly because of logistical issues. I live at home. I don't have a car and I don't feel comfortable in a dress and in high heels on the subway….at 2 o'clock in the morning. That's another reason why I don’t party.

**Survey Data**

Survey participants were asked a number of questions with regards to involvement. One survey item asked participants to rate their agreement with the following statement: “I often attend organized campus activities outside of athletics.” Eighteen percent of respondents agreed (10.7% - strongly agreed; 7.1% agreed) that they often attend organized campus activities outside of their athletics, while 71% (50% - disagree; 21.4% -strongly disagree) of survey participants disagreed, indicating they often did not attend events outside of athletics. Therefore, the majority of survey respondents were not highly involved in activities outside of their athletics. Table 32 displays the frequency of responses:

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<td>100.0</td>
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</table>
Role Models

Some participants discussed their experiences as role models. As a result of being underrepresented in the general university populations and also on athletic teams, a few women discussed the desire or obligation to be role models for younger Black teammates and other young Black women in the surrounding community. Jael enjoyed being a role model for Black girls in the surrounding community. She states:

It’s a smaller university. Everybody knows who you are. You are in the public eye a lot, but it’s a good thing, because we are able to be role models. I like it a lot. I take a lot of pride in being a role model; you know, as a Black person… [The basketball team] puts on camps for kids… it’s for girls aged 5 to 16, 17… Again, it’s a small town, so you are lucky to see anyone who is Black or anyone who is non-White…. At camp one or two of the kids out of 60, is a little Black girl… and it’s cool, because it sounds like a cliché, but I kind of see myself, because I was that only little Black kid who was at basketball camps and things like that, so it’s cool for me to be there and be an example… They can see that they can be from a small town and they can be “different” from everyone around them, but still be able to aspire to play university sport. I think that is kind of cool.

Shannon also felt she was a role model and was content with her role:

I think I act as more of a role model to younger Black athletes. I know in my hometown there’s one [Black] girl and she actually plays [the sport] as well, and she plays for my old club team … [That little girl] comes to some of our varsity home games. After one game she came up to me afterwards and just told me that I’m her biggest role model. So, it’s nice to be able to be that person and show others what it is to be a varsity athlete. But more specifically, to the coloured females, to be able to show them where I am and where they can aspire to be, I’m all about that.

Naomi also stated her desire and intent to be a role model:

I want to be a leader and a role model to the rookies and the new players, especially Black females that come to our team, because I know I’ve benefited from having players who were said, “We’ll take care of you. We’ll show you the ropes…."

Finding Support

In order to progress and succeed within the university, many women noted that they relied on their support systems. More specifically, most women in the study noted that when they were in need of support during their university experience, they looked to family and coaches. Most
participants agreed that family members were emotionally, academically and financially supportive of them throughout their university experience, and in most instances these family members were mothers or aunts. Melissa shared:

I don’t really go to anyone except my mum. I don’t think anyone will really know what I am about, or care enough. I guess you can call my mum a mentor. I talk to her everyday. If I’m having problems, I guess I go to my mum, but no one at the University.

Talia also mentioned going to her mother for academic support:

My mom has been a really key factor in helping me decide on what classes to take from the beginning. I know most people decided on their own or with advisors, but I just went straight to my mother.

As well, while Shanika mentions her parents as a source of support, she goes into detail on how her mother has supported her:

My parents are always there for support and to make sure I’m not alone in any aspect. I send my mom all my papers, all the time, whenever I’m writing. If I need something for her to edit, I just send them to her and she helps. Sometimes my phone bill is 60 bucks. Last month, from all the long distance charges on top of my other plan, it was so high, and it’s just because I was editing one of my papers and my mom didn’t understand what I was reading and writing about, so we were on the phone and we were both there going through it paragraph by paragraph, editing…They support me academically. They support me in athletics, so I guess it’s a good thing.

Keziah explains how her aunt has helped her along the way:

I guess there have been people who have helped me along the way when I felt discouraged, like my aunt who lives in [the city]. She's actually African-American or Canadian. I don't know, [she laughs], but she has always stated, “Keziah, you are going to university!” It's always nice to hear from someone else. Also, her circles of friends are… educated Black women, and they are also very supportive….My aunt and her friends helped me choose classes and gave me advice on classes to take…so that was really positive. It’s a positive group of Black women and some of them are half [biracial] as well, so I didn't feel like I was alone.

In addition to this, a few other women mentioned that they had also approached their athletic coaches for support. Malia shared:

One [strategy I utilize to succeed in university] is working with my academic coach. He’s an actual coach that deals with the academic side of our team. I have been
working more closely him and trying to stay on top of my studies...He’s readily available. Last year I knew [the coach and other academic resources] were available but I didn’t know to what extent, and I didn’t seek them out, so just seeking out help from my coach and staying on top of my readings is the stuff I do differently.

**Dismissal of Racial or Discriminatory Situations**

Moreover, in this study, the dismissal of racial or discriminatory situations appeared to be one strategy that women utilized to deal with race related situations and to progress through university. While many women in the study either decisively or hesitantly noted instances of racism or discrimination they experienced while in university, a lot of the same participants also noted how they would dismiss the incidents that occurred. Shannon shared an experience she had in the classroom with regards to stereotypes, but she also notes how the situation was “not too bad”:

I have not experienced any racism or gender discrimination, nothing of major significance. I know in one of my classes two week ago, I think it was [in] a human sexuality course, the prof brought up an example of a Black person, and a Black stereotype. I can’t remember the context exactly, but it made me feel a little uncomfortable. But there is never anything too much. It’s never anything too bad. Does that make sense? …. I try and not really pay attention to gender stereotypes or even racial things like that, I just ignore it.

Carla stated that with regards to racist incidents that occurred on campus, she just “brushed it off”:

Well, there are some people that come from small towns far away that are used to their homogeneous communities, so maybe it’s a little bit more ignorance than something that’s directly negative or racist. But there have been a few occasions where I felt offended or I didn’t appreciate certain things that were said or that were implied. But it hasn’t happened that many times, and usually I just brush it off.

Another participant shared her experience and acceptance of being the “token Black girl” and her dismissal of racial comments. Naomi states:

The people that I’ve met here are amazing at saying, “you can be our token Black girl and we are okay with that.” [She laughs] They are so light about it, and I have no problem with them joking around. I'll be the only Black person in the room and they’ll just make a joke of it, and I don't look at it as anything…wrong. And people will always make a stereotypical or racist comment and I'll just brush it off. It doesn't affect me. I'm here doing exactly what they're doing.
A few other women simply stated that they tried to ignore racist or discriminatory comments or situations. Rhonda indicated:

I try to ignore [racist and discriminatory comments] as much as possible, and I try to not let my skin tone affect my experience. If I want to do something and if I want to get somewhere, I’m going to get there no matter what people say. I definitely do see, not so much me, but talking to other people, that there is racism, but I just ignore it.

Further, Shanika shared:

I don’t think there has been much racism or discrimination, and if there has been, I think I’ve ignored it... When it happened, I just walked away and did what I had to do. I know some people do make a big deal out of it, but I don’t really think like that. So far, I don’t think it’s played any negative or positive role.

**Theme 6: Hiding and Highlighting Race and Gender**

Another theme that emerged from the data was *Hiding and Highlighting Race and Gender*. While participants generally denied, dismissed, or forgot the experiences they had regarding discrimination and/or racism, they often highlighted these experience accidentally or unknowingly. Numerous participants noted that that they did not experience notable instances of race and gender discrimination, however, some of the same participants inconsistently made reference to racial and gender issues throughout their university experience. The two subthemes were *Gender* and *Race*.

**Gender**

A number of participants noted they did not experience instances of gender discrimination or gender related issues during their university experience. The majority stated that they were not necessarily viewed as weaker and they were not noticeably underestimated as female athletes. However, simultaneously, the same participants noted that male student athletes and male sports were treated differently, female student athletes were held to different expectations, and certain sports were affiliated with a level of femininity and sexuality.

While Tanya initially stated that gender did not influence her university experience, she also goes on to discuss how women are viewed and treated differently. Tanya discusses how
women are treated differently as a result of the numerous sexual assaults that occurred on her university campus:

... females at the school are viewed as [not able to]...defend ourselves, but we are viewed as weaker just because of all the sexual assaults [that have occurred on campus in recent years.] I don’t see the point in that. We [as women,] are just constantly pressured to always have someone with us and that’s pretty much because we are female. That’s the only thing that has stuck out.

Again, while the existence of gender issues were denied or dismissed, differing information emerged as participants began to discuss the academic sphere of their university experience. Some participants felt they had a different experience from men, in the sense that, as women, they had to prove themselves more, particularly in male dominated fields and majors. Veronica shared:

I feel that sometimes, because I am a woman in my program, I do need to work harder just because, I mean, they are all males. It’s a male dominated field, and they are all competing for GPAs and scholarships and awards. There is always competition. Everyone is competing, and I feel I have to work even harder to prove that I belong in this program because I am a female and because I am coloured. Because they always think, “Oh, this is just some girl” and they kind of brush you off.

As well, one participant noted that women were held to a different standard than men in terms of dress codes in specific academic departments. Camille states:

The only thing is the dress codes. I’m in [the] business [faculty], so for presentations and stuff, you have to be more careful with what you wear for the presentation. [Women have to wear]... business dresses and skirts. For guys it’s easy. They can just wear pants and a shirt but, for girls you have to makes sure the dresses are a certain length and, if you're wearing a dress, you cannot show too much shoulders or skin and stuff. Those are the guidelines our professor gave us.

Within the athletic realm women felt that women’s teams were not held to the same standard that men’s teams were. One participant felt that being female was to an extent a disadvantage at her institution due to the fact that men had better practice facilities and resources. Jaia felt because her university did not have a men’s rugby team, the women’s rugby team and their needs were not acknowledged or respected.

I feel that women are at a disadvantage because we don't have a men's rugby team here at [the university]. We get ignored and shafted a lot. Our field is never really
kept. They don’t keep it up. For example, the trimmings and the linings are never done. Also, if we have a game, we are not allowed to play on the big stadium field. We have to go to this unkempt field to play, and where they allow us to play our games, there is nowhere for spectators to sit, even if someone came out to watch. All the other men’s teams have great facilities.

Further participants felt that there are still expectations that women are only supposed to play certain sports and there are still assumptions being made about a female athlete’s sexuality. A few participants reported that their involvement in aggressive sports, such as Rugby, led others to question or make assumptions about their sexual preferences. Malia and Shanika’s accounts exemplify a number of other responses that were presented in the study. Malia shares:

Well, when I say I play rugby, people are shocked because females don’t play rugby. But that’s pretty much it. It’s the sport I have chosen to play… Both males and females are usually surprised when I say I play rugby. They say, “That’s such a rough sport, why do you play that?” and they have said, “You must be butch or something.” But that doesn’t bother me at all.

As well, Shanika shared:

That’s another thing with rugby. It has a lot of stigma that the girls playing are lesbian because you’re too manly, or you are acting too manly. I’ve been asked if I was a lesbian, and I’m not. And actually, until this year, I have never had any lesbians on my team – that I know of - and I’ve played for 5 years now… One thing with rugby is, because we are hitting so hard and playing in the mud, that’s not what a female is supposed to be doing. They think we’re not supposed to be playing rugby.

While most women were unsure if gender played a role in their university experiences, some women were direct and forthright with regards to the role that gender has played in their experience. Olivia reported:

Yes, I think gender plays more of a role then race does just because, when I say I want to be a surgeon, people say, “Oh yeah, so you don’t want children?” and I say, “Yes, I do want to have children.” But people question, “How are you going to do that? You can’t do both.” I’ve had lots comments similar to that said to me over the years, so to me it's like, I feel that I have to be the best in both worlds. I have to be the best as a surgeon, and I’m going to have to be the best as a mother…
Race

With regard to race issues, racism or racial discrimination on university campuses, many interview participants initially noted that they did not have experiences with racism or racial discrimination. However, as conversational interview progressed, many of the same participants made mention of racial stereotyping, racism in the surrounding community, lack of Black-focused programs and curriculum, underrepresentation of Black peoples and racist comments.

Survey Data

As well, one of the survey questions asked respondents, “Have you ever experienced racism or racial discrimination on campus?” Participants were asked to select “Yes”, “No”, “Unsure.” While the majority of respondents stated “No”, there were answers from numerous open-ended questions that alluded to instances of stereotypes and unfair treatment as a result of race (See Table 33).

Table 33: Experience of Discrimination and/or Racism- Survey Participants

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Theme 7: Levels of Blackness

The last theme addressed in the findings was Levels of Blackness. This theme describes the various understandings and ways that the women experienced “being Black”. Throughout the study, a number of participants revealed their understanding, confidence in and uncertainty of their Blackness, while other students described how others defined their level of Blackness. The subthemes are: How Others Define Me, I am Black, and Being Black...It’s Complicated.
**How Others Define You**

Most of the participants made some reference to their Blackness. Many women discussed how others within the university took it upon themselves to determine and define the participant’s level of Blackness. Some women discussed their experience with the phrase “white washed.” Jael noted that while other people often took it upon themselves to define her race and/or ethnicity, she essentially identified as Black.

[Here in this university and in this town] I would never be identified as Black. I’ve been to some cities and I have some friends that are from Toronto and it’s so different because there they’d say I was Black; and then there are levels of Black. Here, other people tell me, “You are light skinned so you are not really Black, or you are mixed, or you’re half African, so you are not Black.” So, things like that are a whole other story, and a whole other conversation about Black people and different levels of Black....Some people tell me I’m not Black, but I identify myself as being a Black woman. Sometimes, if there is an option, I will say I’m biracial... but if I have to self-identify, 100%, I will say Black.

As well, Ayana stated:

I think the thing about biracial identity is that you have your self-identification and then you have how others perceive you, and that varies. There are people that I know…friends who will say, “Oh, the light skinned girl,” or they’ll identify me as Black. So that is what I have observed. People of color will identify me as a Black woman, but White people are more likely to say, “I don’t know if I would identify you as Black,” or they will say, “Your features are White” …I feel that Black people are more likely to accept me as a Black woman…I self-identify as being biracial but I identify more as being Black just because I don’t see myself as a White woman, so I’m a woman of color and that’s how I identify.

Angela expressed similar sentiments:

So the other thing about being biracial is that I never really know what it means to come from a Black perspective, or at least I don’t think that I do. I mean, society always tries to define Black. They try to define me. People say, “you’re not even Black” … but what does that mean? Even though I don’t think I have a Black perspective, I think I’m Black. What is a Black perspective? Yeah, I don’t know…And, yes, I have had to deal with racism because my skin color isn’t White, but I haven’t had to deal with Black-oriented racism because nobody ever classifies me as Black.
I Am Black

As well, many of the participants who identified themselves as biracial discussed their experience and level of comfort with the designation of “Black.” Most of the women confidently identified as Black. Nicole stated:

I prefer if people just to say Black. When people get nervous saying “African, African American, ah… Canadian?” You know? It’s okay, you can say Black, because I’m going to call you White because you are Caucasian. If you call me biracial that is fine as well, but I prefer Black because I want people to be comfortable with it. Race is always such a taboo subject a lot of the time. Socially constructed or not, I’m Black, so you can call me Black.

Similarly, Melissa shared:

I consider myself Black. I was raised with my mom and she is White... I noticed [my Blackness] more when I was younger. When I would be walking into stores, I always knew I was Black. I am Black. I am just what people call “whitewashed.”

Tanya’s statement reinforces this:

I usually identify myself as Black, but being Black hasn’t really played a role because a lot of people don’t even realize that I am half Black. Apparently I’m really White. So, yeah, [she laughs], it hasn’t really played a role at all to be honest. I just consider myself Black. I’m Black.

Being Black…It’s Complicated

Moreover, some participants, although they initially identified as “Black” for the study, revealed they had mixed feelings and experiences with identifying as Black. Shanika explained why she would not want to join one of the student associations that were titled “Black, African, or Caribbean” and why she was not completely comfortable identifying as Black:

[She laughs], I don’t know. Maybe if it was a different name. I don't know. Maybe… maybe it is the name… that's what I don't like about it. If I go to the [culturally titled] group, I have to identify. I have to identify that I am Black, and that is how people are going to recognize and establish me… [Even when I saw the title of your study,] I saw it and I was kind of hesitating…I wasn’t sure if I should reply or not, because if I do, at the same time I have to identify with [being Black]. So, I sent [your study request] to my mom, and she said “It's a good opportunity for you” and I agreed … maybe that's another reason why I don't see race. In [this province], you don't see the racial divide as much as you do in [the other province]. In [the other
province] you can see it very clearly, and maybe that is why I don't automatically want to identify with Black or whatever.

Elizabeth was unsure if she was to consider herself Black:

[When deciding to participate in this study,] …I thought “I'm not sure if I'm supposed to be entirely Black…I know for your study there is a section where you can check off background, but usually I don’t know what to check, so I check off both, and if they only give me one option, I feel like I’m just screwed [she laughs] What do I do?

Shanika found that identifying as Black was complicated and was unsure if that is what she wanted to do. She states:

I feel like if I go to the Black student Association then I would have to identify as Black. Maybe I feel that way because I don't put my race first. If I go to those groups, then I have to associate that I’m Black first... I think that if I have to identify as Black first, then maybe I'll realize more stereotypes, and the stigmas within school, and then if I acknowledge it, then it's there – it’s real.

**Summary**

This chapter presented the seven major themes that emerged in this study. The first theme focused on the expectations of the university experience versus the reality that participants experienced. This theme included expectations of both the academic and athletic experience. The second theme discussed the pressures and possibilities that participants experience as students, athletes and Black women. The third theme described the complex relationships that participants experienced within the university in relation to teammates, coaches, faculty, and the larger Black community. The fourth theme focused on the unique experiences of Black female student athletes. The theme looked at the stereotypes and expectations that are specific to Black women in athletics. The fifth theme looked at the ways in which Black female student athletes address academic or athletic situations, in an attempt to navigate through the university experience. The sixth theme looked at the issue of hiding and highlighting race and gender experiences. The last theme focused on the participant’s experiences and thoughts with regards to the categorization “Black.”

The researcher presented themes that were consistent across the interviews and presented the descriptive statistics that corresponded or challenged the themes. The quantitative findings
and the qualitative findings were set side by side as a means of triangulating and yielding a more nuanced understanding of the findings.

Data from individual in-depth interviews and surveys revealed how the participants perceive their experiences as student, athletes and Black women within Canadian universities. By using participants’ own words through extensive quotes and descriptive data from the surveys, the researcher provided a profile of the experiences of Black female student athletes across Canadian universities at this point in time. Together, the qualitative and quantitative analyses deepened our understanding of how Black female student athletes perceive their experiences within Canadian higher education, as well as differences in their experiences.

The findings reveal that Black female student athletes are experiencing or acknowledging little racial and gender-related tensions within their respective universities. Within the university environment, they are performing adequately academically, integrating socially within the university and athletic realm - to an extent; and they perceive that the advantages of being a student athlete outweigh the challenges. Moreover, the women are generally satisfied with their university experiences and provide a positive assessment of their overall university experience. Furthermore, it was found that Black female student athletes’ university experiences differ in meaningful ways from both non-Black women and Black male student athletes, essentially as a result of the intersection of race, gender and athleticism. This intersection will be discussed further in the following chapter.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The previous chapter presented the general findings of the study on Black female student athletes in Canadian universities. This chapter will provide a discussion of the findings of this study by providing insight into the aims of the study, linking the findings to existing literature, explaining implications and limitations of the study and providing recommendations on how institutions can optimize the student experience for Black female student athletes. The chapter is divided into four sections: discussion of the findings, implications, limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Black female student athletes in Canadian universities. Utilizing a mixed methods approach, the study explored the academic, athletic and social experience of Black female student athletes. Thematic analysis and descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the data. The study was based on the following research questions: “What are the university experiences (academic, athletic, and social) of Black female student athletes attending Canadian universities?”

In this study Black female undergraduate student athletes from universities across Canada were interviewed and surveyed with regards to their university experience. Thirty-two participants were interviewed and twenty-eight individuals responded to the survey. Seven themes emerged from the data: (1) University Expectations versus Reality, (2) Pressure and Positivity, (3) Complex Relationships, (4) Unique Experiences, (5) Negotiating and Navigating, (6) Hiding and Highlighting and (7) Levels of Blackness.

The literature review, which was mainly based on U. S literature and research, greatly assisted the researcher by informing the research project and providing considerations that were essential in understanding the experiences of Black female student athletes in postsecondary education. The following discussion of the findings is organized by categories that directly align with the study’s research question: Academic Experience, Athletic Experience, Social Experience, The Black Female Experience, and The Black Female Student Athlete Experience.
Discussion of the Findings

Academic Experience

The first part of the research question sought to determine the academic experience of Black female student athletes in Canadian universities. With regards to the academic sphere, the majority of participants generally brought to light the academic challenges they experienced, frustration with lack of academic advising and it’s quality when available, limited faculty interaction, lack of mentorship and racial stereotypes. However, while the majority of participants had a number of challenges to contend with, they simultaneously stated that in general, they had a good university experience.

The participants noted that better resources, their own personal strength and academic guidance would have enhanced their academic experience. Subpar academic advising was often cited as the main reason behind academic challenges. The recurrent theme of subpar academic advising was a notable finding, particularly because poor academic guidance can lead to additional years in university, additional tuition payments, academic frustration, unwanted academic major changes and dissatisfaction. As well, the researcher noticed the effects of poor academic guidance as a number of participants floundered or participated in unwanted courses and/or programs as a result of subpar academic advising.

Some participants mentioned that when they were in need of academic advice and support, they often approached and utilized less traditional forms of support. The students reported greater educational support from family members. Participants would go to family for academic support and guidance, particularly female family members such as mothers and aunts. This finding supports previous research (Margolis & Romero, 2001) that found Black female students sought out alternative support networks when traditional networks were unavailable, inaccessible or insufficient. Moreover, the finding that Black female student athletes utilized family member for academic and all-round support was striking, especially since most interview participants also made note that they were the first in their families to attend postsecondary education. This fact has implications for the type of advice that relatives can give regarding the university experience. While parents and relative who did not attend higher education will try to
provide the best possible advice, they likely will not possess the cultural capital to adequately direct their children or family members.

The majority of women in this study also felt their experience and interaction with faculty was minimal and/or neutral. The participants indicated class sizes played a role in their experience and interaction with faculty. Given that most of their class sizes were large, they did not have opportunities to interact or even meet their professors on an individual basis. While the upper year participants noted that smaller classes allowed for greater interaction with professors, they also noted that small classes could still consist of 40+ students, and interaction was still limited. Very few participants were met with poor treatment or discrimination from faculty members based on their Black female student athlete identity. Many participants suggested their interaction with faculty members was so limited they would not know if they were being discriminated against. Moreover, while class size and limited student-faculty interaction were recurring themes with regards to the academic experience, most participants did not seem to view it as having a significant influence on the academic experience. The participants across all regions appeared to expect and were resigned to the fact that large class sizes and limited faculty interaction were a part of the university experience in Canadian higher education.

As well, most of the women in the study indicated that they experienced a lack of mentorship. Almost all participants noted the lack of personal role models and mentors. With regards to mentorship, almost all participants, regardless of CIS region, noted that they did not have or have never had a mentor. Almost all participants noted that lack of mentorship was an issue, and more access to mentors would be beneficial. This finding supports previous studies that found that Black women in particular had a difficult time securing mentorship relationships (Benjamin, 1997; Ellis, 2001; Jordan-Zachery, 2007; Sule, 2009). As such, given the noted importance of mentorship for people of color in higher education (Benjamin, 1997; Ellis, 2001; Jordan-Zachery, 2007; Sule, 2009), further study is needed with regards to mentorship and race in the Canadian context. As well, practitioners now have more than enough evidence to warrant the implementation of programs to remedy the lack of mentorship experienced by Black university students.

In addition, the women in the study were dispersed across academic majors and fields of study. In this context, a number of respondents had set high academic goals by enrolling in
demANDING programs such as engineering and pre-medicine studies. The distribution of women across numerous disciplines and faculties in this study questions whether the “culture of athletes” – that is, the idea that athletes migrate to a few specific majors -exist to a lesser extent for Canadian athletes. Shulman and Bowen (2001), along with other researchers (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011), suggest that “…athletes tend to enter into a ‘culture of athletes’ that seem to account for why they tend to band together disproportionately in certain majors and fields of study” (Dyck, 2011, 53). However, the findings in this study contradict the findings that have been found in the U.S context.

Furthermore, while some Black women in this study discussed not seeing themselves represented within the institutional structure or classroom environment, it did not appear to be a major concern for participants. Unlike previous studies on Black women in higher education, the lack of Black faculty and Black students in higher education (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Jordan-Zackery, 2007; Patton & Harper, 2003; Woods, 2001), the Eurocentric curriculum (Henry & Tator, 2009), the feelings of being “silenced” (i.e., ignored or invisible) (Bruening, Armstrong & Pastore, 2005; Jordan-Zackery, 2007; Woods, 2001), and issues of academic marginalization (Myers, 2002; White, 2007; Williams, 2001; Woods, 2001), were not salient issues. Less than a six interviewees mentioned the lack of or underrepresentation of Black faculty, and only two participants made note of their concerns with the Eurocentric curriculum. Thus, the issues of Black female underrepresentation, Eurocentric curricula, silencing and marginalization, which were prevalent in the U.S context, may not have been mentioned in this study because 1) Black female student athletes in this study sincerely do not consider the above-mentioned topics, to be significant issues and they believe that the university system in Canada is sufficiently diverse and equitable. And/or the above-mentioned topics, which were prevalent in the U.S context, may not have been mentioned in this study because 2) many Black female student athletes in this study were reluctant and hesitant to question and associate racial issues and the educational structure. And/or the above-mentioned issues were not mentioned because 3) Black female student athletes in this study preferred to ignore the situations. A number of participants stated that they purposely ignored and dismissed racial issues or topics, which also could account for the small number of participants that made reference to the issues of underrepresentation, Eurocentric curriculums, silencing and marginalization in higher education.
Along with limited faculty interaction, racial stereotypes, lack of mentorship, and poor academic guidance, balancing academics and athletics was cited as a common challenge amongst participants. However, given the numerous challenges mentioned, many participants described overall positive feelings of belonging within the university environment and felt they had succeeded academically. The majority of participants noted that they felt that they belonged and mattered in the academic environment. Feelings of loneliness and marginalization were rarely mentioned. There were only a few participants who did not feel as if they belonged academically on their respective university campuses. Perhaps the differences in whether or not Black female student athletes feel they belong can be explained by the differences in how they encounter and acknowledge subtle racism in the university environment; for those participants who stated that they did not feel they belonged were often the participants who made mention of racial or gender focused discrimination.

As well, this finding with regard to feelings of belonging and success corresponds to previous research which states that if students feel they belong at their institutions they are more likely to succeed (Astin, 1993; Museus & Quaye, 2009; Tinto, 1987, 1993; Schlossberg, 1989). The participants stressed feelings of belonging and their GPA and individual perceptions revealed success. Thus, more specifically, the findings corresponded to Schlossberg’s Theory of Marginality and Mattering (1989). The women in this study were heavily involved in the university campus as a result of their athletic involvement. This involvement created a connection between the student and the university environment, ultimately resulting in feelings of belonging and mattering, and decreasing feelings of marginalization. While participants felt a sense of mattering in the university environment, they were eager to be further involved in the university in non-athletic ways; however, their athletic commitment hindered their attempts.

Nevertheless, the continued existence of racial stereotypes (e.g., Blacks as intellectually inferior) was a notable theme in the participant’s university experience. Participants noted that race played a part in their academic experience. What was unique for Black female student athletes in the academic sense was that many participants felt there was added pressure to prove themselves academically as a result of their race and racial stereotypes. Participants noted that they were confronted with stereotypes overtly and covertly. The stereotypes suggested that Black students were poor, academically unprepared, and not qualified to be in higher education. Thus, similar to the “proving process” described in previous scholarship (Myers, 2002; White,
Black female student athletes in this study noted that they had to react to the scepticism of non-Black faculty and peers by working twice as hard to prove themselves. This was similar to the findings in James (1997) which noted that a recurring theme was the need for participants to “prove themselves” in order to demonstrate that they deserved a place in their chosen field. However, while the women noted that they had added pressure as a result of having to “prove themselves,” they appeared to accept the “proving process” as a fact of life. Additionally, disaggregating the analysis of data by ethnicity (i.e., Black, Black Caribbean, Biracial, etc.) and CIS region (i.e., Atlantic University Sport, Canada West Universities Athletic Association, Ontario University Athletics, Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec), revealed that participants, regardless of ethnicity and geographical location, experienced some form of the “proving process.”

Additionally, most participants did not critique university practices, policies or standards with regards to race and sexual inequality. Only a minority of participants in the present study seemed to conceptualize racial inequality in education in systemic or institutionalized terms. While many pointed to race and racism as potential obstacles [e.g. stereotypes], once again, most individuals were inclined to perceive this phenomenon in individualistic rather than systemic terms. Only a handful of participants, primarily participants in the upper years [i.e., year 4 and year 5] seemed to possess the language and/or confidence and/or willingness to articulate the idea of systemic or institutionalized racism or inequality. The upper year students appeared to have acquired, or had been instilled with, a heightened sensitivity or critical consciousness, whether it was from being in the system longer, or their personal experiences with these particular issues. Nonetheless, regardless of individual or systemic racism or sexism experienced in the academic sphere of university, the participants (some more explicitly than others) revealed a general faith in Canadian universities.

With regards to the academic realm, the experiences of Black female student athletes could be noted as similar to that of the non-Black female student athletes, male student athletes, and Black male student athletes in some respects. All groups would undoubtedly have experiences with varied expectations of the university experience, limited faculty interaction, frustration with academic advisors and support, feelings of belonging, and possible lack of mentorship. However, what sets the Black female student athlete experience apart from the non-Black student athlete’s is the experience with racial stereotypes, proving oneself, racial/cultural
group responsibility and inherent visibility. As noted, when contending with racial stereotypes, Black female student athletes have the added pressure of proving themselves academically. Participants also noted they felt they had a responsibility to their racial/ethnic group to correct misinformation regarding the group; they had to be the “defender” of their racial group within the academic environment. Often, being the one and only Black person in their university classes, if a stereotypical or inaccurate comment was made about Black people, the women felt they had an obligation to correct it. Further, many participants noted that they could not “hide” or “blend in.” They stood out in the university environment because they were the one and only Black woman, or one of a few Black women in their classrooms and on campus. While some participants noted the ability to “stand out” as beneficial to their experience, many noted that “standing out” added pressure to “behave” and “positively represent” as they could be easily identified. This experience with ‘inherent visibility’ was consistent with the findings in the U.S context, particularly when Black women reside on predominantly White campuses.

**Athletic Experience**

The second part of the research question sought to explore the athletic experience of Black female students in Canadian universities. With regards to the athletic sphere, that majority of participants generally brought to light coach and teammate relationships, athletic pressure, lack of funding, and athletic/racial stereotypes.

About half of the participants felt they were athletically successful. The other half of the participants felt they had not excelled in their sport as they thought they would. Those who noted they were unsuccessful in athletics had felt unprepared to deal with the practice and competition level of university athletics and/or they had experienced unforeseen circumstances such as injury and illness. As it has been found that student athletes who experience injury deal with psychological and physiological ramifications on and off the field (Parham, 1993), this finding is understandable. Thus, more research on student athletes with regards to injury and perceptions of athletic success are needed in order to better assist these students and enhance the student experience.

Many of the women spoke at length and provided specific examples of team cohesion and support. Almost all participants noted overwhelmingly positive relations with their
teammates. As a result of positive relations with teammates, the majority of women in the study cited positive feelings of belonging and mattering within the athletic realm, with very few participants noting feelings of loneliness or marginalization. In addition to this, positive relationships with teammates appeared to be the norm across all CIS regions. The positive experiences with teammates could explain why almost all participants remained members of their athletics teams during their entire tenure at university regardless of various situational challenges. Also, the findings from this study support previous research (Miller and Kerr, 2002; Wilson, 2008), both in the U.S and Canadian context, which also found student athletes reporting positive relationships with teammates. At the same time, the finding that Black Canadian female student athletes experience positive relationships with teammates contrasts with a few U.S studies (Harmon, 2009; Stratta, 1995), which focus specifically on Black female student athletes. In these studies, Black female student athletes at predominantly White universities were found to experience division and difficulties (e.g., rejection, isolation, loneliness) with their teammates. As such, the varied findings could be the result of varying school sizes, school types (i.e., predominantly White) or a number of other mitigating factors. More studies in this area would be needed to make more concrete conclusions.

As well, many participants felt there was pressure to be an athlete first and a student second. Disaggregating the data by CIS regions and by the type of sport played revealed that location or sport type did not appear to influence the issue of whether the participant felt pressure to be an athlete first and a student second. In addition, most participants who experienced pressure to be an athlete first felt the pressure was originating from the coach. Others felt the pressure from teammates, while a few participants noted they had put the pressure on themselves. Nonetheless, the findings question the widespread belief and opinion that Canadian student athletes are considered and treated as “students first and athletes second”. While universities and the Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) association policies may state that they place the interests of the student first, and athlete second, university policies and practices in reality may not be in sync. Some of this dissonance between policy and practice could be the result of having untenured coaches and athletic officials who are under pressure to win. In the early years of intercollegiate athletics, coaches were also faculty members, usually from the Physical Education faculty or department (Schneider, 1997). However, in the 1970s, with the academic growth of physical education; sports becoming a major social force; and
television providing greater exposure for sports, the faculty-coach model became less desirable as universities aiming to capitalize on this growth and exposure began hiring full time coaches in an attempt to produce winning teams. As mentioned by participants in this study, coaches who were not faculty were more likely to dismiss or fail to recognize that academics were student athletes’ main priority. Therefore, more often than not, coaches who were not faculty, or who were hired for their skills to produce a winning teams, made athletics the priority. This in turn led some of the women to feel like “athlete[s] first, [and] student[s] second.”

In addition to this, while there were few athletic scholarships offered across Canada, evidence revealed that the majority of athletic scholarships were distributed in the Eastern and Western regions. In the AUS and CWUAA, at least 50% of participants indicated they had some form of an athletic scholarship. In both the OUA and RSEQ, less than 20% of participants received athletic scholarships (participants in the OUA and RSEQ region noted that when they were without athletic funding, their parents were paying for their education or they obtained student loans). Athletic recruitment was also higher in both the East and West regions (CWUAA and AUS), while almost non-existent in the Central regions (OUS and RSEQ). In the OUA and RSEQ regions participants often mentioned that they sought out and contacted athletic coaches in order to participate in interuniversity athletics.

What appears to be a particularly unique aspect of the Canadian interuniversity context is that of “the commuter student athlete.” In this study the participants who identified themselves as commuter students lived off campus or at their family home and used public transportation or a car to get to campus. A number of participants made mention of the fact that they lived at home or commuted a distance to campus. For the student athlete in higher education, commuting to school can be challenging as practices –particularly for female teams- are often very early in the morning or very late in the evening, impeding attendance at practice or causing students to remain on campus all day. Commuting also limits time for schoolwork and rest. In addition, most of the “commuter student athletes” were located in the OUA region. The “Commuter Student Athlete” is an anomaly and thus further study is needed.

As well, to achieve and maintain an athletic scholarship in Canada, student athletes must maintain a particular grade point average to continue receiving funding. Scholarships are renewed or cancelled on a yearly basis. While this may keep student athletes on their academic
toes, it can also create financial and psychological stress when an athlete unintentionally or unexpectedly falls fractions below the required grade point average and therefore loses funding for the year. Further, the minimal distribution of athletic scholarships and the volatility of Canadian athletic scholarships have led student athletes to take up academic year employment. The region with the least athletic scholarships – the OUA - had the most employed student athletes. Approximately 30% of student athletes in the OUA were employed, working more than 10 hours per week, while 16% of RESQ participants were employed. In the AUS and CWUAA, none of the student athletes worked in paid employment during the academic year. This finding brings to the forefront a new subgroup of student athletes –“the employed student athlete.” With rising tuition costs and ever decreasing athletic funding, more research on the “employed student athlete” is needed. Moreover, no definitive conclusions were drawn between scholarship and non-scholarship athletes across regions or based on other factors due to the fact that there was a wide variance in how much funding students received and what actually constituted athletic scholarships and aid.

Furthermore, the perceived undervaluing and underfinancing of women’s athletic programs set the Black female student athletes’ experience apart from Black male student athletes. Many Black women in the study believed that male sports –especially football and basketball- were better funded and more highly regarded. One participant made reference to the fact that female athletic teams travel to games in personal cars or vans, while the male athletic teams travel in personalized coach buses. As well, a number of participants believed that women’s sports were undervalued and less well funded since female participants had to pay more out of pocket fees to participate in their varsity sport, with little to no spectator attendance at their games, and their training fields and facilities were unkempt. Thus, the participants felt that Black male student athletes and male student athletes in general, did not have to deal with the same challenges or lack of care and attention as female student athletes.

Further to this, while almost all participants who spoke about being a role model discussed their satisfaction and willingness to be role models, some participants noted it was not a choice. Some women noted that often being the only Black female on their respective athletic teams placed them in a position where they were perceived by others to represent their entire race; and, at times, they were also thrust into the role of role model for up-and-coming Black female athletes. By participating in CIS athletics as an underrepresented minority, they were
automatically considered role models. While most generally had positive reflections on their role model status, there was some reflection on the burden that comes with being perceived as a role model, namely the added responsibility to maintain the public image and to represent their group in a positive light.

Moreover, the continued existence of racial stereotypes was also evident in the athletic realm. The women in the study noted that the general expectation that they were athletically gifted and athletically superior because of their race caused added pressure to perform. Participants noted that while they did not necessarily agree with the expectations, they did not want to let down their team or their race by not performing well athletically. Additionally, the gender stereotypes also caused participants additional challenges. Black female student athletes in the study revealed that they had to contend with views and assumptions that they were less than feminine or lesbian because they competed in certain sports (more often than not, basketball or rugby).

Women in this study also made repeated reference to their experiences with stereotypes and racial microaggressions. Microaggressions are “…subtle insult (verbal, non-verbal, and/or visual) directed towards people of color, often automatically or unconsciously” (Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2001, 60). The women in the study mentioned that friends, peers, and teammates would often make comments such as, “I don’t think of you as Black”, or “You can be our token Black girl”, or “You don’t talk like a Black person”, and “You’re going to win because you’re Black.” According to previous research (Solórzano et al., 2001) racial microaggressions in the academic, athletic and social spaces have consequences for students of color. As a result of racial microaggressions, Black students struggle with feelings of self-doubt and frustration, as well as isolation. The findings from this study would support the fact that racial microaggressions exist, but it is unclear, in the Canadian context, if racial microaggressions lead to self-doubt, frustration or isolation. Participants did not appear to be frustrated or experience isolation as a result of racial microaggressions. The women in the study tended to attribute the existence of microaggressions to misperception and ignorance on the part of a few aberrant individuals rather than attributing it to racism that was systemically embedded in the university environment. This allocation of blame could be one explanation for why the women did not feel isolated or frustrated and why they were not discouraged enough by stereotypes or racial microaggressions to leave the athletic or academic environment.
Black female student athletes in Canadian universities value and are partial to their academic and athletic experiences. While most participants felt their athletic experiences were challenging, almost all were content with their experience and felt the trade-offs they made in order to compete were acceptable or more than acceptable. Nonetheless, very few of the women hoped to pursue professional sports careers or to extend their post-university athletic careers after graduation. Most of the women were prepared to move on from competitive and team sports after graduation. Furthermore, only two participants in the study had future career plans that were related to sport. Most women appeared to make the decision to retire from sport upon graduation and to dismiss professional athletic careers as a result of the discourse on the lack of funding and the lack of sports related opportunity in Canada. Moreover, while most of the women exhibited a desire not only to graduate, but also to graduate with honours, and to go on to graduate degrees or additional qualifications, many of the women in the study appeared to be unclear, in general, about how to pursue their future goals and career plans.

As well, with regards to the athletic realm, the experiences of Black female student athletes could be noted as similar to that of the non-Black female student athletes and Black male student athletes in some respects. All groups would undoubtedly have experiences with varying levels of athletic success, varying experiences with teammates, pressures to be an athlete first, scholarship issues, employment and challenges balancing athletic and academics. However, what sets the Black female student athlete experience apart from the non-Black student athletes is, again, their experience with racial and gender stereotypes, expectations, and the added pressure to be role models for other Black female student athletes. The women in this study had a unique experience as a result of racial and gender stereotypes, expectations, and the added pressure to be a role model for other Black female athletes. Many participants reported being stereotyped by peers, teammates, coaches, professors and staff. This supports previous studies showing Black female athletes encountered multiple negative stereotypes as a result of their race and involvement in sport (Bruening, 2004; Engstrom & Sadlacek, 1991; Engstrom, et al., 1995; Corbett & Johnson, 1993; Schell, 1999). Participants felt that stereotypes equating their race with their athletic ability took away from the fact that they often worked very hard in practice and training. As well, because Black female student athletes were numerically underrepresented, the position of role model was not really a choice. Furthermore, what sets the Black female student athlete’s experience apart from that of Black male student athletes is the
funding provided to male teams and the superior attention and care they receive from coaches, peers, and spectators.

**Social Experience**

The third part of the research question sought to explore the social experience of Black female student athletes in Canadian universities. The majority of participants noted that they socialized mostly with other team members or athletes as a result of similar schedules, common understanding of the student athlete experience and lack of time to interact with non-athlete peers. As well, many participants stated their social experience and non-athletic involvement was compromised due to their academic and athletic commitments. Further, some women in the study made mention of the fact that their race affected their experience with dating and intimate relationships on their respective university campuses.

Participants noted a lack of involvement in activities and socializing outside of their sport. They stated their involvement in volunteer organizations, program affiliated associations and educational events were restricted due to a lack of time. As well, the women in the study noted that their opportunities to go to parties and hang out with friends was limited due to the number of hours they spent practicing, traveling for their sport, and studying. The women’s experience with non-athletic involvement was also echoed in a number of other studies. In a number of previous studies, researchers found that athletic participation restricts involvement and leaves little time to explore other aspects of academic and co-curricular experiences (Blinde, 1989; Ferrante et al., 1996; Meyer, 1990; Miller & Kerr, 2002; Parham, 1993; Parham, 2003). However, overall, the majority of students in the study did not appear to be overly concerned with their restricted social involvement. While the participants’ valued interactions with peers and friends and group involvement, they were still satisfied with their restricted experience. This finding was similar to previous studies (Blinde, 1989; Miller & Kerr, 2002; Parham 1993) in which participants in the studies disclosed their sacrificed social lives and felt that university athletics inhibited their social development, leaving them with few interests outside of sports. However, at the same time, these athletes stated their sacrifice of their social life was worth it. Almost all participants noted that if they had to make the choice over again, they would still choose to be a student athlete.
Furthermore, the women in the study noted varying experiences with the Black community within their respective universities. While some participants felt comfortable interacting with other Black students on the university campus, a notable number of participants had trouble relating to other Black people. Some participants felt disconnected, distanced, judged and split/fractured in their relationships with other Black people. Part of that feeling is possibly due to the separation from other Black people growing up. Most participants grew up in predominately White or non-Black communities and were often the one and only Black person in their classes through grade school, high school and university. Other participants identified one’s personal ‘level of Blackness’ and/ or a lack of confidence as being a factor in relating to other Black students on campus. If a person was not seen as “fully” Black or did not “act” Black enough, they felt uncomfortable interacting with those who were “fully Black” or “acted Black.”

Further to this, some of the participants who stated they felt comfortable interacting with other Black students on campus also experienced some dissonance. Some women felt torn between speaking, connecting or congregating with other Blacks on campus. They were concerned that the majority population would label them (e.g., segregationist, Black militants, etc.) if they sought out or congregated with other Black peers.

Some women did not experience any conflict with regards to interactions with the Black community. Again, while these participants stated they felt comfortable interacting with other Black people, they also stated that they simply felt a responsibility to “mix” and fit in with the general university student population and not “self-segregate.” Therefore, it appears that there are complex personal and social negotiations taking place for Black women when it comes to interacting with the Black community on Canadian university campuses.

Moreover, when discussing the social experience and dating on university campuses, the women in this study made it known that talking about dating and intimate relationships, and the actual experience of dating, was complicated and challenging. In almost every instance, participants were initially reluctant to discuss the dating situation on campus, personally or in the abstract. However, the women eventually opened up, as they became more comfortable in the conversation. The women in the study felt dating, for Black women, was more complicated and challenging for several reasons. First, the women perceived that Black men on campus
preferred to date non-Black women, while Black women, more often than not, preferred to date Black men. This disjunction resulted in Black men having numerous women to choose from, and left Black women with a small dating pool. Additionally, Black women felt that the number of Black men on campus was minuscule, further reducing the small potential dating pool.

As well, with regards to interracial dating, the women felt that non-Black men were less likely to approach Black women for a date [reasons not specified], therefore making interracial dating less accessible for Black women. These findings corroborate the research findings from the few available studies acknowledging the paucity of dating partners for Black women (Elise & Rolison, 2003; Henry, 2008; Cuyjet, 2006) and the more freedom Black men have, than Black women, to date non-Black students (Carroll, 1982; Henry, 2008; Hill, 2005; Jones, 2004). Moreover, there is a need to better understand the psychological effects a lack of intimate relationships may have on Black women in university, as well as the nature and development of their coping strategies in dealing with dating challenges. Thus, further investigations concerning the social and emotional effects of dating within and outside of their racial group, or choosing not to date at all, are needed.

With regards to the social sphere in university, the experiences of Black female student athletes could be considered similar to that of the non-Black female student athletes and Black male student athletes in regards to limited social involvement and complex relations with the Black community. However, the Black female student athlete’s experience is undoubtedly unique in respect to dating and intimate relationships on university campuses.

The Black Female Student Athlete Experience

Almost all the Black female student athletes in the study were certain they would make the same decision in deciding to enroll in their particular university as student athletes since as almost all depicted their university experiences as “having been worth it.” Very few women noted that they felt isolated or marginalized within their university setting. In the U.S context, race is an issue in institutions where students of color are significantly underrepresented because they often experience isolation and marginalization (Patton, McEwen, Rendon & Howard-Hamilton, 2007). While this might possibly be the same experience for Black female non-athletes in Canada, this was not evident in the case of Black female student athletes in Canadian
higher education, as this group of students, while significantly underrepresented on campus, generally did not feel isolated or marginalized. This finding could be explained by that fact that Black female student athletes have automatic friendships and support systems as a result of their athletic participation. As well, Black female student athletes in Canadian universities have less feelings of isolation or marginalization as they are used to being the one and only, or one of a few Black people, in an educational space.

As well, this study’s findings are in contrast to previous research showing Black female student athletes at predominantly White institutions of higher education are vocal and adamant about the stereotyping and discrimination they experienced (Corbett & Johnson, 2010). The majority of students in this study did not directly or adamantly report instances of racism, sexism, or discrimination in their university experience. As well, the majority of Black women generally did not suggest that they were in fact subjects of exclusionary practices based on race or gender. Very few participants reported blatant discrimination based on race or gender. In addition to this, most participants did not perceive their universities or structures to be racist or oppressive. This was similar to the findings revealed in Gosine’s study (2007) of high achieving Black Canadian students. On a personal level racial issues were mainly with regards to stereotypes, and on a structural level, the most predominant accounts by the students of racial issues were in relation to the lack of diversity in the university (i.e., in terms of curriculum, faculty and student body). However, participants appeared to accept the lack of diversity as the status quo. Furthermore, most of the frustrations that participants expressed with the student experience were initially not attributed to race and gender, but race did reveal itself as discussion progressed. Nonetheless, while racial issues and/or discrimination did become more evident in the women’s experiences, similar to Seller et al.’s (1997) findings, less than a handful of participants articulated any sustained sense of discomfort that was attributed to being Black and female.

In contrast to previous studies on Black female student athletes in higher education (Lewis, 1997; Carter, 2008), race was not always found to be the overriding factor influencing the Black students’ experiences within the university system. However, this study did find variation amongst participants in terms of how race influenced their experience within the university environment. Such variation in perceptions and attitudes illustrates that race was not the central, influential factor in the experience for all Black participants. In some Black female
student athletes’ experiences, race was the primary factor. For others, it was gender. Race, gender and/or athletics took a primary role depending on the participant’s relationship and experiences -pre-university and university -with Blackness, gender, or athleticism. For example, the few participants who identified less with being Black perceived the university to be more hospitable than those who considered Blackness to be a salient component of their identity. Consequently, how racialized subjects experienced university environments is contingent on the unique convergence of multiple factors, such as race, gender, and athleticism—to name just a few influences.

As noted above, a few participants directly noted instances of inferred and subtle racism and stereotypes. While the majority of participants initially noted that they had not experienced racism or sexism in their university experience, racial and gendered experiences came out as the interviews proceeded. The participants ultimately would discuss, unknowingly or accidentally, instances of racism and sexism in their university experience. It appeared that participants were consciously trying not to say anything negative about Canada or the Canadian educational system. In some instances, it was clear that participants wanted to make it known that Canada “was NOT like the United States.” Many participants echoed the discourse that “Canada/University is multicultural,” “Canada/University is diverse,” “Racism in Canada/University is not as bad as in the United States.” And some of the same participants, who reverberated the post-racial discourse, simultaneously admitted that the diversity and equity persona of Canada/University was a façade. This inherent conflict with regards to racism and sexism in Canada could explain why some of the women initially stated that they did not experience racism and sexism, but ultimately revealed some forms of discrimination in their university experience.

Responses to the question, “What experiences of racism/sexism have you had while in university?” varied greatly. The researcher had to probe younger students who would simply answer “I’ve haven’t had any [instances/experiences of racism/sexism]”. After further discussion, it appeared that participants did not consider certain forms of treatment or behaviour as racist or gendered. This situation also revealed that the ability to describe racial or sexist incidents appeared to increase as the participants moved up in school years. Upper year Black female student athletes are more cognizant of racial and gender issues, or more able to express their experiences with racial and gender issues. More so, the ability or desire to discuss race and
gender was not apparently stronger within any particular CIS region. Also, the hiding and highlighting of racial and gender issues was common across all CIS regions.

The researcher concurred with the assumption that mixed-race participants would more often than not deny the existence of racism because “…racialized people who fall into categories between White and Black are viewed/used as ‘model minorities’ or buffer groups by the dominant group, and are therefore sometimes also positively stereotyped…whereas people of African descent are more likely to be stereotyped negatively” (Hernandez-Ramdwar, 2009, 116). However, some biracial participants, as with mono-racial participants, identified racism, while others denied it.

It has been stated that “Race is a volatile and very personal topic…race is not a topic that many people feel comfortable talking about” (Harrison & Lawrence, 2004, 100) and this was evident in the study as the researcher found that many of the students in the study had a difficult time with questions relating to race, racism or sexism. It appears these might not have been topics participants were used to discussing. There were long pauses and difficulty explaining what they wanted to say. It appears that discussing race in Canadian universities is difficult because some participants initially appeared uncomfortable sharing their experiences. Others were very politically correct and often tried to tip toe around the topic. This could explain why there were only a few differences or unique experiences concretely described by Black female student athletes in the study. More so, this finding was not surprising as the general tendency in Canadian society is to deny the existing prejudice and discrimination against people of color (Henry et al., 1995). Further, resultant of the fact that there is a lack of discourse in Canada regarding race and inequality in higher education, it is not surprising that the participants were hesitant to discuss racial issues. Therefore, increasing dialogues about race and multiple dimension of identity in higher education could increase the level of critical consciousness among these students. Engaging in intellectual exchange where they hear a diversity of viewpoints may help them to better express their thoughts and feelings.

In addition, a common behaviour of the participants was closing down the discussion of race. Generally they closed down the discussion by (1) stating racism didn’t exist; (2) stating racial issues only happened to “friends”; and (3) turning the conversation into a discussion about how everyone is discriminated against. The closing down or dismissal of racial situations was
common across all CIS regions. Participants in each region noted that they “ignored [racial discrimination],” “didn’t pay attention to [racial discrimination]”, or “brush[ed] it off.” This dismissal was not unique to any particular region. According to Farmer and James (1993), the closing down of conversation possibly took place because,

It is difficult to talk about being Black in a White space, even though in the United States such is usually the case. The difficulty is to speak, to name, without appearing to whine, a near impossibility, since African American women are not expected to speak at all. It is particularly difficult to be heard since, despite reality, the myth still prevails that African American women are making great professional strides. Enmeshed within this myth is the belief that even when African American women are suffering, obstacles are faced stoically and handled with a prayer, and a smile. In other words we always overcome. We African American women are reluctant to dispel this myth for it is one of the positive stereotypes afforded us. (Farmer & James, 1993, 205, as quoted in Myers, 2002).

Furthermore, the number of biracial participants that took part in this study was a welcomed and unexpected surprise. Almost all bi-racial participants also identified as “Black,” and believed their experience was the same as those participants who identified as Black non-biracial. The number of bi-racial women in the study and the varied views on ‘Blackness’ illustrates that there is never consensus or closure regarding what constitutes a Black identification. What it means to be Black is constantly argued and negotiated. As well, this study brings to light the need for more focused studies on the experiences of biracial students in the Canadian educational context, especially as society becomes increasingly racially and ethnically mixed.

Lastly, very few participants directly expressed the intersection of race, gender and athleticism in shaping their experiences, but intersections emerged. Black female student athletes made note that they had to deal with racial, gender and athletic stereotypes, and these stereotypes filtered into all aspects of the university experience. Some participants alluded to the intersection of athletic and gender stereotypes when the women revealed how participation in certain sports was associated with a lack of femininity or sexuality. As well, expectations of being a superior athlete revealed the intersection of athletic and racial stereotypes. Furthermore, the dating experiences of Black female student athletes revealed the intersections of race, gender and athletics. Black female student athletes noted that, as a Black person (an underrepresented minority in the university), the dating pool was limited; as a Black woman (often deemed
aggressive and overly independent), the potential for dating was further limited; and as a female athlete (often characterized as manly or queer), dating was even more challenging. Further, the intersection of race, gender and athleticism was revealed as participants noted their experiences with stereotypical beliefs about Black people, athletes and women. The participants contended with the connotations and social reverberations that, as athletes, they lacked academic abilities. The women also had to deal with the insidiously racist implications of Black intellectual inferiority and the myth of innate Black athletic superiority. Further, they dealt with the gendered stereotypes with regards to female femininity and athletic ability. Thus, the literature (Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1991; Smith, Allen & Danley, 2007; Washington & Newman; 1991) and this study shows that individuals do not experience their environments from the perspective of one identity at a time. In fact, these identities combine and interact. Thus, the researcher argues that disaggregating data, or re-aggregating it into different groupings of intersectional identities, helps explore these differences and can be an effective way to understand what is happening inside an individual and an institution; and it can help direct further inquiry.

Summary

This study explored the experiences of Black female student athletes in Canadian universities. It explored the experiences of this group as students, as athletes and as Black women. Emerging from this study were challenges and benefits the participants faced during their tenure at university. The challenges appeared to manifest themselves as issues related to racial stereotypes, gender inequity and athletic/academic balance. The benefits manifested themselves as supportive team networks, academic and athletic skill development and participating in a cherished activity.

The women in this study appeared to have overall positive or neutral experiences. They experienced feelings of belonging and mattering, and they considered themselves successful in their academic endeavours and cherished their experiences with the sport and teammates. While the participants’ experienced added athletic, academic and social pressures, and they contended with the effects of numerous negative stereotypes, they still considered the university experience worthwhile.
The participants’ experiences in this study revealed that the challenges Black female student athletes encounter are less numerous than their American counterparts. Furthermore, the racism and disparaging treatment Black women confront in the U.S context is less evident in Canadian higher education. For the women in the study, contrary to the Black female undergraduate student experience in the United States, race and racism, were to a lesser degree part of their student experience. As well, the relatively few number of other Black students on campus did not lead these students to feelings of isolation and marginalization as was common in studies of African American women. Whereas in the American context, Black women felt distant from faculty members as a result of race and stereotypes, Black Canadian women blamed large class sizes as a reason why they were distant from professors. Only a few participants mentioned the lack of inclusivity in the curriculum.

While it is difficult to make generalizations about all Black female athletes in Canada, what these 32 interviewees and 28 survey respondents across Canada reveal is that the student experience was not as adverse as studies have indicated is true for Black women in the United States. Speculations about why this might be is made even more difficult as this is one of the first studies that focuses directly on Black women, and more specifically, Black women athletes in Canadian higher education.

In addition, Black female athletes have many experiences that are similar to those of Black non-athlete undergraduate women, but athletics makes their experience unique, as Black female student athletes have time constraints due to athletics; they deal with athletic stereotypes; and they have even more limited social experiences. Compared to non-Black female athletes, the experience also differs due to the combination of racial and gender stereotypes. Further, compared to Black male student athletes, the Black female student athlete’s experience was unique as a result of the combination of race, gender and athletic stereotypes, the underfunding and undervaluing of female sport, and the difficulty of dating and intimate relationships or lack thereof.

Moreover, while many women in the study felt that the Black female student experience in Canadian universities was a unique experience, distinct from that of White female student athletes and Black male student athletes, many participants had a difficult time trying to explain exactly why they believed the experience was unique. As well, the participants’ experiences
revealed dichotomous tension between their belief in the existence of racism and sexism and their lived experiences with the university environment. Lastly, Black female student athletes are far from being a homogeneous group, for their academic, athletic and social experiences vary in some respects. However, reflecting on the specifics of individuals’ lives, differing educational institutions, and sports, the participants’ have many similar experiences.

**Implications for Practice**

The results of this study hold several implications for practice that institutions and individuals may consider in order to improve the student experience of Black female student athletes within Canadian universities. In addition to institutions as a whole, several constituencies might benefit from the results of this study: student affairs personnel, academic advisors, coaches (high school and university), and both high school and university Black female student athletes.

As difficulties with academic advising were almost a universal experience for participants, this study presents implications for the area of academic advising. To increase satisfaction with academic advising, “traditional” methodologies should be complemented by additional innovative approaches to advising. For example, institutions could put in place academic advisors specifically for student athletes. Also, creating mandatory academic advising sessions for student athletes each term could be helpful. In combination with this, student affairs personnel could develop annual workshops directed to each academic year or phases of the university experience. Providing yearly experience workshops (essentially student updates or reminders) may help students’ to progress academically in an efficient manner. Consequently, creative programmatic efforts should be implemented early to ensure success of student athletes in both their university and post-university lives.

In addition to subpar academic advising, the results of the study revealed that a number of participants experienced a sense of academic confusion with regards to future goals. While academically successful, a number of participants, even those in their senior years, were struggling with their academic and career plans. Therefore, it is recommended that even prior to university, high school counsellors and coaches develop a pre-university program to educate
parents and student athletes about the vast fields of study at universities, academic course selection, and potential careers. This is especially essential to Canadian student athletes since only a select few continue on to professional or post-university competitive sport. In addition, prior to university, it should be reinforced how and when to access university resources. This may accelerate the adjustment from high school to university, alleviate anxiety surrounding academic progress and reduce academic chaos.

The results of the study reveal that athletic funding, and a lack thereof, was a topic of concern for student athletes. While some student athletes held down paid employment, many felt their busy academic and athletic schedules did not allow time for employment. Thus, the study provides implications for policy change (i.e., scholarships). To support student athletes that are sacrificing their time to represent the universities, institutions can increase funding opportunities. Providing various sources of funding for student athletes would ensure that athletes do not have to take up additional employment or worry about the yearly renewal of their athletic aid.

The study also found that although coaches provided some resources and direction, academically and athletically, the transition from high school to university as a student athlete was challenging. The women felt there were a lot of details and intricacies regarding academics, athletics and funding about which they were not fully briefed when starting the student athlete journey. Therefore, university coaches should develop more comprehensive information packages and workshops to ease the transition from high school to university, and university coaches should make sure that prospective student athletes are apprised of issues related to academics, athletics and the social experience. As well, the results of this study may encourage coaches to reassess what they are placing emphasis on: the student role or the athlete role. Further to this, Black female student athletes exist in an education system where being Black, female and an athlete equates to additional challenges and hurdles to overcome. They exist in three disadvantaged groups. Thus, to reduce and overcome the challenges of these placements, it is essential that universities put in place culturally competent allies to work with these students.

As well, given the underrepresentation of Black female student athletes in Canadian higher education, both academically and athletically, and the lack of mentorship that was evidenced, student affairs personnel and/or student athletes, might attempt to implement some
type of Black mentoring program. For example, Akilah Carter-Francique, professor of Sport Management at the University of Texas A&M, co-founded and facilitates “Sista to Sista”, a monthly mentorship and leadership program for Black female student athletes. The workshops were also designed to foster a sense of connectedness among Black female collegiate athletes. Such initiatives, whether university-led or student-led, could increase the presence of mentorship relationships, address the unique concerns of Black female student athletes and further connect the small Black community on the university campuses.

Further, as mentioned, the women in this study noted that they did not experience overwhelming difficulty with regards to race, racism and sexism. However, this finding must be dealt with cautiously. This finding, in conjunction with the notion of Canada now being a post-racial society, can easily hide the fact that racism and inequity still exist in Canadian society. Particularly in higher education, equal access, opportunity, underrepresentation and racism have not been eradicated.

Lastly, prospective and current Black female student athletes may use the data from this study to assist in their navigation of the Canadian university experience. This study brings to light the challenges and opportunities that Black female student athletes experience in postsecondary education, thus enabling future Black female student athletes to pre-emptively determine areas of vulnerability and opportunity and proactively respond.

Limitations of the Study

The results of this study provide rich and descriptive information on the experience of Black female student athletes in Canadian higher education. However, there are a few limitations of the study that must be mentioned. One limitation in this study was the small sample size, particularly the sample of survey participants. Due to the fact that the study was limited to Black female undergraduate student athletes, and this group of students are underrepresented in Canadian higher education, the number of available participants for this study was limited.

Another limitation of the study results from the number of survey responses collected. Due to the limited number of survey responses, one could see this as a potential threat to the
validity of the quantitative data. However, the limited survey responses did not affect validity, as descriptive statistics were used to support qualitative data. However, the study was limited as the low survey responses resulted in an inability to conduct more sophisticated statistical analysis. Also, a larger number of survey participants would have allowed for greater generalizability and meaningful comparison across the CIS regions.

A further limitation of the study results from the time period in which the interviews were conducted and the time period in which the survey was administered. The researcher felt that the best time to collect data was during the universities’ academic year (September-April). However, during the academic year the students were either in pre-season training, in-season training and competition, traveling, taking mid-term exams, off for Thanksgiving/Christmas holidays, or taking final exams. Therefore, it was challenging to find times when the participants were not constrained by time. Nevertheless, data was collected during the academic year between September 2012 and January 2013. It was evident that in some instances the time constraints due to the above mentioned commitments (and possibly the lack of monetary incentive) caused some participants (survey and interview) to rush through responses and provide vague answers.

As well, inherent limitations exist when discussing issues such as race in a country where discussion of racial issues in most settings is taboo or they are not considered salient issues. Consequently, athletes may not have fully disclosed their perceptions and experiences.

As mentioned, the survey and interviews were only conducted in English. The researcher did not create a French version of the survey and did not conduct interviews in French, due to limited resources. The exclusion of a survey version in French, potentially limited the response rate, particularly in the Quebec region.

Another limitation comes from the researcher’s position as a former student athlete, a Black female, and a graduate student. Being a Black Canadian female and a former student athlete, the researcher could be considered an “insider”. While the impact of the researcher’s positionality on the responses of the participants is essentially unknown, it is arguable that the researcher’s positionality may limit the researchers degree of objectivity. Also, the researcher’s position as an insider could limit the respondents’ answers, since respondents might assume that
the researcher knows all the complexities of being Black and female in higher education and therefore may not feel the need to fully disclose.

Nonetheless, it can be argued either way whether the researcher’s positionality facilitated or hindered the study. However, overall, the researcher believes that her insider position worked to her advantage as numerous participants indicated that they responded to the call for participants because they wanted to help out “…a fellow Black woman, who [they were happy to see] was doing her PhD.” Additionally, because of the researcher’s “insider” status, the researcher believes that a certain level of trust between the participants and the researcher allowed them to be frank in voicing their perspectives. However, the researcher does acknowledge the limitation or the aforementioned considerations in the analysis and interpretation of the results. In the end, the researcher believes that the insider position, while a potential limitation, and a potential threat to objectivity in the study, also proved to be a source of insight. As a result of the “insider” perspective, the researcher was sensitized to the need for a deeper understanding of the Black female student athlete experiences and for avoiding taken-for-granted assumptions.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This exploratory study highlights a few areas requiring greater scholarly attention in Canada. As this is the first study to be carried out in Canada with regards to Black female student athletes and their experiences in higher education, this study should be replicated with an attempt to solicit a larger sample. A replication of the current study with a larger sample is necessary to gain a greater knowledge of the varied experiences of Black female student athletes as well as to increase the generalizability of the findings. As well, a larger sample size is needed with more participants from the Eastern and Western regions in order to make more accurate comparisons across regions. Furthermore, in order to achieve a larger sample size, modification to the research methods and recruitment techniques may be helpful [e.g., monetary incentives].

The researcher also recommends an expansion of the current study. This study did not focus on a direct comparison to another group of student athletes, thus further expansion of this study to include the experiences of Black female student athletes in comparison to Black female
non-athletes; or to other minority female student athletes in Canadian universities; or to White majority groups, could be beneficial. Additionally, a study which explores the experience of Black male student athletes or another ethnic/racial athletic group in Canadian higher education could prove beneficial in expanding the literature in the area of race/ethnicity and sport in Canada. As well, further study could prove beneficial to determining the divergence or convergence of the student athlete experience and allow for more accurate comparisons.

The researcher further recommends a follow up and/or longitudinal study which would be informative as it would assess the experiences and transition out of university (e.g., athletic retirement, occupational destination) and student development changes or responses over time. This would allow institutions, student affairs personnel, and researchers to determine effective policy and practices to assist students in attaining postgraduate goals.

Moreover, there is a need to better understand the psychological effects a lack of intimate relationships may have on Black women in university, as well as the nature and development of their coping strategies in dealing with dating challenges. Thus, further investigations concerning the social and emotional effects of dating within and outside of their racial group, or choosing not to date at all, are warranted. Future research should include qualitative and quantitative studies regarding the intersecting influence of race, gender, and the dating dilemmas on student identity development, the university experience, and the life experiences of Black female university students.

Lastly, as noted in the findings, commuting to school for athletic practice was an added pressure for some participants. In this study the participants that identified as commuter students lived off campus or at their family home and used public transportation or a car to get to campus. For the student athlete in higher education, commuting to school can be challenging as practices –particularly for female teams- are often very early in the morning or very late in the evening, impeding attendance at practice or causing students to remain on campus all day. Commuting also limits time for schoolwork and rest. Moreover, most student athletes in the U.S context live on campus; thus the “Commuter Student Athlete” is an anomaly. Thus, studies examining the experience of this new subgroup of Black female student athletes could prove to be informative.
Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to gather descriptive data on the postsecondary experiences of Black female student athletes in Canada, and to gain an understanding of the experiences of Black females as students, as athletes, and as Black women. The study employed an intersectional framework to examine how race, gender, athleticism and the student role intersect to shape the student experience. The investigation utilized a mixed method approach to explore the experiences of Black female student athletes at universities across Canada.

This national study included participants from each of the four Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) regions. Twenty-eight Black female student athletes completed the online survey, while an additional thirty-two Black female student athletes were interviewed. Thematic analysis and descriptive statistics were used to explore the qualitative data and quantitative data respectively. The study identified seven major themes in the experiences of Black female student athletes in Canadian higher education: University Expectations versus Reality, Pressure and Positivity, Complex Relationships, Unique Experiences, Negotiating and Navigating, Hiding and Highlighting and Levels of Blackness.

As well, the utilization of mixed methods was beneficial to the study. The content of the study was enhanced though the use of mixed methods research. Since there are no studies or literature on the experience of Black female student athletes in the Canadian context, quantitative and qualitative approaches were used for the broad purpose of breadth and depth of understanding. As well, the research utilized mixed methods research in order to make the study accessible. Given that student athletes have limited time due to their academic and athletic involvement, the researcher wanted to make sure that potential participants who could not find the time to take part in the interview process, were given another way of participating in the study. In addition, the researcher set out to obtain different but complementary data on the Black female student experience to bring greater insight and a more complete understanding of the topic. Further, the researcher utilized mixed methods research, as the researcher had hoped the quantitative approach would have yield a larger sample size, and the qualitative approach would produce more in-depth responses. However, the quantitative approach did not yield the intended large sample size. Nonetheless, the quantitative responses were useful in corroborating various themes that emerged in the qualitative data.
The researcher positionality also facilitated and contributed to the study. In the qualitative phase of this study, in addition to the interview protocol, the researcher herself was an instrument in the qualitative interviews. The researcher’s characteristics (Black, female, student-athlete, age, etc.) undoubtedly influenced all stages of the research – recruitment, data collection and analysis. The data collected during the interviews were mediated through the researcher. As well, narrowing the field of concentration, and meaning making were all a function of who the researcher is. Thus, the researcher acknowledged her positionality by including the “situating the study” section at the end of Chapter 1, and thoroughly reflecting on her personal experiences and assumptions prior to, during, and after conducting interviews.

In a number of ways the Black Canadian female student athlete’s experience is similar to that of other Canadian student athletes. However, it was also found that Black female student athletes have a unique experience due to the intersection of their race, gender and athleticism. Black female student athletes experience a set of issues and concerns that many non-Black students and Black male student athletes do not have to contend with. Thus, Black female student athletes have a distinct experience as they deal with racial, gender, and athletic stereotypes; the underrepresentation of Black females/Black female athletes in higher education; the intricacies of Black dating and intimate relationships; and the complex interactions within the Black communities on campus.

Moreover, while some participants had a difficult time discussing or explaining their experiences with racism and sexism in the university, the experiences of these women demonstrates that even at high levels of accomplishment (i.e., the university level and varsity level athletics) where educational and athletic conditions might on the surface appear to be equal, inequality and discrimination still exist for Black women—albeit in subtle forms. Also, the findings suggest that a taboo of racial discourse remains firmly entrenched in Canadian institutions of higher education and, without more discussion and critical analysis, the Canadian educational systems, particularly at the undergraduate level, will continue to be dominated by a false claim of diversity and equality.

As well, while some participants made mention of stereotypes and inequities within the university environment, the majority of participants did not identify these challenges as formidable roadblocks to educational navigation or educational parity. Even while experiencing
stereotypes and inequities, almost all women felt that their experiences in university were worthwhile. The women believed the trade-offs they made in order to compete athletically and progress academically were acceptable consequences.

Moreover, while this study was considered exploratory, the researcher did not set out to privilege race as a factor in the Black female student athlete experience. However, the majority of respondents nonetheless, recognized and noted the salience of race in their postsecondary experiences.

Furthermore, while it is not possible to talk about one authentic Black female student athlete experience or outlook within Canadian universities, there are definitely commonalities that exist in the Black female student athlete experience across Canada.

Lastly, by identifying experiences of Black female student athletes in Canadian higher education, this study has strengthened the knowledge base on which decision can be made about shaping future transitions, mentoring, and funding needs of Black female student athletes and student athletes in general. By exploring student athlete related themes and the intersection of race, gender and athleticism, this study has drawn attention to some important dynamics that prevail in the Black female student athlete experience within Canadian higher education.
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Appendix

Appendix A: Definitions

**African American**: defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/African-american] as “an American of African and especially of black African descent.” In this study the term African American is used interchangeably with Black.

**Athlete Eligibility**: Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) allows students to compete for 5 years. Canadian Interuniversity Sport student athletes must “be enrolled in a minimum of 3 courses (minimum 9 credit hours or equivalent) in the term in which they are competing and successfully complete a minimum of 3 full courses, or 6 half courses (minimum 18 credit hours or equivalent) during the academic year” (CIS) to be eligible to compete (Canadian Interuniversity Sport Website, 2012a).

**Black Canadians**: a “designation used for people of Black African descent, who are citizens or permanent residents of Canada” (Harrison, 2005, 180; Magocsi, 1998). “Canadians of African descent include people brought to Canada as slaves in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, former American slaves who arrived here between the American Revolution and the Civil War, free American migrants, Caribbean Peoples, and those who have come directly from Africa” (Magocsi, 1998, 139). For the purpose of this study “Black Canadians,” “Blacks” and “African Canadians” will be used interchangeably.

**Black Females**: individuals who identify as both Black (of African descent) and Female. Black is a term used in reference to a racial group with a dark skin color. The term has been used to categorize a number of diverse populations (e.g. African Canadian, African American and West Indian) into one common group (Brooks & Althouse, 2000). As the women in this study identify themselves as African Canadian, Black, Caribbean, and West Indian, this study employs the term “Black” when referencing them as a group.

**Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS)**: is the national governing body of university sports in Canada. The organization includes the majority of degree-granting universities in the country. The 52 member universities of CIS are currently organized into the four following regional associations: (1) Atlantic University Sport (AUS); (2) Canada West Universities Athletic Association (CWUAA); (3) Ontario University Athletics (OUA); and Quebec Student Sports Federation (QSSF) (Canadian Interuniversity Sport Website, 2012b)

**Compromise**: Trade-offs and concessions made by a student athlete in terms of budgeting his or her time and energy between academic, athletic, or social roles.

**Conflict**: Discord as a result of incompatible or opposing demands of a student athlete's academic, athletic, or social roles.

**Experience**: A personal encounter or the attainment of knowledge or skill as a result of a student
athlete's attendance at university and/or participation in interuniversity athletics.

**Intercollegiate/Interuniversity Sport or Athletics:** refers to sports and athletic competition organized and funded by a postsecondary educational institution. It also means athletics played at the university level for which eligibility requirements for participation are established by a national association. The terms *interuniversity* and *intercollegiate* will be used interchangeably throughout this study.

**NCAA Proposition 16:** is a more restrictive successor to Proposition 48. Proposition 16 specified the minimum high school grades (2.0 grade-point average (GPA) in 13 approved academic core courses) and standardized test scores (Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) of 1010 or a combined American College Test (ACT) of 86) that student athletes must attain in order to participate in intercollegiate competition. Students with lower test scores need higher core course GPAs. Athletes that did not meet the new requirements are prohibited from participating in intercollegiate competition and may be denied athletic scholarships (Corbett & Johnson, 2010)

**NCAA Proposition 48:** is an NCAA regulation, passed in early ‘80s, that specifies the minimum high school grades (2.0 GPA in 11 designated core subjects) and standardized test scores (15 on the American College Test (ACT) or 700 on Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) that student athletes must attain in order to participate in intercollegiate competition. The rule “…allowed athletes who satisfied just one of the requirements to be accepted into college and be given athletic aid, but they were not allowed to practice with their team during the freshman year and forfeited a year of athletic eligibility” (Brook & Althouse, 1993, 40).

**Navigate:** is defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary means: ‘to deal with or reach some settlement’ [http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/navigate]. More specifically, for the purpose of this study, to *navigate* the university experience, refers to how a student may pick and choose which courses to take; personality traits to diminish or emphasize; individuals to interact with or avoid during particular times and situations in order move forward and successfully complete higher education. Students may alter how they act at different times in order to be accepted by peers, faculty and administration. Students may also pick specific personality traits (introverted, extroverted, etc.) or identities (race, ethnic, gender, athlete, etc.), emphasizing or diminishing chosen traits and identities according to situations they encounter on their path to graduation.

**Negotiate:** is defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary as “to steer or make one’s way through a medium, or to ascertain, plot and direct a course of action” [http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/negotiate]. More specifically, for the purpose of this study, to *negotiate* the university experiences refers to how a student tries to reach an agreement or compromise by internal discussion within his or her self. Students may first debate internally which courses, identities, interactions, and/or relationships are beneficial to his or her ultimate goals (it may be higher academic grades; greater social interaction; graduation; etc.) and then follow through with their choice to reach their goal. Even if the choice is not what they ultimately “want” at that exact moment, it is the best option to move towards a future goal.
**Outsider Within:** refers to a special standpoint encompassing the self, family, and society (Collins, 1986, 14). This relates to the specific experiences to which people are subjected as they move from a common cultural world (e.g., family) to that of the modern society (Ritzer, 2007, 207). Therefore, even though a woman (especially a Black woman) may become influential in a particular field, she may feel as though she never quite belongs. Essentially, their personalities, behaviors, and cultural beings overshadow their true value as individuals; thus, they become the outsider within (Collins, 1986, 14). Consequently, in addition to feeling like an outsider within themselves, they are an outsider within the organization into which they have come, where the vast majority of people are different from them.

**Postsecondary Education:** the term postsecondary education is synonymous with higher education and will these terms will be used interchangeably. As well, in this study, postsecondary education refers solely to universities – degree-granting institutions (e.g., bachelor's, master's or doctorate degrees). It does not include colleges - institutions that typically offer vocationally- oriented programs and grant diplomas and certificates.

**University:** an institution of higher education and research, which grants academic degrees at undergraduate and postgraduate levels (i.e., bachelor's, master's or doctorate degrees) in a variety of subjects. In this study, university is synonymous with postsecondary education and higher education. All terms are used interchangeably.

**Student Athlete:** for the purpose of this study, is deemed to be an individual who participates on a varsity sport team in organized competition with other CIS member institutions, but does not include individuals participating at recreational, instructional or intramural levels. This restriction should not be interpreted as discriminatory towards diverse levels of participation in physical activity. Rather, it is intended to focus the investigation on student athletes participating within the Canadian intercollegiate athletic system and increase the homogeneity of the participant group. The student athletes may or may not receive scholarships or grants from their university.

**Student Experience:** for the purpose of this study, the student experience refers to all aspects of academic (e.g. classes, interactions with faculty and peers), and social engagement (e.g. practice, competition, interactions with coaches, team, and peers) of students pursuing higher education. Additionally, it refers to how students perceive and participate in academic and social situations.

**Varsity Team:** the main team representing a university, college, or school in athletic competitions.
Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interview Protocol

[The following are potential questions to be used as the athlete interview for a study that will examine the university experiences of Black female student athletes.]

Interview Schedule:

Participants will be asked the following questions. They have the option not to respond to any questions so as to protect their free will and privacy. These conditions where stipulated in the consent form therefore, the participants will be prepared when they reach this stage. All transcripts from the interview will be kept secured and confidential.

Interview Script:

You have agreed to participate in a study to gather descriptive data on the experience of Black female student athletes at a Canadian University. I greatly appreciate your time and willingness to be a part of this research. You will be asked to reflect and share on your experiences as a Black, female, student-athlete who is currently attending a Canadian University. I will also ask you to reflect on the intersections of these roles. We will visit for approximately one hour. May I have your permission to tape record this interview? The tapes will only be used or my own purposes to analyze our interview.

Please take as long as you wish to respond to questions, feel free to ask for clarification if my question is confusing or unclear to you.

Guiding Questions

MAIN QUESTION: Can you describe your experience as a Black female student athlete at this university?

General Pre-University Experience

1. Tell me about the process that you underwent in your decision to attend the University……

2. What informed your decision to attend higher education?

3. What role did your family, friends, mentors, play in your decision making process?

4. Did you receive any guidance counselling in high school regarding academics or athletics in higher education? If yes, please describe the experience

5. Can you tell me how you first got involved in your sport? And when you first became interested in your main sport?
6. What influenced you to become involved in sport? What influenced you to continue/stay involved in sport?

7. Is training and competition at the university level notably different from your high school experiences?

8. Did you have the option of attending a university in the U.S? If so, why did you choose to stay in Canada? (How do you think Canadian university sport programs and U.S Division I schools differ?)

The Student Experience: Academic

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

Can you think of any experience specifically to faculty interactions?
Can you think of any experiences specifically related to staff interactions?
Can you think of any experiences specifically related to peer interactions?
Can you think of any experiences specifically related to academics (course curriculum, course instruction, etc.)?

10. Since arriving at University how would you describe your experience and support system (i.e. family, financial, social groups on and off campus, academic advising…)?

11. How has mentoring played a role in your academic experience?

12. What are your educational/academic goals?

Thus far, do you consider yourself successful in your academics?

13. Do you feel like you belong/fit in at this university?

14. Do you think your experience is unique from White men and women/majority/non-Black men and women—Black men—other minority women? How are those students similar or different from you?

The Student-Athlete Experience: Athletic

15. What informed your decision to continue with athletics in higher education?

16. How did you come to be at this university as a student athlete? Recruited or Walk-on

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

Can you think of any experiences related to competition, practice, team interactions, or coach interactions?
18. What are some of the advantages/disadvantages of being an athlete at this university? (Do you experience a conflict being a student and athlete; do you think athletics has negatively impacted your academics; athletics reinforces academic values and contributes to the development of traits)

19. Do you ever feel pressure to be an athlete first and a student second?

20. What are your athletic goals?

21. Do you feel you belong/fit in your sports team/athletic group/environment?

22. Do you consider yourself successful in your sport/athletic career?

23. In what ways do you feel that athletics has impacted your academic participation and performance?

24. Do you think your experience is unique from White men and women/majority/non-Black men and women---Black men---other minority women?

25. If you had to make the decision over again, would you still attend university as a student athlete?

26. Do you have any aspirations to compete in professional athletics beyond university? (I.e. professional athlete in Canada or internationally)

**The Black Female Student Athlete Experience:**

27. Can you describe your experiences as a Black female student athlete at this university?

What is it like being a Black female athlete in this university? Suppose I was a Black female recruit/potential student-athlete and you were chosen to be my host for a weekend. What would you tell me about being a Black female athlete at this university?

Has being Black influenced your sport participation and performance level? Has being Black influenced your academic participation and performance level?

Has being female influenced your sport participation and performance level? Has being female influenced your academic participation and performance level?

28. What are some of the advantages/disadvantages of being a Black female athlete at this university?

29. Do you think that it is the same experience for Black female students who are not athletes?

Do you think that it is the same experience for White female student athlete or Black male student athletes?
Experiences as a Developing Woman:

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

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

What is your experience with dating or securing a romantic relationship in a university?

32. Do you think your experience is unique from White men and women/majority/non-Black men and women—Black men—Other minority women?

The Student Experience: Socializing

33. Can you describe your social experiences at the university? (Experiences outside of class and outside of sport)

In general, whom do you hang out with socially? (I.e. peers on your athletic team, non-student athletes, etc.)
Do you attend organized campus activities or parities outside of athletics and academics?
Can you talk about ways you have become involved on campus (outside of athletics) since being here at this university.

34. Do you think your experience is unique from White men and women/majority/non-Black men and women—Black men—Other minority women?

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

Post University Plans:

36. Can you talk about your academic goals for the future (i.e. graduate school, professional school, etc.)?

37. Can you talk about your career goals for the future?

38. Where do you see sport in your life five years from now?

Follow-Up Question:

39. Can you think of any other experiences here at university that you’ve have not had a chance to talk about? Can you think of any other experiences here at university that I have not asked about?

40. Were there any other things that you thought about with regards to your experience as a Black female student athlete in higher education that you wanted to share with me?
Appendix C: Interview Informed Consent Letter

[Date]

Dear Participant,

This is a national study to be carried out by PhD candidate, Danielle Gabay, under the supervision of Professor Tony Chambers, Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto (OISE/UT). The data is collected for the purpose of a PhD thesis and perhaps for subsequent research articles.

The purpose of the present study is to gather descriptive data on the experience of Black female student athletes at Canadian universities. The academic, athletic and social experiences you have encountered on your university campus will be explored. The criterion for selecting participants will be based on race/ethnicity, gender, athletic participation and level of permanency in Canada. To participate in the study you must self identify as a Black woman (i.e. West Indian, African, British, American or Canadian descent); you must be a member of a Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) team; and you must have some level of permanency in Canada (i.e. you were born in Canada, you are a Canadian citizen, or permanent resident, etc.).

There is scarcely known or attempted research about the lives of Black women in this country, more specifically, Black women in higher education and Black female athletes. This study will provide you with a safe space to share, articulate and document your stories and experiences. As well, this study will help scholars, students, and administrators better understand the experiences of Black female undergraduate student-athletes in Canada. Thus, your participation in this study will be contributing to groundbreaking research that has not yet been attempted in this area.

This study will consist of one interview where you will be asked to reflect on your experiences as Black, female, student-athletes. The interview will be audio taped with your permission. If you agree to take part in this study, your involvement will last approximately one month. You will be asked to take part in three interactions:

1) Initial contact to set up interview times, to last no longer than 10 minutes.
2) An interview lasting approximately 1 hour.
3) Follow-up for you to crosscheck the analyzed data, occurring approximately 3 weeks after the interview.

During the interview you will be asked questions about your academic, athletic and social support systems; sense of belonging; benefits and challenges; and feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction within the university environment. If you agreed to be audio taped, your interview will be transcribed. Your transcript will be sent to you 3 weeks after the interview. You will be sent the data via secured electronic means. You will have 2 weeks in which to read the transcript and add any further information or corrections. Then you will return the crosschecked data to the researcher via secured electronic means.

There is no foreseeable risk associated with participating in this study. You will be asked to reflect on your experiences. The experience itself may uncover emotional feelings related to your
experiences as a Black female student athlete. If you feel uncomfortable you are free to skip any
texts of any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. You may also withdraw at any time from the
study without consequence. If you decide to withdraw from the study, all interview data collected
will be destroyed. Additionally, you will not be judged or evaluated, and at no time will you be at
risk of harm.

Your participation in this research study will be kept confidential. None of the personal
demographic information will be linked specifically to you. In order to maintain confidentiality of
each participant, each participant will be given a case number and all documents will be numbered
accordingly in the participant’s file along with any notes taken and the audiotape from the interview. Should you name specific institutions or persons in the interview, these will be given factitious titles
or names in the final transcription of the data and not mentioned by name or title in the dissertation
or in any publications. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the data.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact me at (647)-233-9315 or d.gabay@utoronto.ca. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Tony Chambers at (416) 978-1215. Finally, if you have any
questions related to your rights as a participant in this study please contact the University of Toronto
Office of Research Ethics, ethic.review@utoronto.ca, or 416-946-3273.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

Danielle Gabay
PhD Candidate
Theory and Policy Studies in Education
OISE/University of Toronto
(647) 233-9315
d.gabay@utoronto.ca

Dr. Tony Chambers
Professor
Theory and Policy Studies in Education
OISE/University of Toronto
(416) 978-1215
tony.chambers@utoronto.ca

By signing below you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have
received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions stated above.

Name: ________________________ School: ________________________

Signed: ________________________ Date: __________________________

Please initial if you consent to the interview being audio-taped and transcribed ________
Please initial if you would like a copy of the research findings upon completion ________

Note: Please keep a copy of this letter for your records.
Appendix D: Biographical Data Sheet for Interviewees

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

Name: First __________________ Last __________________

1. Please indicate your age ___________

2. Please indicate your hometown ___________ Country ________________

3. Please indicate your preferred telephone number OR e-mail address by which you may be contacted_____________________

4. In which country were you born? _______________________

5. How long have you lived in Canada? ______________________________

6. Are you a Canadian Citizen or Permanent Resident? (Please circle/highlight) Yes No

7. Please indicate your race/ethnicity

Black
African
West Indian
Other (please specify) _______________________

8. What is your religion or religious affiliation?

Protestant
Catholic
Jewish
Islamic
Hinduism
Buddhism
Other (please specify)
None
Prefer not to answer

9. Which university do you currently attend? __________________________

10. What is your class level/year in your degree? (i.e., first year, second year, etc.) __________

11. What is your academic major? _______________________

12. What is your cumulative grade point average (GPA) (on a 4.0 scale) _________________
13. What is your primary varsity sport? __________________

14. What is your current year of athletic eligibility? (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th) (Please circle/highlight one)

15. Approximately what was your parents’ or family total income during the past year, before taxes, as far as you know? (Please circle/highlight one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Example Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $19,999</td>
<td>$50,000-$59,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000-$29,999</td>
<td>$60,000-$69,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000-$39,999</td>
<td>$70,000-$79,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000-$49,999</td>
<td>$80,000 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. What are your parents’ occupations?

Mother: ______________________________
Father: ______________________________

17. What is the highest level of education your mother completed? (Please circle/highlight one)

Less than high school graduation
High school graduation only
Vocational, trade, or business school after high school
Some college or university
Completed college (Associates degree, 2 year degree, certificate, etc.)
Completed university undergraduate degree (B.A., B.Sc., etc.)
Some graduate studies
Completed a master’s degree (M.A, M.Sc., etc.)
Completed doctoral degree (PhD, J.D, M.D., etc.)
Other (Please specify):
Do not know

18. What is the highest level of education your father completed? (Please circle/highlight one)

Less than high school graduation
High school graduation only
Vocational, trade, or business school after high school
Some college or university
Completed college (Associates degree, 2 year degree, certificate, etc.)
Completed university undergraduate degree (B.A., B.Sc., etc.)
Some graduate studies
Completed a master’s degree (M.A, M.Sc., etc.)
Completed doctoral degree (PhD, J.D, M.D., etc.)
Other (Please specify):
19. What is the status of your parents? (Please circle/highlight one)
Married
Common Law
Separated
Divorced
Mother deceased
Father deceased
Other (please specify) ____________

20. What is your primary source of funding for your university education? (Please circle/highlight one)
Loans from parents
Parents paying
Personal Loan
Personal Savings
Academic Scholarship or Award
Scholarship or Award
Athletic Scholarship
Student Loan
Other: __________

21. If you presently have a job, approximately how many hours per week do you work at a paid job during the academic year? (Not including work-study) (Please circle/highlight one)
I do not work at a paid job during the academic year
Less than 4 hours per week
4 hours or more per week but less than 8 hours per week
8 hours or more per week but less than 12 hours per week
12 hours or more per week but less than 16 hours per week
16 hours or more per week but less than 20 hours per week

22. Which of the following best describes where you are living now while attending university? (Please circle/highlight one)
University residence or on-campus housing
Off campus accommodation within walking distance of campus
Off campus accommodation within driving distance of campus
Other (please specify):
Appendix E: Online Survey

Survey link: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BlackFemaleStudentAthletes

Hi, I am a doctoral student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am a Black female, former varsity student-athlete and I am currently conducting research for my dissertation which will gather descriptive data on the experience of Black female student-athletes within Canadian universities.

Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated. Through your efforts, valuable information will be collected with respect to the student experience of Black female student-athletes in Canada.

There is scarcely known or attempted research about the lives of Black women in this country, more specifically, Black women in higher education and Black female athletes. It is hoped that this study will help scholars, students, and administrators better understand the experiences of Black female undergraduate student-athletes in Canada. Your participation in this study will be contributing to groundbreaking research that has not yet been attempted in this area.

This study will allow you, a Black Canadian female student-athlete, an opportunity to articulate your views on race, gender, sport and education. You will have the opportunity to voice your opinions, without consequence, on a topic not usually open for discourse in Canada. The purpose is to diversify the current known perspectives in relation to race, gender, athleticism, and the student experience within Canadian higher education.

Thank you in advance.

Contact information:

If you have any questions related to your rights as a participant in this study or if you have any complaints or concerns about how you have been treated as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Ethics, ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact:

Danielle Gabay
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Dr. Tony Chambers
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Informed Consent Letter for Online Survey

An Investigation of the Black Female Student-Athlete Experience within Canadian Higher Education

Purpose of the Study:
The purpose of the present study is to gather descriptive data on the experience of Black female student-athletes at Canadian universities. The academic, athletic and social experiences you have on your university campus will be explored.

This is a national study to be carried out by PhD candidate, Danielle Gabay, under the supervision of Professor Tony Chambers, Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto (OISE/UT). The data is collected for the purpose of a PhD thesis and perhaps for subsequent research articles.

You are invited to participate in this research study if you are:

- A Black woman (of West Indian, African, British, American or Canadian decent), and
- A member of a Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) team, and
- An undergraduate student (or have recently graduated within the last 6 months), and
- Have some level of permanency in Canada (i.e. you were born in Canada, you are a Canadian citizen, a permanent resident, or you have lived in Canada for at least 5 years).

What will be Done:
You will complete a survey, which will take 30 minutes. The survey includes questions about your educational, athletic and social experience in university (for example, support systems, feelings of belonging, and what benefits and challenges you experience as a Black female student-athlete). Other survey questions will request demographic information (e.g. age, religion, marital status, etc.) so that I can accurately describe the general traits of the group of women who participate in the study.

Benefits of the Study:
This study will provide you with a safe space to share, articulate and document your stories and experiences. As well, this study will help scholars, students, and administrators better understand the experiences of Black female undergraduate student athletes in Canada. Further, your participation in this study will be contributing to groundbreaking research that has not yet been attempted in this area.

Risks or Discomforts:
There is no foreseeable risk associated with participating in this study. You will be asked to reflect on your experiences. The experience itself may uncover emotional feelings related to your experiences as a Black female student athlete. If you feel uncomfortable you are free to skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. Additionally, you will not be judged or evaluated, and at not time will you be at risk of harm.

Decision to Withdraw:
Your participation is voluntary; you may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate you are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time, without consequence. If you do not want to continue, you can simply leave this website. If you do not click on the "submit" button at the end of the survey, your answers and participation will not be recorded. You are also free to skip any question in the survey at any time.

Confidentiality:
Your responses will be kept confidential. All data is stored in a password protected electronic format. To help protect your confidentiality, the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you. No identifying information such as your name, email address or IP address will be collected when you respond to this Internet survey.

How the Findings will be used:
The results of the study will be used for scholarly purposes only. The results from the study will be presented in educational settings, and the results may be published in subsequent research articles.
ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below.

Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that:

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are at least 18 years of age

If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button.

☐ Agree
☐ Disagree
*Which university do you currently attend? 

*Are you male or female?

- Male
- Female

Which category below includes your age?

- 17 or younger
- 18-20
- 21-23
- 24-27
- 28 or older

Are you White, Black or African-American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, or some other race?

- White
- Black (of African decent)
- Black (of West Indian, Caribbean decent)
- Black (of British decent)
- African-American
- African Canadian
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

From multiple Races /Some other race (please specify)

In which country were you born?

- Canada
- United States
- United Kingdom
- West Indies
- Africa

Other (please specify)
How long have you lived in Canada?

- less than 5 years
- 5-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21 years or more
- I have lived in Canada all my life

To what category do you belong?

- Canadian Citizen
- Permanent Resident
- Other (please specify)

What is YOUR marital status?

- Single
- Married
- Common Law
- Separated
- Divorced
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (please specify)

What is your religion or religious affiliation?

- Protestant
- Catholic
- Jewish
- Islamic
- Hinduism
- Buddhism
- None
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (please specify)
Approximately what was your parents' or family's total income during the past year, before taxes as far as you know? [This includes money from jobs; from business; pensions; etc.]

- Less than $20,000
- $20,000 to $34,999
- $35,000 to $49,999
- $50,000 to $74,999
- $75,000 to $99,999
- $100,000 to $149,999
- $150,000 or More
- Prefer not to answer

Mother's Occupation?

Father's Occupation?

What is the highest level of school your mother completed?

- Less than high school degree
- High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
- Some college but no degree
- College degree (associate degree, certificate, etc.)
- Some university but no degree
- Bachelor degree (B.A., B.Sc., etc.)
- Some graduate studies but no degree
- Graduate degree (M.A, PhD, J.D, M.D, etc.)
- Do not know

Other (please specify)
What is the highest level of school your father completed?

- Less than high school degree
- High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
- Some college but no degree
- College degree (associate degree, certificate, etc.)
- Some university but no degree
- Bachelor degree (B.A., B.Sc., etc.)
- Some graduate studies but no degree
- Graduate degree (M.A., PhD, J.D., M.D., etc.)
- Do not know

Other (please specify)

What is the marital status of your parents?

- Married
- Common Law
- Separated
- Divorced
- Mother deceased
- Father deceased
- Prefer not to answer

Other (please specify)

When living at home, do you live in a Suburban, Urban or Rural area? [Please select your choice from the drop-down list].

Other (please specify)
What is your PRIMARY source of funding for your university education? [Select one]

- Loans from parents
- Parents paying
- Personal loan
- Personal savings
- Academic scholarship or award
- Scholarship or award
- Athletic scholarship
- Student loan

Other (please specify)

Which of the following best describes where you are living now while attending university?

- University residence or on-campus housing
- Off-campus accommodation within walking distance of campus
- Off-campus accommodation within driving distance of campus
- Prefer not to answer

Other (please specify)

In a typical week, how many hours do you work at a paid job (during the academic year)? [not including work study]

- I do not work at a paid job during the academic year
- Less than 4 hours per week
- 4 hours or more per week, but less than 10 hours per week
- 10 hours or more per week, but less than 16 hours per week
- 16 hours or more per week, but less than 22 hours per week
- 22 hours or more per week, but less than 28 hours per week
- More than 28 hours per week
All things considered, what was the most important factor in your decision to attend university? [Select one]

- Academic pursuits/goals
- Athletic pursuits/goals
- Other (please specify)

Please indicate who or what support group encouraged you to pursue higher education? [Select all that apply]

- Parents
- Teachers
- Friends
- Self
- Guidance Counsellor
- Other (please specify)

What is your current academic year?

- 1st year
- 2nd year
- 3rd year
- 4th year
- 5th year
- Other (please specify)

What is your current academic major?
What is your Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA)?

- 4.1 or above
- 3.6 - 4.0
- 3.1 - 3.5
- 2.6 - 3.0
- 2.1 - 2.5
- 2.0 or below

Did you transfer from another university to attend your present university?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Other (please specify)

If you transferred, please explain why you decided to transfer from one university to your present university.
### Please indicate whether you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Prefer not to answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When I enrolled at this university, it was important to me to get a degree.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the present time, it is important to me to get a degree.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic pursuits are compromised due to my participation in Interuniversity athletics.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic pursuits are compromised due to my social life.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic pursuits are compromised because I am Black.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>My academic pursuits are compromised because I am female.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My academic pursuits are compromised due to discrimination.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### How do you assess the influence of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Neither Positive nor Negative</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Prefer not to answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your coaches on your academic goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The academic advisors in your athletic department</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The academic advisors in your university or academic department</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors in the courses in your major</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your family on your academic goals</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your teammates on your academic goals</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your friends on your athletics goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Has the university provided you with academic advising that has helped you to succeed academically?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Other (please specify)

Please indicate whether you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Prefer not to answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My academics are more important than my athletic participation and performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I view myself as a student first and athlete second</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (i.e. professors, staff, non-athletes) view me as a student first and athlete second</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have had to downplay my academic commitment to fit into the university setting</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a student affects my dating/securing a romantic relationship</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How difficult is it to balance your academic and athletic responsibilities?

- Extremely difficult
- Very difficult
- Moderately difficult
- Slightly difficult
- Not at all difficult
Do you think your student role interferes with your athletic role?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Other (please specify)

Do you consider yourself successful in your academics?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Other (please specify)

Do you have a *mentor who helps contributes to your educational experience and goals?*

* A ‘mentor’ refers to an experienced and trusted person (i.e. professor, staff person, coach, etc.), who advises, guides, counsels, and who serves to enhance your skills and development.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Other (please specify)
If you had the choice/opportunity, would you want a mentor?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure
☐ Not Applicable

Other (please specify)

Do you feel you *belong/fit into the academic environment at the university?*

* To 'belong/fit' means that you have the right personal or social qualities to be a member of the general campus student population.

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

Other (please specify)

Do you feel like you *matter to someone (i.e. coach, staff, peers), or to the university?*

* To 'matter' means that you are of importance and have significance.

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

Other (please specify)
Have you ever considering withdrawing (i.e. quitting school, taking an academic leave) from university due to academic reasons?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Other (please specify)

Do you think your ACADEMIC experience is unique from White men, White women, Black men or other women of colour? Please explain.

Are you satisfied with your academic experience at this university?

- Extremely satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Extremely dissatisfied
- Unsure

Other (if you would like, please explain)

What are the BENIFITS of being a student at this university?

What are the CHALLENGES of being a student at this university?
How could the ACADEMIC student experience at this university be improved?
At what age did you first start playing your sport? [Please select your choice from the drop down list]

When you were a high school student, were your *recruited by a post-secondary institution to participate in athletics?

*To be 'recruited' means a post-secondary institution (i.e. university coach) approached you, asked you to attend their university, and offered you an athletic scholarship to attend and athletically compete for the university.

☐ Yes
☐ No

If you were recruited, where were the schools that were recruiting you located? [Check all that apply]

☐ Canadian Schools
☐ United States Schools
☐ United Kingdom Schools
☐ Not Applicable

Other (please specify)

*Why did you choose to attend a Canadian university as a student-athlete?
What sport do you participate in at this university? [Check all that apply]

☐ Basketball
☐ Cross Country
☐ Curling
☐ Field Hockey
☐ Ice Hockey
☐ Rugby
☐ Soccer
☐ Swimming
☐ Track & Field
☐ Volleyball
☐ Wrestling

Other (please specify)

*What is your PRIMARY* Interuniversity sport?

* Primary Interuniversity Sport: If you participate in more than one sport in the Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS), please choose the sport in which you spend the greatest amount of time as your primary sport.

What is your current year of athletic eligibility?

☐ 1st year
☐ 2nd year
☐ 3rd year
☐ 4th year
☐ 5th year
Is training and competition at the university level notably different from your high school experiences? If YES, please explain below.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Please explain

Please answer YES, NO or UNSURE, to the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When you enrolled at this university, was becoming a professional athlete one of your goals?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At the present time is becoming a professional athlete one of your goals?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When you enrolled at this university, was becoming a member of the national team in your sport one of your goals?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At the present time is becoming a member of the national team in your sport one of your goals?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate whether you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am satisfied with my overall performance as an athlete at this university.</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I manage my time better because of athletics.</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My athletic endeavours are compromised due to my academic pursuits.</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My athletics endeavours are compromised due to my social life.</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As a student-athlete, I feel cut off from the rest of the student body.</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>-----------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that my professor discriminate against me because I am an athlete.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel that some of my professors favour me because I am an athlete.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that my coach's demand of my time and energy prevents me from being a better student.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have felt pressured to be an athlete first and a student second.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that the role of a university student and a university athlete conflict with each other.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy playing my sport now as much as I did in high school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I could start over, I would still play a varsity sport.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I view myself as an athlete first and a student second.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (i.e. professors, staff, non-athletes) view me as an athlete first and a student second.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please indicate whether you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My family has been an important influence on my university athletic career.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family has been an supportive of my university athletic career.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teammates have been an important influence on my university athletic career.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friends (other than my teammates) have been supportive of my university athletic careers.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My coach at this university has been an important influence on my university athletic career.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My professor at this university has been supportive of my university athletic career.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please answer YES, NO or UNSURE to the following statements.

As a student-athlete, have you found it necessary to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take a less demanding major</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take easy courses</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeated one or more courses</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut classes</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take fewer courses per term</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss taking courses I really wanted to take</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss out on educational opportunities (internships, study abroad trips, etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It has been stated that there are consequences to participating in university athletics (i.e. lack of time for non-athletic activities, less time to study, negative athletic stereotypes etc.)

What is your view with regards to the 'consequences'?

- It was an acceptable consequence of my athletic participation.
- The positives of my athletic participation have more than compensated for my inability to spend as much time as I wanted on my academic work and social life.
- Looking back, I wish I had not played a varsity sport.
- Looking back, I wish I had spend less time on my sport.

In a typical week at university (including weekends), how many hours do you spend doing things related to your primary sport?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>5 hours or less</th>
<th>6-10 hours</th>
<th>11-15 hours</th>
<th>16-20 hours</th>
<th>21-25 hours</th>
<th>26 hours or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In season, when you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>compete as a representative of your university in CIS contests that count toward regular season records.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of season, when you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>practice and condition but do not compete in CIS contests</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a typical week IN SEASON (including weekends), how many hours do you spend...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>5 hours or less</th>
<th>6-10 hours</th>
<th>11-15 hours</th>
<th>16-20 hours</th>
<th>21-25 hours</th>
<th>26 hours or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In classes or lab</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing assignments/papers or studying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In extracurricular activities (other than your primary sport)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In social activities (including &quot;hanging out&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxing by yourself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In a typical week OUT OF SEASON (including weekends), how many hours do you spend...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>5 hours or less</th>
<th>6-10 hours</th>
<th>11-15 hours</th>
<th>16-20 hours</th>
<th>21-25 hours</th>
<th>26 hours or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In classes or lab</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing assignments/papers or studying</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In extracurricular activities (other than your primary sport)</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In social activities (including &quot;hanging out&quot;)</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxing by yourself</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
<td>🗙️</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Have you spent as much time on athletics training and competition as you wanted to spend?

- 🗙️ Yes
- 🗙️ No
- 🗙️ Unsure

Do you have a *mentor who helps contributes to your athletics experience and goals?*

* A 'mentor' refers to an experienced and trusted person (i.e. professor, staff person, coach, etc.), who advises, guides, counsels, and who serves to enhance your skills and development.

- 🗙️ Yes
- 🗙️ No
- 🗙️ Unsure

Other (please explain) 

If you had the choice/opportunity, would you want a mentor?

- 🗙️ Yes
- 🗙️ No
- 🗙️ Unsure
- 🗙️ Not Applicable

Other (please specify)
Do you feel you *belong/fit into the athletic environment or your sports team at the university?*

* To 'belong/fit' means that you have the right personal or social qualities to be a member of the student-athlete community.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Other (please explain)

Do you feel that you *matter to someone within the university setting (i.e. staff, faculty, teammates, coaches, non-athlete peers)?*

* To 'matter' means that you believe, whether right or wrong, that you are the object of someone else's attention, and that others care about you and appreciate you.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Other (please specify)
Please indicate whether you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being an athlete positively influences my academic performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being an athlete positively influences being female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being an athlete positively affects my dating/securing a romantic relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have had to downplay my athleticism to fit into the university setting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have had to downplay athleticism to succeed academically in this university</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you consider yourself successful in your athletics?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Other (please explain)

What are the BENEFITS of being an athlete at this school?


What are the CHALLENGES of being an athlete at this school?


Do you think your ATHLETIC experience is unique from White men, White women, Black men or other women of color? Please explain.


How satisfied are you with your athletic experience at this university?

- Extremely satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Extremely dissatisfied

What could be done to improve the athletic experience at this school?
Please answer YES, NO or UNSURE to the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you consider yourself successful in socializing with other teammates.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you consider yourself successful in socializing with non-athlete students.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel you belong/fit into the social environment at this university.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate whether you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My social life is compromised due to my academic pursuits.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My social life is compromised due to my participation in athletics.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with my social life while attending university.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often attend organized campus activities outside of athletics.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a date or securing a romantic relationship at university is easy.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How satisfied are you with your social experience at this university?

- Extremely satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Extremely dissatisfied

Do you think your SOCIAL experience is unique from White men, White women, Black men or other women of colour? Please explain.
Please indicate whether you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Prefer not to answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being BLACK positively influences my ACADEMIC participation and performance.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being FEMALE positively influences my ACADEMIC participation and performance.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being BLACK positively influences my ATHLETIC participation and performance.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being FEMALE positively influences my ATHLETIC participation and performance.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being BLACK positively affects my chances of dating/securing a romantic relationship.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being BLACK positively affects my socializing with other students on campus.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate whether you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Prefer not to answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have had to downplay my RACE to fit into the university setting.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have had to downplay my RACE to succeed academically in this university.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have had to downplay my GENDER to fit into the university setting.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have had to downplay my GENDER to succeed academically in this university.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have had to downplay my ATHLETICISM to fit into the university setting.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have had to downplay my ATHLETICISM to succeed academically in this university.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During you time here at the university, would you say that you have experienced discrimination or racism due to your race, sex, and/or athleticism?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Unsure
Please indicate by checking all that apply below, the response that best describes the basis for the discrimination you experienced. Was it primarily because of your....

[Please check all that apply]

- Race
- Sex
- Athleticism
- Other (please specify) 

Please indicate whether you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Prefer not to answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racism is a much more serious issue in my life than sexism.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism is a much more serious issue in my life than athletic stereotypes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexism is a much more serious issue in my life than athletic stereotypes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism, sexism and athletic stereotypes are all serious issues in my life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What are the BENEFITS of being a BLACK FEMALE at this university?

What are the CHALLENGES of being a BLACK FEMALE at this university?

What are the BENEFITS of being a BLACK FEMALE STUDENT-ATHLETE at this university?
What are the CHALLENGES of being a BLACK FEMALE STUDENT-ATHLETE at this university?
What do you plan to do following your undergraduate degree?
- Graduate/Professional School
- Work
- Travel
Other (please specify)

Five years from now, do you still see yourself competing in your SPORT?
- Yes
- No
- Unsure
Other (please specify)

Where do you see yourself in the next 5-10 years?

Do you have any suggestions for improving the Black female student-athlete experience in Canadian higher education?

Are there things about your life as a Black female student-athlete that were not covered in this survey that you would like to share? If so, what are they?
Appendix F: Informed Consent Form for Online Survey

(Will be on the first screen/page of the Survey)

An Investigation of the Black Female Student-Athlete Experience within Canadian Higher Education

Purpose of the Study:
The purpose of the present study is to gather descriptive data on the experience of Black female student-athletes at Canadian universities. The academic, athletic and social experiences you have on your university campus will be explored.

This is a national study to be carried out by PhD candidate, Danielle Gabay, under the supervision of Professor Tony Chambers, Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto (OISE/UT). The data is collected for the purpose of a PhD thesis and perhaps for subsequent research articles.

You are invited to participate in this research study if you are:

- A Black woman (of West Indian, African, British, American or Canadian descent), and
- A member of a Canadian Interuniversity Sport team, and
- Have some level of permanency in Canada (i.e. you are born in Canada, you are a Canadian citizen, or a permanent resident).

What will be Done:
You will complete a survey, which will take 30 minutes. The survey includes questions about your educational, athletic and social experience in university (for example, support systems, feelings of belonging, and what benefits and challenges you experience as a Black female student-athlete). Other survey questions will request demographic information (e.g. age, religion, marital status, etc.) so that I can accurately describe the general traits of the group of women who participate in the study.

Benefits of the Study:
This study will provide you with a safe space to share, articulate and document your stories and experiences. As well, this study will help scholars, students, and administrators better understand the experiences of Black female undergraduate student athletes in Canada. Further, your participation in this study will be contributing to groundbreaking research that has not yet been attempted in this area.

Risks or Discomforts:
There is no foreseeable risk associated with participating in this study. You will be asked to reflect on your experiences. The experience itself may uncover emotional feelings related to your experiences as a Black female student athlete. If you feel uncomfortable you are free to skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. Additionally, you will not be judged or evaluated, and at not time will you be at risk of harm.

Decision to Withdraw:
Your participation is voluntary; you may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate you
are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time, without consequence. If you do not want to continue, you can simply leave this website. If you do not click on the "submit" button at the end of the survey, your answers and participation will not be recorded. You are also free to skip any question in the survey at any time.

Confidentiality:
Your responses will be kept confidential. All data is stored in a password protected electronic format. To help protect your confidentiality, the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you. No identifying information such as your name, email address or IP address will be collected when you respond to this Internet survey.

How the Findings will be used:
The results of the study will be used for scholarly purposes only. The results from the study will be presented in educational settings, and the results might be published in subsequent research articles.

Contact Information:
If you have any questions related to your rights as a participant in this study please or if you have any complaints or concerns about how you have been treated as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Ethics, ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact:

Sincerely,
Danielle Gabay Dr. Tony Chambers
PhD Candidate Professor,
OISE/University of Toronto OISE/University of Toronto
(647) 233-9315 (416) 978-1215
d.gabay@utoronto.ca tony.chambers@utoronto.ca

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below.

Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that:

• You have ready the above information
• You voluntarily agree to participate
• You are at least 18 years of age

If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button.

• Agree
• Disagree

Thank You!
Appendix G: Recruitment Poster - Survey

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED:
Black Female Student-Athletes Attending Canadian Universities

I, the researcher, am a Black female graduate student (former varsity student-athlete) and I am looking for volunteers to take part in a study on the Black student experience in Canadian higher education.

The purpose of the study is to gather descriptive data on the experiences of Black female student-athletes in Canadian universities.

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey, which will take approximately 30 minutes. The survey includes demographic questions (e.g., age, sex, ethnicity) and questions regarding your educational, athletic and social experience in university (for example, experience with support systems, feelings of belonging, and the benefits and challenges you experience within the university environment).

Participants must be:

1) Female
2) Self-identify as Black, African American, African, West Indian, etc.
3) Member of a Canadian Interuniversity Sports (CIS) varsity team.
4) An undergraduate student (or have recently graduated in the last 6 months).
5) Have some level of permanency in Canada (i.e., Canadian Citizen or Permanent Resident or have lived in Canada for at least 5 years).

Please go to the link below to fill out the survey.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BlackFemaleStudentAthletes

For more information about this study, please contact:
Danielle Gabay, PhD Candidate
Theory and Policy Studies in Education
University of Toronto/OISE
Email: d.gabay@utoronto.ca

Supported by:
The Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education and The Center for Study of Students in Post-Secondary Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto.

Approved by:
The Social Science and Humanities Research Ethics Board (REB) of the University of Toronto.
Appendix H: Invitation to Participate/Recruitment Letter

EMAIL RECRUITMENT LETTER FOR STUDENTS REGARDING THE SURVEY

[Date]

From: Danielle Gabay, PhD Candidate, Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT)

Participants Needed for Research Study on Black Canadian Female Student-Athletes

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am working under the supervision of Professor Tony Chambers, and I am currently conducting research for my dissertation that will involve Black female student-athletes.

The aim of the study is to gather descriptive data on the experience of Black female student-athletes at Canadian universities. The title of this study is Race, Gender and Interuniversity Athletics: Black Female Student-Athletes in Canadian Higher Education.

I am looking for women who self identify as a 1) Black woman (of West Indian, African, British, American or Canadian descent); 2) a member of a Canadian Interuniversity Sport team (CIS); and a 3) Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey, which will take 30 minutes. The survey includes questions about your educational, athletic and social experience in university (for example, support systems, feelings of belonging, and what benefits and challenges you experience as a Black female student-athlete). Other survey questions will request demographic information (e.g. age, religion, marital status, etc.) so that I can accurately describe the general traits of the group of women who participate in the study.

Your assistance will be invaluable to my study and the broader discussion on race, gender, and sport in higher education, as very limited research exists currently on Black women and Black females student-athletes in Canadian higher education.

If you are eligible and interested in participating in my study please follow the link below to the online survey. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at any time.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Z3LNH7B

Additionally, if you are also interested in participating in an interview please contact me via email (d.gabay@utoronto.ca). The interview should take approximately 1 hour. Your participation is voluntary. Your responses will be kept confidential. If you decide to participate in the survey or interview, you are free to withdraw at any time without consequence.
Sincerely,

Danielle Gabay
PhD Candidate
Theory and Policy Studies in Education
OISE/University of Toronto
(647) 233-9315
d.gabay@utoronto.ca

Dr. Tony Chambers
Professor
Theory and Policy Studies in Education
OISE/University of Toronto
(416) 978-1215
tony.chambers@utoronto.ca
EMAIL RECRUITMENT LETTER TO STUDENTS FOR INTERVIEWS

[Date]

From: Danielle Gabay, PhD Candidate, Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT)

Participants Needed for Research Study on Black Canadian Female Student-Athletes

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am working under the supervision of Professor Tony Chambers, and I am currently conducting research for my dissertation that will involve Black female student-athletes.

The aim of the study is to gather descriptive data on the experience of Black female student-athletes at Canadian universities. The title of my dissertation is: Race, Gender and Interuniversity Athletics: Black Female Student-Athletes in Canadian Higher Education. I am interested in interviewing individuals who self identify as a 1) Black woman (of West Indian, African, British, American or Canadian descent); 2) a member of a Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) team; and a 3) Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada.

Your assistance will be invaluable to my study and the broader discussion on race, gender, and sport in higher education, as very limited research exists currently on Black women and Black female student-athletes in Canadian higher education.

The interview should take approximately 1 hour. During the interview you will be asked demographic questions (i.e. age, religion, martial status, etc.) and questions regarding your academic, athletic and social support systems; sense of belonging; benefits and challenges; and feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction within the university environment. Your participation is voluntary. Your responses will be kept confidential. If you decide to participate in the interview, you are free to withdraw at any time without consequence.

If you are interested in participating in my study as an interviewee, please send me an email (d.gabay@utoronto.ca) so that I can make further arrangements. I will be in [insert jurisdiction] from [insert date] to interview you in person. A telephone/Skype interview is also possible as an alternative.

I would be delighted to answer any questions you may have about my study and look forward to speaking with you about the Black female student-athlete experience in Canadian higher education.

Sincerely,
Danielle Gabay
PhD Candidate
Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education
OISE/University of Toronto
(647) 233-9315
d.gabay@utoronto.ca
[Date]

Dear [Insert Name],

From: Danielle Gabay, PhD Candidate, Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT)

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am working under the supervision of Professor Tony Chambers, and I am currently conducting research for my dissertation that will involve Black female student-athletes.

The aim of the study is to gather descriptive data on the experience of Black female student-athletes at Canadian universities. The significance of this study is to allow Black Canadian female student-athletes an opportunity to articulate their views on race, gender, and sport, which may affect them as undergraduate students. They will have the opportunity to voice their opinions, without consequence, on a topic not usually open for discourse in Canada. The purpose is to diversify the current known perspectives in relation to race, gender, athleticism, the student experience and Canadian higher education.

I would like to gather data that will help me explore the university student experience in relation to race, gender and athleticism. In order to do this, I would like to administer a survey to female, student-athletes, who self-identify as 1) Black woman (of West Indian, African, British, American or Canadian descent); 2) a member of a Canadian Interuniversity Sport team (CIS); and a 3) Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada.

The survey will include questions on various aspects of their academic, athletic and social experiences including student expectations, feelings of satisfaction, program demands, priorities, and the nature of conflicts and resolution. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. The survey will be conducted via the online tool Survey Monkey.

Additionally I would like to conduct one-on-one interviews with willing participants. The interview will last approximately 1 hour. Participants can withdraw from the study at any time without explanation or consequence. All information will be completely confidential.

Participants can choose to participate in either the survey OR the interview. They are not required to complete both.

I am writing to you to, request your help in gaining access to your student-athletes. If you are willing and able to distribute my email/poster on my behalf it would be greatly appreciated. The letters ask students to contact me directly if they are interested in participating. If you have any questions, I would be happy to respond to them at any time.

Thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation.
Sincerely,
Danielle Gabay
PhD Candidate
Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education
OISE/University of Toronto
(647) 233-9315, d.gabay@utoronto.ca
EMAIL AND FACEBOOK RECRUITMENT LETTER SENT DIRECTLY TO STUDENTS

Re: Study on Black female student-athletes in Canadian higher education.

Hi __________.

My name is Danielle Gabay and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, at the University of Toronto, Ontario. I am currently conducting research for my Ph.D. dissertation, which will involve Black female student-athletes.

I hope you do not mind that I located you via your university athletic website. I am hoping that you fit the criteria for my study and could help me out by participating.

As you can imagine, there is an underrepresentation of Black female student-athletes within Canadian universities. Therefore, recruiting participants is proving to be very challenging. Hence, your help would be greatly appreciated.

The aim of the study is to gather descriptive data on the experience of Black female student-athletes within Canadian universities.

Therefore, I was hoping you would be able to either take part in an online survey OR participate in one-on-one interview.

Participants must self identify as:
1) A Black woman (i.e. West Indian, African, British, American, Canadian descent, etc., including bi-racial women); and
2) A member of a Canadian Interuniversity Sport team (CIS); and
3) An undergraduate student (or have recently graduated within the last 6 months); and
4) An individual who has some level of permanency in Canada (i.e. Canadian citizen, permanent resident, or have lived in Canada for at least 5 years).

The survey and interview will include questions on various aspects of your academic, athletic and social experiences, including student expectations, feelings of satisfaction, program demands, and priorities. You can withdraw from the study at any time without explanation or consequence.

All information will be completely confidential. If you have any questions, I would be happy to respond to them at any time. With regards to the interview, a phone/Skype interview can be arranged.

Thank you in advance!

Sincerely,
Danielle Gabay
PhD Candidate
Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education
OISE/University of Toronto
(647) 233-9315, d.gabay@utoronto.ca

Survey Link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BlackFemaleStudentAthletes
Appendix I: Recruitment Poster-Interview

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED:
Black Female Student-Athletes Attending Canadian Universities

I, the researcher, am a Black female graduate student (former varsity student-athlete) and I am looking for volunteers to take part in a study on the Black student experience in Canadian higher education.

The purpose of the study is to gather descriptive data on the experiences of Black female student-athletes in Canadian universities. This study will provide you with a safe space to share, articulate and document your stories and experiences.

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to take part in one-60 minute interview. You will be asked demographic questions (e.g. age, sex, ethnicity) and questions regarding your educational, athletic and social experience in university (for example, experience with support systems, feelings of belonging and, the benefits and challenges you experience within the university environment).

Participants must be:
1) Female
2) Self identify as Black, African American, African, West Indian, etc.
3) Member of a Canadian Interuniversity Sports (CIS) varsity team.
4) An undergraduate student (or have recently graduated in the last 6 months).
5) Have some level of permanency in Canada (i.e. Canadian Citizen or Permanent Resident or have lived in Canada for at least 5 years).

For more information about this study, and/or to volunteer for this study, please contact:

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Supported by:
The Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education and The Center for Study of Students in Post-Secondary Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto.

Approved by:
The Social Science and Humanities Research Ethics Board (REB) of the University of Toronto.
# Appendix J: CIS Data on Female Student Athletes

## CIS Data on Female Student Athletes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CIS Regions</th>
<th>Female Full Time Students</th>
<th>Female Varsity Teams</th>
<th>Female Roster Positions (CIS Competition Sports)</th>
<th>AFA Funding for Females in CIS/SIC Sport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic University Sport (AUS)</td>
<td>37,376</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1,036</td>
<td>$1,162,649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada West Universities Athletic Association (CWUAA)</td>
<td>115,993</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>1,466</td>
<td>$1,533,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario University Athletics (OUA)</td>
<td>198,916</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>2,579</td>
<td>$1,391,749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec (RSEQ)</td>
<td>83,497</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>763</td>
<td>$325,174</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2009-2010 data (from Donnelly, Kidd, & Norman, 2011)*