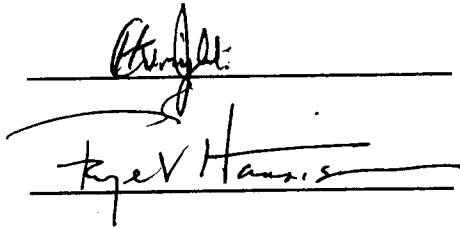


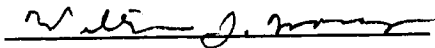
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Maria J. Veri entitled "Race Discourse Among White Women in Intercollegiate Athletics." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.


Joy T. DeSensi, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:







Accepted for the Council:


Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of the Graduate School

RACE DISCOURSE AMONG WHITE WOMEN
IN INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Maria J. Veri
August 1998

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to three women:

My mother, Madeline Bellucci Veri, whom I know only through the memories and stories of others, but whose loving spirit and guidance I have nonetheless felt throughout my life.

My grandmother, Phyllis Bellucci, whose love, laughter, warmth, and generosity filled my life in more ways than I can express. I miss her, cherish her memory, and will

never forget her.

And finally, to a third woman, whose love, humor, wisdom, compassion, and care have graced my life in immeasurable ways. For my aunt, Anne Marie Antonio.

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This dissertation marks the culmination of nearly six years of graduate study. I would like to acknowledge a variety of individuals who were instrumental in helping me achieve this accomplishment.

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This dissertation would not have been possible without the support of family and friends. I would especially like to thank Ann Bertucci for her love, friendship, and encouragement throughout all phases of this project and my doctoral program. This dissertation greatly benefitted from her editorial assistance, late nights of typing, and persistent proofreading. I cannot leave unmentioned my best friends, Geannine Callaghan and Nicole Girault, whose love, humor, friendship, and support were

instrumental in helping me achieve this goal.

A heartfelt acknowledgment goes to my aunt, Anne Marie Antonio, who has lived this dissertation with me every step of the way. Quite simply, I could not have done this without her. Thanks also to my parents, Vince and Carol Veri, for their support during my many years of education. I would particularly like to thank my father for passing along his value of education to me. Last, but not least among relatives, I would like to thank my uncle, Bernie Antonio, and my cousin, Matthew Antonio, for their presence in my life.

My research would not have been possible without the assistance of friends in far away places. I am particularly grateful to Tom Bertucci, Jana Hunter, and Joy Hayes for their hospitality. And, finally, this dissertation exists because of the voluntary participation of six participants. A profound thank you goes to "Carol," "BJ," "Alice," "KJ," "Elizabeth," and "Hilary." I hope I have respectfully portrayed their words and experiences in these pages.

Abstract

Sport, one of America's most pervasive cultural forms, has been historically plagued by racism and the exclusion of racially-identified minorities. A number of studies have addressed race-related issues in sport, with a focus on black Americans and/or racial minorities as the victims of racist practices and ideologies. None of these studies, however, have considered positions of racial privilege in their analyses. Scholars in the new and burgeoning field of whiteness studies have attempted to broaden the parameters of race consciousness by interrogating whiteness as a socially constructed racial category and position of privilege. This study, which is situated within cultural studies, operates from the notion that race is a socio-historical construction and seeks to contribute to whiteness studies with a specific focus on the analysis of race in sport contexts. Specifically, this research project examines how white women negotiate racial constructs while working within sport environments. Drawing on the work of Frankenberg (1993), this qualitative study endeavors to determine, through discourse analysis, how a select group of white women consider themselves in relation to race, and, in conjunction, how these women view male and female black Americans in regard to race. This study thereby explores distinctions of white womanhood on the one hand, and white, female constructions of blackness on the other.

In order to achieve these ends, six white women were interviewed and observed who hold positions of leadership in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I athletic departments and demonstrate diversity in regard to age, geographical origin, job position, ethnicity, and religion. This study is informed by a modified

ethnographic methodology of semi-structured, partial life history interviews and participant observations. Discourse theory was employed in the analysis of the six semi-life histories. The research findings reveal that the participants view race primarily in terms of skin color and culture, but have difficulty viewing themselves as 'raced,' or considering their own racialization as white women. The hegemonic discourse evident in the six interviews reinforces race as a reified, essential category, conceals whiteness as a privileged racial position/identity, conflates race with culture, and infuses blackness with fear, victimization, and exoticization. The counter-discourses present among these interviews explains race as a labeling device which advantages whites and disadvantages racially-defined minorities in material, social, political, and cultural ways.

Preface

“It’s just not right.”

“What would the neighbors think?”

These were my parents’ responses when I told them I wanted to ask my black male friend Kwasi to attend the junior prom with me. I was met with a firm and immediate “no” in response to this request, and despite my protestations, my parents would not be dissuaded from their objections. Kwasi and I were friends and classmates, and my parents seemed fine with that, but when it came to the thought of a date, even a platonic date, Kwasi’s visible blackness took precedence over his personal qualities. I don’t know if Kwasi would have accompanied me to the prom that year, but I do know that I was upset and surprised that my parents forbade me to find out. I attributed their reactions to the social and political climate of their respective upbringings, but I nonetheless hoped that their experiences and observations in the time since their childhoods in the 1940s and my adolescence in the 1980s would have transformed their thinking regarding race and people of different racial backgrounds. What further troubled me about my parents’ reaction was that their response probably was not unique. Perhaps some of the neighbors my mom referred to would have thought it odd to see me in the front yard, posing for prom pictures with a black young man. And perhaps some parents of my classmates also would have forbidden their white daughter to ask a black friend to the prom. On the other hand, I’m sure my parents were wrong about some of the neighbors, just as I’m certain that some of my classmates’ parents would not have been concerned by an interracial prom date. And I remember that my friends, as well as those

friends of Kwasi's whom I knew, thought asking Kwasi to the prom was a great idea, and a non-issue. However, these friends and parents also knew that my relationship with Kwasi was platonic, and that Kwasi and I attending the prom together would have constituted a platonic date. Reactions might have been different, as a high school friend has since attested, had Kwasi and I been dating and considered a couple. Had we been romantically involved, a prom date, as well as our relationship in general, probably would have been more of an issue to my friends, peers, neighbors, and friends' parents. Questions about the implications of a white woman wanting to date a black man, or about the meaning of a black man dating a white woman, certainly would have arisen (with all their attendant fears). Because this was not the case for Kwasi and me, I was spared from those reactions (with the exception of my parents') and from being interrogated regarding my intentions or Kwasi's. Moreover, because Kwasi and I never discussed these issues (I don't know if he even knew I wanted to ask him to the prom), I have no idea how Kwasi's parents, or their neighbors, or any of his other friends, would have reacted if he had accompanied a white young woman to the prom, nor what their perceptions of me might have been. To my parents' credit, I know they were at least partially trying to protect me from what they perceived would only be negative reactions. But, I would speculate that the reason behind their response to the proposed prom date was more complex than they let on. More than likely, my parents' apprehension about interracial dating played a part in their decision, as did their lack of experience in mixed-race settings. My parents probably also acted upon their stereotypical perceptions of male blackness. I don't know, however, what racial perceptions or notions of white

womanhood Kwasi or his parents might have drawn upon had I extended my prom invitation.

* * * * *

That incident stands out in my memory as one of the first times I was made aware of race as a social signifier. In the years since then, through high school, college, and graduate school, I have had other experiences which have heightened my awareness of the social significance of race in American society.

* * * * *

When I entered college, I moved two and a half hours away from home to attend a state university -- not a great distance or a unique experience by today's standards, but it nonetheless felt strange, especially considering my new living arrangements. I found myself in an increased occupancy suite, which meant seven women had been assigned to live in a five-person suite and share one bathroom. The suite wasn't suitable for five people, much less seven. In addition to dealing with cramped living conditions, austere linoleum floors, and prison-like windows, I didn't know a soul on campus. I was faced with transitioning from a high school of roughly 500 students to a university of over 16,000 students. Numbers, though, were not the only difference between my old academic environment and my new one. Diversity was another, as I moved from a lack thereof, to, well, more. I encountered more diversity in regard to race, ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic class in my increased occupancy suite alone than I had in all of my previous seventeen years of existence. Here I was -- a white, Italian Catholic from a working-class family in Upstate New York -- living with a Jewish woman from Long

Island, two black women from Queens, a Latina from Manhattan, a black Jamaican woman from north of the City, and an Indian woman from even further North of the City. I wasn't terribly aware of class positioning at the time -- either mine or other's -- but I did have a sense that all positions of the class spectrum were represented in our suite. I was the lone Upstate New Yorker, from a place known to my suitemates only for its snowfall and arctic-like weather. I remember having an initial sense of being, maybe not a minority, but certainly an outsider. With that isolation came a sense of intimidation -- mainly because I was surrounded by unfamiliar people who, more than that, were unfamiliar New Yorkers who, even more than that, were of an unfamiliar race, ethnicity, *and* geographical location. Not uncoincidentally, the first person I befriended at college was my best friend, Geannine -- a white Italian Catholic from a working-class Queens family who lived on the second floor of our freshman hall. My initial discomfort existed partially because I wasn't provided with much non-stereotypical information about racially/ethnically-identified minorities or New York City natives while growing up in my predominantly white, middle-class, suburban high school. For example, high school teachers would joke that the state regents exams were purposefully easy so that students from the five boroughs could pass them. At the time, I remember laughing with an air of (white?) superiority, and not at all thinking those jokes and my laughter could be linked to racial perceptions and urban stereotypes. In hindsight, I know better.

In the interviews conducted for this project, I have asked each participant if there was any event or experience in her life that she could identify as being responsible for changing her perceptions of race or individuals from different racial backgrounds. For

me, attending college stands out as one such experience. Not only had I never shared a bedroom before college, but I had never really spent much time around people with different racial identities than mine, save for a few high school or summer league teammates. I had certainly never lived with black people. Before college, the only black person I can recall being in my parents' house was my friend Kwasi -- for occasions such as end-of-the-school-year parties (but not prom dates). My best friend, Nicole (another survivor of the chaotic freshman suite), is the second black person to enter my parents' house, and the first to stay there as a guest. I am fortunate to have attended college for many reasons, not the least of them being the opportunity to become more familiar with people whom I was taught to view as Others while growing up -- blacks, Jews, lesbians, Koreans, poor people, rich people, Hispanics, New York City natives ... just to name a few. This increased familiarity helped me unlearn racial/ethnic stereotypes and led to some of the most significant friendships in my life, as well as a greater sense of myself (and others) in relation to constructs of race, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. In the words of many of the participants in this study, I achieved a broader comfort zone with myself and others through my collegiate experiences.

* * * * *

This dissertation project is guided by those experiences and is also motivated by my interest and participation in sport, as many of my experiences regarding racial awareness have come from this context. I grew up with a father who instilled in me a love of sports, whether as a competitor or a spectator. I competed in a variety of sports throughout junior high and high school, played collegiate softball, and worked in a

university athletic department both as an undergraduate and graduate student. As a result of interactions during these experiences, I have increasingly noted what critical analyses of sport often confirm -- that sport, one of America's most pervasive cultural practices, is affected by the same -isms and phobias which plague society in general -- racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia. As a former collegiate athlete and a lifelong sport fan, I am concerned with the condition of sport in America and am consequently interested in engaging in work geared toward abolishing some of the social ills which currently afflict sport. The *primary purpose* of this dissertation is to explore racial perceptions as well as racist dynamics in sport. As a white woman, I consider it important to undertake this study through the lens of feminist whiteness studies; that is, to focus not on people of color as marginal, romanticized victims of racism, but rather on the unearned power and privilege whiteness has amassed. This privilege confers a responsibility for helping abolish racism that is foreign to most white individuals. As such, I intend to examine how white women view themselves in relation to race, as well as how white women perceive racial others, primarily African Americans, and how those perceptions are acted upon in the sport-related workplace. While race carries importance in the minds of many Americans, racial perceptions vary across the United States and have done so throughout history. The more general *secondary purpose* of this study, therefore, is to achieve an understanding of some of the reasons behind American variations in racial perception.

A Brief Explanation of Terminological Use

A wide array of terms have been invoked in critical race studies. Before progressing any further, I would like to offer a brief explanation of the terminology I will

use throughout this study.

My understanding of the term “**race**” is partially based upon the work of a number of scholars (e.g. Appiah, 1996; Frankenberg, 1993; Gates, 1985; Gilroy, 1987; Goldberg, 1993; Gutmann, 1996; Hall, 1996; Harrison, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1994). Thus, when I use the term “**race**,” I will be referring to a broad concept which holds that humans are distinguishable by their phenotypic features, as well as by differences presumed to be natural or biological. As explained by Harrison (1997, personal communication), “phenotype is a common...marker of ‘race,’ but it’s a stereotypic code for presumed biological differences that may not be readily exhibited in phenotypical or physiognomic markers. Racist ideologies may claim physiognomic differences even when none exist objectively.” Concepts of race determine racial identities, whether they are projected, assumed, or constructed, and inform value judgments of individuals, which are also based on the different personal characteristics we often attribute to phenotypic features. The term “**race**,” then, will at times also refer to a broad category of human classification, such as the racial categories on university application forms (e.g. African American, American Indian, White). By using “**race**” in these two senses, I do not mean to imply that race is an inherent, essential, static category. In fact, the quotation marks enclosing the term *race* signify just the opposite - that “race, as a meaningful criterion within the biological sciences, has long been recognized to be a fiction” (Gates, 1985, p.4). While the term race is used frequently in popular and academic language, it refers more to our constructed fictions of reality than reality itself. Race, as Gates (1985) indicates, is far from being an “objective term of classification” (p.5). This study is informed by the view

that race is a socially and historically constructed concept, without minimizing the role these constructions play in structuring cultures and societies. As Gilroy (1987) insists, “‘race’ has to be socially and politically constructed and elaborate ideological work [is] done to secure and maintain the different forms of ‘racialization’ which have characterized capitalist development” (p.38). I want to demonstrate that this structuring occurs in and through socio-historical contexts.

Throughout the course of this study, I draw a distinction between “**race thinking**” and “**racist thinking**.” **Race thinking** simply refers to how an individual thinks about the idea, existence, or concept of race (Appiah, 1996; Goldberg, 1993). The terms “**race conscious**” and “**color conscious**” fall under the broad category of race thinking. **Race consciousness** refers to the awareness that race exists as a socially significant category and shapes our daily interactions. **Color consciousness**, on the other hand, rejects the notion of biological racial identity as well as the existence of racial categories. Instead, color consciousness indicates an awareness that beliefs regarding skin color and other phenotypic features affect individual lives, personal relationships, social interactions, and political processes (Gutmann, 1996).

Racist thinking, however, refers to thought processes which link notions of inferiority or superiority to differences in physical features. Racist thinking always involves the extension of phenotypic prejudice -- beliefs that physical features are indicative of individual qualities and abilities. **Racism** refers to acts and processes of exclusion or discrimination based on racist thinking, whether intentional or unintentional. According to Hall (1996), racism “operates by constructing impassable symbolic

boundaries between racially constituted categories, and its typically binary system of representation constantly marks and attempts to fix and naturalize the difference between belongingness and otherness” (p.445).

Given that culture has been increasingly used as a euphemism for race, it is necessary to consider the notion of **cultural racism** and its many manifestations in American society. Carter (1997) defines cultural racism as:

the conscious or subconscious conviction that White Euro-American cultural patterns and practices, as reflected in values, language, belief systems, interpersonal interaction styles, behavioral patterns, political, social roles, economics, music, art, religious tenets, and so forth, are superior to those of other visible racial/ethnic groups (Asian, Black, Hispanic, American Indian).

(p.200)

Cultural racism is a form of white Euro-American supremacy which operates under the assumption that race is a fixed and immutable biological category. More will be said regarding cultural racism in Part One, Section I.

At various times throughout this study, I also use race terms unconventionally as verbs or adjectives. For example, when I discuss an individual as “**raced**,” I mean that her sense of collective and/or self-identity is partially informed by a concept of race or a dynamic of racism. Similarly, when I use the verb “**racialize**” or the adjective “**racialized**,” I am referring to the influence of race, or beliefs about one’s own race, on self-identity, personal relationships, or social dynamics.

These terms are an integral part of the backdrop of this study, and figure

prominently in current critical dialogues regarding race. As such, they are discussed more specifically within the dissertation. This section is intended to serve primarily as an introductory glossary; Section I of Part One provides a more nuanced and comprehensive consideration of various conceptualizations of race and forms of racism, while Section III includes a discussion of the operation of race ideologies in sport contexts. Race is a complex subject to discuss on any level; it is my hope that this study deals well with the complexities inherent in examinations of race and is successful in illuminating some of the race-related issues present in contemporary sport.

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Introduction

As the twentieth century draws to a close, the United States is still struggling to contend with one of the greatest problems of the nineteenth century: racism and its destructive effects on American lives. Despite legal and social progress, this democratic nation remains unable to adequately and honestly face critical questions and issues regarding race, conceptualizations of race, and the material ramifications of these conceptualizations. Americans continue to employ a variety of evasive tactics when addressing the topics of race and race relations. We sometimes resort to speaking in politically correct generalizations, or profess to be color-blind, or skirt the subject altogether. Also common are the tendencies to conflate race with class, culture, or ethnicity, to reduce race to a biologically determined objective fact, and to avoid non-reductionist explanations of how other identity markers, such as gender and sexuality, intersect with race. Evasions and oversights such as these only serve to perpetuate and reinforce Americans' (sub)conscious beliefs in racial stereotypes and myths of race.

"Race" is not easily defined, as evidenced by shifts in racial discourse throughout history and the intensity and divisiveness of current debates in the United States regarding issues such as affirmative action policies. Indeed, race has never been identified with one distinct meaning upon which everyone, worldwide or even across America, readily agrees. It is this ambiguity and lack of agreement which makes rational discussions about race so difficult and solutions to the problems of racism so hard to achieve. Because race has been conflated with a number of other concepts, unraveling the meaning of race stands as a daunting task which *could* lead to the transformation of

much of the social fabric of this country. I emphasize *could* here because such a transformation, radical indeed, would run against the grain of contemporary race thinking. Furthermore, whites, as a dominant group, are often incapable of considering “race” (or their own racialization), as new conceptions of race, or the elimination of race thinking altogether, would end the privileges and power differentials whites now enjoy solely because of the color of their skin (Frankenberg, 1993; McIntosh, 1988). This difficulty is evidenced in the college classroom when I ask my sport sociology students (most of whom are white) to talk about what it means to be white in American society. In response to this question, I am met with blank stares, quizzical, skeptical looks, or an aversion of eyes, as if I had just asked them a potentially damaging trick question. I think it is not so much that whites are reluctant to question their racial identity, as it is that many of us don’t even know how to begin such an interrogation. For the majority of whites, it is others who have been ascribed “race,” not white people. In order to effectively address the issue of race and race relations and engage in truly anti-racist work, white individuals must first be willing to consider ourselves in relation to race and then achieve an understanding of Americans’ individual race thinking. When we use the term race, as justification, rallying cry, or merely a point of reference, it is crucial that we know exactly what we mean and understand our meaning in relation to the prevailing social discourse(s) of race.

Scholars in the new and burgeoning field of whiteness studies attempt to broaden the parameters of race consciousness by interrogating whiteness as a socially constructed racial category (e.g. Frankenberg, 1993; McIntosh, 1988; Roman, 1993; Sleeter, 1996).

Critics in this field view racial difference primarily “as a result of socially and historically contingent processes of racialization, constituted through and embodied in a wide variety of discourses and practices rather than as a biologically determined product of genes and DNA” (Newitz & Wray, 1997, p.3). By bringing critiques of whiteness into the arena of race studies, whiteness is named as a racial identity and detached from its status as an unmarked, neutral standard against which all other cultural and racial identities are judged. Once whiteness is named as a socially constructed racial identity, white Americans become newly accountable for their privileged position in society (McIntosh, 1988). Gutmann (1996) argues that white Americans have been and still are unfairly advantaged by their skin color; being white, in this sense, is a source of unfair benefits. McIntosh (1988) conceptualizes white privilege as an invisible backpack full of unearned assets which white Americans can count on cashing in everyday. This process is often a subconscious one, as white people are taught not that race benefits them, but rather that racism is something which puts others at a disadvantage (McIntosh, 1988).

Frankenberg (1993), through her interviews with thirty feminist-identified women, examines how race shapes white women’s lives and interrogates whiteness as a socially constructed category. In these interviews, race discourses ranging from essentialist racism to race cognizance are present. One constant theme which cuts across all discursive patterns, however, is the difficulty these white women have in viewing themselves as “raced” or “cultured” individuals. In order to ease this difficulty, it is necessary to position whiteness alongside blackness as a racial construct worthy of scrutiny (Sleeter, 1996). If considered in this context, whiteness will no longer serve as a

neutral standard and hopefully will be perceived as another constructed identity marker with significant social ramifications.

In the process of naming whiteness, it is crucial that we maintain the primary focus of challenging racism and guard against adopting attitudes of white defensiveness - "the relativistic assertion that whites, like 'people of color,' are history's oppressed subjects of racism" (Roman, 1993, p.71). This "white paranoia" attitude has surfaced in conservative circles during the past two decades, and stands as an obstacle to anti-racist political projects. As Roman (1993) argues, white people cannot simply claim that white is a color and expect that lone act to remedy our conceptualizations of race and the pervasiveness of racism. White Americans must follow this recognition with an acknowledgment of the benefits and privileges which this color bestows and an acceptance of the responsibility to help eliminate the power differentials created by racism. The purpose of critiques of whiteness is "not only to deconstruct whiteness and dismantle white racial privilege, but also to imagine and foster anti-racist forms of white identity" (Newitz & Wray, 1997, p.3). The point of whiteness studies should not be, however, to replace the causes of subordinated racial minorities with the concerns of privileged white Americans.

Studies by Frankenberg (1993) and others (e.g. Dikotter, 1992; Martin Shaw, 1995) have shown discourse analysis to be a useful theoretical tool for critical interrogations of race and racial dynamics. Discourses are "bodies of ideas and shared socio-cultural practices which help constitute us as social subjects and thus shape how we see and think about the world" (Storey, 1996, p.16). The potential insight to be gained

through discourse analysis has led increasing numbers of researchers to adopt this methodology and tailor discourse theory to the needs of their disciplinary projects. Frankenberg (1993) utilizes discourse theory to analyze the race-related content of personal interviews with white women, while Dikotter (1992) draws on discourse analysis to trace the historical development of racial thought in China. These studies, as well as others informed by discourse theory (e.g. Martin Shaw, 1995; Goldberg, 1990), demonstrate the impermanence of discursive patterns and their potential for transformation, given their socially and historically contingent nature. Within the framework of the current study, discourse theory and analysis provide a means of understanding the factors which form American race thinking and structure the particular setting of intercollegiate athletics.

Feminist scholars from a variety of disciplines have contributed to the growing field of whiteness studies. Scholars from anthropology, legal studies, gay and lesbian studies, and cultural studies have produced important critiques of whiteness from diverse perspectives. Significantly, sport is one area which has received scant attention from feminist critics (outside sport studies) and virtually no consideration from whiteness scholars. This is an unfortunate oversight, given the pervasiveness of sport in American society. Sport exists as a subculture, and both affects and is affected by social constructions of race, gender, class, and sexuality. Furthermore, sport is plagued by racism, sexism, and homophobia, as well as a history of excluding and/or marginalizing women and racial minorities - notably, African Americans. Sport leaders have begun to concentrate their efforts on achieving gender equity in sports, particularly at the

intercollegiate level, but in their attempts to alleviate gender inequities (which still exist), many of these leaders have ignored issues regarding race. For example, racial minorities are still largely excluded from sport leadership positions, and minority athletes in certain sports still find themselves tagged for peripheral team positions while their white counterparts are filtered into team positions which require leadership and decision-making. If we consider the key leadership positions in professional American sports -- quarterback, pitcher, catcher -- we find very few black athletes represented, and a disproportionate number of white athletes filling those team slots (Coakley, 1998). The paucity of minority individuals in head coaching, managing, and administrative positions is even more insidious when we consider the large numbers of minority athletes who compete in America's major collegiate and professional sports. For instance, sixty-seven percent of players in the 1996 National Football League (NFL) were black, yet blacks comprised only ten percent of the head coaching ranks. Out of eleven NFL head coach openings in 1997, not one was filled with a black person, despite the interest of four to six qualified candidates (Coakley, 1998). The majority of studies regarding race and sport focus on men's sport and male athletes; yet, women's sport experiences are no less mediated by race and plagued by racism.

The field of cultural studies serves as the ideal space for a study which addresses race and women's sport experiences. Cultural studies involves an inter- and sometimes anti-disciplinary approach to studying culture, cultural practices, and social relations as mediated by class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and other significant identity markers. Turner (1996) describes the project of cultural studies as one which examines

“the everyday and the ordinary: those aspects of our lives that exert so powerful and unquestioned an influence on our existence that we take them for granted” (p.2).

Researchers in cultural studies thus take seriously aspects of ordinary culture such as the media, music, sport, and education. Most work in this field is driven by praxis -- the notion that theory and practice are inextricably linked. Cultural studies theorists typically have a vested political interest in the practical use of theory in the world, and engage in work which exhibits concern with issues of power, social justice, identity politics, and social difference. Furthermore, the field of cultural studies “rejects the exclusive equation of culture with high culture and argues that all forms of cultural production need to be studied in relation to other cultural practices and to social and historical structures” (Nelson et al, 1992, p.4). Given this theoretical stance and the field’s commitment to praxis-oriented research, cultural studies can provide a bridge between academic theory and material culture. It is my contention that the current research project establishes such a connection between critical race theory and discourse analysis, and the material culture of intercollegiate athletics as inhabited by a select group of white women.

As a result of observations made during my life-long involvement in sport -- as a scholastic and collegiate athlete, a staff member in two athletic departments, and an academic scholar -- I began to question how white women in various sport leadership positions, and from diverse backgrounds (i.e. social geography, ethnicity, religion, class), develop their beliefs about race. It was my personal experience within one athletic department in particular which served as the impetus for this study.

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During my academic career, I have had the opportunity to work in a collegiate athletic department. During this time, I was able to observe colleagues and supervisors (mostly women, mostly white) discuss and interact with student-athletes and co-workers of color. The degree of fear, unease, and racist stereotyping (as subconscious as it might have been) that was evident in some of these women's beliefs and actions increasingly concerned me. For example, one administrator would automatically whisper any racial modifier, such as "black" or "African American" when she was describing a black person. Another administrator considered sex education and drug use policies primarily necessary for African American athletes. Black athletes noticed that this same administrator appeared much more guarded and uncomfortable around them than white athletes. In other examples from student-athlete observations, an African American athlete voiced her disappointment to me that during her freshman orientation, neither her coaches nor any of the departmental support staff informed her team of the existence or location of the campus Black Cultural Center. In contrast, a white student-athlete the following year complained that she didn't understand why black students *needed* their own cultural center on campus. That same year, one administrator, upon the hire of an African American woman to a full-time position, commented that the new person would be a good role-model for the black athletes and would help the department's image with the affirmative action office, but didn't give any other reason why this woman might be a welcome and valued addition to the department. Overall, this athletic department had only hired a handful of minority women, and, until the mid-1990s, has not placed any of them in a true position of leadership (the recent appointment is an African American head

coach). Instead, they are employed in lower-level positions such as graduate assistant (part-time, temporary), administrative assistant, or secretary. Interestingly, some coaches have hired black faculty advisors from outside the department to work with their teams, but these same coaches aren't pushing for the full-time appointment of more African American women within the department. But, for all of these troublesome examples, there are some white women in the department who value diversity and do all they can to promote diversity in the workplace. One administrator is genuinely excited whenever she hires minority staff members, and has begun holding regular diversity awareness workshops for her staff. A retired head coach made it a point to show her team educational videos regarding social justice issues, such as racism or sexism, on bus trips to competitions, and regularly shared information regarding visiting campus speakers or cultural events of a diverse nature with her athletes and staff.

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These observations and interactions left me with many speculative questions regarding the formation of my colleagues' racial beliefs. What was it, for example, which led one athletic administrator to appear uneasy around black student-athletes, and another woman to value the presence of black women on her staff? If white women in leadership positions in other athletic departments or sport organizations have similar beliefs regarding race and act on them on a daily basis, then this dynamic begs examination, and in some cases, alteration.

If, as Frankenberg (1993) contends, race shapes white women's lives, how is this influence played out in the sport-related workplace -- a workplace in which mostly white

women serve as policy-makers, advisors, coaches, and authority figures to a multi-racial body of student-athletes? Furthermore, how do other identity markers, such as class, ethnicity, geographical origin, religious background, and sexuality intersect with race to affect daily interactions between athletic department staff members and the student-athletes whom they serve?

Before I progress any further, I want to detail where this introduction leads in order to provide the reader with a sense of what is to be expected in the following pages in regard to format and content.

This dissertation unfolds in two main parts. In Part One, I outline the theoretical and political underpinnings of the study and lay the groundwork for a critical examination of women, race, and sport from a cultural studies' perspective. In Section I of Part One, I explore conceptualizations of 'race' and delve into critiques of whiteness, thereby illustrating the socio-historical *constructed-ness* of 'race' and the cultural and political manifestations of its various formations. I work within a black/white duality not because I find other racial categorized or racial groups irrelevant or insignificant, but rather because the majority of Americans view race primarily in terms of "black versus white," and I want to focus on exploring the underlying factors of that dynamic. Through this study, I wish to contribute to an understanding of American racial thought and its influence upon the cultural form of sport; focusing within a black/white duality seems to me the most effective way to initiate such a critique.

Section II covers discourse theory. I discuss the concept of discourse, review examples of discourse analysis in race studies, and explore how discourse theory has

informed work in cultural studies. While my study is not heavily invested in discourse analysis in, for example, a linguistic sense, I do rely on discourse as more than just a fancy term for 'theme.' Given this reliance and the qualitative methodology which guides my study, I find it useful to position discourse analysis in the field of qualitative research, and thus to include a section devoted to discourse theory in Part One.

In Section III, I illustrate why a cultural studies approach is appropriate for an examination of race and women in sport. I discuss the common features of cultural studies work, and take the opportunity to argue for cultural studies practitioners to engage in increased consideration of sport as a cultural form, as well as for sport studies scholars to incorporate a cultural studies perspective in their work. As my study focuses on white women in sport, I also provide a brief history of racial issues in sport and a topical discussion of gender issues in sport. My overarching purpose in this section is to define the current project in relation to cultural studies discourse.

Part One of the dissertation stands as the theoretical build-up to the stories of the six women whom I interviewed and observed, and, subsequently, to the critical analysis of the research findings. I have also included autobiographical vignettes throughout the text. I use these stories as a way to better place myself as researcher within the text, alongside the women who so graciously agreed to participate in the study. Before I could engage in the examination of other women's racial beliefs and personal experiences in sport, I thought it necessary to reflect upon and share my own racial perceptions and sport experiences, as they have significantly shaped my political agenda as a researcher.

Part Two begins with a section on methodology which serves as a segue from the

theoretical foundations of Part One to the applied research setting of the latter half of the dissertation. In this section, I discuss qualitative methodology and outline the research methods utilized in this study. I also include the rationale employed in the selection of the participants. In Section II of Part Two, I present profiles of the research participants and descriptions of the field settings. Section III consists of the presentation of the research findings, as well as the critical analysis of the participants' racial perceptions. Section III concludes with a discussion of the racial discourses which run through the interview responses of the six participants. Section IV serves as the conclusion to the dissertation.

PART ONE

Section I

Conceptualizations of 'Race'

This section reviews aspects of critical race theory and race studies in order to provide a developmental overview of the concept of race and the sociological consequences of its various manifestations. It also examines contemporary racial concepts and perceptions in the United States, with a particular emphasis on the field of whiteness studies. I hope to demonstrate the non-essential character of race and illustrate how concepts of race and racist practices are guided by a race consciousness which pervades American society. Additionally, I argue the need to view race as a social and historical construct and underscore the necessity for color cognizance to extend to a recognition of whiteness as a socially constructed racial category. This recognition is a crucial element in the fight against racism, as well as the construction of a more enlightened conceptualization of race.

It is commonly noted that the concept of race did not seep into European consciousness until the fifteenth century (Goldberg, 1993; Harrison, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1986). During this age of exploration, voyages to distant, previously unknown lands brought Europeans into contact with people they perceived as vastly different from themselves. As a means of explaining any encountered differences, Europeans formulated concepts of race which then were used to categorize humans. As Goldberg (1993) argues, "from its inception...race has referred to those perceived, indeed, constituted as other" (p.62). While phenotypic prejudice was not linked to race initially,

this connection was institutionalized by the sixteenth century, when phenotypic differences (i.e. skin color, facial features) were cited as justification for slavery and other forms of colonial exploitation (Harrison, 1995). Since that time, a variety of racial theories have prevailed. Race has been conceived in terms of lineage, biological determinism, and social Darwinism.

Theories which put forth race as lineage consider race as a static characteristic which is ancestrally handed down from one generation to the next. Late nineteenth century China serves as one example of the prevalence of lineage discourse. During this time period, Chinese groups used genealogies to prove that their lineage was racially pure (Dikotter, 1992). Racial classification and hierarchy systems were constructed in China not only in response to the arrival of Europeans and other foreigners, but also as a result of internal fragmentation among Chinese ruling classes and the expansion of Chinese economic development (Dikotter, 1992). Given the rigid racial classification system in China and the social status attached to pure lineage, strict guidelines dictated which races could merge in order to create the most pure race and consequently strengthen the Chinese empire at the turn of the century.

Biological determinism paradigms view race as genetically determined, and contend that individuals classified in the same racial group possess similar physical traits, as well as emotional capacities, intellectual abilities, sexual proclivities, and cultural tastes. In the United States, biological determinism stood as the dominant race discourse from the late nineteenth century to the early decades of the twentieth century (Omi & Winant, 1994). This racist discourse served as a means of justifying racial segregation

and demonstrating the racial inferiority of blacks. Race was equated with heredity, and whites were considered to be of the biologically superior race (Omi & Winant, 1994). As Smedley (1993) argues, "race offered a new mechanism for structuring society based on a conception of naturally fixed, heritable, and immutable status categories linked initially to visible physical markers" (p.28). In this sense, biological constructs of race were linked to notions of race as lineage, as both views operate on the same underlying principles.

Social Darwinist theories of race can be taken as an extension of race as biology concepts. Darwinist theories claim that one's survival and success in the social world are pre-determined by genetic racial make-up. Social Darwinists insist that biological inheritance, rather than social nurturance, is the primary factor in gauging human racial potential (Smedley, 1993). Among other myths, this "nature versus nurture" notion further cautioned against racial intermixture for fear of the creation of inferior biological beings. The application of Darwinist tenets to allegedly static racial categories brought an exclusionary "survival of the fittest" mentality to bear upon social settings and human potential.

While there are still those who adhere to biological explanations of race, these theories have been largely invalidated by the previously noted scholars in the social sciences. Intellect is no more determined by skin color and facial features than are cultural preferences for music, food, or clothing. Social Darwinist theories of race are similarly limited, as one's potential in the social world is hardly pre-determined by genetics. However, it is worth noting that social Darwinism persists in the 1990s and has surfaced in more sophisticated versions, as evident in books like The Bell Curve and

Darwin's Athletes.

During the twentieth century, ethnicity-based, class-based, nation-based, and culture-based theories of race have emerged at different times (Goldberg, 1993; Omi & Winant, 1994). Ethnicity-based theories of race emerged in the twentieth century as a challenge to biologicistic and social Darwinist conceptions of race (Omi & Winant, 1994). Smedley (1993) defines ethnicity as "all those traditions, customs, activities, beliefs, and practices that pertain to a particular group of people who see themselves and are seen by others as having distinct cultural features..." (p.30). Ethnicity paradigms view race as one of the determinants of ethnic identity, and see race and culture as inextricably linked. Some proponents of ethnicity-based racial theory attempt to draw analogies between black Americans and European Americans by claiming that black Americans share a distinct culture in much the same way that Italians or Germans might. This analogy is woefully lacking for a number of reasons. Notably, culture is learned behavior, and not an inherent human characteristic determined by biological, genetic, or physical traits (Smedley, 1993). While we do operate on physical appearance to make assessments about individuals, it is erroneous to conclude that an individual has certain cultural preferences or beliefs solely because of his or her physical features. The ethnic analogy between blacks and whites is further lacking because the groups in comparison do not share a similar historical experience; African Americans and European Americans came to the United States under vastly different circumstances, and were sometimes subject to sharply contrasting treatment. While European immigrants initially faced discriminatory practices upon entering the U.S., these immigrant groups were gradually accepted and

assimilated into mainstream, white American culture -- some groups more easily than others. For example, Jewish immigrants and Italian immigrants, especially those from Sicily, were not considered "white," despite their European origins. African Americans, however, have without distinction, been both overtly and covertly denied similar assimilation. To this day, structural power differences exist between assimilable European-ethnics and racialized minorities. Also, purveyors of the immigrant analogy rarely display much interest in ethnicity among blacks. While it is often recognized that white Americans have varied and distinct ethnic backgrounds, blacks are often perceived as belonging to one homogeneous group. Ethnicity-based paradigms can be considered an improvement over essentialist biological race discourse, but ethnicity theories nonetheless fall short of adequately explaining the concept of race and its status as a prolific identity marker in American society because they rarely, if ever, acknowledge the power differentials which granted European-ethnics the advantage of being racialized in a "whitening" process, and which disadvantaged blacks by colonizing them into negatively racialized social locations.

Class-based paradigms attempt to explain race in relation to economic processes, labor relations, and the production and use of material resources (Omi & Winant, 1994; Goldberg, 1993). Those who espouse class-based theories of race typically contend that the social dynamics of race are primarily reflected in labor and economic relationships (Omi & Winant, 1994). More specifically, race can be viewed as a determinant of class because capitalist markets often operate on racial prejudice, thereby exploiting or excluding some racially identified groups (e.g. African Americans, American Indians,

Hispanics) while privileging others (e.g. white Americans). Perhaps the most glaring example of racial economic oppression is the colonial slave trade, followed by institutionalized slave labor in the Southern United States. Americans, however, have a tendency to ignore class, yet in the process, conflate race with socio-economic status -- an equation which does not hold up under scrutiny. Just as one's physical features are not a clear indication of intelligence or cultural affinity, one's skin color does not in and of itself determine one's socio-economic standing. It is stereotypes based upon skin color and other racial markers which serve to pigeonhole "non-white" minority groups into limited labor and economic opportunities. Class-based explanations of race are useful, but inadequate when they stand alone. As Omi and Winant (1994) argue, "racial inequality is an outcome, not a cause; its roots lie elsewhere: in market imperfections, political power structures, or the search for secure means of labor control" (p.48).

Various forms of nation-based paradigms of race operate in the United States; I will focus on two prominent strands of these paradigms in this section. One strand of nation-based race discourse is generally put forth by nationalist movements which arise in response to racial oppression. Appeals to this form of racial nationhood are made in order to foster collective identity and provide a point of communal reference around which racially identified minority groups can mobilize in fights against racist oppression. Pan-Africanism, Black Nationalism, and certain Native American movements are examples of socio-political movements guided by this strand of nation-based theories of race. Within such theories, racial dynamics are comprehended as products of colonialism and the outcomes of global, historical colonial relationships (Omi & Winant, 1994).

These accounts of race stress relationships among multiple elements of racial oppression, such as political disenfranchisement, economic inequality, and geographical and institutional segregation, yet remain marginally popular. However, as Omi and Winant (1986) argue, "the appeal of nationalism, in political practice or in theory, appears to be limited...the U.S. political scene allows radical nationalism little space" (p.50).

Frankenberg (1997) points to another strand of nation-based race discourse, thereby demonstrating that nation-based theories of race can be advanced by dominant racial groups as well as minority groups. Frankenberg (1997) speculates that "notions of race are closely linked to ideas about legitimate 'ownership' of the nation, with 'whiteness' and 'Americanness' linked tightly together" (p.6). In this equation, white equals American, and it is therefore the white American who enjoys unhindered access to national ownership and race privilege. The most extreme forms of white national ownership are embraced by white supremacist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and Aryan Nation. The racial beliefs of those groups demonstrate no comprehension of the global factors which have contributed to conceptualizations of race and consequently helped define racial dynamics. On the contrary, white supremacist groups use race as an essential, scientific fact in order to justify their uniquely racist vision for a new America.

Culture-based theories of race have re-emerged and dominated the social, political, and intellectual landscape of the United States during the past two decades (Appiah, 1996; Goldberg, 1993). "The cultural conception," according to Goldberg (1993), "includes identifying race with language group, religion, group habits, norms, or customs; a typical style of behavior, dress, cuisine, music, literature, and art" (p.70).

Contemporary cultural conceptions might stand as an improvement upon biologicistic accounts and earlier ethnicity-based theories of race, but they, too, fail to offer a comprehensive explanation of race. Individuals who belong to groups identified as "African American," "Asian American," or "White" do sometimes share a common culture with others of their respective groups, but the identity markers used to categorize individuals into racial groups do not independently bestow culture. Hall (1996) emphasizes this point in his writings on black culture and black subjects. "'Black'," he writes, "is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed trans-cultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in nature" (author's italics, p.443). McCarthy and Crichlow (1993) concur with Hall's statement, forwarding the notion that racial identity cannot be gathered up in one place as a final cultural property. However, acts of cultural racism nevertheless seem to be common in the 1990s. For example, many universities and high schools resist the inclusion of non-white, non-European/American works in academic canons and fight for the preservation of (white) Western Civilization-based curricula. Also, immigration policies concerning Mexico and Central American countries have grown increasingly restrictive, demonstrating the United States' reluctance to embrace people of Mexican and Latin American descent -- a reluctance at least partially motivated by stereotypic prejudice and an essentialist conflation of race and culture. As Goldberg (1990) claims, "racism is taken now to be expressed increasingly in terms of isolationist national self-image; of cultural differentiation tied to custom, tradition, and heritage; and of exclusionary immigration policies, anti-immigrant practices and criminality" (p.xiv).

Even in purportedly anti-racist movements such as multi-culturalism, culture is used as a euphemism for race -- a conflation which evades serious, honest considerations of race and often precludes individuals from accepting personal responsibility for forms of racism. As previously mentioned, culture is learned through socialization; thus, to make racial identity synonymous with culture only acknowledges a small aspect of how concepts of race operate in the United States. Racial identity may, indeed, be learned through socialization, but more often, it is an identity forced upon non-white minorities without regard for any personal qualities other than external physical features. In this sense, cultural conceptions of race are not all that far removed from biologicistic explanations. Race remains an essential, reified category when it is so strongly and exclusively linked to culture.

The historical shifts in race discourse demonstrate the socially contingent nature of conceptualizations of race and their invocations in everyday social, political, and cultural practices. In the 1990s, race is widely recognized as a social and historical construction (Frankenberg, 1993; Gutmann, 1996; Omi & Winant, 1993). Specific racial categories, as well as the general concept of race, are not unchanging, concretely objective realities, but rather are constructed ideologies which have always reflected political agendas. Omi and Winant (1986) remark that "race is indeed a pre-eminently *sociohistorical* concept. Racial categories and the meaning of race are given concrete expression by the specific social relations and historical context in which they are embedded" (authors' italics, p.60). In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, schematic classification categories were developed in response to European explorers' need to

explain the physical, linguistic, and cultural characteristics of people encountered in foreign places. In the era of colonial expansion, Europeans cited racial classification hierarchies as justification for the capture, removal, and new world enslavement of Africans. In the United States, biological accounts of race were promoted in order to justify the continued enslavement of blacks, and social Darwinist theories of race have been utilized in defense of racially oppressive practices targeted at certain minority groups. Ethnicity-based race theories have been cited in arguments opposing affirmative action policies. Some affirmative action opponents claim that if other ethnic groups have achieved success in American society without federal intervention (i.e. Asians, Italians, Jews), then so, too, should African Americans. These arguments ring hollow when we consider the actual experiences of European immigrants in the United States. While ethnically-identified immigrants were not subject to the same sort of oppressive treatment which blacks encountered, they did confront racist and ethnocentric forms of discrimination throughout the twentieth century. Ignatiev (1996) and Sacks (1993) have each chronicled how European immigrants such as Italians, Poles, and Jews were initially received in America, and how they have since been assimilated. Many immigrant groups, Jews and southern Europeans in particular, were not considered to be "white," but rather were viewed as distinct, inferior races of people. As such, they were often barred from better housing, labor, and educational opportunities. Immigrants of European descent gradually achieved status as whites, but not without wealth and craft experience gained prior to emigrating, and U.S. federal intervention (namely the 1944 GI Bill of Rights), all of which increased their economic, educational, and suburbanization opportunities. The

“whitening” of European immigrants was also aided by the persistent existence of racist prejudice against African Americans. While conceptualizations of race as ethnicity, class, nation, or culture are helpful attempts to make sense of race and racism, they only provide a glimpse of the American racial landscape when they stand alone.

Race is most comprehensively understood as a social construction imbued with cultural, political, and ideological meaning. As McCarthy and Crichlow (1993) attest, “racial difference is the product of human interests, needs, desires, strategies, capacities, forms of organization, and forms of mobilization” (p.xv). Critical race studies as a field has spent considerable time examining racial constructs as related to positions of power and privilege, but until recently, have mainly focused their attention on disenfranchised minority groups. As Roman (1993) argues, “‘race’...all too often has been used as a synonym for groups and persons who have been positioned as racially subordinate” (p.71). Scholars such as Frankenberg (1993), McIntosh (1988), and Roediger (1991), however, have offered critical analyses of racial privilege, thus contributing much needed pieces to the multi-dimensional puzzle of race in American society. In the United States, whiteness occupies the privileged race position, and it is only through both understanding race as a socio-historical concept and examining whiteness as a socially constructed racial category that we can present a clear, honest picture of how race operates in this country. Whiteness is a racial construct laden with social and political meanings which historically have been taken for granted and therefore largely unexamined.

McIntosh’s (1988) backpack analogy provides an excellent entryway into critiques of whiteness and race privilege. It is certainly true that white skin color confers

all sorts of benefits and privileges upon individuals, and in that sense, serves as an unearned asset. As McIntosh (1988) astutely notes, white Americans are not subject to the same scrutiny which black Americans are. A white person can shop without having her ability to pay questioned, can watch television and easily see people of her race positively depicted, and can be exceptionally tall without constantly being mistaken for an athlete. These everyday examples illustrate the pervasiveness of race as a social signifier, and expose the privileged status whiteness secures. This status is apparent to most blacks, but as McIntosh (1988) and others (e.g. hooks, 1992; Hill, 1997; Dyer, 1997) point out, whites are often oblivious to the advantage their skin color bestows upon them. As Grover (1997) remarks, “white is transparent. That’s the point of being the dominant race. Sure, whiteness is there, but you never think of it” (p.34). By ignoring questions of what it means to be white, examinations of race are left only half answered. Whiteness has remained an unmarked, neutral, transparent standard against which all other racial identities are judged, largely because white people are not taught to see how they benefit from the institutionalization of race. Most white people are taught only to see racism as potentially threatening to others. While it is of the utmost necessity to understand the nature and extent of this particular threat, it is equally important to determine the ways in which white people have served as “the architects of other groups’ social and ‘racial’ histories” (Bonnett, 1996, p.153). In other words, we must explore how whites are racialized, thereby, as Sleeter (1996) urges, positioning whiteness alongside blackness for scrutiny as a racial construct. To this end, Dyer (1997) suggests, “white people need to learn to see themselves as white, to see their

particularity...whiteness needs to be made strange" (p.10). Whiteness, like any other racial category, is a social construction; but unlike other racial constructs in the United States, white racial supremacy has been a consistently dominant discourse. This supremacy has been overtly established and reinforced through insidious means such as slavery, Jim Crow laws, Southern church bombings, and Ku Klux Klan intimidation -- and more subtly maintained through tactics such as housing discrimination, exclusion from job opportunities, affirmative action opposition, and an excessive emphasis on black athletic development. Blacks are the obvious victims of these practices, yet white perpetrators suffer for their actions as well. Whites who languish contentedly behind the color line in constructed positions of racial privilege exclude themselves from a variety of potential relationships, and, Sleeter (1996) cautions, "have not yet collectively created a compelling self-identity and sense of meaning that does not entail ravenous materialism and acquisition of power over others" (p.259). This sentiment is echoed by other race critics as well, who contend that whiteness is inextricable from the maintenance of social inequality (Stowe, 1996). More provocative critiques of whiteness call not only for whites to recognize their unearned privilege and become newly accountable, but to commit treason to whiteness and, in the process, abolish the white race (Ignatiev & Garvey, 1996). Noel Ignatiev and John Garvey, editors of the journal Race Traitor, view challenges to white racial privilege as the key to fundamental social change in the United States. When Ignatiev and Garvey (1996) call for a new abolitionism, they envision resistance to "the institutions that reproduce race as a social category - a challenge that disrupts their normal operation" (p.3). White people commit racial treason when they

refuse to abide by and accept the privileges their skin color affords them. Race Traitor's philosophy is reflected in its guiding principle: "treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity." By whatever means necessary, then, successful attempts to level forms of race-based social inequality must begin by breaking through systems of white privilege and end by abolishing race thinking altogether.

Despite these oppositional currents, race thinking is firmly entrenched in American society. While white privilege remains invisible to most of its beneficiaries, white skin color is a distinct identity marker. In fact, whiteness is marked in the sense that many white Americans consider it a signifier of inherent racial qualities. Whites who operate on racial stereotypes often view things like intelligence, articulateness, financial acumen, trustworthiness, and diligence as naturally linked to whiteness, and consider it an aberration or exception when blacks exhibit those and other redeemable characteristics. In reality, whites and blacks have more genetic similarities than differences (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997) -- a fact which renders senseless biological categorizations of race and the essentialist stereotypes which are pinned on them. If, as scientific research indicates, genetics do not account for race, then it stands to reason that race and race consciousness exist only as social and historical formations. Whiteness, therefore, occupies its powerful, privileged racial position not because of the inherent qualities of a reified white race, but rather because of a history of racist myth-making and a pernicious habit of oppressing blacks and other racially identified minority groups. In Frankenberg's (1997) apt assessment, *white* "corresponds to one place in racism as a system of categorization and subject formation, just as the terms *race privileged* and *race dominant name*

particular places within racism as a system of discrimination” (p.9, author’s italics).

For all its power as a significant social symbol, whiteness is ironically defined as an absence. White skin is a source of recognition and often a basis for feelings of familiarity among racially-identified white people, yet whites are largely unaware of their own racialization and demonstrate little self-awareness in relation to race. Roediger (1991) contends that whiteness does not constitute a culture, but rather the absence of culture. He views whiteness as an attempt to build an identity based on “what one isn’t and on whom one can hold back.” Most whites are unable to view themselves in racial terms, but have no trouble attributing racial identities to other groups of people. As Dyer (1997) notes, “we (whites) will speak of, say, the blackness or Chineseness of friends, neighbors, colleagues, customers, or clients, and it may be in the most genuinely friendly and accepting manner, but we don’t mention the whiteness of the white people we know” (p.2). This double-standard, which reduces “non-white” individuals to pre-conceived racial categories yet leaves white people non-raced, partially illustrates Grover’s (1997) assessment of white transparency. Furthermore, when many whites consider blacks in relation to race, they tend to de-personalize their perceptions and only view blacks in relation to racism. In these considerations, whites are removed from their role in racism, and blacks are misunderstood victims of a vague, floating racism. As a result, no one takes responsibility for racism, while its effects on both blacks and whites remain either overlooked or ignored completely. The remedy for this oversight comes in the questioning of race as a social construct. Americans continue to think in racial terms, identify each other in racial terms, and make decisions informed by racial categories.

Because of the pervasiveness of race and racism in American society, it is imperative that we interrogate the social construction of race in order to eliminate racist policies and practices. Roman (1993) suggests that “to ask how ‘race’ operates in daily practice as a set of complex and changeable meanings is to take one modest step away from the essentialist discourse of race and toward a focus on the *unequal effects of racism* for different groups of people” (p.73, author’s italics).

The recognition of race as a socio-historical construct has many political implications. Racial meanings are most often contested and transformed through political struggle, as racial politics have had a long, involved history in the United States. The politics of race are most effectively influenced and altered by mass social movements, such as the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. According to Omi and Winant (1986), “racial movements arise, and race becomes a political issue, when state institutions are thought to structure and enforce a racially unjust social order” (p.72). The Civil Rights Movement, which was responsible for so much significant social change, was organized at every level as a response to the repression and exclusion of African Americans. Yet, as previously noted, racism in this country persists. The continued presence of racial biases indicates that Americans are still guided by assumptions that race is an essential, scientific fact of human nature. In order to eliminate racial prejudice, we must bridge the gap between those who understand race as a social construction, and those who guide political policies and everyday practices with the belief that race is a static, biological essence. As Appiah (1996) attests, it is imperative that we understand the reality of race and race concepts before we are able to sufficiently explain racism.

Moreover, he suggests that "understanding the idea of race involves grasping how people think about races: what they take to be the central truths about races; under what sorts of circumstances they will apply the idea of race; what consequences for action will flow from that application" (p.33).

This study is guided by my desire to reach such an understanding with individuals of a specific population who live and work in a unique context -- intercollegiate athletics. Sport has become one of the most racially loaded aspects of American culture; sport participation and athletic success are fraught with wholly different social meanings for black Americans than they are for white Americans. These meanings are constructed and maintained through the racial discourses which have dominated American society. Race thinking profoundly influences sporting cultures and is responsible for the racist practices and stereotypes which plague both sport and society. If we can abolish, or at least transform race thinking, the elimination of racial prejudice will gradually follow. Various scholars offer different strategies for achieving this goal. McIntosh (1988) suggests that whites engage in serious self-evaluation of their own racialization and assume new accountability for everyday forms of racism. Roediger (1991), Frankenberg (1993; 1997), and Sleeter (1996) emphasize the need to see whiteness as a distinct socio-historical construction, while Ignatiev and Garvey (1996) advocate treason to race privilege for whites and strive for the elimination of the concept of race from American thought. In yet another strategy, Gutmann (1996) calls for a progression from race thinking to what she terms "color consciousness." Color consciousness acknowledges that skin color and other physical features can adversely and unfairly affect individuals'

life chances, and “recognizes that race is a fiction that often functions sotto voce as scientific fact in the identification of individuals” (p.113). A color conscious individual, therefore, understands how race operates as a social construction to affect one’s life chances and experiences, and in doing so, can decouple racial identity from skin color, as the two are only connected because of the social, cultural, and political meanings imposed upon them. The dissolution of this connection is at the heart of potentially successful attempts to abolish race and its many manifestations.

Section II

Discourse Theory and Analysis

In order for race consciousness in America to be altered, we first have to develop an understanding of how Americans learn and think about race. Moreover, we have to determine how it is that American racial thought constitutes individuals in their everyday lives and pervades our most popular cultural forms, sport included. One way of exposing the discourses surrounding race in the United States is through the analysis of racial thought in a specific cultural context. In the case of this study, interview texts of conversations with white women who work in intercollegiate athletics are analyzed for their discursive content.

In this chapter, I discuss the concept of discourse and illustrate the ways discourse analysis has been employed in research projects which address questions of race. I position discourse analysis in the field of qualitative research and explore how discourse theory has informed scholarly work in cultural studies. Finally, I offer a rationale for the relevance of discourse theory and analysis to a study of the socio-historical construction of race and its implications for white women who work within the subculture of sport.

Discourse

The concept of discourse originated in the field of structural linguistics, where the term signifies a formal exposition in speech or writing. In linguistic terms, discourse typically refers to a complete unit of language longer than a sentence (Childers & Hentzi, 1995; Thompson, 1984). Discourse analysts in linguistics examine phonics, syntax, and

other grammatical signs in order to determine the relation between written or spoken statements and social perceptions. This initial conceptualization of discourse has been greatly broadened by various academic scholars in the past thirty years or so. Discourse has become an intellectually constructed concept used to analyze not just language, but culture, power, and ideology. Post-structuralist thinkers, notably Michel Foucault, are perhaps most responsible for this shift in meaning and application. Foucault (1972) finds linguistic theories which treat discourse as a group of grammatical signs referring to contents or representations inadequate. Rather, Foucault conceptualizes discourse as comprised of spoken or written statements which, instead of simply designating things, serve as symbols of knowledge. Furthermore, discourses are historically contingent and can never be isolated from the social practices which surround them (Foucault, 1984).

For Foucault:

discourses are coherent, self-referential bodies of statements that produce an account of reality by generating 'knowledge' about particular objects or concepts, and also by shaping the rules of what can be said and known about those entities. Thus, one can speak of 'legal discourse,' 'aesthetic discourse,' 'medical discourse' etc. These groups of statements and rules exist historically and change as the material conditions for their possibility also change. (Childers & Hentzi, 1995, p.84)

In this sense, we can view discourse as a coherent set of meanings about a particular subject, phenomenon, or institution. As such, discourse is connected to knowledge and power. Foucault (1990) theorizes that discourse transmits, produces, and reinforces

power. Discourse thereby has the ability to legitimate oppressive social practices, yet is also connected to strategies of resistance (Halperin, 1995). The power of a dominant discourse, once exposed, can be diminished through the production of counter-discourses. The strategic analysis of an authoritative discourse makes resistance possible and can lead to the formation of counter-discourses. In order to effectively achieve this end, it is necessary to analyze and engage a dominant discourse in terms of its overall strategies rather than its isolated strands of content (Halperin, 1995).

Discursive patterns, then, are not concrete and unchanging, but rather have the potential to be transformed due to their socially and historically contingent nature. By considering the twentieth century alone, we can identify several major discursive shifts in the United States. Discourses regarding the treatment and rights of African Americans and women have changed significantly, as have discourses surrounding European immigrants and gays and lesbians. Through discourse analysis, we can study discursive elements and piece together the overall strategies of particular discourses. As demonstrated in Section I, a review of the various and changing facets of American racial thought makes it possible to identify distinct discourses regarding race and assess their social, political, and cultural purposes. An analysis of this nature can also point to oppositional race discourses which have historically surfaced, as well as lead to the formation of counter-discourses in the future. For example, racial discourse which holds race to be a socio-historical construct opposes racist discourse which promotes race as a biologically determined characteristic.

With the influence of Foucauldian notions, discourse theory has transcended

disciplinary borders and has been employed by scholars in a wide variety of fields.

Discourse theory has been utilized as an effective analytic tool in critical studies of race (e.g. Dikotter, 1992; Frankenberg, 1993; Goldberg, 1990; Martin Shaw, 1995), sexuality (e.g. Foucault, 1990), and homophobia (e.g. Goss, 1993; Halperin, 1995). Scholars from literary criticism to anthropology to cultural studies have taken up Foucauldian theories of discourse and put their own stamp on them in order to address these and other topics such as colonialism, gender, education, and the media.

Burman and Parker (1993) discuss the popularity and employment of discourse analysis in social psychology as well as in other disciplines. They consider discourse analysis as the study of spoken and written texts in which images of the mind are reproduced and transformed. In their view, “the current popularity of discourse analysis owes much to the ways its analytic tools can be used to inform political practice and struggles” (p.9). This feature of discourse analysis informs the work of previously noted scholars who, through their research, challenge homophobic, sexist, and/or racist structures in society. This method involves different approaches and philosophical frameworks, yet is united by an attention to the significance and structural effects of language (Burman & Parker, 1993). However, Burman and Parker (1993) argue that an emphasis on language alone does not allow for a fully adequate analytic method. Comprehensive analyses of discourse must also take socio-historical context into account. Drawing from Foucauldian notions of discourse, Parker (1992) contends, “the study of the dynamics which structure texts has to be located in an account of the ways discourses reproduce and transform the material world” (p.1). Parker (1992) elaborates a set of

criteria for distinguishing discourses which is based on post-structuralist thought and the work of Foucault. Central among these criteria are the concepts that discourse is actualized in texts, discourse forms subjects, and discourse is historically situated. Furthermore, discourses support institutions, reproduce power relations, and reinforce ideology.

Discourse Analysis in Race Studies

Criteria such as these frame research in critical race studies as well. Discourse analysis is prominent in the work of Goldberg (1990; 1993), Dikotter (1992), Martin Shaw (1995), and Frankenberg (1993). Goldberg (1990) presents a meta-analysis of discourse theory in his study of the social formation of racist discourse. He defines discursive formation as a "totality of ordered relations and correlations - of subjects to each other and to objects...of social, political, economic, or legal inclusion or exclusion" (p.297). Goldberg (1993; 1990) appropriates discourse theory in order to establish a tool for examining historical conceptions of race and their link to various forms of racism. As a researcher, he operates on the premise that once we form an understanding of the nature of racist social expressions, we can effectively oppose racism in our everyday life practices.

Dikotter (1992) draws on discourse theory in his examination of racial constructs in China. He traces the development of race discourse in China from antiquity to the twentieth century through the analysis of Chinese intellectual writing, political texts, scientific journals, popular periodicals, and travelogues. Through socio-historical research, Dikotter outlines the major discursive repertoires that have marked Chinese

racial thought since antiquity. He identifies figural repertoires such as race as type, race as lineage, race as nation, race as species, and race as class. As in Western constructions of race, skin color and other phenotypic characteristics were considered significant criteria in Sinocentric race discourse.

Martin Shaw's (1995) anthropological examination of Kenyan colonial culture and national identity is informed by discourse theory. She analyzes a wide range of discursive forms, such as ethnography, autobiography, fiction, film, and media representations in order to explore the role that gender and sexual politics have played in securing the racial and class privileges of empire. Her study is marked by its concern with the formation of the subject through discourse, as well as with questioning the place of author, form, and textual context. "Society," Martin Shaw (1995) argues, "is held together by discourse. What we come to know as culture is the effects of the operations of power embedded in discourse" (p.19). Specifically, she analyzes white colonialist ethnographies of Kenya and the discourses of race, gender, and sexuality which were the bases of colonial perceptions and interactions within and between Kenyan and colonial cultures. She also analyzes the prevalent discourses in Kenyan cultural forms such as folktales in order to construct an historical account of gender politics. Through discourse analysis, Martin Shaw illustrates the dynamics of both colonial and anti-colonial projects in Kenya.

Frankenberg (1993) utilizes discourse analysis in her research into the social construction of whiteness (the study which most influenced the research project at hand). Frankenberg (1993) conducts life history interviews with thirty white, feminist-identified

women in the San Francisco Bay Area. Through these interviews, Frankenberg examines how race shapes white women's lives. The group of participants in her study is diverse in regard to age, ethnicity, occupation, socio-economic background, sexual orientation, geographical origin, and marital status. Frankenberg's study is guided by her involvement in the feminist movement and concern over its failure to include the perspectives of women of color. As a result of this concern, Frankenberg (1993) examines the relationship between white women and racism and attempts to understand the effects of race privilege upon this relationship.

During the research interviews, Frankenberg (1993) asks each woman to remember her childhood and provide details about her household, family, friends, school, and neighborhood. The participants share their encounters with individuals of different ethnic and racial backgrounds while growing up and discuss how they perceived those individuals. The women in the study also share their adolescent and adult experiences. One of Frankenberg's most critical questions focuses on whether each woman perceives herself as racially and/or ethnically identified. As an interviewer, Frankenberg employs a dialogical approach to the interviews, involving herself in the questions and welcoming digressions from her participants.

Frankenberg (1993) draws on discourse theory in the analysis of her participants' interview responses. She understands discourse as "historically constituted bodies of ideas providing conceptual frameworks for individuals, made material in the design and creation of institutions and shaping daily practices, interpersonal interactions, and social relations" (p.265). Through discourse analysis, Frankenberg (1993) examines the

discursive repertoires of white women regarding race. She identifies three main racial discourses which are present in the interview texts. The first discourse is that of essentialist racism, a perspective through which race difference is viewed as the result of biological inequality. Frankenberg (1993) describes a second repertoire as color-evasive discourse, a view which "asserts that we are all the same under the skin...that, materially, we have the same chances in U.S. society" (p.14). Color-evasive views ignore the existence of power differentials in the racial hierarchy of the United States. The third discourse evident in the interviews is race cognizance. Women who espouse this view recognize that (white) racial beliefs are responsible for creating unequal social structures, and do *not* consider differences between white people and people of color as indicative of racial superiority or inferiority. Through discourse analysis, Frankenberg (1993) identifies prominent racial discourses, interrogates whiteness as a site of race privilege, and attempts to mark whiteness as a racial construct.

Discourse Analysis as Qualitative Research Methodology

The aforementioned studies demonstrate the effectiveness of discourse analysis as a tool of qualitative research methodology. Generically speaking, qualitative research is conducted through a variety of methods and involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Within qualitative research paradigms, discourse analysis is best viewed under the rubric of critical theory (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Guba and Lincoln (1994) conceive of critical theory as a "blanket term denoting a set of several alternative paradigms including...(but not limited to) neo-Marxism, feminism, materialism, and participatory inquiry" (p.109). Critical theory can

be characterized as post-structural and is distinguished from other (e.g. quantitative) research paradigms by its value-laden nature of inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Critical theory is guided by historical realism -- an assumption that reality is shaped by social, political, cultural, ethnic, economic, and gender factors which have been reified into a set of structures that is taken as natural (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In studies informed by critical theory, the researcher is intricately linked to the subject(s) of investigation; thus, the values of the researcher influence the inquiry. Moreover, critical theory inquiries attempt to transform ignorance and misapprehension into informed consciousness through dialogue between the researcher and the subjects of study. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), the general aim of critical theory research is the critique and transformation of exploitative socio-cultural structure. Similarly, Kincheloe and McClaren (1994) contend that critical inquiry must attempt to confront social injustice rather than merely increase knowledge about a particular subject.

We can see an example of research conducted in this vein in Frankenberg's (1993) discursive analysis of race. Perhaps most significantly, Frankenberg examines social constructions through the personal perspective of her interview participants and views her research as a transformative project -- for herself, her participants, and her readers. Frankenberg (1993) critiques the structural reification of race concepts and attempts to name whiteness as a socially constructed racial category, as do many others in the field of whiteness studies. In addition to exploring the formation of racial constructs, Frankenberg (1993) also considers how gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic factors intersect in the social construction of race discourse. She accomplishes this task

by engaging in semi-structured life history interviews with thirty white women.

Frankenberg positions herself as a dialogical partner in the interviews, yet her interaction with the women in her study continues after the interviews, as she engages in a comprehensive discursive analysis of the transcribed interview texts. Frankenberg's overall research project is influenced by her anti-racist agenda and fueled by her personal experience in the feminist movement. She attempts to transform negative racial perceptions in the white feminist community by talking with women about the events, experiences, and relationships which form(ed) their racial beliefs. Through her work, Frankenberg expands race consciousness within feminism, as well as within the lives of her thirty participants.

Once discourse analysis is positioned in the field of qualitative research, it is important to scrutinize the various techniques and procedures of this method for their theoretical rigor and relevance. Thompson's (1984) meta-analysis of ideology and discourse theory provides an excellent critique of discourse analytic methods. In his assessment, Thompson (1984) cites three characteristics which are common to most discursive approaches. The first characteristic is a concern with naturally occurring forms of expression, such as transcribed conversations or written texts. The second feature of discourse analysis is "preoccupation with linguistic units that exceed the limits of a single sentence" (p.99). This feature differentiates discourse analysis from linguistic perspectives which focus on phonology and syntax. The third common characteristic, according to Thompson (1984), is an interest in relations between linguistic and non-linguistic activity. This characteristic considers the ways language is used in specific

social contexts and how language serves as a medium of power.

The link between language and ideology is a socially significant object of study, and as such, the researcher must be careful to consider different elements during the interpretive process. Thompson (1984) points to two fundamental considerations in the interpretive methodology of discourse analysis. The first consideration involves the assumption that discourse is already an interpretation. As Thompson (1984) states:

Events, actions and expressions are constantly interpreted and understood by lay actors in everyday life, who routinely employ interpretive procedures in making sense of themselves and others. To undertake an analysis of discourse is to produce an interpretation, to re-interpret a pre-interpreted domain. (p. 133)

If discourse is already an interpretation, then the researcher's task is to produce a valid and reliable interpretation of what has already been subconsciously interpreted. The second consideration concerns the creative character of the interpretive process.

Thompson (1984) espouses the notion that "the analysis of discourse can never be merely an analysis: it must also be a synthetic construction, a creative projection, of a possible meaning" (p.133). Based on this assessment, he proposes an interpretive process which involves consideration of socio-historical context, analysis of linguistic constructions in the operation of ideology, and the creative projection of possible meanings. The overall task of the interpretive process of rigorous discourse analysis is "reconnecting discourse to the relations of domination which it serves to sustain" (Thompson, 1984, p.138).

Thompson's (1984) approach to discourse analysis incorporates Foucauldian notions of discourse, and echoes the theories espoused by Burman and Parker (1993), Parker (1992),

and a host of race scholars. While there is no single, definitive method of discourse analysis, the features, processes, and considerations Thompson (1984) proposes serve as useful guidelines for all discursive analysts.

Frankenberg's (1993) research embodies the tenets of which Thompson (1984) writes. Transcribed interviews serve as Frankenberg's medium for discourse analysis, but she is not concerned so much with the structural, turn-taking, and exchange dynamics of these conversations as she is with the background of each of her participants and their beliefs regarding race. Frankenberg bases her work on her interviewees' interpretations of their life experiences and explores the connection between these interpretations and racial hierarchies and identities. These aspects of the study, along with Frankenberg's focus on socio-historical context, connect race discourse to societal relations of power in the tradition of post-structuralist discourse theory.

Discourse Analysis in Cultural Studies

Due to the potential of discourse analysis to address a broad array of topics in their materialized cultural reality, discourse has become an important focus in contemporary cultural studies, the field in which the current research project is situated. Discourse theory has gained prominence in cultural studies during the past decade and has emerged as a popular analytic tool for the examination of a variety of social and cultural phenomena. The application of discourse theory within cultural studies grew from Gramscian notions of ideology and perhaps has been most directly influenced by the work of Foucault (Turner, 1996). In his introduction to cultural studies, Turner (1996) describes discourse as "socially produced groups of ideas or ways of thinking that can be

tracked in individual texts or groups of texts, but that also demand to be located within wider historical and social structures or relations” (p.30). For example, discourse analysis has been employed in cultural studies research to examine media forms (Kellner, 1995), AIDS representations (Grover, 1992), and the sociology of art (Wolff, 1992).

The methodology which informs cultural studies research projects is specifically chosen to meet the needs of each local endeavor. Just as there is no singular definition of cultural studies, there is no definitive research methodology which guides all cultural studies work. Researchers employ whatever methodologies are best suited to their research inquiries. Nelson et al (1992) convey cultural studies methodology as a bricolage which is interpretive and evaluative in nature. Cultural studies practitioners have engaged in practices including ethnographic interviewing, participant observation, semeiotics, textual film studies, art criticism, and discourse analysis. Regarding discourse analysis, Kellner (1995) writes:

cultural studies can be distinguished from idealist, textualist, and extreme discourse theories which only recognize linguistic forms as constitutive of culture and subjectivity. Cultural studies by contrast is materialist in that it focuses on the material origins and effects of culture and the ways that culture is imbricated in processes of domination or resistance. (p.32)

By employing approaches such as discourse analysis, cultural studies workers, both within and outside academia, are able to examine the social and historical context of cultural production, cultural practices, and identity formation, as well as their effects upon social interactions and power relations.

The link between discourse and forms of resistance adds to the appeal of discourse theory in cultural studies. Cultural studies researchers are not interested in simply chronicling culture and cultural changes, but often see their projects as interventionist in some way (Nelson et al, 1992). Whether it be contesting traditional constructs of gender, exposing televangelical scandals, critiquing colonialist representations in film, or developing non-essentialist theories of race, work in cultural studies challenges dominant discourses in hopes of creating counter-discourses and shifting relations of power.

Conclusion

It is in this spirit that I borrow from discourse theory in the analysis of race discourse among white women in intercollegiate athletics. On one level, my conversations with the women in this study are an attempt to explore the race thinking of six female individuals who have grown up with sport and now work in college athletics. On another level, this study aims to provide an account of racial discourse in sport, albeit through the perceptions and experiences of a select group of white women who are in various stages of sport-related careers. Furthermore, this study examines the dynamics between individual and cultural race discourse in sport. For example, what factors led to each woman's racial perceptions, and how do these perceptions resemble or differ from those of her colleagues? Does each woman's racial perceptions guide her daily behaviors at work in any way, or influence her personal and professional interactions with colleagues and/or student-athletes? Discourse analysis is particularly suited to the interpretive, evaluative nature of cultural studies projects which address questions such as

these regarding social constructions of identity and relations of power. With the realization that an analysis of race discourse among white women in sport is a form of interpretation, I hope I have presented a fair depiction of the materialized cultural reality of the six women who agreed to speak with me about their lives and careers in a particular facet of sport.

Section III

Cultural Studies, Sport, and Race

Introduction

Bringing together cultural studies and sport, this section attempts to demonstrate how a blending of the two is necessary in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of American culture and to present a critical reading of women, race, and sport. I begin by discussing the field of cultural studies and arguing for practitioners in this field to engage in an increased consideration of sport as a cultural form, alongside others forms such as music, film, and fiction writing. Additionally, I argue for the adoption of a cultural studies approach in sport scholarship and attempt to illustrate why this approach is appropriate for the examination of gender, race, and racial privilege in sport. I conclude the chapter by situating the current research project within a specifically tailored version of cultural studies discourse.

Cultural Studies

As a doctoral student in a newly conceived Cultural Studies in Education Unit, I was troubled by the absence of a singular definition of cultural studies as an academic field. Cultural studies, it seemed, had no cut-and-dry, one-sentence definition like those that could be construed for less ambiguous disciplines such as psychology or economics. What I gradually began to realize was that cultural studies has no disciplinary definition because cultural studies is not a discipline, per se. It is an academic field of inquiry which has been increasingly institutionalized in North American universities, but as a field, cultural studies resists disciplinary codification. In Richard Johnson's words,

“cultural studies is a process, a kind of alchemy for producing useful knowledge; codify it and you might halt its reactions” (1986/87, p. 38). Cultural studies is also anti-disciplinary in the sense that it eschews the formation and maintenance of textual canons and views the examination of culture and social relations as more than participation in traditional academic exercises (Nelson et al, 1992). Therefore, it is more appropriate to speak of the characteristics of cultural studies, or of the common elements of a cultural studies approach to critical inquiry, than it is to attempt to define cultural studies as an academic discipline. I now view this aspect of cultural studies as liberating rather than problematic. Not only is cultural studies anti-disciplinary; it is also marked by an interdisciplinarity which gives the field/approach an eclectic theoretical base and diverse research methodologies. Scholars who operate from a cultural studies approach “borrow” whatever theoretical tools and methodological practices are best suited to their particular projects from traditional disciplines, yet remain unencumbered by static disciplinary borders.

Equally varied are the topics of study one finds in the field of cultural studies. Cultural critics have explored topics ranging from popular film to secondary education to shop-floor culture under the rubric of cultural studies (see Nelson et al, 1992). In the analysis of these and similar topics, scholars have turned to critical theories/practices such as feminism, Marxism, ethnographic interviewing, and participant observation, to name only a few. Concern with issues of power, social justice, identity politics, and social difference also underpin much of the work being done in cultural studies. Accordingly, the best practitioners in this field attempt to bring as many aspects of

identity, such as race, class, religion, politics, gender, and sexual orientation, as are relevant into their work.

Given the broad scope of cultural studies and its ability to produce meaningful critiques of everyday culture, cultural forms, and cultural practices, I find it curious that sport has rarely been taken up as an area worthy of study within cultural studies. What cultural form could be more popular, more pervasive, or more imbued with social meaning than American sport? This oversight comes from two sides. Scholars in cultural studies seem to be unaware of sport as a cultural site, or, possibly are unwilling to legitimize a leisure enterprise in the hallowed halls of academia. This position seems contradictory, considering cultural studies' concern with taking popular culture seriously and obfuscating the boundaries between "high" and "low" culture. Perhaps, as Hall (1996) and Wright (1998) have suggested, cultural studies has gotten away from its origins and initial project of linking the academic study of culture with political intervention. Wright (1998) fears that the institutionalization of cultural studies in the academy is:

producing cultural studies as an academic endeavor that is an end in itself, a development that diminishes the possibility of conceptualizing and utilizing cultural studies as a tool that accomplishes certain socio-political ends both within the academy and, more importantly, in communities and the society at large.

(p.37)

Sport is so pervasive in American society that it has permeated our everyday culture, and, for many, become a taken-for-granted aspect of ordinary life. Given this pervasiveness,

and the conflicts around questions of gender, race, class, and sexuality which persist, sport must be taken up as a cultural form in need of academic study which can lead to transformative political intervention.

For their part, sport studies scholars appear reluctant to embrace a cultural studies approach in their research. Perhaps these scholars view the anti- and inter-disciplinarity of cultural studies as too ambiguous or relativistic; or perhaps concern with questions of social identity and social justice in the arena of sport do not resonate with enough sport studies scholars. In any event, too little has been written about identity markers and social constructions such as race, gender, and sexual orientation in the context of sport -- the very topics cultural studies is best suited and most well-equipped to address. In the following sub-section, I propose that sport should occupy a legitimate space within cultural studies and suggest that cultural studies could serve as another base (with sport philosophy and sociology) from which sport is legitimized as a subject of critical inquiry.

Sport into Cultural Studies

In their Chronicle of Higher Education editorial, Gorn and Oriard (1995) call for scholars outside of sport studies to take sport seriously, given the obvious importance of sport in American life. Gorn and Oriard (1995) take cultural studies to task, specifically, for failing to consider the significance of sport as a cultural form. In their estimation:

...the booming field of cultural studies seems oblivious to the work done on athletics. This is ironic, because cultural studies - the interdisciplinary analysis of history, cultural expression, and power - is exactly where the study of sports is most needed. (Gorn & Oriard, 1995, p. A52)

While cultural studies as a field has not been completely oblivious to sport as a cultural form (see Andrews & Loy, 1993), Gorn and Oriard's point is well-taken. Critical issues of power circulating around the world of sport -- race, gender, class, sexuality, capitalism -- are the very same issues with which cultural studies practitioners are most concerned. Scholars interested in exploring constructs of masculinity, for example, need look only so far as the high school boys' locker room or the muscle beaches of California. Likewise, critics setting out to examine homophobia and its effect on AIDS representations can find rich material in the comparison of two prominent athletes after their HIV-positive disclosures -- the avowedly hetero Magic Johnson and the openly gay Greg Louganis. Furthermore, consider the insight into American racial perceptions which could be provided through an analysis of popular sport films such as "Hoosiers," "Hoop Dreams," "Major League," and "He Got Game." In all fairness, Andrews and Loy (1993) point out a handful of sport-focused research projects conducted by cultural studies practitioners, but these projects are few and far between and are often authored by the same individuals (e.g., Clarke, 1973, 1975, 1978, 1983, 1990; and Critcher, 1971, 1974, 1982, 1986, 1989, 1991). The possibilities for constructive, critical cultural analysis through sport are endless, and the knowledge to be gained from such analyses is too great for scholars to continue to overlook the cultural relevance of sport. As Gorn and Oriard (1995) argue, "the general banishment of sports from cultural studies is not merely an omission of an important expressive form; leaving out sports distorts our view of culture" (p. A52).

It is also possible to argue for the consideration of sport in cultural studies work by appealing to the transient nature of the field. The events, issues, and concerns which

have shaped cultural studies have been commonly noted in historical accounts of the academic genre (see Hall, 1992; Johnson, 1986/87; Turner, 1996). Although cultural studies has no simple origins (Hall, 1996), it can be said that the practice of cultural studies has roots in adult education -- in Denmark, Kenya, and the Appalachian United States, as well as Birmingham (Wright, 1998). In Britain, particularly, cultural studies has been heavily influenced by Marxism. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, much of the work done in the name of cultural studies was concerned with the influence of modes of production and the effects of the distribution of wealth upon culture. In the 1970s, cultural studies' preoccupation with Marxist ideology came under increasing attack from scholars who detected little space in cultural studies for feminism and race studies. Through interventionist work, scholars who viewed identity and social difference as integral to the study of culture fought to expand the critical gaze of cultural studies. In the ensuing years, some of the most provocative, insightful, and challenging work in cultural studies has taken up notions of gender and race and their articulation in and through specific cultural contexts such as music, education, art, and the media. Consider, for example, McRobbie and Garber's (1976) influential feminist analysis of girls and subcultures, or Gilroy's (1987) critique of "the marginalization of 'race' and racism" (p.12) in cultural studies within his examination of racial politics in England. One of the liberating features of cultural studies is its ability to transform itself in order to better grapple with the cultural contentions resulting from individual and group articulations of identity and social difference. As hooks (1990) attests, "cultural studies can serve as an intervention, making a space for forms of intellectual discourse to emerge that have not

been traditionally welcomed in the academy” (p. 90).

Vying for the consideration of sport in cultural studies is by no means as ruptural an intervention as when gender and race issues “interrupted” cultural studies through revolutionary works like Women Take Issue (Women’s Studies Group, 1978) and The Empire Strikes Back (Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1982). Women Take Issue is figural for making feminist praxis and examinations of gender constructs central concerns of cultural studies, while The Empire Strikes Back helped put critical questions of race, the politics of race, and the resistance to racism on the cultural studies agenda (Hall, 1992). The inclusion of sport does not entail the same sort of revolutionary shift, but rather requires a nudging reminder, as space for the consideration of sport as a cultural form already exists within the discourse of cultural studies. It is, therefore, a relevant and timely proposition. Record numbers of individuals are participating in all levels of sport (including dramatically more girls and women); sport spectatorship and preoccupation seem to be at all-time highs due to the hyper-commodification of sport; NCAA Division I collegiate sport in America has become an increasingly capitalist-driven business venture; and media coverage of sport has expanded exponentially and grown distinctly more technologically enhanced.

These factors signal the worthiness of sport as a cultural topic of study, yet they also exemplify the dangers which threaten sport. For example, the amateur status of collegiate sport and its links with higher education are severely jeopardized by a rampant capitalism which, among other things, exploits student-athletes for their talents (Coakley, 1998; Leonard, 1993). Sport spectators’ preoccupation with the outcome of athletic

contests has led to violence, as demonstrated by fan riots at European and South American soccer matches (Coakley, 1998), and by the disproportionate number of domestic violence cases sparked by combat sport viewing (Nelson, 1994). Furthermore, as a microcosm of society, sport is profoundly marked by prejudice emanating from racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia. The culture of sport is in need of critical interrogation from cultural studies practitioners partly because sport is in need of reform. Cultural studies work involving sport can produce scholarly knowledge, but it also has the potential to draw from that knowledge in the production of reform strategies which could be put to use on playing fields and in athletic departments.

A third argument for incorporating sport into cultural studies centers around notions of culture and theories regarding the importance of studying culture. Within cultural studies, "culture" is understood as the texts and practices of everyday life and is seen as a key site for the production and reproduction of social relations (Storey, 1996). The project of cultural studies, therefore, is not exclusively interested in studying "high-brow," aesthetic cultural forms such as opera, art, ballet, and classical music, nor is it only interested in the study of popular culture. Cultural studies work acknowledges all forms of culture in the political sense of their significance for different groups of people. Ethnographic projects in cultural studies, for instance, have explored the use of consciousness-raising theater as a means of creating a work space for working-class Jamaican women through which they can educate themselves and others (Ford-Smith, 1985). Cultural studies ethnographies have also examined the cultural meaning of drug use (Willis, 1976). Everyday cultural forms are important objects of study, considering

that “when we are at our most natural, our most everyday, we are also at our most cultural; that when we are in roles that look the most obvious and given, we are actually in roles that are constructed, learned” (Willis, 1979, p. 184). What context more than sport, for those who participate and spectate, shows us in our most natural and everyday cultural ordinariness? Some would argue that sport is too constructed to be exemplary of the ordinary, the everyday. Sport might be out-of-the-ordinary at its most elite, constructed levels, such as professional leagues or the Olympics. Competition at those levels is highly selective, and the ability to attend sporting events of that magnitude is limited by logistics and socio-economic status, among other factors. What is ordinary about sport is its pervasiveness in everyday aspects of our lives. We can turn on the television and find a sporting event, or sports news, at almost any time of the day, and we can open the majority of American newspapers and find the largest section devoted to sports coverage. Sport paraphernalia is abundant in most shopping malls, and community recreation leagues for a variety of sports thrive in most towns and cities. Sport participation is heavily tied into our educational experiences, as many high school social events revolve around sport competitions, and as universities are identified more with their athletic teams than their academic reputations by many Americans. This is certainly not an exhaustive list of examples of the ordinariness of sport, but a sufficient sampling for the purposes of this argument, as they speak well to Williams’ (1993) assessment of culture: “A culture is common meanings, the product of a whole people, and offered individual meanings, the product of man’s [sic] whole committed personal and social experience” (p.10).

Moreover, what practice is more laden with cultural baggage than sport? By examining sport, we can get a telling glimpse of gender socialization processes, youth subcultures, concepts of black masculinity, homophobic discourse surrounding female athletes, formations of ethnic identity, working-class leisure pursuits, and the social construction of race -- topics which only scratch the surface of sport's cultural significance. Turner's (1996) commentary on culture is an apt descriptor for sport: "Culture, as the site where meaning is generated and experienced, becomes a determining, productive field through which social realities are constructed, experienced, and interpreted" (p. 15). Cultural meaning is generated and experienced in and through sport, and sport is unquestionably a site where social realities are mediated for participants and spectators alike. As Hall (1996) states:

the significance of sport...can only be grasped through an analysis of culture.

Sport is such a visible aspect of popular culture, at least in the so-called developed countries where the cultural meanings and values enacted through participation, competition, and spectacle help make and remake us both as individuals and as collectivities. (pp. 31-32)

Given the pervasiveness and value of sport as a cultural form, it is important for cultural studies scholars to engage in critical assessments of this distinct aspect of American society.

While too little has been written on sport in the context of cultural studies, precious few scholars in sport studies have engaged in praxis-driven research which critically examines issues of identity, difference, and social justice. Hall (1996) urges

sport studies scholars to adopt a cultural studies approach in order to better explore relations of power in sport which are based on constructs of race, gender, sexuality, and class. She argues for the potential of feminist cultural studies to address these concerns and calls for sport sociologists in particular to become politically vested in work aimed at bringing about social change in sport contexts. Those scholars who have more than peripherally dealt with issues related to race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, multiculturalism, and/or class have produced meaningful interventions in sport studies which attest to the value of critical cultural inquiry and demonstrate the need for further inquiries into sport. For example, Andrews (1996) borrows from cultural studies theorizing in his analysis of the persona of Michael Jordan as a site of mediated popular culture at which particular racial ideologies are publicized and authorized. In this critique, Andrews (1996) explores white perceptions of blackness and the role the media plays in establishing these perceptions through images of Michael Jordan. Through a critical reading of popular media forms, Andrews (1996) identifies "the discursive epidemics that delineate Jordan's evolution as a promotional icon and that act as markers of an American cultural racism which oscillates between patronizing and demonizing representations of African American Otherness" (p. 153). Thornton (1995) effectively utilizes critical ethnographic methods in his study of the construction of white heteromascularity and the gendered, racialized body in and through sport. Observations as a participant in a "co-ed" Ultimate Frisbee league, along with twelve interviews conducted with teammates, serve as the basis for Thornton's critical ethnography. In his analysis, Thornton (1995) employs Butler's (1990) concept of gender performativity in order to

demonstrate the fluidity of social identities and to argue that “masculinity is a complex social category and position of intersecting relations of race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, history, geography, and gender” (p.1). Cole and Hribar (1995) draw on Foucault in their feminist interrogation of *Nike*-style advertising, thus blending sport and cultural studies in a critical examination of the most prolific symbol of late-twentieth century sport and corporate marketing. In their analysis, Cole and Hribar (1995) outline versions of popular feminism which have dominated the last two decades of the twentieth century and interrogate *Nike*’s role in their development and proliferation. Cole and Hribar (1995) conclude that not only has *Nike* co-opted feminist rhetoric to sell products, but that through its ad campaigns, *Nike* has provided “women with identities that impede the recognition of historical conditions and circumstances” (p.365). Some recent sport studies texts have also presented work which exhibits a cultural studies influence. Anthologies edited by Messner and Sabo (1990), Birrell and Cole (1994), and Cohen (1993) include theoretical, historical, and empirical research which covers social issues in sport, sport subcultures (subculture = a distinctive group which resists the pressures of a discriminatory capitalist society through the expression of style - Childers & Hentzi, 1995; Wheatley, 1994), and identity formation within/through sport. Books such as Cahn’s (1994) history of twentieth-century women’s sport and Griffin’s (1998) exploration of homophobia in women’s athletics put the marginalized subjects of sexuality and lesbian athletes at the center of their respective analyses. Davis (1997) provides a feminist textual analysis of women’s images in annual Swimsuit Issues of Sports Illustrated, America’s most popular sport magazine. Davis (1997) builds on

hegemony theory in her critique in order to illuminate Sports Illustrated's role in creating a dominant masculinity in the consumerism surrounding sport. As Andrews and Loy (1993) attest, "the emergence of a cultural studies of sport in North America has the potential for enhancing the critical understanding of sport as a form of popular culture in particular and of contemporary cultural existence in general" (p. 255).

Some sport studies scholars have participated in debates regarding the merits of a cultural studies approach in sport-related research, as demonstrated by the special theme issue on British cultural studies and sport in the Sociology of Sport Journal (1992), as well as by Andrews and Loy's (1993) discussion of past and future encounters between British cultural studies and sport. Despite the presence of debates such as these, many sport scholars remain reluctant to embrace a cultural studies approach in their fields of inquiry, perhaps in part because "those advocating a cultural studies/cultural criticism approach have challenged traditional mainstream approaches to sport sociology" (Hall, 1996, p. 35). This reluctance is particularly evident in Crosset and Beal's (1997) unenlightened appraisal of cultural studies' offerings for the sociological study of sport. Crosset and Beal (1997) reduce identity markers such as race, class, and gender to mere political conflicts, and then go on to critique cultural studies approaches for being so politicized as to obscure the lived experiences of individuals in subcultures under study. This is a troublesome assessment, as any cultural criticism which fails to acknowledge the interplay of relevant social constructs like race, gender, class, and sexual orientation is, to use Stuart Hall's (1992) term, a "non-starter." Furthermore, Crosset and Beal (1997) note the ambiguity surrounding definitions of cultural studies without allowing for

the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of culture and cultural formations (i.e., sport). Lastly, as part of their critique of the use of the term “subculture” within cultural studies research, Crosset and Beal (1997) facetiously remark, “within sport ethnographies written from a cultural studies perspective, any group engaged in the production of cultural products qualifies as a subculture” (p.77). This statement is problematic for two reasons. One, the authors make a sweeping (erroneous) generalization without citing each (or hardly any) cultural studies sport ethnography(ies), some of which, I would argue, rely on more stringent criteria in their designations of subcultures. Two, although differences between the terms “subculture” and “subworld” are more than semantic, arguing for the use of one term over the other seems nothing more than an academic exercise void of real-world, praxis-oriented value. Crosset and Beal’s (1997) narrow focus on the use of subculture in their critique of a cultural studies perspective’s usefulness for sport studies ignores the viability of cultural studies work and overlooks the challenging, thought-provoking critical sport research that is capable of being produced from such a perspective.

Certainly, the study of sport from a sociological, historical, or philosophical perspective is already a valid and legitimate enterprise in its own right. However, the field of sport studies can only benefit from the incorporation of cultural studies principles, both in the classroom and in research endeavors.

Race, Sport, and Women

One area in glaring need of scholarly attention and cultural studies-inspired intervention is that involving race, sport, and women in general and sites of male

privilege and white privilege within sport specifically. In this sub-section, I discuss the problem of racism in sport and provide an overview of sports studies research which addresses this problem. The sport studies work which examines race issues in sport is undeniably important, but the majority of it fails to recognize race as a socially constructed category or to interrogate positions of privilege in sport, which exist because of the entrenchment of essentialist discourses of race and gender. I envision the current research project being situated within this space.

Throughout the twentieth century, African Americans as a group have been the primary target of racism in professional and amateur sports in the United States. This trend was prevalent prior to the twentieth century, as indicated by the National Baseball Association's "gentleman's agreement" to exclude black players in 1867 (Parry & Parry, 1991). The late nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century were characterized by racial segregation in sport which was put in place largely by the 1897 Plessy v. Ferguson "separate but equal" court case. This segregation continued between World War I and World War II, but Joe Louis' 1938 boxing victory over Max Schmeling and Jesse Owens' medal-winning performances at the 1936 Berlin Olympics were significant, albeit isolated and brief, triumphs over sport racism. The segregated nature of sport slowly began deteriorating after World War II. The "color line," a metaphor which refers to racial segregation based on skin color, or to an exclusionary boundary separating whites and blacks in sport, was broken in Major League Baseball in 1947, when the Brooklyn Dodgers signed African American Jackie Robinson to a professional contract. The Cleveland Indians followed shortly thereafter by signing Larry Doby, another black

player, but integration in baseball was nonetheless a gradual and painful process.

As more black players were signed by Major League teams, interest in the vibrant Negro Leagues began dissipating. Most Negro League games were social events for the entire black community, but when black athletes began playing in the white Majors, black spectators started to attend Major League games in support of those players. As a result, the Negro Leagues lost crowds and commercial support, while the Majors made a profit off of black players who still faced overt discrimination and were blocked from any leadership positions. In this sense, racial integration in Major League Baseball came with a price for the black community.

Racial integration was seen in other areas of sport at this time, such as tennis, track and field, and boxing. In 1950, Althea Gibson was the first African American athlete (male or female) to compete at the U.S. Tennis Championships, and in 1956 she went on to win Wimbledon. The gold medal performances of black athletes Wilma Rudolph and then-Cassius Clay at the 1960 Rome Olympics were figural events in the midst of the growing Civil Rights Movement. The 1954 Brown v. Topeka Board of Education court case was instrumental in bringing about the gradual integration of interscholastic and intercollegiate athletic programs. The desegregation ruling, combined with the desire of educational institutions to achieve athletic prominence, contributed to the integration of schools and athletic departments. Universities increasingly offered scholarships to black student-athletes, but it was not until the late 1970s that black athletes were a common sight on collegiate athletic teams.

This era was not without resistance to racial discrimination in sport, a sentiment

notably evident in the protest organized by black sociologist Harry Edwards and carried out by black athletes at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics. The most visible protest was made by sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos, who donned black gloves and raised their fists in a black power salute from the medal podium (Smith won gold; Carlos bronze) during the playing of the Star-Spangled Banner. Through this act of resistance, Smith and Carlos expressed African Americans' tense feelings resulting from racism to an international audience. For their actions, the sprinters were suspended from the U.S. Olympic team. Overt racial segregation in sport gradually gave way, but more subtle forms of racism such as stacking and exclusion from leadership positions persist in the later decades of the twentieth century.

Stacking is one of the most common forms of racial discrimination in sport. This phenomenon occurs when athletes of a dominant group are overrepresented in team positions of high interaction, decision-making, and leadership, while athletes of racially-identified minority groups are overrepresented in peripheral team positions stressing physical abilities (Eitzen & Furst, 1989). Positions of leadership include the quarterback and center in football, the pitcher and catcher in baseball, and the setter in volleyball. Peripheral positions in those sports include running back and wide receiver in football, outfielder in baseball, and outside hitter in volleyball. In a study of women's collegiate volleyball, Eitzen and Furst (1989) find that blacks are underrepresented at the setter position, and overrepresented at hitter, a position which requires jumping, agility, and reaction skills.

Stacking has also been discovered in Major League Baseball (Lapchick, 1991).

During the 1991 season, black players were overrepresented in outfield positions (51%), yet underrepresented at catcher (1%), pitcher (4%), and shortstop (19%). Lapchick (1991) also reveals stacking in the 1990 NFL. At that time, black players held eight percent of quarterback positions and thirteen percent of center positions, but were overrepresented at cornerback (96%), running back (90%), and wide receiver (86%). These percentages have not deviated much during the 1990s. In the 1995 NFL, black players held nine percent of the quarterback positions and sixteen percent of the center positions, yet were even more overrepresented at cornerback (100%) and wide receiver (91%) (Coakley, 1998).

Stacking does not occur only in relation to black and white athletes in the United States. In a study of Australian rugby, Hallinan (1991) finds whites overrepresented in central team positions and Aborigines disproportionately placed in wide positions. Maguire (1988) reveals stacking in British soccer, as black Caribbeans and black Africans are overrepresented in wide forward positions, while whites hold the majority of midfielder and goalkeeper positions. The exclusionary practice of stacking is based on the perpetuation of essentialist racial stereotypes, and thus functions to uphold racially-identified positions of privilege.

Racism in sport is also evident in the exclusion of blacks from leadership positions. In the college setting, blacks are greatly underrepresented in positions such as athletic director, head coach, and physical education instructor (DeSensi, 1995). Research shows that racially-identified minority women in sport hold only 5% or less of teaching, coaching, and administrative positions (Smith, 1992). In professional football,

basketball, and baseball, African Americans remain grossly underrepresented in coaching and front-office positions, despite the high numbers of African-American athletes who participate in those sports. Exclusionary hiring practices in sport are typically informed by racist stereotypes regarding the moral, intellectual, and leadership abilities of “non-white” individuals. The continuation of these practices secures whiteness as a position of privilege within sport.

The aforementioned examples are by no means meant to be taken as an exhaustive list of racist practices in sport, but rather to serve as an encapsulated geography of racial dynamics in various athletic settings. Since Harry Edward’s ground-breaking work on race and athletics in the late 1960s, a substantial amount of sport research has focused on racial issues and minority athletes. The subject of much of this research, however, has been the black male athlete and the focus has been on little more than the identification of racial problems in sport. African American women in sport are largely ignored by social and historical researchers, as many studies on race and sport pass off the history and experiences of black sportsmen as that of *all* blacks in sport. Yet, notable exceptions which address African American sportswomen and the double burdens of racism and sexism that they face do exist. For example, sport sociologist Yevonne Smith (1992) points to the need for greater consideration of women of color in sport scholarship in order to create more inclusive versions of feminism and race-relations theory. Birrell (1990), another noted sport sociologist, critiques sport scholars, as well as feminists and cultural studies theorists, for their neglect of issues related to race. Gissendanner (1994) presents one of the few historical considerations of African American women in sport,

and Corbett and Johnson (1993) provide a rare discussion of African American female athletes in collegiate sport. These scholars all take gender and race issues into account in their work, a consideration which contributes to the strength of their research. Indeed, any discussion of women and race in sport would be incomplete without a consideration of how gender mediates women's experiences in athletics. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss some of the means through which women in sport have been and continue to be disadvantaged.

Women in sport are disadvantaged in four main areas: economics, leadership positions, media coverage, and homophobia. The area of economics includes salaries, budgets, and facilities. It is commonly noted that women, on average, make less than their male counterparts in collegiate athletics. Female athletic directors, for instance, make roughly \$11,000 less per year than male athletic directors, and female coaches make approximately \$6,000 less than their male equivalents (Lopiano, 1993). In regard to budgets, NCAA Division I women's programs receive roughly 25% of operating costs, 38% of scholarship money, and 18% of recruiting money, while the remaining funds go to men's programs (NCAA, 1996). Women also are consistently marginalized from leadership positions in sport. Only 50% of women's collegiate teams are headed by a female coach, yet 98% of men's teams are coached by men (Acosta & Carpenter, 1996). Media coverage of women's sport is insufficient in both quantity and quality. Studies reveal that women receive one photo for every twenty-two that male athletes receive in the print media, and that women's sports receive 29 pages of coverage for every 527 pages written about men (Lopiano, 1993). Moreover, when women's sports are covered

by the broadcast media, the quality of the coverage is often sub-par/inferior, as illustrated by less camera angles, more distant camera shots, cruder graphics, and less pre/post-game coverage (Duncan et al, 1994). Homophobia disadvantages women in sport through damaging accusations of lesbianism. This threat, which silences both gay and straight women, serves as an obstacle to female administrator's careers in collegiate sport (NCAA, 1989) and is a factor in many female athletes' decisions to decline athletic scholarships at certain universities (Cart, 1992; Mosbacher, 1994). When considered together, these examples of disadvantage underscore the existence of power structures in sport which privilege maleness. These same power structures also privilege whiteness in sport contexts, a position which most sport scholars fail to consider.

As previously stated, the majority of race-focused sport research seems to either identify issues and problems associated with minority experiences in sport or to explore physiological differences between white and black (male) athletes. Davis (1990) criticizes sport researchers for their preoccupation with the latter category, arguing that:

The preoccupation is racist because it is founded on and naturalizes the notion that racial categories are fixed and unambiguous biological realities, thus obscuring the political interests underlying the process of racial formation. (p. 185)

The search for racially-linked genetic traits which account for athletic success is nothing more than an extension of biological determinism to sport settings. This approach operates on essentialist notions of race and fails to recognize race as a socially constructed category, thereby maintaining racist ideologies in sport. To be fair, some excellent studies which view race as a socio-historical construction recently have been

done in sport (see Andrews, 1996; Cole, 1996; Denzin, 1996). Kellner (1996), a cultural studies critic, provides an insightful blending of sport, race, and media culture in his assessment of the American racialization of Michael Jordan. The former category of research is necessary if we are to adequately examine how black and white experiences in sport are mediated by race. What must, yet has not, accompanied research into minority experiences in sport is the interrogation of whiteness and the ways skin color confers privilege upon white individuals in sport. As Messner (1996) acknowledges, "in race relations scholarship, there has been a more recent turn toward studying up on the social construction of whiteness," while in sport studies "we have a rich literature on race and ethnicity, but there has been very little studying up on whiteness -- studying *race* has meant, for the most part, studying the experiences of African Americans" (p. 22). While not addressing sport specifically, hooks (1990) voices this sentiment in much more pointed (and sarcastic) terms: "One change in direction that would be real cool would be the production of a discourse on race that interrogates whiteness. It would just be so interesting," she continues, "for all those white folks who are giving blacks their take on blackness to let them know what's going on with whiteness" (p. 54). As one of those "white folks" concerned with studying the formation of racial thought in American culture, it is my intention that the project at hand, with its analysis of six takes on whiteness within a specific sport context, stands as an answer to both hooks' (1990) and Messner's (1996) call for a more enlightened race scholarship. Moreover, I hope this project demonstrates the merits of a cultural studies-based approach to the study of race and sport.

In regard to cultural studies and race scholarship, Diawara (1993) identifies two strains of cultural studies in the United States. One strain “posits race at its center and uses metaphors of racial construction to bring to light the ways of life of oppressed groups” (p. 263). The other strain, in Diawara’s (1993) estimation:

explicitly links itself to the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. Taking as one of its primary projects the description of people’s ways of life, it focuses on cultural practices and texts such as rock music, Hollywood, and independent films.... Practitioners of this form ... also describe the impact on culture of, for example, the medical profession, leisure industries, and corporate control of electronic media. (p. 264)

What I am proposing through this study is a combination of these two forms. On the one hand, concepts of race are central to my work, while on the other, sport as a cultural practice which both influences and is influenced by society is figural. If cultural studies is to effectively engage in the study of the construction of identity markers such as race, then it becomes necessary to consider the specific cultural practices/contexts in which those markers are significant. It is thus important to critique racist and sexist practices in sport such as stacking, homophobia, and exclusion from leadership positions in the context of systems of privilege and positions of power. Not only must we achieve an understanding of how racism in sport affects African Americans, but we must also examine the role whites play in perpetuating racism and influencing racial dynamics in sport. It is through this dual understanding that we can begin to perform interventionist work in sport that has the potential to expose the privileging system of whiteness, educate

practitioners regarding the origins and nature of their race thinking as well as that of their colleagues, and destroy myths which reify racial categories as objective facts. This study is an attempt to produce precisely that kind of interventionist work. In short, it is a cultural studies project informed by feminism and whiteness studies which borrows from discourse theory and is carried out through a modified ethnographic methodology of participant observation and semi-structured, partial life history interviews.

PART TWO

Section I

Methodology

Introduction

In this section, I outline the scope of the study and discuss the qualitative strategy upon which it is predicated. I provide a general description of the research participants, as well as a rationale for their inclusion in this project. Section II is devoted to a more comprehensive profile of each participant and field site.

While my general intent in this study is to understand various racial perceptions of Americans and to analyze racial perceptions and racism in sport, the more specific research objective is to examine how white women negotiate racial constructs while working within sport environments. In particular, I set out to determine how a select group of white women view themselves in relation to race, and in conjunction, how these women perceive male and female black Americans in regard to race. This study, therefore, endeavors to explore white womanhood on the one hand, and white, female constructions of blackness on the other. In order to achieve these ends, I interviewed and observed white women who hold positions of leadership in collegiate athletic departments about their experiences with and perceptions of people of race-, gender-, and class-identified groups different from their own. Through field observations and discourse analysis of the transcribed texts of these interviews, I hope I have achieved a greater understanding of how race shapes white women's lives, and, in particular, their daily interactions in athletics with individuals of diverse backgrounds.

Research Methods

Participants

The participants in this study are six white women who currently hold leadership positions in NCAA Division I athletic departments. While these women's professional status is the main criterion for their inclusion in this study, an attempt was made to monitor the diversity of the interviewees with regard to age, job position, and geographical location. A variety of athletic department positions, including associate athletic director, head and assistant coach, athletic trainer, and strength and conditioning coach are represented in this study. Women who hold these positions are the staff members who are either responsible for the operation of significant aspects of the athletic department, and/or who have the most meaningful daily interactions with student-athletes. The scope of this study includes NCAA Division I institutions because of the unique underlying philosophy of most Division I programs. In these institutions, athletics and the competitive success of teams are generally of primary concern. The recruitment of student-athletes is a serious, cut-throat business; athletic teams and individual athletes are often the most well-known representatives and symbols of a Division I university; and regardless of rhetoric that student-athletes are students first and athletes second, practices and competitions frequently take precedence over study time and academic achievement. NCAA Division II programs can be similar to Division I, but in the majority of Division III colleges, athletic success is viewed as secondary to the primary goal of academic achievement. This contrast creates a markedly different athletic atmosphere; therefore, instead of attempting to draw comparisons between Division I and Division III, I focus

on white women who work in Division I programs.

Diversity in regard to geographical location is represented through the inclusion of universities situated in different regions of the country, as well as through the involvement of women who, although working at these universities, grew up in different areas of the country. Racial perceptions often vary from one region to the next in the United States. For this reason, social geography was an important factor in the selection of participants. For example, a woman who grew up during the 1960s in the Midwest more than likely has had different racial experiences than a woman who grew up in a West Coast city during the 1970s. Also of interest are the experiences of women who grew up in one area of the United States, but currently work in regions which have vastly different social climates than that which they experienced in their hometowns.

Due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter (race, racism and sport), I anticipated that the proposition to participate in this study might appear threatening to some white women. Frankenberg (1993) chronicles the difficulty she encountered when initiating similar interviews. Her initial question - "What is white women's relationship to racism?" - was met with silence, suspicion, and hostility by many of her potential interviewees, and perceived as a white supremacist gesture by some. Frankenberg (1993) eventually conducted her study by using a network of friends and colleagues for contacts and by approaching her participants with the following statement of intent:

I'm interested in whether you have had contact with people of racial or cultural groups different from you, and whether you see yourself as belonging to an ethnic or cultural group. (p.35)

Based on Frankenberg's experience and subsequent success, I approached the interviews for my study with a similar strategy. I utilized personal contacts and a network of friends and colleagues in order to locate potential interview participants. The degree of familiarity created by my acquaintance with the participant or the endorsement of a trusted friend or colleague eased participants' concerns and suspicions, gave me access to women who otherwise might not have been approachable, and helped establish trust in the interview process.

Interview Strategy

In order to best explore my participants' experiences and perceptions regarding race, I engaged in semi-structured, personal history interviews with each of them. I employed a dialogical approach to the interviews in order to situate myself within the questions, establish rapport with my participants, and facilitate discussion about the often difficult subjects of race and racism (Frankenberg, 1993). The dialogical nature of the interviews enabled me to understand, rather than merely relate, these women's experiences (Fontana & Frey, 1994) and served to democratize the interview process, thereby preventing me from occupying the position of the authoritative researcher (Frankenberg, 1993).

Before initiating my research project, I participated in a bracketing interview which was conducted by a fellow doctoral student. During this session, I was interviewed with my research questions. This exercise served a few significant purposes. It gave me the opportunity to experience first-hand how well my questions followed one another, and how effectively they addressed the target information of the study. Secondly, I was

able to experience what being on the other side of the microphone, so to speak, feels like during an interview session. As a result, I was better able to relate to my participants and anticipate any difficulties or surprising revelations they might have had during their interviews. For example, at the end of the initial interview, three women commented that they had been very surprised by how many family-related memories came to the surface while discussing race -- an experience which also happened with me during my bracketing interview. Lastly, the bracketing interview also afforded me the opportunity to further explore my racial perceptions and relevant experiences.

I conducted audio taped interviews in a private setting on or near the university campus of each participant. The initial interview focuses on the participant's background history, from childhood through the present. I encouraged the participants to provide as much descriptive narrative as possible in order to best comprehend how they identify themselves and others in terms of race, socio-economic class, gender, and sport experience. The interviews had no pre-set time limit, unless dictated by the participants' schedules. On the average, the initial interview sessions ran from 90 minutes to 120 minutes in length. The interview guide consists of open-ended questions which provided the participants with the opportunity to share personal information and talk freely about their perceptions of race. I did not discourage any digressions or tangents which occurred during the course of an interview, as the memories and expressions brought to mind for these women when presented with the topic of race are just as significant as the historical facts of their lives. While the focus of the interviews is each participant's personal history, I was not interested in producing comprehensive life histories. As Frankenberg

(1993) argues, "an interview is not, in any simple sense, the telling of a life so much as it is an incomplete story angled toward my questions and each woman's ever-changing sense of self..." (p.41).

The purpose of the initial interview was to allow each participant to share her unique life experience. I conducted a second, follow-up interview with each participant in order to fill in any perceived gaps in stories, clarify any unclear details, or further explore the target information of the study (Morse, 1994). I prepared for each second interview by listening to the tape(s) of the initial interview and taking notes for follow-up material. I also used the second interview as an opportunity to share the initial interview audiotape with the participants and verify that my synthesis of the initial interviews accurately reflects each woman's perceptions and experiences. Due to the time-consuming nature of transcribing audiotapes, the considerable cost of traveling to interview locations twice, and the time demands of the participants' schedules, I gave the participants the opportunity to listen to audiotapes of the initial interview session during the follow-up interview, rather than having the participants read a transcribed text of the initial interview at a much later date. This strategy was also intended to provide a more consistent form of data verification, as each participant had the opportunity to evaluate the initial session through the same medium in which it was conducted. It was hoped that each participant would be less likely to attempt to revise her responses if she listened to herself rather than read someone else's transcription of her words. However, each participant declined the offer to listen to her initial interview, citing either her busy schedule or discomfort over hearing her own voice on tape, and claiming that she trusted

my integrity as a researcher. I therefore sought verification through the summary questions with which I started the second interviews. For example, I would ask a participant if my assessment of her family life, childhood neighborhood, and school experience was accurate, and then proceed to ask more specific questions about my summary of her racial perceptions and interactions with individuals of different racial identities. These exchanges served as a validity-check, as they provided an opportunity to make any necessary corrections, and often led to new topics of discussion, or more in-depth conversations about topics and experiences which were mentioned during the initial interview. It is important to note that while the second interview was imperative for purposes of verification, this interview served as more than merely a follow-up session. The second interview with each woman was an opportunity for the further exploration of the participants' experiences, as well as for the probing of any new information shared by the participants. For instance, many of the women interviewed told me they would spend time thinking about a certain point or question that came up during the initial interview, and then bring up that subject again during the second interview. One woman, a couple of hours after the first interview was completed, specifically asked me to inquire about her grandfather during the follow-up session, as she had remembered a relevant incident with him that she wanted to share. Two of the follow-up sessions were relatively short, lasting approximately forty-five minutes, while the other four lasted as long as, or even longer than, the initial interview session.

The formal interviews were audio taped, but I also took observation notes during those sessions. I was mainly interested in recording the participants' facial expressions,

body language, and apparent comfort level during the interviews.

Participant Observation Strategy

I spent approximately five days at each interview site, getting to know my participants and becoming familiar with their work environments and responsibilities. I spent as much time as possible observing these women in order to gain an accurate sense of their professional duties and of how they interact with colleagues and student-athletes. These observations will be noted primarily in Section II, throughout the profiles of each participant. Participant observation enabled me to better comprehend the contextual nature of the interview (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

While this study is centered around formal, semi-structured interviews, I spent some time engaged in participant observation before and/or after the initial interviews with each participant. For example, while observing one administrator, I was able to sit in during a one-on-one meeting she had with a head coach, as well as attend a senior staff meeting at which she was present. I was also able to chat informally with this woman during two separate university athletic events that we both attended. Two sport-specific coaches participated in this study; I spent time observing and talking with them during team practices and formal team meetings. I observed the strength and conditioning coach by hanging out in her staff office and roaming around the weight room and indoor track while she was conducting team work-outs. I was able to briefly observe the athletic trainer who participated in the study in the training room facilities, and then for longer periods of time during two separate practice sessions of the university team she was covering. I spent time observing another woman in the study, a mid-level administrator,

at two athletic events, a staff meeting, and an alumni event she had organized. During these times, I took notes on the participant's behavior, paying particular attention to understanding her daily work routine, plus how she interacts with colleagues and student-athletes, and how those individuals interact with her. Attending team practices and workout sessions provided me with the best opportunity to observe participants' interactions with student-athletes, while staff meetings and casual conversations in office settings were the most accessible means of observing colleague interactions. If I felt that note-taking would be too conspicuous while I was observing a participant, such as during a private or group staff meeting, I just watched and listened intently, made mental notes, and wrote down as much as I could remember as soon as I returned to my base of operations. This base was usually the office or home of my contact person at each university I visited. My furious scribbling in compact spiral notebooks caused one contact person (and good friend) in particular to dub me "Harriet the Spy," after the protagonist of the popular young adult book. I also used the participant observation experience as an opportunity to check for consistency between the participant's interview statements and her actual behavior in the workplace.

My note-taking took two different forms during my time in the field. The first form consisted of a chronicle of events at each site. I kept a daily log throughout my research trips in which I recorded the dates and times of events, interviews, and observations, as well as descriptions of locations and activities during my "free" time in each city (the time I wasn't engaged in interviews or observations). This free time afforded me the opportunity to learn more about each campus I visited, its surrounding

town/city, and the participants and their athletic departments. I was able to collect documents such as media guides, department handbooks, and local newspapers, which became important additions to my fieldnotes. Information from these sources appears in Section II. The second form of my note-taking consisted of a more free-ranging mix of observation notes, interview notes, ideas for follow-up interview questions, and comments made while listening to initial interview tapes. I labeled each section of these notes with relevant information regarding date, time, place, and object of reference.

Data Analysis

Transcript Review

After the interviews were professionally transcribed, I read the transcripts several times in order to immerse myself in the details and gain a sense of each interview as a whole (Sanjek, 1990). A comprehensive review of the transcripts allowed me to identify and categorize the common discursive themes that exist within the participants' responses. I was also able to identify significant variations among the participants, and explore the factors which account for those differences. As suggested by Agar (in Sanjek, 1990), I checked for consistency within each participant's interviews, as well as for variation across participants. I was equally determined to discover what was discussed in the interviews, as well as what was not voiced. The silences in qualitative interviews are often just as revealing as the verbally expressed sentiments.

In order to facilitate an organized and thorough review of the transcripts, I coded discursive topics and subtopics throughout copies of the transcripts. Once the transcripts were coded, I made a master copy of each one, and then cut up the copies and categorized

them into topical groupings. I maintained at least one intact copy of each interview transcript from which to operate so that I would not lose the overall context of each interview after cutting up a transcript. This method enabled me to check interview segments against each other, as well as against the entire transcript of each conversation. Through this process, I produced a roughly indexed system which considerably enhanced the discursive analysis of the interviews (Sanjek, 1990).

Fieldnotes Review

I organized and reviewed my fieldnotes in much the same manner that I analyzed the interview transcripts. I typed up my notes and then classified them according to designated topics. By making copies of each set of fieldnotes, I was able to group notes by both participant and topic. Through this method, I was able to report the behavior of each participant during the interview and within the work environment, as well as present any similarities or variations in behavior across participants.

Reliability

In quantitative scientific work, the reliability of an experiment is of utmost importance, as it is crucial that other researchers are able to replicate an experiment and produce the same results (Sanjek, 1990). In qualitative research, however, reliability in the traditional sense is of little concern. As Sanjek (1990) argues, "We cannot expect and do not hope that another investigator will repeat the fieldwork and confirm the results before they are published" (p.394). Furthermore, it is unrealistic to expect another researcher to have the same insights and experiences in the field (Morse, 1994). The reliability of a qualitative study is found instead in the integrity and ingenuity of the

research design (Sanjek, 1990). Given these guidelines, my study is not verifiable through replication. My study demonstrates reliability insofar as it was conducted with scientific and theoretical rigor.

Validity

Validity is of primary concern in qualitative research. Pelto and Pelto (1978) define validity as “the degree to which scientific observations actually measure or record what they purport to measure” (p.33). The degree to which research depicts what the researcher claims it does is of paramount importance in qualitative work (Sanjek, 1990). I attempted to verify the validity of my research through a variety of methods.

In the process of writing up the findings of my study, I used direct quotations from the women as an integral part of the text in order to provide evidence of any discursive themes. Whenever appropriate, yet (hopefully) without romanticization on my part, the participants speak for themselves and their own experiences within the text. I also document fieldnotes as evidence in order to better illustrate the behavior of each participant during her involvement with the research project. Furthermore, I “publicize” myself as the visible dialogic partner of the participants within the text (Fontana, 1994). I attempted to achieve this end by including samples of interview dialogue within the write-up of my findings which contain my comments and questions, as well as the responses of the participants, rather than just the nicely edited responses of each woman. This technique better contextualizes both myself as researcher/interviewer and each woman as participant/respondent. It also serves to deauthorize the researcher and minimize author bias, with the understanding that the author’s voice and experience is

always in some ways present. Ruth Behar's (1993) ethnographic life history, Translated Woman, provides an excellent example of writing which decenters the researcher as a neutral, all-knowing authority figure. Behar (1993) carries this off by placing herself in the text in order to make visible her thoughts, experiences, and research proceedings. As she explains, "I've tried to keep Esperanza's voice at the center of the text, while also showing my efforts to hear and understand her..." (p.14). Unlike many ethnographers, Behar skillfully interweaves her past and present paths as researcher with the presentation of her subject's life story. I have attempted to chronicle my path as researcher by describing my experiences at each site, including impressions, observations, research plans, interview preparations, and personal interactions. I include this information within the presentation of my participants' histories and the settings in which they currently work. Knowledge of the researcher's path is, according to Sanjek (1990), one of the main tools for assessing the validity of ethnographic research. "Readers," Sanjek (1990) contends, "would be in a much better position to assess ethnographic validity if they had a road map of the ethnographer's path" (p.399).

However, a road map of my research path and direct quotations from the participants' life stories are not adequate indicators of validity in and of themselves. This study can only achieve validity through these strategies *plus* the incorporation of a rigorous critique of interview interpretations. While it is paramount to the study to present the participants' stories accurately and in their own words, this research project is about more than simply telling life histories. This research project exists because of the voluntary participation of six women, but the project is nonetheless guided by a critical

theoretical agenda which, in turn, is influenced by my politics and my personal investment in the topic at hand.

Sharing my transcripts and discourse analyses with an experienced qualitative research group in order to elicit critical feedback regarding my interpretations further contributed to the validity of my findings. My research group consisted of three doctoral students and a university professor, all of whom have experience with qualitative methods and exhibit political commitment to anti-racist work/research.

Significance of the Research

This research serves as a significant critical inquiry into the social construction of whiteness. The objective of this study is twofold: to examine how white women think and feel about race based on their life experiences, and to determine how these thoughts and perceptions affect their daily interactions within the collegiate sport environment. Through interviewing and observing a select group of white women who hold leadership positions in collegiate athletic departments, I was able to gain insight into how concepts of race operate and guide interactions within various athletic contexts. This cultural analysis of whiteness, white privilege, and sport contributes to the “growing need for developing our understanding of how the construction of whiteness varies across lines of class, gender, and sexuality, and how these constructions vary according to the politics of place and region” (Newitz & Wray, 1997, p.4). It is also my hope that this study heightens awareness of sport as a widespread cultural practice in need of critical attention from feminist scholars, cultural studies critics, and race theorists.

The information presented in this study will hopefully further educate the sport

community about race issues and prompt leaders in the field to reevaluate their perception, treatment, and inclusion of athletes and colleagues of color. Racism still plagues intercollegiate athletics, but the knowledge gained from this study could facilitate progress toward greater color consciousness in sport and a stronger commitment to honoring racial and cultural diversity. In order to effect these transformations, it is necessary to first grasp how people think about race (Appiah, 1996). Interviewing white women who work in collegiate athletic departments serves as a means of meeting this initial criterion so that a subsequent attempt to address the larger dynamic of racial constructs is possible.

On an individual level, the participants' involvement in this study resulted in a heightened awareness of racism in sport, a better understanding of their position in the racial order, and a greater consciousness of the experiences which shape(d) their racial beliefs. One of the main purposes of whiteness studies is to hold white people newly accountable for racism and race privilege; it is my goal that this study serves that end by demonstrating how race influences both white women's lives and the pervasive culture of sport.

Section II

Participant Profiles and Field Settings

Introduction

In this section, I present profiles of the participants and descriptions of the research settings. The profiles consist of semi-life histories which include background information regarding each participant's family, hometown, childhood, adolescence, school experience, sport participation, and career choices. This format allows me to present a critical ethnography of each woman's experiences, thereby providing a more comprehensive and coherent depiction of each individual life -- a strategy which I think best reflects the participant-oriented nature of this study. It is also my intent that this strategy gives the reader a strong sense of each woman's personal and professional identity as an individual and in relation to the other participants, before reading about her racial perceptions. I present each woman's racial perceptions, as well as the experiences which shaped her construction of race, in the next section. A critical analysis of the research findings is offered in the remaining sections.

I have chosen to document my experiences with each participant and in each field site within the presentation of the profiles, given that the role of researcher is never a passive, neutral aspect of the ethnographic process. By explicitly interweaving my personal experiences and impressions, I have positioned myself within the research project as the guiding participant, rather than as an outside, objective researcher in order to provide the reader with a further sense of how this study was conducted and of who I am in relation to this project. My study is participant-oriented, but it has nevertheless

been motivated and influenced by my experiential, theoretical, and political biases. The interview sessions, and periods of field observation, are no exception.

A general description of the three field sites precedes the participant profiles. I include only minimal setting information within the profiles in order to better protect the identity of the participants. This format allows me to independently summarize the field sites without directly connecting the women in the study to specific contexts in which they would be more identifiable. Through this measure, I hope I have honored my commitment to confidentiality and the wishes of many of the participants to remain as anonymous as possible.

Field Sites

I conducted research at three separate college campuses in the United States. These universities are located in distinctly different regions of the country -- the Midwest, the South, and the West -- and their athletic departments all consistently enjoy national success in at least one sport. Because of their teams' achievements, these athletic departments receive, to varying degrees, regular attention from regional and national sports media. The following synopses are based upon my observations, the participants' impressions, conversations with my hosts/contact people, and information culled from local sources such as newspapers, media guides, and merchant/community newsletters.

The Midwestern university is the hub of a small town of roughly 65,000 residents. Although this town is situated in a fairly rural area of an agriculturally-identified state, it has a laid-back, progressively liberal atmosphere about it. While perusing the newspaper rack in the town's community co-op (a grocery, deli, bookstore, and health food outlet all

rolled into one), I came across environmentalist newspapers, a newsletter written for and by the homeless, the town's independent alternative newspaper, and various pamphlets for health collectives, martial arts classes, and new age spiritual services (all free). These publications were not only available at the co-op; most downtown stores and restaurants displayed them, too. While the town has a strong non-sport identity, it also intently follows university athletic teams every year. Paraphernalia featuring university colors and the athletic mascot is displayed prominently amidst the aforementioned publications and the typical college-town fare of bookstores, used CD stores, coffeehouses, bars, bead shops, ethnic restaurants, and frozen-yogurt counters. Because of the university, this town probably enjoys more diversity than the rest of the state's towns and cities combined. I had never visited this town before, or even this area of the country, so I was glad I took the time to explore some of the off-campus surroundings.

The sprawling campus sits on a hill overlooking the town. The athletic department is housed in two adjacent buildings which also contain most of the athletic facilities (strength and conditioning center, indoor track, basketball fieldhouse) and the academic support center. Student-athletes spend most of their time either in these facilities or the academic buildings of their classes. Most of the coaching staff offices are situated along one hallway, while administrative offices are a bit more spread out. Thanks to my contact person in this department, I was able to meet a variety of staff members and student-athletes, from a senior administrator to an assistant volleyball coach to an international tennis player. These interactions, combined with the time I spent wandering the town and talking with/observing my participants, helped me develop a

more comprehensive impression of the field site.

The university in the West occupies one segment of an ever-expanding city. Outdoor activities are popular in this area, as the city provides easy access to bike trails, mountains, and bodies of water. The city itself is comprised of many distinct neighborhoods which are characterized by their location, community members, cuisine, and shops. The city practices progressive, community-based politics; according to my host, the inside joke among residents is that if you want to make a change, just get a petition together and the city legislature will form a committee to debate the issue -- an invariably lengthy process. The area surrounding the university contains the usual amenities for college students -- commercial clothing stores (e.g., The Gap, Eddie Bauer), ice cream shops, the ubiquitous coffeehouses, vintage clothing shops, cheap restaurants, and the previously mentioned college-town staples, all in walking distance of campus.

The athletic department facilities are located in one of the furthestmost corners of the campus, and split among three main buildings and a handful of competition sites. Mostly coaches share one building, while the administrative and event management staffs occupy another building. My contact person gave me a guided tour of these facilities, introduced me to a number of staff members, and graciously shared her office space with me during my week-long stay. By the end of the week, I was a familiar sight to many of her colleagues. I had visited this city before, but had never spent much time on campus; therefore, I was glad to be so thoroughly immersed in my field site.

The Southern university is an integral part of community life in the small city in which it is located. The community interest is mainly directed at the university's athletic

teams, which are supported with an enthusiasm bordering on religious zealotry. I was impressed by the depth of the community support this university's athletic department receives. University colors are plastered all over the city, in businesses, on vehicles, and in homes. The commercial street adjacent to the campus is filled with the standard college-town franchise restaurants and officially-licensed apparel stores, plus a fair selection of bars and a few coffeehouses, frequented mainly by professors and graduate students and local bohemians (a distinct minority). Aside from (and even on) this street, I had trouble locating the types of businesses and eateries I have grown accustomed to finding in college towns. To me, this city had the feel of strip mall suburbia, which, in many areas, was only minutes away from outlying rural areas. In fact, my host described the city as suffering from what she termed a "false affluence."

I toured the two athletic department buildings on my own, with my contact person, and with a participant. The department is spread out over two buildings, with most of the coaches in the building that also contains the strength and conditioning facility, athletic training room, and academic support services. Not surprisingly, I found more student-athletes wandering through this building. The majority of the administrative staff occupies offices in the second building, which houses the basketball facilities. Some competition sites are scattered on campus, while others are found at nearby off-campus locations. I was able to converse with a substantial number of staff members and a few student-athletes during my observations of team practices and meetings. These interactions helped me develop a sense of department dynamics and the social climate of the campus and city (conservative, resistant to change, steeped in

tradition).

Despite differences in the surrounding areas of each university, the student body at each institution is predominantly white. However, the Western university also has a significant Asian and Pacific Islander population. The racial diversity of each town or city is more varied. Whites constitute the largest percentage of residents in each place, but the Midwestern town also has a small percentage of blacks and American Indians, and the Western city is populated by substantial percentages of blacks, Asians, and American Indians, plus a distinct European ethnic group. At each university, the majority of blacks on campus are student-athletes, while the majority of student-athletes are white. The staff of each athletic department is predominantly white, and the blacks who are employed are typically found in visible, yet peripheral positions such as assistant coach, equipment manager, academic advisor, or compliance director. The Western city was the largest of the field sites, and as such, displayed the most socio-economic diversity. The other two cities seemed to be primarily middle class, with a smaller gap between the extremes of poverty and wealth.

Participants

Carol

Carol grew up in a large, Irish Catholic family in a suburb of a Midwestern city. She is one of seven children who range in age from their early thirties to mid-forties. Carol has worked in college athletics, in various capacities, for over twenty years. She began her career as an assistant basketball coach and gradually became more and more involved in administrative roles. Currently, Carol is an associate athletic director in a

Division I program.

I met Carol informally while on a tour of the athletic department facilities with my contact person during my first day on campus. Carol's office is located in a building which houses most of the coaching staff offices and the strength and conditioning room. She came out of her inner office to greet me while I was chatting with her administrative assistant, the woman who had arranged my interview and observation appointments with Carol. I had spoken to Carol only briefly over the phone before arriving on campus -- her assistant (and my contact person) handled all my other calls -- so I was glad to have an opportunity to meet Carol in a casual setting before we sat down for our initial audio taped interview. I was struck by Carol's professional and business-like manner, and her forthright communication style. We sat at a small, round table in her office for all of the interview sessions. During our conversations, Carol usually sat slightly forward in her chair with her arms on the table in front of her, or one arm leaning on the edge of her chair. She maintained strong eye contact throughout our interviews, and would tap her fingernails on the table whenever she emphasized a particular point. Our conversations were interrupted only by anticipated phone calls on her private line. She took these calls, spoke briefly, and then returned to the interview. It was difficult to schedule private time with Carol, but once we sat down to talk, I felt like I had her undivided attention.

At forty-four, Carol is the third oldest of her siblings. While growing up, she often found herself in the caretaker role for her family, as her mom suffered from epilepsy and her dad worked long hours and drank excessively. Carol explained, "I sort of became the person in charge of the home." During her childhood, Carol spent time

playing with her siblings (mainly her next youngest brother) and with neighborhood kids. Her best friend through junior high lived across the street, and two of her closest high school friends were also from the neighborhood. According to Carol, "it was a neighborhood where there was a lot of activity. We spent our time in the neighborhood playing and growing up and it was a neighborhood where families interacted with each other."

This neighborhood was also predominantly white, a characteristic which had appealed to Carol's father and had prompted him to move his family away from the city and into the suburbs. Carol remembers:

We moved to the 'burbs when I was about three or four years old. I don't recall ... the home we lived in prior to that, but it was pretty much in downtown [city], and my father certainly wanted to get us out of that environment and out in the boonies a little bit and that is what he did and we had a three-quarters acre lot in a very predominantly white neighborhood.

When I asked what her father meant by "that environment," Carol explained:

He was not comfortable with African Americans, actually is not until today, and downtown [city] had a very diverse population and he was not comfortable as far as believing that was the best environment for his family, so he wanted to move us some place he felt was safer and probably economically more feasible.

Carol's mom shared these sentiments, but most of her extended family remained in the predominantly Irish city neighborhood they had known all of their lives. Irish heritage was (and still is) an integral aspect of family life in Carol's household.

Maria: You mentioned one of the first words to describe yourself and family was Irish Catholic. Was ethnicity important to you or was that a conscious awareness that really permeated?

Carol: Well, the Irish background was very prevalent because actually my grandmother and my grandfather on my dad's side were both born in Ireland and

... on my dad's side were very strong Irish women and we grew up learning about leprechauns and the rainbow and Ireland and all of that, and until this day it is very prominent.... St. Patrick's Day is a big deal and it was growing up. On my mother's side was a very strong religious influence and I used to say my dad used to carry the beer and my mom carried the rosary.... There was a strong influence of both and so I say a basic dysfunctional Irish Catholic family.

Despite the positive aspects of being brought up in an Irish environment, Carol had some negative associations with this heritage. She explains:

unfortunately both my grandmother and grandfather were alcoholics and my dad was a very strong drinker growing up and alcohol had a very negative impact on my life growing up and still to this day and, in that respect, being Irish wasn't fun because there was a clear association with drinking. But the heritage and the stories and the history ... was intoxicating itself.

Interestingly, Carol grew up in the suburbs of a city known for its ethnic diversity, but she had no awareness of that presence.

Maria: Did it [ethnic awareness] permeate into the suburb, just what I know of [city], that it was pretty ethnically defined ...

Carol: I don't recall any of that even in the suburbs growing up that had an influence or a presence at all. Not that I recall.

Carol began participating in sport activities at a young age in her neighborhood.

Her brothers introduced her to various sports (football, basketball, baseball/softball) --

"My sisters were not athletic; my brothers were, and that is how I learned to be athletic, was through them." Carol remembers playing sports mostly with boys, but not being bothered by that social dynamic:

Carol: . . . most of the time I was one of the few girls playing.

Maria: What was that like?

Carol: I don't really remember; now it seems a little bit foreign or strange, but at the time it didn't appear to be. I do remember being one of the best and feeling

that self-esteem of wanting to be picked and [being] one of the fastest.... It didn't appear to be that strange to me at the time and I don't recall conversations about that is not what girls do or being a tomboy. I know they were there, but I don't recall them as I do in remembering that it was fun and that I had some success at it so I enjoyed it.

Although Carol enjoyed playing sports informally, she did not participate in organized athletics until the end of high school. She was a member of the first class to attend a new high school; due to an initial lack of students (there weren't four grades at the school until Carol's senior year), the school was not able to support athletic teams for its first two years of existence. Carol explains:

we didn't have the athletic advantages that others had. We had football, we had boys' basketball, but we had no other activity, so I went through actually my senior year not participating in interscholastic programs, which I am not that old. It is unusual; I mean, certainly there have not been that many opportunities for women as there have been for men or boys and girls, but not to have any opportunity until I was a senior in high school is a bit unusual.

Maria: What was the time frame?

Carol: I graduated from high school in '71 and started my college career in the Fall of '72.

Maria: Okay, so even in junior high there were no opportunities?

Carol: No. Certainly physical education class, but no organized activity. So that need was met through playing with my brothers or whatever. And I got involved in band and cheerleader. I was cheerleader all the way through and that was my outlet because we didn't have opportunities.

Carol is ambivalent about her cheerleading experience. While cheerleading served as a physical outlet in the absence of organized sport opportunities, she struggled with the social perceptions that people often harbor about cheerleaders.

Cheerleading is interesting.... I think it's a very unhealthy outlet for women ... and I struggled with that. I knew I got treated differently because I was a cheerleader

... and my father was very proud of that, you know; that was a good role for a women to have and he enjoyed that.

Carol was uncomfortable with the elite high school status bestowed upon cheerleaders.

Carol's demonstrated ability in physical education classes led to her collegiate athletic career. A teacher suggested that she attend a basketball camp the summer after her junior year, so she registered with money she had earned from a part-time job. Much to her surprise, she was the best player at this camp. As Carol put it:

I knew I had some ability because I was always the best when we played. I knew that, but I didn't get the range of that. I didn't know how I compared to others outside the neighborhood or outside the family.... Then my junior summer [I] got the MVP award and there were 150 kids at this camp.

Her career ambitions altered as a result of this newly realized talent. Instead of staying home and attending business school, Carol took her camp supervisors' suggestion and decided to attend college in order to play basketball and move away from home. Not only did she enjoy athletic success in college (lead scorer and Hall of Fame inductee), but she also went through a personal growth period. "Those five years were probably, I grew in more ways than in any other segment of my life and so I look back on those years very fondly." Notably, Carol first became cognizant of gender inequities in sport while she was in college.

As I got older I realized that the very worst guy on the basketball team had his whole education paid for and I was the very best and it took me until I was thirty years old to pay back my school loans. That became clear to me much later in my life ... and there was some bitterness as a result of that after I realized how unfair that was.

One of Carol's top priorities as an administrator in college athletics has been eliminating gender inequities such as the one she experienced in college. In fact, the camp coach who

encouraged Carol to play college basketball was the first person outside of her family to give her feedback about her sport ability, and Carol often wonders what would have happened if she had been given some organized instruction as a child or an adolescent.

Carol's sense of fairness perhaps developed as a result of her Catholic upbringing and family life. She vividly recalls being forbidden by her father to attend professional baseball games with her brothers.

Maria: Did you have any confrontations [with your father] about being mad that you couldn't go?

Carol: You know, I am sure I did, but ... he [dad] was boss and you didn't exactly have conversations with him a lot.... But I remember being angry about it. It didn't seem fair. You know, when you are brought up Catholic, you ... hope life is fair and if you work hard things will happen to you. Well, that is not the way life is.... And that is the sense that I remember, is that it seemed unfair to me that they would get to go and I would not.

Carol also sensed that the role she was expected to fill within the family was unfair, and that she was treated differently than her siblings.

I remember for as good as I was I had difficulty getting along with my parents, and I never caused any problems and I got good grades and went to school and yet I struggled with my home environment ... probably a sense of unfairness in that I thought I was perfect and my family wanted me to be around more, and once I got into junior high and high school ... I didn't want to be around home anymore. Too many kids, the house was a wreck, too much noise. I wanted to be with my friends and they always wanted me to be around and I remember sensing how unfair that was.... I know my folks were proud of what I was doing in school or band or cheerleader ... yet I still struggled with ... thinking how unfair that is because I am doing everything you want me to do and yet it appears not to be enough.... And I didn't want to be around the drinking, either ... you grow up in fear that your father will get killed drunk driving and your mother is going to have a seizure ... you grow up in that environment and you want to get out of it.

Education and sports were the means through which Carol was able to leave her home environment -- a break which only one other sibling made. Carol earned her Bachelor's

degree, and then went on to complete a Master's degree. She is the only member of her family who possesses an advanced degree and is not a blue-collar worker of some sort.

Carol became the most animated during the interviews when speaking about college athletics and her role as an associate athletic director. In her position, Carol oversees the daily operation of all but two of the twenty-one sports at her university. Carol travels to any post-season competitions in which university teams are involved, and makes one trip every year with the women's basketball team. Although she does not travel to away competitions on a regular basis, she does attempt to make a team road trip with each coach at least once. She also attends team practices and many home athletic events. Her formal one-on-one interactions with student-athletes are, however, infrequent and often for disciplinary reasons.

You know, my job with student-athletes, I usually don't see them on a one-to-one basis unless there's a problem, which is unfortunate.... The interaction may come from a behavior problem, it may come from an academic problem ... Where I also have contact with them is, we do exit interviews for every senior that's finished their eligibility ... that's always at the conclusion, though, of their collegiate experience.

The morning before our first interview, Carol had conducted an exit interview with a female athlete which lasted one hour. Carol enjoyed that interaction, and thought that the athlete did, too. As a disciplinarian, Carol finds it important to develop a continuing relationship with student-athletes who have been sent to see her.

What I always do, you know, if we've got a problem ... I always say 'alright ... you've got to stop in ... once every few weeks and say hello and let me know how things are going' ... I'll name them, 'okay, you're my juvenile delinquent for the month. I want to see you every week' and then they pop their head in and I go, 'okay, how's it going? Are we behaving ourselves?'... Most of the time, they've acted like a knucklehead or something and we've just got to kind of get it

straightened out.

Student-athletes must also see Carol whenever they want to drop a class, whether they are carrying a full courseload or not. In most athletic departments, academic support staff members handle those responsibilities.

By the nature of her position, Carol has a substantial amount of contact with coaching and administrative colleagues. I was able to observe an individual meeting she had with a male head coach which lasted approximately one hour. During this meeting, Carol listened to the coach's concerns about home event management, team travel funds, conference scheduling, recruiting, and an academically ineligible player. Carol made what I considered to be direct, thoughtful responses to each concern, and provided thorough explanations of both her position and the department's on issues the coach raised. I was also granted permission to attend a senior staff meeting as Carol's guest. She introduced me to the staff as a visiting doctoral student at the beginning of the meeting. The staff sat around a long rectangular table, while I observed the proceedings from a chair by the wall. The head athletic director conducted the meeting in a professional manner, and each administrator took turns reporting on events in his/her area of the department. Carol participated in this sequence and added relevant information to reports from other administrators. Much to my surprise, one of Carol's colleagues asked me a question about my university's athletic department. I was also kidded about being a bad luck charm, as an athletic team suffered its worst loss of the season in a game I had observed the previous week.

Carol's professional responsibilities consume a substantial amount of her time

each week, both during the work day and after office hours, but she attempts to balance those demands with her home life. She is the parent of two young boys, and in order to spend more time with them, Carol often brings them to home athletic events with her. She also makes it a point to be with them for the requisite bedtime stories, day care drop-offs, and after-school talks. The juggling is not always easy, though. As Carol states, "Athletics is pretty much my life. I think I have very little discretionary time. I'm either working out, working, or with my family."

BJ

BJ works as an athletic department administrator for a Division I university. She grew up in a small Midwestern town with her parents and two brothers (one older, one considerably younger). I corresponded with BJ through e-mail before arriving on campus in order to schedule preliminary times to meet and to inform her about the intent of my study. We narrowed down possible days for interviews and observations (with the help of my contact person), but did not set specific appointments until we met. I met BJ at the end of my guided department tour, as she occupies an office next door to my contact person's. BJ greeted me as soon as my contact person and I appeared in her doorway, and invited me to enter the office and sit down. Her casual, yet professional manner put me at ease instantly. We arranged times for the first interview session and observation period, and when I asked her if I could bring any food or beverage to our very early interview session two days hence, I discovered that we share an unhealthy addiction to Pepsi (although mine doesn't kick in until much later in the day).

BJ reserved a private conference room for our first interview. We sat at the corner

of one end of a long, rectangular table in comfortable leather chairs that swiveled and partially reclined. Before I began taping, we chatted for approximately fifteen minutes about the previous night's basketball game and halftime show, and about BJ's transition from coaching to administrative work. While she enjoys the role of administrator, she misses the interaction with student-athletes which coaching provided. BJ's posture and body language were relaxed throughout our conversations -- most of the time, she sat back in her chair, loosely crossed one leg over the other, and leaned on the arm of her chair or the back of an empty chair next to her. She maintained consistent eye contact whenever we spoke and took time to thoughtfully answer my questions and share her past experiences. Our subsequent interviews were conducted in the more informal setting of her office. Throughout my visit, BJ was generous with her time, whether it was for an interview session, observation event, or informal conversation.

Sport involvement has been a figural part of BJ's life from an early age. As a result of having an older brother who was seriously involved in sports, and a schoolteacher father, BJ started playing sport when she was a young girl.

The advantage was having a dad that was a P.E. teacher and had a key to the gym.... I can remember being three and four years old, and ... it's snowy and it's Sunday, and mom wants you out of the house and, I mean, we spent forever in the gym.

The athletic skills BJ developed from those afternoons spent in the gym with her father and brother led to early organized sport participation.

I can remember my parents lying so I could play softball and tellin' people I was six, and I was only five. I mean, I was playing competitive softball at five. I swam my first swim meet probably when I was six. I was running track certainly around that age as well. I was a pretty full-fledged athlete by the age of eight.

Although there were not a lot of kids in BJ's neighborhood, she did play with some boys who lived a few blocks away. Her older brother was a significant playmate, and somewhat of an inspiration as well.

I was very competitive with my older brother. I mean ... anything he could do, I was gonna prove I could do better. I could never venture to guess how many hours we spent in the driveway playing basketball, whiffle ball in the backyard....

In her own words, BJ was a "definite tomboy," and grew up (she was born in 1958) during a time when "bein' a girl and bein' an athlete was not always the most socially acceptable thing." She credits her older brother's athletic success for indirectly helping her find a niche as a female athlete, something that otherwise might not have been possible -- "it was a good thing for me 'cause it probably created opportunities for me being his little sister."

Sports both defined family life in BJ's household, and served as a means of introduction in many of her friendships. BJ explained:

Our whole lives just revolved around whatever sport we were into ... if my older brother was participating in something, you know, we all had our part, and we all went.

BJ's parents attended her athletic events, but her brother often did not because of time conflicts with his own competitions. Regarding acquaintances, BJ met many of her friends through some sort of sport participation, but did not see herself as belonging to just one social group while in school.

BJ: I went through this syndrome, I was always pretty popular with the boys 'cause I could throw a football as far as they could.... I went through that stage. But ... I always had a lot of boys that were friends and girls that were friends.

Maria: So popularity with boys was linked to your sport ability?

BJ: Not necessarily, you know, it was always a good introduction. But I ... don't think that was really the whole thing.... Sports was sometimes a common way, but it was certainly not, it was just friends, just like you're friends with anybody.... Sports, a lot of time, was the introduction. Although I had friends that ... I played with in the band or ... whatever.

Maria: [Did] sports come up with your friendships with girls at all?

BJ: Yeah. Yeah ... a lot of my friends that were girls were also involved in sports. And probably, you know, my better friends were probably ... involved in sports as well as I was. But I was a kid who, you know, I was pretty well-accepted in all the cliques. I didn't really belong to one clique, and I teamed along pretty well with everybody.... I was pretty independent.... I mean, I really did have a lot of friends ... but I wasn't necessarily in the "in" group, but I wasn't in the "nerd" group.... I just, you know, kinda bounced around from -- I never really stayed in a group.... I really didn't care that much.

Sports and band were BJ's two main extracurricular activities in school. She broke with traditional gender stereotypes not only because she was an athlete, but also because she was one of only two or three girls who played the trombone. Her best friend throughout most of junior high and high school was a fellow female trombonist who was one of the few black students at BJ's high school. In fact, she lived with this friend's family for lengthy periods of time during high school, in order to escape problems she was experiencing at home with her parents. BJ did not discuss the specifics of these problems other than to attribute them to her independent nature.

BJ attended segregated schools until she entered high school. Before that time, the town had five or six white elementary schools and one black elementary school which fed into segregated high schools. Eventually, the town closed the black schools, restructured the first- through seventh-grade schools, and integrated the white high school. Consequently, BJ attended a racially mixed, but predominantly white high

school. Her town was also geographically segregated.

BJ: It's a town that definitely, you know, there was a place where ... about eighty percent of the black people lived, and ... where the white people lived....

Maria: What were those places?

BJ: I mean, you know, the black people lived on one side of town -- and the other for the white people. There was not a lot of other, what I would say, ethnic groups.... I mean, you were pretty much, there wasn't a lot of Asian population or Mexican or anything.

BJ spent a considerable amount of time on the "black side" of town whenever she was living with her best friend's family. In regard to socio-economic class, she defined the town as predominantly middle class. She did not perceive a tremendous amount of poverty among residents, and recalled that upper class residents tended to live in housing areas located on the outskirts of town.

Despite her sport involvement and high level of athletic ability, BJ did not consider playing at the collegiate level until late in high school. She explained:

At the time growing up, in elementary [school] and younger, there wasn't even high school sports -- so it wasn't like you would watch the girls' high school team play. They kind of started as I was coming into it. And then through high school until maybe my junior or senior year, I never even really thought anything about college.... When I first went to college, you know, there was not full scholarships yet ... it was never -- the opportunities just weren't there that you dreamed about that, you know, kids have today.

Basketball was BJ's strongest sport, but she also played softball and ran track in high school and college. The only formal athletic instruction BJ received prior to college was from various swim coaches, but, despite being an accomplished swimmer, she did not pursue that sport after high school. BJ grew up aware of her athletic ability, yet did not have a sense of how this ability compared to national, or even regional, standards until

she began competing in college.

BJ enjoyed consistent support for her sport participation from her parents, until halfway through high school when her mom expressed misgivings.

My mom wavered, you know, about the time I got to be ... a sophomore or so in high school. We started in the battle -- she wanted a cheerleader, and, at that time point, it just wasn't gonna happen. We had those battles.... I think there was probably, looking back, there was probably a lot of talk about, you know, 'what a tomboy you have' ... and I think it probably hit my mom harder.... I don't think -- I never noticed. I mean, I didn't care.... I was back in my little independence state.

BJ was caught between a mother who was viewed social acceptance for her daughter in terms of cheerleading, and a group of parents who were using BJ as a "cause" in the push for girls' athletic opportunities. BJ was uncomfortable in the role of being a cause, but she nonetheless continued her sport participation.

After a stellar collegiate basketball career, BJ landed an assistant coaching position on the West Coast. In this respect, she differed from most of her high school classmates, who found work within a small radius of their hometown and settled down to raise families. BJ coached at the Division I level for over a decade before assuming her current administrative position. BJ's main professional responsibilities are overseeing the daily operations and special events of two of the higher profile teams in the athletic department. BJ has a unique position because, in her words:

I'm an administrator, so people think I have enough authority to accomplish things, but yet I'm not so high up that I still don't have a relationship with the team or the players or the coaches....

I was able to gain a sense of BJ's work routine by observing her during three athletic events and a staff meeting. Among other duties, BJ works at the official scorer's table

during home basketball games and manages home and visiting team accommodations. BJ also organizes alumni events, a task which occupied her throughout the weekend of my campus visit. I watched three basketball games which she worked from a vantage point directly behind the scorer's table. BJ managed the event in an efficient, professional manner, and appeared to be well-respected by the event security staff. Before the start of one basketball game, a security guard asked for my staff credentials; when I told him I did not possess any, but was a guest of BJ's, he immediately apologized and told me that as long as I had BJ's approval, I was permitted to be anywhere.

BJ played a minimal role in the staff meeting which I attended with her. When it was her turn to speak, she quietly reported on events in her areas of supervision, and then yielded the floor to another colleague. Although I had observed BJ on four separate occasions which she thought provided a fairly accurate picture of what she does professionally, she expressed concern that I had not been in a position to observe her interact with student-athletes. I was at least able to observe her interacting with a group of twenty-five alumni basketball players. She made it a point to greet each alumnae individually whether she knew her or not, and seemed to enjoy the opportunity to be somewhat of a coach again. While BJ enjoys working in college athletics, she is interested in returning to school for a Master's degree in hopes of adding to her qualifications for upper level administrative positions in amateur or professional athletics. Because college athletics is still, as she said, in her blood, BJ would consider accepting a Division II or III position which could allow her to serve as both a head coach and an administrator. Such a position would enable her to play an organizational role in the

daily functioning of an athletic department while also working with student-athletes again.

Alice

Alice is the head coach of a Division I softball team. Due to the demands of her father's job with an oil company, her family moved frequently while she and her older sister were children. They lived in the Northeast and the South before settling in the Midwest when Alice was twelve years old. While Alice has many memories of moving to and living in the South, it is the Midwestern town which she considers home.

I spoke with Alice twice over the phone before visiting her campus -- once to inform her about my study and make preliminary interview appointments, and a second time in order to confirm those arrangements. Despite being well into her team's competitive season, Alice generously set aside time for our interview sessions. This time was slightly compromised, however, as one of Alice's athletes suffered an injury which necessitated a trip to see an orthopaedic specialist in a nearby city. Alice accompanied her player to the doctor's office, and, as a result, what was to be a late morning interview became an early evening interview. Although she had been through an exhausting day that came on the heels of a long road trip, Alice graciously engaged with my questions and conversed with me for almost two hours. We conducted both interviews (the second one began as scheduled) in her office with me seated comfortably at the end of a couch and Alice in a chair pulled up to face the side of the couch. She seemed at ease during our interview sessions, as she maintained consistent eye contact and sat in a relaxed position with one leg crossed over the other. While talking, Alice would lean backward

or forward in her chair in order to emphasize a point that she was making. In addition to her thoughtful responses and willingness to think of specific examples, Alice seemed to be an exceptional listener. In all of Alice's personal interactions, I observed her to be forthright, professional, and outgoing.

Alice's family lived in a suburb of a Southern city for five years before moving to the Midwest. Despite her young age at the time, Alice remembers feeling a sense of culture shock after moving to the South from a Northeastern state.

Yeah, there was a lot of culture shock when we went down there. I still remember saying to my mom, not understanding what 'y'all' meant and a few other things, what grits were; you know, we were called 'damn Yankees' for a long time ... it was a different atmosphere growing up in the South. Sometimes I wasn't sure whether the North won the Civil War or whether the South won the Civil War.

Alice and her family adjusted to this cultural shift, and she subsequently began to develop an avid interest in history, particularly of the Civil War era, which has remained with her.

She explained:

My dad was a kind of Civil War buff, and so we used to go visit Civil War museums and that kind of stuff, but I was fascinated with the issue of slavery. I didn't understand how somebody could enslave another human being, and why the South fought it so hard, and all those issues.... [I] got engrossed with the Civil War during ... college ... probably thanks to my dad's influence.

As an adult, Alice enjoys reading historical novels and biographies, and lists historically-based movies such as "Dances with Wolves" among her favorites. Attending junior high and high school in a heavily-populated American Indian area of the Midwest broadened Alice's historical interests.

Alice described the neighborhood that her parents moved to in the Midwest as "very white, very much middle class." Her parents bought their house because of its

prime location; it was within short walking distance of the church, the schools, the park, and the grocery store. Alice was initially disappointed with the neighborhood because only a few kids lived nearby. Once school started that first year, however, Alice and her sister quickly became engrossed in interscholastic sports, and no longer had time to play in the neighborhood. Alice had begun playing sports while her family was still living in the South, initially because her sister expressed an interest in basketball.

My sister came back, well, she being 6'4" ... she used to play in the band and the basketball coach saw her one day in junior high and said 'why don't you try out for the basketball team.' So she came home one day and said, 'I want to try out, I want to go play basketball.' And that's all my dad needed to hear; 'okay, you want to do it, let's go do it.' And then, of course, I said I wanted to, so my sister and I were involved in, like, small league basketball and softball. I was involved in softball; my sister didn't play softball.

Alice's first experience with organized sports came at the community league level. Her dad was her first instructor, but was initially leery of grooming his daughters to be athletes.

Maria: Was your dad a big encourager once you expressed an interest?

Alice: Yes. He got excited about it, but for some reason ... when he had two girls, he wanted them to be girls, and he didn't think he wanted them to be athletes, because in his mind ...

Maria: There was no way to be the two?

Alice: Yeah. But once we got involved in it he thought it was awesome, and he totally gave wholeheartedly to both of us and supported us in everything we did once we shared an interest. He wasn't going to tell us 'no.'

Her dad served as an assistant coach for two of Alice's summer softball teams, an involvement she both loved and hated.

He was willing to do whatever. You know, I started pitching, and he was great

about not saying 'let's go, let's go pitch,' everyday. He'd usually wait for me to say 'Dad, can you go catch with me?' And he was great about that, because I was really bad when I first started.... He was actually a very good coach in a lot of ways, but little things would drive me nuts. Like, he was horrible with names and he'd get people mixed up, and I used to get so embarrassed.

Alice's mom was also supportive of her daughters' sport involvement, often serving as team manager and attending competitions. Her parents continue to travel in order to lend support to Alice's university team. Soon after moving to the Midwest, sport became a year-round activity for Alice. She competed in scholastic sports during the academic year, and played with elite traveling Amateur Softball Association (ASA) teams during the summer.

Alice attended a small, predominantly white junior high and high school. She met most of her friends through school and/or sports.

Probably my closest friends were people that also were student-athletes at the time ... most all the friends, I would say, are people that I played some type of sport with.

Athletes comprised a distinct social group at Alice's high school, but she easily traversed social borders.

There was the athlete group and then there was kind of the cool non-athlete group, and then ... the hoods as we called them; then there was the geeks over here, and you how stereotypes in high school go ... but it was kind of funny because I was one of those people that actually, I wasn't just stuck in this athlete, cool athlete group, or whatever. I was one of those people that actually got along with everyone ... that could kind of float within almost any group and be comfortable and be accepted and be okay.

While she had the ability to get along with everyone, all of her friends in school were white. Alice commented that her class had a very strong group of female athletes, and she counted four women from this group as her closest friends. These women were all

“very good athletes and all very strong people” who proceeded to play collegiate sports and enter professions such as law and medicine.

Alice excelled in academics as well as athletics while in school. In her words, life in high school “was pretty much school, athletics, studying,” most likely because of her strict upbringing.

Maria: You mentioned that you were sheltered by your parents. In what ways?

Alice: Very strict with studying at home. They were strict with not being allowed to go out. Restricted in what you’re allowed to watch on television, where you’re allowed to go, what movies you’re allowed to see. Very Christian, very strong Christian family, atmosphere.... Not totally overbearing, domineering parents, but they were strict.

Alice graduated from high school with a 3.9 GPA before heading to college on a softball scholarship in another Midwestern state. Upon the completion of an illustrious playing career during which she earned All-America honors and set two university softball records, Alice entered the collegiate coaching ranks. She has spent twelve years as either an assistant or head softball coach at the NCAA Division I level. Her teams have enjoyed considerable success, but being a coach means more to Alice than just serving as a recruiter and a strategist.

I think every team is a reflection of their coach, period. I think how you treat, how your players see you treat people in general, is how they will end up treating people in general.... Like, for instance, this weekend I had a waitress come up and tell me that was the best group of young people she’d ever served, and you know, that makes you feel good as a coach.... So you try to be as cordial as you can, and I think the kids see that. They know how my staff tries to treat people and does treat people. And I think their behavior would be different if they saw us different[ly].

I observed Alice conduct an indoor softball practice while I was on campus. She was

interactive and personable with her players, taking the time to talk with each one individually and to greet each player who arrived late because of a class. During drills, any criticism or instruction Alice offered a player was constructively and positively focused on technique improvement. Because some players were absent, Alice participated in most of the practice activities, working just as hard as, if not harder than her players did. She was professional, knowledgeable, highly skilled, and especially adept at conveying her knowledge of the sport to her players. Alice was also respectful of her student-athletes' off-the-field lives. The day I observed practice, she excused everyone early so that one of her players could attend a relative's funeral without having to conspicuously leave a team meeting. This courteousness extended to Alice's staff as well. When we finished our initial interview, Alice realized that her assistant coaches were still working in the office next door. She immediately opened their door and insisted that they go home in order to relax. In fact, she was also courteous to me, an unfamiliar interviewer. I previously noted Alice's generosity with her time; she also expressed a sincere interest in reading the final copy of this dissertation, and urged me to contact her without hesitation if I thought of any additional questions for her.

KJ

KJ works as a strength and conditioning coach in a Division I athletic department. She was born and raised in a Southwestern state known for its cultural convergence of food, language, music, and ethnic heritage. When she was six years old, her family moved south within the same state, from a suburb to a rural area, where her parents continue to live.

I had been acquainted with KJ while we were in graduate school together, a familiarity which I think enhanced our researcher/participant relationship. Our collaboration was also aided by KJ's interest in the study's topic. I initially shared my dissertation idea with her a year before I conducted the first interviews. She immediately offered to participate, and, in our occasional e-mail correspondences, would always inquire about the progression of my work. We arranged specific interview dates through e-mail, and then over the phone as my planned research trip grew closer. KJ hospitably extended an invitation to stay with her and her boyfriend, which I gladly accepted. We went out for Chinese food and a few games of pool the night I arrived in town, and, after sleeping in the next morning, KJ and I headed to a nearby city for an afternoon of sightseeing. During my first morning on campus, KJ gave me a tour of the athletic department facilities before I settled in the weight room to observe her conduct a team work-out. While we were on our tour, KJ introduced me to the colleagues and student-athletes we encountered, and provided me with background information about administrators, coaches, and department politics. KJ's outgoing courteousness was apparent in all of her interactions, as was her concern for and familiarity with the student-athletes with whom she worked.

KJ, 27, does not possess many memories from her early childhood, so most of the experiences she related occurred after her family moved south. She did, however, recall often being the center of attention as a little girl, mainly because of her freckles and red hair.

So I guess, they tell me that when I was little, that I would always attract people.

The people would always come up to me and, 'Oh, how cute your are.' and ... they said I didn't know any strangers.

Much of this attention also came from her father's position in the community.

I was used to getting a lot of attention. My dad was the executive vice-president of a big bank there so when we went to the bank everybody just, I mean, I was like a little Shirley Temple girl. I mean, my mom ... she would, like, curl my hair. I had long red hair and she would do it in ringlets, and I was always dressed in these cute little dresses with lace and cute little matching panty things underneath, and just your stereotypical little girl.

The adult KJ is far removed from the "girly" Barbie Doll-loving, Shirley Temple clone of her youth.

The first neighborhood KJ's family lived in was predominantly white, but the town they relocated to was closer to the Mexican border, and therefore had a large Mexican American population. KJ did not remember more than a dozen black people living in the town. Most of their neighbors were older white people, but KJ was able to interact with kids her age at the school playground across the street.

We were right there at the school, so there were always people, there were kids close by but not immediately close by. So I always had a place to play. I always had the playground equipment ... so I was always playing with whoever was there.

When she wasn't on the playground or in school, KJ and her family were frequently at church.

Church was probably a pretty influential thing because we were there all the time. We were always at church, and it was a very white church. I don't remember any Mexicans at all ever being there.

KJ recalled eagerly anticipating the quad-annual meetings her congregation held with the Mexican church in town. She thought the sound of Spanish singing and praying was beautiful, and was fascinated by the language because she couldn't understand it. She

would unsuccessfully try to persuade her parents to speak Spanish to her, as they knew some words and phrases. KJ perceived that their reluctance may have stemmed from growing up as white minorities among Mexicans in South Texas. When I asked KJ why her family moved south, she explained:

I guess my dad was tired of living in a big city. [City] is not a big city, but it was becoming a lot bigger, and I guess they [my parents] wanted to, they were both from smaller towns and I guess they wanted to move to a smaller town, so this job came up in [town], and so he went and interviewed and came back and took us to go check it out.

KJ's first memory of her life in that town involves attending school.

KJ: I remember going to school ... we didn't start school there at the beginning of the [school] year. It was probably in the fall.... And I remember the first day I went to school it was picture day. And, like, my mom didn't know it was picture day and so that picture of me is the only picture that we have where my hair is not perfect....

Maria: She didn't have time to do your ringlets?

KJ: Right.... So she just had it pulled over to the side with a ponytail, but I just had this little homely shirt on and my hair was all raggedy, like it is right now, and it was just kind of pulled over with a barrette, and I look adorable. I love that picture of myself because it looks like me. It doesn't look like I'm a Barbie Doll.

KJ attended schools in the town's only school district, which was comprised of four separate school buildings located within the same block. Her teachers were predominantly white women, while the student body was "about half Mexican and half white." She did not perceive many socio-economic differences among her classmates, except for an extremely wealthy white friend and a poor Mexican friend, until junior high.

Probably around junior high I became a lot more aware of the poor, not only Mexican, but poor white people, too, because the poor kids didn't get to play

sports. And I didn't really know why, but one reason was because the school didn't supply our shoes for us. We had to buy our own shoes, so there were probably some kids that couldn't afford to buy shoes.

KJ's sport involvement began on the summer softball diamond sometime around fourth or fifth grade. For KJ, softball was just an activity to fill time during the summer - she was more excited about the end-of-the-season team swimming party than anything else. She has much more vivid and fond memories of playing basketball and golf throughout junior high and high school, and of physical education class activities like dodge ball. KJ started playing golf in the fifth grade, because her older brother had started golfing that same year. Their father played golf in college, so he was excited about sharing the sport with his children. KJ explained:

I really liked golf because it was something I guess I was pretty good at.... I think I was just as good as my brother ... when we first started out, and so that was a lot of fun. I could hit the ball pretty far.... In the seventh grade, I played in tournaments ... and I won a few tournaments, and so of course I really liked it.

KJ was also a successful scholastic basketball player. She received encouragement to participate in sports primarily from her father and brother.

My brother liked it that I was good at golf so he would encourage me. He would be like, 'hey, let's go play,' especially in junior high ... and we would play basketball together, too, because we had a basketball court, not a court but a goal, in our driveway, so we would shoot baskets. My dad would even go out and shoot baskets with us sometimes. When I got into like eighth and ninth grade, my dad would encourage me to practice my free-throws, and he was like, 'try to make ten in a row.' He wasn't ever domineering. He wasn't like, 'don't come in until you've made ten in a row,' but he was like, 'you should try to make ten in a row.' So I remember trying to.

KJ had considered playing collegiate basketball, but a knee injury suffered during her senior year of high school prevented that possibility. She played golf throughout high

school, an activity which consumed a substantial amount of her time.

I would be at the golf course in the spring, once basketball season was over ... I would be at the golf course from 2:30 to dark (6:30 or 7:00) and then I'd come home and eat dinner and do homework. So it was like a part-time job or something.

With the exception of chemistry, KJ was an excellent student. Academic success, however, required less effort than her athletic endeavors. In her own words, "I was a perfect straight 'A' student. I didn't really put that much effort into it, grades just came easy for me." Because KJ's school district was not wealthy, she and her classmates often were responsible for providing their own school supplies -- something that was unfamiliar to me.

KJ: We, in our biology classes, we had to go find our own animals to dissect.

Maria: You're kidding.

KJ: Uh-uh. They didn't provide frogs or anything, so we would go frog-hunting at night. Our teacher showed us how to do it and we would go out and do it. And if somebody killed a snake or something, they'd bring it in and we'd lay it out on a little Styrofoam tray ... and we'd pin it down and cut it open. I remember doing that several times. I remember pinning it down with the snake still moving. That was fun.

KJ's devilish side also found light in chemistry class:

We had a fish tank and the teacher kept wondering why the fish kept dying. She didn't know I was dropping potassium in it, or hydrochloric acid ... when we would do labs. I'd wonder, 'would this kill the fish?' and I'd go over and drop some of it in the water.

In addition to academics and sports, KJ maintained a social life during high school. She had two distinct groups of friends -- one from church, and the other from classes at school. Although she socialized with both groups, they did not mingle at all.

She got along with her basketball teammates, but did not consider them friends because “they were a kind of different crowd than the crowd I went to church with.... I never really felt out of place, but I never really felt like they totally accepted me.” One friend whom KJ consistently mentioned was a Mexican girl she met in 4-H club during fourth grade and took classes with in high school.

After her knee injury, KJ did not intend to play sports in college, but when she arrived on campus, some of the golfers she knew persuaded her to try out for the golf team as a walk-on (a player not on an athletic scholarship).

I did [play golf] the first year, and I had a great time. I got to play free golf.... But during the winter of that year, by the time it got too cold to play, it was time to go to the weight room ... and I fell in love with the weight room, so I started volunteering because they had student assistants there ... I fell in love with it and so I stayed in there and I stayed working in there, and that’s how I started.

KJ earned a full scholarship to work in the weight room for the remainder of her time in college. Working on the strength and conditioning staff provided her with the opportunity to interact with a more racially diverse group of people than she had while growing up in her small, rural town. KJ’s experience on the strength and conditioning staffs of her college and graduate school led to her current full-time position.

KJ is the only female member of her department’s strength staff, a familiar position for her, given the male-dominated nature of her profession. She enjoys the athlete-oriented aspect of her job, and attempts to establish a rapport with each student-athlete she trains. She explained:

A lot of times I’m the liaison. They come to me and they’re like ... ‘Coach did this and this and this, what do you think I should do?’... I have to say, ‘Well, I think maybe you two should talk some things out.’... So sometimes I feel like I’m

a sports psychologist of some sort, you know?

KJ also talks regularly with student-athletes about their relationships with their parents, or boyfriends/girlfriends, or about their struggles with homesickness. While I observed KJ at work, I noted that she maintained interactive relationships with student-athletes. At the beginning of one workout session, she inquired about one athlete's health (she had been battling the flu), asked another athlete about her classes, and complimented one athlete for the particularly strong game she had played in the previous weekend's home competition. KJ had faxed the women's tennis team a message of encouragement while they were on the road over the weekend, and many of the players stopped by to thank her for it and to tell her about their performances. KJ conducted her team workout sessions in an engaging, professional, and efficient manner. She instructed student-athletes on the proper form and technique for lifts and drills, and did not hesitate to compliment their effort or to correct their technique if necessary. She appeared confident in her ability and knowledge, in command of her work-out sessions, and, overall, professionally skilled. KJ also maintains a solid rapport with the coaching staff. She works closely with coaches in order to devise the best team work-out plans possible, and updates coaches on a regular basis regarding their student-athletes' progress.

Our interview sessions felt more like relaxed conversations than formal interviews. We conducted the initial interview in a private room in the academic services center while seated across from each other at a large round table. KJ comfortably leaned forward or backward in her chair while talking, and maintained consistent eye contact during my questions and her thoughtful responses. We conducted the second interview

over breakfast at KJ's kitchen table, in order to save time that would have been spent searching for another private space on campus.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth is an athletic trainer at a Division I university. She grew up with her parents and two siblings (one brother, one sister) in a suburb of a large Midwestern city. I did not realize what a feat it was to have scheduled interview time with her until I arrived at her training room office and three of her colleagues commented on how miraculous it was to remove Elizabeth from work for two hours. Their remarks worried me slightly, but Elizabeth graciously gave me her undivided attention for the duration of our interview sessions, despite her demanding schedule. We conducted our interviews in an empty locker room in one of the athletic buildings on campus. Before retiring to the locker room, Elizabeth made certain that her colleagues knew where to find her in case an emergency occurred at any of the team practices that were in session. She also wore a pager and carried a cellular phone with her at all times to increase her accessibility. I had the sense that Elizabeth is particularly adept at concurrently managing multiple tasks, and to say that she has a strong work ethic and a genuine concern for the student-athletes would be a gross understatement. Elizabeth's body language indicated that she was comfortable -- she would slightly slouch in her chair, or put her feet up on a nearby stool -- and maintained strong eye contact during our conversations. When her eyes began to water due to the physical exhaustion of a long work week, I felt especially appreciative of her willingness to participate in this study (and a bit guilty for monopolizing her time).

Elizabeth grew up in what she termed an urban suburb. Her family lived in an

apartment building in a racially homogeneous white neighborhood. Her siblings were her primary playmates as a young child, in addition to Alex, a Cuban boy who lived upstairs from her family. Once she entered school, she befriended kids who lived in the small houses of the surrounding areas. She spent many after-school hours playing with those friends.

Maria: As far as playing, hanging out after school, did you do a lot of that?

Elizabeth: Yeah. In fact, my mom had to yell at us to come in for dinner and things like that. I did a lot of activities after school, even in junior high. I played a lot of, kids would get together and play softball games, play 'Johnny come over,' 'Red Rover,' whatever, kickball games, 'Four Square,' all through elementary school, a lot of after school activity.

Elizabeth attended a wealthy school district which had exceptional facilities and supplies, and offered a broad range of extra-curricular activities. She took advantage of many of the sport-related opportunities in junior high and high school.

In junior high, I got into even the organized sports -- basketball, running club, intramurals was big at my junior high. They had everything, all year round.

Elizabeth's sport involvement began in the neighborhood, where her father and her neighbor were her primary teachers.

Really it was Alex, he was the one. My dad took me out a lot, too, but Alex, really. I mean, day in and day out, I was a little tomboy and we just, lots of tossing, just playing catch and throwing a football and running patterns. And throwing snowballs ... or getting the skateboards out ... so just a lot of activity with him in the neighborhood situation.

Elizabeth also credits her school's comprehensive physical education program for building her athletic skills. In high school, she played basketball and softball, and ran track. Her parents were supportive of her sport activities, but not fanatical.

They weren't the fanatic parents that came to every practice or came to even every game. But they never stopped us [kids] from playing ... they were very supportive. Never encouraged us to be, 'you have to practice all the time,' and that sort of thing, but never said we couldn't go out for anything. Just one hundred percent supportive.

Elizabeth's parents also strongly encouraged academic success and social awareness. Her dad was a social studies teacher, so she grew up with an appreciation of history and an understanding of other cultures. Elizabeth also had an unusually high awareness of current events, due to her father's affinity for news telecasts.

Maria: News was big in your family?

Elizabeth: Oh, all day long. As soon as dad got home from work, the news was on until there was no more news to be on.... Which is why I think it helped us become more so aware of stuff out there.

Elizabeth developed a concern for social justice issues from both of her parents.

My mother was huge into women's rights when I was growing up, a big member of the [fight for the] Equal Rights Amendment, a big pusher of that. A big member of the League of Women Voters. So she was huge for women's rights. My dad was huge for women's rights without being very outspoken about it, but just very supportive. Very big on, it's okay for inter-racial marriages, it's okay for inter-religious marriages.... You know, just stressing to us all the time that people are equal ... things of that nature.

While in school, Elizabeth obtained her closest friends through sports, because of "all the teamwork stuff and the bonding that you get, and the hours that you spend with each other." It was through sports that Elizabeth also realized her career ambition of athletic training.

I knew I liked athletics. I knew I wasn't good enough to go very far in athletics, and I found that I was better in the science area of studies. And my best friend had a blood blister on her foot, playing basketball. And our athletic trainer at the high school ... didn't handle the blood blister appropriately, and she ended up with blood poisoning, laid up in bed for two weeks ... and so I said there's got to be

another way ... so that's what I want to do. It would keep me in athletics and still was medical enough for me.

Elizabeth worked as an athletic trainer throughout college and graduate school. Along the way, she often had to fight to prove her ability as a woman in a male-dominated profession -- a battle which has led her to a more compassionate understanding of other minorities' struggles against discrimination.

I think getting into my profession really taught me, I think especially more as a female, and saying, look, give me a chance. A human body is a human body, whether it's a male, female, white, black, it doesn't matter. Give me a chance to work on a human body, because I was trying to push the envelope on a predominantly male profession, so I was trying to prove that I could work with either gender, it didn't matter what color and please don't discriminate against me because I should only be working with females ... or not being allowed in the locker [room] because of a gender issue.... I was the only female working with football at [my college].... Well, why can't I work with football? A human body is a human body.

As a professional, Elizabeth enjoys seeing increasingly more female colleagues at conferences and other universities. She also takes great pride in preparing young athletic trainers, male or female, to enter the profession. Regarding the student-athletes with whom she works, Elizabeth considers personal relationships with them to be an integral factor in her effectiveness as an athletic trainer.

The freshman year's the hardest, because you don't really know them. But you get to know them very quickly.... I'm their first contact.... I'm the one they meet first in their physical. I'm the one they meet in all their paperwork. So I'm the exposure right away, so it comes fairly quickly and if they've got any sort of outgoing personality, then we've learned who and what we are really quick. You know, what buttons to push or not push ... do they respond to sarcasm, do they respond to joking, do they respond to just leave them alone. Do you have to explain yourself all the time. Can you just tell them to do it.

Elizabeth firmly believes that personality and humor are crucial elements in the injury

rehabilitation process for student-athletes.

There's a lot of humor and I do joke around a lot, but the joking is, I think, more professional than non-professional.... A lot of the healing power I think I have comes through humor. And it isn't, 'Oh, did you hear this joke?' It's just getting down to their level and joking around. Being one of them. I think they consider me more one of them as opposed to staff. Yet when it comes time for [a] staff decision, they don't question me on it.... I feel like a lot of times their mom away from home.

As an athletic trainer, Elizabeth is primarily responsible for the prevention and care of injuries among the student-athletic body at her university. I observed her working directly with student-athletes during two team practices. Both practice sessions followed a similar routine. Before the practices began, she taped and wrapped many of the athletes in order to protect and/or stabilize their various injuries and chronic conditions. Elizabeth spent the beginning of the practices conducting rehabilitation drills with some of the more severely injured players. She was extremely active throughout the practice sessions, and displayed a hands-on approach to all aspects of her job. Elizabeth spoke with coaches, department colleagues, and student-athletes occasionally during the practices, and seemed to enjoy a strong rapport with all of them. At the conclusion of the practices, she immediately headed to the team's locker room in order to check on the physical condition of the athletes and to compliment their efforts for the day.

Hilary

At twenty-five, Hilary is the youngest participant in this study. She is an assistant coach for an NCAA Division I women's soccer team. Her father's military career caused her family to move frequently during her childhood. Hilary was born in the Western U.S., lived in an East Coast suburb for five years, and spent three years in Central Europe

before her family moved back to the States and settled outside a major East Coast city.

A missed wake up call made me considerably late for my initial interview with Hilary. After getting dressed in record time and fulfilling my promise to pick up breakfast bagels, I arrived on campus to find Hilary patiently waiting for me with some much-needed caffeine. We settled into a private conference room in an academic building across the street from the athletic department offices. Before beginning the interview, we chatted briefly about the topic of this study, my use of personal contacts to find participants, and Hilary's soccer team. As an assistant coach, she is responsible for instructing position players and handling some administrative and recruiting duties. Although she is four years removed from her distinguished collegiate career, Hilary continues to play competitive soccer for elite amateur teams in her region of the country. After graduating from college, she attended graduate school and entered the coaching ranks as an assistant at the same university. She assumed her current coaching position upon the completion of her Master's degree. Hilary appeared comfortable during both interview sessions, judging from her relaxed posture and consistent eye contact. Our previous acquaintance through mutual friends contributed to the casual atmosphere of the interview setting.

Hilary's parents met in Germany while her dad was in the Air Force and her mom was working as a dental assistant for American doctors. As a native German, her mom considered it important for her two daughters to spend time growing up in her country and establishing a relationship with their grandparents. Hilary and her sister thereby had the advantage of a bilingual upbringing and a distinct sense of cultural heritage which

continues to resonate with them. The neighborhood that Hilary came to call home in America was middle-class and inhabited mostly by commuters to the nearby metropolis. Despite the pleasant surroundings of the town, Hilary recalled some strange transitions from life in Germany.

Maria: I know you were young when you moved back, but did anything strike you as really different when you came back from Germany?

Hilary: The biggest thing, and my mom still makes a joke, was that we had to get in the car and go everywhere, like she'd say, 'I need to go to the grocery store, let's go.' And I looked at her funny, 'do we have to get in the car?' Why can't we just walk across the street to the bakery, or, you know, shops and stuff.

Hilary entered the fourth grade when her family returned from Germany, and even though she did not know anyone at school, she quickly made friends on the playground.

I think being in Europe ... you couldn't be shy over there unless my sister and I wanted to play with each other the whole time, and you'd get sick of that so you had to go out and make friends. When we came back to the U.S. it wasn't too hard. Of course, you know, playing at recess, that always helped, I always jumped in on all the games, meeting the boys and girls.

Because she quickly became involved with organized sports at the community and scholastic levels, Hilary did not spend a great deal of time playing with kids in her neighborhood. She explained, "it was not like I came home every day and went out and played, because you had practice or something a couple of days a week." Hilary's sport experience began in Germany with soccer and basketball. She benefitted from having knowledgeable soccer coaches and opportunities to watch European soccer matches.

According to Hilary:

I specifically remember my sister playing first and I wanted to play so I pretty much started soccer and basketball because of her and it was wonderful over there.

Hilary's family supported her sport involvement to varying degrees.

Definitely my supporters would be my dad first, and my dad was my biggest supporter and encourager. My mom, she supported me, not to the extent of my dad ... great if I wanted to do it, but she wasn't the type of parent who would come to every game. My dad would. If he was in town, he would be at every game. And my sister, definitely. She always said she played sports for fun, where I took it to another level.

Hilary was also fortunate to have exceptional club team and high school coaches who were instrumental in developing her talent.

Sports were Hilary's only extra-curricular activities while in school. She eventually focused all of her energy on soccer, and made it a year-round sport in junior high. Hilary met most of her friends either through classes or her soccer teams. While most of her friends were athletes, she did not feel constricted in her relationships.

I had a lot of different types of friends. I mean, yes, they were all within sports, but at least you've got your more outgoing groups or quiet and reserved. I mean, I made friends with a lot of people at school who weren't in sports, but we didn't do much outside of school.

Because of her cultural background, Hilary sought out friends who shared a strong sense of their ethnic heritage. Some of her closest friends in high school were Iranian, Korean, Chinese, and Greek classmates whose homes were characterized by distinct languages, customs, decorations, and foods. In fact, Hilary described her school district as fairly diverse in relation to race and ethnicity, primarily because of the international attraction of the nearby city. When she moved south to attend a large state university, she was shocked by the apparent lack of diversity in her college environment. She explained:

... when I was in my dorm, saw the other freshman ... it threw me back. First of all, just the southern culture was different, but ... it seems like my dorm wasn't really mixed very well and it was all the same type of people in it, and ... I seemed

so different from a lot of them, culturally.

Before college, Hilary had never been around many white-identified people who had little or no sense of their cultural heritage.

For as long as she can remember, Hilary has aspired to be an Olympic soccer player, and, in her own words, "to take soccer as far as I could go." Although she has yet to have an Olympic soccer experience, she is heavily involved with her sport as both a player and as a coach. Her love of the game and her concern for student-athletes guide her coaching.

I'm more of a player's coach. I play that term [player's coach] more, you know ... versus a dictator, I think.... I like to have the respect of my players, but I also want them to be comfortable enough to come to me to talk about how training's going and be comfortable with maybe making suggestions. It's definitely a two-way communication.... I expect them to always work hard. But I also know that they're not always going to want to be working hard, so I have to be tough with them, as well ... it's just finding a balance, but yet we have a lot of humor and laughter in practice.

As a coach, Hilary finds it important to develop individual relationships with her players. She is especially interested in learning about her players' families and cultural backgrounds, so as to better understand her players as individuals: "I like to know that because it kind of puts the pieces of the puzzle together."

I observed Hilary during a team meeting and a team practice. The purpose of the team meeting was to watch films of the team's previous two soccer matches. The meeting was held in one of the athletic department's academic support rooms and was conducted by the head coach. I took note of the proceedings from a table in the back of the room. Hilary joined me for the first half of the meeting, but roamed the room during

the film viewing in order to speak with specific players about their performances. She briefly left the meeting at one point in order to check on the availability of the indoor practice facility that evening. Upon the conclusion of the meeting, Hilary accompanied some players to her office so that they could schedule the following day's work-out session. I was also permitted to observe a team practice at the soccer complex. The practice lasted approximately ninety minutes. During warm-ups, Hilary demonstrated some specific goalkeeper drills for me and chatted with the players and team managers. The head coach led the team drills, while Hilary conducted one-on-one drills with the team's lone goalkeeper. Hilary was an active participant in these drills, as well as in some scrimmage situations at the end of practice. She was an encouraging and instructive work-out partner for her keeper, and offered constructive feedback to all the players throughout the practice. She seemed to have a strong rapport with the other members of the coaching staff.

Although Hilary enjoys the interactive nature and competitive aspect of coaching, she would eventually like to work her way into a sport administration position, at either the corporate or collegiate level.

Conclusion

Each woman in this study has a unique life history, but these participants also share common experiences which have been mediated by constructs of race and gender, as well as by their involvement in sport as athletes and professionals. Other than Carol and BJ, the two oldest participants, these women grew up with a sense of themselves as athletes and a desire to pursue sport-related careers. They have all, as girls and/or adult

women, struggled against gendered systems of privilege in a masculinely-identified cultural form and male-dominated professions. And, although their racial perceptions and their awareness of themselves as raced individuals varies, these women have all enjoyed majority-group status because of their white skin color. The following section presents the participants' race thinking and offers a critical analysis of the racial discourses which run through their interview responses.

Section III
Presentation and Critical Analysis of
Participants' Race Thinking

Introduction

In this section, I present and analyze the racial perceptions and experiences of the participants as related to me during their interviews. The section is divided by titled sub-sections that are organized around themes and topics which surfaced throughout the interviews. Many of these sub-sections stem from responses to the specific interview questions that were asked of each participant, while others were brought up tangentially in the course of open-ended conversations. The first few sub-sections, with their focus on family backgrounds and childhood experiences, serve as a transition from the preceding participant profiles section to the weightier critical analysis of race matters in these women's personal and professional lives that is found in subsequent sub-sections of this section.

Central among the research findings are the participants' efforts to racially define themselves and others, as well as their ability to define the term 'race' in general. Race is discussed both in the context of sport and in society at large, with an emphasis on the life interactions, lessons, and experiences of the participants which have factored into their beliefs about race as an identifying marker. In order to better clarify the context of each interview, I have included my questions as the interviewer along with the participants' responses. At the conclusion of this section, I indicate the broader racial discourses that operate in these women's lives.

Homogeneous Beginnings

While growing up, the six women in this study did not encounter or interact with many people who were racially or economically different from themselves. They attended predominantly white, middle-class schools, with the exception of KJ, who attended a poor school with a significant number of Mexican American students, and Hilary, who went to a multi-ethnic and multi-racial high school. These women also grew up in mostly white, middle-class neighborhoods. There were some significant variations among their experiences, however. For example, Elizabeth grew up in a climate of religious diversity; as Catholics, her family lived in a Jewish area of their city, and, as a result, she acquired a knowledge and appreciation of Jewish religious and cultural customs.

Elizabeth: I understood the Jewish religion quite a bit just from all the Bar Mitzvahs and Bat Mitzvahs, and even just understanding Hanukkah versus Christmas. I mean, we got, school was closed for Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah. Those were holidays for us.

Elizabeth also spent time with the Cuban family that lived in her building -- their son was a frequent playmate, and his grandmother often shared homemade Cuban dishes with Elizabeth's family. As noted in the previous section, many of Hilary's friends were from distinct ethnic groups, and her high school had a relatively large number of foreign exchange students.

Hilary: I think it was just natural to have people with parents from different countries and my friends speaking another language, or them maybe being a second generation.

The homogeneity of each participant's childhood and adolescence is even more apparent

in light of the absence of "non-white" individuals in their lives. In fact, many of these women can easily identify the first black person they met, or the first time they became aware of the presence of other racially-identified groups. Carol related a particularly vivid story from her childhood regarding one such encounter.

Maria: When you were growing up you mentioned you lived in an all-white neighborhood and your school was all white. Were you aware of the presence of other racial groups, outside of knowing your dad wanted to move you out of an urban environment?

Carol: I was aware certainly just living life, but was not interactive at all. My first memory of an interaction with an African American was when I was about four years old walking on the sidewalk in front of my grandma's home and a little black girl came up and took my hair and pulled it for no reason -- absolutely devastated me. Just bawled my eyes out and scared me to death and that is my first time and I don't believe until I went to college and maybe not even then in college much... Didn't go to school with them, weren't exposed. The exposure I had, again, was negative.

After a slight digression, I asked Carol to expand upon that experience:

Maria: Talk about when you were four and the black girl pulled your ponytail and you were shocked. Do you remember what the nature of the shock was -- was it just that a kid pulled your ponytail, or was there something else that triggered it?

Carol: It was a double whammy, not only did I get my ponytail pulled..[my brother and I] were walking back from this little drugstore that my uncle owned and we were going in there to pick something out and we were coming back to my grandma's home and I don't recall the particulars about it, and I didn't recall it until much later in my life, too. I kinda had forgotten about it, although at the time it was pretty traumatic. I don't know what happened -- all I know is she is not like me and I remember thinking that she hated me and it was a double whammy because I not only got my hair pulled, but it was a black girl which, again, I didn't have much interaction with, so I got hit by both accounts. It scared me because, you know, that is the biggest problem I think people have with racial issues is the fear factor and I was afraid of what she was going to do to me and we weren't fighters and we weren't brought up in that kind of environment...and I was afraid that she was going to hurt me more and I thought she was much stronger and faster and quicker and bigger and [would] probably hurt me and I

remember that more than anything. It shocked me because it seemed to me unprovoked. I don't know if my brother or somebody, I can't remember any of that.

It is interesting to note that even in the retelling of this story, Carol's four year-old version of herself had definite preconceptions about black people. Because of her antagonist's black skin color, Carol assumed that she must be "stronger and faster and quicker and bigger" -- decidedly athletic characteristics -- although she initially described her as "a little black girl." It seems as though Carol's apprehension at the time was a result of her lack of encounters with black people: "all I know is, she is not like me." Prior to that incident, and perhaps not until college, she had no interactions with black people which would have indicated that a black girl could be anything other than different from her. And, given the fear induced by the hair-pulling encounter, it is reasonable to assume that Carol would have approached other black children, and even black adults, with some trepidation in her youth, and possibly in her adult life as well. Carol had one other memory of interacting with a black person while growing up.

Carol: I remember that happening and my uncle had a friend that, I called him Joe, and he was a big black man and we would see him once in a while and [I] liked him and he was very jolly and I remember that interaction, but other than that, I don't recall any except a negative environment [regarding race] from my father and mother.

Maria: Did your father have comments about your uncle's friend?

Carol: It was my mom's brother and I think my dad liked him because they drank. But I don't recall. My uncle unfortunately was an alcoholic, and so Joe was around when the drinking was going on, but I don't recall any opinions about that.

Her description of Joe as "very jolly" brings to mind stereotypical definitions of black

men as vagabond “Bojangles-like” entertainers -- jovial clowns with no real cares or concerns of their own, whose main purpose is to amuse white people. Curiously, until college, Carol’s two prevailing images of black people were negatively tinged with violence and drinking.

KJ was raised around Mexican people, but did not have any significant interactions with black people until college. She remembered two black individuals from her childhood, but explained that at the time she was not aware of their blackness.

KJ: I do remember ... at one house, I think my mother must have had surgery ... so they hired a black woman to come in and help with the cleaning of the house.... and this woman’s name was Ethel, and I really liked her because she was a lot of fun. She was enthusiastic and exciting. I didn’t realize until high school that she was black. They mentioned it one day because I made the comment that I had never really been around black people much, and my mom and dad said, ‘Oh yeah, you were around Ethel when she helped us with the house and stuff for six weeks ... You really liked her.’ And I was like, ‘That woman was black?’

Although KJ was not aware of this woman’s blackness when she was a young girl, her description of her as “fun,” “enthusiastic,” and “exciting” reminded me of Carol’s description of her uncle’s black friend, and seemed suggestive of stereotypes of black women as “mammies” -- whose sole identity is derived from caring for white families and nurturing white children. KJ also recalled a black employee at a restaurant her family frequented.

KJ: Sometimes after church we would go to this place, it was a big buffet line ... and it was kind of dark in there, or maybe I was just short and couldn’t really, wasn’t up in the light. But I remember there was a black man that worked there and I remember him showing me how to eat corn on the cob by sticking the toothpicks in the end and then holding it like that. I remember him teaching me how to do that.

Maria: Were you aware that he was black, different from you somehow at the

time? Or was it like the woman who helped out at your house?

KJ: I think probably so, yeah. I may have known. He was just an old man. I mean, really, I just thought of him as an old man. I don't know that I was, if anybody ever told me he was black, I don't really recall that. I don't know when I remembered that he was black. But my parents were not friends with any black people that I can remember.

I would venture that KJ's experience with black people as servants of some sort is fairly common among white people who grew up in the southern half of the United States.

What seems more unique is her failure to notice the blackness of those individuals. This point will be taken up later in a section concerning the participants' racial perceptions of others.

BJ's closest high school friendship was with a black girl, despite the segregated nature of her schools and the fact that her town was still in the throes of the civil rights struggle. Although BJ recognized a difference between her and her friend, she did not realize the social ramifications of skin color variations and relationships between blacks and whites until an incident with a teacher in high school.

BJ: ... the incident that I will remember most, as far as [a] racial incident for me, personally, was ... you know, I had always been around black people and had not really, had not really given it much thought.... My parents were teachers and they had friends who were black who taught and my best friend was black in high school ... we were both in band together and ... I can literally, to this day, remember my parents going to the student/teacher night, and having this teacher tell my parents that a black girl and a white girl should not be friends and of course my parents were just appalled and her parents were.... I mean, hey, these people were, and her parents, her mother was actually the elementary director of music.... they were both just so dumbfounded that somebody in the educational system, somebody that taught, would say that to them.

After the band director's racist comment to their parents, he attempted to separate BJ and her friend during band rehearsals and performances. This tactic only made the girls more

adamant about their friendship.

BJ: I mean, he would purposely try to separate us. And, of course, the more he tried to separate us, the ornerier we got ... to the point where we would be in the marching band and we'd have two squads of trombones and he'd have one on one end and one on the other, and ... I don't know how she did it, but we'd march along, and I'd look up, and all of a sudden she'd be over there.... But that, you know, that was somethin' that certainly was such an eye-opener for me.

Rather than confirming racial stereotypes or leading to negative perceptions of blacks, BJ's relationship with a black girl led her to an increased awareness of racial issues and a wariness of prejudiced white people.

Generational Differences in Racial Perceptions

Two of the participants' in this study recall being taught nothing about race or about individuals from different racial backgrounds during their childhood, while Carol, KJ, Alice, and Hilary remember explicit lessons regarding race from their parents or grandparents. Carol cited her father as her main source of information regarding race.

Carol: My father is a very safety-conscious kind of person, which is in some ways very good because I had some really good training growing up. On the other hand, I think it was a very unhealthy environment because it was very clear that an environment where there are African Americans, the message was very clear that you were not as safe. [I was] in a very racist environment through my whole life. Actually, today I am not around them [her parents] as much.

Her father's race-related sense of safety extended to Carol's social life, especially as she grew older.

Carol: ... it was horrible, my dad just was really ignorant, and I love him dearly, but he was ignorant, and I remember, and this is really sad, but when I was in college I remember saying to somebody there were two things that my dad was absolutely loony toons about besides the safety thing. I remember I could come home and tell my father just about anything. I could tell my father I was pregnant, I could tell my father I was a lesbian, I could tell my father that I was going to quit school. The two things I could not do was one, my dad was

convinced that if you had a puff of marijuana that you were a cocaine addict the rest of your life. The influence of drugs, which was interesting, because alcohol was so prevalent, but adamantly opposed, and the second thing was dating a black man. If I came home my dad would probably prefer I got pregnant [by a white man] than to come home if I was going to marry a black man -- oh, my gosh, forget it!

Carol did not talk about her response to the specifics of her father's argument other than to comment that she "realized the song and dance I was getting at home wasn't necessarily the truth." Carol's opposing views about race as an adult are evident when she discusses raising her children.

Carol: ... it's a huge priority for my boys to be involved in environments that have diversity. And in everything that I do with them, whether it be their preschool, their church ... where we live, that becomes an issue. Where we play, where we, you know, the things that we do. The problem is that [city], although it has a cultural influence, it's basically a middle- to upper-class Caucasian town. A lot of people with a lot of money.... So it's, it's often, you know, the environment you find yourself in reflects your community. If you don't have a strong, diverse community, you're probably not going to have a strong, diverse school system or church.... But, it is a priority for me, and you know, the oldest one is just getting ready to go to school, he'll be going to kindergarten next fall, and where he is going to go to school, and to make sure that he goes someplace that has some diversity is important to me. You bet they're going to be raised differently.

Carol's sons attend preschools that have a "racially mixed environment," but they live in a predominantly white, middle class neighborhood. Also, Carol seems to conflate race and cultural diversity with class, saying that she would like more diversity, but does not expect to find it in a "middle- to upper-class" city. The possibility of a black middle or upper class does not seem to occur to Carol -- a bias which was present among many of the white women Frankenberg (1993) interviewed. Implicit in her statement is an unwillingness or inability to proactively take responsibility for creating a more diverse community. Ironically, Carol has almost mirrored her parent's "white flight" from the

city to the suburbs by insulating her family in a white, middle-class enclave of a city that "certainly has a cultural influence."

KJ did not remember any lessons from her parents about race, but recalled some of her grandfather's prejudiced statements.

Maria: Do you remember your parents ever teaching you anything about race, or people from different racial backgrounds?

KJ: No. I don't remember them teaching me.... I remember my grandfather talking about ... he was always, 'nigger' was a very common word for him. He was always telling nigger jokes. And I remember I would just kind of see my way out of the room whenever he would start talking like that.

KJ also remembers feeling uncomfortable after an incident in a restaurant with her grandmother.

KJ: I remember once in high school I was up at my grandparents' house visiting and we were in a little restaurant.... A white woman was sitting at a table and she had a baby that was clearly mixed, black and white, the baby was, and I remember my grandmother going something like, 'Lord have mercy,' ... and I remember someone at the table said, 'What?' I don't remember if it was me or what. And she said, 'Look at that baby, would you?' And I remember thinking it was the cutest baby I had ever seen. And you know, she said something like she didn't know what the world was coming to or something like that, and I don't think I really understood what she was talking about until some years later. ...

Maria: ... Do you remember feeling one way or the other about her reaction?

KJ: Yeah, I remember thinking that she was probably not right to think that. Because I don't remember thinking there was anything wrong with that.

Although KJ had been unfamiliar with black people up until this time, she disagreed with her grandparents' negative assessments of blackness and bi-racialness. In college, KJ briefly dated a black man -- a relationship of which her older brother did not approve.

KJ: I think he mentioned to my mom and dad that I was dating this guy, so the next time that I got home I got the lecture on dating people of other races. And I

don't really remember my mom talking to me about it, but my dad told me, you know, you're in college, you can date whoever you want to. I'm not going to tell you who to date, but you need to think about it, you know, each person that you date could potentially become your mate, and if you have children you need to think about what their lives will be like if you had a mixed-race child. And who would they identify themselves with, black or white.... And I was thinking, whatever, dad. I didn't think it was that big a deal.

Maria: Do you think he was saying that out of concern for you?

KJ: Or concern for himself. I don't know. I think maybe a little bit of both.

The racial views of KJ and her generation of cousins differ greatly from those of the older generation in her family.

KJ: Some of my cousins from my dad's side that are around my age, a little bit older than me, they're a lot like me.... They're all very artsy and very open and very creative in their fields.... I mean, they're just in very diverse roles, but they're all very creative in what they, a lot more creative than their moms and dads and my mom and dad.... My brother's probably more conservative than all of us. But I would say the rest of us are very liberal ...

Maria: ... Any other indications from your family of having different or similar perceptions? You talked about you and your cousins seem to be of a similar mindset. Any other differences between that generation and the older generation?

KJ: Well, my current boyfriend's black and all my cousins just think that's wonderful and they can't wait to meet him, and if I'm happy, they're happy for me, and that sort of thing. But the older generation, they think it's a tragedy and the most awful thing and, you know, they just think I'm ruining my life, and so that's a big difference.

During our follow-up interview, I asked KJ what factors she thought accounted for the difference in race thinking between generations in her family.

Maria: What do you think it is that accounts for the difference with your generation? Because you didn't grow up and listen to your grandfather's stories and say, oh yeah, you're right and that's funny, and you didn't process that.

KJ: Uh-uh. I hated them. And it kind of made me dislike him in some ways. I mean, I don't hate him, but I don't really care to be around him. And I'll probably

never see him [her grandfather] again, because once he found out that I was dating a black man, he didn't even sign the Christmas card that my grandmother sent me.

Maria: Did it just have her name on it or did she sign his name?

KJ: No, she signed her name, and then she wrote, 'I'm so sorry that Grandpa doesn't want his name.' I'm sorry, she wrote, 'I'm sorry Grandpa don't want his name on this card.' So I think maybe education has something to do with it, because I don't know if she ever finished school. I don't know if he finished school.

KJ's current relationship with a black man is the cause of much stress for her parents as well. They did not react to the news as extremely as her grandfather did, but her parents are not managing to do more than tolerate what for them is an uncomfortable and unpleasant situation.

Maria: If you don't mind, talk more about your parents and how they're dealing, I guess dealing is not a great word, but how they're dealing with your relationship.

KJ: I think they're pretty much tolerating it right now. I think tolerate would be a good word.... they probably don't want to accept my life the way it is right now, but I suppose they're going to tolerate it and love me anyway. Because right, whenever I told them that we were going to be living together and they were like, well, we don't approve of what you're doing, and I said, well, you know, I'm twenty-seven years old. I really don't care if you approve of what I'm doing. Just, I'm your daughter, are you still going to love me, or what? And they were like, oh, we'll always love you.... So I'm very confident that they love me. I think they just kind of think, well, she'll move on, they'll break up, and she'll move on.

Her parents object to KJ's relationship on religious grounds, also. As fundamentalist Christians, they do not approve of her living with a man prior to marriage, especially a (black) man who is not a Christian.

Hilary's parents have raised similar objections to their daughters about inter-racial dating. In fact, those objections are the only teaching about race that Hilary is aware of

from her parents.

Maria: Do you remember your parents teaching you anything about race, people from different racial backgrounds?

Hilary: Yeah, my mom, well, both of them. My sister and I are definitely more open-minded than they are. I mean, like, I don't think my mom would ever allow us to date a black person.... she wouldn't like that ... she was never actually exposed to African Americans, and, for the most part, she was just mostly around Caucasians [in Germany].... so, I think she's gotten better, but she's discriminatory on some things. Just with African Americans, it seems like. I remember my sister having a pretty good [black] guy friend in high school, but my mom said, 'You better not date him.' ... I mean, it was just out of the question.... My dad was, I don't know, with his generation, he would never say anything derogatory ... but I also don't think he would approve of us dating. He never said, thank goodness, I hate the 'n' word. I just do, and I still to this day I notice how in one conversation my mom was talking about somebody, you know, 'that black person over there,' and I'll stop and be like why can't you say 'that person over there who's in that shirt or something.' They still label, though. That's something I notice with them. I think they've gotten better because they've seen my sister and I grow up and have different types of friends.

Among the six participants in this study, Hilary has been in the unique position of influencing her parents' racial perceptions. Because of their heterogeneous neighborhood and the racial and cultural diversity of their daughters' friends and teammates, Hilary's parents have had the opportunity to become familiar with many more people than they otherwise would have if they had remained in Germany or only socialized within their circle of mostly white friends.

Alice's parents influenced her racial perceptions by urging her to have a respectful regard for all people. She explained, "My parents, I would not call them very prejudiced people.... My parents talked about loving and caring for everyone, every person out there." Alice elaborated on this point a bit later in the interview.

Maria: Do you remember your parents teaching you anything specific about

race? ... In general, you said they taught you to love everybody and be respectful to everybody. Did they teach you anything more specific than that about race, about people from different racial groups?

Alice: Not that I can remember. They definitely had their own ideas about morals. But as far as racial groups, you know, we never talked about that. You know, we talked a lot about right and wrong, as far as how to treat people, but it was never, you treat white people this way, or you treat Indian people this way, or you treat black people this way. It was, this is how you should treat people. This is what's right, this is what's wrong.... So I don't remember any specific things growing up talking about race.

It is significant that Alice equated being taught about race only with lessons about how to treat people. Her equation supports McIntosh's (1988) assertion that white people often recognize acts of racism against blacks without understanding how skin color affects their lives as white-identified individuals. Alice did not mention being taught about how race has disadvantaged some groups while advantaging others, even in the context of slavery and the Civil War history with which she is fascinated. Also implied in Alice's response is a perception of black people primarily as victims.

While Alice does not recall any specific race teaching from her parents, she has clear memories of her maternal grandfather's perceptions of black people. His racial remarks would usually surface during his stories about their family history.

Alice: Now my grandfather was a banker in Washington, D.C. and was a person who ran a lot of properties for the bank. They owned some apartment complexes ... and he managed everything, and my grandfather was very prejudiced, and to sit and listen to him talk sometimes absolutely drove me nuts. He and I would get into discussions about it.

Maria: What kind of things would he say?

Alice: Oh, you know, he'd talk about that, and maybe a lot of it had to do with his experiences, but I think they were in some lower income areas in D.C. back then, and about how dirty black people were and you know, he called them

niggers and everything else. And it was very derogatory to me and for him that's just how things were.

Whether the thought originated with Alice or her grandfather, this passage contains yet another conflation of race with class, as Alice transitions from "lower income areas" to "how dirty black people were." Alice would attempt to argue with her grandfather by voicing her discomfort with his perceptions of and labels for black people, but to no avail.

Alice: But we would sit down and he would just start talking about people. And I'd ask him about growing up and as far as the racially type of conversation, I just, when he'd talk about some black people he had dealt with and he would talk about the niggers this and niggers that, and I'm like, Grandpa, that really offends me. I wish you wouldn't call them that. And he was like, I've called them that my whole life, I'm not going to change that now. I said, but that's such a derogatory term, and we'd get into almost an argument about it, and I'd finally say whatever, just drop it. So he, a very stubborn man, was not going to change in his ways at the age of seventy something or eighty something.

Like KJ, Alice does not share her grandfather's racial perceptions, but interestingly, Alice's mother does not share her father's perceptions, either. Alice attributes these differences to her mother's strong personality and college education, and their influence upon her daughters.

Alice: To me, it was amazing that my mother is not more biased, more prejudiced than what she is. I think to an extent, everybody has a little bit of prejudice or bias or whatever. You can't help it...

Maria: What do you think enabled your mom to develop different perceptions and ideas?

Alice: My mother is her own person and extremely strong, opinionated. She really thinks for herself and she has a very good sense of right and wrong, of values, and honestly believes that everyone is equal and should be treated equal, and you know, those types of things have always come across to me, growing up and even now.

Education seems to be a key factor in generational differences in race thinking

thus far. Carol, who is the only person in her family to attend college, has racial beliefs which vary greatly from those of her overtly prejudiced parents and siblings. BJ and Elizabeth have fathers who were involved in the educational system as career teachers, and Elizabeth has an extremely socially-conscious mother. These participants seem to share their parents' more progressive race thinking. KJ, who holds a Master's Degree, has quite different racial views than her grandparents, who failed to complete high school, and even than her parents, who attended college.

History and social geography also appear to be significant factors in the formation of individual race thinking. KJ's parents and grandparents, and Alice's grandfather, grew up during the pre-Civil Rights era in particularly segregated areas of the Southern United States. They did not frequently travel away from home, nor spend time living in different regions of the country with more diverse groups of people. Similarly, Hilary's mother was born and raised among white Germans, and then worked at a predominantly white American military base as a young adult. The participants' race thinking was also influenced by their relationships with black friends and colleagues.

Figural Interactions with "the Racial Other"

Most of the six women in this study somewhat easily recalled the first black person they met -- a telling indication of the homogeneity of their early lives. Some of these women also have had interactions with specific black people whom they credit for increasing their familiarity with racial Others and expanding their awareness of racial issues. Carol related stories about two such individuals in her life. The first black person she mentioned was Ron, a male collegiate basketball player at the university she attended.

Ron was the star player on the men's team, and played professional basketball for a few years after college. Carol knew him because they were fellow athletes, and became friends with him because he was dating her roommate. Because of her friendship with Ron, Carol grew even more adamantly opposed to her family's racial prejudice. In her words, Ron "clearly was the first person that had an impact on me." Carol even used Ron in an attempt to change her family's perception of black people.

Carol: My grandmother had purchased a little home on a lake not far from where I was going to college and my family had come up there and I didn't have a ride up there and the only person who could take me was Ron, and I remember laughing, 'Oh, my gosh, Ron, get ready,' and Ron took me out there and came in and met my family and my dad behaved himself very well, but it was traumatic, but that was the case and I loved Ron ... I have a lot of fond memories of Ron.

Even though she expressed affection for Ron and was aware of a possible altercation between her family and him (so much that she felt a need to warn him prior to arriving), Carol insisted that he walk her into the house rather than just drop her off in the driveway.

Maria: You mentioned when he drove you to your grandmother's house ... your father was very good. What was everybody's behavior like?

Carol: They were very cordial about it, and I remember that we didn't talk about it. And Ron only dropped me off, but I wanted him to come in. But I remember pulling up in the driveway and then looking out and seeing and just about, but then you have to remember, Ron was pretty popular in the state. He grew up [there] and went on to play for the [university team], and went on to play [professionally]. And so they were, in some ways that made him better than others because he had a job and he had money and, you know.

Despite good intentions, Carol put Ron in a risky position and held him up as a "credit" to his race for her family. As she explained, "It was good for my family. I clearly remember that." She did not consciously ask him to drive her (he offered when another friend could not), but she consciously said to him, "Hold on here, guy, 'cause we don't

know what's going to happen." Her comments also indicate a tendency to think of blacks in terms of lower socio-economic standards; Ron's status as a professional basketball player made him an exception, and therefore the perfect person to display for her family's benefit. Andrews (1996a) has written about the "safe" status athletic stardom confers upon black men in the eyes of white people, using Michael Jordan as a prime example. He, as well as other writers in the popular press (e.g. McCall, 1997), have commented that without the basketball, Jordan is just another tall, dark, scary, bald, black man.

The second black person Carol mentioned was a current black male colleague who she describes as her closest professional friend.

Carol: The coach that I am probably ... the closest to in this department is Mike, our only black head coach. And, he is one of the closest, my closest colleague. He's the one I go to, too. He is my touchstone, like, I'll go in [his office] and say, okay, what about this whole Fuzzy Zoeller thing? What he said about the food and all that, or I'll go in and ask him things.... Because he's, he's a conscience for me in some way.

During our follow-up interview, I asked Carol how she thought Mike perceived their relationship.

Maria: You said that Mike is kind of your touch point ... and your conscience. How does he feel about being in that role?

Carol: I think he, I think he respects it. I think he, we have a very close working relationship. I'm very vulnerable with him, and you know, can just be honest with him and I care about him, you know, and I think he cares about me and supports me and so I trust him.

Maria: What do you think, or what has been his response when you've asked him things about, like, O.J. [Simpson] or the Fuzzy Zoeller thing?

Carol: I get surprised ... 'Cause ... the answer that I think he's going to say is not always the answer. About the Fuzzy Zoeller thing, he just thought it was the stupidest thing in the whole world that someone would make a point about it. [He

said], you know, that's what we eat. That's the kind of food we eat.... And Mike was not offended by it at all, and I thought he would have been.... he's the one I can just go to and say, 'I don't quite understand all this.' So it's a very important relationship to me because, you know, I want to be aware.

Carol values her friendship with Mike, but does not seem to recognize that she often asks him to be a spokesperson for his race. While she is interested in increasing her awareness of race-related social issues, she is generalizing one black man's perspective to the entire black community. This generalization is problematic for a few reasons. One, it assumes that there is a universal "black experience" that is mediated by the physiognomic characteristic of skin color. Two, it operates on the presumption that white people who are otherwise isolated from black people can become more race conscious simply by asking a black colleague how he or she feels about various current events. And, three, it is redolent of a politically correct, "some-of-my-best-friends-are-black" defense against accusations of racism or racial ignorance. It is also interesting to note that when asked about Mike's perception of their relationship, Carol fleetingly addressed my question before providing more detail about *her* perceptions of the relationship. In the process, she felt the need to offer a justification for her friendship with Mike ("... so I trust him").

Hilary could also identify a significant black person in her life. She talked about a black elementary school teacher who had a profound influence upon her while her family was still living in Germany.

Hilary: In Germany, my second and third grade teacher, I had the same teacher for two years, she was incredible, Miss Jones, and she was African American and she was awesome.... she was definitely my first impacting teacher that I remember, who just brought me out of my shell and did a lot for me.... She was a great lady and that was a point in my life where I was really, really shy, and she just brought my personality out. Got me to open up a lot more.

Hilary's instructor did not teach her anything specific about race, but as a positive role model who was black, created a non-stereotypical familiarity with black people for Hilary. Consequently, Hilary probably had a much different perception of blacks as a young child than someone like Carol, who had an altercation with a black girl, or KJ, who grew up listening to the derogatory jokes about blacks her grandfather told.

BJ acknowledges her black best friend from high school as the person most responsible for increasing her awareness of race prior to her professional career as a coach. In addition to the memory of the incident with their band director, BJ shared stories about how her friend helped her become more aware of her black peers' perceptions of white people.

BJ: I can remember her telling me, times ... like in gym class, we would play, you know, murder ball or somethin', and I was one of the better athletes in the school and I never thought anything about who I hit with the ball - Or how hard I threw it ...

Maria: Is that like dodge ball?

BJ: Yeah. And, I can remember to this day, you know, where some of the black kids thought I had thrown the ball too hard at them. And, had she not been my friend, I'd probably gotten jumped. But, at the time ... I didn't have a clue.... it was definitely a time of learning diversity, you know, in our community.... it was something that I think I was just, for a lack of better terminology, pretty naive about.... I threw the ball at them as [hard] as I did anybody else. You know, I didn't -, but, and I said, at that time ... they were the ones who were being asked to, you know, move into the white school ... that was not something I was probably very aware of - how they were feeling.... I can't remember at that age thinking, oh, this is probably hard on them ... I didn't really give it a lot of thought ... I wasn't that sensitive to it, probably.

BJ knew racial tension at her high school was responsible for shutting down the school for two days one year, and for eliminating the use of any potential weapons, like bats or hockey sticks, in physical education class, but she was nevertheless unaware of the

feelings of black students. Furthermore, she did not realize the role she might have played as a white student in creating an atmosphere of racial tension. Her black friend helped her become more conscious of her personal actions.

BJ also became more familiar with black people as a result of periodically living with her best friend's family during high school. She did not recall specific lessons about race from her time in their home, but talked about noticing differences in everyday items such as hair care products and cosmetics -- benign observations which actually demystified some of the differences between blacks and whites for BJ. Her familiarity with this family prevented her from accepting stereotypical caricatures of black people and increased her comfort level around "non-white" individuals -- a rare awareness for a white high school student in BJ's town.

Many of the participants appreciate their college experience in general for providing an environment which afforded them the opportunity to interact with individuals of diverse racial backgrounds. KJ related a story about visiting a friend at college as a high school senior.

KJ: My senior year in high school one of my friends from another town, we played against each other in basketball, but we became friends, she went to college, and I went to see her one weekend and she was on the basketball team there, and so a lot of her teammates were black and a lot of her friends were black. And so I hung out with all of them and I had a great time, just with all these different kinds of people. They were black and white and Mexican. We all went to a big party and I had a great time, and so when I went to college I think I had a lot more open mind to being friends and talking with people who were different from me, and my freshman year I made friends with one of the [black] football players and we were, he and I were friends all through college.

One time KJ and her friend were studying in her dorm room when some of her friends

walking in the hall saw them.

KJ: We were lying on the middle of my room drawing and stuff, and I remember the door was open.... some of the girls on the hall came walking through the hall or something and they saw Steve laying there, and they were like ... what's going on? I mean, they were shocked to see this black man laying there, but then once they got a good look at him they wanted to know more about him because he was really nice-looking. Nobody ... even as conservative as [my college] is, and I dated black guys in college, nobody ever said I can't believe you're dating black guys. Nobody ever said that to me ... Maybe it was just the people that I surrounded myself with.

It is unlikely that KJ would have experienced the same freedom and diversity had she remained surrounded by family in her hometown. Through her experience as a staff member in the university athletic department's weight room, KJ met and worked with a large number of black student-athletes, and developed relationships which increased her familiarity with black people and caused her to more strongly oppose her family's racial views.

Alice described college as the place where she first met more than just one or two people from different racial groups.

Maria: Was that different for you at all? How did you feel being in a more multicultural setting?

Alice: Actually, I was excited by it because I felt like I was just in this little bitty town that never experienced anything different, and it was like I kind of led a boring life growing up and I was excited to get out into a bigger area, even though [college town] wasn't exactly the metropolis of the world, but much bigger than where I was and to get into an environment where there were a lot of different types of people, and I had to deal with a lot of different types of people, and see how I looked at it, because you say you're not prejudiced, or you say that you believe everybody should be treated alike, but when you get into certain situations, how do you react?

Alice did not elaborate on any specific situations or interactions, other than to mention

getting to know some of the black athletes on various university teams. By virtue of the schedule she kept as a student-athlete, Alice primarily made friends among her softball teammates, who were all white. She did, however, indicate a belief that simply claiming not to be prejudiced is a meaningless statement -- particularly if one is from a small, predominantly white Midwestern town. Without the interactions she had with black students in college, Alice is not sure that she would feel comfortable around black people as a professional coach.

Alice: I'm not sure if I would have ventured out to get to know other people of other races.... I don't think I ever would have sat down necessarily and gone up and had conversations with someone of a different race. Because you tend to, you know ... born in this little white community, grew up, you know, spent my whole life there. I don't know if I would have really ventured out to meet diverse types of people if I weren't forced into an environment where I got to know them.

Maria: Was that because of a sense of familiarity?

Alice: Yeah, I think you're more comfortable when you're familiar with something. Almost I think anybody would say that ...

Maria: Did anything change once you had those interactions? Did you learn anything new about people that you previously wouldn't have spoken to or had never hung out with before?

Alice: The only thing would be ... they really are no different than anybody else. You know, I got closer to some more than others. I think you just get to know somebody that came from a little different background, maybe an inner-city background -- they had a tougher time than you did. And I grew to appreciate some of the things that I had, two parents, never had to struggle with having enough food on the table.... so I don't think anything more than I began to appreciate maybe a little bit more about what I had growing up and just the thought that they're no different than anybody else.

Maria: Are you talking primarily about African Americans?

Alice: Yes.

Implicit in Alice's responses are preconceived notions about African Americans; even though she did not recall being taught anything specific about race, she held certain (stereotypical) beliefs about the socio-economic status, family structures, and geographical origins of African Americans (poor, single parent, ghetto).

Elizabeth spoke of college as the place where she learned more about herself, and, in the process, more about the treatment of certain minorities.

Elizabeth: Well, college is where I guess I figured out more who I was. And through that experience, I think became even more tolerant for the way people, I guess more critical of the way people treated other people. And [I] didn't want to be around people who didn't treat people appropriately.... Because here I'm a minority and I didn't want to be treated that way. So I think that's what happened even more in college.

As previously noted, Elizabeth felt like a minority as a woman working within collegiate athletics, given her constant battle to prove herself as a female athletic trainer. Because she was on the receiving end of sexist discriminatory practices, she developed an intolerance for any other kind of identity-based discrimination. And, just as KJ became more familiar with black people by working with black student-athletes in the weight room, Elizabeth interacted with more black people through her athletic training duties.

Whether it was through personal friendships with specific black people, working relationships with black colleagues and/or student-athletes, or attending a college with a diverse student body, these women each had at least one figural experience which influenced their perceptions of black people, and, in some cases, altered their definitions of race.

Race Defined

I asked each participant to explain her understanding of the term “race” during the research interviews; those explanations are included in this sub-section. While there are some similarities in their definitions and the manners in which they presented them, there are also some noteworthy exceptions among these women’s thoughts regarding race. Particular attention is given not only to the content of these definitions, but also to the manner in which they were offered.

Carol defined race quickly and briefly when first asked, and then struggled to elaborate on her definition.

Maria: In general, can you tell me what race means to you?

Carol: Well, when I think race, my first thought is African American ... or, like, the under-represented minority. Which is kind of interesting because that can be, that’s even women. But when I have a tendency to think more, or when I think racist, or when I think racial situations I happen to think mostly African American scenarios.

Maria: Anything else about race as something that defines us?

Carol: Well, if you look at the global view of race. In that, maybe in Caucasian, it obviously, in answering, what is your race, defines who you are. When I think about race in the context of a conversation or a question or whatever. Well, unless it’s, you know, filling out a questionnaire and they ask for your race, I usually am thinking more of defining, at least my reaction is African Americans. But certainly race obviously means more than that, but when it’s used in my environment, most of the time that’s what.

Like many white people, as discovered by Frankenberg (1993), when Carol thinks in terms of race, she thinks primarily of African Americans. As a white person, she ascribes race only to racial Others. Carol mentions women in her explanation, but only in regard to their status as a gendered minority, not to their race. The only time she considers variations on her definition of race is when she is faced with a list of racial categories on

a questionnaire. Carol attempts to further explain her view of race in the second passage listed above, but ultimately only succeeds at muddying her initial definition. She begins multiple strands of thought, but does not quite complete any of them. She stops, starts, backtracks, then stops and starts again, and the only really new thing we learn from her clarification is that she thinks race obviously means more than African American; however, she has difficulty articulating that meaning.

Alice offered a similar, yet more broad definition of race, plus speculation about the factors behind the formation of her definition.

Maria: In general, right now, what does race mean to you?

Alice: Race means to me multicultural, you know, it's a breakdown of color of skin and also has to deal with religious beliefs and et cetera, but when I hear the term race to me, the first thought that comes to mind is 'Caucasian versus African American'. And I think that's because it's been played up so much in the media over the years. But it also has to do with Indians, American Indians, I guess is the politically correct term, any other type of race out there. So, I don't know if that's a simple enough explanation.

Maria: You said any other race. What would be another one to you?

Alice: Jewish.

Alice tends to conflate race with culture in the initial part of her definition, but her primary association is in terms of "black versus white." She attributes this perception to media messages regarding race. Perhaps because of the area of the country in which she was raised, Alice also has a perception of American Indians as a racial group.

Interestingly, Alice perceives Jews as a distinct racial group, a perception which reflects the conflation of race and culture (in the form of religion) and speaks to the complexities involved in the whitening process of European immigrants. While most European-

ethnics were eventually assimilated as “whites” in America, certain groups, such as Jews and Southern Europeans, encountered more lasting forms of ethnocentrism and racism in the U.S. (Ignatiev & Garvey, 1993; Omi & Winant, 1994; Sacks, 1994).

BJ explicitly defined race in terms of culture, and also spoke about it in relation to diversity. For her, diversity refers mainly to race, religion, and sexual orientation. Of those three categories, I asked her to talk more specifically about race.

Maria: What does race, in general, mean to you?

BJ: I think, you know, different ethnic classes. I mean, it means, race to me means your ethnic orientation, whether it’s black or Asian or Hispanic - or white, or ... probably that.

BJ’s choice of words is intriguing here. She uses both “class” and “orientation” in combination with “ethnic” in order to define race. She does not necessarily view race as an exclusive category of skin color or other physical features, but rather attaches vague cultural significations to her definition. Notably, BJ added “white” to the end of her explanation, indicating that she perceives whiteness as a racial category also, although she was hard-pressed to explain what a “white ethnic orientation” might be.

Hilary initially defined race as categories on a questionnaire which refer to skin color and place of origin.

Maria: In general, what does race mean to you?

Hilary: Race? I think of it when you look at a check on the box on a paper that says Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Other. I just think of the different, just more your skin color and where you’re from. That’s what I think of race.

Not only did Hilary tell me what she thinks of race, she also told me *when* she thinks of race -- if faced with a list of racial classifications which require a check in a certain box.

Frankenberg (1993) and McIntosh (1988) have illustrated similar tendencies among whites in their respective writings on whiteness and race. White people, they argue, rarely have cause to think about race in their daily lives, unlike more racially marked individuals, such as blacks. When I asked Hilary to clarify what she meant by "skin color" and "where you're from," she spoke in detail about her perceived differences between race and culture.

Hilary: Well, I guess that contradicts. I don't know what I'd lean toward more. I guess skin color.

Maria: Not necessarily, I guess. You can combine the two and I guess that's what you were doing.

Hilary: Yeah, I probably do, I guess. I just think of the boxes, though, when you fill out a form.

Maria: As labels?

Hilary: Yeah. And not just like black. I try to think of everyone. Especially having known, you know, Koreans and a few Spanish people, not as many, and then Greeks, you know, we all look different.

Maria: You've talked about these other cultural groups -- Greeks, Iranians, and Koreans, and then you've talked about African Americans in relation to race. But then you've also used the word culture quite a bit in talking about all those groups. What do you mean when you use the word culture? Is that different than race at all, or is it the same?

Hilary: I think it's different. For me, culture is more how you're brought up and the ways you do things. Culturally, why you would hold your fork that way, or maybe speak that way, or culture in dressing. I think it's more in your actions. Race is more concrete, it's concrete versus, you know, you're African American or you're Spanish, or maybe where you're from or what you look like. But culture, I think, is you can define different cultures generally, because Americans are kind of like this, or Germans, or French, but then I think it's a person has their own culture depending on how they grew up, you know. I have a lot of my German culture and then I have some of my dad's Italian-Irish ... but I think each person has their own culture, and some people less than others if they weren't

exposed to a lot.

Hilary admitted that she had not thought much about race before our interview, and seemed encouraged by my questions to process through the topic and clarify her responses. I had difficulty asking her neutral probing questions, so I attempted to respond to her statements with questions which indicated that I was processing race along with her, hopefully without leading her to any conclusions. Hilary's strong identification with her own cultural identity seemed to better enable her to articulate a distinction between race and culture. It is important to Hilary to define race in inclusive terms ("And not just, like, black"), but her definition reveals that she considers race as a referent for "non-white" people, and culture as a descriptor for white people. Hilary does not conflate race with culture, but rather seems to simply relate more strongly with cultural identifiers on a personal level.

After a pause, KJ offered a one-word definition of race, and then expanded that definition to three words after a probing question.

Maria: In general, what does race mean to you? ... What do you think of when you hear the word race?

KJ: Color.

Maria: Anything else, or is that your overriding ...

KJ: Culture maybe. Yeah, I just think of culture, color, diversity.

She did not expound upon her response until the beginning of our follow-up interview, when I asked her a specific question about race and culture after she related a story in which she described Mexican Americans in cultural terms, but compared them to a racial

group.

Maria: Do you view Mexican Americans as a cultural group? As a racial group?

KJ: Well, to me, it's part both, because, like, the woman that taught my 4-H food class, that taught us how to make all the Mexican food, to me that's a cultural thing. Food, I identify food with culture a lot of times, but then it's a race, I mean, when you're filling out forms if you're Mexican, I think they want you to check Hispanic. But I know a lot of Mexicans that won't check Hispanic. They'll check Other and then write Mexican American. So I suppose it could be however you view it.

Like the other participants, KJ thinks of race in terms of the classificatory categories on certain forms, but she is aware that those categories provide a restrictive means of identification for individuals who fill them out. She personally distinguishes between race and culture, but is reluctant to impose her views upon others ("I suppose it could be however you view it."). I also asked KJ to clarify her use of the term "diversity" during our second interview.

Maria: You used the word diversity a couple of times yesterday ... I'm curious, what do you think of when you hear that word or use that word?

KJ: Well, for diversity, there's all kinds of meanings that you can incorporate. You could say that we have a diverse staff where I work. I'm a woman and I work with men. That's diverse.... You can go by races and you could say my boss is German-American, his ancestors are German. I don't know what mine are, but I'm a white woman as far as race goes, and then my other co-workers are black American. It could be gender-related or race-related or culture-related, religion -- you could have diversity in religions. You could have diversity of ideas, just philosophies on different training methods.... I have a very diverse group of athletes that I train. I have a lot of different sports.... We utilize different energy systems for each sport. So the training is different for all of them.... Even though all the women on [a] team are white, they're pretty diverse as far as hair color and height and physical build, and so does that cover diverse good enough?

By KJ's lengthy description of diversity, it is apparent that she does not consider the term

as some politically correct euphemism that is handy for discussing race. And, she does not view diversity as a “catch-word” only descriptive of race or other identity markers -- a tendency many Americans (myself included) have. Interestingly, after distinguishing between race and culture earlier on our conversations, KJ conflates the two in this passage, when she racially classifies her white boss as “German-American.”

Elizabeth provided the most elaborate definition of race and exhibited a willingness to not only clarify her definition, but to also converse about the complexities of the topic. Her enthusiasm gave me the impression that race is a subject she had spent a considerable amount of time thinking about on her own prior to our conversations. Here is an excerpt:

Maria: In general, what does race mean to you?

Elizabeth: Race means, it's a label that I think, it's a label that unfortunately people like to categorize things and compartmentalize because I think they understand things that way, which is kind of sad because they don't want to look past that compartmentalized little comfort zone. Yet if they'd only open their eyes, they'd realize nothing is compartmentalized. It can't be. Because otherwise you're going to, if you just want to describe someone, you're going to describe them in fifty thousand different compartments, whether they're blond-haired, blue-eyed, you know, Catholic, Jewish, white, black. You know, tall, short, big feet, little feet.... What do you want to do here, let's go on, fair-skinned or tan easy or whatever. So I think it's a way, I think race is a way people use to control, and they do that through a word. By stirring up emotions, by compartmentalizing people, and by, in their minds, having a comfort zone to describe something. And so to me, it means nothing, yet it means everything.

Maria: And you mean something comes from what our society has attached to labels?

Elizabeth: Yeah. And yet it's also been a way to gain equality, using race to gain some more equal, you know, whether that person's a good person or a bad person, they use race to gain equality, which is needed, because it's a label of race. If the label of race wasn't there, you wouldn't even need that. You could

just have good person, bad person. You know, not good black person, bad black person.

Elizabeth views race not as a concrete, objective category, but rather as a means of narrowly labeling individuals and promoting stereotypical beliefs about certain groups of people. The "compartments" Elizabeth disdains are the result of those beliefs, and evidence of how stereotypes about race operate in our society -- namely, to control individuals and groups through racialization. Elizabeth also recognizes that racial labels have been used by those whom they are typically meant to oppress in order to gain equality with majority-status groups. She views organized religion as partially responsible for promoting racial labeling.

Elizabeth: I think religion has a lot to do with the compartmentalizing that occurs.

Maria: Religion? How so?

Elizabeth: Religion is, organized religion is a way to keep people safe. To keep people ignorant, keep people answering the questions they can't answer, because a simple answer is God said so, or God wants it to be that way.... So I think religions use that power to get what they want, whether it's to keep women down, to keep blacks down, to bond blacks together, and organize that group.... it's [religion] a way of power, it's a way of control, it's a way of keeping down, it's a way of building up, it's a way of answering questions, it's a financial extravaganza, religion is. And it's a way of controlling and of achieving control by men.

Maria: What do you think about the role of the church in the Civil Rights Movement? ... Does that fall into what you've just described?

Elizabeth: Yes, but that's a positive. There's positives and negatives to it. Yeah. It's a union. If you want to put it into business, [the] black church was a union to the Civil Rights Movement ... because any time you get a group that binds together you're going to have more power.

Elizabeth's criticism of religion is mostly targeted at conservative fundamentalist

Christian sects that preach exclusion and discrimination.

Elizabeth: That's where you find more racism, among some of the ignorance of the religious people. The more religious a person is and lives by the Bible, I think you have more discrimination. You've more discrimination homosexuality-wise, you've more discrimination [against] race, you've more discrimination [against] gender, you've more discrimination, you know, the women are supposed to be barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen is what the Bible says, and these frickin' women are living that way. What are you going to do that for? Because the Bible told me to? Yeah, well, you're reading the wrong Bible, you know.

Elizabeth's responses allude to many more issues with organized religion than are covered by the scope of this study, but much of her thoughts regarding religion are directly related to questions of race. Although she values spirituality, Elizabeth views many organized religions as characterized by a dangerous absence of independent thought, which can lead to, among other exclusionary practices, racism. In a few paragraphs of thought, Elizabeth defines race, discusses how race operates in society in relation to not just blacks, or blacks and whites, and identifies one of the factors she sees behind the proliferation of racist thinking.

It is imperative to view these six definitions of race independently as well as in light of their similarities and differences in order to achieve an understanding of how a select group of women working within intercollegiate athletics think about the general concept of race. To complete the race picture, it then becomes necessary to analyze how each woman views herself and others in relation to race.

White on White

After each participant defined her concept of race, I asked her what racial group she considered herself to be a part of, and followed that with an inquiry about how she

perceives herself in relation to race. For most of the participants, this was a difficult question to answer, primarily because the question was at first, incomprehensible. I could relate to my participants' confusion because I was certainly puzzled the first time this question was posed to me (by an anthropology professor in graduate school). Throughout the first two interviews, I struggled to find more clear ways to state this question, and finally settled upon a version of "What does being white mean to you?"

Carol was immediately puzzled when asked to describe herself as a racialized individual, but attempted to talk herself through the question.

Maria: What racial group do you consider yourself belonging to?

Carol: Caucasian.

Maria: Within that, how do you see yourself in relation to race?

Carol: How do I see myself in relation to race?

Maria: Right. As a self-defined white woman, how do you see yourself in relation to race?

Carol: I don't, I don't understand the question.... How do I define, how do I see myself in relation to race in, in, I don't know. I don't know how to answer that. I don't know how I see myself. I see myself as Caucasian, female.

Maria: Okay. Being a white woman, what does that mean to you?

Carol: It means it's tough.... Yeah. It means that, although I'd much rather be a female than a man, it's tough. You know, I think it's absolutely wonderful to be a woman. I love being a woman. I love women who love women. I love men who love women. But I think being a female is tough. I think, you know, being an African American female is tougher.... But it's not easy. It's wonderful and it's, it's a challenge.

Maria: So when you talk about it being a challenge, you're mainly referring to the "woman" part of "white woman"? The gender aspect of that?

Carol: Yes, totally.

Maria: How about it from another perspective? From the “white” perspective?

Carol: I think it stinks. I think it stinks that it is so unfair in some ways that, that we get treated the way we do. That people get defined by race. I don’t even like the word. I mean, it ... doesn’t seem to be necessary, because it immediately makes an assumption that you are different, and I know we have to do that for all kinds of reasons. But I’m not always sure why. I don’t usually fill it out unless I feel I have to. I don’t understand the point of it.

It seemed much easier for Carol to respond to a question about being white in terms of gender rather than race. Her response indicates an inability to speak about herself in terms race, most likely because she identifies with the gendered aspect of her personal identity, and has never considered herself “raced” in any way. When I asked her to focus on the “white” part of her definition, she commented about her dislike of race as a defining label of people in general, but still did not speak about race in relation to herself. For Carol, “people” get defined by race, but not her. The inability of white women to see themselves in relation to race has been documented by many scholars in the field of whiteness studies (e.g. Frankenberg, 1993; McIntosh, 1988; Roman, 1993; Sleeter, 1996). In particular, McIntosh (1988) argues that this inability exists because white people are taught not to see the privileges which race bestows upon them, but only to see race as something which puts others at a disadvantage.

Although BJ offered a relatively lengthy initial response to my question, we still both struggled to ask and answer subsequent questions. Earlier in our conversation BJ said she considered herself white, or Caucasian, whichever term was more politically correct.

Maria: How do you see yourself in relation to race?

BJ: I'm not sure what you're askin'. Let me answer this, and I'm not sure if it's where you want to go with it. I think, I think I'm very respectful of people's individualities -- whether it is their race, whether it is their religion or sexual orientation or whatever. I think I try to be respectful of it, I try to understand it - that's just part of their life that I may or may not be able to relate to based on my experiences or who I am. I guess I respect the right to be different and to have different opinions, but I don't particularly worry about it.... It's probably the only way I know how to put it.

Maria: Okay, put yourself in that now. You told me about others in relation to race, mainly, and other identity markers. Now put yourself in that. How do you see yourself in relation to all those things?

BJ: I'm not a relationship-type person, so I really couldn't tell you. You know, that's where my being far too independent for my own good probably comes into play. I don't know really how else, you know, I'd put myself anyway. I'm not sure what you're ...

Maria: Yeah, I'm trying to make it clearer without leading you somewhere. Does being white mean anything to you? About yourself?

BJ: Eighty percent of the time, no. Occasionally it's an issue.

Maria: Okay. Can you talk about the twenty percent?

BJ: Okay. Yeah, I got it now. Occasionally it's an issue. For me, it's become an issue as I've gotten older, it's ... it has been an issue in terms of jobs. To a small degree. You know, I think it's an issue at times, as far as for me coaching, and I think administration to some degree ... when you're dealing with that many people, and you're trying to convince parents that you're going to be a good role model for their daughter in life, you know, it certainly became so much more of an issue. I think it's a little bit of an issue in administrative wages because of affirmative action and counts and perception, but, that's where it's probably come into my life in the last five, six years.

When I asked BJ about herself in relation to race, she began her response by discussing her respect for other people's various identity differences, such as race, religion, and sexual orientation. She only mentioned herself in relation to her treatment of other

individuals. In fact, when I attempted to clarify my question by asking her to discuss herself in the context of her initial response, she was at a loss because she does not consider herself a "relationship-type person." Discussing race only in relation to herself appears to be a foreign concept to BJ, as it does to many other white women. Dyer (1997) and Grover (1997), among other scholars, have written about the transparency of whiteness that is apparent in BJ's responses. After further clarification, BJ talks about her whiteness as an issue in her professional career. As a coach, she was aware that parents of potential (black) recruits might be reluctant to leave their daughters in the care of a white woman, and as an administrator, she is cognizant of affirmative action counts in college athletic departments which might work against her future employment. BJ did not indicate an awareness of any privileges her skin color might bestow upon her. She did, however, tell me that the first time she really became aware of herself as a white person was on a recruiting trip during her early years of coaching. She traveled to an inner-city high school and attended a basketball game at which she was the only white spectator.

BJ: I can remember walking in the gym and that was one of the first times, you know, that I was certainly the minority, and what an issue it was to have a white coach sitting in at this game. And it was such a big deal to these people, and I was kinda like, huh? ... I don't remember feeling negative or positive or any particular way about it. I just remember noticing that this is an issue that I'm sitting in this gym - alone.

BJ was fully aware of her whiteness while sitting in that gym, but, at the time, did not comprehend the crowd's reaction to her presence. It is interesting to note that BJ was not conscious of her racial identity until she was in the position of being a minority in an

unfamiliar setting. Her perception is typical of many white people, who, because of their privileged status, never have cause to think about their own racialization.

Alice was intrigued by my question about being white, and acknowledged her difficulty with providing a response.

Maria: What racial group do you consider yourself belonging to?

Alice: Caucasian.

Maria: Okay, then what does being white mean to you?

Alice: Hmm, that's an interesting question. I think, what does being white mean to me? I don't know if being white means as much to me as being white means to other people. To me, I don't care what I am, I'm just me. And it doesn't matter whether I'm short, tall, fat, thin, black, white, whatever my religious beliefs are, whatever my sexual persuasion is ... it doesn't matter. I'm just who I am and accept me for who I am. So white really doesn't mean anything to me. I think it means more to other people than, other people see me as white and I just see me for me. But that's a tough question to answer.

Maria: It is, you're right.

Alice: I think being a part of the white race, or the white culture, has it's good points and it has it's bad points. You know, sometimes I've thought of, I have a friend of mine who went over to Hawaii and coached ... and, you know, she's a minority, the white folks are a minority where you have a lot more Samoans and et cetera, than white, and she's treated like a minority. She's received some very harsh treatment and it was a very difficult time for her ... I'm of the race that's predominant here, and I'm not in the minority, so I'm not necessarily the one that sometimes is treated poorly. You know, I have all the advantages, which sometimes is great and sometimes, you know, you watch movies about realistic events that happened and you're really ashamed ... and, you know, slavery issues, and it doesn't make me very proud of what my race supposedly did, so I think I have, you don't always think about all the advantages you have of being white versus being black. Totally to be in someone else's shoes and be in that situation or even a minority. What is it like? I don't know. I can't honestly say that because I've never been in that situation, and I'd be curious to see how I would react to that.

Alice was not as thrown by this question as Carol and BJ were, as evidenced by the ease

with which she continued to grapple with the topic without any further probes from me. Early in her response, she commented that being white might mean more to others, and then a bit later proceeded to provide an example of a friend who was more aware of her whiteness because she lived in a location in which she was a minority as a white person. Alice mentioned that there are good points and bad points to belonging to the white race, and then defines those points in terms of minority/majority-group status and the poor treatment of minorities. Her association of minority with “the one that sometimes is treated poorly” is intriguing, and perhaps reveals a tendency to conceive of blacks, and possibly other racial groups, primarily as victims. Significantly, Alice talked about advantage in relation to being white, but expressed discomfort with that advantage, stating that it “sometimes is great,” while at other times, “you’re really ashamed.” She did not mention specific advantages of whiteness, other than being spared harsh treatment, but is at least partially aware of the metaphorical “invisible backpack” of race privileges that McIntosh (1988) argues white Americans possess as a birthright. Alice was able to discuss whiteness and race in relation to herself, yet she still concluded her thoughts by bringing the question around to being black and being a minority, which is how most white Americans are taught to view race (McIntosh, 1988; Sleeter, 1996).

In Alice’s response, she refers to “white culture,” a term which I asked her to clarify in a subsequent probe.

Maria: You mentioned when you first started talking, answering this question, the phrase “white culture.” What is white culture?

Alice: White culture to me? That’s a tough question ... you’re catching me on my own terms, that’s not good. Let me answer it of what is black culture to me.

You know, when I sense, or think about black culture, I think about, you know, the issues of slavery and I think about music, jazz, the blues. I think about dancing. I don't think about that when I say the term 'white culture.' I think much more, sometimes passionate feelings about their culture.

Maria: About black culture?

Alice: Yes. Very strong historical bonds. You know, like all of the African Americans that I during my lifetime have gotten to know seem to be a little bit more in tune to their history, et cetera, and that's not always the case with a lot of the people that I know are white. So white culture more so, when I think about white culture, I think more so about uptight. You know, when I think about music I don't think about [a] passionate type of music. I think of rock and roll, classical. I'm not sure where else I want to go with that, but that's probably my idea of white culture, I guess.

Maria: From what you've just described ... it sounds like there's almost an absence of things in white culture.

Alice: Sometimes I feel that way. Sometimes I feel, such as a church setting, the difference between a white church and a black church. What's my immediate thought in the two different services is music and much more, black people are much more into it. They're much more feeling and when they sing their praises to God it's much more, it sounds like it's coming from deep down. And they're just giving it their all, and we go to a white church, and we're singing our hymns, and everybody's half-falling asleep ... my impression of the two different atmospheres are totally different ... Maybe that's because there's been so much negative things that have happened to a lot of black people through time, through early in their life, whatever, but there's a lot more to be emotional about, a lot more hate, I'm not sure.

I was interested in Alice's explanation of "white culture," especially in light of Frankenberg's (1993) findings that white women often attribute culture, or cultural practices and customs, to distinct racially- and/or ethnically-identified groups, but not to white people in general. Many of the women in Frankenberg's study, in fact, defined whiteness as the absence of any culture. Although Alice initially defined white culture through an explanation of her perception of black culture, she did attribute some cultural

forms/practices to whites, albeit ones which displayed a lack of character and a missing sense of history. By simply using the term "white culture," she indicates her belief in its existence. Alice's definitions of both black and white culture seem to include a fair number of stereotypes that may or may not be true. For example, she associates expressive musical forms with blacks, but not with whites. While blacks have a rich history in developing and transforming musical genres like jazz and the blues, every black person is not inherently gifted in music or dancing. Curiously, Alice associates whites with more uptight forms of music, and then lists classical music and rock and roll as examples. She does not seem to recognize the link between rock and roll and the rebellious counter-culture of the sixties, or rock and roll and the blues, or the presence of black musicians like Jimi Hendrix, or the possibility of black classical musicians. Alice appears to perceive black culture as having evolved from negative historical events, a perception which again indicates a subconscious tendency to think of all blacks as victims. Also, she assumes that all blacks have a sense of their history, simply by virtue of being black, and that whites do not. Alice does not acknowledge a diverse ethnicity among blacks, but nor does she among whites, either -- more evidence that when Americans think about race, they think mainly in terms of a black/white dichotomy, or, to use Elizabeth's term, black and white compartments.

KJ was much more reluctant to discuss race and whiteness in relation to herself. In fact, she was loathe to place herself within a racial category.

Maria: What racial group do you consider yourself belonging to?

KJ: American. Racial, I mean, I'm white, I'm red-headed. I've been called a

redhead more than I've been called white in my life. I mean, whenever people point me out, they usually don't say that white girl over there, they usually say that redhead. Black people even do that...

Maria: ... Interesting. What does being white mean to you?

KJ: It means that I burn real easily when I go outside. I mean, I don't know, being white... It means that a long time ago that the white people in America were really, really terrible and acted really bad towards black people and the whole country is still paying for it. It means that, I don't know, I don't really think of myself as being white ... I don't really associate a color with myself. I don't think of myself as being black or Hispanic, I just don't really, I just don't think of myself as being white. I think of myself as being me.

Maria: Okay, let me ask it this way and see if anything else comes to mind. How do you see yourself in relation to race.

KJ: Well, I guess with the people that I'm around sometimes I, I don't know, it's kind of awkward. I mean, I've never really thought about it. Okay, ask me again.

Maria: How do you see yourself in relation to race?

KJ: Just being a part of a pie. It's just a pie graph, I'm just one of the slices. I mean, sometimes a majority, sometimes a minority, it depends on where I'm at. If I'm working with a [specific] team, well, I don't even really think about it. Because they all get along so well. They don't segregate themselves. They interact.... I never have been aware, I never really have thought, okay, I'm white and these people are not white.

A surface reading of KJ's response might indicate that she is what Ignatiev and Garvey (1996) would term a "race traitor" -- a white person who refuses to abide by and accept the privileges her skin color affords her. KJ is reluctant to assume a racial identity, as whiteness holds little meaning for her. However, upon closer reading, it appears that KJ has committed race treason without reaching the level of awareness that coincides with traitor status. KJ recognizes that the United States is still paying for the grievous crimes whites historically have committed against blacks, but she locates this behavior in the

past, not the present. She has great difficulty considering herself in terms of race, and, for whatever reasons, seems to want her whiteness to signify nothing other than a propensity to sunburn easily. What she does not acknowledge, however, is the unearned advantage her skin color bestows upon her. KJ's description of working with a specific multi-racial athletic team implies that in the absence of segregation, race is not an individual or group identifier for her. Her ability to see herself as one of the slices in the pie graph of race indicates that she does not ascribe race only to other, "non-white" individuals, like Carol or BJ does. Yet, she had previously stated, "I don't really associate a color with myself" -- a common statement among white people (see Frankenberg, 1993) which is illustrative of Grover's (1997) assessment of white transparency. Her disregard of her whiteness can be considered both good and bad -- good, because she does not give much credence to static, racial categories, and bad, because she does not recognize her own racialization.

Hilary discussed whiteness in terms of labels before I specifically asked about what being white means to her.

Maria: So what race or group do you consider yourself belonging to?

Hilary: Caucasian or white, whatever's politically correct. I probably said white until I got into college and I started using more politically correct terms and stuff.

Maria: And that would be Caucasian, you think?

Hilary: I think if you say 'white,' I don't know, I'm really not white, you know ... I probably say, when I talk to people I probably say the word 'white' and stuff, but I know in my mind it should really be Caucasian. I don't like white, black, you know, because there are so many people in between who are mixed. They, say, have a lot more Italian heritage or Hispanic, so maybe their skin's a little bit darker and what would you call them? Are they the 'Other' group? You know, I hate labels anyway.

Hilary recognizes the inaccuracy of 'white' as a descriptor of physical appearance, acknowledges diverse ethnic identities among white-identified people, and also notes the possibility of a bi-racial or bi-ethnic identity. Implicit in this passage is also the perception that variations in skin color have different social significations in American society. Hilary initially has difficulty placing herself within a discussion about race and labels, however.

Maria: What does being Caucasian mean to you?

Hilary: Huh. I mean, I guess just how I look, my skin color would be in that group.

Maria: Does skin color have any meaning to you?

Hilary: No. I've never thought much about that.

Maria: Does anything come to mind now since you have been asked this question?

Hilary: No. I mean, about what does white mean to you? Yeah, because I place so much more emphasis on my, going back to the word culture and stuff like who I am and where I've grown up and my family background. I've never much thought, it's kind of like a given. I'm Caucasian, you know. I mean, you can see that from the outside. But someone from the outside wouldn't know that I have the German background.

Maria: So 'German' resonates much more strongly with you than being white?

Hilary: Definitely, way up there.

Because of her German heritage, Hilary identifies strongly with the concept of culture, but has trouble viewing herself in terms of race. Hilary's generational proximity to her ethnic origins gives her a distinct sense of having a culture, unlike many of the white women Frankenberg (1993) interviewed. In addition, she seems more aware of culture in

relation to European, Asian, and Latin American ethnic groups than she does in relation to black Americans -- an awareness that was also indicated in her general description of race in the previous sub-section.

Elizabeth had little trouble defining herself racially and discussing the social implications of being white.

Maria: Define yourself racially. What racial group do you belong to?

Elizabeth: Caucasian.

Maria: Okay. How do you see yourself in relation to race?

Elizabeth: How do I see myself in relation to race?

Maria: Going from the definition you just gave me, that you see yourself as Caucasian, what does being Caucasian mean to you?

Elizabeth: I'm given an advantage in society. I have it easier by far. Also the fact that I'm middle-class gives me an advantage off the get-go, so that's a birthright, I guess, if you're looking at birthrights here, which is pretty sad.

Maria: That class gives you an advantage?

Elizabeth: Yes, well, class and race. You know that I'm automatically born into this. It's almost like the Royal Family. If you look at the Royal Family, if you're born into the Royal Family, you're set.... and in a sense, I've been handed a jump start because I'm white, because I'm upper-middle class, where on the other hand, I've probably been dealt bad cards in the sense that I'm female, gay, and trying to penetrate a male-oriented profession.

Elizabeth views being white as a distinct advantage in society, especially when whiteness is coupled with the economic security of middle-class status. She is also aware that other identity markers, such as gender and sexual orientation, mediate one's life experiences and opportunities. She places herself in the context of those constructs, as well. In terms of Frankenberg's (1993) racial discourses, Elizabeth would be considered race cognizant,

as she recognizes that (white) racial beliefs are responsible for creating unequal social structures. Elizabeth is aware of the privileged social status whiteness secures -- a realization that makes her an exception among white people in general (Dyer, 1997, Hill, 1997; hooks, 1992; McIntosh, 1988), as well as among the six participants of this study.

Race has typically been used as a synonym for groups positioned as racially subordinate (Roman, 1993), but as a socially constructed category, race also applies to groups positioned as racially dominant. I therefore found it of paramount importance to ask the participants in this study about what being white means to them. The responses of most of the women indicate that race is not a label they have personally identified with, but rather have projected onto others. Within that projection is an ignorance of how race operates as a privileging identity for white people. The race picture is rounded out in the following sub-section by analyzing how the women in this study view others in relation to race.

White on Black

The intent of this study is to explore how white women who work in intercollegiate athletics think about the concept of race in general, and perceive themselves and others in relation to race. After asking each participant how she sees herself as a white woman, I asked her how she views others in relation to race. Those responses, plus other related comments, are included in this sub-section. It is revealing not only that the participants spoke most frequently about blacks when asked how they see others in relation to race, but also that much of the information relevant in this sub-section surfaced while the women were grappling with questions about their own

racialization.

Carol spoke about comfort levels when asked about how she perceives others in relation to race.

Carol: Well, I probably have a comfort level with different races ... But it's something that I don't want to, I mean, I don't want to feel more comfortable with certain groups than I do with others. And I'm consciously aware of it when I'm not as comfortable. I actually think about, you know, are there particular people that I don't reach out to as much? And why? Why do I feel more comfortable with some people than I do with others? ... You know, you look at your professional friends, you look at your personal friends ... who are those people? It's interesting to me because it's clear that my upbringing has had an impact on my adult life.... For as much as I fight it, and for as much as I don't like it, it's very clear.

In her response, Carol equates "others" with "different races," and implies that she must work to become comfortable around those whose racial markings are different than her own. She does not offer specific information about the groups she experiences comfort or discomfort around, yet she does acknowledge her upbringing for impacting her adult racial perceptions. Despite (or maybe because of) her apparent discomfort, she expresses a fascination with African Americans, and a desire to learn more about them through reading books and watching films.

Carol: I have some wonderful books. Nathan McCall has written, if you haven't read the book up there [on her office shelf] that's called, "What's Goin' On," you should read it. I mean, I'm very fascinated.

Maria: I'm familiar with his name.

Carol: Yeah, I'm very fascinated by the African culture and you know, when you read some of these books you start, I think, I think people who are in athletics in particular have to be very sensitive to the nature of the people that make up our family, and if you don't have a relationship with that, how do you learn about that? How do you understand?

Interestingly, Carol utilizes black American sources in order to better understand “African culture,” a tendency which indicates that she considers “African” to be synonymous with “black American” or “African American.” Furthermore, Carol discusses the importance of forming relationships and learning about and understanding “people,” but she seems to spend more time consulting media sources for information about race (read: African Americans) than she does building relationships with black people -- a subconscious preference which perhaps speaks to her own comfort levels with black-identified individuals. Also noteworthy in the above passage is Carol’s use of vague descriptive terms instead of specific racial identifiers: “people who are in athletics” (white?) and “people that make up our family” (black?). Carol proceeded to provide a specific example of a case demonstrating the need for (white) people working in athletics to increase their sensitivity to black people. Her example leads to questions regarding the offering of sensitivity training in college athletics.

Carol: ... that book, “What’s Goin’ On,” I had my boss read it when she went on vacation last summer. I said, you’ve got to read this book. Everybody in athletics should read it in my opinion because it talks about things that we have no concept about. I’ll give you an example of something that happened at work. We have an African American student who was having some problems, and this young person elected to see a black therapist.... And it was difficult, no not difficult, it’s confusing to the Athletic Director why you would have to do that. And she says, I don’t care, if I had a problem, I don’t care if you’re a male, a female, white, green, blue. It makes no difference to me. Why do we have to have sort of a specialized therapist for this particular case? And my response was, you haven’t been black.... you haven’t had to deal with a comfort zone with people that perhaps this person has. We haven’t had to live that life. It is different for them.... And that’s a perfect example ... it’s sort of like saying, until you walk in their shoes. And I haven’t, and so I read, you know. I rented “Soul Food” ... I go to movies. I go, to try to understand a life that I was isolated from, discriminated against, and had no interaction with. And I’m in athletics, which is extrem..., it has such a strong influence. And so it, it’s interesting to me my comfort zones with race. And why

I make the choices I make.... It fascinates me about myself.

Curiously, Carol suggests that her boss, and colleagues in general, should read a book in order to better understand the experiences of African Americans, rather than become acquainted with and develop relationships with more black people. She is concerned about taking a “walk in their shoes,” but her strategy for learning more about black communities involves the voyeurism of reading books and watching movies. Carol recognizes that blacks also have comfort zones with racial others, but does not elaborate on what the nature or origins of those comfort levels might be. And, her vague language continues in this passage when attempting to describe the predominance of blacks in athletics: “*it* has such a strong influence.”

BJ’s perceptions of racial others were discussed in the context of previous subsections, in which they were particularly relevant. She also spoke about her perceptions of racial others in respect to coaching and recruiting black student-athletes as she transitioned out of her response to my question about whiteness. BJ recognizes that a black student-athlete might have different experiences than a white student-athlete, but she does not always see those differences in terms of race issues. However, she remained vague about what those differences might be, and how she might process through them with a student-athlete.

BJ: I think it’s important to respect the fact that there are differences. I think understanding is important if it’s important to the other person. I think if it’s important to that kid that I really understand where you’re coming from or whatever and they’re willing to share and open up in terms of that part of their life, then I think it’s important. I don’t feel like I have to be the one that they, I mean, I think it’s important that somewhere in their life they have people who meet that need. I guess I don’t feel like I have to be that person as a coach or an

administrator.... I've tended to let the person know that I care - I'm here if you want to talk - ... if not, then I respect that that's not somethin' they want to share with me now or ever.

BJ explained that she does not necessarily perceive others in terms of race, but instead is "really hung up on who the person is." This view could be perceived either as color-blindness, or as an unwillingness to make any individual judgements based upon skin color (or gender, religion, sexual orientation, etc.). She does not automatically assume that a black person has race issues, or that if a black student-athlete was experiencing race-related problems, she would even want to speak with BJ about them. But, BJ does consider it important for black student-athletes to have someone in their lives, preferably on campus, with whom they do feel comfortable speaking about racial issues. In this sense, I would argue that BJ differs from the white women Frankenberg (1993) describes as "color-evasive" (unaware of how skin color affects one's material chances in society).

When I asked Alice about how she sees others in relation to race, she immediately mentioned her dislike of prejudice.

Maria: How do you see others in relation to race? You talked about that a little already, by defining black culture ... is there anything else you want to add to that?

Alice: I think there's a lot of prejudice out in the world. That upsets me. I don't like it. I don't like it when people aren't treated as equals, and they should be. Whether it's how a police officer, because you hear so much about crime and dealing with black suspects versus white suspects. You know, you have a black and a white suspect standing right there and the police officer comes to the black suspect and suspects them first, every single time. That's not right. I had a roommate in college that was very prejudiced and her parents were very prejudiced, and it was easy to see in hearing her parents talk where she got it from. And I was just appalled because my parents would never talk about people like that. They would never talk about black trash and this and that. And so I don't know where I'm going with this ... but my perception, I guess, of other

people and race, dealing with race, is unfortunately they're so locked by tradition in the world, they think that there's just a lot of people that just don't understand that the difference between people is sometimes the color of their skin, and there's good white people and there's bad white people, and there's good black people, there's bad black people, there's good Indians, there's bad Indians. You know, and it doesn't necessarily have to do anything about the color of their skin. And unfortunately not enough people in this world know that, or believe that.

Alice's association of race with prejudice toward groups such as blacks and Indians implies that she sees others as victims in relation to race -- a common association among white people which views blacks only in relation to racism, and, in the absence of an acknowledgment of white privilege, removes whites from any role they might play in perpetuating racist practices (Dyer, 1997; McIntosh, 1988). She recognizes that perceptions of skin color are responsible for the differential treatment of blacks and whites, but believes that skin color does not necessarily have anything to do with an individual's intrinsic goodness or badness. Moreover, in discussing how she perceives racially-identified others, Alice gives consideration (albeit with de-personalizing pronouns) to how those others might perceive white people: "they think there's just a lot of people that just don't understand."

KJ, as previously noted, does not like to dwell on the racial identity of others, or herself. However, she mentioned that she has always been fascinated by people of other racial groups.

KJ: I think I've always been very attracted to people of other races. And I don't know where that came from, because my family, we were never, my parents were never good friends with any people of other races.... I think I've been very attracted to things that were a lot different from me. Maybe it's because I've always wanted to be different, or maybe being a redhead in a world full of blonds and brunettes, you know. I don't know what it is, but I've always thought of myself as being different. I just really kind of liked people who were different,

because I've always thought of myself as being different.

Although she attributes her fascination with people of other races to a perception of herself as different, KJ's response suggests that she views those who are differently raced than her as 'exotic' racial others. This view was also evident among some of the white women in Frankenberg's (1993) study, and was similar to Carol's fascination with "African" culture. Perceptions of blacks as 'exotic' or 'unique' by whites further sets blacks apart as racial others. KJ's expressed desire to be different alludes to the deficiencies of white culture which Alice discussed in the previous section, and speaks to Roediger's (1991) assertion that whiteness constitutes the absence of culture.

When I specifically asked KJ about her perception of others in relation to race, she related a work-related incident and then spoke about perceptive differences between her and her boyfriend, David.

Maria: How do you see others in relation to race?

KJ: I get frustrated sometimes if somebody tries to use, like if they say, because I'm black, you're not going to let me do something. Like a football player said that to me before. I wouldn't let him change the music [in the weight room]. Well, I don't let anybody change the music, and he tried to say, oh, because I'm a brother and everything you're not going to let me change the music. And I said, you know, it ain't got nothing to do with your skin color, man. Nobody touches the stereo, no athletes touch the stereo, black or white. 'Ah, you're just saying that.' No, I'm not just saying that. Nobody touches the stereo, you know, and then they know that I'm being fair.... I don't know, this is really stumping me because I just never really think, I just think of it as all working together. I don't think, I'm not really aware of being white. Especially up here, because everybody in this town, I think people are a lot more into who you are, not the color of your skin. Especially dating a black man. We never get stared at. If people are staring at us, it's because they think we're a really cool-looking couple or something. I mean, nobody's staring at us in a negative way. So, I don't know. I mean, it's even when I'm around his family and I'm the only white person, I don't feel white.

Maria: Your boyfriend's family?

KJ: Right. I mean, if I'm the only white person there I don't feel white, but the opposite is true of him because he's very aware of being the only black person if he's ever somewhere where he's the only black person...

Maria: Do you think he would answer these questions differently?

KJ: Yeah, he's very aware. He thinks this area is racist to a certain degree and he's never lived in the South. So yeah, he would answer a little bit differently. I think our perceptions, of course they've got to be different because we grew up in different areas of the country. I guess if I were to answer for him, how does he see himself in relation to race, he would probably say minority, you know, he thinks and could be very warranted, but he's given the hard jobs at work whereas the white guys are given the easier jobs.

KJ seemingly contradicts her earlier statements about difference in her comments regarding the music incident in the weight room. She is stumped by questions which ask her to consider her perception of race, claiming that she just thinks of other people in terms of "all working together." Here again, her struggle with these questions is illustrative of the transparency of whiteness to whites (Dyer, 1997; Grover, 1997); KJ is color-blind to herself. Also of interest are the opposing views she and David have of their town's racial climate. KJ thinks they are well-received as an inter-racial couple, yet David perceives a degree of racism among the town's residents. KJ attributes this difference to their respective geographical origins, which could be partially responsible, but she does not recognize that power differentials based on skin color might also influence how she as a white person and David as a black person both are perceived and perceive others in relation to race. Yet, she does acknowledge that racial perceptions vary from person to person within this passage.

Hilary asked for clarification of my initial question about racial perceptions of

others, and then proceeded to speak about her familiarity with alternative types of people.

Maria: How do you see others in relation to race? Like I asked you how you see yourself in relation to being white. How do you see others in relation to race?

Hilary: Like how do I look at them?

Maria: Yeah.

Hilary: I like to think that I look at people, you know, especially once I know them and their name, just you know, that's so-and-so. I don't tend to label them in my mind by white, Caucasian, black.... it just goes back to growing up with early seeing and just being exposed to alternate types of people that nothing makes me pause when I meet someone new. The big thing is when I go somewhere else and it's not a big mix of races, maybe notice, wow, it seems like there's more white people here. That's when I seem to notice.

Maria: How do you feel when you're in a situation like that, that's more homogeneous? What goes through your mind?

Hilary: I think I just notice it. Of course it doesn't bother me, I think I just notice it. I tend to observe a lot anyway, what types of groups are around me. Unless I feel threatened or something, you know. I think I just tend to notice it, but it's like a passing thought, nothing huge.

Significantly, when Hilary is asked how she looks at others in relation to race, she does not single out only blacks or other "non-white" groups in her response, but rather ascribes race to both whites and blacks. Her comments "nothing makes me pause when I meet someone new" and "of course it doesn't bother me" suggest that she thinks hesitation in that situation is a typical behavior for many people.

Hilary became personally acquainted with more African Americans because of her college athletic participation. She developed more perceptions of African Americans through those acquaintances, and shared some of them during this segment of our

conversation.

Hilary: I've noticed that wherever, you can be at a restaurant or a movie or anywhere out, and African Americans always say 'hi' to each other, even if they don't know each other. They always take time to, not converse, but just say 'hi' and notice each other, whereas other races might walk right by each other. I think that's always kind of cool. They tend to be, because I had three pretty close friends on my college team, and they were all very different. You know, one from Maryland, one from Canada, and one from Alabama, so they all are different in their backgrounds, at least my friends on my college team are all very outspoken for sure, they definitely spoke their mind, and didn't hold anything back. But I don't know, that's hard to say just from those three who were my closer friends ... Sometimes it did seem like, and this maybe goes back to high school, but a lot of times African Americans are a lot louder, though. And they seem more boisterous and when they are excited they let you know. And I always thought it was kind of cool, maybe because I'm so shy, and I thought, they really get into it, you know ... they just seem a lot louder than a lot of the white people or other races.

While Hilary is reluctant to generalize behaviors to the entire African American race based on her interactions with three black college friends, she does offer two stereotypical observations about black people in this excerpt. Her use of more negative terms like "loud" and "boisterous," as opposed to an adjective such as 'expressive' is curious.

When I asked her why she thought black people always greet each other, she explained:

Hilary: I think the acknowledgment when they say hi to each other and they seem to have good respect between each other, even if they don't know each other, that's just probably out of how they've been brought up with their family and just having that respect for the black people, though.

Maria: Why do you think white people don't do those things, or care about those things?

Hilary: I don't know. Maybe it's because white people know that for one thing wherever they would go within their city, their town, this country, there's usually going to be tons of other white people around. But you never think about it.... Say I walk into a restaurant somewhere and say if I'm the only white person. I mean, not many white people choose to go to ... a restaurant or a store that usually caters to black people, not many white people would go in and eat there, but that happens all the time for black people, though ... but we never put ourselves in

their shoes or choose to go to that part of town or that store ... or something. Because maybe it goes back to ... because we're in the majority, that we don't take the time to think about it and we just take it for granted that we're always going to be in a comfort zone.

Despite the black stereotypes that Hilary mentions, she has given thought to potential reasons for the behaviors she lists, and then draws an insightful distinction between the experiences of whites and blacks in the United States. She recognizes that whites often take their majority-group status for granted, and, at the same time, fail to comprehend the full consequences of having a minority-group status which is based upon skin color. This realization echoes McIntosh's (1988) assertion about white privilege.

Asking Elizabeth about her perception of others in relation to race launched us into a lengthy discussion of college athletics and various forms of advertising and entertainment media.

Maria: How do you see others in relation to race? You've talked about this a little bit already.

Elizabeth: I see a lot of discrimination. I see it at the high schools I work at. I see it when we travel. I was traveling with a team once and we went through this small town and the bus driver stopped and none of the African American kids wanted to get off the bus, because we were in the South, and it was not the place to get off the bus. Just even talking to the athletes, the discrimination that they respond to. I see discrimination among our athletic department with it. You know, a white athlete makes a better poster child than a black athlete. You've got, everybody's looking for All-American apple pie, and in the media's opinion, that is the good ol' white boy from whatever, the good ol' white gal from whatever, to represent. You know, as long as they're not gay. So, straight, white, blond hair, blue eyes. Oh yeah. The biggest seller on TV. You don't have a black man driving a Mustang on TV. Because he stole that Mustang, if he is. You don't have the black man driving a Cadillac because he's not the business executive. You don't have the black woman selling the toothpaste ... That's not the face you want to associate with your toothpaste. And that's stupid, because they buy toothpaste, too. You have the black woman selling the hair care products for the black woman. That's what you have. And it's an association, it's relation, it's

identity.

Maria: So you see that as a trend, that black people are upheld only for other black people, but white people are upheld for everyone?

Elizabeth: Yeah. White people are upheld for everyone. It's starting to be more now that you're getting your token. I mean, if you want to look through the years of films, and TV shows, you know, the sixties and seventies, you had your token black subcharacter. Now you have your token gay subcharacter. And there's whole sitcoms that are just whole black-populated stories. So that's made a big change. And you've got major, you've got cops who are minorities, whether they're Hispanic ... and you've got more women being cops and all. So the theater has done a good job, the movies and TV has done a good job of kind of switching that, except in advertising, if you notice ... you've got an array of victims and criminals, of all races, it doesn't matter. All intelligence, whether it's the upper middle class woman saying I didn't do it and murdering her husband -- none of that matters. But look at the commercials that come on. There's no black man driving a Cadillac. There's no black woman selling toothpaste, you know. There's just nothing.

Elizabeth finds the media culpable for perpetuating racial stereotypes and influencing the dominant racial images which pervade American society. Her facetious comments indicate that she is aware that media images of blacks and whites (or the absence thereof) are often inaccurate representations of individual experiences, or unique representations which cannot be generalized to all members of a racially-identified group. Her perception of the media varies greatly from Carol's, who refers to media forms as her primary source of information about African Americans. Interestingly, Elizabeth sees more progress toward expanding racial perceptions within the entertainment media than within the advertisement media. Elizabeth initially mentions discrimination in her response about perceiving racial others, but rather than referring to the black athletes she discusses merely as victims, she shows compassion for *their* perceptions of racial others and *their* race-related fears. She is also aware of the role other identity markers, such as

gender and sexual orientation, play in the maintenance of social power structures (“So, straight, white, blond hair, blue eyes”). In relation to her perceptions of others in relation to race, Elizabeth again demonstrates a race cognizance which makes her exceptional within this group of white women, and perhaps among majority-group whites in general.

The interview excerpts included in this subsection indicate, with the exception of Elizabeth’s, that these white woman found it much easier to speak about race in terms of others -- notably blacks -- than themselves, a research finding also reported by Frankenberg (1993) and supported by McIntosh (1988), Roman (1993), and Sleeter (1996), among others. Even though the majority of the women in this study spoke more easily about blacks in relation to race than themselves as white women, their responses, to varying degrees, included racial stereotypes which they operate on in their daily lives.

White Perceptions of Race in/through Sport Contexts

In this sub-section, I present the race thinking which is at work in the participants’ daily professional lives in intercollegiate athletics. The presentation of these women’s operative race thoughts includes examples of how each woman’s racial awareness is/was mediated by her sport involvement, in addition to the participants’ observations of racism in intercollegiate athletics and their suggested strategies as white women for alleviating racism.

One striking similarity among the participants’ experiences is that they all consider sport as their main avenue for meeting, interacting with, and learning about individuals from different racial backgrounds. Some of these experiences were reported in previous sub-sections (e.g., Alice in *White on Black*), and therefore will not be repeated

here. As mentioned in the sub-section on generational differences, Carol's relationship with a black male basketball player in college helped her further distance herself from her parent's negative teaching about race and racial others.

Maria: Sport participation seems like the avenue through which you first met an African American individual, first got to know someone of a different racial group than you.

Carol: Right, yes.

Maria: Okay. Did that single interaction influence your perception of individuals from different backgrounds at all?

Carol: Very much so. I think I had it figured out before then, though. Because I was smart, you know, and realized that the song and dance I was getting at home wasn't necessarily the truth. I didn't, I didn't buy it. I wasn't believing it, and so I think I had it figured out, but I do think my relationship with Ron at the time and since then has just validated that. That my perception of what the real world was like was correct.... But it was clearly the avenue of athletics that got me there. That's where all my interactions are. Even outside of athletics, I'm trying to figure out if I've had any African American friends, and I don't think I have. I think they've all been associated with athletics in some way. So that clearly has been the road.

In her appreciation of sport for providing her with the opportunity to meet African Americans, Carol did not mention any concern over her lack of interactions with blacks or other differently raced individuals outside of athletics in her adult life. Her friendships with Ron and her colleague, Mike, in addition to her books and movies about African Americans, seem sufficient, even though she expresses an interest in black people and a desire to have her sons interact with more racially and ethnically diverse groups of people.

BJ drew a distinction between meeting people of different racial backgrounds through sport, and having those interactions influence her racial perceptions.

BJ: I don't know that I want to say my participation in sports influenced my perceptions. It brought me in contact with people from other races. That I ... otherwise ... growing up or whatever, was not exposed to. You know, I think that is the way I would probably put it.... I mean, I haven't met any minorities outside of sports as I have in, but I don't know that I'd feel any different about a minority I met outside of sports than - I don't have a different perception of somebody who's a minority that has nothing to do with sports.... I think sport has provided me [with] the greatest opportunity to meet and have, and be a part of other people's lives and have them be a part of my life - that are from other races.

BJ's explanation implies that she has become acquainted with racially-defined minorities outside of sport, albeit to a lesser degree than in sport, but that these interactions have not influenced her perceptions of individuals from those minority groups. BJ's description of her sport acquaintances also indicates that her relationships with minorities are multi-dimensional -- she does not view them only as colleagues, or "touchstones," or exotic others. When I asked if her interactions influenced her thinking about race in general, she responded in terms of being a coach and an administrator in college athletics.

Maria: Did your sport participation influence your thinking about race in general?

BJ: I wouldn't say my participation in sport as an athlete - ... I mean, there again, it was nothing more than the opportunity to meet and be a part of people's lives who were from a different race. My involvement in sport as a coach and administrator, that might be true to some degree a little bit more, that has influenced a little bit.... I think it's that way only because you're dealing with people on a different level. You know, when you're on a team together, you're just, you're being friends and you're trying to, you have a common goal ... and, you know, when I was a coach, and as an administrator, I'm often dealing with younger people, and you feel some responsibility for their growth and development as people, and that type of thing.... you play different roles, so therefore, yeah, I'm sure I look at it a little differently.

As a professional working with student-athletes and their parents, BJ feels some responsibility for developing and maintaining an awareness of race-related issues and

experiences and their possible affect on individual lives. She also expressed this sentiment when discussing recruiting concerns as a college coach (see *White on Black* sub-section).

KJ spoke both about meeting people from different races through sport, and the influence those interactions had upon her race thinking in general.

Maria: Do you think your sport participation or your work within athletics influences your perception of people from different racial groups?

KJ: Definitely so. I think if I hadn't been working with athletes from all different races, I think I would probably, if I didn't work with any other people from any other races, if I only worked around white people, then I wouldn't know any people from any other races and it would still be a mystery and they would just be, I'd just be curious. I wouldn't know if they were real people or not. So I think it's, I've really enjoyed knowing them, a wide variety of people, and not just necessarily because they're black or Hispanic or Asian or whatever, but just because I enjoy getting to know them as individuals.

Maria: And sport has allowed you to have that interaction primarily in your life?

KJ: Oh, for me, definitely. Because in the weight room, you get to talk to people more than, I mean, I get to talk to all the athletes, so if I weren't working in this field, I wouldn't get to know any of these athletes. But you know, I might be working down at the post office where I'd work with some black people, but I don't know if I'd get the chance to know them on the same level that I've gotten to know these athletes, because athletes, I play a more motherly sort of role in what I do, and at the post office ... it wouldn't be the same type of relationship. It would be more like, could you pass me that stamp? ... it wouldn't be, are you tired today? Do you need me to rub your shoulders? You know, it wouldn't be a nurturing environment like it is that I work in.

Maria: Do you think your participation, your working within sports, influences your thinking about race in general?

KJ: I think it does. Because people of other races and genders are just in socio-economic classes. I mean, they're people. And ... if I hadn't been in this environment, I might not think that. But I think all my life, I've always been curious about people of other cultures. So I think somehow along my path I think I would have found it.

It is interesting to note, and perhaps telling of KJ's upbringing, that she did not consider people from different racial groups as "real" until she became personally acquainted with them. She did not mention this consideration in relation to white people, however -- an omission which suggests the unmarked transparency of whiteness as the standard against which all other racial identities are judged. Her omission also illustrates the status of white skin color as a basis for feelings of familiarity among racially-identified white people. KJ appreciates the nature of her job in college athletics, because her position as a strength and conditioning coach allows her to interact with student-athletes on a personal and professional level. It is those interactions which she most credits for influencing her race thinking and perceptions of individuals from racially-identified groups different from her own. KJ emphasizes socio-economic class as the main stratifier of individuals, an observation which does not conflate race with class, but, nonetheless fails to recognize how perceptions of other identity markers, such as race and gender, structure individual lives.

Hilary also values her experience within athletics for providing opportunities to meet individuals from different backgrounds.

Maria: Do you think your sport participation influenced your thinking about race in general, or individuals of different racial groups?

Hilary: Yeah. I got to know them. That really helped.

Maria: So you see that as important, to get to know someone?

Hilary: Yeah. I don't think you can judge from the outside. And if you did that you'd be wrong on many people. So as I got to know them, it was pretty cool. It's big for me, too, to get to know their families and I got that chance, too, just because most were very supportive, like their families would come and watch a

lot. And that helped, so I got to know them and their background, where they're from and what their parents are like.

Hilary seems to be alluding to skin color when she talks about judging individuals "from the outside," and to be acknowledging that many of the stereotypes which are constructed on the basis of skin color are fallacies. Her vague use of language ("them," "their families," "their parents") in this response does not indicate whether she is speaking about one particular racial group or not, but her reference to parental support and spectating suggests she is speaking about her African American college teammates.

Although Elizabeth has interacted with significantly more racially-identified minorities through her career in college athletics, she mainly credits her family for influencing her racial perceptions.

Maria: Did your sport participation influence or affect your race perceptions at all, and your perception of people from different racial backgrounds?

Elizabeth: I think more or less, I think my family upbringing was the biggest influence. As far as playing and everything, if they were on my team, they were on my team, and that was fine, you know. The enemy was the other team, whether they were white, black, Hispanic, it didn't matter, they were the enemy. Not the enemy you wanted to kill, but the enemy you wanted to beat.

Unlike the other participants, Elizabeth proudly shares her parents' racial perceptions and consideration for individuals of other racially-identified groups. She had a more broad base of knowledge than athletics for information about race, primarily because her parents "were very worldly and very well-read and very tolerant of everything and everybody ... [and] really pushed a non-racist environment."

The significant role that sport, particularly college athletics, has played in influencing these women's perceptions of race and differently-raced individuals can be

considered as validation for the focus of this study. If white women who work within college athletics derive most of their knowledge about race from their interactions in sport contexts, then it is imperative to examine the operation of racial constructs in that context, especially considering the pervasiveness of sport as an American cultural form. Work of this nature which focuses on whiteness is also necessary, especially in light of the fact that none of the participants claimed they learned more about their own racialization through sport interactions.

During the course of these interviews, the participants spoke, to varying degrees, about their perceptions of racism in intercollegiate athletics, and when asked, offered opinions about how they, as white women, might be able to prevent and/or alleviate racial stereotypes and racist practices in that context. Each woman claimed that racism does exist in college athletics, but some were more forthcoming with specific examples than others, and more comfortable discussing the topic in general.

Carol emphatically believes racism exists in intercollegiate athletics, but was hard-pressed to provide specific examples to support her assertion.

Maria: Do you think racism exists in intercollegiate athletics?

Carol: Do I think what?

Maria: Racism exists.

Carol: Absolutely. Unfortunately. It's kind of like gender equity. You know, we've made some huge progress, and is the glass half-full, is the glass half-empty? And there are days when that glass is as empty as you can imagine and there are days when, when you would hope that it would be half-full. I'm probably more pessimistic than optimistic about it. But, you know, we're getting there. It's just, it just seems sometimes a long way away. So, no question.

Maria: Okay. And you based that on your personal work experience?

Carol: Yeah. My personal knowledge, yeah. My sense, my feeling.

Maria: Are there any other specific race issues which have come up in this athletic department?

Carol: Yeah, there's been lots of them. I mean, there've been hiring issues in attempting to provide a more diverse staff. That's a very controversial issue in, in what we're attempting to do. There have been interactions that have been, I don't know, so much racially motivated. I don't know, I don't know about that, that an interaction was uncomfortable because of race. But certainly when you have mixed cultures involved in it, it gets heightened a little bit.... But there probably would have been situations that probably, you know, would be reflected in any kind of a work environment or professional environment.

After Carol's initial assertion, she makes a brief analogy between racism and gender equity issues, and then provides evasive, metaphor-laden rhetoric about racism in intercollegiate athletics before reiterating her original response. This interview excerpt suggests that perhaps gender is an easier topic to discuss than race for Carol, and that she either senses racism exists, but knows of no concrete examples, or knows racism exists, but is unwilling to share specific examples from her athletic department. The general race-related issues that Carol does mention concern hiring practices, and the department's "controversial" attempt to hire a more diverse staff. Although Carol expresses a desire to have a more diverse staff, she describes the involvement of "mixed cultures" as a problematic situation. When I asked Carol for more specific examples of racism, she stated that she would think of some to share during our follow-up interview, but never made good on that promise. Carol spoke more about hiring practices when I asked her if she thought she could alleviate racism in intercollegiate athletics.

Maria: As a white woman, do you see yourself as having the ability to alleviate

the racism that exists in collegiate athletics?

Carol: Not to alleviate it. I would hope that I would be a positive influence.... I would hope that the way in which I am and the things that I believe in are things that would encourage people to, you know, look at themselves and be aware. A lot of times people are really ignorant. I mean, they don't even realize that something as, you know, saying isn't that a nice-looking black couple, you know, where you wouldn't say isn't that a nice white couple. I mean, it's something as minor as that, but people don't, they're not, they're ignorant to it.... You have a chance sometimes of behavior change even if it's not addressed, but usually people have to be aware of change in order to change. And so I would hope that, by my, not so much by my influence, but just my presence here that ... that we work very hard to create an environment of support and an environment where people are treated equally in regards to race, gender, or sport ... [that we] would create an environment that was race, racist-free. But I doubt that would ever happen, but I certainly hope I'd be a positive force.

Carol wants to be a positive force in the elimination of racism from collegiate athletics, but she offers no specific strategies for creating a racism-free climate, other than setting herself up to lead by example. She indicates an awareness of the different usage of labels in the description of whites and blacks, and claims that "people are really ignorant," but does not recognize the evasive and de-personalizing language that she utilizes when discussing race or other racially-identified individuals. Moreover, she does not consider herself a proactive influencer of racial perceptions, even though she believes ignorant behavior has to be addressed before it can be changed. Carol offers no reason for refusing to assume this role, but her response nonetheless brings to mind arguments that white people often do not recognize any responsibility for maintaining or eliminating forms of racism (e.g., Frankenberg, 1993; hooks, 1992; McIntosh, 1988; Sleeter, 1996).

Because Carol spent a substantial amount of time talking about hiring concerns in relation to race, I asked her about a specific black staff member I had observed during an

athletic event.

Maria: I was watching the basketball staff last night, and I noticed that they have an assistant who is an African American woman. Was that a conscious effort to bring in a person of color?

Carol: Yes. We wouldn't have a basketball staff without representation from a person of color. Male or female.

Maria: What's her role on the team primarily? Do you know?

Carol: She handles, I mean, in addition to her coaching responsibilities, I think she's in charge of, she has all the academics and does it very, very well, she does. She does all the road gigs, she's in charge of tickets on the road and the travels, kind of stuff like that. I'm not sure what her coaching responsibilities are. And, she's great, she's good. She's a very good, she's like the mediator between the kids and coaches. She looks good.

Curiously, Carol explained that her department would not have a basketball staff without representation from a person of color, but she does not express this concern for any of the other university athletic teams. Perhaps her department is playing into stereotypes about blacks and basketball, and thinks that a person of color is needed as a role-model for black student-athletes. However, the women's basketball team only has three black players. Carol's description of this assistant coach ("she looks good") implies that her hire in a peripheral, yet visible, position might have been a requirement to demonstrate the department's efforts to create a more diverse staff, and suggests that this coach is valued primarily for her skin color.

BJ spoke about racism in intercollegiate athletics in relation to racism in society at large.

Maria: Do you think racism exists in intercollegiate athletics?

BJ: I think to some degree, 'cause I think it's still in society. But I don't think

intercollegiate athletics is, you know, really that different from society in terms of its social values or anything.... I'm sure it's there. And probably the same ways you see it in society.

Maria: Any specific examples that come up? Whether it be here in your department or just things that you'd observe, in general, elsewhere in college athletics.

BJ: Yeah ... The best example I can give you right now is, and you saw the game Saturday, is Jen (black player). And here is, you know, an African American who is from the inner city of [a West Coast city] and I think certainly if you want to look at how people responded to her at times in this department, and there certainly has been some stereotyping being from the quote "ghetto" and some things of that nature, so I think you see it in that way.

BJ does not view sport as detached from general society, but rather recognizes a connection between society and sport in relation to social values -- a connection that she considers responsible for the existence of racism in intercollegiate athletics. Unlike Carol, she provides a specific example of racism in her department, and demonstrates an awareness of the negative stereotypes with which black student-athletes often contend. BJ proceeded to provide examples of how some of her colleagues responded to Jen's presence on the basketball team. Because of Jen's skin color and geographical origin, some staff members expected her to fail to meet academic eligibility standards, or to perform poorly for a coach who was known as a disciplinarian. BJ was visibly bothered by these stereotypical perceptions, which she linked to the influence of the media. She asserted, "people jump to conclusions sometimes about her because that's what they saw on television or they saw it in a movie ... I'm not sure they ever take the time to really get to know the kid." As a white woman, BJ thinks that she can help alleviate racism in intercollegiate athletics by establishing relationships with student-athletes and colleagues

(getting to know the kids), and assuming responsibility for confronting racism as an authority figure.

BJ: I think an important part of it is to not let it exist, you know, as a person of authority in that environment, to not look the other way. I mean, if you do hear a comment that you feel is racial in nature or inappropriate or whatever, that you don't look the other way - that you respond to it. And maybe, not so much in a disciplinarian way, but in a way of explaining why it is maybe offensive to somebody else.

Alice provided a direct, immediate response to my question about racism, and then offered a few brief examples of racism that she has observed as a coach in various athletic departments. Although she was willing to discuss racism, she was reluctant to implicate any colleagues or speak about practices she had not personally observed.

Maria: Do you think racism exists in college athletics?

Alice: Yes.

Maria: In what ways?

Alice: I think not necessarily am I speaking for this university, or for certain coaches, but I think that there are some areas of the country, some towns, that treat black athletes differently from what they treat white athletes. I think that was true at the university where I was at before.... It was very difficult for black athletes in that town to go out and eat in any establishments. Not that they weren't served, but they didn't have the services that a white person would have, or a white student-athlete. But yet when they were on that basketball court, people gave money to go watch them and people were yelling and screaming for them. But they were treated differently and that's wrong.

Alice's observation of differences between a town's treatment of black student-athletes on and off the court indicates the role athletic success and entertainment value plays in rendering blacks 'safe' in the eyes of whites -- a commonly noted dynamic (e.g., Andrews, 1996a; McCall, 1997; Smith, 1992). Alice also spoke about the racist

perceptions of some of her colleagues in the coaching profession.

Alice: I think that sometimes black athletes and white athletes are treated differently by coaches in how they deal with things. I think there's a perception still, and this is just my perception, this is not a fact by any stretch of the imagination, but black athletes aren't as smart as white athletes. A black athlete can't be a quarterback. I think that's still out there. I think it's slowly changing and in some parts of the country it's better than other parts of the country. I think there are some coaches that will, depending on the sport, obviously in the sport of football and basketball you can't survive without black athletes these days. But I think in other sports there can be some prejudice in recruiting. I'm not going to recruit a black athlete. I'm not going to recruit a white athlete. I think it works both ways.

In her discussion of discrimination against black athletes, Alice mentions a prime example of stacking based upon white coaches' perceptions of black's intellectual ability. Her comment regarding the necessity of black athletes in football and basketball is intriguing for at least two reasons; one, it is possible that she is basing that assumption on stereotypical information about the "natural supremacy" of black athletes in those sports, and two, she seems to consider that necessity as evidence that coaches of those sports do not participate in exclusionary recruiting practices. Interestingly, Alice conceives of racism in a black/white dichotomy, but unlike the other participants thus far, considers the possibility of racist practices against white student-athletes.

As a white woman, Alice believes she has the ability to have a positive impact on racial perceptions. Her main strategy for helping alleviate racism in college athletics involves recruiting more black players on her softball team.

Alice: I think that I can have a positive impact on things. Not that I can change things totally. I can see, you know, put into a certain situation will maybe bring a few black players in the future, that that might help, that I could help some other people in their perception of how maybe they have been in a small town environment and they haven't been exposed to someone of another background.

Her strategy to recruit more black players in order to alleviate racism and alter racial perceptions seems to reduce the solving of race-related problems in athletics to the increased representation of racially-identified minorities. This solution is reminiscent of NCAA strategies to demonstrate compliance with Title IX gender equity stipulations. Most universities focus on showing a balanced percentage of male and female athletes, but not on working to alter sexist gender perceptions. I do not mean to imply that recruiting black athletes is a bad idea -- it is just that more needs to be done in conjunction.

KJ sees evidence of racism in college athletics in media portrayals of white and black athletes and in the differential treatment of white and black athletes as students.

KJ: The prominent [black] football, basketball athletes, most of the time, male, whenever they get in trouble with the law, their pictures are put in the paper. To me that's racist, because you know whoever they had the fight with, their picture is never in the paper.... a black guy that's an athlete gets in a fight and gets arrested, he's in the paper. So to me that's prejudice.... And I don't know why that is. I mean, I don't think the newspaper journalists are necessarily all that racist. I'm sure they are to some degree, but if a black guy gets in trouble, you've got to put his picture in the paper. As related to women and prejudice and racism, you know, I suppose they probably encounter some racism within their classes ... their professors might treat them a little different, but I don't know.

The examples of racism that come to mind for KJ are perhaps revealing of her subconscious associations regarding black male and female student-athletes. She sees black male athletes as victims of racism *after* they have committed alleged crimes, and speculates that black female athletes might experience racism in the context of the college classroom. KJ also sees racism in the way some black student-athletes are exploited for their athletic talents and coddled by staff members in academic support services.

KJ: What are we teaching some of these young black males about the way the world is if the whole time they're in college we just tell them to show up to practice on time and do everything we ask them, as far as everything else, we'll take care of them. I mean, that's a form of racism. It's not real blatantly ugly like calling somebody a 'nigger', but basically we are saying you're not capable of handling these things on your own so we're going to do it for you.

KJ believes that she can help lessen racism in college athletics through respectful relationships with athletes of different races.

KJ: Can I alleviate racism? No. But I think I can help make this a better place. Through getting to know individuals and just acceptance, and getting to know them as people, and not treating them any different.

Her philosophy regarding the establishment of relationships and the fair treatment of all people extends to her strategies for alleviating other social ills, such as sexism and homophobia, as well.

Like BJ, Hilary contends that racism exists in sport because it is present in society in general.

Maria: Looking at college athletics as a whole, do you think racism exists in that context?

Hilary: Race what?

Maria: Racism exists in that context?

Hilary: Yeah, I mean, it's not much different than in society.... I definitely don't think it's as huge.... it exists because people come in having previous biases ... but a lot of times they might leave with changed attitudes because they see how everyone intermixes.... because either you're forced into it on your team where you have a mixture of players ... or say with coaches of another race, so I think it's a lot better. And I haven't seen a problem with our women's athletes, or heard anything, which has been kind of cool.

Hilary spoke initially about an absence of racism among student-athletes, and credits the interactive nature of college athletics for eliminating previous biases student-athletes

might have. She perceived racism in college athletics to exist mainly at the level of upper administration, where she has noticed a distinct lack of administrators of color. She explained, "I don't know if it's racism, it just seems like there's not, they [white senior administrators] don't seem as open to having different people at those positions." As a white woman who is a young assistant coach, Hilary thinks she has the ability to alleviate racism in college athletics by not letting racist comments by student-athletes or colleagues go unchallenged.

Elizabeth feels "sick" and "ashamed to be white" whenever she encounters examples of racism in college athletics (and in general). Most notably, she has sensed the discomfort of black student-athletes while on road trips in more racist areas of the country. She is also concerned about the lack of diversity among her athletic department colleagues.

Elizabeth: I think it's pretty sad that our administration is not more representative ... administratively, I think it's pretty sad that we don't have better representation of the minorities.

Maria: Do you see that as indicative of an underlying racism?

Elizabeth: Yeah, because I think the overall, and again, it's just a feeling or opinion that I have, I think the overall perception is that we have to deal so much in a man's world, at least if they're going to tolerate us it needs to be a white woman versus a black woman or Hispanic woman or Asian woman.

With this statement, Elizabeth seems to acknowledge that 'non-white' women are doublely-burdened by sexism and racism in sport, a structural dynamic noted by Smith (1992) and Birrell (1990).

Elizabeth hopes that she can make an impact against racism in college athletics by

creating an atmosphere of comfort for all student-athletes and valuing many forms of diversity on her staff. She has organized diversity awareness workshops for the athletic training staff, and urged coaches in her athletic department to do the same for their teams. Elizabeth also makes it a point to challenge any racist remarks she hears from student-athletes. However, she is skeptical about how successful those strategies can be without university-wide change: "I think it's going to be very hard unless this university makes a conscious effort to provide an atmosphere of comfort." Elizabeth thinks more minority representation in the general student body will lead to more minority representation on the athletic department staff and on the university faculty and administration. In order to accomplish greater racial diversity on college campuses, she suggests that "universities as a whole have to promote higher education for the black individual."

All of the women in this study insisted that racism exists in college athletics, and, for the most part, spoke in terms of a black/white dichotomy when providing examples of racism. The examples of racism provided ranged from racist remarks, to exclusionary hiring practices, to the exploitation of black student-athletes and staff members. The hesitation displayed by some of the participants when initially asked about the existence of racism indicates a level of discomfort with an honest, specific discussion of race. For example, Carol and Hilary needed the question to be repeated, and Carol only spoke in vagaries when asked for specific examples. Near the end of our interview, Carol unintentionally exhibited racist thinking in her description of a black assistant coach. Each of the six women expressed a desire to alleviate racism in college athletics, but some were more reluctant than others to assume responsibility for its elimination. Others,

like Elizabeth, were able to offer specific strategies for altering racist thinking among student-athletes and their athletic department colleagues. BJ and Hilary drew comparisons between sport and society in relation to the presence of racism, but Elizabeth is the only participant who spoke about a connection between sport and society in regard to challenging race discrimination.

Gender

Not surprisingly, gender concerns were brought up in the context of six interviews about race with white women who work in intercollegiate athletics. Some of the women seemed to simply relate more strongly to themselves in relation to gender than race, while others appeared to evade questions about race by changing the subject to gender. A few participants seemed more willing to provide examples of sexism in sport and gender equity issues in college athletics than they were to provide examples of racism. Some of the women also perceived that they could relate better to African Americans and other racially-identified minorities because of their minority status as women in a male-dominated profession. One woman in particular drew personal comparisons between sexual orientation and race in the context of sport. I have chosen excerpts from interviews with Carol, Alice, Hilary, and Elizabeth to illustrate these points

During her response to the question, "How do you see others in relation to race," Carol segued into a discussion of gender equity in college athletics and spoke for some time about her colleagues in relation to both their gender and race when describing whom she works and socializes with most comfortably (she is most comfortable working with younger white men who have no qualms with women in leadership positions). Carol

claimed that she did not perceive a link between race and gender, however.

Maria: Throughout the interview today, you've talked about race and gender both together. Do you see the two as linked?

Carol: No. I have more association with black males than I do black females. Probably because of the nature of my profession. But I don't know, and I see, certainly see a difference.... I think the black female has some real challenges and obstacles in life. Much, much harder than my life. And my life's been hard.

According to Carol, she does not perceive any link between race and gender because she has not interacted with many black women. Her response indicates a belief that black women are the only people whose lives are affected by both race and gender. Carol does not consider the possibility that constructs of race and gender have combined to influence her life in any way, or the lives of black men or white men, for that matter. In this sense, she exhibits white people's blindness to the privileges their skin color has conferred upon them and demonstrates the tendency to ascribe race, as well as the consequences of racism, only to others (Grover, 1997; McIntosh, 1988; Roman, 1993; Sleeter, 1996).

Carol considers some of the challenges she has faced because she is a woman to be similar to challenges people of color have because of their race.

Carol: Some of the same challenges I have in being treated as an equal and being recognized in value are some of the same challenges that people of color have.... You know, when I was at the NCAA, I'd walk in a room and, there'd be all men and I realized very quickly that for as uncomfortable as it was for me to walk in that room, it was very uncomfortable for them to have a woman in the room ... And when a black man walks into a room of white men, I know what that feels like because I have done that.

While Carol is a female minority in college athletics, her whiteness provides her with advantages to which the black man with whom she perceives herself having so much in common is not privileged. In reality, it seems unlikely that Carol, as a white woman,

unaware of herself in relation to race, would be able to completely comprehend the experience of a black man as he enters a professional situation in which he is the only person of color.

Alice spoke quite easily about race and racism throughout our interviews, despite her observation that “race is very skirmish [sic] topic for a lot of people to talk about.” The second half of our follow-up interview, however, was spent mostly in a discussion of gender inequities in college athletics in general and in Alice’s athletic department specifically. Alice mentioned examples of dilapidated locker room facilities for women’s teams, and sub-par competition fields for the women’s soccer and softball teams at her university. She is particularly frustrated by the condition of the softball facility.

Alice: The softball field was opened up in 1985, and at the time, it was okay, but they just threw it together, they didn’t think when they built it because they said let’s do the dugouts like we designed them on baseball’s [field], which is fine. But they didn’t sink them like they did baseball’s, and so you can’t see from half the stands into the corners of the outfield because the dugouts are way up.... That field has not changed one bit other than they put in new aluminum bleachers since then, and that’s a little frustrating to me, especially when I saw that baseball got a new stadium. I think it was in the late eighties.... They put like a million dollars in the baseball stadium at that period of time. And now they’re putting another two million dollars to upgrade it even further. And ours sits exactly the same.

The inferior women’s athletic facilities at Alice’s university are examples of the gender inequities in intercollegiate athletics which have been reported in official NCAA reports and academic research (e.g., Acosta & Carpenter, 1996; Coakley, 1998; Lopiano, 1993). Alice also shared her annoyance with the insubstantial amount of television coverage women’s athletic events receive, citing the Atlanta Olympic Games as a case in point. Her observation coincides with those made by Duncan et al (1994) and Coakley (1998) in

regard to the general media coverage of women's sports.

Hilary provided examples of racism in intercollegiate sports when initially asked (see previous sub-section), but when I asked if she knew of any additional examples, she offered an incident concerning gender while she was in graduate school.

Maria: Do any other specific race issues or situations stand out from your own department, or the previous department in which you worked?

Hilary: Actually, in graduate school, unfortunately there was a brand new program, and the coach they hired was a [white] female and I had a pretty good feeling they hired her just because she is a female, just getting in, and she didn't have hardly any experience. It was a total disaster. I think they regretted it, I think they were just like okay, let's just hire a woman because we need to ... and I resented that because it made my first year miserable.

During our follow-up interview, I asked Hilary why she brought up sexism and gender equity in the context of an interview about race.

Hilary: I think because with athletics, I think women are still, when you look at race, black and white, where blacks are a minority, and you look at gender within athletics, women are still a minority in terms of coaching and administration. I'm trying to battle my own way hopefully to the top, to get into administration one day. But I know it's going to be very, very hard because it's mostly male. So I can kind of relate in a way.

Hilary recognizes that both sexism and racism are at play in collegiate athletics, and relates to blacks as fellow minorities within the context of sport leadership positions in intercollegiate athletics. She does not, however, claim to totally relate to blacks on the basis of her gender, as Carol does (note Hilary's qualification of "relate" with "kind of" and "in a way"). Additionally, Hilary's observation of the dearth of blacks and women in coaching and athletic administration supports statistical research regarding NCAA Division I collegiate athletic departments (e.g. Acosta & Carpenter, 1996; Coakley, 1998;

Lopiano, 1993).

As noted in the *White on White* sub-section, Elizabeth referred to sexual orientation in the context of her discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of various identity markers. She indicated that her racial identity and class status serve to advantage her in society and sport, while her gender and sexual orientation (although the latter is not as visible) put her at a distinct disadvantage in her profession and her personal life. In our second interview, I asked Elizabeth why sexual orientation resonated so strongly within a discussion of race.

Maria: I'm wondering why sexual orientation came up for you in the context of an interview about race?

Elizabeth: Because it's discrimination. Because I've been there, done that. And I can see what other people go through because of their skin color. I mean, not given the opportunity of a job, or not given the opportunity of working a sport because they thought I might be gay or something hits home the same as someone who's black and not being hired, you know. Or because I was a female versus a male in a male-dominated profession, maybe I didn't get it.... Don't judge me before you even know me is the whole message. And I don't want to do that to anybody else.

Elizabeth's responses indicate that she views herself in relation to many different identity markers and that she has an understanding of how those markers might affect her life chances. She is able to speak about the privileges she possesses and the challenges she faces because of her identity as white, female, gay, and middle-class. The other participants view themselves primarily in relation to gender, and somewhat in relation to class, but not as defined by race. They view 'non-white' people mainly in relation to race, and sometimes in relation to class or ethnicity. KJ was the only participant other than Elizabeth who mentioned her sexual orientation (she is straight). BJ and Alice made

passing reference to sexual orientation in the context of diversity, Carol joked about how much easier it would be to tell her dad she was a lesbian than to reveal she was dating a black man, and Hilary did not mention sexual orientation at all. The silence surrounding sexuality in this study is perhaps indicative of the presence of homophobia and heterosexism in college athletics. Because of the threat of accusations of lesbianism, both gay and straight women are effectively silenced. Gay women in sport may fear being open about their sexuality because of possible recriminations, and straight women may be reluctant to offer support to lesbians or to oppose homophobic/heterosexist practices and comments for fear of being labeled negatively themselves.

Based on the preponderance of gender in these interviews, it is possible to argue that white women who work in intercollegiate athletics are more in tune with the gendered aspect of their identity than the raced aspect, and/or that despite progress toward gender equity, forms of gender-based discrimination remain firmly entrenched in college athletic departments.

Some Notes on the Language of Race

Given that the content of the participants' race-related interview responses is of primary concern in this study, I find it necessary to comment on the recurring linguistic terms found among the women's statements before concluding this section.

Many of the interview excerpts included in this section contain language which serves to de-personalize individuals from racially-identified minority groups.

Predominant among these examples are repetitive impersonal pronouns which the participants use to refer to African Americans. Words and phrases like "them," "they,"

“some more than others,” “those people,” and “better than others” can be evasive and generalizing. For example, when describing her black friend Ron, Carol commented, “in some ways he was better than *others*,” (see p.15) but did not explain who those others were -- apparently, it was understood that she was referring to African Americans, but even so, she did not clarify between African American men or women, or African American athletes and non-athletes. Alice spoke euphemistically about African American individuals with phrases like “they really are no different than anybody else” and “I got closer to some more than others” (see p. 21). These phrases reminded me of the administrator I knew who would whisper racial modifiers whenever referring to a person of color. Another common phrase which further sets blacks apart from whites as Others is “exposed to.” Some women used this phrase when discussing their interactions with black individuals, as in “I was exposed to more African Americans through sport,” perhaps not realizing the negative connotation of exposed because of its frequent use in relation to a virus or disease.

Notably, each woman, in various contexts, spoke about “comfort levels” or “comfort zones.” Carol and Elizabeth, for example, mentioned comfort zones when they were discussing whom they feel most comfortable with at work and in their personal lives. Hilary referred to sport as a comfort zone for her as a child because athletic activities provide a refuge from an otherwise isolating shyness. Additionally, all six women brought up comfort zones when they were discussing interactions (or a lack thereof) between white and black individuals. Carol related a story about her oldest son’s comfort level with people of color.

Carol: I already see comfort levels in him that are a bit disturbing to me. I'll give you a perfect example. Jen [a black player], who is on our basketball team, is very fond of my son. After a recent basketball game, she picked him up and took him into the locker room, and it freaked him out. Not only that, you know, that she picked him up. But kids, you know ... you don't just go up and grab kids. You know, they have a comfort zone. Like adults do. And, Jen always used to be his favorite player, now Mary [a white player] is and he just kind of freaked out about that. And, I see him more hesitant with Jen now. And I have some concerns about that.

Here, Carol seems to be using "comfort zone" as a euphemism for fear, rather than saying that her son was scared because a black woman, whom he knew, picked him up. His reaction is indicative of the lack of racial diversity in his life, and, ironically, resembles his mother's reaction to the black girl who pulled her hair when she was about the same age as her son. Overall, the frequent use of de-personalizing descriptors and the theme of comfort zone or levels in relation to race suggest an underlying fear factor in the participants' perceptions of individuals and groups who are not racially identified as white.

The last language concern I want to discuss is the women's use of the term "nigger." This word was only mentioned by them in the context of relating stories about their families' racial perceptions or of describing a racist remark that they had heard -- none of the participants used the word directly. However, some of the women could not repeat the word, even when quoting someone else's use of it. For example, Hilary and Elizabeth both mentioned their dislike of the "n-word," and explained that they cannot bring themselves to pronounce it. Alice and KJ expressed their disdain for the term, but had no apparent trouble with repeating it. This observation forced me to consider my bias against this word; not only do I have trouble saying 'nigger' (preferring, like Elizabeth

and Hilary, to use 'the n-word' instead), but I also have difficulty typing it and then reading it in the context of my own writing, because the term is so negatively weighted to me. I would argue that the term has a negative connotation for Alice and KJ, also, but perhaps it is more familiar to them because they frequently heard it used while growing up, while I did not.

In an examination of race discourse, I believe that the language we use when talking about race is just as revealing as our life history experiences and our past and present racial perceptions.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is not to pass judgement on six white women for their race thinking, but rather to analyze their racial perceptions in order to achieve an understanding of the racial discourses which shape the lives of white women who work in intercollegiate athletics. By way of concluding this section, I present the hegemonic discourses which are revealed throughout the semi-life history interviews conducted with the six participants.

There are many strands of thought at work in the racial discourse which has and continues to form the race thinking of these women. The most overarching of these strands holds that race is a reified, static, objective category of human classification. Implicit in the participants' responses, to varying degrees, is a belief in the existence of race, and different races of people. There is a color-blindness evident in the views of women who do not recognize their own whiteness and the social, political, economic, and professional advantages they enjoy solely because of their skin color. Color-blindness to

whiteness prevents the acknowledgment of racial privilege by white-identified people and ignores the power differentials and structures of social stratification created by race.

Race is primarily seen as the determining factor of disadvantage for racially-identified, subjugated minority groups. In this sense, race is an identity which white women both project onto and observe in others, but do not recognize in themselves. Moreover, the women in this study also seem to think in terms of the formulation: race = black =

victim. They rarely, if ever, consider the other side of the equation:

race=white=beneficiary, or give much thought to disproving black = victim. Race

discourse among these six women also seems laden with fear -- of 'non-white'

individuals, and of honest discussions of race which challenge reductionist, euphemistic

terminology. The discourse against interracial relationships present in these interviews is

indicative of these fears. The discursive dimensions of whiteness seem to be

characterized by absence and transparency. Blackness is distinctly visible and has many

social significations for these white women, while whiteness remains invisible and taken

for granted. Also significant is the tendency to identify race with cultural practices and

forms such as language, music, dress, and religion. The concept of responsibility for

racism is mostly absent from the discourse surrounding race among the white women in

this study.

There are, however, resistant strands of counter-discourse at play throughout the interviews. Elizabeth, and Alice to a lesser degree, recognize their racial identity as more complex than the single-word descriptors "white" or "Caucasian," and equate whiteness with advantage and privilege. This counter-discourse of race positions whiteness as a

marked racial category, thereby revoking its status as the neutral standard against which all other racial identities are perceived and judged.

The semi-life histories presented here demonstrate what Frankenberg (1993) noted in her work on the social construction of whiteness:

... as much as white women are located in - and speak from - physical environments shaped by race, we are also located in, and perceive our environments by means of, a set of discourses on race, culture, and society whose history spans this century and, beyond it, the broader sweep of Western expansion and colonialism. (p.2)

Section IV

Conclusions and Implications

Conclusions

The primary purpose of this study was to explore racial perceptions and racist dynamics in sport through the examination of six white women's racial perceptions of themselves and others -- individuals racially-identified as black, in particular -- and of how those perceptions are acted upon in the context of collegiate athletic departments. One of the unique features of this study about race and sport is its focus on the racialization of individuals belonging to a racially-identified majority group. All too often, analyses of race and racial constructs focus only on racially-identified minorities and, in the process, only consider those minorities as victims of racism. This important, yet narrow, aim fails to consider white individuals' accountability for racism and hegemonic racial discourses which puts others at a disadvantage, and at the same time, privileges whites. If we are to truly comprehend the racial quandary that faces this country and its cultural forms, examinations of race must focus on both privileged and subjugated groups and the social constructs which maintain power differentials between them. Addressing race issues in American society is a broad and daunting task; therefore, it is all the more important to undertake parochial critiques of race in our most pervasive cultural forms. I have chosen to examine sport because it is an aspect of American society that is particularly plagued by racial stereotypes and racist practices, which too frequently go unaddressed. I have made white sport leaders the center of this study because that focus enables a necessary intervention in sport studies research; racial

positions of privilege in sport are in need of scrutiny. I have decided to focus on white women in college athletics because it was my experience working with white women which partially served as the impetus for this study. And, as a former collegiate athlete, a lifelong sport fan, and a promotor of women in sport, I care about the social climate of professional and amateur athletics in the United States. Like many of the women in this study, I can identify pivotal relationships and life events which have altered or consciously formed my perceptions of race and racial others. Had it not been for my high school friendship with Kwasi, my high school and collegiate sport involvement, the opportunity to attend college away from home, and my graduate school studies, I would never have engaged in a research project which focused on race and whiteness and sport. Although my personal background is not sufficient support for a research project and does not give me credence as a scholarly expert, it has nonetheless been a figural part of this study. As often noted by feminist researchers, I have made the personal the political and the political, academic. Writing this dissertation has given me the opportunity to explore my own history and racial preconceptions, and so, in a sense, I have journeyed along as a researcher with the participants of this study.

I support the contention that race exists as a socially and historically constructed concept. Hegemonic racial discourses are contingent upon political agendas which are guided by the desire to maintain systems of inequality which subjugate blacks and other racially-identified minority groups and uphold whiteness as the superior standard. However, resistance to these systems is possible through the formation of counter-discourses, as illustrated by shifts in twentieth century racial discourse as a result of the

Civil Rights Movement. In order to form counter-discourses, Americans must, as Appiah (1996) suggests, begin the process of exploring how they think about race, under what circumstances they apply the idea of race, and the consequences that will follow from that application. The inter- and anti-disciplinary field of cultural studies serves as the ideal space for such an exploration. Cultural studies takes seriously everyday forms of culture such as sport, and is concerned with social identity markers such as race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. Accordingly, the practice of cultural studies is well-suited to an examination of race and sport. Methodologically speaking, the qualitative methods involved in a modified ethnographic research strategy of semi-structured, partial life history interviews and participant observation lent themselves best to the task of this study.

To summarize, this is a cultural studies project in which concepts of race are the central focus and the consideration of sport as a cultural form is figural. This research endeavor, which is informed by whiteness studies, operates under the notion that race is a socio-historical construction and is, as stated by Gates (1985), far from an objective term of classification. I interviewed and observed six white women who currently work in NCAA Division I athletic departments and demonstrate diversity in regard to age, geographical origin, job position, ethnicity, and religion. I employed discourse theory and qualitative research methods in the analysis of their semi-life history interviews.

The research findings reveal five main experiences shared by the participants. They were raised in racially homogeneous settings, had limited contact or interaction with blacks while growing up (and in adulthood), and have had a figural interaction with

a black person (or group of black people) which altered their racial perceptions. In fact, many of the participants hold racial beliefs which vary greatly from those of their parents and/or grandparents. Furthermore, the participants all credit their experiences in college and their involvement in sport for providing them with opportunities to meet, work with, and befriend individuals from different racial backgrounds. Regarding racial perceptions, these women view race primarily in terms of skin color and culture, but not in relation to themselves. The majority of the participants had difficulty viewing themselves as raced, or considering their own racialization. The hegemonic discourse evident in the six interviews reinforces race as a reified, essential category, conceals whiteness as a privileged racial position/identity, conflates race with culture, and infuses blackness with fear, victimization, and exoticization. The counter-discourses in resistance explain race as a labeling device which advantages whites and disadvantages racially-defined minorities in material social, political, and cultural ways.

Implications

Ignatiev and Garvey (1996) argue that challenges to white racial privilege are the key to fundamental social change in the United States. I concur, and argue that challenges to white racial privilege are necessary in sport, specifically, in order to eliminate the racism present in sport and counter the historical exclusion of racial minorities in that pervasive American cultural form. If sport participation and university attendance are as figural in the formation of racial perceptions for white sport leaders as indicated in these interviews, then work geared toward altering hegemonic racial discourses needs to be done in the setting of college athletics, especially when we

consider the disproportionate numbers of white (male) staff members who supervise racially diverse groups of student-athletes. This study has focused upon the racial perceptions and life experiences of six white women. I contend that similar research needs to be conducted with white men in sport, as they are the individuals who occupy the majority of sport leadership positions. A race study with white men at its center would also necessitate a consideration of male privilege. A consideration of male privilege in the context of sport is warranted in and of itself, given the preponderance of gender-related grievances which surfaced in these interviews and the gender inequities which still exist in college athletics.

The interviews included in this study indicate that sport involvement is not the only experience which mediates our racial beliefs. The contentions and experiences of the participants indicate that organized religion is a cultural form that may also play a significant role in the formation of race thinking. Future studies considering this role would shed more light on the operation of race ideologies in American culture, and seem particularly warranted in the fundamental Christian Bible Belt of the Southern United States, given the prevalence of church-based communities and the history of racism in that region.

The participants' semi-life histories also demonstrate how other factors such as gender, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation intersect in the formation of racial beliefs. In light of one participant's experience as a gay woman in collegiate athletics, and the threatening discourse of homophobia surrounding female athletes and sport leaders, I perceive the need for critical analyses of heterosexual privilege in sport contexts, in

addition to examinations of racial privilege and gender privilege. I contend that examinations of these and other social identity/justice issues are best undertaken from a critical cultural studies' perspective.

It is my hope that this study broadens the parameters of race consciousness by interrogating whiteness as a socially constructed category and helping detach whiteness from its unmarked, neutral status. More specifically, I hope I have illuminated race-related issues in sport through the exploration of race theory, the consideration of sport as a cultural form, and the discursive analysis of the six interviews with white women which comprise this research endeavor. Finally, it is my wish that the general and specific conclusions of this study promote among sport leaders a racial discourse of color-consciousness that rejects the notion of biological racial identity and acknowledges that race operates as a social construction attached to skin color and other phenotypic features, to affect individual lives, social interactions, cultural practices, and political processes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Guide

- I'm interested in learning about your experiences as a child. Specifically, could you tell me about:

- where you grew up -- put me in that setting
- your family
- your friends and neighbors
- your school
- your most important/favorite extra-curricular activities

- Tell me about your background/experience in sport.

- primary encouragers to participate
- how supported was your sport participation
- specific sports played
- childhood ambitions
- people/friends you interacted with through sport

- While growing up, were you aware of the presence of people of different racial groups than you?

- did you interact with people of a different racial group than you?
(to what extent, why or why not)
- do you remember what your perception of people of different racial groups than you was at the time?
- did your family/friends share your perception?

- In general, what does race mean to you?

- What racial group do you consider yourself belonging to?

- How do you see yourself in relation to race?

- How do you see others in relation to race?

- I've asked you to talk about sport and race separately, but now I'd like you to talk about them together.

- Did your sport participation influence your perception of others of different racial backgrounds?

(if yes, how so?)

- Did your sport participation influence your thinking about race in general?

(In relation to concept itself, you, or others?)

- Do you think your perceptions of race or racial others influence your interactions with colleagues and/or student-athletes?

(Either white or black)

- Do you think racism exists in intercollegiate athletics?

- Why or why not?

- Are there any specific race issues which have come up in your athletic department?

- As a white woman, do you think you have the ability to alleviate racism in intercollegiate athletics?

- If yes, in what ways?

- If no, why not?

Wrap-up Interview Questions

- Has the conversation we've just had been revealing in any way?

- Were any questions/topics during this interview difficult for you to answer or discuss?

- Could you comment on anything you liked or disliked about the interview?

- Do you have any suggested improvements for talking about these subjects?

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

RACE DISCOURSE AMONG WHITE WOMEN IN INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

CONSENT FORM

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to better understand white women's perceptions of race, and their conceptions of themselves and others in relation to race. I am primarily interested in whether you have had contact with people of racial groups different from you, both within and outside of your experiences in sport, and whether you see yourself as belonging to a racial or cultural group. This project is being undertaken for the completion of a doctoral dissertation.

Description of Study

You will be asked to participate in two informal interviews. The initial interview will last approximately 60-120 minutes and will focus on your personal history, from childhood through the present, in order to explore how you identify yourself and others in terms of race, socio-economic class, gender, and sport experience. This interview will be audiotaped so that I will be able to accurately capture your words. The second, follow-up interview will last approximately 30-60 minutes and will also be audiotaped. During the second interview, I will allow you to listen to the audiotape of the first interview and make any additional comments or amends to your responses, if you desire. I will also use the second interview as an opportunity to ask you further questions about your personal experiences, if needed. Both audiotapes will be transcribed.

After the initial interview and before the follow-up interview, I will ask to be allowed to spend time observing you in your daily work environment in order to gain a better understanding of the nature of your job responsibilities and your relationships with colleagues and student-athletes.

Confidentiality

You will select a pseudonym which will be used during your interview and in the transcription of the audiotapes to ensure confidentiality. My dissertation advisor and I will be the only ones with direct access to the interview tapes and transcripts. Additionally, the audiotapes and consent forms will be kept in a locked filing cabinet on

- over -

the UTK campus throughout the study and for three years following the project's completion, after which the tapes will be erased and the documents destroyed.

Potential Risks

There are no anticipated physical or psychological risks associated with your participation in this project. Your participation is entirely voluntary. If at any time you are uncomfortable about answering a question or you wish to terminate the interview, please feel free to say so, and we will go on to the next question or stop the interview altogether. There will be no penalty or prejudice if you decide to withdraw from the study.

Potential Benefits

The possible benefits include an opportunity for you to talk about your experiences in sport and to reflect on what these experiences have meant to you. In addition, participating in this study might result in a heightened awareness of racial identity and of race dynamics in sport. Furthermore, your participation will contribute to the existing body of knowledge about women, race, and sport. Please know that you are the expert here -- I am simply interested in hearing your stories, comments, and thoughts about your experiences and relationships in and out of sport as related to race.

Finally, you may contact me at any time if you have further questions or concerns about the project or your participation in it.

I HAVE READ THE ABOVE STATEMENTS AND I UNDERSTAND THE EXPLANATION OF THE PROJECT, THE PROCEDURES TO BE USED, MY ROLE IN THE RESEARCH, AND THE POTENTIAL RISKS AND BENEFITS INVOLVED.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Maria J. Veri and Joy T. DeSensi
Cultural Studies in Education
The University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN 37996-2700
Phone: (423) 974-8555

Appendix C

Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

NAME: _____ **PSEUDONYM:** _____

AGE: _____

HOMETOWN: _____

YEARS WORKING IN COLLEGIATE ATHLETICS: _____

CURRENT EMPLOYER: _____

CURRENT POSITION/TITLE: _____

YEARS AT POSITION: _____

CURRENT ADDRESS: _____

HOME PHONE: _____

WORK PHONE: _____

FAX: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Appendix D

Fieldnotes Sample

INTERVIEW #18

- started ~ 10 min late; when asked if had stopping time, [redacted] said 1/2 hr, 30 min. Previous meeting had said she would block out 1 hr.

- declined when asked if would like to listen to tape of 1st interviews ->

said trusted what I had on tape & not concerned about anything she had previously said. Answered no

fairly quickly, thought for a few seconds, and said no again. Told

her I would be glad to send copy of tapes at her request.

- Very efficient during interview -> didn't rush through, but didn't linger in lot & ponder much.

-> Did think about drawing connections when asked or bringing up past experiences & examples

- interrupted w/ phone call - after ~ 20-min, took call, but came right back & said have 5 min

= Became very animated when talking about college athletics & diversity awareness, training for staff & athletes

Vita

Maria J. Veri was born in Syracuse, New York, on October 5, 1970. She graduated from Westhill High School in 1988, and entered the University at Albany, State University of New York, that same year. She was a starting player on the Great Danes' softball team for four years, and graduated cum laude with a double major in English and Psychology in 1992. Maria entered the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in January 1993 and earned a Master's of Science degree in Human Performance and Sport Studies with a major in Psychology of Sport in August 1994.

Remaining at UT, Maria began work on her doctorate in the Fall of 1994. During her doctoral program, she taught an undergraduate course entitled "Sport in American Society" for the Cultural Studies in Education Unit of the College of Education. In the Spring of 1998, Maria was honored with a Chancellor's Citation for Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching. She received a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education, with concentrations in Cultural Studies and Sociology of Sport, in August 1998.