DEAR STUDENT-ATHLETE: ILLUMINATING THE VOICES OF FORMER FEMALE STUDENT-ATHLETES OF COLOR

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

Racism and sexism have and continue to permeate college sport. While scholars have explored the impact this has on African American male student-athletes, and female student-athletes in general, fewer have directed their attention to the lived experiences of female student-athletes of color. Thus, this population has remained silenced, marginalized, and understudied both historically and in contemporary times. This study fills this gap by illuminating and centralizing the voices of former female student-athletes of color and strives to answer the questions: a) How did race and gender impact the lived experiences of former female student-athletes of color who attended historically White colleges/universities (HWCUs)?; b) How did former female student-athletes of color navigate the good, the bad, and the ugly of their sports organization (i.e., athletic department) and campus life at their HWCU?; and c) What strategies could be applied to enhance the development of current student-athletes of color? Critical race feminism (CRF) and Intersectionality were utilized as theoretical tools to frame this study. Purposeful criterion and snowball sampling were used to recruit N=15 former NCAA female student-athletes of color. Data collection included: a) Background questionnaire; b) In depth semi-structured interview; and c) Written narrative. Findings were analyzed via qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis. Eleven salient themes emerged from the data. Implications for research, theory, and practice in sport management and beyond consists of extending this work to include other former student-athletes, the potential and utility of CRF, and creating community amongst former student-athletes via digital media platforms, and the creation of merchandise. This work has the potential to make impact in the academic sense but also direct impact with this community directly.

DEDICATION

To past, present, and future student-athletes. May you know your worth, find your voice and realize that you are so much #MoreThanAnAthlete.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would have the opportunity to pursue a Ph.D. This was never in the cards for me. I was just a kid from Mililani, Hawaii who had dreams of playing division one softball. Little did I know that my time as a student-athlete would propel me in so many ways. Needless to say I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for amazing people in my life.

First and foremost, I'd like to thank my family and friends for their unconditional love and support over the years. Dad, thank you for being a phenomenal coach but an even better Dad. I will never lose sight of the importance of taking care of the little things, "2H100" (i.e., Hustle, hard work, 100% effort), and taking time to "smell the roses". Mom, thank you for being my support system and always leading by example. You are a strong independent woman who lives everyday with aloha – this is something that I too aspire to be one day. Kacie, thank you for your unwavering support over the years. While being away from home has been difficult at times, I've had the honor of witnessing your growth from afar. Your free spirited nature and ability to thrive in any context is something I envy. I have never been more proud to be your sister. And of course, my sweet Snupe, thank you for being the best boy, emotional support dog, and running partner a dog mama could ask for. Couldn't have done it without you dude! Last but not least, aunties, uncles, friends, former coaches and teammates, colleagues, mentors and professors, though I cannot mention all by name please know that I am extremely grateful and you are sincerely appreciated.

Second, I would be remiss not to express my deepest gratitude to the 15 women who participated in this study. Their willingness to open up and share their powerful

stories moved me immensely and I have no doubt will also impact the lives of others in profound ways. The engagement and support that I have received from this group has been more than I ever could've asked for. Their rich narratives are the heart and soul of this passion project and none of this would be possible without their cooperation.

Third, I would like to thank my friends and colleagues and the department faculty and staff at Texas A&M University. I have a great deal of respect for each of you as scholars but also as people and I am grateful that our paths crossed here. Also, I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Natasha Brison, Dr. George Cunningham, Dr. Joe Feagin, and Dr. Kazuko Suzuki. Thank you for your time, suggestions, revisions, mentorship, and support throughout this process. Thank you for believing in me and this work at times when I didn't even believe in myself. Dear Student-Athlete wouldn't be the same without you all. Finally, to my committee chair Dr. John Singer, thank you for taking me in and all the guidance and support these past four years. Under your tutelage I was able to find my voice and come into my truth as a scholar but also as an Asian American Women – thank you for providing me the space to do so. For this, I will always be grateful.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As a sport management scholar that sees the world through a sociological lens, I strongly believe that you must revisit the past to understand the present. Despite being a relatively young academic discipline (Chalip, 2006), the field of sport management has made great strides in some respects. And needless to say, has lagged behind in others. From a critical sociological standpoint, there have been peaks and valleys, moments of hope and progress followed by stints of silence. Nevertheless, there has been a steady presence of scholars that suggest in order to thrive, the field of sport management must maintain a healthy balance between theory and practice, and show social concern for all people. It is these critical calls to action that resonate deeply and have inspired me as a young scholar looking to make meaningful contributions to the field.

I turn to the words of past Zeigler award recipients like Joy DeSensi (1994) shed light on the need to address multicultural issues related to sport such as gender, race, ethnicity, and more. Wendy Frisby (2005) and her call to utilize the critical social science paradigm in teaching, research, and practice, as a lens to interrogate the bad and ugly sides of sport so that we can enjoy the good sides of it. I know now more than ever, the importance of Allison Doherty's (2014), "It takes a village" speech, when speaking to the necessity of interdisciplinary research in sport management. And echo Dr. Cunningham's (2014) claim, as he reminded us that, "justice and equality in sport will only be realized through our collective action - not our silence". Thanks to the message of these people and others small incremental changes have been made.

This progress is reflected in present times. In the past year, I was fortunate enough to be in the audience for both Dr. Akilah Carter-Francique's heartfelt NASSS Presidential Address titled, *"A Song for You: Composing the Sport Scholar-Educator-Activist"*, as well as Dr. Jennifer McGarry's (2020) powerful Zeigler Address, *"Enact, Discard, Transform: An Impact Agenda."* Two women who have dedicated their life work to a social justice agenda broadly and hearing the voices of those on the margins, that is, women and girls of color in particular, were awarded the highest honors in their respective sub-disciplines. This is no coincidence.

Nevertheless, in the words of Dr. Harry Edwards, "there are no final victories". The aforementioned work coupled with my own lived experiences, pop culture phenomena, and creative endeavors by current and former professional athletes like Martellus Bennett's, children's book, *Dear Black Boy* and LeBron James' multimedia platform, the *Uninterrupted* have inspired and informed the creation of the study I propose today: This is an innovative study that extends the work that came before it and yields practical implications for theory and practice; with honor, emotion, humility, and a grateful heart, this is where I enter the conversation.

Statement of the Problem

Racism and sexism have and continue to permeate American sport and society (Smith, 1992). This includes but is not limited to the college sport context. Nearly 30 years since Smith's (1992) publication on women of color in sport and society this still holds true. For years, scholars have addressed how racism hinders the educational experience and overall development for African American male student athletes attending HWCUs

(Beamon, 2014; Cooper & Hawkins, 2014; Singer, 2005b). In addition, others have addressed the role of gender for female student-athletes in general (Madsen, 2010; Person, Benson-Quaziena, & Rogers, 2001; Petrie & Stover, 1997; Steinfeldt, Zakrajsek, Carter, & Steinfeldt, 2011). Of this collective body of work, fewer scholars have directed their attention to those on the margins, that is, female student-athletes of color and how race, gender, and the intersection thereof (i.e., gendered nuances of racism) may impact their lived experiences as student-athletes on HWCU campuses.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is a "member-led organization dedicated to the well-being and lifelong success of college athletes" (NCAA.com, 2019). According to Lapchick's (2019) *Racial and Gender Report Card,* nearly 30% of all female student-athletes across the NCAA, are women of color. Yet, there remains an alarming dearth of literature and general lack of understanding when it comes to the lived experiences of these individuals in and through college sport (Beamon, 2014; Bruening, 2005; Carter-Francique, 2017; Person et al., 2001). Recent years have brought a growing body of literature focused on African American female student-athletes and their sporting experiences (see Bruening, Armstrong, & Pastore, 2005; Carter-Francique, 2017). Nevertheless, this group and especially other women of color continue to be systematically overlooked in sport research and theory (Beamon, 2014; Bruening, 2005; Carter-Francique, 2017; Lapchick, 2019; Person et al., 2001) and remain on the margins in sport and society (Smith, 1992).

Person and colleagues (2001) argue, "Research in this area is needed so that we can serve these students to the best of our abilities, providing them with support, assistance, and relevant services and programs" (p. 62). This glaring gap in the literature on female

student-athletes of color is not only alarming but dangerous as racism and sexism have and continue to permeate this space (Agyemang, Singer, & DeLorme, 2010; Gayles, Comeaux, Ofoegbu, & Grummert, 2018; Gill, 2011). Furthermore, women of color on college campuses stand at the intersection of multiple identities and may be subjected to unique challenges on the basis of their race, gender, and role as a student-athlete (Bernhard, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to address the aforementioned gap by illuminating and centralizing the voices of former female student-athletes of color. Given the sustained call for sport managers to embrace more innovative and contemporary approaches to qualitative inquiry (Hoeber & Shaw, 2017; Rinehart, 2005; Shaw & Hoeber, 2016; Singer, 2005a; Singer et al., 2019), intersectionality and critical race feminism (CRF) coupled with creative complementary methods of data collection were strategically selected to create a qualitative study that gives participants the platform to share their stories as the researcher seeks to hear the voices within each narrative. Here, the focus on former student-athletes is not only unique but noteworthy. While less effort has been given to investigating this group in comparison to current student-athletes, those who have gone this route suggest these individuals have much to offer (Beamon, 2008; 2012; 2014; Guillaume & Trujillo, 2018; Sartore-Baldwin & Warner, 2012). For instance, in their study on perceptions of justice within intercollegiate athletics Sartore-Baldwin and Warner (2012) touched on this as they assert,

> Indeed, the results of this study indicate that former athletes offer a differing perspective than current athletes. In order for social justice to be achieved in one of

> the United States' celebrated institutions, administrators must seek out and probe the perceptions of former athletes. Due to their more critical views, the results of this study suggest that former athletes may be more likely to be effective agents of changes. (p. 277)

A focus on this group assists in gaining a better understanding of how race and gender impact the experiences of former student-athletes from an intersectional perspective, and in bridging the gap between the experiences of former and current student-athletes.

Significance of the Research

By expanding upon the important work that has been done in this space, this study has broader implications for theory, practice, and has the potential to make meaningful contributions to the field of sport management in a number of ways. These major contributions include: a) Reverberating Bruening's (2005) call to action by placing an emphasis on the need for an explicit and sustained focus on female student-athletes of color and understanding their lived experiences on this basis of race and gender in and through college sport; b) Presenting an opportunity to continue working towards bridging the gap between former and current student-athletes (i.e., how can former student-athletes' voices and experiences help inform solutions that address current issues today's student-athletes encounter?); c) Informing practical action steps for NCAA institutions and associated athletic departments as Cunningham (2012) argued, "the NCAA should be mindful of how diverse, and marginalized, populations educational experience(s) are impacted when creating policies…" (p. 58).; and d) Providing methodological innovation

for the field of sport management. Moreover, the use of qualitative inquiry, specifically personal narrative (e.g., in-depth semi-structured interview and written narrative) answers a call for more personal narrative and innovative qualitative approaches that can serve to invigorate sport management research (Rinehart, 2005; Singer, 2005a; Singer et al., 2019).

These are timely and necessary contributions as we strive to illuminate the voices of former female student-athletes of color in and through sporting spaces.

Research Questions

This study was driven by three research questions:

1. How did race and gender impact the lived experiences of former female student-athletes of color who attended historically White colleges and universities (HWCUs)?
2. How did former female student-athletes of color navigate the good, the bad, and the ugly of their sports organization (i.e., athletic department) and campus life at their HWCU?
3. What strategies can be applied to enhance the development of current student-athlete of color?

The formulation of these research questions was informed by the theoretical frameworks (e.g., Intersectionality and CRF). For example, CRF seeks to identify the inner-workings of patriarchy and racism, specifically, how they work and contribute to the systemic oppression and subordination of women of color (Wing, 2003). Furthermore, engagement with the "researched" community is considered as essential to elicit real social change

(Berry, 2010; Carter-Francique, 2017). The three aforementioned research questions assisted in understanding the stories and lived experiences of former female student-athletes of color, while prompting social change by former female student-athletes of color, for current and future student-athletes to come. Additionally, the existing literature, and the purpose of this dissertation work, also helped shape the research questions presented.

Researcher Positionality

Reflexivity and researcher positionality are vital components when doing qualitative research (Corlett & Mavin, 2017). According to Milner (2007), this is especially important for those conducting race based research as he argues, "Researchers, in particular, are challenged to work through dangers (i.e., seen, unseen, and unforeseen) and to reconsider their own and others' racialized and cultural positionality in conducting research" (p. 397). In the spirit of this call, he adds that being transparent and clearly articulating how the research is conducted may be just as noteworthy as what is revealed in the findings (Milner, 2007). In turn, I will begin by acknowledging my statement of researcher positionality.

My background as a Japanese American female who was born and raised in Hawaii, former student-athlete who played NCAA Division I softball at a HWCU, formerly worked in intercollegiate sport and now as a doctoral student and teaching assistant (TA) who engages with student-athletes (past and present) on a regular basis informed the pursuit and design of this study. My intersectional identity and minority status as a woman of color in the predominantly White male dominated sport industry largely compelled me to draw from theoretical frameworks like intersectionality and

critical race feminism (CRF) in conjunction to innovative qualitative methods of data collection that seek to illuminate the voices and showcase the participant's stories. After having some time to reflect on my time as a female student-athlete of color at a HWCU, I realized that I experienced some of the best but also greatest struggles during this time. My memories of winning a conference championship and traveling around the country with my teammates are plagued with feelings of vulnerability, anger, shame, and embarrassment. These stem from experiences that are clearer in hindsight and when recalled via a critical lens. On the field, my nickname was a mix between Ninja and Ichiro. Upon missing a fly ball my coach would make comments such as, "Was the sun in your eyes? Because you have no eyes", and ask questions like why I looked like a baby China doll but still played softball. Off the field, I recall my junior year when my athletics academic advisor enrolled me in Taekwondo and told me this was a required elective - I would later find out it was not. However, unknowingly I took it and became the running joke in study halls and the academic advising offices that semester. I dreaded going to the football training room to get treatment after 6:00 am weights in the morning wondering if the same football player would verbally harass me, speaking in a mix of English and the couple of Asian words he knew but would use out of context. While there are more, these were just a few of the more appropriate racialized and gendered experiences that were part of my everyday life as student, athlete, and student-athlete.

It is my hope that this work will be a first step towards highlighting these women, building community and a way that we can include the voices of former female student-athletes of color in conceptualizing practical solutions capable of addressing issues today's student-athletes face.

Based on the purpose statement and research questions driving this study I assumed that the majority of the participants will have experienced some form of racism and/or sexism during their tenure as student-athletes. In the literature, several scholars have highlighted the ways in which African American male student-athletes at HWCUs experience racism and discrimination and the negative effects this has on their educational experience and overall development (Beamon, 2014; Cooper, 2019; Cooper & Hawkins, 2014; Singer, 2005b; Singer, 2019). In addition, the sexist nature embedded in sport that often goes unrecognized and uncontested (Fink, 2016) led me to believe that the participants in this study will also experience unique forms of discrimination on the basis of race in addition to that of gender (i.e., the gendered nuances of racism). While I may have been optimistic, I expected that some participants in my study would have much to say regarding their lived experiences after having time to reflect since their college careers have come to a close. Studies have pointed to the consuming nature of a singular athlete identity for some student-athletes (Beamon, 2012; Brewer, Petitpas, Van Raalte, & Mahar, 1993; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996). Thus, if one is committed to being a student-athlete they may consciously or unconsciously think less critically about external factors at play. After having time to reflect on their experience, I suspected that they may conceptualize their time spent and things endured as a student-athlete in new ways.

My assumptions were informed by the existing literature and my own personal experiences as a former Asian American female student-athlete who attended an HWCU. Nevertheless, there is the chance that I could be wrong. An absence or lack of narrative in general (i.e., silence) or accounts of fairness, equality, or instances where neither one's race and/or gender was the source of discrimination and negativity would indicate that my

assumptions were incorrect. Nevertheless, this is a positive thing and much can still be gained from the research.

Limitations

This research was not without limitations. As a former student-athlete and current doctoral student working in the field of sport management, I utilized my network and personal connections in college sport and academia as a starting point to recruit the participants for this study. While this was helpful with gaining access, and establishing credibility, this can be a double-edged sword as this may exert bias in the sampling process and could have potentially influenced the answers given by participants if they were aware of my background as a former-student athlete, Asian American female, etc. Additionally, I was the sole investigator in this study; thus, in the process of collecting, transcribing, and analyzing the data my bias may have also been asserted. The use of member checking was used to help to address said bias and maximize trustworthiness as well as credibility in the data collection, analysis, interpretation, and writing process. I also kept a reflexive journal to document introspective thoughts and general questions and comments that emerged. One could argue that a final limitation was the sample size (N=15). While I do acknowledge that the findings will not speak to the lived experiences of all former female student-athletes of color, this study is transferable, meaning that it can be applied in other settings with a different group of people (Cope, 2014, Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Polit & Beck, 2012). This element of transferability is essential in qualitative inquiry. Due to the glaring dearth of literature on former female student-athletes of color in college sports, despite the relatively small sample size, this

study provides meaningful contributions to the sport management literature and will lay the foundation for future research to follow.

Definitions of Key Terms

The following terms appear frequently throughout this document. To avoid confusion these terms have been defined in the space below and will be expounded in various sections throughout this proposal.

Critical Race Feminism (CRF)

A theoretical framework that draws from three tenets of CRT: a) race and racism as the norm; b) anti-essentialism and intersectionality; and c) counter-storytelling/narrative. The purpose of CRF is to identify the inner-workings of patriarchy and racism, specifically, how they work and contribute to the systemic oppression and subordination of women of color (Wing, 2003).

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

A social movement and theoretical framework that emerged from the social missions of the Civil Rights Era in the 1960s (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). CRT scholars are particularly interested in understanding the contours and nuances of race, racism, and White supremacy in the US legal system and other social institutions, and changing the bond that stubbornly persists between these systems and racial power and privilege.

Gender

"What is considered masculine and what is considered feminine in a group or society" (Coakley, 2009, p. 258). In this document gender will be used when discussing differences between men and women that are informed by environmental factors or a combination of environmental and biological factors (Cunningham, 2019).

Intersectionality

A theoretical framework, powerful concept, and analytical tool (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Intersectionality acknowledges that one's social categories are not independent but rather should be understood in how they interact and/or influence each other (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991).

Lived Experiences

A term in qualitative research which is understood as a representation and intimate understanding of a participant's experiences, choices, and opinions that influence one's perception of knowledge (Given, 2008). This is gained through personal first hand experiences in everyday life.

Race

"A population of people who are believed to be naturally or biologically distinct from other populations" (Coakley, 2009, p. 276). This can be considered to be a social construction.

Student-Athlete

Simply put, this term can be defined as an individual who participates in an NCAA sanctioned organized sport at the college that they attend. I would be remiss not to mention the dilemma this term presents. Staurowsky and Sack (2005) critically interrogate the exploitive origins and evolution of the term over time as they challenge scholars to reconsider the use of the term in academic research. While I agree with the crux of their claims, I argue that for many the title of student-athlete is an honorary one and something many identify with, or aspire to be. Thus, this term is used strategically as there is power in the term and using it may allow the findings to reach and empower more people (i.e., past, present, and future student-athletes).

Women of Color

This can be considered women, "representing several diverse ethnic groups-identified as African American, Hispanic (Latina, Puerto Rican, Chicana), Asian American (Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese), or Native American (Indian, Alaskan Native)" (Smith, 19992, p. 228). Historically, these women have been marginalized in American sport and society (Hall, 2001; Smith, 1992).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to illuminate and centralize the voices of former female student-athletes of color, a group that has long been overlooked. This chapter provides an overview of work that has been done in this area thus far and explains how it informs this study. To begin, I start broadly and delve into the literature on race and gender in sport and society respectively. Next, I move on to discuss Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality and stereotypes imposed on women of color in the U.S. Since this study takes a particular interest in college athletics and the student-athlete experience, this is followed by a look into the literature regarding the lived experiences of women of color on college campuses broadly, and HWCUs more specifically. Finally, this chapter concludes with an explanation of the need for an explicit and sustained focus on the lived experiences of former female student-athletes of color and an outline of the theoretical frameworks that will be used in this study.

Race in Sport and Society

In his foundational work *The Souls of Black Folk,* W.E.B. DuBois (1903) famously asserted that the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line. More than a century later, Hylton (2018) argued that this sentiment remains pertinent to sport and society, as race and the task of racial equality continues to present an ongoing issue in the twenty-first century. While many find comfort in the good and mythical power in the institution of sport (e.g., the Great Sport Myth) (Coakley, 2015), others remind us that sport is a microcosm of society (Eitzen, 2000) where its racialized dynamics inform and

are informed by wider discourses, ideologies, structures, issues, and controversy (Hylton, 2018). In turn, there is an increasing need to better understand and address the social ills flowing through sport and society, including the presence of race, racism, and the racialized experiences of those within it.

For years, sport management scholars have sought to understand the state of race and ethnic group relations in the U.S. context and to examine how these realities have been produced, reproduced and perpetuated in and through sport organizations. Ketra Armstrong (2011) provided a brief overview of trends and patterns of race and ethnicity research taking place in the field. Armstrong's (2011) findings will guide the discussion to follow.

Research examining the direct and indirect instances of discrimination and prejudice faced by minority populations was noted as the most common area of interests (Armstrong, 2011). Falling under this umbrella, other salient lines of research include: unequal employment opportunities for people of color in sport organizations (Cunningham, Bruening, & Straub, 2006; McDowell, Cunningham, & Singer, 2009; Quaterman, 1992), the struggles of student-athletes of color from a racial-social perspective (Beamon, 2014; Bruening, Armstrong, & Pastore, 2005; Carter-Francique, Lawrence, & Eyanson, 2011; Martin, Harrison, Stone, & Lawrence, 2010; Singer, 2005b; 2008; 2009; 2016), racial stereotypes and stacking (Bopp, Vadeboncoeur, & Turick, 2019; Sack, Singh, & Thiel, 2005), and the challenges present for women of color and the influence on sport leadership opportunities (Armstrong, 2007; McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017). Sport marketers have also explored how race and ethnicity influences the consumption of sport (Armstrong & Stratta, 2004; Armstrong, 2008; Clarke & Mannion, 2006).

Also worth noting are efforts from the field to explicitly highlight this area of interest. In 2010 and 2011 respectively, leading journals in the field of sport management, *Sport Management Review (SMR)* and *the Journal of Sport Management (JSM)* dedicated special issues to focus on the topics of race and ethnicity. As a collective, articles in the former presented an opportunity for readers, scholars, and practitioners alike to critically reflect on "sport management and societal structures, values, norms and policies in the context of what might be termed ethno-racial studies" (Adair, Taylor, & Darcy, 2010, p. 308). Meanwhile, in the latter, articles addressed the salience of race and ethnicity in sport management practices, research, and experiences of various stakeholders (i.e., sport employees, athletes, etc.) (Armstrong, 2011).

The works featured in these special issues shined a light on several groups that have historically been marginalized in the sport management literature, including indigenous perspectives (see Hoeber, 2010; Nicholson, Hoye, & Gallant, 2011), African American experiences (Cunningham, 2010), ethnic minority women (Carter & Hart, 2010; Gill, 2011), and the organizational culture of college sport (Doherty, Fink, Inglis, & Pastore, 2010). However, despite this progress, some scholars warned against the scarcity of research on the experiences of other underrepresented groups in sport, including but not limited to Asians and Hispanics (Carter & Hart, 2010).

Since these publications nearly a decade ago scholars have continued to build upon this important work. Moreover, societal changes and various social events in and through sporting spaces have resulted in new research on race in sport management to emerge (e.g., racialized discourse and cyber racism in online spaces). For example, the most popular and rapidly growing area of interest as of late is the focus on athlete activism in sport. In 2016,

Colin Kaepernick's demonstration of symbolic activism by kneeling to bring greater attention to police brutality against and the systemic oppression of Black people in the United States (U.S.) criminal justice system took the National Football League (NFL) by storm (Weems, Oshiro, & Singer, 2017). Since then, athlete activism has continued to burgeon in and beyond the sport context, receiving significant media coverage and attention from sport management scholars (Agyemang, Singer, & DeLorme, 2010; Cooper, Macaulay, & Rodriguez, 2019; Oshiro, Weems, & Singer, in press; Sanderson, Frederick, & Stocz, 2016; Yan, Pegoraro, & Watanabe, 2018; Weems & Oshiro, 2019). While this interest has been a source of hope and progress in the field, an explicit and sustained focus on race and ethnicity is still needed in sport management specifically in contexts such as college athletics.

College sport and the student-athlete experience have and continue to be an area of interest for sport management scholars concerned with the study of race and racism (Armstrong, 2011). Most notably, Brooks and Althouse edited series, *Racism in College Athletics* (2013), has long focused on issues of race, racism, and racial equity, equality and diversity in college. In this context, race based research has focused primarily on the African American male sporting experience in and through college sport (Cooper 2019; Harrison, Bimper, Smith, & Logan, 2017; Hawkins, 2010; Singer, 2005b; Smith, 2007). Issues like exploitation, academic clustering, mis-education, lived experiences at HWCUs and more have been examined. For example, Singer (2005b) argue that race and racism hinder the educational experiences and overall development for these individuals. Similarly, Beamon (2014) contended that negative experiences with stereotyping and name

calling from fellow students and fans were salient sources of racism experienced by the African American male student-athletes at HWCUs.

According to Armstrong (2011), when it comes to understanding the racial-social struggles of student-athletes of color, most studies have been concerned with African American males and to a lesser extent African American females. In her powerful piece, Bruening (2005) problematizes this narrow focus. Furthermore, while her study is primarily concerned with African American females, she advocates for more research inclusive of the lived experiences of those historically silenced populations, that is, women, people of color, and *especially women who are people of color* (Bruening, 2005).

This work suggests there is a gap in the literature on race and racism in sport management research and identifies a fruitful place for research to be extended. Armstrong (2011) and others note the element of systemic whiteness also referred to as an "Anglocentric Flavor" pervades sport management, industry and academy alike. This, coupled with the general lack of representation from scholars of color in the field may partially explain why research in sport management has lagged behind broader studies on race and ethnicity in other fields (Armstrong, 2011; Thomas & Dyall, 1999). Simply put, Armstrong (2011) expressed, "While research on race and ethnicity in leisure (in general) has grown in 'waves' (Floyd, 2007), research on race and ethnicity in Sport Management in particular has comparably appeared in 'ripples'" (p. 100). In the words of Gayles and colleagues (2018), "Race remains a salient and divisive issue in twenty first century athletics" (p. 11). Thus, it is important to address the gap, as doing so will allow us as sport managers to better understand the lived experiences, and the unique needs of diverse populations of people.

Gender in Sport and Society

Before transitioning into a discussion of gender, it is imperative to explicitly acknowledge the terminology I will use throughout this section. This is particularly important when doing work in the area of women and gender studies and likewise in the field of sport management (Cunningham, 2019). Definitions of gender and sex are not universal, natural, or objective. However, these conceptualizations have consequences on meso- (i.e., organizational/structural) and micro-levels (i.e., individual) (Alsop, Fitzsimons, & Lennon 2002; Fausto-Sterling 1993, 2000; Fujimura 2006). In turn, gender scholars in Western cultures have long discussed the distinction between sex and gender. In regards to the former, in some capacity most contend that sex is understood as biological differences while gender is considered something that is socially constructed (Alsop et al., 2002; Fujimura, 2006; Fausto-Sterling, 2000). Despite this consensus, the authors also offered criticism of such dichotomous/binary thinking giving rise to debates on the hard sciences vs. social sciences, nature vs. nurture, etc.

In the biological-social nexus so to speak, Haraway (2004) assert that despite our siloed thinking the biological and social are irrevocably intertwined and therefore should be treated as such. In line with this sentiment, Gayle Rubin (1975) uses the term "sex/gender system" in order to describe "a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention" (p. 204). Thus, Rubin's (1975) verbiage acknowledges the distinction between sex and gender but also how the two inevitably inform one another. While all stances are worth noting, for the purpose of this research I will draw from Cunningham (2019), who define gender as,

"traits that are culturally appropriate for women and men" (p. 121) and sex as, "biology and the physical and chromosomal differences between females and males" (p. 121).

Like the race based studies previously discussed, research on gender is of equal importance. When it comes to gender and sexism in particular, the latter is considered, "the belief or attitude that women are inferior to men, the application of masculine stereotypes to women or the hatred of one gender or sex" (Brittan & Maynard, 1984). While sexism is not unique to sport, scholars have expressed the distinct and dangerous ways in which sexism plays out in sporting spaces. For example, Fink contended, "But that is what is so interesting about sexism in sport. It is commonly overt yet simultaneously unnoticed. It hides in plain sight. It is so entwined in the fabric of sport that most do not even discern it." (p. 1). Furthermore, despite progress that has been made related to gender discourse, associated research (Shaw & Frisby, 2006), and the representation and achievements of women in sporting spaces over the years, this indicates that there remain challenges that need to be addressed in the field of sport management. Furthermore, college sport represents a context that is particularly in need of attention.

Historically, scholarship in sporting spaces has mirrored the dominant White male culture that permeates the sport industry (Bruening, 2005). Moreover, research on the basis of gender in college sports has focused primarily on White female student-athletes, at least in terms of representation and participation in the respective research studies. Most notably issues such as lesbian stereotyping (Walker and Melton, 2015), eating disorders and nutritional concerns (Allred & Powe, 1997; Johnson, Powers, & Dick, 1999), sport-related injuries, and sexual harassment have garnered much attention and rightfully so as these perspectives are needed. Nevertheless, this narrow focus has resulted in the silencing of

African American women and other women of color in the sport management literature. Bruening (2005) warned sport scholars that, "all the women are not White and all the Blacks are not men (Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982), and that those individuals can have different experiences becoming involved and staying involved in sport" (p. 330).

Additionally, Shaw and Frisby (2006) acknowledged the redundancy and overuse of liberal feminist theory which has dominated research on gender in sport management. Consequently, they contend that this approach, "does little to challenge or alter dominant gendered discourses and power structures within sport organizations" (p. 483). In sum, the dominance of liberal feminist theory may explain the somewhat narrow focus of gender research and offer support for why new theoretical and methodological frameworks are needed to be more inclusive of the experiences of females of color and to embrace other intersecting identities. This is worth noting as Gill (2011) warned that sexism in college sport manifests in a multitude of ways and further research is warranted to better understand the intricacies of this phenomenon.

In more recent years, scholars in the field of sport management and beyond have answered the call to move the experiences of African American female student-athlete from margins to center. Additionally, alternative theoretical and methodological frameworks have been incorporated to diversify research in this area (see Carter-Francique, 2017). For example, utilizing Patricia Hill Collins' Black feminist thought has allowed scholars to, "elucidate the multiple and complex structures, discourses and agencies that affect African American women's sporting experiences" (Carter-Francique, 2017, p. 66). This research has been used to explore the media framing of Black female athletes (Carter-Francique, 2013), the nature of Black leadership in community recreation sport

(Armstrong, 2007), the lived experiences of African American female student-athletes at historically White colleges and universities (HWCUs) (see Bruening, 2005; Bruening et al., 2005; Carter & Hart, 2010; Carter & Hawkins, 2011), and more. While scholars have also started to highlight other female student-athletes of color such as Guillaume and Trujillo's (2018) powerful work that examines the lived experiences of Latina former student-athletes pursuing a graduate education, there remains a gap in the literature. In sum, more research of this nature is needed to work towards better understanding the lived experiences of female student-athletes of color from an intersectional perspective.

The aforementioned research on race and gender lays the foundation for scholars to explore the concept of intersectionality. Next, I will discuss the nuances of this approach and explain the ways in which this will serve as a point of departure for my own research agenda. This is where I enter the conversation.

Intersectionality: Women of Color

Unsatisfied with the ways in which feminist and antiracist discourse marginalized the complex identities of women of color, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991; 1993) introduced the term intersectionality. This acknowledges that one's social categories are not independent but rather should be understood in how they interact and/or influence each other (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991). Early on, Crenshaw (1989) used this as a lens to make sense of the employment experiences of Black women. Nevertheless, she suggests intersectionality can be useful when extended to other women of color (Crenshaw, 1993). This is necessary as Zinn and Dill (1994) express, "For African American women, Latinas, Asian American women, and Native American women, gender is part of the larger pattern

of unequal social relations; how gender is experienced depends on how it intersects with other inequalities" (p. 3). I address this concept in more detail in the theoretical framework section.

The gendered racism imposed on women of color manifests in numerous ways (Feagin, 2013). For instance, humor, language, symbolism, and stereotypes are just a couple of examples. Moreover, the nature of these things may differ based on race. For example historically negative portrayals of African American women include Aunt Jemima, the house-keeper/mammy, and the sexually aggressive "jezebel", while more modern imagery points to these women as the matriarch or welfare queen (Ammons, 1995; Feagin, 2013). For Asian American women, Museus and Iftikar (2013), articulate that, "the intersections of race and gender can produce stereotypes of hypersexual and submissive sex objects" (p. 18). Associated imagery includes but is not limited to lotus blossoms, geishas, and prostitutes (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). Finally, Latina women are assigned several behavioral traits such as being sexual, exotic, and domestic (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005). Being self-sacrificing, dependent and powerless are also noted as prominent stereotypes imposed on Latinas in the U.S. (Lott & Saxon, 2002). Therefore, while all women may experience some shared similarities in terms of prejudice and stereotypes based on their gender, they may face unique differences based on the racist subframes that are present.

In the context of sporting spaces, there are several examples where we see these stereotypes come to fruition. For instance, the 2007 Rutgers Women's basketball and Don Imus controversy and the more recent 2018 emotion-laden caricature of Serena Williams and Naomi Osaka at the U.S. Open are just a couple of many examples. In the former,

Imus directed racists comments towards the Rutgers Women's basketball team, a very successful team made up of predominantly African American females, referring to them as "nappy-headed hos" amongst other inappropriate comments (Feagin, 2013; Gill, 2011). This exemplifies the harsh and sexualized nature of framing against Black women. In the latter, Mark Knight of the *Herald Sun*, put forth a highly-racialized caricature following the U.S. Open Tennis Singles Championship between African American female superstar, Williams, and up and coming Osaka who is of Japanese and Haitian descent. In the caricature, O'Neal (2018) asserts Knight:

> …[depicted] Williams as an enraged behemoth. She is drawn with big lips as well as an outsize chest and arms that make her tutu and ponytail (i.e., indicators of femininity) part of his editorial judgement. She is jumping up and down on the wreckage of a tennis racket destroyed by her thunderous legs. (para. 3)

On the contrary, Oshiro and Weems (2018) contended that, "In stark contrast to a hyper-visible Williams, in the background is Osaka, portrayed as a much smaller, thinner, docile, observably White female with blonde hair taking direction from the official" (para. 7). The racist and sexist frames imposed upon both women illustrate the deep framing and emotion-laden stereotypes present. In sum, intersectionality and the position of women of color in sport and society is imperative to consider as we continue to draw attention to this line of work.

In the next section, I will delve into the literature on women of color on college campuses. In doing so, I will highlight the importance of addressing the culture and matters of historically White colleges and universities (HWCU), and how these spaces inform the respective student and student-athlete experience for women of color.

Women of Color on College Campuses

HWCU Matters

To understand the totality of the student and student-athlete experience one must first come to understand the culture of HWCUs and the ways in which women of color are situated within these spaces. Several scholars have shed light on the historical foundations of HWCUs and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) as well as other minority serving institutions (Bonilla-Silva, 2012; Feagin, 2002; Gasman, Baez, & Turner, 2008; Kynard & Eddy, 2009; Merisotis & McCarthy, 2005) and their associated athletic departments (Cheeks & Carter-Francique, 2015; Cooper, Cavil, & Cheeks, 2014; Cooper, 2018). However, while the nuances of minority serving institutions are often explicitly noted, the taken for granted inner workings of HWCUs tend to be more covert and generally lack critical interrogation (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). Furthermore, Bonilla-Silva (2012) asserts, "we never ponder the whiteness of these places, we rarely question the history and the practices that create and maintain these institutions as white" (p. 184). This ultimately hinders our ability to address the inequalities present within these institutions and the impact this has on students (Bonilla-Silva, 2012; Chou, Lee, & Ho, 2016).

Feagin (2013) expressed that systemic racism is built upon the foundation of the White racial frame, that is, the dominant racial framing (i.e., overarching White worldview) that has legitimated, rationalized and shaped racial inequality and oppression in this country for years. A key feature is the strong pro-White sub-frame, also referred to as the pro-White center, that views Whites and Whiteness as virtuous, superior, moral and good. Antithetical to this is the equally strong anti-others sub-frame, that encompasses a

strong negative orientation to racial "others" (Feagin, 2013). Furthermore, racial stereotypes and prejudice, narratives, emotion-laden images and feelings have been "established over time and used to rationalize and justify white power, and privilege and racial minority oppression and subordination" (Singer, Weems, & Garner, 2017, p. 24).

Likewise, the phenomenon, which Bonilla-Silva (2012) refers to as the "invisible weight of whiteness" is systemic in nature and has been institutionalized into the fabric of major parts of society (e.g., education) for centuries (Bonilla-Silva, 2012; Chou et al., 2016; Feagin, 2002; Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2013). There are countless examples of how this presents itself on campuses across the U.S. including but not limited to time honored traditions, physical symbols (e.g., statues), names of buildings, and more (Bonilla-Silva, 2012). These cultural symbols inform the campus climate and culture of the university at large. This matters because it encourages and perpetuates a culture of exclusion where minority students, faculty members, and support staff may not feel welcomed (Bonilla-Silva, 2012). Deeply embedded within the culture of institutions of higher education and society, this oppressive reality naturally trickles down into the institutional logics of the associated athletic departments. In turn, continued interrogation of the culture of HWCUs and a better understanding of where women of color are situated within these spaces is warranted both in regards to their respective roles as student and student-athlete. Next, I will review the work that has looked at the experiences of women of color on HWCU campuses. This will be followed by an overview of the limited, yet, powerful work that has focused on the lived experiences of female student-athletes of color at HWCUs.

The Student Experience

To be able to participate in their respective sport, student-athletes must maintain a certain level of academic eligibility (NCAA.com, 2019). While some student-athletes may experience increased visibility or even celebrity status as a highly recognized figure on campus (Ferrante, Etzel, & Pinkney, 1991), for many, aside from team issued athletic gear, they may be seen as just another student and susceptible to many of the same struggles as their non-athlete peers. In regards to race, gender, and intersectionality, scholars have documented the lived experiences of racial and ethnic minorities on college campuses, with a handful highlighting the gendered nuances of racism at play for women of color, in particular, in more recent years (Bernhard, 2014; Guillaume & Trujillo, 2018; Shahid, Nelson, & Cardemil, 2018).

Jones, Castellanos, and Cole (2002) suggest, "The ethnic minority experience is said to be distinctly different from that of majority students at PWIs" (p. 23). The research focused on women of color on HWCUs campuses indicates that there are both shared similarities and unique racial differences in regards to the experiences in this space. In terms of the former (e.g., shared similarities), many students of color express feelings of alienation and describe campus as being a cold and lonely place (Domingue, 2015; Jones et al., 2002). Additionally, being the target of racism via racial microaggressions in the classroom and on campus was another salient theme that has been reported across various racial/ethnic groups in multiple studies (Jones et al., 2002; Lewis et al., 2019). These things are worth noting because not only are they common but can negatively influence things like academic performance and psychological well-being, and more for students of color (Lewis et al., 2019; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, &

Hart, 2008). For instance, this can also affect a student's sense of belonging on campus, as Lewis and colleagues (2019) assert, "Students of color who experienced a greater frequency of racial microaggressions in the classroom and on campus also reported decreased sense of belonging" (p. 2). Therefore, these shared similarities and challenges that students of color, and women of color in particular, face are important to recognize and are worthy of further investigation. It is also just as important to understand the unique differences present for women of color based on their respective racial group. In the next section, I will draw from the literature to unpack the lived experiences of African American, Asian American, and Latina female college students at HWCUs.

African American Women

The everyday realities endured by women of color are informed by norms and stereotypes present on the societal level. Feelings of isolation, racism, and discrimination were frequently noted in studies examining the experiences of African American female students attending HWCUs (Domingue, 2015; Hannon, Woodside, Pollard, & Roman, 2016; Shahid et al., 2018). In addition, feelings of emotional pain and invisibility are additional challenges that these individuals endure (Howard-Vital, 1989). In one study, Shahid and colleagues (2018) speak to the prevalence and negative effect of stereotypes and mis-representations of African American women on campus as they suggest, "Racial and gendered stereotypes may create unique challenges for Black women based on perceived stereotypes about Black people in general and Black women in particular" (p. 7). This was also apparent in Donovan's (2011) study, where White college students revealed their feeling towards Black women – labeling them as loud, tough, angry, talkative,

insensitive, and less educated in comparison to White women. These examples are just a few which capture the ongoing battle with stereotypes, gendered racism, and social inequities that African American female students encounter in the context of HWCUs (Carter-Francique & Hawkins, 2011; Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Asian American Women

Historically Asian Americans have been greatly overlooked in research within higher education (Museus & Park, 2015). While more recent studies have started to look into the lived experiences of Asian American college students there remains a dearth of literature in this area and further inquiry is warranted (Museus & Park, 2015). The available literature shows that Asian American women attending HWCUs face numerous challenges based on their intersectional identity. In a series of studies conducted with 70 Asian American college students on an elite American campus, Chou and colleagues (2016) assert, "The experiences of these Asian American respondents that are racialized are intertwined with systems of gender and sexuality. Controlling images that shape perceptions of Asian American masculinity, femininity, and sexuality perpetuates racial domination" (p. 37). In turn, feeling like outsiders on their own campus (Chou & Feagin, 2015), racial harassment, isolation and exclusion, pressures to assimilate along with representational and cultural silencing (Museus & Park, 2015) are some of the racialized experiences reported by Asian American college students. Gender also plays a prominent role as Chou and colleagues (2016) suggest, "While Asian American women are stereotyped as exotic sexualized racial others, Asian American men are stereotyped as asexual, effeminate, foreign, weak, marginalized men" (p. 37). Thus, the gendered nuances

of racism also inform the everyday lives and experiences Asian American female students endure at HWCUs.

One stereotype unique to this group is the myth of the model minority (Chou & Feagin, 2015; Museus & Kiang, 2009; Wing, 2007), that is, a White constructed and typically White imposed stereotype that has profoundly impacted Asian Americans both in terms of identity and lived experience (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). It characterizes certain Asian American groups as exemplary in education, occupation, and professional achievement in comparison to other people of color (Chou & Feagin, 2015; Hurh & Kim, 1989), which is detrimental because it implies attention and assistance is no longer needed for people of Asian descent (Lai, 2013) or that Asian American students do not face significant struggles in the context of higher education. Scholars suggest this myth may be part of the reason why Asian Americans have been overlooked in higher education and beyond (Chou & Feagin, 2015; Chou et al., 2016; Museus & Kiang, 2009).

Latina Women

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2011), Latinas/os are the fastest growing ethnic group in the U.S. and as a result, they are attending college at increased rates (Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2015; Fry & Lopez, 2012). While Latina/o students and Latinas in particular continue to be generally overlooked in higher education research (Rodriguez, Guido-DiBrito, Torres, & Talbot, 2000) there is some research that sheds light on their experiences and the struggles they face on HWCU campuses.

In addition to the daily challenges of discrimination, isolation, and invisibility that other minority groups also encounter (Jones et al., 2002; Lewis et al., 2019), the racism

imposed on Latina/o students plays out in distinct ways. For example, in one study examining the racial microaggressions experienced by this group, Yosso, Smith, Ceja, and Solórzano (2009) suggest that Latina/o students who attend HWCUs may experience contempt for them as individuals and well as for their abilities. More specifically, they are stereotyped as under qualified, lacking intelligence, and generally unequipped and unwanted in these spaces (Yosso et al., 2009). These racial microaggressions are put forth in the form of interpersonal microaggressions, racial jokes, and institutional microaggressions (Yosso et al., 2009), and when directed specifically at Latinas/os commonly revolve around: insinuations of language, culture, immigration status, phenotype, accent, and surname (Yosso et al., 2009).

Gender based differences are also apparent for Latina students on HWCU campuses, which Rodriguez and colleagues (2000) introduced. Here, their primary focus was on the stereotypes present for Latina women, in general, and how these inform the challenges they have and continue to face within the context of higher education. For example, the stereotype that Latinas are submissive, docile, and have no aspirations other than producing children certainly informs others' misunderstanding and low expectations regarding academic achievement for this particular group (Rodriguez et al., 2000). Finally, in regards to gender based differences amongst Latina/o college students, Rodriguez and colleagues (2000) contend that the dearth of attention on Latinas in higher education largely stem from the academic success and resilience they have experienced in comparison to their Latino male counterparts. While this may hold true, scholars suggest that further research dedicated to better understanding the experiences of Latina college students in the context of higher education is much needed (Guillaume & Trujillo, 2018).

The Student-Athlete Experience

> Athletes who are women or students of color—or both—like other college athletes, play the dual role of student and athlete. However, these two groups also share the distinction of being two of the most visible of historically underrepresented groups in higher education. (Person et al., 2001, p. 55)

In addition to the demands of student life, student-athletes represent a special population and face unique challenges, stressors, and pressure in comparison to their non-athlete peers (Gayles, 2009; Wilson & Pritchard, 2005). Scholars have taken interest in the intricacies of the student-athlete experience and perhaps not surprisingly, many point to a key feature unique to this group, that is, time demands (Beauchemin, 2014; Brecht & Burnett, 2019, Gayles, 2009; Potuto & O'Hanlon, 2007; Singer, 2008; Wilson & Pritchard, 2005). For example, maintaining a certain level of academic eligibility (Hendricks & Johnson, 2016), attending classes and study hall sessions, participating in at least 20 hours of athletic activities each week (Holsendolph, 2006) and sport-related travel are just a few of the things student-athletes are expected to balance on a regular basis (Brecht & Burnett, 2019). Furthermore, Simiyu (2010) suggests that student-athletes face additional challenges on the individual and institutional levels. This can range from personal goal setting and career choices, physical and emotional fatigue, to external issues such as, coaching demands and expectations, institutional policies, discrimination, and marginalization from college mainstream activities (Simiyu, 2010, p. 16). In sum, Engstrom and Sedlacek (1991) contended that student-athletes are susceptible to unique

forms of prejudice and discrimination. A trend that is often heightened for student-athletes of color (Greer & Robinson, 2006; Person et al., 2001).

This group faces distinct struggles in sport and society; as Person and colleagues (2001) contend that, "Issues that are particularly challenging for student athletes of color are social and academic integration, performance pressure in their sport, and racism and sexism on campus" (p. 59). On the basis of race, research in this space has focused primarily on African Americans, while insight on other student-athletes of color (e.g., Asian American, Latina/o, Native American) remains sparse (Person et al., 2001). In terms of gender, there is significantly less research exploring the experiences of female student-athletes of color on college campuses and with those who attend or have attended HWCUs in particular.

While research has historically investigated female student-athletes and student-athletes of color, few had directed their attention to those who identified as both, that is, female student-athlete of color (Person et al., 2001). As such, this group remained marginalized and overshadowed by studies addressing the realities, challenges and needs of Black men and White women (Bruening, 2005; Carter-Francique & Hawkins, 2011). However, thanks to several calls to action (see Bruening, 2005; Person et al., 2001; Smith, 1992) in recent years we have witnessed an evolving body of work on African American female student-athletes broadly and their experiences at HWCUs in particular (Bruening, 2005; Bruening et al., 2005; Carter & Hart, 2010, Carter & Hawkins, 2011; Carter-Francique et al., 2011; Carter-Francique, 2013). These efforts largely led by Carter-Francique and colleagues show that, "Black female college athletes experience a 'double

bind' based on their categorization as racial (e.g., Black) and gendered (e.g., Woman) 'others' in the context of sport" (Carter-Francique, Dortch, & Carter-Phiri, 2017, p. 18).

Beyond the aforementioned challenges present for African American female students at HWCUs, those who are student-athletes may face additional obstacles. Some salient themes that have been identified include a concern for a lack of diversity on campus and within their respective athletic department (Bernhard, 2014), feeling invisible and silenced by various stakeholders in athletics and beyond (e.g., media, administration, coaches, support staff, and fellow student-athletes) (Bruening, 2004; Bruening et al., 2005), and perhaps the most prominent - feelings of alienation and isolation stemming from their racial and athlete status (Bernhard, 2014; Carter-Francique et al., 2013; 2017). Research has begun to investigate how these student-athletes cope with these additional life stressors (Carter & Hawkins, 2011) and the role that athletic administrators and support staff play in shaping these experiences (Bruening, 2004; Bruening et al., 2005; Carter & Hart, 2010). In sum, it is clear that this research supports Bernhard's (2014) claim that, "Black female student-athletes have distinct experiences as racialized individuals at PWIs (Predominantly White Institutions)" (p. 74).

While one can glean hope from the progress that has been made over the years since Sellers, Kupermine, and Dames (1997) expressed, "studies of the life experiences of African American female athletes are virtually nonexistent" (p. 700), this is also a reminder that more work is needed to truly understand the lived experiences of all female student-athletes of color, past and present. While progress has been made in some spaces, there remains virtually no research examining the lived experiences of Asian American female student-athletes in and of themselves. Until recently the same was also true for

Latina student-athletes. Guillaume and Trujillo (2018) sought to understand the ethnic identity development and experiences of five Latina former student-athletes pursuing graduate education. They suggest, “It is clear that more research is needed to better understand the experiences of former student-athletes, in particular Latino/as in post-secondary education...” (Guillaume & Trujillo, 2018, p. 49). I would echo this statement and extend it to suggest more research is needed on all women of color in higher education broadly, and particularly those who sit on the unique intersection of woman of color and student-athlete. In the next section, I will further explain the need for an explicit and sustained focus in this line of research and how this study will attempt to fill this gap in the literature.

Identifying the Gap

I have pointed to several gaps in the literature. Together, these expose a lack of attention dedicated to understanding the lived experiences of women of color in society broadly, and female student-athletes of color on college campuses in particular. Again, Bruening (2005) asserted that, “Sport culture ignores the experience of women and people of color, and most specifically ignores women who are people of color” (p. 330). This, and other calls to action (Hall, 2001; Smith, 1992) ignite awareness and have led to a slow yet, surely growing body research dedicated to understanding of the African American female sporting body and the lived experiences of African American female student-athletes in particular (Carter-Francique, 2017) Nevertheless, this group and other women of color continue to be systematically overlooked in sport, research and theory (Beamon, 2014; Bruening, 2005; Carter-Francique, 2017; Lapchick, 2019).

Furthermore, research in sporting spaces has generally failed to acknowledge the intersectionality of their lived experiences in and through sport (Bruening, 2005; Walker & Melton, 2015). In this vein, Person et al. (2001) warned, "Limited information is available about student-athletes who are women of color" (p. x). While scholars have touched on the urgent need for this in the implications of their studies on African American male student-athletes (Beamon, 2014) and African American female student-athletes (Bruening, 2005; Bruening, Armstrong, & Pastore, 2005), few have embraced this call resulting in a dearth of knowledge on other females of color. This is problematic as scholars acknowledge the common and unique forms of oppression women of color encounter on college campuses both in regards to their respective student and athlete roles (Bernhard, 2014; Howard-Hamilton & Watt, 2001; Guillaume &Trujillo, 2018). In turn, I echo Hall's (2001) claim that, "Although most of the literature is on African American women in sport it is paltry sum. There is a need to study all women of color including Asian American/Pacific Islander, Native American, and Latinas" (p. 397). Furthermore, I draw inspiration from her sentiment suggesting that, "We must have more literature on women of color that focuses on their strengths and coping styles rather than deficits" (p. 397). This is evident in the purpose of the study and associated research questions.

More research in this area is needed so that we can serve these students to the best of our abilities, providing them with support, assistance, and relevant services and programs. The sport literature lacks the coming to voice and the visibility of women of color that has recently occurred outside of sport (i.e., education, sociology, economics, etc.) (Collins, 1998). This glaring gap in the literature on female student-athletes of color needs to be addressed as racism and sexism has and continues to run rampant in and

through the college sporting spaces (Gill, 2017; Agyemang, Singer, & DeLorme, 2010; Gayles, et al., 2018). In this study, I work towards addressing this gap. In the next section, I will highlight the theoretical frameworks that will be used.

Theoretical Framework

Intersectionality (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991) and critical race feminism (CRF) (Wing, 2003) serve as analytical lenses and theoretical frameworks to guide my research. These complementary frameworks were carefully selected based on my epistemological worldviews as the researcher and due to the fact that they both account for the complexities of race and gender in understanding the lived realities of women of color and the latter embraces the element of counter narrative/storytelling. Both intersectionality and CRF were inspired by earlier works on critical race theory (CRT). Therefore, I will first and foremost provide an overview of CRT and then, expound on the remaining two theoretical frameworks and how they have been utilized in society and sport.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Emerging out of the social missions and struggles of the 1960's civil rights era (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2013; Tate, 1997), the CRT movement is a "collection of activist and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power" (Delgado and Stefancic, 2013, p. 3). Positioning race at the center of analysis, scholars from various fields (e.g., legal studies, education, etc.) suggest that CRT is a powerful epistemology (Curry, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2000), an interdisciplinary paradigm (Tate, 1997), and an analytic and activist tool. Moreover, it can be used to

"…understand the contours and nuances of race, racism, and White supremacy and change the bond that exists between American social systems and racial power and privilege" (Singer, Weems, & Garner, 2017, p. 19). Pioneers in the early development of CRT include the likes of Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Mari Matsuda, Patricia Williams, Richard Delgado, and others.

The CRT framework acknowledges that racism is embedded within the structures of U.S. society and culture. This framework lends its attention to the role the legal system plays in the legitimization of White privilege throughout various institutional structures, which in turn, marginalize people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013; Singer, 2015). Museus and Iftikar (2013) contend that "Critical legal scholars created CRT in reaction to the unwillingness of the legal field to meaningfully critique and respond to the role of race and racism in the legal system and give voice to people of color who experience racism within legal institutions" (p. 19). Thus, much of the power of this framework lies in the ability to articulate issues that reflect a lived experience (Hylton, 2015). As such, "For many, CRT's attraction comes from its ability to articulate and explain the lived realities of racialised and minoritised actors" Hylton (2015, p. 326) argues.

While the application of this pragmatic framework has varied across disciplines (Hylton, 2015), the central tenets of CRT remain relatively constant. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) identified several core tenets of CRT, this includes: a) Racism as normal, which speaks to the permanence of race, racism, and how this intersects with other forms of subordination in the U.S.; b) Challenge to dominant ideologies and epistemologies (e.g., meritocracy, neutrality, etc.), c) Critique of liberalism; d) Interest convergence principle;

and e) The centering of experiential knowledge, voice, and storytelling. These tenets and principles capture the essence of CRT in theory and praxis.

CRT has been utilized in various disciplines outside of the legal field and has been particularly prevalent in higher education (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tate, 1997). However, despite this profusion of CRT in higher education, Singer (2005a) expressed that studies on race and racism have been marginalized, and this framework had yet to see its full potential in the field of sport management. This is problematic as Hylton (2015) contended that, "Racism in sport is a serious contemporary issue and one that, on any given day, is likely to produce multiple examples of global controversies" (p. 323).

In 2005, John Singer encouraged scholars in the field of sport management to utilize more critical, qualitative, race-based epistemologies (i.e., critical theories) to challenge the dominant positivist paradigm often used in this field (Singer, 2005a). Likewise, Hylton (2015) touched on the value of CRT as a framework to refocus attention towards an exploration of race, race equality, and away from the application of oppressive theory in the sport and leisure studies. Adding to this perspective on the value of CRT as an analytic framework, Singer, Harrison, and Bukstein (2010) suggested, "CRT is a tool through which scholars and researchers can define, expose and address certain problems in sport organizations because it offers a way to understand how ostensibly race-neutral structures and processes in sport are" (p. 274).

Over time scholars have explicitly responded to this call to action employing race-based theories like CRT to magnify and empower the voices of marginalized populations in sport. In line with this research agenda, studies have predominantly focused on the perceptions and lived experiences of Black male student-athletes in particular (Agyemang

et al., 2010; Beamon, 2014; Cooper & Hawkins, 2014; Martin & Harris, 2006; Singer, 2009). Research has also employed a CRT approach to look at under-representation of Black males in leadership positions (e.g., coaches and administrators) (Agyemang & DeLorme, 2010; Singer et al., 2010), and intersectionality in sport (Anderson & McCormack, 2010).

Despite this progress, Cooper (2014) warned that, "As an emerging sub-discipline of the broader sociology and psychology of sport fields, race-based sport education research is still seeking to demystify the privileged connotations associated with positivist approaches and demonstrate the value added of employing constructivist approaches such as qualitative research methods" (p. 3). In turn, scholars serious about doing this work must continue to strive to answer the call to action put forth by Singer (2005a) and others in the field, and continue working to see the value in, and extend the use of this framework along with the reach of other race-based epistemologies to understand all minority groups in this relatively young academic discipline (Chalip, 2006).

While the primary focus on CRT is on race and the racialized experiences of ethnic minorities, it informed and inspired the emergence of critical race feminism (CRF). This unique framework distinguishes itself from CRT by accounting for the complexities of race and gender (Berry, 2010) making it especially useful for studies adopting an intersectional approach (Carter-Francique, 2017).

Intersectionality

Collins and Bilge (2016) assert, "The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many

factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways" (p. 2). Therefore, while the previous research that has been done on race, racism, and sex/gender respectively is of equal importance, it is imperative to remain mindful of the presence of intersectionality and how an individual's intersecting identities may inform their lived experiences.

Ella Baker, Anna Julia Cooper, Rosa Parks, Mary Church Terrell, Harriett Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, and more – the stories and experiences of these women is at the heart and soul of Black feminism including Black feminist thinking and action. According to Carter-Francique (2017), "Black feminist thinking and action have always encapsulated the intersections of a raced, gendered, and classed 'Other'" (p. 63). Emanating from this tradition, Crenshaw (1991) coined the term 'intersectionality'. This acknowledges that one's social categories are not independent but rather should be understood in how they interact and/or influence each other (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991). Guiding this theory are three constructs: representational intersectionality, political intersectionality, and structural intersectionality (see Crenshaw, 1991).

There is great utility in taking an intersectional approach to research. For instance, Melton and Bryant (2017) suggest, "Using an intersectional approach, researchers can uncover multiple forms of prejudice women of color face due to structural and systemic pressures" (p. 65). Additionally, Collins and Bilge (2016) express that intersectionality can also be used as an analytic tool to "examine how power relations are intertwined and mutually constructing" (p. 7). Moreover, intersectionality is a critical theory that has been

most popular in the field of sociology. Scholars have long used this as a tool to understand the interlocking nature of racial, gender, sexuality, and class issues present in society (Elias & Feagin, 2016).

In sporting spaces broadly, and sport management in particular, intersectionality is a slow but growing area of research which yields great explanatory potential for the field. This approach has been utilized as a way to highlight the silencing and dearth of literature on certain populations in sport. For instance, Bruening (2005) contended that, "Sport culture ignores the experience of women and people of color, and most specifically ignores women who are people of color" (p. 330). Moreover, she troubled this notion, highlighting how women of color, and African American women in particular, have been marginalized and at times, completely excluded from sport literature on both the basis of race and gender.

Following trends in broader intersectionality research, early theorizing in sport have focused on the intersecting identities of race and gender, and inequities unique to Black women in America in particular (Borland & Bruening, 2010; Carter-Francique, 2017; Carter-Francique & Olushola, 2016; Carter-Francique & Flowers, 2013; McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017; Carter-Francique, et al., 2011; Melton & Bryant, 2017). In one example, Carter-Francique (2017) highlights how intersectionality has been used to unveil acts of social injustice and marginalization for this population in particular. Additionally, in a recent study, McDowell and Carter-Francique (2017) employed intersectionality as a lens to examine the experiences of African American female athletic directors, discovering that when coupled with other stereotypes present the intersecting identities of the participants resulted in constant challenges in the work environment (McDowell & Carter-

Francique, 2017). This work presents important findings relevant to the "well-being, recruitment, and retention of African American women in leadership positions" (McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017, p. 393).

Extending this important work, recent research on intersectionality has included additional identities such as addressing issues of sexual orientation (Anderson & McCormack, 2010; Walker & Melton, 2015) and social class (McDowell & Cunningham, 2009). Consequently, it seems that sport management scholars continue to see the value of this approach and call for further considerations of intersectionality and research from this perspective. Since this research takes an explicit and sustained focus on illuminating the voices and understanding the lived experiences of former female student-athletes of color in particular, implementing intersectionality in conjunction with CRT and CRF was most appropriate for this research.

Critical Race Feminism (CRF)

Critical race feminism (CRF) embraces notions of theory and praxis prompting engagement with the "researched" community to elicit real social change (Berry, 2010; Carter-Francique, 2017). This theory emerged at the end of the 20th century from various social movements such as CRT, critical legal studies (CLS), postmodernism, and feminist legal theory (Wing, 2003). All the while seeking to address the holes in the aforementioned theory. For example, while important, CRT's focus on Black men, and feminist legal theory's attention to White upper-class women had left the experiences of women who are also racial/ethnic minorities relatively unaccounted for (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010;

Wing, 2003). Thus, there was a dire need for new theory to understand and better address this new, complex category (e.g., women of color) and their lived realities in society.

The purpose of CRF is to identify the inner-workings of patriarchy and racism, specifically, how they work and contribute to the systemic oppression and subordination of women of color (Wing, 2003). Richard Delgado (2003), a key co-founder of CRT, advocated for the utility of CRF as he contended that, "One encounters the voices of Latinas, Asians, Native Americans, and African Americans. One learns why each group suffers different kinds of discrimination and obstacles and how each is racialized - and sexualized in unique ways" (p. xv). Furthermore, Evans-Winters and Esposito (2010) highlight the key contributions of CRF that make it distinct and different from other theories in legal studies. This includes: a) It conceptualizes that the experiences and perspectives of women of color are different from men of color and White women; b) CRF analysis moves the experiences of women of color from margin to center unpacking their lived experiences and the discrimination they face from an intersectional perspective; c) It takes an anti-essentialist perspective related to the multiple identities and consciousness of this group; d) Embraces a multidisciplinary approach, and e) CRF is concerned with theory and practice. Scholars taking this approach may actively study and combat gender and racial oppression that present itself (see Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010).

In sum, CRF is a theoretical framework that acknowledges the vulnerability and celebrates the resilience of Black women and other women of color in a variety of settings (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010).

In regards to key tenets, CRF leans on three salient tenets of CRT: a) race and racism as the norm; b) anti-essentialism and intersectionality; and c) counter-

storytelling/narrative. Storytelling and counter-storytelling has been essential to the success of this theory encourages women of color to center rather than marginalize their lived experiences and re-claim their personal narratives (Berry, 2010). While still in its infancy, CRF has started to garner attention and legitimacy in the area of legal studies and beyond (Wing, 2003). In addition to Adrien Katherine Wing's (2003) book, which consists of a collection of essays on CRF and the legal status of women of color, scholars have utilized this approach in the areas of education (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010), teaching/pedagogy (Berry, 2010), and to gain insight into the experiences of tenured Black female faculty in academia (Sulé, 2014). For instance, in her moving article, Sulé (2014) utilized CRF as a lens to inform her analysis of socialization and agency of tenured Black female faculty members at HWCUs. The findings indicate that adapting within the work environment was difficult due to imposed institutional discrimination on the basis of race and gender (Sulé, 2014). Nevertheless, participants managed to strategically navigate through these obstacles and maintain their integrity by enacting, discarding, and transforming. More specifically, for these participants, professional socialization means "enacting norms that are aligned with their standpoint, discarding norms that conflict with their standpoint, and transforming norms to bring them into alignment with their standpoint" (Sulé, 2014, p. 440) suggests. By drawing from CRF, this study exposes the role of agency in the process of professional socialization, particularly, the strategic balancing act exerted by historically underrepresented groups in higher education (Sulé, 2014).

According to Carter-Francique (2017), despite the dearth of research which employs CRF in the institution of sport, embracing this framework has great potential and

explanatory power, particularly for studies that take an intersectional approach. While some may see this lack of application as problematic, I choose to embrace this as an area of opportunity to progress the research on women of color in sport management. As such, this framework was strategically selected and offers great potential and explanatory power for this research.

"CRF speaks to the marginalization of African American women, in addition to Asian, Hispanic, and Native American women as racial and ethnic 'Others', and, likewise, promotes social justice through voice and direct policy-making" Carter-Francique (2017, p. 70) notes. Informed by the growing research on Black male athletes, and Black female athletes more recently, I argue that this can be used as a springboard to continue to introduce women from other racial/ethnic groups into the conversation. Since the early 1990's, Smith (1992) has called for the need to seriously consider the realities of women of color in sport and society. CRF gives scholars the theoretical tools to do so. Since little work has been done up to this point in the context of sport, both in regards to the sample (e.g., former female student-athletes of color) and this particular theoretical framework (i.e., critical race feminism), embracing this approach can shed light on novel findings, new ways forward, and inspire others to consider its utility in their own work.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The methodology section describes the procedures that was used to carry out the study (Krathwohl & Smith, 2005). In chapters one and two, I identified what I investigated. In the following chapter I will highlight how I executed this study. More specifically, I delve into the following respective sub-sections: a) research design; b) participants; c) data collection; d) data analysis; e) establishing trustworthiness; f) ethics; and g) time schedule.

In research there are generally two main streams of theory development: Deductive and inductive approaches to reasoning. In the former, the researcher takes a top-down approach, starting with theory, creating hypothesis, and empirically attempting to test and/or confirm those hypotheses (Creswell, 2015). This type of logic moves from the abstract to the discovery of specific truths lending itself to quantitative analysis. Williams (2007) notes, three trends pertinent to quantitative research include research design, test and measurement procedures, and statistical analysis (p. 66). On the contrary, inductive approaches to reasoning moves from specific observations to general conclusions based on themes, patterns, or trends that emerge from the data (Creswell, 2015). This lends itself more to qualitative analysis, a holistic approach which tends to be more exploratory and open-ended in nature (Williams, 2007).

To maximize the effectiveness of the study the methodology should be strategically selected based on the research question(s) (Flyvberg, 2006). Nite and Singer (2012) touch on the transformative power of qualitative inquiry in the field of sport management in particular as they assert, “From our perspective, the implementation of qualitative research

methods into sport management studies may prove to be effective for connecting with and affecting change in the lives of sport populations" (p. 91). Furthermore, seeing participants as co-creators of knowledge (Frisby, Reid, Millar, & Hoeber, 2005), empowering participants and readership, and the overall emancipatory nature were amongst the noted benefits of this kind of inquiry (Nite & Singer, 2012). Given the focus of this research, a basic interpretive qualitative design (Merriam, 2002) was utilized.

Research Design

The research design is the basic procedures and techniques used to carry out the study (Creswell, 2015). Creswell, Hanson, Clark, and Morales (2007) contend that for qualitative researchers in particular, "Numerous inquiry strategies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), inquiry traditions (Creswell & Poth, 2016), qualitative approaches (Miller & Crabtree, 1992), and design types (Creswell et al., 2007) are available for selection" (p. 236). As such, researchers have a plethora of research designs at their disposal, including but not limited to narrative research, case studies, grounded theory, phenomenology, and participatory action research (PAR) (Creswell et al., 2007). Moreover, recent developments and calls to action in the field of sport management in particular (Shaw & Hoeber, 2016; Hoeber & Shaw, 2017; Rinehart, 2005; Singer et al., 2019) have led to a steady increase of creative and innovative approaches.

In this study, I use a combination of two approaches that compliment my selected theoretical frameworks discussed in chapter two: a basic interpretive qualitative design in and narrative research.

First, a basic interpretive qualitative design was implemented. According to Merriam (2002), those who adopt this approach seek to, "discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved, or a combination of these" (p. 6). To accomplish this, data is often collected through interviews, observations, or the analysis of various documents (Merriam, 2002). In this case, in-depth individual interviews and written letters will serve as the data sources to be triangulated and interpreted. Finally, salient themes emerging from the data are identified, rich descriptions are presented, and discussed using the extant literature to frame the findings (Merriam, 2002). Due to the lack of research with former female student-athletes of color, this approach is deemed necessary to illuminate their stories and gain a better understanding of their lived experiences in college sport and society.

Next, in response to Robert Rinehart's (2005) call to action, which challenged sport management scholars and practitioners alike to use the personal narrative design in creative ways to ascertain the lived experiences individuals ascribe to their own lives; narrative research design will also be utilized in this study. More specifically, oral and written personal narratives will be conducted with each participant as I seek to "hear the voices within each narrative" (Chase, 2005, p. 663). Despite several calls for the utility of personal narrative, this type of approach has remained largely nascent in sport management research (Rinehart, 2005; Singer, 2005). Due to the alarming dearth of literature on former female student-athletes of color, the narrative research design offered many benefits to this exploratory study.

Participants

The sample consisted of approximately N=15 former female student-athletes of color. Within this sample, I strived to obtain participants from each of the following respective racial groups: African American, Asian American, and Latina.

Purposeful criterion sampling is used in this study. Patton (2002) suggests that purposeful criterion sampling strives to understand information rich cases and requires participants to meet specific predetermined criteria in order to be eligible for selection. Therefore, the criteria for participation in this study requires that participants: a) Self-identify as a female of color (e.g., African American, Asian American/Pacific Islander and/or Latina); b) Has completed at least one year of college sport at an NCAA institution; c) Was a student-athlete at an HWCU; and d) No longer competes at the college level.

Additionally, snowball sampling was also utilized to recruit individuals to participate in this study. This type of sampling relies on participants to identify cases of interests and others who may share similar characteristics (Palinkas et al., 2015). Throughout the interview and recruiting process, the researcher asked participants to recommend individuals that may be a good fit for the study. This strategy was particularly useful with this sample as many former student-athletes came from a team setting or possessed a network of others who shared similar backgrounds. Nevertheless, it is important to note that negotiating access to conduct research with current student-athletes is a challenging process (Singer, 2005b; Beamon, 2014). As a former NCAA Division I student athlete, my network with former student-athletes is much stronger than that of current student athletes. This, along with my personal connections with academic and

athletic personnel, assisted in gaining access to this population and served as the starting point for many of the initial contacts I made.

Data Collection

Qualitative inquiry is used in this study. More specifically three rounds of data collection were utilized: 1) a background questionnaire, 2) individual in-depth semi structured interviews, and 3) written narrative was conducted and collected from each participant as I sought to "hear the voices within each narrative" (Chase, 2005, p. 663). As a collective, these three forms of data collection help to ensure credibility as triangulation of data sources is vital in qualitative research (Lather, 1986a).

Round One

In round one of data collection, all participants were asked to complete a background questionnaire. This instrument contained questions related to the participant's demographic information (e.g., age, gender, race, etc.). In addition, individuals were asked to provide further information related to their educational background, athletic careers, and current occupational status. Finally, the participants were asked to select a pseudonym to protect their confidentiality. This pseudonym was coded and used to label the participant's respective files for the remaining rounds of data collection. The participant's respective pseudonym was also used when referencing the individual and their associated narrative in the final write-up of my dissertation. The questionnaire was completed on Qualtrics and the link was administered via email or text message based on the participant's preference. Participants had to one week to complete the questionnaire, and a reminder email was sent

out two days before the final due date for those who had not already completed the questionnaire. This was used to collect basic information, build rapport, and provide a springboard to garner additional information during the next stage of data collection.

Round Two

In round two, individual in-depth semi structured interviews were conducted. In its simplest form, the qualitative interview is understood to be an active, collaborative process between two or more people (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Furthermore, scholars contend that the interview is not only a frequently used method of data collection but also, "one of the most important data gathering tools in qualitative research" (Myers & Newman, 2007, p. 3). Falling under this umbrella, there are various categories of qualitative interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Notable examples include structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews offer limited to no flexibility in regards to the way questions are asked and answered as researchers rely heavily on a script and set of predefined questions (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Myers & Newman, 2007). On the contrary, unstructured interviews offer much flexibility and room for improvisation as the sole purpose is to strive to understand complex phenomena through the eyes of the participants (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2016). With no pre-established questions or interview guide, the emphasis is placed on spontaneity and the interaction between the researcher and participant (Patton, 2002; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2016). Finally, the semi-structured interview falls between the two aforementioned categories, offering a mix of flexibility and structure. In this approach, researchers utilize an incomplete script (e.g., interview guide) with open ended questions

used to guide the course of the interview (Myers & Newman, 2007; Patton, 1990). This is the approach that was used in this study.

According to Zhang and Wildemuth (2016), “Interviews are a widely used tool to access people’s experiences and their inner perceptions, attitudes, and feelings of reality” (p. 239). Conducting semi-structured interviews gives the participant space to expound on topics that resonate with them, helps the interviewer stay on track, and facilitates discussion by allowing room for following-up questions on the subject matter (Morse & McEvoy, 2014). This balance was one of the many reasons why the interview, and specifically, the individual in-depth semi-structured interview was deemed most appropriate for this study.

These interviews lasted approximately 1-2 hours; while I initially planned to conduct face-to-face interviews to capture the essence of each participant’s lived experience, due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic this was not an option. Thus, all data collection was conducted electronically via video conference call (e.g., FaceTime and Zoom) or telephone. According to Hanna (2012), given the digital technologies people have at their disposal, programs like Skype should be considered at best, a legitimate research medium and at least, a respected alternative to conduct semi-structured interviews in particular. In addition, scholars assert that flexible research mediums (i.e., Skype and telephone) offer the benefits provided by traditional face-to-face interviews and then some (Hanna, 2012; Holt, 2010). For example, providing participants with autonomy in terms of preferred research medium, practical benefits, and privacy protections are amongst those noted. Therefore, although this was not the original plan, it proved to be just as effective.

Upon receiving permission from the participants in the IRB informed consent form, two audio recorders (i.e., primary and back-up) were utilized to document the exchange taking place during the interviews. This technique allowed me to be more attentive, thoughtful, and considerate throughout the respective interviews. Following Patton's (1990) recommendation, I took copious notes during the interview. This includes but was not limited to reflexive thoughts, further questions, general comments, and more. Finally, in the time immediately following completion of the interview I took time to reflect, unpack, and note additional comments that arose post-interview. Patton (1990) argued, "The period after an interview or observation is critical to the rigor and validity of qualitative inquiry. This is a time for guaranteeing the quality of the data" (p. 352). Thus, taking this time to reflect was crucial in round two of data collection.

Round Three

In round three, written narrative was selected to compliment the in-depth individual semi-structured interview and providing participants with an additional medium to articulate their lived experiences. Given the dearth of research with women of color in sport and society (Bruening, 2005; Smith, 1992) narrative inquiry was strategically chosen as scholars argue, ""giving voice" to marginalized people and "naming silenced lives" have been a primary goal of narrative research for several decades" (Chase, 2005, p. 668).

One week after the participant completed round two (i.e., interview) the researcher sent an email with instructions to complete round three of data collection (i.e., written narrative). In this email, the "Dear Student-Athlete," writing prompt was also be included. In the writing prompt description, the participant was instructed to reflect on the interview

and write a letter to their past, present, and future selves. This may include, reflections from the individual interview, personal stories, past regrets, words of wisdom for future student-athletes, hopes, dreams, future aspirations, and more. Each participant had 10 days to provide their written response to the prompt. Moreover, the participants were given two options for submitting their written narrative: 1) Submit electronically by responding to a Qualtrics form (link provided by researcher via email), and 2) Submit a hardcopy, by emailing, scanning, or mailing the written narrative directly. Two reminder emails were sent to participants - the first, one week after the initial email and the second, the day before the written narrative was due.

Contemporary narrative inquiry highlights the unique voice within the narrative (Chase, 2005). Furthermore, Chase (2005) mentions, "Narrative is retrospective meaning making - the shaping or ordering of past experience. Narrative is a way of understanding one's own and other's actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time" (p. 656). With this being said, the written narrative is especially fitting to illuminate the voices and understand the lived experiences of former female student-athletes of color. After having time to reflect on their time as student-athletes broadly, and the recently conducted individual interviews more specifically, providing an additional medium to follow yielded further insight.

By giving the participants the space to express their stories, words of wisdom, coping techniques, methods of resistance, persistence and more, in many ways the written narrative provided the opportunity and potential to create social change (Chase, 2005) and personal healing. Chase (2005) speaks to this powerful element of narrative inquiry as she

suggests, “self-narration can lead to personal emancipation - to “better” stories of life difficulties or traumas” (p. 668). Thus, by taking part in this study there is the potential for personal growth and the participant’s stories may also be able to help inform future research, policy, and best practices for former, current, and future student-athletes.

Data Analysis

A general inductive approach was used to analyze the data derived from this study, as I strived to unpack the core meanings emerging from the individual participants and identify salient categories and themes related to my research questions (Thomas, 2006). It is noteworthy to acknowledge the notion of researcher-as-instrument, that is, the role that the researcher plays as an active respondent in the research process (Lather, 1986b). In turn, my lived experiences as an Asian American female in general, and former NCAA Division I student-athlete more specifically informed my position as the researcher. In the spirit of qualitative research, I kept a reflexive journal throughout the duration of this study to practice researcher reflexivity and document any biases that were present. An in-depth breakdown of the steps I took to establish trustworthiness throughout the research process can be found in the next section.

For round two of data collection, that is, the individual in-depth semi structured interview, I followed the steps provided by Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) to guide data analysis. To start, I personally transcribed the audio recordings from the respective

interviews to further familiarize myself with the data. Once transcription was complete, I did an initial reading of each document. In doing so, I highlighted, noted, and began to code the emerging themes that presented themselves. Following this, I re-read the respective transcripts at least two more times – this time, color coding themes, refining, and organizing my emerging findings. Once this data was collected for each individual participant respectively I compared themes present across all participants to see the shared similarities and/or unique differences that were present.

In round three, the written narrative, it is important to hear "the voices within each narrative" (Chase, 2005, p. 663). Therefore, discourse analysis was used to interpret the narratives. This is appropriate as scholars contend that discourse analysis is useful for interpreting relevant discourse and texts (Fairclough, 2013). While combing through the written responses I highlighted, noted and coded emerging themes and salient categories. Similar to round two, once I reviewed each individual written response respectively, I compared all that were present across the board to gain a better understanding of my findings in relation to my research questions. I then compared and contrasted my findings from the individual in-depth semi structured interviews and written narratives. Implementing multiple forms of data-collection and data-analysis allowed me to triangulate data sources. This is key to generating rich data, thick descriptions, and to ensure credibility in this qualitative research study (Lather, 1986a).

Establishing Trustworthiness

Unlike the traditional quantitative approach where the strength of the study is evaluated based on rigor and validity, qualitative researchers strive to establish credibility and trustworthiness (Cope, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is operationalized by establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability throughout the research process (Cope, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I will highlight each of these criterion areas in the remainder of this section.

Credibility

Data is considered to be credible if it accurately captures and reflects the participant's truth (Cope, 2014; Lincoln & Guba; Polit & Beck, 2012). Moreover, it is the researcher's responsibility to not only adequately interpret but also accurately represent what is shared by the participant. Lincoln and Guba (1985) offer several major techniques that assists researchers in developing credible findings. Three techniques that were implemented in this study are triangulation (discussed in the section on Confirmability), peer debriefing, and member checking. Peer debriefing involves consistent communication with a "disinterested peer" essentially unpacking thoughts over the duration of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This simple technique offers a plethora of benefits such as keeping the researcher honest, opportunity to develop next steps and best practices, catharsis, and more (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For these reasons, I consulted with a peer debriefer throughout the course of this research. Next, member checking is another technique

that I utilized to ensure credibility in this research. According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), "The member check, whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stake holding groups from whom the data were originally collected, is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). Moreover, this activity can be formal or informal and occurs continuously throughout the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, I utilized member checking at two points, that is, at the end of round two of data collection (i.e., individual semi-structured interview) and upon completion of chapters four and five (i.e., Findings and Discussion, Conclusion, and Implications). More specifically, following each participant's individual interview, I revisited the audio recording and personally transcribed the interview. Once this transcript was complete, I sent the document to the participant via email and provided them the opportunity to review the document as well as voice their concerns and offer any feedback and comments before proceeding. Similarly, upon completion of the study, I sent chapters four and five to all participants who were interested. Once again, I gave them the opportunity to review the documents and provide any additional insight before moving forward. Embracing these three techniques helped to ensure credibility in this work.

Transferability

The basis of transferability is that the findings of a study can be applied in another setting or with a different group of people (Cope, 2014, Houghton, et al., 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Polit & Beck, 2012). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), thick description is essential for others to determine if a study can be transferred or not. To account for this, I have included thick descriptions of the background and methodology of this study as this

will give other scholars the opportunity to decide if this is a study and/or research design they wish to adopt in their own work. For example, I argue this study could be useful in looking at the lived experiences of former male student-athletes of color who attended HWCUs and ultimately look at the shared similarities and unique gender based differences that may be present between the two groups.

Dependability

Dependability is the reliability of qualitative research and thus an essential criterion of establishing credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A study is considered dependable if it can be replicated over time and in other similar conditions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Following the advice of Lincoln & Guba (1985), in order to establish dependability in this study I have provided thick descriptions of the research process. This included being intentional and explicit in acknowledging my subjective biases in my aforementioned statement of researcher positionality as this speaks to the ways in which this could influence the study. In addition, I consulted with my dissertation chair, Dr. John Singer, at each stage of the research process to debrief and document the progress and decisions that have been made up to that point. Together, these techniques helped to establish dependability and ultimately, credibility in this study.

Confirmability

Cope (2014) contended that, "Confirmability refers to the researcher's ability to demonstrate that the data represents the participant's responses and not the researcher's biases or viewpoints" (p. 89). This is particularly important to consider with a study of this

nature that seeks to illuminate the voices and lived experiences of former female student-athletes of color through the use of oral and written narratives. Although complete objectivity cannot be obtained in qualitative research, scholars suggest that various techniques such as performing a confirmability audit (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), incorporating triangulation, and keeping a reflexive journal (Guba, 1981) can help researchers maintain neutrality throughout the research process. In turn, first, I kept an audit trail that will include six categories (Halpern, 1984): a) raw data; b) data reduction and analysis products; c) data reconstruction and synthesis products; d) process notes; e) materials relating to intentions and dispositions; and f) instrument development information. Doing this assisted with organization (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Second, triangulation of data sources is vital in qualitative research (Lather, 1986a; Lather, 1986b). Therefore, I utilized multiple methods of data collection previously mentioned. By conducting both individual semi-structured interviews and then giving participants the opportunity to respond to a writing prompt this gave me the opportunity to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon from the participant's unique perspective (Patton, 1999). Third, I kept a reflexive journal throughout the duration of this study. In this journal, I documented my general introspective thoughts including but not limited to questions, comments, and concerns, observations, justification for decision making, and more (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Taken together, these three techniques helped me to maintain focus on hearing "the voices within each narrative" (Chase, 2005, p. 663) and establish confirmability overall.

Ethics

Prior to partaking in any kind of research and especially when dealing with human subjects, it is imperative to ensure that it is ethical (Andrew, Pedersen, & McEvoy, 2019). The American Psychological Association (APA) puts forth five ethical principles: Beneficence and no maleficence, fidelity and responsibility, integrity, justice, and respect for people's rights and dignity, along with guidelines to uphold these standards. Furthermore, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) is in place to protect human subjects. In sum, to ensure high standards of ethics are maintained, IRB approval was sought out and the researcher was required to obtain informed consent from participants before including them in the study. Beyond these practices, as the researcher, I practiced common courtesy and high levels of respect throughout the process. For instance, participants were informed of what would occur prior to partaking in each respective round of data collection and were also be given the opportunity to opt out of the study at any point in the research process.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to illuminate and centralize the voices of former female student-athletes of color by delving into their lived experiences in and through their collegiate careers. This work was driven by three research questions: 1) How did race and gender impact the lived experiences of former female student-athletes of color who attended HWCUs?; 2) How did former female student-athletes of color navigate the good, the bad, and the ugly of their sports organization (i.e., athletic department) and campus life at their HWCU?; and 3) What strategies can be applied to enhance the development of current student-athletes of color?

This chapter discusses the salient themes that emerged from the in-depth semi-structured interviews and written letters provided by the participants who took part in the study. The participants provided thick descriptions of their lived experiences, which resulted in an immense amount of data – forcing me to grapple with selecting the themes that were most noteworthy in relation to the research questions asked and make difficult decisions in regards to data inclusion and exclusion. Given the information rich data put forth by the participants, the themes are presented by each research question, respectively. Prior to highlighting the themes, basic background information for each participant is provided in Table 1. This information was collected through a background questionnaire administered via Qualtrics, which each participant completed prior to taking part in the interview. The pseudonyms listed were provided by the participants. Additionally, a brief description of each participant's cultural upbringing as a woman of color is provided to

give insight into how it might have informed their experience, and how they made sense of things when given the opportunity to reflect back years later.

Jordan. Jordan is a 27-year-old mixed-race (Black/White) female from California. She played softball at a division one institution in the Southeast. Being born and raised in the Bay area she described her cultural upbringing as diverse, and she got into sport by following in the footsteps of her older sister. She is married and currently works in the health and fitness industry.

Bianca. Bianca is a 27-year-old mixed-race (African American, Native American, and White) female from North Carolina. She played soccer at a large division one institution in the Southeast. She played multiple sports growing up and described her upbringing as very family oriented. In college, she experienced success but was affected by injuries in the latter half of her career. Bianca is currently finishing medical school.

Jasmine. Jasmine is a 27-year-old Black female from North Carolina who played basketball at a division two institution in the Southeast. She described her cultural upbringing as very family oriented and faith-based growing up in the church. From an intersectional perspective, she touched on how her parents prepared her for what it means to be a Black woman in society and to stand proud in this identity. Jasmine described herself as a four-year role player who was very involved on campus. She is married and works in communications.

Kash. Kash is a 30-year-old African American female from Rhode Island who played basketball at a division one institution in the Northeast. She shared how sport was initially a way for her to get out of the house and that her love for basketball continued to grow as a result of watching women's college basketball on television. When describing her cultural upbringing she gave credit to her parents for being intentional in preparing her to be a Black woman in this world. Jasmine now works in professional sport.

Renee. Renee is a 28-year-old Black female from California who attended three different institutions over the course of her student-athlete career. In doing so, she played basketball at both the JUCO and division one levels. She described her cultural upbringing as diverse, being from the cultural melting pot that is the Bay area. Renee played multiple sports growing up and realized as early as 5th grade that sport could be a vehicle to pursue a college education. She is currently in graduate school and works as a teaching instructor.

Morgan. Morgan is a 28-year-old African American female from Ohio who played basketball at two institutions in the Southeast. Between the two schools she played at both the NAIA and division three levels. She described her upbringing as split between inner city Ohio and Alabama, and shared that it was in high school that she started to take her hoop dreams more seriously. Renee has worked in college athletics and is the founder of a non-profit, which strives to empower young female athletes by providing them with mentorship and skills that can be sustained on and off the court.

Tahnai. Tahnai is a 30-year-old mixed-race (Filipino/Caucasian) female from Ohio who played soccer at a large division one institution in the Southeast. She described her cultural upbringing growing up in the Midwest as primarily White, but shared how traveling for club soccer exposed her to diverse people and cultures early on. Tahnai has been playing professional soccer domestically and internationally since the end of her college career in 2011.

RM. RM is a 35-year-old Asian (Japanese) female from Hawaii who played softball at a small division three institution in the Northwest. She described her cultural upbringing as diverse and played multiple sports growing up. Her younger sister also attended the same college to play softball. RM is now married and currently works as a high school guidance counselor and softball coach.

ShyAnn Baker. ShyAnn Baker is a 39-year-old mixed-race female (Filipino, Chinese, and Spanish) who played soccer at a large division one institution in the Northwest. Growing up in a military family she was born in Hawaii, and also split time between Japan and Washington as a child. She described her cultural upbringing as diverse living on Navy bases for most of her life. After college, ShyAnn played professional soccer domestically and internationally. She now works as a soccer coach at the club and high school levels.

Ilene. Ilene is a 25-year-old Asian female from California who played basketball at a small division three school in the Southeast. She described her upbringing as culturally diverse, and was surrounded by a particularly large Asian population being born and raised in the

Bay area. She expressed coming up playing traditional AAU basketball, but also competing in a local Asian League, which was a more tight knit community and family affair. Ilene now works in professional sport.

Loke Malia. Loke Malia is a 62-year-old mixed-race female (Hawaiian, Irish, and American Indian) who played basketball and volleyball at a division one institution in the Pacific. Growing up she was raised by her grandmother and shared how playing sports through the church was her outlet when money was tight. After getting into some trouble in high school she moved in with her former PE teacher who turned out to be a big influence in her life. After college, Malia worked as a teacher and coach but is now retired. Her oldest daughter also played volleyball in college and pursued a professional playing career overseas.

Nat. Nat is a 23-year-old Hispanic female from Virginia who played soccer at a small division three institution in the Southeast. She explained how being brought up in a strong Hispanic family oriented household played a large role in her upbringing, culturally. Both her parents were from El Salvador and they spoke predominantly Spanish within the home. Being a first-generation college student played a big role as she navigated the recruiting process. Nat is currently pursuing her master's degree and serves as a graduate assistant coach of a women's soccer team.

Anna. Anna is a 28-year-old Hispanic female from Florida, who played basketball at a small division three school in the Southeast. Her older sister played softball in college and

inspired Anna to pursue playing at the next level. She described her cultural upbringing as interesting on many levels. Being in a military family, she spoke to the struggles of being geographically distant from her family's rich Hispanic culture, which she always longed for growing up in her predominantly White Southern Baptist community. She also noted being a White-passing woman as something she grappled with growing up. Anna is currently in graduate school and works as a strength and conditioning coach.

Jennifer Knowles. Jennifer Knowles is a 24-year-old mixed-race (Black/Mexican) female from California who played softball at a division one institution in the Southeast. She described her cultural upbringing as very diverse being from the Bay area, but struggled to find herself often being the minority on predominantly White travel softball teams in her younger years. Though her student-athlete experience was a challenging one she says this is when she started coming into her truth as a proud Black and Latina woman. She is currently pursuing her master's degree and works as a graduate assistant coach at an HBCU.

Tori. Tori is a 24-year-old mixed-race (Hispanic/Caucasian) female from Texas who played softball in college at a large division one institution in the Southwest. She described her cultural upbringing straddling the line between not being Hispanic or White enough. Tori talked about the internal struggle she faced as someone who looked different but was seen as White or "not counting" as a minority by her peers. Playing softball in college helped her find herself and take pride in celebrating what made her different. Tori now plays professional softball and works in sport broadcasting.

Before presenting the findings by directly addressing the research questions for this study it is important to note that the focus on former student-athletes comes with the luxury of hindsight, as the participants have had time to reflect since the end of their collegiate playing careers. The number of years post-college for participants in the study ranged from 1 to 39, with the average being approximately 9 years. This is noteworthy as many participants acknowledged how things like hindsight and the evolution of the social-political climate over time altered the way they made sense of their student-athlete experience particularly in regards to how race and gender impacted their lives. This aligns with Sartore-Baldwin & Warner (2012) who contended that a focus on former student-athletes may have much to offer due to their critical orientation and unique outlook in comparison to current student-athletes.

Research Question One

The responses from participants showed that race and gender impacted their student-athlete experience in numerous ways both in and of itself and from an intersectional perspective. Furthermore, the participants primarily highlighted the ways in which race, gender, and the intersection thereof was apparent in their respective academic and athletic roles on campus. Some also highlighted how this was also present in life off campus, simply navigating the world as women of color in society. For example, Jennifer Knowles talked about the fear she felt as a Black and Latina woman, living in a small college town in the Southeast after Donald Trump was elected as president of the United States (POTUS),

> It was scary because there was a point in time where I thought what if I'm at a bar and somebody's drunk. I'm at the bar trying to get a drink and say I bump into somebody and I'm like, yo watch out. Or somebody bumped into me and I'm like, watch out, and it's a drunk White dude, a White MAGA dude who punches me in my face or something, you know what I'm saying? Like that's what was going on at that time. And I called my parents scared, like, I was crying and I was scared. Like once they announced that he was the president I was scared. And I didn't want to live like that.

This example had nothing to do with Knowles' student or athlete status on campus but was still relevant in her lived experiences. This is something to be mindful of as the findings speak to the complex realities of many of the participants.

To maximize organization, the salient themes associated with the research questions will be broken down into three sections: Race, gender, and intersectionality. Sub-themes for each respective section will also be presented if available. First, race salient themes include *racial microaggressions* and *navigating White spaces*. In the latter, sub-themes consist of feeling out of place and supportive spaces and faces. Second, salient themes for gender consisted of *sexism: hiding in plain sight* with the sub-theme of the gender gap. Third, the salient themes for intersectionality was the *informal educator* and *celebrating women of color*.

Table 2 Themes for Research Question 1.

	Theme	**Sub-theme**
RQ1	Racial microaggressions	

	Navigating White spaces	Feeling out of place
		Supportive spaces and faces
	Sexism: Hiding in plain sight	The gender gap
	Informal educator	
	Celebrating women of color	

Racial Microaggressions

In terms of race-based experiences, the most frequent response was recollections of racial microaggressions endured by participants. In general, microaggressions was a term used post-civil rights era to describe subtle forms of White on Black racism (Pierce, 1970). More specifically, Sue et al. (2007) define racial microaggressions as, "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights or insults toward people of color" (p. 273). The data from my study suggested that racial microagressions often manifested in the form of nicknames, stereotypes, and isolated incidents imposed by others. Assigning people nicknames is a fairly normalized practice in the sport world. However, multiple participants recalled moments where these nicknames played directly off of their race. For example, Anna who is Hispanic and Caucasian explained how her older sister who was also a student-athlete was referred to as Taco, and as the younger sister she was given the name Nacho. Anna further explained that at the time she didn't find it offensive but her Dad and the rest of her family thought otherwise. Moreover, reflecting on this experience she expressed discomfort as she recognized the racialized undertones and negative message this portrayed. In another example, Bianca

spoke to how her head coach would often make what she and her teammates considered light hearted jokes stemming from people's racial background as she explained,

> Sometimes he (coach) would make jokes. I think we were all used to him so it didn't necessarily bother us but sometimes they may not have been appropriate whether they were like just playing off of someone's race a little bit or like giving them different nicknames. I remember we had one girl who was half Japanese…he'd call her 'the samurai' sometimes. Then one girl who was very strong and a little bit bigger, she was African American and he would call her 'Black death', these very strong references.

Bianca explained that this type of banter was not uncommon and very much accepted and normalized in this particular team setting, which allowed the racialized nature of this discourse to fly under the radar. Similar to Anna's sentiments, Bianca expressed discomfort in these instances as she stated, "Looking at it now, it's easier to see. You're like wow, I don't know how to think. But I guess if you just keep hearing stuff sometimes you just become like not into it, which isn't always great either." Thus, while both seemed relatively harmless at the time, the significance of these racialized microaggressions looked different to the participants in hindsight.

Racial microaggressions also surfaced in imposed stereotypes that were distinct and different for each racial group. Two of the Asian participants, RM and Ilene shed light on how this was apparent in the classroom and on the court respectively. For instance, RM described the misconceptions regarding her natural intellectual abilities and the strong work ethic she developed as a result of dealing with dyslexia for a considerable amount of time. In a tone of disbelief and frustration she asserted:

> It's funny they think cuz I'm Asian, I'm just automatically smart. And I'm like, no, I'm dyslexic. Like I wasn't lazy in high school, I would study a lot and know everything. But I was always like, I will outwork anybody right now. And that's pretty much how I can get myself ahead. But I'm like, in no way do I consider myself smart. You know what I mean? I'll just outwork the heck out of you. And that goes a long way

On the other hand, Ilene addressed feeling "boxed in" and illuminated how multiple stereotypes played out on the court, particularly the dearth of Asian female student-athletes and the idea that Asians are fast and crafty, but also weak:

> I think a challenging thing that I found is that it's not very often that you see Asian female athletes at the collegiate level, especially in basketball so you end up getting put in a box. So when we were doing scouting reports on other teams if there was an Asian girl on that team my coach would automatically say, she plays like Ilene. I believe it's because they looked like me and not necessarily because they played like me. I'm not a shooter. I can't shoot for shit. That girl's a shooter. And she'll (coach) just say, she plays like Ilene. It's because we looked the same. I felt like I was being put in boxes. If you look at me, I look like a shooter or like I play a certain way. You're assumed that you're faster and more crafty and but then at the same time like you're not as strong, right? Like you're put into that shooter position, which is more of a two position versus a true point guard. And so, I think you just get automatically stereotyped because people haven't seen your type of build on the court before.

Both RM and Ilene's stories aligned with stereotypes imposed specifically on people of Asian descent (Chou & Feagin, 2015, Chou et al., 2016; Museus & Iftikar, 2013; Museus & Kiang, 2009; Wing, 2007). On the contrary, Jasmine talked about the distinct and different stereotypes she faced as a Black female basketball player as she expressed:

> The biggest thing, the biggest negative of being an athlete is...if you were Black, they would say, oh, what sport do you play? And they just automatically assume you like sport. And some of my Black friends who did not play sports, hated it, because they're like, do I not deserve to be on this campus without that? I think that was the biggest thing that they just assume that you're here and you're a person of color, you must play a sport and a lot of times that was the case because it wasn't a very diverse place. So just being cubby holed into that Black ghetto basketball player, which was not me at all. It was more of the outside looking in than the inside because my teammates knew me. We were mostly Black, but we all came from different stories like some of us, cities all over the country…But I think the campus knew me in a certain way, just because I was a Black athlete, you know, and I wore sweatpants to class, you know? But that wasn't who I was. I was a hardworking student-athlete, got a certain GPA, was involved in other things and cared about other things than people thought I did.

These aforementioned examples show how racial microaggressions in the form of stereotypes were present for many of the participants, but how the stereotypes that were imposed on an individual level were reflective of the stereotypes unique to each respective racial group in broader society.

Finally, participants recalled isolated incidents during their student-athlete careers where racial microaggressions occurred. One of the more vivid recollections that speaks to this sub-theme comes from Jasmine who shared a story about a run in with her photography professor who was an older White male:

> It was one class, a photography class. We had to do a profile piece on ourselves and then do a profile of a historical figure. And my professor looked at me and said, for our Black students, you can dress up as a famous negro in history. I was like, negro? What year is this? This is 2014. I was like, oh that doesn't sit right with me…He was an older White guy. And I remember feeling super weird about that. So I went to my advisor and she didn't like it either, but she kept saying, you know, he's kind of older and he doesn't mean anything by it. And I can write something up if you want it to be formal and I was like, I want it to be formal. I felt like he was really weird anyway because I was one of the only Black students in the class that other Black kids from different classes would say they got kind of a racist vibe from him. It's not like he called me anything offensive, but it was kind of weird.

Taken together, the theme of racial microaggressions points to the fact that racism manifests in numerous ways on and off the field of play. And while all women of color are prone to these occurrences, the way in which it is imposed often stems from the deep-seated emotion laden stereotypes present for each respective racial group (Feagin, 2012).

Navigating White spaces

The second theme, navigating White spaces touched on the struggles of being a racial minority in a predominantly White environment. The sub-themes include *feeling out of place and*

supportive spaces and faces. In feeling out of place, the participants pointed to the demographics and culture of the school. Morgan, an African American basketball player who played at a small D3 institution in the Southeast said:

> Demographic wise, it is a very small school. And no, I don't think I fit in with the demographic of the school. There's only two people maybe you can relate to and this is, you know, so many levels mentally. Just things that I would like to do didn't help me grow as a person. And even like the faculty and staff, nobody looked like me. So I don't feel like I could go to them with anything or learn as best as I could have. If I would have had somebody that actually cared but like on the opposite end of the spectrum I didn't get that same energy.

Additionally, Anna touched on how the geographic location of the school influenced the conservative culture felt on campus:

> I definitely felt out of place by just being in Alabama, like culturally. A lot of kids that weren't there to play a sport were not very socially aware or cultured I guess you could say, or like literally were not exposed to anywhere outside of the town. That in itself was a problem to me. Not a problem but there’s a difference because I grew up in a military family where we traveled everywhere and when I was younger I played on a club team, like all sorts of different girls from everywhere, every cultural background. Having that exposure on a campus where kids will literally grow up, their parents went to the school and they're just re-living, this cycle was like mind boggling.

Furthermore, she explained that in addition to cultural differences, physical differences were also apparent as Anna expressed:

> I was kind of like the odd one because I'm like from out of state, came to play a sport, I dress different, I look physically different than a lot of people, all my friends are athletes, also minorities, so it was like all kids or athletes who are from out of state that's like my whole friend circle now from college is all the kids from out of state that just happened to go to this school in Alabama.

Although most participants spoke to feeling out of place on campus in their student role, for some the lack of diversity within the student body was also apparent within the athletic department as Tori stated:

> It's weird because now when I think about it there weren't very many people of color in the athletics department that look like me. I feel like there's a bunch of either White or African American. But I remember reading some stat and it was like, excluding student athletes, the population of African Americans at my school was less than 1%, like crazy low, it's ridiculous.

For Tori, the lack of diversity within the athletic department wasn't something she realized or paid much attention to until doing the interview. After making this statement she pondered how being in a space where people didn't look like her could have potentially hindered the sense of belonging she felt in more implicit ways. Nevertheless, the feeling of being out of place while navigating White spaces was common for many of the participants.

The second sub-theme, supportive spaces and faces showcased the small pockets of people and places on campus who provided the warm welcoming inclusive environments

that the rest of campus did not. For instance, at her institution Kash found community in the university's African American Institute (AAI) as she raved:

> They did a great job. They had the African American Institute. So we were all just inherently a part of that, didn't really have to sign up. So they did a good job of really creating spaces where you could feel safe, feel comfortable and you can feel loved on campus which is something I really liked about my school.

She further elaborated on how this helped her connect with people of similar interests and expand her network as an African American woman on a HWCU campus:

> So every single Black person that I've met on campus who wasn't on the team was part of the African American Institute. So whenever there was some type of event, they would always invite me. And so I just started to go to more and more of those events that they were putting on because they appealed to me, the demographics.

In another example, Renee spoke to the impact of representation coupled with the intentionality on part of the athletic department in cultivating a productive academic space for Black student-athletes of campus:

> My most memorable experience was when I was able to have a Black male professor. For one, I never had seen a Black male, doctor which was shocking to me. I had no conceptualization of what a PhD was, like none of that made sense to me. And so taking his class African Americans in Sport, with a majority of Black athletes being in that class, Black students in general being in that class, that was a really positive academic experience for me. One, because the athletic department pushed that class and I guess in a way stacked us all in that class, but I felt it to be beneficial and their ability to be culturally responsive in some way.

The aforementioned examples speak to a couple more organized structured spaces that these former student-athletes, specifically those of African American descent found comfort and community in outside of their sport. Participants also highlighted the individuals around campus who were like a home away from home. Through their ethic of care, they were bright lights in the daily routines of some of the participants in the study. For instance, Anna expressed great appreciation for the cafeteria workers who prepared and served many of her meals over the years as she mentioned:

> The women in the dining hall, who would serve us knew us by name for four years straight, like that kind of stuff is what made my college experience what it was...like during basketball season we were the only team on campus in December because everyone's on a break but we leave the dining hall and they would be like talking to you like you're like their family because you can't leave campus and they're all serving you and stuff; so having engagement with the dining hall facility workers is something so small but like a big deal.

From these participants' perspective, those seemingly small things made a world of difference in their lives navigating these White spaces.

Sexism: Hiding in plain sight

The most salient theme related to gender was the subtle forms of sexism that participants endured. Falling under this umbrella was the sub-theme of the gender gap. The theme name, hiding in plain sight is a direct reference to Fink's (2016) powerful piece where she stated one of the interesting things about sexism in sport is that, "It is commonly overt yet simultaneously unnoticed. It hides in plain sight. It is so entwined in the fabric of

sport that most do not even discern it" (p. 1). This was appropriate as it directly pertained to taken for granted norms and operations within the athletic department where women in sports broadly and female student-athletes more specifically were made to feel less than their male counterparts. The findings exhibited that this was especially relevant when it came to the quality of facilities, priority given in terms of scheduling of athletic events and facility usage, and the qualifications of personnel who worked with the women's sports teams. In terms of facilities and usage, Jordan acknowledged the reality that comes with being a non-revenue sport as she stated:

> I think being a part of a non-revenue sport is something that would play a part in it because we were treated pretty well. But there are certain things when you're a non-revenue sport you are definitely lower on the totem pole for stuff…I mean we still are in this town where people cared about athletics. But you know you're definitely lower on the totem pole. We have to get pushed over in a corner in the weight room because football is working out right now and they need all of this space. So make sure you don't get in their way. You know, we're gonna be over in this corner. You know, stuff like that, you're definitely less than.

Similarly, RM took a similar position when reflecting back to the limited spaces in D3 facilities and scheduling that prioritized men's sports:

> I think just facility wise, they were nice, it just wasn't big enough. Like we couldn't be in the weight room at the same time as the football team. You know, the weight room wasn't big enough to have both of us and since we weren't one of the major sports we always ended up going in the off times. We're always there frickin at like five o'clock in the morning.

Also related to the weight room as a physical space, ShyAnn Baker recalled being puzzled by the lack of sport specific training for female sports that took place in the weight room:

> Looking back I feel like what we did wasn't super sports specific. We did some exercises that helped kind of build those quicker fast twitch muscles but it was still a lot of very heavy lifting. But during season it was like heavy stuff which is odd. But I mean, the head strength and conditioning coach was the football guy. And then they had like other strength coaches that were assigned to a different sport but I don't think any of them were actual soccer players or played soccer. So I don't think they really understood the movements and the dynamics of a soccer player.

The dismissal of women's sports that often find themselves at the bottom of the totem pole and made to feel less than, as Jordan described may be seen as normal by others. But based on these participants' narratives they may be felt deeply by the student-athletes that are directly affected.

Finally, this theme also related to things the participants themselves viewed as very positive and took great pride in. Tori, who played softball at a D1 university in the Southwest talked fondly of their softball team support group known as the Sugar Daddies. This particular example speaks to how deeply systemic sexist discourse is embedded in this particular context. Moreover, the very thing that may seem inappropriate to an outsider looking in, is embraced by those within this particular program, larger athletics community, and also supported by the university. This is apparent as she explained:

> Basically you're supposed to have enough to have like one for each player. So they have a shirt that says, Sugar Daddies. And then on the back, they have your last name so it's kind of like a fan group for softball. Our PA announcer was actually a

> sugar daddy. So it's just funny how like, it all comes full circle…We had to go like recruit them one time. Like our coach said you guys are gonna go take a sign-up sheet and go to the main plaza and we were like, okay whatever you say. And so my friend would just point at people and just stare at them until they made eye contact and say, you want to be my Sugar Daddy? They would look at her and they'd be like, no, no, I'm good. And then we're like, no, no, no like we were just making a joke out of it. It was hilarious.

The sub-theme of sexism that emerged from the data was the gender gap. The gender gap highlights the tangible and intangible ways that inequalities manifest within athletics in particular on the basis of gender. This may be informed by the systemic sexism hiding in plain sight that the participants previously touched on. Some examples of inequalities mentioned include discrepancies in scholarships and stipends as well as treatment and respect amongst men's and women's sports. This was particularly interesting given the age diversity of participants in this study. With the youngest participant being 23 and the oldest being 62 years old it was apparent that: a) Progress has been made over time; and b) The gender gap still exists and there is still work to be done. For example, Loke Malia who played basketball and volleyball at a D1 university from 1976-1981 talked about all that went into balancing her roles as a female-student and providing for herself through college:

> I started working really hard and we had summer jobs. The school helped student-athletes find jobs but that's what we did and we were also doing summer school too. We did summer school during the day, then work, get off at like 2:00 in the morning, then we go home and train. Actually we'd go run after everything to like

> maybe 3:30-4:00 in the morning. Go do the same thing the next day. And so that was like 78 going into the 79 season.

Taken aback by this demanding schedule, I asked if this was normal for all student-athletes or if she felt like she was the exception. In response, she expressed:

> I gotta tell you that I think it was normal for the female athletes. We had a few of the boys working with us, but back then we didn't have what the boys had. The boys had full scholarships, and even our full scholarships, we didn't get the kind of stipends that they had. I think that's where we first started noticing that, even registration. When we go to registration, we'd stand in the line outside the gym like everyone else. And then we ask the boys, how did you guys get your classes already? And they go, oh our academic advisor does our classes. So we're like, what the hell, you know?

Loke Malia's recollection of this particular component of the student-athlete experience highlights the gender gap that was present nearly 40 years ago. When addressing the current situation today she contended that:

> The girls get more now but there's still that line where it's still not the same. And it was really weird because I think the girls volleyball is bringing in so much money now. How can you give the boys basketball team more scholarships than the girls volleyball when they're not great? As the change went on for the girls, it got better for the guys too. So to me, I think there's still a split. The gap has gotten smaller, but there's still that gap.

In addition, other participants who played in more recent years added to similar topics and discussed what this looked like in contemporary times. For instance, Tahnai, who played soccer at a D1 university in the Southeast, voiced:

> If anything, the only issue on the sports side would have been between the male and female. Like there was obviously a gap between that in terms of sport, especially because we were such a heavy football and basketball school. And it was always about the men, it was about the men who brought in the money and that some of the women's programs should be thankful for the men's programs that we would get such good treatment or the nice perks or the extra things because of what the men's sports were doing.

In sum, the participant's sentiments point to the fact that progress has been made but there is still much work to be done as the gender gap is still present in intercollegiate athletics.

The Informal Educator

The respective themes for race and gender have been presented. However, also evident in the participant's narratives were how things impacted them through an intersectional lens, particularly at the intersection of race and gender. The two most noted themes that emerged was the informal educator and celebrating women of color. Most responses aligned with the former and the reality that many of the women of color included in the study found themselves assuming the role of informal educator in some capacity when on teams that were majority or all White. Like it or not, they carried the burden so to speak of teaching, correcting, and informing their teammates on race relations and social issues. With this also comes the emotional labor of being what Erving Goffman refers to as

an “open person” or someone who is available to entertain conversations or answer questions that others may have (Goffman, 1963). Two participants offered particularly powerful insight into what this looks like. Renee, a Black woman who was one of few women of color on an otherwise all White team, including many international student-athletes, described one example of the complexities of this as she said:

> I wasn't just navigating like the White and Blackness along American racial lines but trying to have conversations with my White European teammates about race, about fetishizing Black male athletes, about cultural appropriation. And I know at the time, that's what we were having conversations about but I didn't have that language to throw out fantasizing. For them having this understanding like, no, we don't have racial categories, like what is White or Black? They’re like I'm Danish. And I’m like, no, you're White. You’re White. And so those conversations were never heated. But like, those weren't conversations that our coaches never thought we should be having. And not that they, you know, would try to quiet them. They just never spoke to how much diversity was on our team. Like that's something that we all work through together, which I think is powerful. But I definitely think as a role of a coach who has recruited this extremely diverse team, it would have been nice to see him step into that role, particularly as a White male.

In another example, Jennifer Knowles shared the discomfort and tension she felt as a Black and Latina women situated amongst her predominantly White teammates following the election of Donald Trump:

> I will say especially being there when Donald Trump got elected when he was in the office, you completely saw that shift being there, and it was on the team. It was

> all around, it was scary. Me and a teammate got into it but she's actually thanked me and others have thanked me for having those conversations. Once my senior year came when I started coming into my truth of who I was as a Black and Latina woman, especially when all that stuff was going on, I had to start sticking up for myself because I was seeing like people on my team post these like nasty things, and like agreeing with Donald Trump and stuff like that. And I had to say, if you vote for him and stuff like that's fine. But I want you to know that you're going against me and my people and what my family stands for. You know, they did thank me later, like you opened my eyes because she was from a small town in Tennessee, like racist as hell. And I don't want to call her racist, but I know she was told things are very untrue. And she came into this, into this school believing these things. And most of the girls believe things that are untrue, about Black people and Mexican people, or people in general. And seeing that shift everywhere, that was kind of sickening.

Interested if this was a solo or team effort, I asked if others, regardless of their racial background supported her and/or took part in disseminating these counter narratives. Knowles replied, explaining that she was the only one at the time as the other women of color on her team remained silent on those issues and did not actively seek out opportunities to have those conversations. She also explained how these types of interactions conversing and working through difference were not isolated occurrences but rather constant emotionally taxing incidents. Furthermore, she described another vivid memory that took place in the midst of the resurgence of athlete activism, sparked by Colin

Kaepernick's efforts in 2016 where she was at a football game with her teammates and the marching band knelt in peaceful protest during the playing of the National Anthem:

> I was at that game and my parents came to visit. And I was literally like hearing all the girls around me being so fucking disrespectful and stuff, like fuck them, like they're getting booed and everything. I left the game right after the National Anthem. I called my dad and I said let's go, I was in tears. And I was like they don't understand, they don't get it. They're saying like, why are these people kneeling? Like they don't even care to get it. They don't even care to look at me. It was just shitty and I didn't really feel a part of the team, especially after that. And I had to start telling people about themselves because I was getting walked all over. People were getting too comfortable and saying things that they should not be saying around anyone, especially not around me and especially me as a woman of color.

Both Renee and Knowles' stories show the additional work that often comes with being a minority in a team setting where difference often runs deeper than merely physical features. In these two instances, both women took responsibility to fill this role and have these conversations, to embody the role of informal educator. Other participants in this study also did the same on a smaller scale. However, this may not always be the case.

Celebrating women of color

On a more positive note is the theme of celebrating female student-athletes of color. A handful of participants talked about the benefits they reaped as a result of being a female student-athlete of color. Tahnai who is Filipino and Caucasian and Nat who is Hispanic, both felt they were granted professional/personal development opportunities outside of

their sport due to the Universities desire to promote diversity and support student-athletes who were also of minority status. Tahnai was given an award for minorities in athletics and as a result had the opportunity to attend a convention at the United States Olympic Complex in Colorado. Thinking back to this experience she shared:

> It was for three or four days; it was called FLAME. I'm pretty sure it stood for Finding Leaders Among Minorities Everywhere. And I got to do that. And I thought that was really, it was definitely out of my comfort zone. And it was just a really cool experience. And then, you know, just all of the different backgrounds that we had there. They're probably like 20 and 30 of us there. They're from colleges all over the states. So that was a really cool experience that I had highlighting minorities in sport.

Similarly, Nat had the opportunity to attend the NCAA Career in Sports Forum at the NCAA Headquarters in Indianapolis. In talking about her experience and how her institution supported her she contended that:

> They wanted their athletes to get recognized. I was able to attend the NCAA Career in Sports Forum and I got to meet a lot of student-athletes from D1, D2, and D3 who had the same mindset as you like they want to be a part of sports when they graduate. I got to meet a lot of other people that were a part of the NCAA so I got a feel for different areas in sports. It was three students from our college that got chosen to be a part of that, like you have to apply. If you have to answer questions they ask you like your ethnicity or race, things like that they want to make it as diverse as they can.

Finally, when it comes to celebrating female student-athletes of color, participants also shared examples of how this also played out in more discrete ways, such as simply celebrating women of color for who they are by allowing them to be who they are. For instance, Renee shared how a small gesture can go a long way when she recalls her coach respecting her hair needs, something that was personally very important to her:

> It was nice to be able to tell my coach like hey, I need to get my hair done. So I need to know what time practices are on Saturday; or hey, can you please schedule an early practice Saturday so I can drive down to the city because I need like eight hours to get my hair braided. And like that was something I discussed with him on my recruiting trip that actually was upheld, and this is before athletes were able to even get a schedule like two weeks in advance. Like that's like a new thing; I think the Bylaw now, but I would say that's like a positive experience as a woman of color was to feel like I didn't have to, I guess, forgo like my hair keep to be an athlete at this institution which was really important.

Interestingly in a slightly different sense, some of the participants felt that celebrating individuals for their status of student-athletes afforded female students-athletes of color some protections or privileges in comparison to their non-athlete peers. For example, Jordan explained how living in a small college town that was a very pro-athlete culture may have offset some of the potential bias she may have otherwise been exposed to:

> I think I probably didn't get the same type of maybe potentially ridicule and/or racial bias that a woman of color would who wasn't an athlete got. Knowing what that's like now in the real world, I don't feel like I felt it as much in school. But I

> went to a school that very much so idealized athletes. And the community definitely was pro-athlete. And it wasn't just mainly the male money sports.

Furthermore, Kash added to this by touching on how the diversity of her basketball team and the sheer amount of time they spent together doing sport related activities created an unrealistic expectation of the real world outside of their bubble as she shared:

> It's so funny in college we used to call like regular students, students or anything we call them muggles…I think we actually had more minorities on the team throughout my time, so of course it's just like being on a team is unrealistic reflection of what it is like on the outside. Spending so much time with them I probably wasn't exposed to as much microaggressions or you know things that could have happened or that might have happened to the African American muggles on campus.

From these examples, it appeared that at times, one's student-athlete status in a sense negated the full effects of bias felt by some participants. All in all, the theme celebrating female student-athletes of color shed light on the positive ways in which student-athletes are recognized based on their race and gender, and while this may not happen everywhere it is present in some places and spaces.

As a collective, the salient themes and associated sub-themes that emerged from the data showcase how race, gender, and the intersection thereof impacted the lived experiences of former female student-athletes of color who attended HWCUs. The shared similarities and unique differences in their narratives highlight the diverse range of experiences present amongst this particular group. The participants provided information

rich data that I will further unpack in the discussion section of chapter five. Next, I will present the salient themes present for research question two.

Research Question Two

In the in-depth semi structured interviews the participants highlighted the good, the bad, and the ugly of their student-athlete experience. However, the majority of the data for question two revolved around how participants navigated the bad and the ugly or tough times and obstacles they faced. For many of the participants, the bad and the ugly times that they endured over the course of their student-athlete careers ebbed and flowed and emanated from the salient themes present in RQ1. For example, the racial microaggressions imposed or the sexism they felt in both their student and student-athlete role weighed heavily on some of the participants. Nevertheless, other hardships were also noted such as being homesick, transitioning into college, and dealing with poor coaching. For this question, the salient themes that emerged from the data were *reframing your outlook* with the sub-themes, sport does not define you, remember your why; *leaning on teammates*, and *a strong support system*.

Table 3 Themes for Research Question 2.

	Theme	**Sub-theme**
RQ2	Reframing your outlook	Sport does not define you
		Remember your why
	Leaning on teammates	
	Strong support system	

Reframing your outlook

In reflecting back on their student-athlete experience most of the participants expressed that when going through bad and ugly on and off the field, reframing their outlook put a lot into perspective and helped them persevere through difficult times. For example, Bianca, who was a soccer player at a D1 institution, talked about the dangers of being defined by your sport asserting,

> I think what kind of helped me get through it was that I changed my mindset a little bit. I almost started feeling like I was defined by being a soccer player. I kind of started feeling like I was defined by that and how much playing time was I getting, if I was getting to travel, or was I getting picked for this or that at practice? And I think I just put so much pressure on myself. And I just learned that I kind of had to, stop thinking like that and realize that I was just like everybody else, like just a person and I wasn't just a soccer player. I played soccer but that's not necessarily who I was or what defined me.

For Bianca, reframing her outlook coincided with an injury she endured late in her career, which restricted her abilities and potential on the field. Nevertheless, seeing herself as someone who was more than a soccer player, freed her up to explore post undergraduate educational opportunities like medical school, which she currently attends.

Like Bianca, Jasmine echoed similar sentiments as she argued, “Being able to have a support system and that support system encouraging you and helping you realize that basketball is only a part of you, and it’s just something you love to do, but it’s not who you are.” For Jasmine, the idea that sport does not define you, was a seed planted by her father

very early on in her athletic career. These words have stuck with her to this day and she gave credit to her father as she shared the story:

> My dad would always tell me when I was little, I was a sore loser. I would cry if we lost a rec ball game, like I was a bad loser. And he would always look at me, you know, the old saying was, it's just a game? He never said that to me. He would say, you're more than a basketball player who plays this game. And that stuck with me and that's why I loved my school, because whenever basketball was going terribly, it wasn't all of who I was, it was just a part of what I did. My husband was the president of BSU. So I was very involved in the Black Student Union; I was a tour guide, you know, I had all these friends who weren't my teammates. So I had all these other things that I loved, that was going on in my life that I could get away from basketball. And even when basketball was going terribly, it didn't mean that life was bad.

Having the familial support and being pushed to be more than a basketball player from a young age helped Jasmine stay grounded and thrive as a multidimensional person. Both Bianca and Jasmine's stories show that whether it comes from within or a narrative encouraged from someone from the outside looking in, the realization that sports does not define you was a small thing that helped participants in this study navigate through college and cope with the bad and ugly times in a big way.

Also, falling under the umbrella of reframing your outlook was to remember your why. The data that pointed to this sub-theme showed how introspective reflection and reminding yourself why you had chosen to be a student-athlete in the first place helped student-athletes be mindful of the end goal when things were tough. This was especially

vital for Nat, a first-generation college student, who leaned on this when things got rough with academics and being homesick as she voiced:

> I knew I was there for a reason. I knew that I was going to be the first one to graduate. I'm like, I'm here, I want to be here. Now that I'm here I have to do it...I guess I'd say from academics to being homesick and trying to manage my time, I knew I was there for a reason. And I knew that I had people in my corner supporting me. And I knew that I was doing it for them. And for myself.

For Nat and others, the opportunity to take the time to think about what was important and why they were there helped to rationalize the commitment that they made and to continue fighting through the hard times that presented themselves along the way.

Leaning on teammates

The theme of *leaning on teammates* falls in line with the saying that there is strength in numbers. Participants who spoke to this theme highlighted how sticking together as teammates on and off the field made the experience more enjoyable and the bad and ugly times more tolerable. For participants, this included leaning on individuals of all racial backgrounds, including their White teammates. Jordan suggested that these bonds come from the mutual respect garnered and struggles you overcome together as she shared:

> It’s like there’s just a different love, like you know in 4 years it feels like I’ve known you for 10, 10 years I’ve known you for 20. You know it’s the hardships and the amount of pressure and all that other stuff that just adds up to a different level of closeness. Like I don’t need to know what you’re saying because I know you’re thinking it, you know? That’s huge.

This one of a kind bond was evident in other participant's narratives as well and appeared to be particularly pertinent to the relationship they shared with their classmates, many of whom entered and exited the program together over the course of 4-5 years. For example, Ilene said:

> I started with two other girls and we played all four years together so to start from freshman year all the way to senior year together was super special in that they're obviously my best friends.

For Jennifer Knowles, a coaching staff change going into her junior year presented an additional challenge for her and her teammates. She expounded on Ilene's point as she suggested:

> While I was in school it was the girls, my teammates, my class, we're gonna link forever, you know what I'm saying? Because we went through it. Any chance we got whether it was going out, going to the mall, listening to old R&B songs at the house, that really got us through it, and you know, us being together outside made it easier for when we were going through it together on the field.

Like Knowles, other participants talked fondly of the incredible bond they cultivated with their teammates, many of which have turned into lifelong relationships still present today. Almost all of the participants said that these are people that they continue to lean on even after their playing careers ended.

On the contrary, Ilene pointed to how teammates can be utilized in other ways, such as resources to help strategically navigate life as a student-athlete. She stated, "I think what I learned is using my teammates as a resource, a lot of upperclassmen had taken the classes I had. So it was good to tap into them." Thus, while there may be a different kind

of relationship or level of comfort than those within the same class, other teammates, specifically upperclassmen may be great resources for other things that can be equally helpful such as mentorship, course work, and experiential knowledge that one can only obtain by going through it themselves.

Taken together, the participants frequently noted that being able to lean on your teammates is huge in navigating the bad and the ugly parts of the student-athlete experience.

Strong support system

Regardless of how positive or negative their experience was, all participants noted the importance of having a strong support system to some extent. For some this meant integrating on campus and having non-athlete peers in their circles; for others, this required having supportive coaches present; but for most this came back to have a strong circle of family and friends to confide in, especially in trying times. In light of this, participants relied on their support systems in different capacities. For instance, Bianca, who attended school close to home spoke to the luxury of having a tight family unit nearby. She stated:

> I talked to my mom a lot like over the phone and stuff or she would like come up and visit and I remember through college I hung out with my teammates a lot, but anytime my mom and dad could visit or my sister or brother would be in the area I spent a lot of time hanging out with them. So definitely a lot of support from family.

On the contrary, Tahnai acknowledged how just knowing she had people in her corner went a long way, even in times when she didn't necessarily need the additional support:

> You know, I had a good group of people, I had a good support system around me as well, to kind of keep you level or can help me out when I need it. Like, I might not have asked for help, but I knew that I had help if I needed it, and I think that was comforting. That was like a good comfort, even if I didn't use it.

Tahnai found great comfort in just knowing that there were people there if needed.

Furthermore, ShyAnn Baker expressed that surrounding herself with a supportive and diverse group of friends allowed her to vent but also stay balanced as people with different backgrounds would bring forth different perspectives. She stated:

> I think it was mostly kind of surrounding myself with people that I actually trusted and was able to vent and not feel judged or like it's looked down upon. A circle of friends and it was a mix between athletes. Like I said, I had a lot of non-athlete friends that I could kind of bounce ideas and my frustrations off of them. You know you could tell them like it is almost because they had no background in it. So just talking with people was the biggest thing for me.

Finally, while there were mixed opinions amongst the participants in terms of whether or not living with teammates or other student-athletes was an effective approach, Jordan highlighted how having a steady sturdy household was in many ways her saving grace and big de-stressor as she navigated the daily demands of being a student-athlete.

> I thank God for the household that I had because we had a really good household. We all had someone in different capacities, like someone you could sit there with and either just be quiet or have a conversation with. And it's kind of rare, but I had a very functional household…Having a steady, sturdy household, especially when things were not the best was a big de-stressor.

With this being said, the participants emphasized that having a strong support system both near and far, within their home life and with family and friends in some capacity played a significant role in navigating the good, the bad, and the ugly sides of life as a student-athlete.

The three salient themes presented (e.g., *reframing your outlook, leaning on teammates, and a strong support system*) capture the ways in which participants in this study coped with the bad and the ugly times in their academic and athletic experiences as female student-athletes of color. Mindful of these things, next, I will present the themes that emerged for research question three, which offers words of wisdom and the strategies that could be applied to enhance the development of current female student-athletes of color.

Research Question Three

Question three asked the participants to share strategies that they felt could be applied to enhance the development of current and future student-athletes of color. Based on what they know now, the participants offered an abundance of heartfelt words of wisdom, stories, past regrets and messages of encouragement, which they shared through their in-depth semi structured interviews and personal written letters. Three salient themes emerged from the data, including *control the controllables* with the sub-themes of *invest in yourself* and *it's never too late to redirect*; *recruiting: find the right fit,* and *Ball is not life: #MoreThanAnAthlete*.

Table 4 Themes for Research Question 3.

	Theme	**Sub-theme**
RQ3	Control the controllables	Invest in yourself
		It's never too late to redirect
	Recruiting: Find the right fit	
	Ball is not life: #MoreThanAnAthlete	

Due to the rich narratives that were put forth, the pertinent quotes from the written letters are included in Table 5.

Control the controllables

> Practice self-love. Be confident in your own skin and teach others (especially those who look like you) to do the same. Even when the world says you can't, make sure you can. Even when the world tells you that your natural born look isn't accepted, hold your head high. The world may not be ready for your skill and strength but always be ready and willing to put it on display. Learn from the self-loving trail blazers before you. Love yourself. (Kash via written letter)

The theme *control the controllables* shed light on the small ways student-athletes can take power over their experiences. In the data that emerged for other research questions it was clear that these individuals have a lot to balance as women of color who are also student-athletes. With this in mind, the participants found it imperative to advise others to do what they can with what they are given. ShyAnn Baker provided an overview of what this looks like as she argued:

> I think it's really making sure you control the controllables like you know, your work ethic, your decision making, like your attitude towards things and that could be, you know, like in life and with sports, but I think for most of us athletes were driven by the sport. And so taking care of that piece and kind of help balance your social and you know, life outside of sports.

Within this theme, there were two sub-themes present: Invest in yourself and it's never too late to re-direct.

To invest in yourself, participants wished to inform current and future student-athletes that this can be done in a plethora of ways and encouraged them to ask questions, and to take advantage of the resources provided by the institution and the athletic department. In one instance, Bianca voiced the importance of looking out for yourself and others and seeking additional help when needed. She stated:

> If you're interested in something or feel like there's something you need help with, or like a resource that would be nice, or that you feel like they need more guidance or like anything like that don't be afraid to stand up and ask for it, or see if it's a possibility. If you see gaps, don't be afraid to bring it up, whether it's for yourself or other people also...Be proud of who you are, be confident and don't get down on yourself out there.

She said. In addition, Kash highlighted how investing in yourself goes deeper than the physical skills of your sport but also taking care of the little things pertaining to your mental health and well-being as she offered these words of wisdom:

> It was a fun experience playing college but it was also very, very stressful. Put a lot of pressure on yourself, especially for your teammates and especially for coaches

> and family. So I would say for those coming up and walk in that same path. My best piece of advice is to understand that stress is okay. And it's part of your gut. It's going to be a part of everyday life from now until you're no longer here, but the important part of that is learning how to deal with that stress in healthy ways, having the right coping mechanisms, having the right stress relief tools and resources, and not being afraid or embarrassed to ask for help when you need it. I remember one time I was struggling on the court in college and my coach was like, maybe you should see our team doctor, like a psychologist, and I was like, No! I'm not gonna see a psychologist. I'm not crazy, you know, those stigmas about talking to someone. But I look back and I'm like I definitely should have and it probably would have helped me a lot quicker than I was able to heal from what I was going through and so I think that would be my best piece of advice. Just you know, deal with stress in healthy ways. And, you know, educate your teammates and your friends about that.

This point was particularly interesting as all but one of the participants made note of mental health in their narratives, but mainly in the sense that it was not talked about when they were playing. Nevertheless, investing in yourself as a holistic being (i.e., academically, athletically, mentally, physically) was something that participants felt should not be overlooked.

The second sub-theme that emerged from the data was that it is never too late to redirect. This stemmed from participants who expressed a general lack of awareness in regards to how to change the trajectory of their own respective journeys. For example, Anna insisted:

> I don't think I knew anything about transferring. What else to study, what I was gonna do after school. I just didn't know anything. I didn't know how to do it. Like if I were to even want to go somewhere else I wouldn't have known where to begin with how to do that. I don't think the people that I was around were educated enough to know how to leave like a school if I wanted to. I didn't even know any of that like yeah, to transfer.

Like Anna, for one reason or another many participants who were unhappy and felt stuck in a situation that did not serve their best interests, academically, athletically, and/or personally. This prompted some to offer their sentiments, such as Renee, a transfer student-athlete who played at both a JUCO and Division I institutions. She contended:

> If it's not like beneficial to you, like this is your alumni network, your teammates will always be your teammates in your institution, that's where you're going to graduate from and so if you're not happy with the arrangement, don't just stay, this would be for my D1 athletes, don't just stay because it's D1. Know that D2 or low-mid major schools are doing great things as well. So it doesn't just have to be the Power 5 or the Plus Six, there's other institutions that can serve your needs.

Jennifer Knowles added to this as she voiced, "If you want to quit, your self-worth is not determined by your D1 scholarship. That is okay."

Participants also highlighted how re-directing can be in the academic sense. Jordan reflected on the missed opportunity to alter her own academic journey and encouraged others to:

> Explore the hard tracks, explore what you want to do after this...Because being an athlete for a long time is everything. But that's really only like your first 20 years of

> life. I still have all of this other time to go, you know? So now what? Explore what else is out there and challenge the people who are just seeing you as a price tag because the people who are there to help can always help more. Could I have gone to my academic advisor more? If I knew there was more to ask about? Sure. I could have changed courses. I could have redirected. I could have done something different. The resources were there, but the knowledge of resources wasn't.

In sum, the data suggests that the participants wanted today's student-athletes to know that they have agency in their respective journeys and have numerous options and opportunities at their disposal if a situation doesn't serve them.

Recruiting: Find the right fit

> Your transition from high school to college athletics will allow you to search for the right college/university for you. I challenge you to find a program that sees the potential in you and believes in you. Don't be another number in the system, a bench warmer for a named school; be someone who has the opportunity to make a difference, someone who earns there playing time, someone who has challenges to make you a better person. After your time in collegiate sports, I challenge you to find a work place that allows you to do the same. (RM via written letter)

A frequently noted theme for research question three stemmed back to the recruiting process. Participants felt it was imperative to advise current and future student-athletes to be intentional and find the right fit in terms of the university and the athletics program. The participants felt strongly about this, as many of those who had negative

experiences attributed much of it back to a poor fit either with the institution, coaching staff, teammates, or otherwise. Further, with privilege of hindsight on their side some felt that this could have been avoided by being more critical and paying more attention to detail in the recruiting process.

For many student-athletes, finding the right coach can make or break one's experience. Morgan and RM both hit on this. Morgan advocated for a critical approach to being recruited as she suggested:

> See the character of the coach. Go to multiple games, see how they are on the floor and off. Obviously they're gonna sell you a dream, just knowing they want you to play. Now when you get there it can be totally different. You didn't put the time in and get to know the program or even asking the players, current players, what's going on? How do they feel about them that you wouldn't know?

In similar fashion, RM, who is currently a high school counselor and softball coach shared the wisdom she imparts on many of her high school athletes, that is:

> Find the right fit. Find a coach that's willing to fight for you, but also help you along the way. It's not just about sports, it's about life. They're not going to be your best friend but that they're gonna have your best interest in mind. You know what I mean? The title of the school is not as important as the quality of the school. You just gotta outwork everybody. The harder you work the more time you're gonna get.

She added:

> Talk to the coach. Find a good fit. The name of the program at the end of the day doesn't mean anything. You've got the ability now to choose who you want to play

> under. If you don't like that coach, and that coach is not going to bring the best out of you, you need to go find someplace else to play. You know what I mean? If they truly want you they're going to take care of you. What is the school going to do for you?

For Renee, while the coaching was important she argued that the team you will surround yourself with is also worthy of consideration. From her perspective, student-athletes should "re-examine their surroundings. And what I mean by that is like, are these teammates that I actually want to be around."

Furthermore, when it comes to recruiting, participants offered words of wisdom that are applicable to all student-athletes but especially in the best interests of female student-athletes of color. Tahnai was one participant who felt strongly about this as a Filipino and Caucasian female soccer player who had an exceptional student-athlete experience. In speaking to this, she credited the inclusive culture of her athletic department and within team diversity that was present. In wanting others to have the same opportunity to thrive as student-athletes she warned:

> It's about finding that group, the groups of people or just that the culture, know that you're in a good culture that is about celebrating your difference and your diversity and don't just go to a school because you're being recruited for your talents and realize when you get there, or when you go visit that you're looking at everyone that looks like exactly the same or that you feel like you're in a small-minded place. Because you can definitely get those feelings and those vibes just from meeting people or seeing them and you might end up experiencing that and if you know yourself that that's going to be an issue for you, then don't put yourself in it. Don't

> use that just because maybe like they're like a top 10 team or something like that. Like definitely like find your fit. Do the homework. Do the research. Because what I realize now is there's just so many different options. There's so many different schools that offer so much and you can find your fit if you do the work.

Additionally, she touched on how the draws of the big-time Division I institutions do little if it does not help your personal growth or propel you in your future endeavors as an individual, as she encouraged the next wave of female student-athletes of color to:

> Make sure it's the kind of culture you want to be in because it's about the people and it's about that environment. And it's not just about the numbers and the stats and the rankings and whatever status you can get from being at that certain school. That's not what's going to matter after you get out of college and when you are in the working world. Like, yeah, it'll be cool to say, oh, I went to blah, blah, blah. But if that doesn't help your character, help you grow as a person at all like, it's just a name...That isn't going to really help you that much in the long run, unless what you're looking for, just that ranking in that status. But I would hope that especially female student-athletes are going to want more than that. They're going to want a place where they're celebrated and that they can grow and no one's going to tell them they can't be something or can't do something. Just because they're different.

In sum, after competing as student-athletes and being able to reflect on their experiences the participants felt inclined to warn others to be careful of putting too much emphasis on what may be considered desirable (e.g., big time Division I institution, the name of the school, winning championships, etc.) in comparison the things that matter (e.g., fit, culture, coaching staff, team culture, etc.). The participants also encouraged

others to be critical, intentional, and thoughtful as they have agency in the recruiting process. In the eyes of several participants, putting the time in on the front end can have long term payouts on the back end. And it is important for current and future student-athletes to be mindful of these things and take their decisions seriously as they are the ones that will need to live with the situation and surroundings that they choose.

Ball is not life: #MoreThanAnAthlete

> Ball is actually not life: Similar to being a good human being, I think it's important to remember there is more to life than basketball. (Ilene via written letter)

> Please understand that your sport does not define you, you are knowledgeable, confident, and resilient and your sport just amplifies that. Carve out space in your life to spend time with yourself in order to understand exactly who you are and what you want, this will help you develop non-negotiables that align with who you are at your core! (Morgan via written letter)

In recent years, LeBron James has been credited for the popularization of the "more than an athlete" mentality. This motto speaks to the fact that being an athlete is more than the game itself but also the holistic person and the impact one can have on broader society (Uninterrupted.com). In line with this, the former female student-athletes of color in this study frequently noted that they would want current and future student-athletes to know that in the words of Ilene, "ball is not actually life". The participants in the study are working women who have found their way into a variety of career paths both within and

outside of sport. All currently assume other roles as wives, sisters, friends, and some even mothers and grandmothers raising children of their own. Now being able to see the bigger picture, many acknowledged the harsh reality that sport doesn’t last forever and addressed the dangers of putting all of their eggs in one basket early on. Like Jordan who bluntly shared:

> I think going back to the advice and it's so freakin hard to get through but letting somebody know that sports isn't everything. Cuz it can't be everything, it can’t last forever. Because I know that I wouldn't have believed you. I wouldn't. I would have thought like, okay cool, thanks, appreciate it. If at 18, 19, 20 you told me that because yes, it was everything to me...But there has to be a fine line.

Others felt it was important to encourage current and future student-athletes to use college as a time to find out who they are, what they want in life, and specifically who they are outside of their sport. In this vein, Jasmine insisted:

> Number one is know who you are, embrace that person and develop that person. So, college as you know, it's like a crack in the sidewalk like you're not a kid, you're not an adult, I'm just trying to figure out where you fit in. I hate to use a cliché but like you're literally finding yourself you're trying to figure out what it is I want to do with my life. Where do I belong? Who is it that I want to be? So really just knowing yourself is so important because in college there is so much that will grow with you that can throw you completely off track...My whole thing is knowing who you are and settling and standing in that person

She extended this by saying:

> Another thing I would say is find out who you are as a non-athlete, because if all you are is an athlete, you're going to have that huge hole when it's all over. And it's gonna suck, you're gonna have a little hole regardless because it is a lot of your time and energy. But exploring who you are outside of athletics is so important.

Morgan echoed Jasmine's comments as she said she would personally push others by asking them to:

> Please develop a strong sense of self. Please understand, who you are and what you want, you don't have to know what you want 100%, but having that sense of self and having boundaries and having you know, non-negotiables to stand by can really help you move forward and impact how you make decisions. So, I think just developing a strong sense of self would take care of a lot. A lot of steps for you moving forward. Yeah, that's the only thing I wish I have done then.

Taking a slightly different angle, Jennifer Knowles words of wisdom was to not get caught up in your sport and allow coaches to determine your self-worth as she argued:

> These coaches don't determine how worthy you are, your self-worth is not based on playing time and if the coaches like you or not, because that's what we did, it was like we made our self-worth on that. You know what I'm saying? Like, oh my gosh, I must be shitty because I'm not starting, no, F that and just relax. Who cares? Like literally, who cares? I know everybody wants to play, obviously, but just do what you have to do. Keep working, it's gonna fall. Meditate, like let it manifest, put that shit into the universe. Because at the end of the day, you can't worry about the future or the past. All you have is this present moment.

Furthermore, Knowles highlighted how allowing others and the success in her sport took a toll on her mental health. Reflecting back to this she explained:

> You know you say you wish you would have known what you know now but I just wish I wouldn't take it so seriously, and that's so shitty to say but it's not because it wasn't that serious. It's literally just a game, like you stressing over this and it is affecting your mental health and like it's not worth it. And once you actually have the time to sit down and realize like oh my god, I have all the time to do stuff that I actually like to do. Oh my god I could paint, oh my god I could write, oh my god I can do all this stuff. I can go to the park. Like, it's not that deep. It's just not.

For most of the participants who spoke to this theme, the necessity in pushing this narrative stemmed from past regrets and their somewhat difficult transition out of college sport. While the challenges these individuals faced varied, they all felt that this in part resorted back to the fact that ball was life. Therefore, it is imperative for others to have the opportunities to learn from their mistakes and see the value in being #MoreThanAnAthlete.

In this chapter, the salient themes were presented. Moving forward, in chapter five I will address what this means, how it contributes to the field of sport management, and the implications for research, theory and practice.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to illuminate and centralize the voices of former female student-athletes of color who attended HWCUs. This research consisted of three research questions: 1) How did race and gender impact the lived experiences of former female student-athletes of color who attended HWCUs? 2) How did former female student-athletes of color navigate the good, the bad, and the ugly of their sports organization (i.e., athletic department) and campus life at their HWCU? and 3) What strategies could be applied to enhance the development of current student-athletes of color?

Guided by critical race feminism (CRF), the following themes were identified: (a) Racial microaggressions, (b) Navigating White spaces, (c) Sexism: Hiding in plain sight, (d) Informal educator, (e) Celebrating women of color, (f) Reframing your outlook, (g) Leaning on teammates, (h) Strong support system, (i) Control the controllables, (j) Recruiting: Find the right fit, and (k) Ball is not life: #MoreThanAnAthlete.

CRF embraces notions of theory and praxis prompting engagement with the "researched" community to elicit real social change (Berry, 2010; Carter-Francique, 2017). More specifically, it leans on three tenets of critical race theory (CRT): 1) race and racism as the norm, 2) anti-essentialism and intersectionality, and 3) counter-storytelling/narrative to learn why and how Latina, Asians, Native American, and African American women endure shared and distinct racialized and gendered experiences (Wing, 2003). These aforementioned tenets were used to make sense of the findings. In the next section, the I will unpack the findings and discuss what this means and the contribution this makes to the field. This will be followed by implications for research, theory, and practice.

Discussion

Intersectionality and CRF were used as theoretical frameworks and lenses to make sense of the findings that emerged from the data. The former acknowledges that, "The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways" (p. 2). In turn, in the field of sport management, Melton and Bryant (2017) suggest, "Using an intersectional approach, researchers can uncover multiple forms of prejudice women of color face due to structural and systemic pressures" (p. 65). Meanwhile, the latter (e.g., CRF) embraces notions of theory and praxis prompting engagement with the "researched" community to elicit real social change (Berry, 2010; Carter-Francique, 2017). Delgado (2003) highlighted the beauty of CRF, which provides that space to recognize the shared similarities and distinct differences are present for women of color as he stated, "One encounters the voices of Latinas, Asians, Native Americans, and African Americans. One learns why each group suffers different kinds of discrimination and obstacles and how each is racialized - and sexualized in unique ways" (p. xv). While CRF has rarely been used in scholarship in sporting spaces, it has much to offer research that takes an intersectional approach (Carter-Francique, 2017). Additionally, Carter-Francique (2017) noted, "CRF speaks to the marginalization of African American women, in addition to Asian, Hispanic, and Native American women as racial and ethnic 'Others', and, likewise, promotes social justice through voice and direct policy-making" Carter-Francique (2017, p. 70). These three tenets will be used to explain and present the themes that were identified in chapter four.

Tenet one: Race and racism as the norm

Tenet one of CRF, race and racism as the norm, suggests that racism is a normal and pervasive part of everyday life in American society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Museus & Iftikar, 2013). Derrick Bell (1992) spoke to the permanence of racism in America by introducing the notion of racial realism, in which he asserts that racism will never cease to exist but those committed to the fight should continue to resist and work towards making small incremental changes despite working towards an illusory end. While this stance is often criticized as being overly pessimistic, Bell and others suggest this is not pessimism, but rather a harsh reality that needs to be recognized (Bell, 1992; Curry, 2008).

The findings indicated that race was an important identity for all but one of the participants included in the study, as 14 out of 15 of the participants highlighted how their race played a more prominent role in their experiences compared to other identities. The exception to this was Loke Malia, a 62-year-old mixed-race (Hawaiian, Irish, and American Indian) female and former two sport student-athlete at a division one institution. Given the social context in which she matriculated through college, that is, in the late 1970s to early 1980s and on the heels of the introduction and enforcement of Title IX, it was not surprising that the role of gender was more evident in her story.

Consistent with tenet one of CRF, the findings indicated that most of the participants experienced prejudice and discrimination to varying degrees due to the racial microaggressions imposed upon them. Scholars have argued that it is typical for people of various ethnic minority groups to find themselves the target of racism via microaggressions in the classroom and on campus, particularly at HWCUs (Lewis et al.,

2019; Jones et al., 2002). Furthermore, others have shed light on the consequences this has for those affected, including but not limited to negatively impacting academic performance, psychological well-being, and sense of belonging for students of color (Lewis et al., 2019; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, & Hart, 2008).

In addition, the ways in which women of color experience the everyday realities of racism is informed by norms and stereotypes present on the societal level. This was apparent in the distinct and different messages couched in the racial microaggressions. For instance, as a Black female student-athlete Jasmine described how she felt others categorized her as a Black ghetto basketball player simply because of her identity as a Black female basketball player. On the contrary, RM, an Asian female who played softball in college and struggled with dyslexia, expressed the frustrations that stemmed from people assuming she naturally possessed a superior level of intelligence. This was despite all the extra work she had to put in to be successful academically as someone who dealt with a learning disorder.

The assumption that RM was intellectually superior is a direct reflection of the myth of the model minority; this White constructed, and typically White imposed, stereotype implies that certain Asian American groups are exemplary in education, occupation, and professional achievement in comparison to other people of color (Chou & Feagin, 2015; Hurh & Kim, 1989). More specifically, in the context of higher education it suggests that Asian American students do not face significant struggles and as such, do not require extra attention or assistance (Chou & Feagin, 2015; Chou et al., 2016; Museus & Kiang, 2009).

Jasmine and RM's stories show the stark contrast and distinct ways in which racism is normal, but the way in which it is imposed may differ by racial group. Perhaps this can be explained in part by the work of Galinsky, Hall, and Cuddy (2013) who revealed the ways in which racial and gendered stereotypes interact with one another and impact people's lives in differing ways. Research has examined the ways in which racial microaggressions impact students broadly, and students who are women of color to some extent. However, in terms of the latter there has been a dearth of research in sporting spaces that addresses these concerns. In the realm of intercollegiate sport, recent years have led to a slowly but growing body of literature centered around the lived experiences of Black female student-athletes broadly, and their experiences at HWCUs in particular (Bruening, 2005; Bruening et al., 2005; Carter & Hart, 2010, Carter & Hawkins, 2011; Carter-Francique et al., 2011; Carter-Francique, 2013). Salient themes emerging from these studies include concern for a lack of diversity on campus and within the athletics department (Bernhard, 2014), feeling invisible and silenced by various stakeholders in athletics (Bruening, 2004; Bruening et al., 2005), and alienation and isolation stemming from their racial and athlete status (Bernhard, 2014; Carter-Francique et al., 2013; 2017).

In the findings from my study, the participants who identified as Black or African American recalled instances where race and racism impacted their lived experiences most frequently. Many of which aligned with previous research done in this line of work; for instance, Morgan spoke to the lack of diversity and isolation being an African American female student-athlete on a HWCU campus where no one looked like her as she recalled feeling isolated and as if her growth as a young adult was stunted due to the lack of care exhibited by others on campus. As a result, she expressed discomfort in confiding in

faculty and staff for guidance and support, as she was made to believe that her sole value lay in her athlete identity and her ability to be productive on the court.

The highly-racialized nature of the lived experiences of Black and African American former female student-athletes in comparison to the other women of color may be explained in part by Derrick Bell's (2018) *faces at the bottom of the well* thesis where he explains that racism is enduring, permanent and that Black people often are the ones most affected by the systemic injustices present within American society.

Finally, while racial microaggression is a common term used to describe the racial slights imposed on people of color (Pierce, 1970; Sue et al., 2007), in my findings and many other studies (Huntt, Mendenhall, & Lewis, 2012; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Yosso et al., 2009) it is evident that these microaggressions are felt deeply and impact those directly affected in big ways. I can personally attest to this as some of the microaggressions I endured as a student-athlete took years to recover from. Simply put, there is nothing micro or little about them.

I suggest that by continuing to refer to these forms of racism as microagressions it undermines the significance of these slights and the way it is felt by those targeted. Moreover, referring to it in this way (i.e., microaggressions) takes agency and responsibility off of the perpetrator and makes it seem as if not only are these minor but they are individual isolated incidents rather than systemic in nature (Chun & Feagin, 2020). In turn, I echo Chun and Feagin's (2020) assertion that "macro-aggressions" may be a more appropriate term to describe the racial and gendered slights people of color often experience. "The racially charged rhetoric of our current times signals the urgent need to replace the understated implicit bias and microaggressions language with a more direct and

frank terminology that addresses the long-term material, social, familial, and career consequences of what are intentional macro-aggressions and macro-inequalities" Chun and Feagin (2020, p. 129) contend in speaking on this issue in the context of higher education. Thus, as sport management scholars, we too should be mindful of the power in language and at least consider also implementing this shift of terminology from micro- to macro-aggressions in our own research.

Nevertheless, two key contributions that emerged from the findings are that: 1) Race and racism played a role in the academic and athletic lives of the former female student-athletes of color included in this study (i.e., on and off the field of play), 2) In addition to Black and African American females, race also impacted the lived experiences of Asian and Latina former female student-athletes, and 3) Utilizing the term macroaggressions rather than microaggressions should be considered as this may be a more appropriate depiction of the everyday racism imposed upon people of color.

Tenet two: Anti-essentialism and intersectionality

The second tenet of CRF, anti-essentialism and intersectionality suggests that there is no "essential experience or attributes that defines any group of people" (Museus & Iftikar, 2013, p. 20). For instance, there is no singular Latina student-athlete experience that all female student-athletes of Latina descent are restricted to. But rather, one's racial identity intersects with other social axes to shape systemic oppression and unique experiences on the individual level (Crenshaw, 1993; Museus & Iftikar, 2013). The findings aligned with this tenet as the shared similarities but also unique differences were apparent in the participants' stories in general and within their respective racial groups

more specifically. As a result, I suggest that women of color and the various groups that fall under this umbrella (e.g., African American/Black women, Asian women, Latina women) are not monolithic groups and should not be treated as such. Rather it is imperative to acknowledge the points of similarity and difference within these at times, complex lived experiences, and understand why they are present.

The notion of anti-essentialism amongst the former female student-athletes of color in this study was especially evident in the strategies they implemented to navigate the good, and particularly the bad and the ugly, of their student-athlete experiences. For example, the necessity of building a strong support system was a salient theme that emerged from the data. However, what this support system looked like and the spaces and places they presented themselves were quite different for the Latina and African American participants. For instance, the presence of family was undeniable and the main pillar of support in the narratives of all four of the Latina participants. For instance, Nat, a Hispanic female and a first-generation college student recalled experiencing homesickness because her family meant so much to her, but finding comfort in communicating with them and knowing that they were a large part of her motivation to graduate from college. Moreover, Tori expressed the comfort she felt in attending a university that was in close proximity to her grandparents' home as she acknowledged that they were a part of her journey from beginning to end, starting with the recruiting process. Moreover, she stated that they were huge supporters and in attendance at almost every game. Anna also touched on the vital role of familial support in her narrative. Suffering numerous concussions over the course of her playing career, she talked about concerns for her mental health and the struggles of dealing with injuries that were not physically visible. Furthermore, she shared how her

parents were always there for her through those dark times and how they played a big role in her decision to end her basketball career after suffering a concussion in her junior year of college, “My parents didn't really care about my sport anymore. They were just worried. It wasn't about basketball anymore. They weren't interested in my sport anymore. They were just worried about me.” For Anna, her parents influence ultimately confirmed that it was in her best interest to quit playing basketball, which she shared was one of the most difficult decisions she had to make.

Coined community cultural wealth, Yosso (2005) emphasizes the important role that familial capital plays particularly in Latina/o communities. She explains how cultural knowledge is nurtured amongst familia also known as kin (Yosso, 2005). Moreover, kin offer various lessons that assist in minimizing feelings of isolation as individuals deal with personal problems (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Yosso, 2005). Thus, while their narratives took form in slightly different ways, it is clear that family was a big part of the support system the participants of Latina descent held near and dear to them, ultimately aligning with Yosso’s (2005) stance.

The African American and Black women included in this study also talked about the importance of family in their support systems as well. For instance, Bianca shared how having family in the area served as an escape for her and that their support was monumental in her college years. However, in comparison to the Latina women, the role family played in the lives of other African American and Black women was distinct and different. Specifically, the role of family was not only in terms of being a support system but also an integral part of preparing them to be a Black woman in this world. For example, Kash and Jasmine shared how the lessons passed down from their parents, helped

them understand who they were and what this meant in society. Both of which helped them to navigate the bias and discrimination they encountered as student-athletes in college:

> For my dad, you know, he grew up in Jim Crow South. My parents were born in the late 50's. And so, they're both in Memphis when they were children. Remember how everybody was panicking because Martin Luther King, Jr. was shot in Memphis? They remember that and so growing up hearing those stories, they have always wanted me to be proud of being Black, proud of my culture, proud of our history, and they wanted me to understand what people have been through for me to have this opportunity, for me to live in the suburbs and you know, not have to worry about anything like that growing up.

Likewise, Kash expressed, how similar life lessons and preparation passed down from her parents helped her understand who she was and the history behind the prejudice and discrimination she faced in college. Scholars have long highlighted the ways in which African American mothers, in particular, intentionally raise their daughters as 'resistors' (Robinson & Ward, 1991; Ward, 1996). Furthermore, Yosso (2005) explained, "Through verbal and nonverbal lessons, these Black mothers teach their daughters to assert themselves as intelligent, beautiful, strong, and worthy of respect to resist the barrage of societal messages devaluing Blackness and belittling Black women" (p. 81). This preparation and awareness of identity along racial and gender lines was something that was unique to the African American and Black women included in this study.

Finally, it appeared that while they often faced more struggles than their Latina and Asian counterparts, the African American and Black participants seemed to have more safe places and spaces around campus that embraced their culture. For example, four of the six

participants made note of the positive role that the Black student organizations (e.g., Black Student Union (BSU), Black Student Association (BSA), African American Institute (AAI)), or inclusive cultural programs played in their student-athlete experience. For instance, Kash contended that there was a very tight knit Black community amongst students on campus. She further explained that while she initially got involved in the AAI because the events and the activities they offered appealed to her culturally and she quickly fell into a network and friend group through the organization.

In addition, Jasmine talked about how her boyfriend at the time, and now husband, was the president of the BSU at her institution, so she was very involved in that outside of her sport. The other African American and Black participants also spoke to the comforting and healing nature of these spaces and places. The presence of these formal outlets was not as apparent in the narratives of Asian and Latina participants. Two of the Asian participants who were originally from Hawaii made mentions of their occasional participation in the Hawaii Club at their respective institutions. However, other than that, this presence was sparse. Needless to say, similar spaces may be present but they were not used by the Latina and most of the Asian participants in this particular study. In turn, the aforementioned examples highlight the shared similarities and unique differences present for the former female student-athletes of color both as women of color and within each respective racial group.

Tenet two of CRF also speaks to the notion of intersectionality. The intersectional nature of the lived experiences of the participants was evident in the findings. Besides the prominent role that race and racism played in the lived experiences of the former female student-athletes of color, other social axes (e.g., gender) and salient identities (e.g.,

student-athlete identity) impacted the participants' lives in mutually influencing ways. I will begin with a discussion of the noted sexism that emerged from the findings, unpack the significance of what it means to be an informal educator as a woman of color, and finally, discuss the demands of being a woman of color who is also a student-athlete in today's day and age.

According to the findings, while often falling second to race, gender also impacted the lived experiences of the participants in the study. In general, this was more negative than positive and frequently manifested in various forms of sexism that resulted in some of the student-athletes feeling less than their male counterparts. The nature of the sexism described was consistent with that put forth by Janet Fink's (2016), *Hiding in plain sight: The embedded nature of sexism in sport*. In this article, she contended that, "But that is what is so interesting about sexism in sport. It is commonly overt yet simultaneously unnoticed. It hides in plain sight. It is so entwined in the fabric of sport that most do not even discern it." (p. 1). This was exactly the case for the women included in the study. Furthermore, while race and racialized experiences were present in both the participant's student and athlete role, the impact of one's gender and the associated sexism endured was prevalent within the athletic department broadly, and within the physical walls of the weight room in particular. Incidents such as having weights and conditioning sessions at 5 o'clock in the morning because male sports have the prime time slots, the softball team being pushed into a small corner of the weight room in order to make room for the football team, and lacking sport specific weight coaches that men's team were often afforded were amongst those listed. Hence, these sexist practices that have become embedded into the

taken for granted norms of intercollegiate athletics system are hidden in plain sight but still yield negative outcomes for the female student-athletes who are directly affected.

Additionally, most of the participants who spoke to this theme were explicit in stating that this sexist culture was not necessarily a product of tension between male and female student-athletes but rather, a result of systemic sexism present at the macro- (i.e., societal/institutional) and meso- (i.e., organizational) levels. For example, Loke Malia expressed, “It wasn't bad feelings between the athletes between the females and the males. It was a problem with the whole system, like whoa, how come our full scholarships don’t cover everything? I'm playing college sports like Jesus Christ. It was ridiculous.” The sexism that pervades intercollegiate sport also presents itself in more implicit ways. Although it was not explicitly noted in the data something apparent in the participants’ narratives was the negative experiences that stemmed from poor coaching and the high turnover rates for coaches in women’s sport.

Ironically, the coaching carousel at the college level is something that frequently appears in headlines of prominent male revenue sports such as basketball and football, but there was an alarming rate of turnover present amongst the coaching staffs for which participants in this study played for, as 8 out of 15 participants endured at least one head coaching change at some point in their college career. Moreover, two coaches were fired due to corrupt activities or illegal practices; while, participants felt that the others were either inadequate coaches or exhibited questionable behaviors. For example, Jasmine talked about how their championship season was stripped away due to her head coach’s illegal activity. This incident ensued after it was made public knowledge that the coach was sharing her personally prescribed pain medication with the star player on the team so

that she could play through injuries suffered throughout the season. In another instance, Ilene highlighted the immature and highly questionable behavior of her head coach. In attempts to pit players against each other, Ilene shared an instance where the coach asked one player to hide under her desk while "privately" meeting with another player on the team. Finally, Jennifer Knowles, who got recruited by one coaching staff and then ended up playing for two different coaching staffs over the course of her college career, expressed the frustration she felt during her time as a student-athlete. "It's so unfortunate that they keep hiring these inadequate and incompetent coaches to have these girls at such a crucial time in their lives" she exclaimed in frustration and disbelief.

These disturbing recollections shared by half of the participants included in this study points to the inadequate coaching present at the college level for female student-athletes. The recurring sentiments were difficult to hear, as it is a reality that I know all too well. As a former D1 softball player my experience was relatable. Between myself and my sister who is three years younger than me and also played softball at the same institution, we played for three different coaching staffs over a seven-year span. Rebuilding, redirecting, third times a charm, call it what you wish, but from a student-athletes' perspective this is crazy. I personally was recruited by a coaching staff that did not deliver what was promised. By the end of my sophomore year I contemplated transferring, but before this could happen our program underwent an NCAA investigation, which resulted in them being fired for a multitude of NCAA violations. Although they were gone, the effects of the pain felt and psychological warfare inflicted continued to linger long after they were relieved of their duties. This took years to recover from. Nevertheless, this informed my desire to pursue my PhD and to address these very issues present in college

sport. Thus, these inadequacies on the coaching end often have very real implications for the players directly impacted.

Regarding the hidden nature of sexism, I suggest that the low priority often placed on women's sports and female student-athletes in particular may show up in the thoroughness, or lack thereof, in coaching search committees, hiring processes, etc. While endless amounts of time, resources, and efforts are put into recruiting top-notched candidates that show long term promise and potential for the football team, the question is whether athletic administrators are doing their due diligence to secure competent candidates for the women's sports.

Coach turnover is frequent at the college level (Shipherd, Wakefield, Stokowski, & Filho, 2019). Nevertheless, while scholars in the field of sport management have done important work looking at turnover primarily in terms of coaching turnover intentions (Cunningham, Ahn, Anderson, & Dixon, 2019; Cunningham & Sagas, 2004; Cunningham, Sagas, & Ashley, 2001; Ratten, Ryan, & Sagas, 2009), there is a dearth of research that examines how coaching turnover affects student-athletes (Shipherd et al., 2019). Moreover, Shipherd et al. (2019) contend that, "Indeed, coach turnover studies have focused primarily on the coach, thus failing to recognize the needs of the athletes who have just experienced a change in leadership" (p. 98).

A recent qualitative studied conducted with 11 athletic teams at a Midwestern Division I NCAA institution that had undergone coach turnover indicated that the coach's gender and coaching style determined whether they impacted the athlete's affective state, team dynamic, and program culture in positive or negative ways (Shipherd et al., 2019). Thus, this points to the ways in which coaching turnover may have multi-level

implications for the student-athletes affected. “Coach turnover is dynamic insofar that it can foster either functional or dysfunctional effects on individual’s affective states, team dynamics, and university environments” Shipherd et al. (2019, p. 104) suggests. In turn, this work in conjunction with the emerging findings regarding the coaching carousel present in my study support the need to further explore how student-athletes are affected by a phenomenon that has become rather commonplace, particularly in women’s sports.

Another finding worthy of further discussion is addressing the many “hats” that participants wore as female student-athletes of color in predominantly White spaces. While not the case for all, a few of the participants found themselves assuming the role of informal educator within their team. As women of color, Renee and Jennifer Knowles shared how they felt a sense of responsibility to inform, correct, and educate their teammates, many of which were White females, on social issues, race relations, non-White culture, and more. In other cases, they naturally found themselves being what Erving Goffman (1963) refers to as an “open person”, which he describes as someone who is seemingly readily available and accessible to provide information as teammates would come to them with questions or comments regarding race and ethnic group relations. This additional role, or in some cases, this burden is often one imposed upon women of color.

The concept of emotional labor can be used to make sense of these findings. Emotional labor can be defined as, “an effort to both regulate inner feelings and express appropriate emotions to be effective in the job” (Lee & Chelladurai, 2018, p. 394). This is something people of color, and women of color in particular, who find themselves navigating White institutional spaces must constantly engage in (Evans & Moore, 2015). Evans and Moore (2015) highlight the paradox of emotional labor imposed upon people of

color in these historically White spaces. As such, they argue, "People of color carry the burden of having to choose between tacitly participating in their marginalization or actively resisting racist ideologies with the possible consequence of institutional alienation, exclusion, or official reprimand" (Evans & Moore, 2015, p. 452). This is concerning as scholars have pointed to the psychological consequences of emotional labor (Hochschild, 1979; Wharton, 1999).

This was apparent for Knowles, who talked about standing up for herself by educating others, while still coming into her truth as a Black and Latina woman:

> And on top of that I just know what I know. I am a part of two beautiful cultures. And both of the cultures I'm a part of, they're kind of Americanized, I'm not like Mexican-Mexican, I'm just Mexican. I don't even speak Spanish you know? But like, you know, I know my culture. And then and that's a lot of pressure to like educate other people too, like what the hell is going on literally? Like, it was a roller coaster like it really was.

The felt responsibility, pressure to educate others, and roller coaster ride speaks to the extra emotional labor often imposed upon women of color in sport and society. On a positive note, while it does take extra work, the everyday micro-resistances Renee and Jennifer Knowles took part in can be seen as forms of resistance against racial and gendered objectification and degradation (Evans & Moore, 2015). Moreover, pushing back and warning against racist discourse is one way to strategically negotiate their position in these White institutional spaces by emotionally protecting themselves and valuing their human dignity (Evans & Moore, 2015; Higginbotham, 2001).

Nevertheless, as the women of color in this study explain how they were not only outsiders within, as Patricia Hill Collins (1986) would say, but also tasked with informing their White teammates of how to respect them and others within these spaces, further research that looks at the emotional labor endured by women of color in intercollegiate sport broadly, and female student-athletes of color in particular is warranted.

Finally, while intersectionality is oftentimes talked about in terms of social identities (e.g., race, gender, sexuality, class, etc.) all participants in this study spoke to the significance of their student-athlete identity and the major impact this had on their lived experiences in and through sport. With this being said, there was an overwhelming abundance of data in response to question one that did not necessarily center around race and gender. For example, salient themes that emerged were things like negative coaching, harsh transition periods both into and out of college (athletics), guidance, enduring injuries, and mental health. To understand the depth of some of these additional findings, some of the more powerful quotes that speak to each of these themes are included in Table 6. Although these findings do not directly address the research questions posed in this project, it is imperative to note how these things can intersect with some of the racialized and gendered experiences that the participants previously shared.

Also, the additional themes presented do not occur in and of themselves, but rather in conjunction with the aforementioned lived realities the participants faced on the basis of race and gender as female student-athletes of color at HWCUs. The average college female student-athlete may be between the age of 18-21. Therefore, the findings suggest that this is a lot for anyone to balance, and there may be even more imposed upon women of color

in sport and society once the aforementioned emotional labor is factored into the equation (i.e., allostatic load).

To work towards addressing this issue, sport managers, in general, and athletic administrators, coaches, and support staff would benefit from first and foremost, having awareness of this occurrence and also brainstorming steps they could take to make these sporting spaces more inclusive for all, on the basis of race, gender, and otherwise. On the contrary, there appears to be a dearth of literature that spreads awareness of these issues amongst student-athletes and informs them of what can be done to take matters into their own hands on a micro- (i.e., individual) level. As such, I asked the participants not only how they navigated the good, the bad, and the ugly of their student-athlete experience but also to share words of wisdom they had to offer other current and future female student-athletes of color. In turn, this is another key contribution of this research project that lays the groundwork for future research to follow. In the next section, I will discuss this by couching these findings in tenet three of CRF, counter-narrative/storytelling.

Tenet three: Counter-narrative/storytelling

The third tenet of CRF, counter-narrative/storytelling is rooted in the belief that "oppressed people have stories that can constitute valuable knowledge and counter dominant hegemonic norms" (Museus & Iftikar, 2013, p. 20). Under these conditions, the experiential knowledge put forth by people of color is seen as both legitimate and valuable (Yosso, 2005). Given the dearth of attention given to women of color in sport and society, this study sought to illuminate the voices of former female student-athletes of color and create a space for their counter-narratives and stories to flourish. This resulted in 15

participants that each shared their rich narratives. In addition, to addressing how race and gender impacted their lived experiences, emerging from the findings were sentiments addressing research questions two and three - heartfelt navigational strategies and words of wisdom that current and future student-athletes can use to enhance their own respective collegiate experience. This extends previous research that has been done with student-athletes broadly, and female student-athletes of color more specifically, by going beyond identifying the problem and encouraging former student-athletes to impart their words of wisdom and to include them in working towards solutions for ongoing issues.

The systemic racism and sexism embedded in the institution of intercollegiate sport may be ever present. Nevertheless, the participants' counter-narratives indicate that there is a plethora of strategies that can be implemented on the individual level to persevere and even thrive in and through historically White spaces of higher education. For instance, salient themes included: Reframing your outlook, leaning on teammates, strong support system, control the controllables, the recruiting process: find the right fit, and ball is not life #MoreThanAnAthlete.

According to Samuelson and Litzler (2016), "The concept of community cultural wealth has a basis in critical race theory and offers an assets-based approach to understanding the persistence of underrepresented minority students" (p. 94). This cultural wealth is nurtured via six forms of capital (i.e., aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistant capital), that is dynamic in nature and informs one another (Yosso, 2005). The descriptions of each respective form of capital is listed in Table 7. All six forms of capital were consistent with the findings that

emerged from the participants' narratives – with aspirational, navigational, and resistant capital being especially prominent.

The dynamic nature of these three forms of capital is apparent as each mutually informs one another. For example, the findings related to the themes *reframing your outlook, control the controllables* and *ball is not life: #MoreThanAnAthlete* are examples of aspirational capital. Moreover, these themes speak to the ways in which current and future student-athletes can not only persevere when faced with adversity but establish a game plan and envision a future for themselves that is bigger than sport and their identity as a student-athlete.

Next, in regards to navigational capital, the themes of *navigating White spaces, leaning on teammates, strong support system*, and others, to a lesser extent, explicitly highlighted coping strategies and navigational tools that student-athletes can implement directly. The navigational capital offered is informed by the lived experiences of former female student-athletes of color included in this study. Capital of this nature is of great value for people from communities of color and their ability to maneuver through institutional spaces that were not created with them in mind (Yosso, 2005).

Finally, in terms of resistance capital, the themes of *celebrating women of color* and the *informal educator* exemplified ways in which participants took part in everyday micro-resistances (Evans & Moore, 2015). In addition, a notable finding that was addressed earlier was the familial preparation that was evident for two Black female participants, Jasmine and Kash. Their families' role in preparing them for what it means to be a Black woman in this world is also a form of resistance capital.

Franklin (2002) contended that cultural capital can be defined as, "the sense of group consciousness and collective identity that serves as a resource aimed at the advancement of the entire group" (p. 177). Moreover, Yosso (2005) insisted, "...the main goals of identifying and documenting cultural wealth are to transform education and empower People of Color to utilize assets already abundant in their communities" (p. 82). Thus, inadvertently through their counter-narratives and storytelling elicited in both oral and written narratives, in some ways this works has begun creating community cultural wealth by female student-athletes of color and intended for female student-athletes of color - past, present, and future.

Table 7 Cultural Wealth: 6 Forms of Capital (Yosso, 2005, pp. 79-80).

	Description
Aspirational	The ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real or perceived barriers.
Linguistic	The intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style.
Familial	Those cultural knowledges nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition.
Social	Networks of people and community resources.
Navigational	Skills of maneuvering through social institutions.
Resistant	Knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality.

Often silenced (Bruening, 2004; Bruening et al., 2005) and at times forgotten (Smith, 1992), the individual and collective voices of participants included in this study is valuable in exposing and addressing the systemic inequalities present in intercollegiate sport and the steps that can be taken to address this. This concept of community cultural

wealth, which has long been utilized to conceptualize the cultural capital present within communities of color (Yosso, 2005; Huber, 2009; Samuelson & Litzler, 2016), shows promise in forming unity and serving as a resource for female student-athletes of color. In the future directions section, I address how this work can be extended and how this community may also be cultivated in a practical sense.

Future Directions

Research and theory

According to Lapchick's (2019), *Racial and Gender Report Card,* female student-athletes of color account for approximately 30% of all female student-athletes across all NCAA Divisions I, II, and III are women of color. Nevertheless, there is an alarming dearth of research on the lived experiences of these individuals in college sport and society (Beamon, 2014; Bruening, 2005; Carter-Francique, 2017; Person et al., 2001). This work makes meaningful contributions to the sport management literature as this study reverberates Bruening's (2005) call to action by moving female student-athletes of color from margin to center, placing an emphasis on the need for an explicit and sustained focus on this group. Furthermore, the rich narratives provided by the participants shed light on the shared and unique ways that race and gender played a role in shaping the experiences of former female student-athletes of color, how they persevered through challenging times, and the advice they had to offer the next wave of student-athletes to come.

In regards to research, the data pointed to the negatives and positives present. For instance, the overwhelming majority of participants shared vivid accounts of the discrimination and prejudice they endured on the basis of race and/or gender, both on and

off the playing field at their HWCU. As a result, participants felt less than, out of place, and unwelcomed as they navigated these White institutional spaces. These findings speak to the tenet of CRT and CRF, race and racism as the norm, which suggests that regardless, racism is a permanent and pervasive aspect of everyday life (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Thus, while the women of color in this study may have been affected in different ways, they all noted some degree of prejudice and discrimination was present in their student-athlete experience.

The findings of this work are only representative of the 15 participants that were included in the study. However, as a result of this initial work further research is needed to understand other female student-athletes of color, past and present, to uncover the intricacies of their lived experiences as well as next steps that can be taken to cultivate cultures of inclusion in these predominantly White spaces and places, particularly for African American, Asian, Latina, and Native American student-athletes.

Although the findings are not generalizable in the traditional quantitative sense, they are transferable, meaning that this can be applied in other settings or with a different group of people (Cope, 2014, Houghton, et al., 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Polit & Beck, 2012). First and foremost, the initial response and interests from the participants in this study was incredible. Many expressed interest in staying connected to this work in some capacity and jumped at the opportunity to share other contacts in their network who they also felt would be a good fit and willing to participate. This showcases the potential opportunities to conduct research with this group (i.e., former female student-athletes of color) and their willingness to share their rich stories and give back to the cycle of impact. In turn, one future direction would be to include more female student-athletes of color and

develop more robust findings and as a result, a greater understanding of their lived experiences in and through sport.

Also, due to the time constraints and additional levels of IRB clearance required when dealing with "vulnerable" populations, Native American student-athletes were not included in this particular study. However, future work with women of color should include Native American females, as Chideya (1999) warned that in the most stereotypic sense Whites are considered superior, Blacks inferior, Asians and Hispanic are considered foreigners, and Native Americans are rarely thought of.

In addition, this study could be extended to include other former student-athletes. For example, this may include but is not limited to former White female student-athletes, male student-athletes, and LGBTQIA+ student-athletes to illuminate their voices and investigate how their respective intersecting identities impact their lived experiences, how they navigate the good, the bad, and the ugly of athletics and academics, and the advice they have to offer others. On a more local level, institutions (i.e., high schools and colleges) could utilize this study to understand the lives and needs of their own student-athletes on a more personal level. For example, similar to exit interviews, in-depth individual interviews or focus groups could be conducted with outgoing student-athletes. This would give athletic administrators at that particular university advice into how to improve their daily operations as well as insight into how to better serve student-athletes. This would also provide incoming student-athletes at that particular institution more formal knowledge and advice that may help navigate their college careers more effectively. The possibilities are endless, and taken together this research agenda can help build a collective

voice of former student-athletes and work towards bridging the communication gap between past, present, and future student-athletes.

In addition, important theoretical implications also emerged. This confirms Carter-Fracique's (2017) sentiments that despite the scarcity of research adopting this approach, embracing CRF has much to offer, particularly within sporting spaces. In utilizing CRF as a theoretical framework to guide this study women of color were placed front and center. This provided the opportunity for their lived experiences to be interpreted in and of themselves rather than in comparison to other groups. Furthermore, I argue that part of the beauty of CRF is the creative versatility it offers, especially when paired with qualitative research. At the crux of CRF is the component of counter-narrative/storytelling, which, historically speaking has been a rich tradition in many communities of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Delgado (1989) attests, "oppressed groups have known instinctively that stories are an essential tool to their own survival and liberation" (p. 2436). Moreover, these stories can take many different forms including but not limited to personal and composite narratives (i.e., oral and written), poetry, and film (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

In this study, a unique element was the written letter. Due to the potentially intimate nature of the research questions I found it imperative to give the participants two outlets to share their rich narratives, that is, orally in the individual interview and written in letter form, which they completed in privacy and on their own time. I then triangulated the two data sources in the interpretation stage of data analysis. Taking this approach yielded powerful insights. The personal touches included in the written letters were particularly moving and filled with rich heartfelt words of wisdom, past regrets, love, and inspiration that primarily spoke to RQ3.

Finally, a positive takeaway that occurred organically was the cathartic relief that this work provided to the participants in the study. Many expressed their gratitude for taking interests in their stories and asking important questions that no one had asked them before. At one point, Jasmine mentioned how it felt like therapy being able to talk through her experiences, particularly, those with racialized undertones. Meanwhile, others found great value in doing the written letter where they were given the opportunity to write to current and future student-athletes in general or their past selves. For instance, Jordan expressed how she likely would not have reflected on these monumental moments and how they continue to inform her life today had she not been involved in the study. On the contrary, Anna emotionally expressed her appreciation and comfort in simply finding someone who understood her and valued her experience. These are just a few examples of the healing effects this had for participants in this study.

The aforementioned examples highlight the theoretical contributions this approach has to offer. While there is a dearth of literature that implements CRF (Carter-Francique, 2017), this work showcases one way that it can be effective. By placing an explicit and sustained focus on women of color in sport and providing methodological innovation – this helps to address multiple calls to action set forth by sport management scholars (Bruening, 2005; Rinehart, 2005; Singer et al., 2019) and advances much needed inquiry in this line of work. Thus, as a future direction I encourage others to adopt this approach and be creative in thinking of personal ways to apply it to their own research.

Here, I have addressed the implications for research and theory. In the next section the practical implications of this work will be highlighted.

Practice

In designing the study, I was intentional about the practical component this work provided. While question one sought to gain an in-depth understanding of how race and gender influenced the participants' lived experiences, question two and three, which looked at how these individuals navigated the ups and downs of their student-athlete experience and the words of wisdom they had to offer was geared toward eliciting practical, applicable knowledge that could be used by current and future student-athletes walking in similar paths. As a result, the participants provided an abundance of insightful stories, heartfelt pieces of advice, and some also provided implications for the institution in particular.

The implications for the institution spoke to the ways in which athletic administrators, coaches, and support staff could offer more guidance and support for student-athletes. For example, in speaking to her difficult transition into college Renee mentioned how having a transition course or program for incoming student-athletes could have made a world of difference as she stated, "I would like to see a class that is partnered with a faculty member on campus that focuses on sport…providing an inner mixed class of athletes and student-athletes just talking about how to transition into college." Meanwhile, Nat addressed that having more guidance, particularly from her athletic academic advisor could have helped her develop a greater awareness for what majors were available and better planning for the future:

> I wasn't having an advisor. I say, I had an advisor but she wasn't really like pushing me to try new things. I think if I had an advisor who was like, hey, like, you should look into this club or you know, you should do clubs outside of soccer, I think that

would have done it...So I never really thought about looking into something else, different majors. So I think I would have taken that a little more seriously.

Additionally, Tahnai expressed how through her experience she just wanted to be viewed as a person and not just a player, particularly by her coaches as she insisted, "That was what I always wanted from them (coaches), I want them not just to know me as a player, but to know me as a person. I want them to value me as a person, not just a player." She went on to explain how this was a little thing that would have increased the respect she had for them as individuals in positions of power. Thus, to be heard, seen, and valued as more than just another product on the field was something Tahnai wished was different.

These findings suggest that as a main takeaway, sport managers, particularly scholars and practitioners studying or working in intercollegiate athletics should at least consider and at best seek out input from current and former student-athletes in program evaluations, operations efforts, policy and procedure development, etc. as these individuals have a unique perspective and intimate understanding of the inner-workings of the intercollegiate industrial complex as they are the only ones who have actually lived through it day in and day out. Even for current sport management scholars and practitioners who are also former student-athletes, it may behoove them to diversify their scope and garner feedback from current and future student-athletes with diverse demographic backgrounds. Being inclusive of these voices may help sport managers imagine new ways out of age old problems and better serve student-athletes as a collective unit.

This research study was the first step in a larger vision for this work. According to the research, the next steps include creating community amongst former student-athletes,

beginning with the former female student-athletes of color included in this study. The findings support this need and the desire the participants have for these kinds of physical spaces. For instance, in wrapping up the in-depth interview, Anna expressed her gratitude and interests in being part of this kind of community as she stated:

> I think that's why I was so like, immediately jumped on the opportunity. I was like, yes, please! Because no one ever had this conversation with me...And again, like this presence has never been anything I've experienced. It's like no one's ever had or even asked these kinds of questions or cared. I don't know how to find more people like you who are doing what you're doing. So that's why I was like, on board from the start because it's like the community that I've been looking for, like, through my whole student-athlete experience. So being a part of that, like a small bit would be like, monumental to me. And to see go somewhere is really important to me too. Um, so however engaged or whatever it turns into, I'm more than bought in.

By cultivating community amongst former student-athletes, individuals can build relationships, seek out support, and perhaps provide some guidance and mentorship to the next wave of student-athletes that they longed for in their own experience as many highlighted the lack of guidance and direction present in their academic and athletic journey.

In addition, in this day and age there are endless forms of technology at our disposal. Drawing inspiration from the likes of Colin Kaepernick's *Know Your Rights Camp* and LeBron James' new media brand, *the Uninterrupted*, which presents counter-narratives and stories of many high profile professional athletes, a future direction

emerging from this would be to create an online presence to build community in virtual spaces and disseminate information outside of the academic realm. For example, this could be done through the creation of merchandise, a social media platform or a podcast.

In her 2019 Zeigler lecture, *Enact, discard, transform: An impact agenda,* Dr. Jennifer McGarry challenged the field to reflect upon how the notion of impact is conceptualized in sport management as she pointed to "a broader, more inclusive and critical examination of impact" (McGarry, 2020). For me personally, impact is much deeper than impact factor in the academic sense, but rather, impact on a collective and individual level or past, present, and future student-athletes. In light of this, in the words of sport management scholar Joshua Newman, we must start "imagineering" innovative and creative ways to disseminate this knowledge. Therefore, in conjunction to publishing this work in academic spaces and places, social media may be one way to spread this information far, wide, and to the next wave of student-athletes as social media is a popular means of communication and information consumption, particularly for young people (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). In addition to social media, creating a podcast is another outlet that can be explored as podcasts continue to be a popular means of sharing information (Winn, 2020). Utilizing this platform can help to further illuminate the voices and stories of former female student-athletes of color. Moreover, these podcast episodes will not only be easily accessible and in audio form, but can also serve as a resource and coaching tool, for coaches, mentors, professors, and administrators. Furthermore, these non-traditional creative endeavors can produce opportunities for innovative research and inform future research moving forward in the realm of sport management, new media, technology, and building community online.

In sum, this study provides numerous implications and future directions for theory and practice. Pursuing research in this line of work has much potential and the opportunity to make meaningful contributions to the field of sport management broadly, and research on student-athletes and intercollegiate sport in particular. Moreover, by moving former female-student athletes of color from margin to center, I emphasized the need for an explicit focus on this group in sport and society. I encourage others to do the same as this is a call to action that should be sustained over time.

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APPENDIX A

BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear participant,
Thank you for being willing to participate in this study. The goal of this questionnaire is to understand your basic demographic information and educational background. Please provide as much information as you feel comfortable with.

SECTION I
Demographic Information: Please list the information or check the box(es) that most accurately represents you.

Name: _____

Pseudonym: _____

Age: _____

Sex: _____

Race: _____

Marital status:
☐ Never married
☐ Married
☐ Divorced or separated
☐ Widowed
☐ Other

Children:
☐ Yes
☐ No
If yes, how many children and what are their ages?
_____

SECTION II
Educational Background and Career Information: Please list the information or check the box(es) that most accurately represents you.

What is your educational background? Please check all that apply. For the degrees marked, please list your corresponding major(s) in the box below.

Degree	☐ Bachelors	☐ Masters	☐ Doctorate	☐ Other
Academic Major(s)				

Current job title: _____

Number of years in current position: _____

SECTION III

Former student-Athlete Background Information: The following questions are related to your time spent as a former NCAA varsity student-athlete. Please list the information or check the box(es) that most accurately represents you.

What institution(s) did you attend during your time as a student-athlete?

What NCAA varsity sport(s) did you play during your time as a student-athlete?

How many years did you complete as a student-athlete?
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5+

Please list the years that you competed as a student-athlete (e.g., 2011-2014).

Did you pursue a playing career post-college?
☐ Yes
☐ No

SECTION IV

Additional commentary: Please provide any additional comments or information that you feel may be noteworthy or add value to this research moving forward.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

My name is Kristi Oshiro and I am currently a PhD candidate in the division of Sport Management at Texas A&M University. I am interested in exploring the lived experiences of former female student-athletes of color who attended historically white colleges and universities (HWCUs). With this being said, I'd like to ask you a series of questions as you reflect back to your time as a student-athlete. Please take your time in answering the questions and feel free to refuse to answer any questions that may make you uncomfortable. This is about you as my intention is to hear your story.

SECTION I
Introduction

- Please tell me a little about yourself

- How would you describe your cultural upbringing as a woman of color in the U.S.

- Tell me about your journey to being a student-athlete

SECTION II
Personal Experiences as a student-athlete

- Talk to me about your experiences as a student on campus
  - Can you explain any positive experiences?
  - Can you explain any negative experiences?
  - In your opinion, which was most significant?
  - Reflecting back on this, how have these experiences influenced your life

- Tell me about your experiences as a student-athlete at (insert school name here)
  - Can you explain any positive experiences?
  - Can you explain any negative experiences?
  - In your opinion, which was most significant?
  - Reflecting back on this, how have these experiences influenced your life

- Talk to me about some of the pros and cons (i.e., rewards and challenges) of being a female student-athlete of color on a HWCU campus.
  - How did you navigate the good, bad, and ugly of campus life?
  - How did you navigate the good, bad, and ugly of your sport organization (e.g., athletic department)?

- How do your experiences as a student-athlete look different in hindsight? Please explain.

SECTION III

Future Directions

- Did you receive adequate support during your time as a student-athlete?
  - What are some resources that would have enhanced your holistic development during this time?

- Are there any strategies that you implemented that helped you successfully navigate these spaces? Please explain.

- Knowing what you know now, what advice or words of wisdom would you offer other female student-athletes of color who are currently navigating similar HWCU spaces? Please explain.

SECTION IV
Closing Questions

- Do you have any additional thoughts or comments as you reflect back on your time as a student-athlete at an HWCU?

- Is there anything else you'd like to add or feel is important?

- Do you have any questions for me before we wrap up?

APPENDIX C

WRITING PROMPT

Dear participant,
Thank you for your time and ongoing participation in this research study. In this final round of data collection you will be asked to provide your written narrative in letter form in response to the "Dear Student-Athlete," writing prompt below. Please respond to the best of your ability as there is no right or wrong answer. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact: Kristi Oshiro by phone (808-389-5512) or via email (oshirok10@tamu.edu).

"Dear student-athlete," writing prompt:
As best you can, please reflect back to your time and experiences as a student-athlete. Starting with the dedication, "Dear student-athlete," please write a letter to your past and/or present self, or today's current student-athletes. This may include reflections from the interview, personal stories, past regrets, words of wisdom for future student-athletes, things you would have done differently if you knew then what you know now, hopes, dreams, future aspirations, and more.

APPENDIX D

ADDITIONAL TABLES

Table 1 Participants' Background Information.

No.	participant	gender	age	race	sport	NCAA division	years competed as student-athlete
1	Jordan	Female	27	Black/White	Softball	D1	2010-2014
2	Bianca	Female	27	African American, Native American, White	Soccer	D1	2010-2014
3	Jasmine	Female	27	Black	Basketball	D2	2011-2015
4	Kash	Female	30	African American	Basketball	D1	2008-2013
5	Renee	Female	28	Black	Basketball	JUCO, D1	2010-2015
6	Morgan	Female	28	African American	Basketball	D3	2009-2013
7	Tahnai	Female	30	Filipino/Caucasian	Soccer	D1	2008-2011
8	RM	Female	35	Asian (Japanese)	Softball	D3	2003-2006
9	ShyAnn Baker	Female	39	Filipino, Chinese, Spanish	Soccer	D1	1998-2001
10	Ilene	Female	25	Asian	Basketball	D3	2012-2016
11	Loke Malia	Female	62	Hawaiian, Irish, American Indian	Basketball, volleyball	D1	1976-1981
12	Nat	Female	23	Hispanic	Soccer	D3	2015-2019
13	Anna	Female	28	Hispanic	Basketball	D1	2010-2013
14	Jennifer Knowles	Female	24	Black/Mexican	Softball	D1	2013-2017
15	Tori	Female	24	Hispanic/Caucasian	Softball	D1	2015-2018

Table 5 Quotes from Written Letters.

Theme	Sub-theme	Quote
Control the controllables	Invest in yourself	"Practice self-love. Be confident in your own skin and teach others (especially those who look like you) to do the same. Even when the world says you can't, make sure you can. Even when the world tells you that your natural born look isn't accepted, hold your head high. The world may not be ready for your skill and strength but always be ready and willing to put it on display. Learn from the self-loving trail blazers before you. Love yourself." "You are a powerful being and can create the future you want without having to rely on anyone else to make it happen for you. Practice speaking up for yourself and express your boldness, the same confidence you have on the court is the same confidence you have without sport, your voice is important and needs to be heard so use it more often." "Nobody quite looks familiar here and you are built different. Stand tall and in peace and know you are crafted to handle loads that the average are not equipped to carry. You were marked Most Valuable before the game begun – you are chosen. Get to know yourself, the sooner the better."
Recruiting: Find the right fit		"Your transition from high school to college athletics will allow you to search for the right college/university for you. I challenge you to find a program that sees the potential in you and believes in you. Don't be another number in the system, a bench warmer for a named school; be someone who has the opportunity to make a difference, someone who earns there playing time, someone who has challenges to make you a

		better person. After your time in collegiate sports, I challenge you to find a work place that allows you to do the same."
Ball is not life: #MoreThanAnAthlete		"Please understand that your sport does not define you, you are knowledgeable, confident, and resilient and your sport just amplifies that. Carve out space in your life to spend time with yourself in order to understand exactly who you are and what you want, this will help you develop non-negotiables that align with who you are at your core!" "Your value doesn't lie within the confines of your sport, you have much more than your athletic ability to offer to the world and by doing the inner work you will tap into exactly what that is." "I want you to understand is the saying that LeBron James made famous, "You are more than an athlete." College is a wonderful time to grow and become who you want to be. Don't let that person be one dimensional. For most student athletes, your career ends here. After your final games as a senior you will have this huge hole in your life where your sport used to be but it is up to you how big of a void there is. Your sport is what you love to do. It may even be your passion, but it is not WHO YOU ARE. You are more and it is up to you to explore other sides of you which in the long run make you a better athlete." "I promise you, there is a way to balance everything in your life (sports, academics, self-care, family, friends, and any other things in life that you may enjoy), and it is critical to do so as it will add so much richness and enjoyment to your life as opposed to your life being consumed by just one thing."

		"Now that you are here, it is up to you what you get from this experience and what type of legacy you will leave behind. Who I am doesn't matter… I was a 4-year role player at a DII school. However, what I left behind on my campus still lives on today. I was focused on who I wanted to be and that was more than an athlete."
The cycle of impact		"Start opening doors for others. Now is the time because you are a role model to so many people. Use your platform to empower and elevate others. The young girls who come to the game to watch YOU play is a gift so use your platform to make them smile. Use it to show them right from wrong and use your hard work as an example of the good that can come from it. Then teach them to empower others. Start that cycle of impact that will change the world." "You are in a position of privilege and have the opportunity to do so much good for those around you. Never underestimate the opportunities and ability you have to make a positive impact in the life of another. Even the seemingly smallest of kind actions, words, or gestures can make a significant and lasting impression." "Some words of wisdom, spend time alone. Get to know you while you are on your own. Have a chance to live alone. I have found it has taken a lot longer to figure out who Jordan is and what she wants inside a marriage and in other relationships. I had time to do that while I was younger, but that was uncomfortable and so it was easy to always keep someone else around so you did have to pay attention to what was going on inside." "I hope that the obstacles we had as a female athlete back then has and will help athletes today and in the future."

		"Lead by example both on and off of the field/court/mat/track/pool/course through your resilience, positivity, treatment of others and how you live your life, and never let a bad day make you question your worth as a player or as a person. Look out for those around you as well and continuously support your teammates, celebrate in each other's successes, and help to lift each other up when someone is down."

Table 6 Research Question 1 Additional Findings.

Theme	Sub-theme	Quote
Negative coaching	Poor coaching	"They told me I was like the best I can be and then they would like yell this close in my face and tell me I was pathetic. It was weird. It was very unfortunate. I can't believe they were even employed by the University in the first place." "This guy was just really unprofessional and almost degrading in the way he spoke with us. I would say X's and O's, he knew what he was doing. But coaching is more than that. That's 10% of coaches, the X's and O's. So the 90% he failed. Just how he went about doing everything else like relationships, how he talked to kids, how he now handled certain situations. I remember one time I was late to get on the bus and we're going to Montgomery. I went up to the bus and he was like, no, we just gonna leave

		you. And he left. And he told me to drive to my Montgomery. It was like a two hour drive." "Our coach was not really listening to the needs of our team, our head coach at the time, great guy, he just struggled with communication as far as with female athletes, and just the psychology of female athletes."
	The coaching carousel	"He told us that information and we all cried. It wasn't a predicted thing at all, we were all blindsided, which I think was the hardest part because we were like, wait, what? Where are you going? What do you mean? You're the only reason that a lot of us are here, we trust you. We came here because of you. My freshman class was huge, probably like 15 of us. Essentially like a whole team of us all under the impression we're gonna play under you…I just remember it vividly, being told the information, crying and leaving the room like immediately because I was like, what am I supposed to do now? Especially in that setting when you're trying to learn how to be an independent young person and then it's like the one person that I'm learning from is not there anymore. It's like what am I supposed to do now?"
Harsh transition periods	Into college	"I thought that coming from a school like my high school I would definitely be okay, but I definitely struggled a little bit academically my freshman and sophomore year and the beginning of my junior year. Just being stressed out so much about the soccer side of things. And then it got to a point where I had a few injuries in college and that kind of took away a little bit of confidence for me there and it kind of bled a little bit into like the academic side as well where I was already struggling and so it was kind of this panic like, oh my gosh, what's happening? Am I not very smart anymore? Am I just not able to even do this or you just started questioning everything." "I would say stepping into college I didn't feel prepared for what happens socially in college. With you being freshly 18 and you're on a team of girls who are 22, 23, 24 years old that age gap was a big shock for me."

	Out of college/Identity foreclosure	"It's actually still a struggle because for me, softball was a sure thing, or like sports was a sure thing that I knew that I loved and dedicated my time to. And then after that you're like, you got to figure out who you are. You got to figure out what you like, you know, outside of the athlete. And you've never experienced that before. Like, can I do this job for the rest of my life and be happy? And it took me five years. I applied for like seven or eight different jobs not even joking." "I think it felt very, I don't want to say messed up but that's the best word I can think of right now, just messed up for no one in the athletic department to check on me when before my image and likeness was plastered after that pretty successful freshman year, was plastered all over the university, athletic department, but as soon as I wasn't playing it just it stopped." "I really thought that I was definitely going through an identity crisis, too. And I was in an abusive relationship. So that was really really tough."
Guidance		"I almost want to say I was failed at being a student, because we weren't encouraged to explore unconventional or potentially different degrees that may have been a little more challenging just because they were making sure your eligibility was there. I probably would have picked a different undergraduate degree if I had the opportunity, which I did have the opportunity, but I guess have the conversation with somebody about what's out there. Instead of just like, well, what do you want to do? Well, what does that mean? What does any 18 year old know what to do? You know? I think my student career was, I don't want to say tainted, but I probably would have picked something different if I wasn't an athlete." "I changed my minor because my coach was like, I'm giving you an 80% scholarship because you're gonna miss practice Tuesday's and Thursday's? Like, I changed my whole minor because she made me. She manipulated me into feeling like I was stupid for choosing African American Studies

		when this one class was only available on Tuesdays and Thursdays and that meant I was going to miss an hour of practice. And she told me that my worth was based on my scholarship and that I should not be in that minor and that I needed to make a change. Like basically, you need to change because I'm paying you to be at practice. I thought we were student-athletes?"
Injuries		"Yeah, so, every year since my junior year in high school, I had a concussion. So granted I don't think all of them were as severe, there's a weird understanding of head injuries. So I had those and that was like known into my college career…The only engagement that I had about concussions at all was like doing tests and being done with it. Like no one was talking to me about how serious that was. And looking back like dude, I don't know. Like why? Why was no one helping me or talking to me? And I only know what I know now because I've done my part and research. Like mental health and head injuries and athletes, because I'm like, dude, I went through a whole crisis after and other people are probably thinking the same thing, but no one's really educated or talking to them about it." "When you had your first surgery at 15 and you've been in rehab since you were 10 or 12. Your body starts breaking down a lot faster. I knew that at 18 that I would have hip problems by 40. I just knew it. And I played a non-contact sport so I can't even imagine what it would be like for people who played contact, like what people's bodies feel like when they play contact sport? I think one of my favorite things is being out there and practicing and the energy that it took, subsequently is also the same thing that is has created a lot of aches and pains now getting out of bed at 27 you know? And having a couple of surgeries and a couple of concussions and so I think that's one of my negatives would have to be like the effect that it's had on my body. Now."
Mental health: It wasn't talked about back then		"I remember actually talking to my coach, we're in her office and she was like, yeah, do you hear Patti Gasso (Oklahoma Head Coach) makes the girls go to sports psychologist? She goes, like why? And I literally look at

		her like, are you fucking serious like why not? Like, softball is mental, like it's literally mental. Why wouldn't you want to go to a psychologist to work through those things? Especially if you're not performing or if like you're in a slump or you had the yips and you can't throw the ball?" "It was mental warfare." "I look back and I'm like man some of these places have so many resources like for me, like that was unfathomable seven years ago, and now it's like, but there's still so much and to me, it's so much work that needs to be done and getting it out there because I even wonder if I had had the language where I've sought the resources?"