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## Measuring African American Female College Athletes' Athletic Identity to Determine Support Service Needs

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## CHAPTER TWELVE

# MEASURING AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE COLLEGE ATHLETES' ATHLETIC IDENTITY TO DETERMINE SUPPORT SERVICE NEEDS

AKILAH R. CARTER-FRANCIQUE,  
BILLY J. HAWKINS, AND CHARLES CROWLEY

She knows who she is because she knows who she isn't.

—Nikki Giovanni<sup>1</sup>

In 1993, Mary Howard-Hamilton claimed, “African American female college athletes face tremendous psychological, identity, and cultural barriers when attending college.”<sup>2</sup> The specific nature of these barriers is demarked by their “Othered” status as a racial, gender, and social class minority<sup>3</sup>; manifested experiences of social isolation and alienation<sup>4</sup>; negative media commentary<sup>5</sup>; and stereotypes and discrimination.<sup>6</sup> Howard-Hamilton<sup>7</sup> goes on to state that these barriers are intensified for African American female athletes at historically White institutions of higher education (HWIHE) that reduce them to mere athletically talented bodies.

Scholars have argued that African American/Black female (*and* male) athletes have been and are currently exploited for their athletic talent to the detriment of their educational engagement.<sup>8</sup> This argument is supported by the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) annual documentation of college athletes' graduation rates as an indicator of educational engagement. For example, the NCAA<sup>9</sup> presents African American athletes at the Division I (DI) level having a Graduation Success Rate (GSR) of 74 percent, compared to White athletes at 91 percent. More specifically, the GSRs for African American female college athletes at the DI level are 84 percent, compared to African American males at 70 percent, White females at 95 percent, and White males at 87 percent.

While African American female college athletes' GSRs are above African American males, they are fourteen points lower than their White female counterparts. The GSRs coupled with the revenue produced by African American athletes and distributed throughout the NCAA member institutions<sup>10</sup> further support the notion of African American athlete exploitation.

Due to this visible dichotomy, African American female college athletes' psychological and cultural perceptions of self are challenged, as African American girls and women historically and culturally are socialized to embrace their total being.<sup>11</sup> Edwards conveys, "In the Black community it seems a woman can be strong and competent in sport and still not deny her 'womanliness.' She can even win respect and high status."<sup>12</sup> However, upon leaving the comfort of their communities and transitioning to HWIHE, African American female college athletes are forced to acculturate to the predominantly White institution and the individualistic commercializing culture of athletic departments.<sup>13</sup> Understanding this reality brought forth many questions for us as Black scholars and former college athletes. Thus, once enrolled in HWIHE, how do African American female college athletes, who are reared to embrace their athletic prowess, negotiate their identity? Who helps them navigate the barriers? More specifically, how can the measurement of African American females' athletic identity aid with determining and allocating support services and counseling needs as college athletes? To work through these questions, it is necessary to understand exactly who college athletes are and what they endure.

## **College Athletes and Support Services**

In 2001, Watt and Moore asked the question, "Who are student athletes?" Their response explicated the historical marriage between college athletics (e.g., NCAA) and higher education, the significance of college sport in American society, and the impact of reform efforts on college athletes' athletic, academic, and social experiences. The authors discerned that college "athletes face a unique set of challenges that they are not ready to meet without assistance."<sup>14</sup> Parham identified these challenges and placed them in six categories that consisted of college athletes managing their (1) academic and athletic roles; (2) social engagements outside of athletics; (3) athletic success and failures; (4) physical demands and health from athletic participation; (5) personal relationships (e.g., parents/guardians, extended family, and friends); and (6) retirement and transition from college athletics.<sup>15</sup> In addition, Broughton<sup>16</sup> postulated that college

athletes, similar to college students, experience challenges when transitioning from high school to college; and therefore, the combination of the “student” and “college athlete” challenges can affect their developmental experiences and necessitate support services and counseling<sup>17</sup> (e.g., 10–15 percent of college athletes require serious counseling<sup>18</sup>).

## Support Services

College athletes' ability (or inability) to negotiate the athletic, academic, and social challenges presented can have positive and negative experiential consequences. Accordingly, athletic personnel (e.g., academic advisers, life skills coordinators, and coaches) are charged with providing college athletes appropriate support services (i.e., life skills, career networking, and mentoring) and counseling (i.e., academic advising and psychosocial support).<sup>19</sup> The notion of support services and counseling prompted several theoretical approaches (e.g., psychoeducational approach, Heath's theory of maturity, and Perry's cognitive developmental approach)<sup>20</sup> to inform college athlete advisement. While the examination of the various theoretical approaches is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to acknowledge practitioners' employment of the approaches/models with the delivery of services and programs offered. For example and while dated, in 1981, the University of Florida employed the psychoeducational approach to teach first-year college athletes about life skills and to advise exiting seniors about post-college careers.<sup>21</sup> Through the years, scholars' and practitioners' employment of these approaches sought to address the developmental needs of college athletes as well as the diverse populous of college athletes (e.g., African Americans and basketball players).<sup>22</sup>

### *Life Skills Program*

The NCAA established an association-wide approach to address the developmental needs of college athletes. Members of the NCAA Foundation and Division I-A Athletic Directors' Association came together in 1991 to address college athletes' developmental needs and support services programs. Ergo, in 1994 the Challenging Athletic Minds for Personal Success (CHAMPS) Life Skills program, known currently as Student Athlete Affairs, was realized and designed to address five support service areas to benefit college athletes' holistic development, including: (1) academic excellence (e.g., time management and study skills); (2)

athletic excellence; (3) personal development (e.g., nutrition and stress management); (4) career development (e.g., interviewing skills and alumni career networking); and (5) service (e.g., speakers' bureau and peer education/counseling).<sup>23</sup> In addition to the five areas, the program was also designed to promote diversity and inclusion; encourage a balance between academics, athletics, and personal life; and provide support services that address the changing needs and evolving challenges of college athletes.<sup>24</sup>

## **Athletic Identity**

During the 1990s, the notion of *athletic identity* emerged as a construct of interest to understand athletes' commitment to their sport,<sup>25</sup> retirement and transition,<sup>26</sup> career development and maturity,<sup>27</sup> and overall development and self-concept.<sup>28</sup> Athletic identity is defined as "the degree with which an individual identifies with the athletic role . . . a social dimension of self-concept influencing experiences, relationships with others, and pursuit of sport activity."<sup>29</sup> Conceptualized in the multidimensional theory of self-concept, athletic identity is deemed a significant construct for discerning how a person's athletic participation (i.e., level of involvement and experiences) may affect the affective, behavioral, cognitive, and social psychological elements of their identity.<sup>30</sup> Hence, athletic identity is associated with positive and negative participation factors.

Researchers denote that college athletes immersed in participation at the college and university level have strong athletic identities.<sup>31</sup> Subsequently, positive factors for persons with strong athletic identities include greater developmental skills and the capability to manage life (i.e., relationships, time, and commitments).<sup>32</sup> Cornelius (1995) conveyed developmental and life management skills as "the ability to structure the lives and to manipulate their environment in ways that allow them to satisfy daily needs and meet responsibilities without extensive direction or support from others."<sup>33</sup> Conversely, negative factors for persons with strong athletic identities are overtraining and burnout,<sup>34</sup> injury,<sup>35</sup> and such risky behaviors as hazing, the use of performance-enhancing drugs, the use of alcohol and illicit drugs, and increased sexual activity.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, having a strong athletic identity is problematized when athletics and academics are seen as mutually exclusive.

## **Athletic Identity and College Athletes of Color**

To date, there is limited research that has examined athletic identity and race and/or ethnicity.<sup>37</sup> Harrison and colleagues<sup>38</sup> explored the empirical

and theoretical influence of race on athletic identity between African American and White male college athletes. Their results revealed that African American male college athletes had stronger athletic identities when compared to White male college athletes. Moreover, results indicated that there was a significant difference between the two racial groups from the same sport. The authors concluded that the socialization patterns for African Americans and Whites have distinct differences, illuminating that for African American males (and females), "sport participation and developing sport skills is a significant aspect of life and is a critical factor in the development of social acceptability and prestige."<sup>39</sup> The emphasis on sport participation and athletic commitment, thus, results in academic disengagement, low graduation rates, and limited skills for non-athletic-related careers.<sup>40</sup>

Arguably, the aforementioned research study is noteworthy when considering the experiences for college athletes of color. Person, Benson-Quaziena, and Rogers indicate that the increasing demographics for students of color *and* women<sup>41</sup> "calls for clarification of the needs of female athletes and athletes of color."<sup>42</sup> Therefore, in addition to the challenges for college athletes, the authors presented increased concerns for female college athletes' ability to cope with eating disorders and nutrition, injuries incurred from sport participation, and sexual harassment. For college athletes of color, concerns include social and academic integration, pressures to perform athletically, and experiences of racism and sexism. And, for college athletes whose race and gender overlap like African American females, Person and colleagues illuminated that the absence of role models and lack of coping skills should be addressed through programs and culturally relevant support services.<sup>43</sup>

Based on the literature, the following research questions (RQ) were of interest:

- RQ1. What are the most and least important Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) factors for African American female college athletes?
- RQ2. Are there differences in AIMS factors for African American female college athletes?
- RQ3. What are the most and least important AIMS factors for African American female college athletes based on academic classification?
- RQ4. Are there differences in AIMS factors for African American female college athletes by academic classification?

## Method

As presented, there is a dearth of research examining African American females' athletic identity. Acknowledging the aforementioned research on African American female college athletes and their experiences of racial discrimination, stereotyping, alienation, and isolation, identifying the complexity of their identity, particularly as athletes, was of interest. Hence, this exploratory research employed a quantitative research design using a survey technique of four research questions. According to Crowl, quantitative research is a method "used to examine questions that can best be answered by collecting and statistically analyzing data that are in numerical form."<sup>44</sup> This is a nonprobability sampling method where it was not a random decision; thus, the investigator used judgment in selecting participants.<sup>45</sup> This is significant, as the majority of the participants (73.7 percent,  $n = 28$ ) were from basketball and track and field, sports in which African American females have a historical and traditional presence.<sup>46</sup>

## Participants

The participants for this study were purposefully selected from a NCAA Division I (DI) Football Bowl Subdivision<sup>47</sup> (FBS) university located in the southeastern region of the United States. A DI FBS university was selected as they: (1) represent the highest level of college athletics; (2) produce the most revenue (i.e., television contracts and ticket sales); and while the driving force behind the classification is football, these schools (3) must provide equal numbers of sports for men and women.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, a HWIHE was selected, as it has been found to be an aversive environment that has situated the African American/Black female athlete as the "Other" based on their intersecting identities (e.g., race, gender, and sexual orientation).<sup>49</sup> The participants were ( $n = 38$ ) self-identified African American<sup>50</sup> female college athletes. After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the participants were solicited and provided with research consent documentation. All students consented to participate in the study. The athletic classification representation included first year ( $n = 11$ ), second year ( $n = 9$ ), third year ( $n = 8$ ), fourth year ( $n = 8$ ), and fifth year ( $n = 2$ ). The athletic team representation included basketball ( $n = 7$ ), gymnastics ( $n = 1$ ), softball ( $n = 4$ ), tennis ( $n = 1$ ), track and field ( $n = 21$ ), volleyball ( $n = 3$ ), and basketball/volleyball ( $n = 1$ ). The scholarship representation included full ( $n = 20$ ), partial ( $n = 8$ ), and walk-on ( $n = 10$ ). The self-identified socioeconomic classification representation included low income ( $n = 5$ ), middle income ( $n = 29$ ), and

high income ( $n = 4$ ). The academic majors included a range of degree-seeking fields. (See Table 12.1.) The participants range from eighteen to twenty-two years of age with 19.95 years of age as the mean ( $SD = 1.374$ ).

**Table 12.1. Academic Majors for African American Female College Athletes**

Academic Major	Frequency	Percent (%)
Accounting	1	2.6
Accounting and Sport Studies	1	2.6
Advertising	1	2.6
Biology	1	2.6
Broadcast News	2	5.3
Business	1	2.6
Child and Family Development	1	2.6
Consumer Economics	1	2.6
Criminal Justice	1	2.6
Early Childhood Development	2	5.3
Fashion Merchandising	1	2.6
Health Promotions	1	2.6
Housing and Consumer Economics	1	2.6
Mathematics	1	2.6
Political Science	2	5.3
Pre-Journalism	1	2.6



Public Health	2	5.3
Social Work	1	2.6
Sociology	1	2.6
Sport Business	1	2.6
Sports Studies	7	18.4
Undecided	2	5.3
Not reported	5	13.2
Total	38	100.0

### Instrument

The Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) is a seven-item psychometric measure for assessing athletic identity.<sup>51</sup> The AIMS consists of three factors of athletic identity rated on a seven-point Likert-type scale. The three factors examine: (1) negative affectivity, or the “extent to which as individual experiences adverse emotional reactions to undesirable outcomes related to sport”<sup>52</sup> through rated statements such as “I feel bad about myself when I do poorly in sport”; (2) exclusivity, or “the degree to which an individual’s self-worth is determined solely by his or her performance with the athletic role”<sup>53</sup> through rated statements such as “Sports are the most important part of my life”; and (3) social identity, or the “extent to which an individual perceives him or herself as an athlete from a social standpoint”<sup>54</sup> through rated statements such as “I consider myself an athlete.” A person’s total score can range from 7 to 49, where a higher score represents a higher level of athletic identity. Again, the AIMS was developed to determine the level of identification with the athletic role and has been employed broadly in sport identity research. The AIMS test-retest reliability ( $r = .89$ ) and internal consistency (alphas =  $.81$  to  $.93$ ) were obtained, and, according to Brewer and Cornelius, the AIMS score validity increases with the level of sport involvement (e.g., athlete vs. non-athlete), sport competence, and athletic identity elements.<sup>55</sup>

## Procedure

The African American female college athletes were solicited through distribution fliers (e.g., posted in athletic department, team locker rooms, university recreation center, and by personal contact) and email notification. The primary researcher (first author) obtained email contacts through the university directory after reviewing pictures on the athletic website and identifying the target population as those who had phenotypical demarkers indicative of African Americans (e.g., skin color) or if racial identity was unknown. Six ( $n = 6$ ) self-identified African American female college athletes responded through email solicitation. All other college athletes ( $n = 32$ ) responded through flier solicitation and by word of mouth, or *snowball sampling*. Snowball sampling is deemed beneficial when research populations are “unavailable or when access to population members is restricted,”<sup>56</sup> like college athletes. Thus, the sampling method enabled the researchers to obtain the targeted participants through referral.

This research study was a part of a larger body of research approved by the lead authors' university IRB; hence, participants were briefed on the research, and the consent form was reviewed. Upon reviewing and signing the consent form, participants were given the twenty-five-minute questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of questions on: (1) demographics (e.g., current sport, athletic classification, and academic major) and sport participation (e.g., scholarship status); (2) AIMS; and (3) perceptions and attitudes (e.g., athletic opportunity, athletic support, and racial and gender discrimination). For this study, only the demographics, sport participation, and the AIMS were examined.

## Data Analysis

In this research, quantitative analysis was used to include inferential and descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics identified ranking, means, and standard deviations. Then, a frequency analysis determined the breakdown of respondents by scholarship status and academic classification. A frequency analysis of section 1 determined the mean responses of the entire section, which measured influence factors of surveyed track and field college athletes. A multivariate analysis of variances (MANOVA) was used to analyze questions 2–4. The significance level was set at an alpha level of .05 for this study. If the variables were found to be of significance, then a post hoc test was conducted to identify where the significance lies.

When looking into power, the analysis consists of a process in which one of several statistical parameters can be calculated given others. Usually, a power analysis calculates needed sample size given some expected effect size, or alpha, and power. Referring to such power calculations as *post hoc power* (PHP), Yuan and Maxwell show that PHP does not necessarily provide an accurate estimate of true power.<sup>57</sup> Hoening and Heisey discuss several misconceptions connected with retrospective power.<sup>58</sup> Cohen addresses the issues of power and power analyses, including some recommendations about effect sizes that can be used when performing a power analysis. Therefore, Cohen considers the use of such recommendations as a last resort, and only when a thorough literature review has failed to reveal any useful numbers and a pilot study is either not possible or not feasible.<sup>59</sup> Hence, when addressing the effect of size, Cohen developed the following parameters: (1) Small effect: 1 percent of the variance;  $d = 0.25$  (too small to detect other than statistically; lower limit of what is clinically relevant); (2) Medium effect: 6 percent of the variance;  $d = 0.5$  (apparent with careful observation); and (3) Large effect: at least 15 percent of the variance;  $d = 0.8$  (apparent with a superficial glance; unlikely to be the focus of research because it is too obvious).<sup>60</sup>

### Limitations

As stated, the research results presented in this study were part of a larger body of exploratory research examining Black female college athletes' identity negotiation within a HWIHE. First, the number of participants in this research study is considered small and not generalizable based on the principles of quantitative research; however, acknowledging that Black female college athletes represent 4.6 percent of the overall participants within DI, DII, and DIII NCAA member institutions, the number of participants is in alignment with the association representation.<sup>61</sup> Second, the use of the AIMS was appropriate to identify their support services and counseling needs for athletics. However, following the review of the data, the authors discerned that, in order to identify and determine a comprehensive listing of support services and counseling needs to address the intersection of the African American female college athletes' racial and gender identity, a racial identity measurement scale (e.g., Cross Racial Identity Scale<sup>62</sup>) and a gender identity measurement scale (e.g., Gender Identity Scale<sup>63</sup>) could add to the interpretation of the AIMS.

## Results

The purpose of this study was to determine African American female college athletes' level of athletic identity and their need for support services. The results indicate that African American female college athletes had high athletic identity scores. Overall, the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) ranked the following as the top overall mean scores: "I consider myself an athlete," "I have goals related to sport," "Most of my friends are athletes," and "I would be depressed if I were injured and could not compete in sport." See Table 12.2.

**Table 12.2. Summary of AIMS Scores Mean Rank and Standard Deviation of African American Female College Athletes**

Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS)		N	M	SD	Rank
Social Identity	I consider myself an athlete.	38	6.97	.577	.1
	I have goals related to sport.	38	5.97	1.24	3
	Most of my friends are athletes.	38	5.97	1.53	2
Exclusivity	Sport is the most important part of my life.	37	4.19	1.79	6
	I spend more time thinking about sport than anything else.	38	3.63	1.60	7
Negative Affectivity	I feel bad about myself when I do poorly in sport.	38	5.13	1.43	5
	I would be depressed if I were injured and could not compete in sport.	38	5.29	1.35	4

The results indicate that on the AIMS, social identity had some of the highest mean scores of all the three factors. Per the results, African American female college athletes had a very strong agreement mean score relationship with the following scale items: “I consider myself an athlete,” “I have goals related to sport,” and “Most of my friends are athletes.” This shows that African American female college athletes identify strongly with participating in athletics as part of their social identity. The negative affectivity factor was the only other area that African American female college athletes felt strongly about. The areas of: “I would be depressed if I were injured and could not compete in sport” and “I feel bad about myself when I do poorly in sport” had strong mean scores that show high agreement within these areas.

Table 12.3 indicates that the social identity total mean score ranks higher than the other two mean factors for African American female college athletes on the AIMS when addressing academic classification. In addressing fourth- and fifth-year African American female college athletes, social identity ranks as a very high important factor. See Table 12.3. Here the univariate tests show that the significant difference in the mean scores is within the academic classification on the AIMS. The highest mean score for Social Identity were significantly higher ( $M=6.79$ ,  $SD=.577$ ) than the highest mean score for Exclusivity ( $M=4.19$ ,  $SD=.179$ ) and the highest mean score Negative Affectivity ( $M=5.29$ ,  $SD=1.35$ ) in the Social Identity category for reasons for understanding the AIMS.

**Table 12.3. Summary of AIMS Scores Mean Rank and Standard Deviation of African American Female College Athletes by Classification**

AIMS Factor	Statement	Academic Classification	Rank	m	sd
Social Identity	I consider myself an athlete.	First Year	3	6.91	.302
		Second Year	5	6.33	1.000
		Third Year	4	6.88	.354
		Fourth Year	1	7.00	.000
		Fifth Year	1	7.00	.000

AIMS Factor	Statement	Academic Classification	Rank	m	sd
		<b>Total</b>		<b>6.79</b>	<b>.577</b>
	I have goals related to sport.	First Year	2	6.64	.674
		Second Year	3	5.89	.928
		Third Year	4	5.50	1.069
		Fourth Year	5	5.38	1.923
		Fifth Year	1	7.00	.000
		<b>Total</b>		<b>5.97</b>	<b>1.24</b>
	Most of my friends are athletes.	First Year	3	6.27	1.489
		Second Year	5	5.22	1.563
		Third Year	4	5.50	1.852
		Fourth Year	2	6.63	1.061
		Fifth Year	1	7.00	.000
		<b>Total</b>		<b>5.97</b>	<b>1.53</b>
Exclusivity	Sport is the most important part of my life.	First Year	1	5.09	1.300
		Second Year	3	4.50	1.773
		Third Year	4	3.63	1.847
		Fourth Year	5	3.00	1.927

<b>AIMS Factor</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Academic Classification</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>sd</b>
		Fifth Year	2	5.00	1.414
		<b>Total</b>		<b>4.19</b>	<b>1.79</b>
	I spend more time thinking about sport than anything else.	First Year	1	5.09	1.514
		Second Year	4	3.11	1.054
		Third Year	3	3.25	1.282
		Fourth Year	5	2.50	1.414
		Fifth Year	2	4.00	.000
		<b>Total</b>		<b>3.63</b>	<b>1.60</b>
Negative Affectivity	I feel bad about myself when I do poorly in sport.	First Year	2	5.45	1.128
		Second Year	5	4.56	1.424
		Third Year	3	5.50	1.195
		Fourth Year	4	4.50	1.773
		Fifth Year	1	7.00	.000
		<b>Total</b>		<b>5.13</b>	<b>1.44</b>
	I would be very depressed if I were injured and could not compete in sport.	First Year	1	5.73	1.489

AIMS Factor	Statement	Academic Classification	Rank	m	sd
		Second Year	2	5.56	.726
		Third Year	5	4.63	1.408
		Fourth Year	4	5.00	1.512
		Fifth Year	3	5.50	2.121
		<b>Total</b>		<b>5.29</b>	<b>1.54</b>

The multivariate test (MANOVA) Wilks's Lambda = .354,  $F(28,116) = 1.173$ ,  $p < .00$ , eta squared = .228, power = .403, indicate there was a significant difference between academic classification within Social Identity. Eta squared is the effect size for the sample; and, 2.3 percent of the variability in academic classification was due to Social Identity. (See Table 12.4.) In Table 12.4, the univariate test shows that the significant difference in the mean scores is within the social identity factor. The mean scores for African American female college athletes were significantly higher for: "I consider myself an athlete" ( $M = 6.97$ ,  $SD = .577$ ); "I have goals related to sport" ( $M = 5.97$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ); and "Most of my friends are athletes" ( $M = 5.97$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ), in the social identity factor for athletic identity measure.

**Table 12.4. Summary of Differences AIMS Scores of African American Female College Athletes by Classification**

Academic Classification (AIMS)		F	df1	df2	P
Social Identity	I consider myself an athlete.	7.199	4	32	.000*
	I have goals related to sport.	4.330	4	32	.007*
	Most of my friends are athletes.	4.012	4	32	.010*



Exclusivity	Sport is the most important part of my life.	.141	4	32	.966
	I spend more time thinking about sport than anything else.	.927	4	32	.461
Negative Affectivity	I feel bad about myself when I do poorly in sport.	1.176	4	32	.340
	I would be depressed if I were injured and could not compete in sport.	.628	4	32	.646

For African American female college athletes with a partial scholarship, the social identity total mean score ranks higher than the other two mean factors, as indicated in Table 12.5, while African American female college athletes with a full scholarship had the second rank AIMS social identity. Overall, the social identity category had the highest total mean scores of any category on the AIMS.

**Table 12.5. Summary of AIMS Scores Mean Rank and Standard Deviation of African American Female College Athletes by Scholarship Classification**

AIMS Factor	Statement	Scholarship Status	Rank	m	sd
Social Identity	I consider myself an athlete.	Walk-On	3	6.70	.483
		Partial Scholarship	1	7.00	.000
		Full Scholarship	2	6.75	.716
		<b>Total</b>		<b>6.79</b>	<b>.577</b>

<b>AIMS Factor</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Scholarship Status</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>m</b>	<b>sd</b>
	I have goals related to sport.	Walk-On	3	5.50	1.509
		Partial Scholarship	1	6.13	1.458
		Full Scholarship	1	6.15	.988
		<b>Total</b>		<b>5.97</b>	<b>1.24</b>
	Most of my friends are athletes.	Walk-On	3	5.30	2.00
		Partial Scholarship	1	6.63	.744
		Full Scholarship	2	6.05	1.432
		<b>Total</b>		<b>5.97</b>	<b>1.502</b>
Exclusivity	Sport is the most important part of my life.	Walk-On	2	3.80	1.874
		Partial Scholarship	3	3.63	2.066
		Full Scholarship	1	4.63	1.606
		<b>Total</b>		<b>4.16</b>	<b>1.793</b>
	I spend more time thinking about sport than anything else.	Walk-On	3	3.50	1.434

AIMS Factor	Statement	Scholarship Status	Rank	m	sd
		Partial Scholarship	2	3.50	1.927
		Full Scholarship	1	3.75	1.618
		<b>Total</b>		<b>3.63</b>	<b>1.601</b>
Negative Affectivity	I feel bad about myself when I do poorly in sport.	Walk-On	3	4.90	1.449
		Partial Scholarship	1	5.63	.916
		Full Scholarship	2	5.05	1.605
		<b>Total</b>		<b>5.13</b>	<b>1.436</b>
	I would be very depressed if I were injured and could not compete in sport.	Walk-On	3	5.00	1.333
		Partial Scholarship	1	5.75	1.035
		Full Scholarship	2	5.25	1.482
		<b>Total</b>		<b>5.29</b>	<b>1.354</b>

The multivariate test (MANOVA) Wilks's Lambda = .711,  $F(14,56) = .743$ ,  $p = .723$ , eta squared = .157, power = .403, indicate there was a no significant difference between scholarship status, as indicated in Table

12.6. Eta squared is the effect size for the sample: 15.7 percent of the variability in AIMS and the scholarship status.

**Table 12.6. Summary of Differences AIMS Scores of African American Female College Athletes Based on Scholarship Status**

Summary of Differences (AIMS)		F	df1	df2	P
Social Identity	I consider myself an athlete.	2.436	2	34	.103
	I have goals related to sport.	.404	2	34	.671
	Most of my friends are athletes.	5.062	2	34	.012
Exclusivity	Sport is the most important part of my life.	.311	2	34	.735
	I spend more time thinking about sport than anything else.	.635	2	34	.536
Negative Affectivity	I feel bad about myself when I do poorly in sport.	.659	2	34	.524
	I would be depressed if I were injured and could not compete in sport.	1.351	2	34	.272

## Discussion

The AIMS, as presented, was designed to identify a person's commitment level to their sport,<sup>64</sup> but as suggested, the AIMS could be utilized as an assessment tool for athletic personnel to understand student-athletes' ongoing adjustment to the environment and responsibilities.<sup>65</sup> The purpose of this research investigation was to determine African American female college athletes' level of athletic identity and to determine the need of support services that may aid in their college athlete experiences. More

specifically, the purpose was to identify: (1) the most and least important AIMS factors for the African American female college athletes; (2) the specific differences among African American female college athletes' AIMS factors; (3) the most and least important AIMS factors based on academic classification; and (4) the specific differences between African American female college athletes' AIMS factors based on academic classification.

To address the first research question, the African American female college athletes in this study indicated the social identity factor was the most important of the AIMS factors and exclusivity was the least important. More pointedly, overall the women's scores indicated that they perceived themselves as athletes (social identity), but their self-worth was not solely dependent on their athletic activities (exclusivity). Gendered research suggests female college athletes have fewer opportunities to play sport at the professional level than male college athletes<sup>66</sup>; therefore, female college athletes may place less emphasis on their athletic identity and more on nonathletic identities (e.g., academic and career).<sup>67</sup> In 2004, Harrison and Lawrence found female college athletes understood that their ability to play at the professional level was severely limited to the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), Women's Tennis Association, (WTA), and perhaps even the U.S. Track and Field Association (USATF).<sup>68</sup> Lance found that female college athletes experienced greater role conflict than male college athletes, which was attributed to societal gender norms and sport team affiliation (i.e., masculine/not acceptable sport [basketball] vs. feminine/acceptable sport [track and field]).<sup>69</sup> This identity, as the literature presented, is supported by the socialization of African American women by the Black community to embrace her athletic prowess and physicality and to nurture her sport participation in "feminine" and "masculine" sports from an early age.<sup>70</sup>

With respect to the second research question, Melendez<sup>71</sup> denotes that having a strong athletic identity can create challenges adjusting to the role as a college athlete (i.e., coping with injury and balancing athletic and academic responsibilities). However, these research findings asserted that females and racial minorities that may have a strong athletic identity will adjust better to what Brewer and Cornelius<sup>72</sup> categorize as "exclusivity" due to the collectivist cultural values attributed to females and racial minority communities (i.e., African American and Hispanic). Thus, "collectivism is characterized by a belief in the importance of interdependence, cooperation, group identification, socio-centricity, and strong emotional attachment in relationships."<sup>73</sup> For practitioners working

with African American female athletes, Carter-Francique<sup>74</sup> purports developing programs grounded in Patricia Hill Collins's "ethic of care" philosophy.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, if African American female college athletes have a strong athletic identity, it does not automatically denote an ability nor an inability to transition.

The overall AIMS scores for the thirty-eight African American female college athletes were deemed high; however, there were specific differences among the women's AIMS factors of social identity, exclusivity, and negative affectivity. Interestingly, the results indicated that the rank order of the mean item scores reflected a hierarchy and salience of the respective factors. Hence, the women's segmentation of their athletic identity positioned social identity on top, in strong agreement with the strength of their athletics involvement; negative affectivity was positioned in the middle, in agreement with the emotional importance of their athletic participation and affiliation; and exclusivity was positioned on the bottom, with a neutrality to disagreement with their self-worth dictated solely by their athletic affiliation. Therefore, while the women, again, embrace their athletic selves, the AIMS intimates that they have other aspects of their identity such as their educational engagement or the interlocking nature of their race, gender, and social class within the HWIHE that may influence their self-worth.

The third research question concerned the most important and the least important factors of the AIMS based on the African American female college athletes' academic classification. This information would aid with identifying what support services and counseling the women may need throughout their tenure. The AIMS revealed social identity as the most important factor and negative affectivity as the least important factor. Thus, like the AIMS results indicated in research question 1, the women had a strong social identity that was in agreement with the strength of their athletic participation and involvement, while negative affectivity was the least important factor, ranging from neutrality to disagreement with the importance of being emotionally connected to their sport performances. Therefore, for the first-year athlete transitioning out of high school and into college and the fifth-year college athlete transitioning into elite competition or retiring from competition, athletics has great meaning. But each are leaving one level of competition for another new level of competition or none at all. There is anticipation of new challenges and a new environment including coaches, friends, and teammates and a decrease in emotional investment with the "old" environment.

The African American female athletes represented first-, second-, third-, fourth-, and fifth-year college students. The results indicated that

the first-year and the fourth- and fifth-year students had the highest athletic identities. Wittmer and colleagues<sup>76</sup> conducted research on college athlete development, and this research indicated that first-year college athletes that have a strong athletic identity warrant support services appropriate to addressing college athlete life balance, and that athletic personnel need to work to integrate these college athletes into the greater student body. Similarly, fourth- and fifth-year college athletes had a strong athletic identity. Wittmer and colleagues<sup>77</sup> suggested that college athletes in the latter stage, or in the third through fifth year of their college athletic tenure, with strong athletic identities warrant appropriate support services geared toward post-college career information, services, and transition. Thus, the results from the African American female college athletes' scores reaffirm the need for developmentally appropriate support programs.

While developmentally appropriate programs are suggested, practitioners need to be mindful of African American female college athletes' willingness to participate in support service activities and counseling that may not reflect aspects of their identities.<sup>78</sup> When programming for women and people of color, scholars note the importance of support services and counseling programs that account for the negative campus racial climate within HWIHE<sup>79</sup> (i.e., the exclusion of faculty, staff, and students of color and a university mission that does not promote a commitment to pluralism<sup>80</sup>). In addition, practitioners need be aware that, in the existence of HWIHE and the likelihood of a negative campus racial climate where racial microaggressions occur, the willingness of students classified as racial minorities to participate may be limited. Due to the interlocking identities of African American female college athletes, the support services and counseling programs need to express the sentiment of a "safe cultural space."<sup>81</sup> The creation of safe space organizations allows marginalized people generally, and African American female college athletics specifically,<sup>82</sup> an opportunity for self-expression, a voice, and an opportunity to further develop their identity and engage educationally.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, administrators and staff need to be cognizant of, or demonstrate cultural competence regarding, the daily challenges of African American female college athletes as an "Othered" body on HWIHE campuses.

For example, if HWIHE's athletic personnel implement a mentoring program to aid African American female college athletes' development and educational engagement, they may face some pushback from these women. In 2010, Carter and Hart examined perspectives on the concept of mentoring and the need of mentors for Black female college athletes.<sup>84</sup> Their research revealed that the women understood the concept of

mentoring, but as college athletes, they had more than one mentor to address the components of their identity—hence, the career/academic component, the psychosocial component, and the athletic component. One of the key findings in the research study was that both the career/academic component and the psychosocial component of mentors were fulfilled by family members such as the women's mothers, fathers, and family members, rather than any athletic or university personnel. This is significant but can be problematic if trying to guide the young women and introduce them to opportunities outside of their developmental and maturation purview. Nevertheless, the women understood the importance of mentoring and contended that their mentors must exhibit relational characteristics that entail notions of authenticity, empowerment, and engagement.<sup>85</sup>

While beyond the four research questions of interest, we ran analyses of the AIMS based on the African American female college athletes' athletic scholarship status. The results indicated that the women who were on partial scholarship and received a portion of grant-in-aid (i.e., financial aid to cover the cost of books, tuition, and/or housing) had the strongest athletic identity, but there was no significance of their identity to the full-ride or walk-on/nonscholarship athletes. Nevertheless, there is a dearth of research examining athletic scholarship status based on a person's athlete identity in college that remained of interest. For instance, Medic, Mack, Wilson, and Starkes<sup>86</sup> state that males are traditionally motivated extrinsically (i.e., by tangible rewards); thus, their motivation was dependent on their scholarship status, sex/gender, and sport team affiliation. Moreover, the research revealed that the motivational role of college athletic scholarship status resides in the amount of the scholarship and/or the personnel that determine the amount of the scholarship, as this can work to have “control over scholarship athletes' behavior”<sup>87</sup> and subsequent athletic identity (e.g., social identity, exclusivity, and negative affectivity). This concept is noteworthy, acknowledging the current NCAA policy on the renewal or nonrenewal of scholarships or “institutional financial aid.”

The 2013–2014 NCAA Division I Manual article, 15.3.5 *Renewals and Non-Renewals*, including 15.3.5.1 and 15.3.5.2, details the *Institutional Obligation and Reconsideration of Nonrenewal* accordingly.<sup>88</sup> In brief, financial aid/athletic scholarships are one-year obligations and subject to review, at which point college athletes may receive a renewal of financial aid (i.e., increase, same, or decrease) or a nonrenewal of financial aid. The determination of renewal and nonrenewal of financial aid is based on the decision of the sport team's head athletic coach and coaching personnel.



Thus, athletes with a partial scholarship may have a stronger athletic identity and greater investment in their athletic identity and performance due to the desire to receive a full scholarship. Furthermore, the possibility of a decrease in financial aid could threaten their ability to participate on their sport team because of the cost to attend their respective institution and their ability to obtain additional financial resources (i.e., family income, financial aid, and academic scholarship). Therefore, athletic personnel should be mindful of how African American female college athletes that are not receiving full financial aid may forsake their academic responsibilities to achieve athletic success and thus, to secure a greater amount of financial aid. This is particularly significant for college athletes of color who come from low income/urban neighborhoods, as financial aid in the form of an athletic scholarship provides access to HWIHE DI athletic programs.<sup>89</sup>

## Conclusion

The results of this research study raise interesting points for consideration with respect to African American female college athletes' athletic identity and to determining their support services and counseling needs. The African American female college athletes had strong athletic identities based on the norms presented by Brewer and Cornelius<sup>90</sup> with significant interactions based on their status as college athletes, their athletic classification, and their scholarship status. As denoted in the introduction, African American female college athletes who attend HWIHE endure psychological, identity, *and* cultural barriers, and "to become a fine athlete she has to develop an assessment of herself in the face of society, which devalued her, as both a female and a black."<sup>91</sup> Therefore, practitioners who develop support service programs need to be mindful of the intersectionality of diversity dimensions for female college athletes and college athletes of color, and if they choose, should utilize the AIMS to identify support service needs and integrate a race-based and gender-based measurement scale and/or use open-ended questions in a face-to-face interview that will capture the voices and perspectives of a historically marginalized population. This effort will acknowledge the fullness of their identity within institutional environments in which they are "Othered."

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