NEGOTIATING GENDER ACCOUNTABILITY ACROSS CONTEXTS: THE CASE OF THE FORMER COLLEGE ATHLETE

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Dedicated to: My grandparents. Rosalio (Chalio) Acosta, Genoveva (Jenny) Franco Acosta, George Russian, and Marie Gunza Russian.

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Anna Elyse Acosta Russian

NEGOTIATING GENDER ACCOUNTABILITY ACROSS CONTEXTS: THE CASE OF THE FORMER COLLEGE ATHLETE

The purpose of this dissertation is to uncover the nuanced ways individuals make sense of shifting gender accountability norms as they transition out of a unique social context and into broader U.S. society. This dissertation examines how 84 former Division I college athletes use the socialization they acquired through college sport in their lives once they are no longer student-athletes. I ask: When is being a former college athlete utilized as an asset, and when is it seen as a liability? How does race and gender impact these choices?

I use the case study of former Division I college athletes to investigate three key things. First, to explore how women and men translate the skillset acquired in the previous context of college athletics to their current workplace context that associates such skills with the masculine-typed ideal worker image. Second, to uncover the degree to which women and men can use a gendered status marker to their advantage at work. Third, to explore the extent to which broader cultural gender norms impede or facilitate the maintenance of one's athletic identity—a social identity cultivated and rewarded by all genders in the college athletics context, still seen as masculine by broader U.S. society.

Results show all former student-athletes use the social skills learned through college athletics in their work life today, but men can benefit from these skills to a greater degree than women because they more directly embody the ideal worker image. Respondents are more likely to use their college athlete credential in workplace contexts that share similar values and norms as college athletics. These workplace contexts are more likely to be predominantly white and men-dominated spaces than not. Thus, unsurprisingly, white men were more likely than Black

men and Black and White women to use their athlete credential to their advantage at work. Furthermore, I find men have a smoother transition to recreational sporting life than women because broader gender norms continue to view athletics as a predominantly man-centric activity. I argue the case of the former D1 college athlete serves as an appropriate site to explore the ways in which people use or reject social practices previously learned in an overarchingly masculine institution as they navigate the contexts surrounding work and sport in their lives today.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Sport is a prominent social institution in American society (Cahn 2015; Coakley 2017). It both produces and is a product of social reality (Frey and Eitzen 1991). The United States has a unique history compared to its global counterparts when it comes to the formation of its sporting culture. Unlike in Europe, where organized sport originally developed at voluntary clubs and associations, the United States relied on schools, colleges, and universities (van Bottenburg 2013). To this day, student-athletes continue to compete at all levels of education. The varsity college/university setting remains the most elite amateur sporting environment one can participate in. Inequities in college sport persist to this day: women's teams receive less funding, media attention, and unequal facilities (O'Connor 2021; Sveinson et al. 2022); research suggests it is racially colorblind, lacks racially conscious leadership, and reproduces racial marginalization (Bimper and Harrison 2017; Cooper et al. 2020; Keaton and Cooper 2022). Yet there is minimal research on if, or how, these gender and race-based inequities continue after college graduation.

The end of college athlete career transition is an under researched phenomena (Miller and Buttell 2018). Most studies focus on career transitions for the broad category of elite athletes. Previous research shows when elite athletes transition to a life outside of sport they may experience emotional and psychological difficulty including athlete identity disclosure (Bopp et al. 2021). Others may feel a newfound sense of autonomy, and some a mixture of both (Fuller 2014). Previous studies have shown the transition away from elite sport to be slow and gradual, at times conceptualized as a "a transition process involving development through life rather than a lone event" (Fuller 2014:2). Transitioning out of elite sport is not simply about coming to terms with losing the structure and networks associated with sporting culture. It's also about learning

how to apply the skills, networks, and behaviors acquired through sport in former athletes' lives after transitioning out of college athletics.

This dissertation asks: When is being a former college athlete utilized as an asset, and when is it seen as a liability? How does race and gender impact these choices? This study relies on 84 in-depth interviews with former Division I NCAA student athletes to answer these research questions.

My empirical goals with this dissertation are threefold. First, I provide a detailed analysis of when and how former-college athletes use what they learned in college athletics to their advantage in the working world today. Second, I explore if former college athletes view their college athlete history as a status marker that can help them succeed in their work environment. Third, I show the different ways former college athletes navigate the new norms and expectations associated with recreational sporting life considering their departure from elite sport. My theoretical goal with this dissertation is to create a dialogue between Cultural Sociology's cultural toolkit theory and the Sociology of Gender's interactionist framework of gender accountability. I use the case of the former college athlete to show how gender accountability norms impact what remains in individual's cultural toolkits once they leave an overarchingly masculine institution and are reintegrated into modern American society. I examine how social context and individual's race and gender impact this process.

DOING GENDER INTERSECTIONALLY

A pillar of social psychological literature is the symbolic interactionist perspective that people respond to situations on the basis of the meaning they assign to them (Blumer 1958; Goffman 1990). This interpretative framework has been adopted and expanded upon in the sociology of gender literature via Doing Gender Theory. Gender accountability (i.e., doing

gender) refers to the ways in which we hold ourselves and others responsible for expressing our gender identities in socially acceptable ways (West and Zimmerman 1987). Social context shapes when and how gender accountability rules are applied. This theory views gender as an ongoing activity that is created through, and simultaneously structures social interaction. Institutional forces that maintain gender are validated through social interaction, while simultaneously the accountability involved in gendered interactions varies by context.

Race is also central to how gender accountability impacts social stratification. Hill Collins (2009) argues systems of oppression are interlocking and uphold unmarked default categories of power (i.e. whiteness, masculinity). Accountability of one's gender performance often rests on racialized ideologies. Intersectional scholars challenge the assumption that any single social institution serves as the overarching determinant of social inequality, and instead looks at how macro-level institutions like race, class, and gender "work together to draw boundaries and reproduce complex inequalities in the system as a whole"(Choo and Ferree 2010:137). While we know these norms are defined by the unmarked category of whiteness, what remains unclear is how individuals navigate and negotiate gender accountability as they move into and out of different social contexts in their lives today. I rely on an intersectional framework to show how the intersecting systems of race and gender shape individual attitudes & perceptions, and how people are materially rewarded or disadvantaged within the social institutions of work and recreational sport.

Further, the way we see ourselves and how others see and interact with us, is an inherently social process (Mead 2009). Our social identities—be it race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc.—are integral to who we are. The feedback we receive from others as we move around and express ourselves in the social world impacts who we are, how we feel about

ourselves, and how we interact with others. As I will show in the empirical chapters that follow, the college athlete identity continues to play a strong role in how my respondents enact their gendered selves across two new social contexts that are not inherently tied to college sport.

SOCIALIZATION AND CULTURAL MATCHING

Sociological research has established shared culture matters gaining access to, and building connections with new social groups (Byrne 1971; Rivera 2012). Previous scholars show cultural similarities serve as foundations for attraction, trust and comfort, bonding, and a bases for evaluating merit (DiMaggio 1987; Lamont and Molnár 2002; Rivera 2012). Research has focused largely on how shared culture matters in educational settings, how it matters to employers in work settings, and how it is created and sustained in sporting settings (Fine 1979; Fujimoto, Snijders, and Valente 2018; Rivera 2012; Stevens, Armstrong, and Arum 2008). Other scholars have shown cultural similarities involving sports are salient sources of inclusion and exclusion in the work force (Turco 2010).

Rivera (2012) uses the case of hiring to show how cultural matching—the ways an individual's cultural background and experiences, relate to, or identify with another's cultural background— mattered more to employers hiring decisions than overall work productivity on its own. She concludes, shared culture specifically in the form of lifestyle markers such as leisure pursuits and self-presentation styles, matters for employer hiring. While Rivera shows how employers view cultural markers, the role of employees is under-explored. Passive employees are implied in her theory. I expand on Rivera's study by shifting focus from the employer perspective to the employee. I explore the ways former Division I college athletes use or downplay their student-athlete credential in their employment today to investigate the extent to which cultural matching matters to respondents. I use this case study to show how employees

deploy cultural markers, strategically uses them, restoring agency of employees, and how this process is gendered and racialized.

Further, a large body of literature has explored identity foreclosure when student-athletes transition out of elite sport. Athlete identity foreclosure refers to when someone completely adopts the identity of being an athlete without exploring or considering other aspects of who they are (Erikson 1968; Murphy, Petitpas, and Brewer 1996). These findings show that many former college athletes have a low level of exploration of alternative social identities outside of that of the athlete, and a high level of commitment to their athlete identity due to the intense commitment they had to their athletic endeavors (usually from childhood through young adulthood) (Brewer and Petitpas 2017; Murphy et al. 1996). Most studies surrounding student-athlete identity foreclosure rely on relatively small samples and focus primarily on identity construction rather than the social contexts that impact said construction. My dissertation adds to this body of literature by relying on a large racially and gender diverse sample that explores specifically how workplace and recreational sporting context impacts one's experience with their former-student athlete identity.

While previous literature shows athlete identity foreclosure is a serious struggle many former student-athletes undergo, some studies also suggest participation in college sport can also be rewarding in life after college sport (Fuller 2014; Warehime et al. 2017). For instance, a Gallop report commissioned by the NCAA shows former college athletes former "are more likely than non-student-athletes to be thriving in purpose, social, community and physical well-being, and their financial wellbeing is comparable to non-athletes" (Gallup 2020:3).

Nonetheless, research is limited in understanding how the social capital acquired through participation in college athletics impacts former student-athletes after graduation. Social capital

refers to the resources embedded in social relationships, networks, and social structures that individuals can access and utilize to gain advantages or achieve certain outcomes in society (Bourdieu and Bourdieu 2021; Coleman 1988). I move this literature forward by exploring if shared culture matters in the eyes of employees as they compete for and are inducted into jobs. I also explore if the college athlete credential is in fact seen as a status marker for former-student athletes in the working world today and how demographic characteristics like race and gender impact whether people use their college athlete credential for social rewards in the workforce and recreational sporting life today.

JUSTIFICATION FOR SOCIAL DOMAINS OF STUDY

Work

The workplace is an important domain to look at for three key reasons. First, the workplace remains the primary domain wherein economic and gender inequality is created and reproduced (England 2020). Second, workplace norms largely champion similar skills and mindsets as those championed in elite athletics (Clément-Guillotin, Chalabaev, and Fontayne 2012; Minnotte and Minnotte 2021). Athletic attributes such as dominance, competitiveness, and work ethic are considered key qualities that define what an ideal worker should embody (Williams 2001). My unique sample serves as a case study wherein women and men translate a skillset cultivated by, and rewarded to, all genders in the previous context of college athletics to their current workplace context that associates such skills with the masculine-typed ideal worker image. Third, tokenism continues to negatively impact minority workers across all professions. Tokens, defined as "numeric minorities in segregated occupations," experience challenges of greater magnitude and meaning than majority peers (Turco 2010:895). Obstacles can include things like social isolation, implicit and explicit biases that impede workplace advancement, and the cognitive hardship of feeling like one must represent their entire social group (Kanter 2010;

Turco 2010; Wingfield 2021). Literature shows tokenism impacts members of different social groupings to different degrees. For example, white men in the predominantly women-centric profession of nursing experience a "glass escalator" wherein their token status as white men was beneficial (Wingfield 2009). They were able to build bonds with white men superiors and were treated with warm and congenial respect from peers and patients alike. In contrast, Black men of the same profession were seen as less skilled than women nurses, mistaken as janitors or viewed with distrust by white patients, and were not given the same motivations and mentorship to move up the occupational ladder. As former student-athletes move into their respective occupational fields, the race and gender makeup of these workplace contexts may or may not align with the context of college sport. The racial and gender makeup of the workplace is going to impact how former athletes navigate the shift into their working lives and the degree to which they can use their college athlete skills and credentials to their advantage.

The literature on gender and work shows the ways in which women and other minority groups, more so than white men, do gender within the work environment has a significant impact on how these individuals are perceived and accepted in their professions (Schilt 2010; Wingfield 2009). These findings largely depend on the gendering of the profession itself, and the gender composition of the workplace. For example, tokenism in the workplace heightens gender salience for minority groups (Kanter 1977). Likewise (Alfrey and Twine 2017a) find LGBTQ women who presented as gender fluid in their masculine tech work environment experienced a greater sense of belonging than heterosexual and feminine presenting women peers. Theory and empirical work suggest women are penalized to a greater degree for breaking gender norms in the workplace context than men. I argue the traits associated with college athletics are largely

seen as masculine by broader US society, as such women will be more likely to negotiate traits fostered in college sport such as competitiveness than their men counterparts.

Chapter 3 examines how women and men translate a skillset positively cultivated by both women and men in the previous context of college athletics to their current workplace context that associates such skills with the masculine-typed ideal worker image. Chapter 4 explores the degree to which former student-athletes are able to use their Division 1 college athlete credential to their advantage at work and the ways this process is gendered and racialized.

Recreational Sport

To have the skills required to play Division I college sport, most student-athletes would have been participating in sport most of their adolescence and young adulthood. Previous research suggests, those who engage with sport in their youth are quite likely to continue to participate in sport throughout adulthood (Hoekman, Breedveld, and Kraaykamp 2017). Nevertheless, literature in the sociology of sport documents a significant gender gap between women and men, with men out participating women across all stages of the life course (Hoekman, Breedveld, and Kraaykamp 2017). Scholars conjecture this gap could be due to an array of things including: men being socialized into sport at a younger age and at higher rates than women; a relative lack of resources and institutional support for women in recreational sport; and gender ideology from other domains of social life (i.e. the social norm women should be the primary caretaker of children) constrain women's choices to pursue recreational sport in adulthood (Capranica et al. 2013; Hirvensalo and Lintunen 2011; Milner and Braddock 2016).

Still, it remains unclear how interactional experiences in recreational sport after college athletics impacts women's' desires and abilities to participate in recreational sport. For example,

perhaps due to the structure of adult recreational sport which consists of limited opportunities for sex-segregated sporting leagues, women may struggle with tokenism and deference to men as they participate in mixed sex sporting endeavors. I seek to explore what mechanisms lead former women's college athletes to maintain or distance themselves from participation in recreational sport.

I also explore how men participate in sport after leaving college athletics. The United States has a unique sporting model in which: elite sport is most valued and is directly tied to education. This model, coupled with the societal view that sport is a hegemonically masculine institution, makes it so men's college athletics, and particularly the most popular spectator sports (i.e., football and basketball) is seen as one of the most elite forms of sport an individual can participate in in US society. As such, it is possible that when men leave college athletics, they may struggle with continuing to participate in recreational sport as they may view the level of play as unsatisfactory and/or find it difficult to participate in an activity that has lost its relative status (Messner 1992). It is also possible these men continue to pursue athletic activity with relative ease as their credential as a former college athlete gives them the status to be taken seriously in recreational sporting endeavors.

To summarize, the gender structure of college athletics supports separate but equal spheres of athletic participation. There is equal opportunity for women and men to play their sports in homosocial spaces. In the gender structure of adulthood, that is not the case. Most people who participate in sport in adulthood are men. Thus, former women college athletes are likely to face barriers in participating in sport after college athletics that their men counterparts will not.

THE CASE OF THE FORMER STUDENT ATHLETE

The former college athlete serves as a case that socializes women and men in a relatively controlled and similar manner to adopt gendered practices which are different from the broader gender structure of the United States. Former college athletes are socialized from adolescence into a sporting subculture. Due to the institutional structure of eligibility in college sport, former college athletes are required to exit the sporting institution around the same time. According to the NCAA, fewer than 2% of former student-athletes will go on to play sports professionally (Gallup 2020). Division 1 college athletics is setup such that most student-athletes are recruited and eligible to play their respective sports throughout their 4 years of undergraduate education. Thus, most former D1 athletes begin their careers shortly after high school and end their collegiate careers around the age of 22. For the most part, these individuals are undergoing a similar process of being young adults negotiating gender norms upon leaving college athletics. Theoretically, former student athletes are cases in which individuals need to renegotiate their gender identity upon exiting the all-encompassing masculine institution of college sport, which makes the context specific nature of "doing gender" more visible.

College athletics socializes women and men into homosocial environments wherein student-athletes are spending most of their time building bonds with individuals of the same gender. The unique social structure of college athletics can provide student-athletes an environment where they are shielded from broader gender and race-based norms and stereotypes. Simply put, college athletics trains all athletes to value masculine attributes such as competition, physical strength, and dominance. Student-athletes are rewarded and not penalized for championing these traits regardless of race or gender. Once they exit college athletics, these former athletes enter new social contexts like the workplace and recreational sport environments,

where new gender accountability structures are in place. Further, being a former college athlete is an achieved status that can denote prestige outside of college athletics. Former college athletes can take the college athlete credential with them and use it in their lives after college sport as a cultural status marker because in many social contexts in US society today, cultural knowledge of, and experience with, sport is valued.

Most studies on disengagement from competitive sport focus on life satisfaction, occupation satisfaction, and education attainment (Beamon 2010, Hartmann and Massoglia 2007) as key outcome variables of various retired athletes across the life course. Few, if any, studies examine how former athletes translate and use the skillset learned through college athletics in the workplace and recreational sporting life after graduating. I address this area of research in my project by focusing on how former college athletes navigate their work and recreational sporting worlds upon exiting college athletics, and how shifting gender accountability norms impact this transition. This can help us better understand why gender inequality persists in the modern world and how socialization into sport may mitigate or amplify these inequalities – or both.

CURRENT STUDY OVERVIEW

This study is about how people use or negate the status and social skills acquired in an overarchingly masculine institution as they reintegrate and settle into hegemonic gender norms of US society. I rely on in-depth interviews to understand how people of different races and genders interpret and ascribe meaning to a prestigious athletic credential, interact with their social worlds, and make sense of previously learned social skills and behaviors considering exiting from the total institution of college athletics. How do former college athletes view and

use the skills they acquired through participation in college sport in their work lives today? Do former college athletes view their college athlete credential as a status marker in their work worlds today? If so, when? If not, why not? What does recreational sporting life look like for former college athletes? Do they still consider themselves athletes? How do gender, race, and type of sport played shape these views and experiences?

To investigate these questions, I use qualitative interviews with former NCAA college athletes to uncover the mechanisms which led respondents to their current navigations and understandings of gender as it intersects with their current athlete identity. The structural conditions of college athletics—gender segregated homosocial spaces with extreme emphasis on athletics and the body— coupled with the social consequences of exiting this social setting provides a unique opportunity to explore how shifting social contexts impact individuals' experiences with, and understandings of, gender. The NCAA is a member-led organization that regulates student athletics among 1000+ schools in the United States. It has three divisions. Division 1 is the highest level of intercollegiate athletics sanctioned by the NCAA. I specifically sample former Division 1 athletes because, as research suggest, it is the most all-encompassing of the three divisions, meaning D1 athletes are much more likely to cultivate a strong attachment to their student-athlete identity. Also, divisions differ in level of status and prestige. D1 sports have the largest followings and resources. I chose to focus only on former D1 athletes to ensure respondents had relatively similar resources and socialization processes in college athletics and similar levels of prestige/associated with their college athlete status because they all participated in the same division.

Outline of Study:

This dissertation uses 84 in-depth interviews with former Division 1 college athletes to explore how they use the skills and cultural credential cultivated in college athletics in their work and Chapter 3 explores how respondents use the socialization learned through college sport in the workplace today. I investigate how racialized gender accountability norms associated with the ideal worker image impacts when and how former Division I college athletes use or reject the values, norms, and behaviors learned through college sport in their work lives today. While Chapter 3 explores how former college athletes translate values and skills associated with college athletics to their work lives Chapter 4 investigates if, and how, the college athlete credential is viewed as a status marker at work today as either an asset or a liability. I examine how employees deploy the college athlete credential as a cultural status marker, and the ways this process is gendered and racialized. In other words, Chapter 3 looks at how the social skills acquired through college athletics impact interactions at work while Chapter 4 explores how the college athlete credential is gendered. Chapter 5 focuses on recreational sport and the body. I examine how women and men feel about their bodies and navigating recreational sporting contexts (i.e., the weight room and team sports) considering their experiences as college athletes. Across these empirical chapters, I pay particular attention to the ways gender and race impact the lived experiences of my respondents. The concluding chapter proposes actionable steps to improve former student-athletes' transition out of college sport.

CHAPTER 2: METHODS AND SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

This study relies on 84 in-depth interviews with former Division I NCAA student athletes. Qualitative research focuses on the meaning people ascribe to their actions and are best suited for answering questions of "how" and "why" (Creswell and Creswell 2013; Rubin 2021). In-depth interviews specifically, allow the researcher to chart and explain "the unfolding links between broader social structures and norms, on the one hand, and the beliefs, emotional states, and actions of individuals, on the other"(Gerson and Damaske 2020:5). Interviews ask respondents to recount and consider multiple aspects of the same experience, thus providing nuanced and deeper understanding of the social phenomena at hand. This chapter begins by detailing study recruitment procedures and sample demographics. I then walk through the interview process, including the interview guide and interview experience. Next, I explain my data analysis procedures and personal reflexivity. I conclude by discussing methodological limitations of the study.

RECRUITMENT AND THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Recruitment and data collection took place from March 2021 through May 2022. Interviewees were recruited through personal networks, sport-related academic listservs, and snowball sampling. As a former Division 1 college athlete myself, I initially began the recruitment process by contacting former college coaches and teammates and asking them to share my recruitment materials with potential respondents who were in their networks. After each interview, respondents were asked to share study invitation materials with eligible individuals in their own athletic networks. A goal of this study was to purposively sample former student athletes who played a range of sports and attended a range of universities. Since former Division 1 student athletes are a relatively dispersed group of people, I predominantly relied on

snowball as previous research suggests this recruitment strategy is especially useful in accessing populations that are diffuse and difficult to identify (Isaic-Maniu 2013).

Interviews were conducted entirely over Zoom. Participants were not compensated for their participation in the study. Previous research shows conducting interviews via video (e.g., Zoom) is an effective alternative to in-person interviews (Seitz 2016). All interviews were audio recorded. Interviews averaged 120 minutes, with the longest being 189 and the shortest being 70 minutes. Prior to being interviewed, I emailed all study participants the study information sheet and scheduled the formal meeting time. Before each interview began, I received verbal confirmation from each respondent that they had read through the study information sheet and consented to the expectations of the research process. This included consent to record the zoom meeting and have the audio file transcribed and de-identified for final analysis.

I relied on a semi-structured interview guide throughout the data collection process. This guide went through multiple iterations and pretests (i.e., three practice interviews) prior to full data collection. I leaned heavily on the interview guide during the initial round of interviews following the guide chronologically. As I grew more comfortable with the interview process (around the 10^{th} interview or so), I used the guide for general structure and as a reminder of topics I absolutely wanted to touch on, and let the respondent lead me through their experiences as a student athlete and life after college athletics.

The interviews were long but necessary to obtain a full picture of respondent life after college athletics. Interviews began with respondents providing demographic information such as their race, gender, sport played, age, current occupation, and marital status. I then asked respondents to walk me through how they came to be Division 1 athletes, and their general experiences in college athletics. Respondents discussed the highs and lows they experienced as

student athletes, the stereotypes they saw associated with the sport they played, and how they felt in terms of their gender presentation as student-athletes. I directed the narratives with follow-up questions that specifically addressed the impact race, gender, and sexuality had on their experiences. Next, I asked respondents to walk me through their experience transitioning out of being a college athlete and how their participation on college athletics left them feeling prepared/and or underprepared for post-graduation life. I intentionally probed to ask how their experiences in college athletics impact their current views and experiences with gender, race, and sexuality. The remaining sections of the interview focused on how respondents viewed and used their athlete credential and skills acquired through college sport across various contexts in their adult lives. These contexts included: recreational sport, the workplace, friendship, romantic life, and parenting life. Each of these sections followed the general format of asking respondents if, how, and when they use their college athlete credential to their advantage in the particular social setting; how they felt others viewed them considering their former student-athlete status; and the importance of having similar-others (i.e., other former elite athletes) in the particular social setting. I concluded each interview by asking respondents to share advice they had for other former student-athletes currently transitioning to adulthood, if there was anything else they'd like to share regarding their experiences, and if there was anything they expected me to ask that I didn't.

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Table 2.1 provides a breakdown of respondent gender and race. Table 2.2 provides descriptive statistics on Age, number of D1 seasons played, region of the U.S. respondents attended undergraduate, U.S. citizenship status, and current U.S. residency status. 50% of the sample identified as women and 50% of the sample identified as men. 42 respondents identified

as White, 28 identified as Black, 1 respondent identified as Asian-American and White, 2 respondents identified as Latiné, 1 respondent identified as Mexican and White, while 1 respondent identified as Latiné and Black. Respondents participated in Division 1 college athletics for at least one year, with the majority (95%) playing for their entire collegiate career (i.e., 4 to 6 years[1]).

Table 2.1 Race-Gender Sample Characteristics

	Women		Men	
Variable	Observations	Percentage	Observations	Percentage
Black	15	18%	19	23%
Black & Hispanic	1	1%	0	--
Black & White	2	2%	2	2%
Asian & White	1	1%	0	--
White	21	25%	20	24%
White & Hispanic	2	2%	1	1%
Total	42	50%	42	50%

The average age of respondent at time of interview was 29 years old, with most respondents falling in the age bracket of 26 to 30 years old. 31 respondents attended a college or university in the Northeast, 10 in the Midwest, 8 in the West, and 35 in the South. All but 4 respondents were U.S. citizens. 79 respondents resided and/or were employed in the U.S., while 5 respondents were employed and resided outside of the U.S. at the time of interview.

Table 2.2 Sample Characteristics Cont.

Age	Observations	Percentage
23-25	13	15%
26-30	43	51%
31-35	22	26%
36-41	6	7%
Number of D1 Seasons Played		

[1] NCAA eligibility permits student athletes 5 calendar years to play in 4 seasons of sport, starting from the time they enroll as a full-time student. Respondents who claim to have played 5+ years did so because they were ineligible to play (due to transferring schools, a medical grey-shirt, or a first-year redshirt—i.e., they sit out from competing in games but are still members of the team).

	1 or less	2	2%
	2	3	4%
	3	4	5%
	4	59	70%
	5	15	18%
	6	1	1%
University Region			
	Northeast	31	37%
	Midwest	10	12%
	West	8	10%
	South	35	42%
U.S. Citizen			
	Yes	80	95%
	No	4	5%
Resides in U.S.			
	Yes	79	94%
	No	5	6%

16 Division 1 sports were represented. Most men athletes participated in Football (n=15), Basketball (n=5) and Swimming (n=6). Other men's sports represented in the sample include Baseball (n=3), Cross Country (n=1), Ice Hockey (n=1), Soccer (n=4), Track and Field (n=4), Volleyball (n=1), and Wrestling (n=2). Most women athletes participated in Volleyball (n=9), Basketball (n=7), and Gymnastics (n=7). Other women's sports represented in the sample include Cross Country (n=2), Field Hockey (n=2), Ice Hockey (n=1), Lacrosse (n=1), Rowing (n=1), Soccer (n=3), Softball (n=4), Swimming (n=3), Track and Field (n=1), and Water Polo (n=1).

While there is limited data available regarding the demographics of the former Division 1 athlete population in the U.S., the NCAA does annually publish race/gender breakdown of current student athletes. For the 2022-2023 academic calendar, 27% of D1 athletes were white men, 14% where Black men, 12% were men of other races/ethnicities, 28% were white women,

6% where Black women, and 12% were women of other race/ethnicities. Tables 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5 show the percentage of Women and Men of Color vs white women and men in each of the respective sports represented in this study's sample. Basketball (76%) and football (64%) have the largest representation of Men of Color, while basketball (68%) and Track and Field (47%) have the largest representation of Women of Color.

Table 2.3. Sport-Race breakdown for Women—Sample vs. NCAA

Sport	White Women			Women of Color		
	Raw n	Within Sport Sample %	NCAA %	Raw n	Sample %	NCAA %
Baseball	--	--	--	--	--	--
Basketball	1	14%	32	6	86%	68
Cross Country	1	50%	71	1	50%	29
Field Hockey	2	100%	69	0	0%	31
Football	--	--	--	--	--	--
Gymnastics	2	29%	61	5	71%	39
Ice Hockey	1	100%	60	0	0%	40
Lacrosse	0	0%	83	1	100%	17
Rowing	1	100%	73	0	0%	27
Soccer	2	67%	65	1	33%	35
Softball	3	75%	65	1	25%	35
Swimming	2	67%	73	1	33%	27
Track & Field	1	100%	53	0	0%	47
Volleyball	4	44%	60	5	56%	40
Water Polo	1	100%	60	0	0%	40
Wrestling	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total	21	100%		21	100%	

Table 2.4. Sport-Race breakdown for Men—Sample vs. NCAA

	White Men			Men of Color		
sport	Raw n	Within Sport Sample %	NCAA %	Raw n	Sample %	NCAA %
Baseball	2	67%	75	1	33%	25
Basketball	0	0%	24	5	100%	76

Cross Country	1	100%	68	0	0%	32	
Field Hockey	--	--	--	--	--	--	
Football	9	60%	36	6	40%	64	
Gymnastics	--	--	--	--	--	--	
Ice Hockey	1	100%	67	0	0%	33	
Lacrosse	--	--	--	--	--	--	
Rowing	--	--	--	--	--	--	
Soccer	0	0%	45	4	100%	55	
Softball	0	--	--	--	--	--	
Swimming	6	100%	69	--	0%	31	
Track & Field	1	25%	51	3	75%	49	
Volleyball	--	--	--	--	--	--	
Water Polo	--	--	--	--	--	--	
Wrestling	0	0%	71	2	100%	29	
Total	21	100%		21	100%		

As the above tables show certain race-gender groups are over and underrepresented in my sample in comparison to their representation in NCAA D1 sports. For example, 29% of my women gymnasts are white women and 71% are Women of Color even though 61% of current women gymnasts are white and 39% are Women of Color. This study's empirical focus is on how former D1 athletes experience shifting out of the context of college athletics. The purpose of the sample is not to be accurately representative of the demographic makeup of D1 sports. I display the comparison of race-gender breakdowns within each sport to help contextualize what type of social environment respondents are leaving when they leave their college sporting cultures. As we will see in the coming empirical chapters a crucial part of the transition into the working world is navigating new social spaces where race-gender dynamics and representations might not align with those of college athletics.

Likewise, it is important to note the types of occupations my respondents entered after graduating. Table 2.5 provides a breakdown by gender of the types of occupations respondents were working in during the time of interview. Women and men respondents are employed at

similar rates in the fields of athletics (14% vs. 19%), Military/law enforcement (5% each), and politics/law (5% vs. 2%). Women respondents are overrepresented in the fields of Health/Mental Health Services (19% vs. 2%) and Human Resources/Administration (17% vs. 2%). Men respondents are overrepresented in Business/Financial Operations and Management (14% vs. 7%), Research/Computer Occupations (12% vs. 7%), Education (21% vs. 14%), and Sales (21% vs. 12%).

Table 2.5 Sample Occupation Characteristics by Gender

Occupation Type	Women %	Men %
Athletics	14%	19%
Business/Financial Operations/Management	7%	14%
Education	14%	21%
Health/Mental Health Services	19%	2%
Human Resources/Admin	17%	2%
Military/Law Enforcement	5%	5%
Politics/Law	5%	2%
Researcher/Computer Occupations	7%	12%
Sales	12%	21%

White women and Women of Color in the sample are evenly distributed across occupation fields. Women of Color in the sample are most concentrated in Health/mental health services (24%), Athletics, Human resources/admin, and Sales (14% each). Most white women in the sample are concentrated in fields of Education (19%), Human resources/admin (19%), and Athletics (14%). Men of Color respondents are most concentrated in Education (33%), Athletics (19%), and Business/Financial Operations/Management (14%). White men respondents are most concentrated in fields of Sales (33%), Research/computer operations (24%), and Athletics (19%).

Table 2.5 Sample Occupation Characteristics by Gender & Race

Occupation Type	Women of Color %	White Women %	Men of Color %	White Men %
Athletics	14%	14%	19%	19%
Business/Financial Operations/Management	5%	10%	14%	14%
Education	10%	19%	33%	10%
Health/Mental Health Services	24%	14%	5%	0%
Human Resources/Admin	14%	19%	5%	0%
Military/Law Enforcement	5%	5%	10%	0%
Politics/Law	10%	0%	5%	0%
Research/Computer Occupations	5%	10%	0%	24%
Sales	14%	10%	10%	33%

DATA ANALYSIS

All interviews were transcribed and de-identified prior to data analysis. Zoom provides a raw transcription file of all audio recordings. The raw transcription file was edited and de-identified by me or trained graduate student research assistants. I relied on the qualitative software Atlas.Ti to code and analyze all transcripts. Initial analysis began with writing summary memos after each interview was completed. These memos included details such as the time and date of the interview, respondent characteristics (i.e., clothing choice, temperament), and summary statements for each of the major sections of the interview guide. Once all interviews were completed, I used Atlas.Ti to develop a coding scheme. I began by broadly coding the transcripts for each major context discussed in the guide (college life, the transition process, recreational sport, work, friendship, romantic/parenting life). I then created subcodes within each broader theme that serve as the basis for this study's results. As distinct themes emerged, I was attentive to negative and disconfirming cases, in order to verify and/or contradict these emerging patterns (Luker 2010).

Chapter 3 results center on how respondents use the socialization learned through college sport in the workplace today. I specifically analyze key themes of transferable skills,

untransferable skills, and intersectional skills. These broad themes emerged by coding if or how – or both, participation in college athletics prepared or underprepared them for life after college sport.

Chapter 4 investigates if, and how, the college athlete credential is viewed as a status marker at work today as either an asset or a liability. I also focused on coding the different ways in which respondents articulated when and why they either downplayed or heightened their college athlete credential in the workplace.

Chapter 5 focuses on recreational sport and the body. First, I coded how respondents felt about their bodies considering being former college athletes. I then coded patterns surrounding how respondents participate in recreational sport in their post-college life. As patterns emerged, I divided this broader theme into two focuses: weight room settings, and team sport settings. I paid particular attention to how respondent gender and race, as well as the gender of others in the athletic spaces discussed impacts sport participation and when and how respondents highlight or deemphasize their student athlete background.

REFLEXIVITY

I began collecting pre-dissertation data for this study while taking a qualitative interviewing class my second year of graduate school. The impetus for this topic of inquiry came from my own lived experiences as a former Division 1 college athlete. I was a member of the Women's Volleyball and Basketball teams at my alma mater and experienced firsthand the different racial and gender dynamics at play depending on the sport being played and the social identities of the athlete. After I left college athletics, I went to graduate school and spent the first few years of coursework navigating the transition process of moving out of the elite sport world and into academia. I began to think critically about how my own social identities as a queer,

white-Latiné, cisgender woman impacted the way I felt about divulging my college athlete credential to academic peers, and the way I interacted in recreational sporting spaces after college sport. As I continued my studies, I grew more interested in understanding how cultural markers of social status are gendered and racialized, and how social identities disproportionately shape navigating gender norms in new social contexts. In other words, the burden of dealing with societal expectations regarding how we express our gendered selves is much heavier for bodies that fall outside of the white gender binary—where white men embody the epitome of masculinity and white women the epitome of femininity. While much had been written about the transition process from college athlete to former student athlete, there was little written about how the social capital associated with the college athlete credential is gendered and racialized in life after college sport. So, I decided to make this the topic of my dissertation.

There are many aspects of my identity that shaped my role as a researcher. I embodied various forms of insider and outsider status in relation to my respondents, especially along the key dimensions of gender, race, and athletic status. Being a former division 1 college athlete, myself allowed me to gain initial rapport with my respondents. This was acutely true when interviewing women, as our shared experience of navigating our social worlds as women was an added level of commonality. Talking about gender and race with those who did not share my same positionality also proved effective. Aware that status differences shape social interactions, I was mindful of how gender and race could affect the interviews (Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz 2013).

To establish initial rapport, I always disclosed my former Division 1 athlete status. While this disclosure created a comfortable atmosphere, at times it also led respondents to assume I knew details of their experience and thus brush over certain answers. To combat this, I would

often circle back to underdeveloped answers and probe respondents to elaborate on their experiences. I was intentional about probing and framing my questions to elicit respondents' own thoughts regarding their experiences as college athletes and the shift away from college sport. To combat and preempt any preconceived notions projected from my own experiences as a college athlete onto respondents, I wrote self-reflexive memos regarding my own presumptions and understandings of what I expected to find in the interviews (Foster 2009). I looked for patterns and disconfirming evidence that surprised me or informed me to viewpoints I had not considered throughout the memo and data analysis process.

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

While using in-depth views allows me to glean a holistic and contextualized picture of respondents' social realities, this method is not without limitations. Due to the nature of my sampling procedures, it is possible my sample does not accurately reflect the population of all former D1 college athletes. As previously stated, I relied on social networks and academic listservs to recruit. Reliance on academic listservs may have skewed the sample to have an overrepresentation of individuals working in higher education (either as admin, coaches, professors, or graduate students).

The scope of this dissertation is limited, in that only former NCAA Division 1 college athletes were recruited for this study. While my sample size is small, it is mighty in its ability to "discover the factors, mechanisms, and processes that create broader trends" surrounding shifting social contexts and gender accountability (Gerson and Damaske 2020:16). This method allows me to identify the underlying social norms that inform the gendered and racialized patterns previous literature as documented regarding former-athlete identity closure. I did not stop

interviewing respondents until I ensured I reached saturation regarding respondents' experiences navigating new racialized gender norms across my social contexts of interest in their adult lives. The uniqueness of this case allowed me to focus on a real-world social phenomena wherein social actors who have been socialized into an overarchingly masculine domain are now required to navigate and re-negotiate gender norms in a new setting. The theoretical insights gleaned from this data speak not only to actors and practitioners within the sporting world, but to anyone navigating new social contexts with gender norms different than what they are accustomed to.

CHAPTER 3: WHO CAN GO FROM STUDENT-ATHLETE TO IDEAL WORKER? —HOW RACE & GENDER IMPACT STUDENT-ATHLETE INTEGRATION INTO THE WORKFORCE

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I investigate how racialized gender accountability norms associated with the ideal worker image impacts when and how former Division I college athletes use or reject the values, norms, and behaviors learned through college sport in their work lives today. I argue values championed in college sport such as work ethic, competitive drive, and direct communication align with the societal image of what an ideal worker should be. Regardless of positionality, most respondents continue to enact these values at work today. However, the degree to which they are rewarded for enacting such values varies depending on one's race and gender. White and Black men seamlessly translate their skillset to the workforce, while Black and white women must negotiate racialized gender stereotypes that are activated when enacting these values at work. Nonetheless, even while conforming to hegemonic workplace gender norms, women also use previous strategies learned in college athletics to simultaneously resist and push back against conventional workplace gender accountability norms.

Examining how former college employ the values, norms, and behaviors learned through college sport in their work lives today is fruitful for three key reasons**.** First, it serves as a fascinating case to explore how previous gender socialization impacts current navigation of gender norms in the workplace. Second, I expand on the literature at the intersection of race, gender, and workplace accountability norms by showing how people at the margins simultaneously uphold and exercise coping strategies that allow them to resist hegemonic gender norms. Third, I add to the literature on retirement from elite sport by concentrating on how the

norms and values associated with college athletics impact integration into the workforce opposed to the usual quantitative measures of physical and mental health.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Shifting Gender Accountability Structures & the Ideal Worker Image

Gender accountability theory views gender as an ongoing activity that is created through, and simultaneously structures social interaction (Hollander 2013; West and Zimmerman 1987). As previous scholars note, gender accountability expectations are highly contextual. The ways that hegemonic gender norms are defined and enacted may look very different depending on the social situation. For instance, the actual enactment of the expectation that a woman be nurturing looks very different depending on if the woman is nurturing her child, a co-worker, or pet. Just as the expectation that a man appear competitive looks different depending on whether the man is playing sports or doing a business deal. Yet, within the context of college athletics all student-athletes are socialized to adopt masculine-typed behaviors and characteristics. This is because elite sport is an all-encompassing social institution that champions norms associated with masculinity, regardless of an athlete's race or gender (Messner 1988). For example, sport champions stereotypically masculine qualities such as competitiveness, aggression, dominance, and muscularity (Hardin and Greer 2009). Given the link between sport and masculinity, gender norms within college athletics reward women and men athletes alike for displays of masculinity.

Attributes such as dominance, competitiveness, and work ethic are considered key qualities that define the ideal worker image (Acker 1990; Williams 2001). The ideal worker image refers to the widespread cultural definition of what an exemplary worker should look like. This image typically includes attributes and values involving: a strong and committed work ethic, high productivity and efficiency, self-reliance, and absence of personal constraints (Acker

1990; Davies and Frink 2014). Nonetheless, the ideal worker image continues to be gender-typed as male (Turco 2010). Expectations about women and men's roles at work and home, coupled with essentialist logics that say men innately possess ideal worker traits to a greater degree than women, allow men to reap rewards for a masculine ideal worker standard (Ridgeway and Correll 2004).

Women, in contrast, have the burden of navigating competing gender accountability norms at work. This is in part due to prescriptive stereotypes—which derive from cultural beliefs about what women and men should or should not do—that place women in a double bind of sorts (Heilman 2001). Prescriptive stereotypes dichotomize women and men. Men are expected to be agentic, competent, and assertive. While women are expected to be nurturing, warm, and communal. Further, U.S. society also continues to uphold the belief that women should desire and ultimately become mothers, even as they pursue professional careers (Coontz 2006).

To be seen as an ideal worker, women should display traits stereotypically associated with men, but do so in a way that maintains gender difference. They still must make sure they are doing gender in a way that is legible to co-workers as feminine, or else they risk penalization (Heilman and Okimoto 2007). For example Benard and Correll (2010) find when employed mothers violate normative expectations associated with motherhood at work (i.e., appear competent as opposed to warm) are viewed less favorably than fathers. In other words, women must adopt traits that are at odds with prescriptive stereotypes regarding how women, especially working mothers, should be or act to be seen as an ideal worker.

Research within the workplace has documented how workers are gendered and raced. For example, Wooten and Branch (2012) show how Black women in the mid-19th and 20th centuries were seen as ideal domestic service workers for white households. Wingfield (2009) shows how

Black men do not benefit to the same degree as white men when working in feminine typed professions. Previous research has also documented how localized workplace contexts impact the ways women and men attempt to live up to the ideal worker image (Blair-Loy and Jacobs 2003; Kelly et al. 2010; Minnotte and Minnotte 2021; Reid 2015). Yet, exploring how people draw on socialization in previous contexts as they navigate new workplace gender accountability norms remains understudied. Further, the literature is lacking in understanding how one's positionality (specifically gender and race) impacts how people use previous socialization to position themselves as ideal workers. This chapter takes up that call by examining how women and men translate a skillset positively cultivated by women and men in the previous context of college athletics to their current workplace context that associates such skills with the masculine-typed ideal worker image.

Doing Gender Intersectionally—Room for Coping and Resistance

Gender accountability is intertwined with power—where those with greater power and social status, define, and have greater authority to hold others accountable to hegemonic gender norms. Writ large, hegemonic gender norms in the United States are rooted in white, heterosexual, upper-middle class ideals. Due to this, people often have pre-conceived notions about how members belonging to a particular gender, race, class, sexual orientation, etc. should behave or look like. Intersectional workplace research shows hegemonic norms and stereotypes constrain how gender and racial minorities express their gendered selves (Wingfield 2009). In other words, gender expectations and people's ability to meet such expectations are always influenced by their intersecting structural positions such as race, class, sexuality, and gender.

It is assumed, since they are at the top of the social hierarchy, white men have no real reason to re-do or undo gender. Men have a vested interest in maintaining gender accountability norms because the norms justify their elevated status. However, previous research also suggests the degree to which individuals are penalized or rewarded for enacting masculine typed traits championed in sport in the workplace varies depending on one's race and gender (Alfrey and Twine 2017b). The normative expectations that drive racialized accountability processes are both defined by, and shape broader institutional and social structures that maintain inequality (Hollander 2018). It's not just a top-down approach wherein broader gender norms and values cause interactional inequalities (via gender accountability). Rather, the interactions themselves, are what sustain social structures of inequality.

Previous research suggests Black workers in predominantly white spaces and women in male-dominated occupations are often faced with tokenization. As numeric minorities in their occupations, these individuals experience barriers to advancement in their workplace (Kanter 2010). Research has also shown tokenism is subject to the local workplace context one is embedded in (Turco 2010). Turco (2010), for example, compares the experiences of two tokenized groups: women and Black men investors in the leverage buyout industry (LBO). She finds while both groups face barriers to entry into the profession, Black men report fewer negative consequences when compared to women. She argues local cultural definitions prevent women from being seen as ideal workers because they are mothers or at risk of becoming ones. Black men, in contrast, can capitalize on the ideal worker image because that image is more gender-typed male than it is race-typed white.

Despite the disadvantageous position women in the workforce often face, their positionality provides unique "outsider-within" position that could propel them to resist

hegemonic racialized gender norms. Everyone has agency, thus resistance to gender accountability norms is always possible, although often fraught with potential social sanctioning (Acker 2006a; Tinkler et al. 2019). Previous examples demonstrating resistance to hegemonic gender norms tend to fall into two categories: that of re-doing gender, and that of un-doing gender. Re-doing gender showcases how people redefine and reinterpret the meanings associated with gender accountability. For example, Hollander (2013) shows how women who attend self-defense classes redefine the expectations they have for themselves and other women of being more outspoken and physically assertive. Un-doing gender refers identifying instances when gender difference is reduced in interaction (Deutsch 2007). It captures when gender hierarchies are challenged, and identifies exchanges that change how people hold each other accountable for their gendered actions (Connell 2010). For example, Kelan (2018) finds men undo gender at work when they display humility or use their power to advance women.

Intersectional scholars have long argued marginality is a site of simultaneous subordination and resistance (Crenshaw 1989; Hill Collins 2009; Hill Collins and Bilge 2016; hooks 1984). For example, in the ground-breaking book Black Feminist Thought (2009), Hill Collins theorized that Black women are positioned within a matrix of domination that imposes intersecting material and social constraints. She argues Black women living at the margin hold an "outsider-within status" that uniquely positions them to use their marginality to covertly (and at times overtly) resist oppression.

Previous studies have explored coping strategies and strategies of resistance to pressures of hegemonic gender accountability (Acosta 2008; Hoang 2015; Kwon 2015; Moore 2011). Kwon (2015) shows how children who serve as language brokers for their immigrant parents, use their outsider-within status to covertly resist inequality. For example, when translating

between parents and English-speaking monolinguals, respondents censor and filter racist rhetoric. Acosta (2008) shows how lesbian Latinas emphasize their femininity when around homophobic family members to downplay their sexual minority status. Hoang (2015) demonstrates how women sex-workers in Vietnam perform femininity on the job for economic gain. For example, she finds women workers employed at locations catering to Western men project third world dependency by embodying their clients' racialized desire to imagine Vietnam as a poverty-stricken Third World country in need of Western help. To do so, these women use makeup to emphasize having darker skin tones and embellish the level of poverty they currently live under. All these examples showcase people with marginal positionalities consciously identifying hegemonic and oppressive accountability norms and exploiting, coping, or covertly resisting them. I expand on this line of literature to incorporate an intersectional analysis of how the combined axis of race and gender impact individuals' ability to translate skillsets cultivated and viewed through a gender-neutral lens in a previous context to the workplace context.

The Case of the Former College Athlete at Work

The transition out of college athletics is often described as a time of emotional, psychological, and physical change (Bopp et al. 2021). Some athletes feel a newfound sense of autonomy and freedom because they are no longer tied to an extremely regimented sporting subculture. Others might experience a sense of identity loss or listlessness because of the sudden loss of structure and support (Warehime et al. 2017). While previous studies have documented various outcomes such as mental and physical health and employment, these measures are largely quantitative and often ignore how respondents translate the values, norms, and skills to life after elite sport. For example, a recent Gallup (2020) study commissioned by the NCAA

shows former NCAA student-athletes are more likely to be thriving in purpose, social, community and physical wellbeing than their non-athlete peers. However, this, like many studies regarding former college athletes does not disaggregate by gender or race, let alone by the combined axis of race and gender. Theoretically, former student athletes are cases in which individuals need to renegotiate their gender identity upon exiting the all-encompassing masculine institution of college sport, which makes the context specific nature of "doing gender" more visible.

College athletics is an insular community with certain sports[2] fostering greater racial diversity than broader workplace settings (NCAA 2022). It also socializes women and men into homosocial environments wherein student-athletes are spending most of their time building bonds with individuals of the same gender. The unique social structure of college athletics can provide student-athletes an environment where they are shielded from broader gender and race-based norms and stereotypes.

As previously stated, accountability centers on the back-and-forth exchange between social actors, at a given time, in each social context, operating under a given set of gender norms. Even though women athletes know they are rewarded in the context of sport for displays of masculinity, they also know they are being held accountable by others outside of the athletic sphere who expect them to display normative femininity practices, especially in the workplace (Acker 2006a). Alternatively, men are often praised and rewarded within athletics and the workplace alike for displays of masculinity. Simply put, college athletics trains all athletes to value masculine attributes such as competition, physical strength, and dominance. Student-

[2] Men's and Women's basketball for example comprise of over 50% of Athletes of Color (NCAA 2022)

athletes are rewarded and not penalized for championing these traits regardless of race or gender. Once they exit college athletics, these former athletes enter the workplace, where new gender accountability structures are in place.

FINDINGS

All respondents emphasized how participation in college athletics instilled in them values such as work ethic, leadership, self-discipline, and competitiveness. Regardless of race or gender, most respondents were adamant the work mentality and skillset they took with them from college sport helped them be successful employees today. Respondents differed in the degree to which they were rewarded for enacting this skillset at work. Below I show how the transferability of these skills (and the disadvantages stemming from transferability of the skills) is raced and gendered.

College Athlete Skillset and Ideal Worker Image

For white men, the skillsets learned through college athletics translated to the workplace context relatively seamlessly. Regardless of current industry or previous sport played, most white men respondents emphasized how skills like work ethic, coachability, teamwork, and time management continued to successfully help them at work today. When I asked Chase (White, Men's Football, Production Manager for Oil & Gas), how, if at all, participating in college athletics left him feeling prepared for life after college sport he emphatically stated:

> "It [college athletics] teaches you punctuality, it teaches you accountability, it teaches you work ethic… It teaches you socialization skills, how to be around and talk to superiors. It also teaches you a level of professional ability...It's just a ton of life skills that come with being an athlete that sets you up for success later on down the road."

Chase went on to discuss how he easily translates these skills to his current role as a manger saying:

> "I've got 60 shop floor employees that report to me. And my job is to know exactly where every part is, what's going on, on the floor at all times. And I can relate that to being a quarterback. You gotta know what the defense is doing. You gotta know where all your guys are, what their responsibilities are at all times, to have a successful play. So I've kind of found a niche role that allows me to do what I really enjoyed doing even when I was on the field. So it's kind of cool. It's just the same skills, different application."

This idea of "same skills, different application" resonates with white men because these skills are largely emphasized under the ideal worker norm, and the ideal worker norm has the image of a white, middle-class men embody these worker norm expectations and ideals. Chase, like most of the white men I interviewed, was quick to say the devotion he had to his college sport was easily translated to the current commitment he has to work. In fact, some white men went so far as to say college athletics over-prepared them for the commitment required for their current work life. Thomas (White, Men's Football, Commercial Real Estate Broker) says:

> "There's a lot of things being an athlete teaches you. You know how to work hard, you know [how to] to prioritize. You also know that, like nobody here [at work] is going to yell at you. You don't have a strength coach that is going to scream at you. You just do your thing and make sure you do a good job. And if you don't, then they'll find somebody else to do it. I have not found the white-collar world to be nearly as intense as college athletics."

While all respondents discussed how college athletics instilled values embodying the ideal worker image (i.e., work ethic and competitive drive), white men were the most likely to talk about translating these principles into action at work the most seamlessly. None of the white men I spoke to discussed having to navigate competing racialized gender accountability norms (unlike their women peers).

As I'll show in the next chapter, Black men talk a lot about how the stereotypes associated with being a college athlete are racialized, but the actual implementation of the

principles learned through college sport (e.g., work ethic, time management, and competitive drive) largely parallels that of white men respondents. Black men, akin to white men, view the skillsets they gained as college-athletes as compatible with meeting and exceeding expectations at work today. For instance, Jeremy (Black, Men's Wrestling, Police Academy Trainee) says he brings the "work ethic" and "mental fortitude" he gleaned from college wrestling to his job today. He "can dominate in situations where" he doesn't "feel comfortable in," and "can work as hard as" he "possibly can, to get the maximum results" at work. He went on to describe how his work ethic and competitive drive helped him excel as a police cadet. Phillip (Black, Men's Football, Manager of Safety Engineers) agrees, saying his current job in "corporate America" parallels his experience of "climbing the depth chart" to get more playing time as a college football player. He says he's translated the mental toughness and competitive drive needed to fight "to keep your scholarship" as a college football player to his current corporate role. This has allowed him to advance to a managerial role relatively quickly in his profession and makes him feel confident that he can handle the "kill or be killed" mentality of his workplace culture. Again, Black men, akin to white men, overwhelmingly discussed how the skills learned in college athletics translated positively to the workforce. This suggests, at least for men, the ideal worker image remains far more gender-typed than race-typed (Turco 2010).

White women also highlighted the benefits of carrying a strong work ethic and competitive drive over to the workforce. Even though they are embodying principles of the ideal worker norm, white women respondents are still met with gender inequality in interaction because of their marginal position as women. Layla (White, Women's Softball, Educator at a Community College) spoke about how co-workers and bosses see her as "intense" with "good-time management," and as a solid leader—attributes she positively contributes, in part, to her

college softball career. Nonetheless, Layla also described how cultural expectations for women after college athletics makes it more challenging for her to navigate workplace expectations than when she was a student-athlete, even when she employs ideal worker characteristics. She says:

> "I get asked the question a lot 'so when are you going to get married? where are those kids? Why are you still in this career?' like 'why haven't you moved on to your new phase?' like as this is not a new phase, this is what I want to do like that. So um I just think it's harder being a female in the workforce"

It is harder for Layla to be a "female in the workforce" than a student-athlete because she is confronted with gendered expectations that she takes on the heteronormative "feminine" role of marriage and motherhood. Even though she has cultivated and maintained values that should, and to an extent do, allow her to excel at work, they don't negate or minimize the broader cultural expectations that women should get married, that women should have kids. White women, akin to men respondents regardless of gender, also talk about how these values translate over to work but they aren't enough to mitigate macro level gender accountability norms that expect women to also be caretakers. Some white women respondents like Layla emphasize how they cannot escape this caretaker norm even when they employ ideal worker characteristics. Others, like Holly (White, Women's Volleyball, Registered Nurse) feel college sport sheltered them, and left them feeling unprepared for navigating this norm. Although Holly discussed how "being on time," "work ethic and being a good coworker" all "came from being an athlete," she also felt college athletics sheltered her from the expectations associated with being a working mother. She constantly feels "a lot of pressure and stress" associated with the societal notion that "women have to do it all" stating as a student-athlete:

> "You're in a bubble, and um, it's like not the real world in college sports. And for example, if you need something, you have so many people, you can just call them they'll figure it out for you. You don't actually have to figure it out yourself. Or like your coach will figure it out for you, but if you're just a regular college student, you have to like jump some hoops or go through a lot of channels to get it figured out probably".

Again, most respondents, regardless of race or gender, spoke positively about translating the work ethic and devotion to college sport over to their work life, even though they also acknowledged losing the structure and "handholding" that was provided to them as student-athletes was a difficult process. However, unlike other respondents, white women, especially in their late 20s or later, were much more likely to explicitly discuss the tension they felt between upholding the ideal worker image and the gendered expectations of motherhood. For white women, the tension is: even though they have these skillsets cultivated through college athletics that align with the ideal worker norm, macro-level gender norms that imply women should be mothers, make it challenging to reap the full benefits of this skillset. White and Black men reap greater benefits than women because they aren't confronted with conflicting gender accountability norms and stereotypes. For Black women there is tension as the skillsets themselves become racialized.

Many Black women respondents also emphasized feeling "grateful" for the drive and determination instilled in them in college athletics that they now carry with them to the workforce. For instance, Vivian (Black, Women's Basketball, Senior Policy Advisor in Public Health) says she brings her athlete mentality to work every day: "always striving to be better…I feel like I have a drive because of athletics, because of basketball." However, Black women, unlike respondents of other positionalities, must navigate racialized stereotypes associated with having these skillsets employed by a Black woman's body at work. Elise (Black, Women's Basketball, High School Teacher & Basketball Coach) compared the difference she felt displaying her strength and leadership on the basketball court in college to displaying these traits in the workforce today. She says:

> "I feel like as a Black female athlete, especially a basketball player, you're looked at as kind of strong. I would say, a leader... That presence in the workforce… is not always a positive presence… it's like you're fighting that Black woman superhero complex that you feel like you have to be able to handle it all and do everything. People say to me all the time 'you're so strong'. But sometimes I don't want to be strong. Sometimes I want to be soft too… It's just hard to try to find that balance of being seen as a leader but not mean. And being able to be good at my job, but also not being overworked and abused and used. Yeah, just trying to navigate and be impactful without being seen as like domineering or overbearing.
>
> Interviewer: Whereas in college, basketball was like
>
> Elise: 'that's great!' They want you to be tough."

Elise, like many other Black women respondents, is unable to reap the full benefits of utilizing characteristics like work ethic and leadership that she cultivated in college athletics at work. While these characteristics are associated with the ideal worker image, the fact that manhood defines the image, means people who live outside of those margins can never fully embody nor reap rewards for displaying aspects of this image.

Krista (Black, Women's Basketball, Outpatient Coordinator at a mental illness hospital), discusses how at work today she feels "more aware of being the token 'fill in the blank'." She never had to deal with these thoughts in college athletics because basketball is "a predominantly Black sport" so she never questioned her sense of belonging as a student-athlete. Whereas in her workplace now she must: "show up for more than what you see. I have to show up in my intellect. I have to show up in my performance. I have to show up in how I speak, how I can articulate." Meaning she must show up to meet and exceed the expectations put on her in the workplace to overcome any perceived discrimination or stereotypes associated with her Blackness. Whereas in basketball, her race "wasn't a question". Like Elise, Krista felt empowered as a college basketball player to display leadership, competitive drive, and a strong

work ethic. Now Krista feels these traits, are helpful not because they allow her to be viewed as an ideal worker by employers. Rather, they're tools that help her overcome racist stereotypes.

To summarize thus far, white and Black men are able to translate the skills acquired in college athletics with relative ease and are met with positive results at work. Men, regardless of race capitalize on the college athletic skillset without having to also navigate other racialized gender accountability norms. White women also benefit from translating the college athlete skillset to the workplace with employers viewing them as successful employees because of their work ethic and competitive drive. However, they must also reckon with the gender stereotype that women should become mothers. Black women also highlight how the values and skills learned in college athletics helps them succeed in the work world today. However, unlike respondents of other positionalities, Black women have the added burden of navigating racialized stereotypes that are activated when employing their college athlete skillset at work.

Women develop and deploy skillsets that uphold the ideal worker image of strong work ethic, confidence, and competitive drive. Yet, unlike their men counterparts, they cannot fully reap the benefits of this skillset, because of workplace gender accountability norms that limit who can fully embody these characteristics. Women are not passively accepting the gender inequality that persists in the employment of these skills at work. Rather, they are conscious of the expectations and potential penalization that occurs due to these gender inequities. In fact, they use coping strategies cultivated through previous experiences in college athletics to push back against some aspects of workplace gender accountability norms.

Employing Student-Athlete Skillset as Coping Strategies

Women respondents, regardless of race, repeatedly discussed how participating in college athletics gave them the confidence and resilience to stay the course and excel in their

work life today, regardless of whatever adversity was thrown their way. Black women were more likely to discuss coping strategies. Wherein they resisted the racialized gender accountability norms imposed on them by anticipating them and deploying coping strategies learned through college sport. Nichole (Black, Women's Lacrosse, PhD Candidate/Part-time Professor/Sport Psychologist Consultant) said her college experience navigating racism with her head coach taught her that she "always has the option to walk away" from a racist environment. Nichole discussed how she ultimately transferred from her first university to an HBCU because her head coach was explicitly racist. Although her second head coach was also white, she had a much more positive experience with this coach and institution. Nichole says she regularly draws on her experiences as a student-athlete for two key reasons. First, to vet potential work environments to ensure they align with her values. She says, because of the racism she experienced from her first head-coach, when interviewing for jobs now she makes sure she would "not be the only Person of Color at work", and that their DEI statement is sincere and practiced. Second, to remind herself "you can always leave" if she is in a workplace setting that is uncomfortable or compromises her values. She says: "I'm not going to beat myself up on every situation where like someone is being racist to me and they're my boss. But I know that I will always have the option to walk away." Black women, like Nichole, were much more likely to talk about how college athletics made workplace discrimination more manageable to navigate because they had seen it before. Repeatedly, Black women respondents would discuss how current racialized interactions in the workplace paralleled experiences in college-sport, just happening in a new context. Since these women had experienced these unequal interactions and expectations previously in college sport, they were able draw in the skillsets they used to navigate those moments and apply them to their work life today.

For example, Laila (Black, Women's Volleyball, Professional Model) spoke about how being a Black volleyball player at a predominantly white school, while fun, "was a lot of mental work." While her team was "open to learning" about racial diversity, she says it "always felt like mental gymnastics" because "you're almost trying to validate your existence to the greater population that you are a human, just like them, even if you are a different race". She said over the course of her college career she learned educating teammates on racial diversity was mentally taxing and something she did not always have to actively pursue. These experiences in college, prepared her for her current role as a Black model working with predominantly white photographers and makeup artists because:

> "people don't have the knowledge, or they're not even seeking the knowledge to try and like properly prepare for other PoC to be on set and working with them… Like if you're this world renowned…hairstylist, but then you're coming to set going like 'Oh, I don't really know how to do your hair. Your hair looks good' so it's interesting to transition to that, from sports but being like. 'Okay, like I've seen it before but I've just seen it in a different way'."

Laila, like many Black women respondents uses the racialized experiences she had in college to help her to successfully navigate her current white workplace. In college Laila was confronted with numerous racial stereotypes like "Black women jump higher" or are more athletic than white counterparts. Laila learned to "just be you" and ignore the pressure to engage in the mental gymnastics of either playing into the stereotypes or actively re-educating white peers on them. She carries this with her as a model today. While she knows she may have to deal with white colleagues who are ignorant of her gendered-raced experiences, she also knows she does not have to engage in the mental gymnastics of either playing into the stereotypes or actively re-educating white peers. This skill, cultivated though college athletics, allows Laila to successfully navigate predominantly white spaces in her work environment today. Many Black women respondents gained heightened awareness of unequal raced and gendered power dynamics as

student-athletes. They draw on these experiences to exercise coping strategies at work by controlling when they engage with race-based topics at work and having the confidence to uphold personal convictions of self-worth and anti-racism at work, even if it means leaving a current job. Some might argue these strategies are not explicitly challenging hegemonic racialized gender norms. I argue they are forms of resistance because they allow respondents of marginal positionalities to take up space and thrive in social contexts that might otherwise prove difficult to navigate. Although these coping strategies allow these women to thrive, they are also extra work. As previous literature shows, there is a physical and emotional cost to the stress of demonstrating resilience when navigating spaces of potential gender and race-based discrimination (Ong, Fuller-Rowell, and Burrow 2009).

White women, in contrast, did not talk about how navigating gender inequality in college sport gave them the tools to navigate it in the workforce today. Rather, they spoke about how the actual social skills cultivated in college athletics—dominance, self-assurance, and direct communication—in other words the skills associated with the ideal worker image, gives them the confidence to navigate the workplace even in the face of gender inequality. Julia (White, Women's Soccer, Executive Assistant in Tech) says it's important for her to "appear strong to everybody else in the room" at work because "men in general come off stronger." She says being an athlete has:

> "helped me to be a stronger woman in the same room with those men. To feel confident, and also to like maybe some days when I don't feel confident, kind of make myself get there [laughs]."

Vanessa (White, Women's Soccer, works on a telematics product team for an insurance company), concurs saying "women who have been in sports, have similar personality types of being outspoken, being driven, being confident."

White women are aware of the interactional gender inequality occurring at work, as my previous theme shows. They know their skillset is going to be looked at less favorably than their men peers. At the same time, this skillset provides them with confidence to navigate the gender inequality rampant at work today. This confidence is further displayed by Chelsea (White, Women's Softball, Onboarding Specialist at a Tech Company) who says she uses the confidence cultivated through college athletics to set her apart from other women coworkers. She says:

> "I would say a lot of females, at least in the tech industry, tend to be more reserved when it comes to voicing their opinions, very much accommodating… I'm very direct. I push back on customers… I tend to apply or put my hat in the ring for things that I might be under qualified for just for the sake of doing it. So I feel like I'm very manly again in the workforce, because I feel like a lot of those traits are things that you hear like 'okay men are the ones who like negotiate for more money' or 'they're, the ones who apply when they know that they're unqualified' or 'they're the ones to speak up'. So I feel like I match that those masculine tendencies because I played softball."

Chelsea went on to discuss how this confidence cultivated through college softball, helped her to successfully navigate a promotion at work. In some respects, the college athlete skillset helps white women cope with unequal gender accountability norms in the workplace because it gives them the confidence to display and reap benefits from characteristics that men are regularly rewarded for. White women resist workplace gender accountability norms of submission or fear of penalization for being too competent because they were rewarded for demonstrating confidence as student-athletes.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I argue women and men who participate in college athletics are socialized into values and skillsets that embody the ideal worker norm. These characteristics include strong work ethic, leadership, independence, and competitiveness. All former-student athletes, regardless of gender, were rewarded in college for displaying these skills. In other words, acquiring these skills didn't make people feel like they were breaking any type of gender norm

within college athletics because they were required by all student-athletes, regardless of gender, to be successful athletes. I find that once these athletes leave college sport and enter the workforce, they continue to display this skillset at work today. Everyone, regardless of race or gender, acknowledged this skillset continues to help them be successful employees today. However, because hegemonic gender norms associate being an ideal with being a man, women respondents aren't rewarded to the same degree as their men counterparts for employing these skills at work. My findings show women have the added burden of navigating constraining raced-gender stereotypes when employing these skillsets. White women are able to translate the skills, but they're still constrained by stereotypes/expectations surrounding motherhood. Black women are also constrained because the skills themselves become racialized, wherein they must balance a tight rope of using the skillset to be a successful employee without playing into racialized stereotypes.

While it may seem like women former college athletes are solely constrained by and reinforce unequal hegemonic gender norms, I find they use strategies learned in their previous experiences as college athletes as coping strategies that allow them to better navigate their new workplace environments. White women literally use the skillset emphasized in college athletics to give them confidence to push back and display masculine characteristics at work without fear of penalization. Black women use previous racialized experiences with teammates and coaches in college to enact coping strategies that include anticipating racial conflict and implementing avoidance strategies beforehand, educating white peers, or choosing not to engage with educating white peers. These coping strategies learned through college athletics help women respondents to be resilient in the face of gender and race-based discrimination at work. These coping strategies are a response to racial and gender discrimination but are not necessarily

always undermining the racial and gender order. For example, Black women (like all other respondents) emphasize the fact they embody all of these assets that define the ideal worker image. Yet when they display these characteristics at work (i.e., strength, independence) they are sanctioned for almost personifying racialized meanings of what it means to be a Black woman. In other words, they fear the threat that others at work might see them—in using the skills they learned and were praised for using as student athletes—as embodying racialized stereotypes that elicit racist responses.

Both Black and white men felt their college athlete skillset translated seamlessly to the work world. This suggests, perhaps usurpingly, the skillset gained through participation in college athletics when employed by men, does not challenge hegemonic gender accountability norms. In other words, men former college athletes continue to do gender in hegemonic ways because they continue to be rewarded for it. Women, to some extent, re-do gender in the employment of the skillset they acquired through college athletics by implementing these masculine-typed traits at work. In other words, through their experiences as college athletes they were able to re-define and re-interpret the meanings associated with athletic traits (such as dominance and competitiveness) as characteristics they too have a right to embody as workers.

The fact that these findings do not show an explicit race effect for Black men should be taken with skepticism. The gender and racial makeup of each respondent's workplace environment is a key component to how respondents are navigating work. 33% of Black men in my sample worked in education, specifically in institutions that were majority Black. These respondents emphasized how important it was for them to work in environments that inspired Black youth. In contrast, none of the Black women I interviewed discussed working in workplace contexts that were not majority white. In fact, many of them discussed being one of a

few, if not the only, Woman of Color on the job. It is highly likely tokensim and shifting social context might be playing more of a role than simply the gendering of professions and movement out of the masculinized institution of college sport. Future research should explore how the gender and racial makeup of workplace contexts impacts the degree to which student athletes of different gender and racial backgrounds can use their athletic skillset.

To summarize, this chapter shows the skillset acquired through college athletics are incredibly valuable to all athletes. In theory every former-student athlete should be able to use their skillset and benefit from it to the same degree in the workforce. However, that does not happen because of gender and race-based expectations and stereotypes associated with different bodies displaying these characteristics at work. In other words, there is mismatch—all former student athletes see the skills they cultivated in college athletics as core to what makes them an ideal worker today but how others in the workplace view and receive the enactment of these characteristics is unequal.

These findings suggest it is beneficial to cultivate spaces where values and norms aren't explicitly gendered, because it gives people confidence to continue to display masculine typed traits such as strong work ethic, leadership, and competitiveness, in new social settings, thereby enticing women to resist hegemonic norms that penalize women for enacting these traits at work. Nonetheless, gender equality remains stalled because gendered and race-based stereotypes continue to be activated in interaction.

The focus of this chapter was on how former-student athletes continued to use their skillsets cultivated in college athletics in their working worlds today. I paid particular attention to how respondents employed these skills (i.e., work ethic, leadership, competitiveness) and the ways they were differentially rewarded or penalized depending on race and gender. Former

student-athletes take more than a skillset with them when they leave college sport. They also take with them social capital associated with being an elite Division I athlete. In the next chapter I show how the college athlete credential serves as a status marker offering different degrees of penalties and rewards for respondents in their work life today.

CHAPTER 4: CULTURAL MATCHING AND THE COLLEGE-ATHLETE CREDENTIAL

INTRODUCTION

While the previous chapter explored how former college athletes translate values and skills associated with college athletics to their work lives, this chapter focuses on the college athlete credential itself. Previous research has shown employers are more likely to hire and develop strong working relationships with employees who share similar cultural characteristics than with those who do not (Rivera 2012; Wildhagen 2010). However, the role employees play in workplace cultural matching remains underexplored. In this chapter, I examine how employees deploy the college athlete credential as a cultural status marker, and the ways this process is gendered and racialized. I ask: Why do some people actively use their college athlete credential at work while others downplay it? How do gender, race, and profession impact this process?

This chapter makes three contributions to the literature. First, examining when and why former college athletes use or downplay their college athlete credential at workplaces employee agency at the center of the analysis. Second, this chapter expands literature within Sociology of Sport because I explicitly treat the college athlete credential as a cultural status marker. Third, I show how race and gender impact former-college athletes' ability to leverage their backgrounds as student-athletes in their professional careers today. These findings expand on work-place cultural matching theory by providing an intersectional analysis of how employees agentically deploy cultural status markers at work.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Status, Intersectionality, and the Student-Athlete Credential

Status refers to the position an individual holds within a social hierarchy in social-relational contexts (Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz 2013). Status is both ascribed and achieved. Ascribed status refers to status that is assigned to an individual, rather than achieved by the individual (Foladare 1969). This includes status' such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, etc. Achieved status refers to status that an individual acquires through one's own efforts and actions (Foladare 1969). This includes things like being promoted to CEO, becoming valedictorian of one's graduating class, or being league basketball champions.

Previous scholars have long noted gender and race serve as primary frames that provide an initial basis for understanding who someone is and expectations for how someone might act (Ridgeway and Correll 2004; Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz 2013). Gender and race-based stereotypes are often activated in social interactions when social actors differ with one another on these characteristics (Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz 2013). In other words, ascribed master statuses such as race and gender can impact the degree to which a social actor is rewarded or positively valued for an achieved status. For example, Harkness (2016) finds race and gender significantly alter market lender's decisions to lend finances to potential candidates because they alter lenders' status beliefs about the applicants. She finds Black men and white women were at a relative disadvantage compared to Black women and white men. For this study, former-college athlete is an achieved status that respondents carry with them once exiting college athletics. This chapter explores how respondents use the former D1 college athlete credential as a status marker in interactions with others at work.

A social status marker refers to an identifiable attribute, characteristic, or symbol that signifies an individual's social position in each social context. For example, educational credentials like a high school diploma, bachelor's degree, or PhD are social status markers that

indicate where an individual may fall within the educational hierarchy in the United States. I argue that being a former-college athlete is an achieved status. Therefore, the student-athlete credential serves as a social status marker that can signal prestige outside of college athletics for three reasons. First, Division 1 college athletics is the highest level of amateur sport athletes can play in the United States. Being a former participant of this athletic organization signals, one has the background knowledge and experience of engaging in the physical and mental expectations that come with playing elite sport while achieving a college degree. Second, U.S. society continues to value athletes as high-status individuals. Previous research suggests elite athletes serve as cultural symbols that uphold core American values of self-discipline, dedication, and meritocracy (Coakley 2017). Third, previous research suggests male-dominated, fast-paced occupations like sales and Wall Street reward people for knowledge of, and experiences with, sport (Roth 2011; Turco 2010). In other words, one's familiarity with sport has shown to serve as a key element used for cultural matching between employers and employees.

Cultural Matching and the Workplace

Cultural matching broadly refers to the ways an individual's cultural background and experiences, relate to, or identify with another's cultural background. Research suggests people are more likely to form connections with others who share similar cultural attributes, (in other words culturally match) such as hobbies, language, values, etc. (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). Research within the workplace context suggests shared cultural experiences and backgrounds can improve employee hire-ability and retention, increase strength of social ties among coworkers and clients, and increase employee satisfaction for those who feel a sense of cultural fit at work (Araki 2020; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, and Johnson 2005; Roth 2011).

Rivera (2012) uses the case of hiring to show how cultural matching occurs through organizational, cognitive, and affective processes. Organizational processes, wherein the company explicitly values perceived cultural similarity to current employee base, encourage candidate selection on cultural fit. Cognitive processes refer to the ways that cultural similarities increase employer's ability to understand and value candidates' qualifications. Affective processes refer to the ways cultural similarities make hiring evaluators excited and more likely to fight for candidates during hiring deliberation.

While Rivera shows how cultural similarities between employers and potential employees matter from the perspective of hiring evaluators (i.e., the employer side), her theoretical framework undertheorizes on the agency of potential hires. Rivera's theoretical argument implies job applicants are passive, rather than strategically choosing when and how to deploy cultural status markers to frame oneself as a cultural fit with their employers. Further, her study focuses on hiring practices. Yet, cultural status markers stay with employees once they are hired and can continue to be used by employees to gain credibility and acceptance on the job. This chapter fills these theoretical and empirical gaps by examining how former college athletes strategically use their college athlete credential, during the hiring process and on the job. Rivera focuses on the effect of social class markers in high-class work settings. I focus on the effect of the gendered status marker of the college athlete credential in male-dominated workplaces. By understanding how race and gender impact employees' intentional use of the college athlete credential at work, we can better understand how cultural similarities between employers and employees, like all other forms of capital, unequally privilege certain positionalities over others (Bourdieu and Bourdieu 2021).

Former College Athletes at Work Today

Previous research shows participation in sport can increase individuals' social capital. Social capital refers to the resources embedded in social relationships, networks, and social structures that individuals can access and utilize to gain advantages or achieve certain outcomes in society (Bourdieu and Bourdieu 2021; Coleman 1988). Studies show sport allows participants to build relationships within and across different social backgrounds like race, class, and age, builds community among fans, and can lead to an increase in civic engagement (Kim et al. 2021; Perks 2007; Seippel 2006). Research has shown an individuals' knowledge of, and competency in, sporting endeavors can increase social integration and status (Rivera 2012; Smith, Spaaij, and McDonald 2019).

Research within the context of college athletics has examined how the type of sport, gender, and race contribute to a student-athlete's accumulation of social capital (Bimper 2016; Clopton 2012; Manwell, Johnson, and Walker 2021). For example, Bimper (2016) and Manwell et. al (2021) show Student-Athletes of Color gain substantial social capital within their athletic departments but have a more challenging time translating that capital to the broader white college environment. Studies on the integration of former college athletes into the working world focus on athlete identity foreclosure, employability, and career satisfaction (Brewer and Petitpas 2017; Dwyer and Gellock 2018; Harding 2011). No study to date has explicitly examined how former college athletes translate the social capital garnered through their participation in college sport to their professional lives after graduating. It is important to fill this empirical gap to have a better understanding of how the cultural and social assets acquired through college sport can continue to contribute to athletes' success long after they've left their respective courts or fields.

I argue being a former college athlete is an achieved status that can denote prestige outside of college athletics. Former college athletes take the college athlete credential with them and can use it in their lives after college sport as a cultural status marker because in many social contexts in US society today, cultural knowledge of, and experience with, sport is valued. Knowledge of sport can cut across class divides because it is widely popular and accessible in American culture (Coakley 2017). Previous literature suggests it is particularly valued in men-dominated occupations like venture capitalism where the work environment shares similar cultural traits of competition, dominance, and fast-paced atmosphere as sport environments. Thus, we might posit respondents who go into team related professions will be more likely to use their athlete credential at work than those who aren't in those professions. For example, Roth (2011) shows how men on Wall Street use their shared knowledge of sport to cultivate bonds that are otherwise inaccessible by women counterparts who do not share the same cultural knowledge. Turco (2010) highlights how the Leverage Buyout industry champions an ideal worker image that mirrors the traits associated with an athlete. Both these studies emphasize how women in these professions, unlike their men counterparts, do not have the prior knowledge of sport to use as a source of cultural and social capital to connect with colleagues and clients.

Previous research suggests a key reason why women cannot access the social advantages that come with using sport as social capital at work is because they lack access to sporting knowledge. Women (and men respondents alike) in my sample have access to sporting knowledge and culture because of their experiences as Division I college athletes. Thus, this chapter advances this prior research by exploring how former Division I women, athletes use or don't use their college athlete status in their respective professions in comparison to their men

counterparts. I pay attention to how the gender composition of respondents' work environments impact when and how they choose to up or downplay their athlete credentials at work.

Previous literature also suggests cultural matching between employers and employees significantly shapes employer hiring evaluations. However, employee-side agency regarding when and how to deploy cultural status markers to culturally match with employees remains under explored. I use the case of the former college athlete's strategic use of their athlete credential at work to explore this phenomenon. I focus on how race and gender impact when and how respondents use their college athlete credential at work.

FINDINGS

Below, I use a cultural matching framework to analyze when and why former college athletes use or downplay their college athlete credential in their professional lives today. I show how workplace context, coupled with respondent positionality impact the degree to which one can benefit from said credential.

Job Context Matters

Relevant to Workplace Context:

Regardless of profession[3], most respondents said they put their college athlete credential on their resume and discussed it during the interview process to signify ideal worker traits. Heidi (Black, Women's Gymnastics, Administrative Assistant) says she "has one line about being on the gymnastics team in" her resume and then plays the credential up in interviews to signal

[3] All but one respondent was currently employed or pursuing higher education at time of interview. The one respondent said she was a stay-at-home mom at the time of interview but prior to that had a career in marketing so she answered work related questions according to that experience.

cultural fit. She says she uses the credential to “hit all those key terms that job hunters like to hear” like “how to prioritize” and be held accountable “to get things done.”

Findings suggest individuals working in professional cultures like athletics (i.e., coaching, sales, military/law enforcement, education) were more likely to regularly use their college athlete credential as an asset after the hiring process as well. For example, Julia (White, Women’s Soccer, Executive Assistant in Tech Sales) discussed how moving from a job that was not a competitive environment (i.e., construction sales) to a more competitive environment (tech sales) shifted the amount of respect she got for having the college athlete credential. She said at her old job she would not “use” her college athlete credential “to sell myself” because she didn’t think it was “necessary to get the job, or to be deemed successful or liked in my job”. Yet now, because she is in a “competitive environment where it's a lot of men who are interested in sport” she sees her athlete credential as helpful in that her men coworkers “know how to relate with” her" and “impressed” by the athletic drive and skillset she brings to work. Interestingly, both occupations were male dominated but Leah felt more encouraged by the organizational culture in her current tech job to share her college athlete credential because it signaled cultural fit. Rivera (2012) found when candidates displayed social class markers with hiring managers, it generated a positive effect between the candidates and hiring managers in high-class workplaces. Here, as Leah illustrates, I find the athlete status marker generates a similar positive effect for some women in men-dominated work settings.

Chadwick (Black, Men’s Baseball, High School Teacher) says he mentions his college athlete credential when applying for coaching or teaching jobs because these professions value and understand traits associated with being an athlete. He says potential employers “view athletes as leaders, as people that are not afraid to be upfront, not afraid speak their mind, or have

pressure put on them." In other words, the college athlete credential signals positive worker attributes. Willis (White, Men's Football, Financial Representative) concurs saying he puts it on his resume and uses it to prove he is a cultural fit in his current place of employment as a financial representative. In answering the question during an interview with his current employer, Willis was asked "what is going to drive you?" He relied on his college athlete credential saying: "well I have been driven, you know, in the past five years, playing college ball" to signal he had the work ethic and collaboration skills required for the job. When asked why he chose to talk about his athlete credential, Willis said it's "because they understand athletes" and went on to describe how the company values competitive drive and independence. In this case, the process of cultural fit involves identifying one's workplace culture values the social norms cultivated in college athletics (i.e., competitiveness, work ethic, autonomy, and collaboration) either because of the nature of the work itself, and/or because co-workers are also former athletes and can therefore relate.

Unrelatable to Workplace Context:

Individuals working in workplace cultures that emphasized collaboration and competition to a lesser degree than college athletics (i.e., research) were more likely to downplay their college athlete credential at work today. These workplace cultures such as social work, healthcare, and education are also predominantly women-dominated occupations (Wingfield 2021). Marie (Black, Women's Gymnastics; Licensed Clinical Social Worker) says she downplays her college athlete credential at work because "it's of no interest" to her colleagues. She says:

> "I feel like after you've done a sport, especially collegiate division one, you tend to be more competitive overall, so you're more in those sales roles…I find it very rare that you would go into like therapy [laughs]. So, I think the industry just tends to attract more nonathletes than athletes."

Marie recognizes her workplace culture does not value or see the college athlete credential as culturally similar, in part, because it does not value competition. Therefore, she downplays her credential at work because she feels it does signal relevant skills to her current profession. Jane (White, Women's Volleyball, Policy Researcher) concurs, saying the college athlete credential is not as understood or respected in her current field as a policy researcher:

> "My sense is that in some professions being an athlete is like a respected thing. I don't think any of my colleagues could give a rat's ass that I played a sport. I feel like I developed, all of these skills, but I don't think anyone I work with has a particular appreciation for that. I work with a bunch of nerds. Not to be judgmental but it's not a competitive work environment, the way I imagine like if you go into finance or something. Like people really appreciate that you we're a competitive division one athlete. I think that in my field people appreciate your education and like intellectual abilities and less so you're discipline and competitiveness."

George and Jeremy echo their women counterparts above. George (White, Men's Swimming, Data Analyst) says his college athlete credential has "lost its relevance" now that he's become a data analyst where he's learned "nobody really cares". Jeremy (Black, Men's Wrestling, Police Academy Trainee) agrees, saying he downplays his college athlete credential at work because his colleagues "don't really understand it… and most of the department has been in the military, so they are just like [in nonchalant voice] 'oh you did that'".

Organizational processes regarding when respondents chose to downplay their college athlete credential at work were not explicitly gendered or raced. I found no clear raced-or gendered pattern regarding who saw their college athlete credential as a cultural fit. What mattered was the profession they currently worked in. Respondents actively determined whether to use or downplay their college athlete credential according to if their workplace culture valued

social skills connected with college athletics such as competitive drive or understood the cultural relevance of the college athlete credential itself. One's professional culture is shaped and defined by the race and gender composition of the workplace. I did not explicitly ask how the social makeup of each respondent's work environment shaped their thoughts and experiences. However, findings do suggest respondents from occupations outside of sales, education, and athletics were more likely than others to suggest their credential was no longer relevant. In other words, they worked in professions that were either more women dominated (i.e., health/mental health services, human resources/administration) or less team oriented (i.e. research/computer occupations).

The Impact of Gender and Race on Leveraging the Athlete Credential

Gendered source of social capital:

Most Black and white women respondents who used their college athlete credential to their advantage at work did so because they saw it as a source of social capital they could use to relate with employers, co-workers, and clients. Cheyanne (Black, Women's Gymnastics, Physical Therapist) says employers "understand how student-athletes are different…we're able to carry the weight of so much." She said during a recent job interview, the interviewer said they love hiring student athletes because they "have different mindsets" that make it "so much easier to work… because you understand what needs to be done, and you get it done". Casey (White, Women's Field Hockey, Tech Sales) also discussed how her college athlete credential increased her employer's ability to understand and value her as a potential worker. She says she got the internship for her current job, in part, because she was a student-athlete. She said sports were "literally all" she spoke about with her hiring manager at the interview:

> "We just talked about how his kid's played lacrosse and I played field hockey. And he was just asking me all these questions and we just had a good conversation. I don't even think that he asked me any questions about my work experience, or the job, or anything."

Casey understood the college athlete experience resonated with her interviewer, and therefore actively and intentionally played up her college athlete credential to be seen as a more viable candidate.

Other women used their college athlete credential to, as Eloise (Black, Women's Basketball, Works in Finance Sales and as a Spin Instructor) says, "find common ground" and "establish credibility" with her co-workers. Likewise, Olivia says her college athlete credential serves as a key source of social capital with her clients. She says:

> "as a gym owner having the NCAA nationally ranked field hockey player attached to my name is definitely appealing to clients… it's something that they throw around that immediately puts a little bit of clout on what I do. So, [laughs] nothing about like 'Oh, she has a master's degree' [laughs], no it's 'She was a division one athlete' [laughs]."

In summary, Black and white women had similar patterns of using their college athlete credential at work as a form of social capital wherein clients, employers, or co-workers read the college athlete credential as something relatable that provides credibility to their current worker identity.

Black and white men also use their college athlete credential at work as sources of social capital. Chase (White, Men's Football, Production Manager for Oil & Gas) feels his athlete credential gives employers "an understanding that 'hey this guy has been a member of a 100-person team… 'He's punctual, he's got accountability'. It's just some of the stereotype stuff that goes with being on a team." When white men spoke about their college athlete credential eliciting stereotypes it was usually, as Chase says above, a positive image that invoked ideal worker traits. Black men did not talk about positive stereotypes associated with the college

athlete credential. In fact, as I'll show below the stereotypes invoked by the credential when applied to Black men was negative. However, some Black men did discuss using the credential as a source of social capital. Matt (Black, Men's Soccer, Law Student) for instance, uses his college athlete credential to show he is especially knowledgeable about his area of law specialization. Matt is currently a law student intending to practice sport entertainment law. He says his college athlete credential positively makes him "look unique and different" because there are not "many people with a sports background going into law" so if something sports related comes up at work, he "can share some sort of insight because that's my background." In other words, Matt sees his background and college athlete credential as a source of social capital that sets him apart from other lawyers and increases potential employers' ability to understand and value his qualifications.

The college athlete credential for men, unlike women, also served as a form of social capital that can be used to build social networks. Andrew (White, Men's Baseball, Commercial Real Estate Agent) for instance, coached little league baseball in an affluent community, in part, to grow his commercial real estate clientele. Through coaching he was able to meet high net worth individuals interested in commercial real estate and gain them as clients because of the connection he made with them through youth sports. He says people are likely to go into business with someone "who taught their son how to throw a curveball five years ago versus a guy who I just had coffee." Dominic (White, Men's Football, Farm and Rach Real Estate Agent) uses his "name and where [he] went to school for business purposes," often reaching out to alumni for potential referrals and then using his credential to build connections. He says bringing up his college football career "just kind of snowballs" into a connection with clientele because

they are usually men who follow college football, and therefore understand and value the traits Dominic needed to cultivate to successfully be a college football player.

Black and white men respondents alike, can use the social ties accumulated through college athletics to successfully recruit clientele and acquire jobs. Felix (Black, Men's Football, State Police Agent) said "playing football put me in the right place at the right time" because it allowed him to build a relationship with a university alumnus who ultimately connected him to his current job as a state police agent. Tim (Black, Men's Football, Teacher) agrees, stating by playing football at the flagship university in his state he already was reputably known by his employer prior to the interview:

> "when I was submitting resumes and things I got my first opportunity at a school, they brought me in as an hourly role and to coach football…As soon as I walked in the door: You walk in and you shake the guy's hand, and you introduce yourself. And he's like 'oh your Tim. You played offensive line for XXX University. You were player of the game in XY game.' And I knew I was gonna have the job before I left just based on the conversation right there".

Many Black and white men alike were able to capitalize on the social networks and connections made as college-athletes to advance their professional careers today.

<u>College athlete credential as irrelevant or liability:</u>

Black and white women and white men who downplayed their college athlete credential at work similarly justified doing so because they felt the credential did not resonate with fellow co-workers or clients. Lillie (Black, Women's Basketball, Digital Director for Member of US Congress) says bringing up her college athlete credential at work "almost feels like a party trick" because "it's like this cool thing that you did one time for several years…but what does that do for me in this political space?" Lillie chooses to downplay her college athlete credential at work,

not because it is a source of liability, but because it does not offer any added social benefit for bringing it up. Lucy (Black, Women's Softball, Beauty Product Development Manager) concurs, saying "in my line of work in the beauty community people don't care what your sports were, they care about what's the last product that you developed that was a huge launch and that's it." Leo (White, Men's Football, Research Associate and PhD Student in Economics) says: "work life is so different. And they [co-workers] really can't connect or understand. Like that's a whole different world for them.... And I don't even want to even attempt to bridge [that]". Tracie (White, Women's Volleyball, Chief of Staff for Large Tech Company) says she doesn't use her college athlete credential much at work anymore because she has "a lot more other experiences that I can draw from whereas previously that was like the main experience that I had to draw from for everything." In essence, Black and white men and white women who downplay their college athlete credential at work do so because the credential does not provide social rewards. It does not do anything.

Unlike other respondents, who downplayed their college athlete credential at work because it didn't provide them with greater social capital, many Black men downplay their credential at work because they view it as a liability. Travis is "hyper aware of stereotypes about Black men athletes so he "pushes back" against these racist stereotypes saying: "it's like 'yeah sure I was an athlete. but I'm also lots of other things'. So that's a major reason why I always push back on that and why I often say that I did something else." Travis adamantly stated he never brings his college athlete credential up at work because he fears it will activate racist stereotypes that could hinder his ability to be seen as a successful employee.

Similarly, Collin (Black, Men's soccer, Works in Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Development) felt potential employers often "assumed" his college athlete credential was "the

only way I could have gotten into college." He downplays his college athlete credential in interviews "just so people don't think I was a dumb Black athlete who just used sports to get into college." Tim has experienced moments at work "where people kind of look at me as a big dumb football player." He says he might be at a meeting where he "eloquently explained something" and the vocabulary that he uses "will shock people." Tim downplays his athlete credential with his co-workers because he wants to be judged on "what I actually know" as opposed to racist stereotypes. This fear that the college athlete credential signals a lack of intelligence or deservingness of admission to college was echoed by many Black men respondents including Aaron (Black, Men's Football, Retired NFL Player). Aaron is a retired NFL player who now spends his time working on a variety of projects including music and standup comedy. Aaron says when people find out he is a former NFL player, he gets:

> "the same reaction about my music all the time— 'hey, this is actually good! I thought this was gonna suck' because, you know you, played sports. The same with comedy—'Wow! I didn't realize, you were smart enough to do comedy!' 'Alright Tom, it's getting a little racist now'. But you know what I'm saying? It's almost like you have to overcome being an athlete."

The reactions Aaron usually gets for his comedy and music are through the racialized lens of surprise that he is capable of being successful at something other than football. This feeling of having to "overcome" being an athlete to be taken seriously at work was only shared by Black men in the sample. Previous research has shown gender and race can activate specific stereotypes depending on one's positionality. Stereotypes surround college athletes are both positive and negative. Negative stereotypes associated with being college athletes include being "dumb jocks" who are not serious about, nor deserving of, college admissions (Wininger and White 2015). Positive stereotypes include being seen as driven and motivated (Yukhymenko-

Lescroart and Sharma 2022). These findings suggest negative stereotypes associated with the college athlete credential are primarily activated for Black men respondents.

How Gender and Race Impacts Who Reaps Rewards

College Athlete Credential as Inspiring or Source of Pride:

Rivera (2012) conceptualizes affective processes as the ways cultural similarities make hiring evaluators excited and more likely to fight for candidates during hiring deliberation. Since my focus is on employees, I define affective processes as the ways cultural similarities linked to the cultural athlete credential make respondents more or less excited and therefore more or less likely to bring up their credential at work.

Except for one respondent, none of the Black women respondents discussed an affective reason for bringing up their college athlete credential at work. The one exception is Nichole (Black, Women's Lacrosse, PhD Candidate and Sport Psychology Consultant) who realized bringing up her athlete credential to her students was "inspiring" because it allowed them to see they too could become successful college athletes. Similarly, the Black men respondents who discussed affective reasons for using their college athlete credential at work did so for inspirational purposes. These respondents taught or coached students. Chadwick (Black, Men's Baseball, High School Teacher) says he talks about his college athlete credential with his students because "I was once an athlete and I know exactly what you think, and are going through, been through, thinking about doing, wanna do". Chadwick feels motivated to use his college athlete credential to empathize with and encourage the predominantly Black students he coaches and teaches. Patrick (Black, Men's Football, Highschool History Teacher & Football

Coach) emphasizes the fact that he was a successful student-athlete when working at his predominantly Black, lower class high school to serve as a source of inspiration for his students:

> "It's just being that presence. Being a Black male, I give my students something to look at other than just being an entertainer or being an athlete. I actually have a brain…I have pictures of me and an NFL Player at [football] camp practices…. and I show them how important it is to get that piece of paper [degree]. And I say it because it's very hard and statistically as a Black male that's something that we don't accomplish very often. We fill prisons more than we fill graduation seats. But that's my passion for it, and that's why I enjoy doing it so much. And I say, 'Look if I did it, y'all can do it."

For Black men like Chadwick and Patrick who work in educational settings with Black youth, the college athlete credential provides positive feelings for them at work because it inspires. The similarities these men feel with their students, especially along dimensions of race and gender, produced affective benefits when they brought up their college athlete credential at work. These benefits include being able to connect with and motivate students to succeed in the classroom and on the sports field.

Unlike Black men and women who discussed inspiration as a key affective reason for using their college athlete credential at work, white women and men emphasized their college athlete credential at work as a source of individualistic pride. Camille (White, Women's Softball, Crime Analyst) says she still enjoys talking about her experiences as a college athlete among work colleagues, in part, because "it's a huge accomplishment…It's a badge of honor in a certain sense, I think I love talking to people about it". Likewise, Dana (White, Women's Gymnastics, Technical Program Manager) says she "really likes" sharing her college athlete credential "with people that I work with because it helps explain me a little bit more…from a pride perspective." Simon says, "I wear it [my college athlete credential] like a badge of honor." Max (White, Men's Swimming, Data Analyst) states: "I put it on my resume... Partially because it gives context to who I am…Partially because it signals to employers that, hey, I was able to get an education and

trained for four years. And that adds value to the resume, and it kind of adds more context, to see who I am". Max went on to discuss how is college athlete credential is a "source of pride" to him but doesn't want it to be "all of who I am." The affective processes white folks displayed when bringing up their college athlete credential at work generated affective benefits of positive self-worth.

As I show in the next section, the college athlete credential, while invoking an emotional desire to up-play at work for some, can invoke emotions of apathy or humility in others and their desire to downplay the credential.

College Athlete Credential Peripheral to Current Self or Source of Humility:

The primary affective process respondents, other than white women, discussed the reason for downplaying their college athlete credential at work today centered on distancing oneself from their college athlete identity. These respondents used language that signaled lack of excitement towards the credential. Thalia (Black, Women's Volleyball, Software Engineer) says she sees her college athlete identity as "a different chapter of my life that I never really had to carry over into my work life". Vivian (Black, Women's Basketball, Senior Policy Advisor in Public Health) agrees saying "I'm in my career now where even though basketball is a part of me, I don't want it to keep identifying me." Krista says she waits and only brings up her college athlete credential at work if she is asked about it because she feels "basketball is part of what made" her who she is today but "it's not the core" her. In other words, for many Black women the temporal distance from their time as college athletes has created apathy towards talking about their college athlete credential at work because it is peripheral to who they are today.

White men also regularly discussed distancing oneself from their college athlete identity at work. Adam (White, Men's Football, Works in Athletic Fundraising for a University) says he no longer brings up his college athlete credential because since college he's "tried really hard to be well-rounded" and not just be known as "the guy that played D1 football". Greg (White, Men's Cross Country, Career Coach for a University) concurs, saying he no longer brings up his college athlete identity at job interviews because he doesn't "want it to be the only facet of who I was" and that he'd rather employers be "interested in me for other components" such as his more recent work experiences and hobbies. Similarly, Phillip (Black, Men's football, Manager of Safety Engineers) says "Phillip: Once I get in, I don't want to just essentially fully use that as a crutch I wanna all right, let me learn the job let's I want to be known more than just being the former student athlete". Likewise, Luke (Black, Men's Basketball, Professional Basketball Player) currently downplays his college and professional athlete credential because he knows "eventually you have to stop playing basketball" and so it's healthier to keep his distance from that identity, and therefore downplay it, so that way he is more prepared for retirement and the potential athlete identity foreclosure that might come with it.

In contrast to other respondents wanting to distance themselves from the college athlete credential at work, some white women downplayed their college athlete credential out of humility. Holly says nobody in her work environment "needs to know" she played volleyball in college because "it's just embarrassing. It's not really that embarrassing, but I just don't want to be a bragger or like all about myself, so I just don't really talk about it." Vanessa (White, Women's Soccer, telematics product team member for an insurance company) echoes Holly's modest attitude and uses gender to explain her humbleness. She feels that talking about her college athlete credential outside of interviews is "more braggy" so "in a day-to-day work

setting, if it doesn't come up" she usually will not bring it up. Vanessa then described an instance where she downplayed her athlete credential while a man coworker talked about his. She says:

> "Whenever I was a new hire a couple years ago, we had to go around the room and say a fun fact. I didn't say anything about sports and soccer. And then like four people later was a guy who said, 'I played D2 basketball'. And everyone in the room, was like 'wow! no way! that's amazing'. 'What was it like?' And just so impressed. I was talking to my fiancé after and I was like 'it's so annoying. like it was D2. Everyone should chill out'. and I took it personally. But it was that I was jealous that people weren't impressed by me. But at the same time, I felt like it was too braggy to say anything. And I think that probably goes with male and female personality types, or traditional personality types."

These findings suggest some white women who actively downplay their college athlete credential remain constrained by gender norms that dictate women should be humble and therefore downplay sources of pride at work.

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I use Rivera's (2012) cultural matching framework to show how former Division 1 college athletes strategically use or downplay their college athlete credential at work today. I show how workplace context, along with respondent positionality impact who benefits and why from the college athlete credential at work.

I find no race or gender-based patterns regarding cultural similarities to workplace organizations impact respondents' use of the college athlete credential. Rather, workplace cultural norms played the most crucial role in determining if respondents used their college athlete credential at work. Respondents are more likely to use their college athlete credential in workplace contexts that share similar values and norms as college athletics. These workplace contexts were more likely to be predominantly white and men-dominated spaces. Thus, even though my respondents largely spoke of their workplace contexts as seemingly gender and race-

neutral, the norms and social interactions associated with these spaces generate gender and race specific consequences.

Respondents actively considered how the college athlete credential could serve as a source of cultural similarity with employers, co-workers, and clientele. I find Black and white women alike use the college athlete credential as a source of social capital that can help them build bonds with potential employers and serve as a source of credibility to clientele. Black and white men also use the college athlete credential as a source of social capital because it represents workplace reliability. However, unlike their women counterparts, men garner social capital as well in the form of social networking because of their athlete credential. They can use the social ties built through college athletics to access jobs, recruit business, and connect with clients in ways that women respondents cannot.

I find respondents across race and gender groups may downplay their college athlete credential at work but the reasons why they downplay differ by gender and race. Black women, Black men, and white women are less likely to use the athlete credential at work than their white men counterparts. When white men downplay their credential at work, they do so because they feel it doesn't resonate with their colleagues or clients, not because it could serve as a potential liability. Black and white women who downplay their credential at work tend to do so because they work in professions (usually gender neutral or women-dominated) that do not see sport and the college athlete status as something that is relevant or beneficial to the workplace culture or job at hand. Some white women also downplay their athlete credential to adhere to prescriptive racialized gender stereotypes that dictate (white) women should be humble and downplay achievements. In contrast, when Black men downplay their college athlete credential at work

they do so because they fear the credential invokes harmful racist stereotypes. In other words, the college athlete credential is a liability.

Finally, I find Black men (and to a lesser degree Black women) in teaching/coaching roles talk about it because they feel it serves as a source of inspiration to their students/players; Alternatively, white women and men talk about it at work because they feel proud of what they've accomplished individualistically. Some white women downplay their college athlete credential out of humility. While some Black women downplay their athlete credential because they see it as peripheral to who they are today and are therefore apathetic about bringing it up at work. Previous research suggests racial socialization is stronger & more of a protective factor for Black Americans, which makes sense why Black men and women discuss using their college athlete credential as a source of inspiration for Black youth.

White and Black men also vocalize this apathy but with the adage of not wanting to rely on the credential “as a crutch.” White and Black men downplay because of broader stereotypes associate "dumb jock" stereotype with them. Interestingly and as my findings show, Black men actually talk about feeling like they've had the stereotype applied to them at work while white men haven't. Racial socialization is stronger & more of a protective factor for Black Americans. This finding is in line with previous research that shows the rigidity of race-based stereotypes wherein Black men are allowed to be seen as athletic but not as intellectual (Wininger and White 2015). White women feel humility because it plays directly into broader gender norms that women should be humble. Black women don't because they hold a marginal status as Black women so they can never embody hegemonic gender norms, nor reap full benefits of embodying these norms. Yet this marginalization also means they don't feel as much pressure to conform to these hegemonic gender norms in the ways their white counterparts do.

The combined findings of chapters 3 and 4 show how complex and nuanced the interplay between shifting social contexts, race, and gender are. For instance, chapter 3 revealed manty Black men respondents felt they could capitalize on their college athlete skillset in the workplace environment. Yet, chapter 4 shows these same men view their college athlete credential as a liability in the workplace. These findings are not at odds but a result of tokensim. Recall, tokens, defined as "numeric minorities in segregated occupations," often experience challenges of greater magnitude and meaning than majority peers (Turco 2010:895). These challenges are often amplified for racial and gender minorities. It is highly likely many respondents who downplay their college athlete credential at work are doing so, at least in part, because of their tokenized status.

For example, recall the Black men respondents who saw their athlete credential as a source of pride and inspiration were largely employed as public educators to a predominantly Black student body. Likewise, Black women former basketball respondents were more likely than Black women former gymnasts to discuss downplaying their athlete credential at work out of fear of eliciting harmful racist stereotypes. This finding is likely because Black women basketball players are moving from a majority-racial minority (if not also gender minority) social context of college basketball (where most players are Players of Color) to predominantly white workplace contexts. Whereas Black women gymnasts are moving from a predominantly white sporting context to a largely predominantly white workplace context. Respondents of Color moving from a diverse sporting environment to a homogeneous workplace environment have the added burden of reconfiguring how to operate in a white professional setting. While those moving from a white sporting environment to a white workplace environment have the experience of feeling tokenism as a student athlete to draw on in their work environment today.

To summarize, while the racial and gender makeup of respondents' workplaces was not explicitly asked during interviews, we can posit when and how the college athlete credential is viewed as a liability or an asset is shaped by the race and gender makeup of their professional environment. In other words, it is not simply that a job context values the skillset and understands the cultural significance of the college athlete credential. It is also how the gender and racial makeup of the workplace impacts if, when, and how, race and gender-based stereotypes surrounding the credential are activated.

These findings extend work on cultural-matching frameworks to show how employees consciously, and strategically, use cultural status markers to their advantage. My respondents were aware of the norms and definitions of cultural fit at their workplaces. They assessed the norms and how their own positionality might impact the way others at work might relate to them, and then chose when and how to disclose their college athlete credential. For many, the college athlete-credential did indeed serve as an indicator of cultural similarity. These finding's echo Rivera's (2012) in showing that cultural similarity is a form of capital.

My findings also contribute to broader discussions of intersectionality and the workplace. The fact that one's ability to utilize the college-athlete credential was in part, dependent on one's race and gender suggests macro level racialized gender norms continue to shape who benefits the most from cultural status markers. The use of cultural status markers to signify cultural similarities by employees at work is another example of how race and gender norms systematically privilege whiteness and masculinity.

Finally, results from this chapter inform best practices regarding how to mentor recent NCAA student-athlete graduates through the transition process away from college athletics and

into the working world. One's college athlete credential can be utilized as an asset but that is dependent on social context and an individual's positionality. It is important for future programming to also include how student athletes can leverage their college athlete credential, social networks, and sporting knowledge to advance in professional careers outside of college athletics. It would be beneficial for student-athletes, starting in their freshmen year, to undergo regular programming that requires them to think through how the knowledge and connections they are making as student athletes in the here and now, can help them grow long after graduation.

This chapter focused on the ways respondents were differentially able to capitalize on using the college athlete credential at work today. Thus far, this dissertation has shown how the skillset and credential acquired through college athletics impacts former student-athletes in their professional lives. These chapters showed how when some respondents embody these practices learned through college athletics at work it helps them meet ideal worker norms in certain workplace contexts. Yet for others, raced-gendered stereotypes and expectations make it difficult to fully capitalize on these skillsets and social networks generated from the athlete credential. As findings from this chapter allude to, respondents aren't just navigating how to translate what they learned in college athletics to their lives today, they are also navigating a transition in their athlete identity and experiences with sport. In the following chapter, I analyze respondents' current relationship to their athlete identity and engagement with recreational sport. I explore how respondent gender and race impact one's ability to maintain their athlete identity and the ways they engage with sport after leaving college athletics.

CHAPTER 5: THE TRANSITION TO RECREATIONAL SPORTING LIFE—GENDERED AND UNEVEN

INTRODUCTION

My dissertation thus far has shown an individual's experience as a student-athlete continues to shape their lives long after they've hung up their cleats, emptied their lockers, and moved on into the working world. Previous chapters have focused on work and the different ways the skills and credentials associated with college athletics are racialized and gender. This chapter focuses on recreational sport. I ask: how do former college athletes navigate the transition into recreational sporting culture? How do women and men feel about their bodies now that they are no longer D1 athletes? How do people feel navigating recreational sporting contexts (i.e., the weight room and team sports) considering their experiences as college athletes? How do gender, race, and college sport played inform this experience?

There are three key reasons for examining how former college athletes navigate recreational sporting contexts. First, the transition out of college athletics and into recreational sporting culture serves as an interesting case study to explore the extent to which broader cultural gender norms impede or facilitate the maintenance of one's athletic identity— a social identity cultivated and rewarded by women and men in the college athletics context, still seen as masculine by broader U.S. society. Second, we know many former student athletes struggle in their first few years out of college with understanding who they are once they are no longer rooted in a formal sporting culture. Yet surprisingly less is known about how they navigate the transition into recreational sporting culture. This chapter speaks to this issue and how uneven this process is by gender. Third, I expand on the literature at the intersection of race, gender, and

sport by showing how race, gender, and sport played impacts one's transition to/acceptance in recreational sporting spaces.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Race, Gender, the Body, and Shifting Social Contexts

Current research that uncovers how the salience of gender shifts and varies across contexts find that these shifts occur in accordance with the norms and expectations of particular contexts (Connell 1987; Deutsch 2007; Hoang 2015; Kane 2006; Kazyak 2012; Ridgeway 2009; Schilt 2010; Schippers 2007). It also depends on the assumptions, identities, and past gendered experiences, social actors carry with them into social contexts (Schilt 2010). Research also suggests social institutions often maintain their own standards and practices regarding gender norms (Acker 2006b; Alfrey and Twine 2017a). For example, the institution of sport is seen as a hyper-masculine social domain (Messner 2016). This means for men, sport champions masculinity in its most exalted form—including an explicit emphasis on heterosexuality and a gender expression of dominance and muscularity. As such, sporting norms surrounding gender expression for women can be at odds with broader standards of femininity (Krane 2001; Ross and Shinew 2008). Likewise, literature suggests people embedded in these social contexts recognize and often negotiate such norms with broader societal expectations. Nevertheless, it remains unclear how former college athletes make sense of the previous gender socialization they learned and were praised for within the institution of college athletics once they move into the institution of recreational sport.

Further, elite sport emphasizes "body consciousness" wherein athletes see their bodies as a performance tool used to win competitions or games (Greenleaf & Petrie 2013). Athletes

regularly experience praise and critique for what their bodies can and cannot do within their athletic arenas (Coakley 2017; Coppola, Ward, and Freysinger 2014). The female athlete paradox shows how some elite women athletes feel their athletic physique, championed in college sport, is incompatible with societal standards of how women should look (Krane et al. 2004). de Bruin et al. (2011) show how some athletes feel proud of their bodies within sporting settings but are dissatisfied with their bodies when they are in social settings. Thus, research shows self-conceptions of body image are context specific and participation in sport often makes it challenging for women to navigate competing gendered expectations surrounding the body. Studies that explore men athletes and body image largely focus on how athletic subcultures can push men to over train, over or under eat, or use harmful supplements to achieve body related goals for their sport (Reel et al. 2013). No study has shown men athletes experience the paradox women athlete do when it comes to juggling body image expectations associated with sporting contexts and social contexts. Likewise, few studies have explored how retirement from elite sport impacts conceptions of body image among women and men athletes. These studies have found many retired athletes experience body dissatisfaction as they compare their post-retirement selves to their elite athlete selves. A mixed method study surveying 218 retired collegiate women's gymnasts and swimmers found most of the women in the study were dissatisfied with their weight although they said they had a normal weight, had transitioned towards maintaining a more "feminine ideal" consisting if "thinner" or "leaner" physiques, and experienced a "retired female athlete paradox". This paradox is defined as "feeling satisfied that the pos-post retirement body better resembles the feminine ideal, yet feeling dissatisfied that this represents a move way from a still desired athletic ideal" (Papathomas, Petrie, and Plateau 2018:22). Except for the previous piece, most of these studies on college athlete retirement and the body rely on small

samples (interviews with 10 or less athletes), with homogenous groups of athletes (i.e., only gymnasts, or only swimmers), and do not explore how the combined dimensions of gender and race contribute to body image expectations. This chapter specifically explores how gender, race, and sport played impact the relationship retired college athletes have with their bodies and sport today.

Disengaging from Elite Athletics

Studies within the sociology of sport literature explore the ways gender impacts athletes' participation in sport and physical activity (Chalabaev et al. 2013; Malcom et al. 2021; McGannon, McMahon, and Gonsalves 2018). Many of these studies expose how social structures and gender ideologies marginalize and exclude bodies that are not cis-gendered, white, heterosexual, men (Clément-Guillotin, Chalabaev, and Fontayne 2012; Coakley 2017; Mann and Krane 2018). For instance, McGannon et al. (2018) finds competitive recreational runners who are also mothers had to juggle the competing expectations associated with motherhood and competitive recreational runner. Research has also explored the ways former college athletes navigate wellness upon graduating. Studies have shown that leaving the immersive environment of college athletics can cause some former student athletes to decrease their body satisfaction and mental and physical distress (Papathomas, Petrie, and Plateau 2018; Bopp et al. 2021). While previous research has explored the ways current minority student-athletes navigate the norms of college sport, the literature is lacking in understanding how former-student athletes navigate the physical structure and cultural norms associated with U.S. recreational sporting life today (Anderson, Stokowski, and Turk 2022; Mann and Krane 2018; Pickett, Dawkins, and Braddock 2012).

Previous research suggests, those who engage with sport in their youth are quite likely to continue to participate in sport throughout adulthood (Hoekman et al. 2017). Nevertheless, literature in the sociology of sport documents a significant gender gap between women and men, with men out participating women across all stages of the life course (Hirvensalo and Lintunen 2011). Scholars conjecture this gap could be due to an array of things including: men are socialized into sport at a younger age and at higher rates than women; There is a relative lack of resources and institutional support for women in recreational sport; Gender ideology from other domains of social life (i.e. the social norm women should be the primary caretaker of children) constrain women's' choices to pursue recreational sport in adulthood (Capranica et al. 2013b; Hirvensalo and Lintunen 2011; Milner and Henry Braddock II 2016). Still it remains unclear how former student-athlete's backgrounds as college athletes impacts their transition into recreational sport.

To summarize, the gender structure of college athletics supports separate but equal spheres of athletic participation. There is equal opportunity for women and men to play their sports in homosocial spaces. Once they leave the institution of college athletics, that is not the case. Most people who participate in sport in adulthood are men. Thus, former women college athletes are likely to face barriers in participating in sport after college athletics that their male counterparts will not.

The case of the former college athlete is such that women and men respondents a like engaged in sport in the overarchingly masculine context of college athletics. In college, being an athlete was celebrated and often seen as gender-neutral within the institutional setting. However, as my findings will show, the unique structure of college athletics makes it challenging for women, especially white women, to navigate recreational sport life after graduation. Specifically,

women must navigate gender accountability norms at public sporting spaces today that police their gender accountability in ways they were not accustomed to as student-athletes. Men, regardless of race, have relatively smooth transitions to recreational sport. They are not penalized for the ways they go about being recreational athletes. Rather, they are extolled and valued for their athletic backgrounds.

FINDINGS

All 84 interviewees continued to be physically active after leaving college athletics. An overwhelming majority continued to see themselves as athletic and/or as an athlete (75%). In other words, for most of my respondents' recreational sport is seen as more than a simple hobby. It is the primary domain in which they can maintain and express a core part of who they are, and who they have been (since childhood for most) as athletes. Being an athlete remains integral to who my respondents are. Participating in recreational sport is the primary way in which they can continue to cultivate and express this aspect of their identity. Yet, as I will show below, cultural gender norms associated with recreational sports requires women and men to resocialize and adapt to being athletes outside of college athletics in gendered and unequal ways.

Recreational Sport and the Body

Men Align with Masculinity Norms:

There are three overarching ways men, regardless of race, talk about their bodies after college athletics. They include tempering expectations, relief and relearning, and newfound body autonomy. Interestingly, race/ethnicity do not distinguish these themes, rather college sporting position does. The first group of men are men who must learn how to temper expectations regarding their bodies. These tend to be men who played in sporting positions that required them to have bodies defined as the apex of masculinity. Think football quarterback, soccer forward, or

basketball shooting guard. Their image is fit, muscular, and generally embodies what social norms define as the physical pinnacle of masculinity. These men discuss learning how to accept their peak college physique is no longer attainable but continue to maintain bodies that are still athletic and "better" than the average American man.

Kenneth (Black, Men's Wrestling) struggles with accepting his body doesn't look like it did in college. He knows "compared to the average person…I have a good body, but it's like once you've had a Ruth's Chris steak, your gonna feel differently about eating the Walmart Steak." Where, college Kenneth's body was the Ruth Chris' steak (a steak from an upscale restaurant), and his current body is the Walmart steak. "It's like I had the top-of-the-line steak, and now, Wal Mart steaks aren't bad, it's just not the top of the line." Kenneth is in the process of relearning and tempering his expectations on how his body looks now that he no longer has the time and structure to maintain the physique he once had as a college wrestler. Tye (Black, Men's Soccer) rationalizes his relative loss of athletic physique as a product of choosing and needing to devote his time to building and maintaining his business. Nonetheless, he still says "even though I am 60% there" (meaning his physique is at 60% of what it was in college) "I'm still really happy where I am [physically]". Paul (White, Men's Football) says "since college" his goal "has always been to try to maintain" his football physique. This is his goal because "from a vanity standpoint, I like my college physique and I put a lot of work into it". Paul says he has a masculine physique because he "has that statue of David sort of look of muscles and strength…[which] is definitely what a college quarterback's body would be built like". Leo (White, men's football) has had relatively easy transition out of college athletics. He feels,

> "for the most part I'm just as fit in a different way. In football they kind of really try to change your body depending on your position. I know guys that lost 150 pounds after football, because they carry so much weight. I didn't have any

> transformation like that. I carried a lot more muscle, but I weighed just about 5 pounds less than I do now…I'm still very fit but lost some muscle mass."

These men are affected by broader gender norms that reward men for masculine, athletic physiques. It is not just about maintaining their body figures to be healthy. It's also about recognizing they can no longer embody the pinnacle of masculine physique that they once had in college athletics because their social circumstances have changed. While these men might struggle a little in tempering their expectations, they have a relatively smooth transition in accepting their post-college athletics bodies because they are not breaking any gender norms. They are still upholding the definition of masculinity—athletic physiques that might be "less fit" than in college but are still relatively more attractive by societal standards than the average person.

The second group of men consist of those who played in sporting positions that required them to put on excess weight to succeed at their sport. In my sample, these are predominantly football players who played on the offensive or defensive line. These are large men. Usually 6' foot or taller, who described weighing 240 lbs. in college as "undersized". These guys talk a lot about two things: relief and relearning. They feel relieved because they no longer have to actively eat, lift weights, and put their bodies through the grueling activities involved with being a lineman (i.e. physically going against another 300 pound man at practice every day). These men struggle a bit more in their transition out of college athletics than the first group of men because they have the added task of relearning how to maintain a healthy weight after college sport.

John (White, Men's Football) says "from the day I stepped on campus, everybody was like 'you gotta gain weight'." John actively put on over 40 pounds of "muscle and fat" to

appease coaches and be a successful lineman. John felt relief after leaving college football because he was able to drop to a healthier weight and feels better physically. Not to mention the weight loss realigns himself with societal expectations of how men should look—athletic and muscular, but also not overweight. Jacob (White/Mexican, Men's Football) also says in college "there was never a time where I wasn't trying to gain weight and I could never get to my final goal of like 260". When Jacob graduated college, he weighed 240 pounds and immediately began to lose weight because "I didn't need this weight… I no longer needed it because I no longer played the sport." As Jacob discussed his transition out of college football his tone was one of reprieve. He was relieved he no longer had to actively try to gain and maintain excessive weight for his position. Felix and Richard (Black, Men's Football) concur. Felix says football "is a demanding sport on your body, so you have to eat a certain amount to maintain weight and things like that. And that appetite doesn't go away after you stop. So that's been my hardest thing." Richard (Black, Men's football) agrees saying "I actually ballooned up instead of losing weight" after leaving college football because he didn't have the structure and resources available to help him learn what a healthy body weight was outside of football and how to properly eat and workout to maintain that physique.

The third group of men are primarily made up of men whose sporting positions did not necessarily require them to build extremely muscular or bulky physiques (i.e. Cross-country runners, swimmers, baseball players). These men also have a relatively smooth transition out of college athletics. They highlight how leaving college sports gave them a newfound sense of body autonomy to exercise and mold themselves as they desire, rather than as their sport required them. They are different than the previous group of men because they do not struggle with relearning how to eat properly.

Marcus (Black, Men's Basketball) says he's "much happier" with his "body now" and that he doesn't miss much "about the regimen of college athletics" because it felt like, "'this is what we're telling you to do' as opposed to me really taking the time to assess what works for me and what doesn't work for me. [I have] a lot more autonomy over my decisions now." For some men, this newfound body autonomy allows them to redefine their physiques, so they are even more in line with societal definitions of masculinity. Chadwick (Black, Men's Baseball) says: "if we are talking physique, I look better than I did in college… I've got [more] definition in all my muscles, my legs are a little bigger." Chadwick uses his newfound ability to shape his physique the way he wants it to look, as opposed to the ways it needed to look to function as a baseball player.

Interestingly, the muscular physique Chadwick strives for now is even more in line with hegemonic gender norms than the slender frame required of him as a college baseball player. He says "Like when I started going to a gym after college, I definitely I got more strong after college. It's probably the opposite of if you were to talk to a football or a basketball player who spent more time in the weight room." Since college, Simon (white, men's swimming) joined a Crossfit gym and devoted much more time to sculpting his muscles than he did as a college swimmer. Simon says, "I feel great about my body, I actually feel like my body looks better now than it did when I was in college". These men are the least likely to discuss struggling with the transition out of college sport (at least in terms of their bodies) because they appreciate their new ability to build workouts and move and mold their bodies as they want to---usually so they align with cultural definitions of what a man's body should look like.

<u>Women Align with Femininity Norms:</u>

Women also predominantly talk about feeling relieved because they are no longer required to maintain physiques that they see as "too masculine" or "too muscular". In other words. They no longer must maintain bodies that fall outside of hegemonic gender norms. Julia (White, Women's Soccer) says "I don't think I really focused on what my body looked like then [in college], because I was on a team with a bunch of women who looked like me. We were all soccer players, had the same strong thighs and things like that. But once I left soccer, immediately right after, that's just a whole life change". Julia went on to describe how exiting college athletics made her more cognizant of how she wanted her body to feel and look now that she was no longer a women's D1 soccer player. She no longer does "as intense weight training" as when she was a student-athlete because she prefers not to be "bulky." This idea of wanting to minimize bulkiness or muscularity and maximize feminine attributes after college athletics was regularly voiced by white women respondents. Vanessa (White, Women's Soccer) says as a D1 soccer player she was "definitely self-conscious of my quads." She appreciates the body autonomy she has now to "focus on my running" so her legs can "get really small" and notes that possibility, "would never have happened in [college] soccer".

Likewise, Michayla (White, Women's Gymnastics) says "when I was doing gymnastics… I was pretty comfortable with my body and I knew that it was a certain way because I was training in a certain way." Michayla discussed how as a college gymnast, while she was proud of her body, she also did not like how certain women's clothing wouldn't fit her properly due to her muscular physique born out of being a gymnast. These insecurities grew once she left college athletics because she no longer had gymnastics to rationalize why her frame did not fit societal standards (as she defined them) of fitting into women's clothing properly. She says people "look at my shoulders, they look at the definition in my arms, and they can tell that's

not something that's normal." Michayla didn't like this aspect of her physique outside of college gymnastics because it "made me feel like less of a woman." That sentiment did not change once she graduated college, saying "I always thought when I stopped doing gymnastics then I'll look normal. And that doesn't happen… And yeah I'm not working out as much and I'm not as strong as I was, but I still am built that way, so I think even as an adult like now I'm just like well I don't even have an excuse anymore so it's almost worse." Kay (White, Women's Swimming) echoes Michayla 's feelings of insecurity surrounding her athletic frame saying when she first left college athletics she "would be always trying to buy things to make me look more feminine, like buying push up bras so that my boobs look bigger or, like once I finished swimming I cut back on my cardio a whole lot so that I could like gain more fat so that I would like be curvier".

Black women largely discuss two topics. The first, just as with men former college athletes, is tempering expectations. Many Black women discussed the shift in mindset they had to make when accepting their bodies as they are today compared to what they were in college. Nichole (Black, Women's Lacrosse) for example, says her body is "definitely not as tight as it used to be" but that she's accepted it because she's "not waking up in the morning to work out twice a day. That's not realistic or sustainable." Eloise (Black, Women's Basketball) says "It's like I still look great even though I don't look the same [as in college athletics]. You have to understand the conditions you were in then, versus where you are now." Eloise went on to describe how the lack of structured workouts and adult responsibilities including a full-time job make it impossible, and unnecessary, to maintain the same physique she had in college. That shift in mindset is an ongoing process for Eloise who says she must "check myself" at the gym and "thank my body" and say "'you look awesome' when I am working out". Rachel (Black, Women's Soccer) is also currently working on this internal shift in bodily expectations,

particularly about her physical strength. She says, "I felt so strong in college…Now I just kind of feel weak." She knows this relative drop in physical strength is because "I don't do the same things I did in college" and that in the eyes of others she continues to be seen as strong and athletic. She says she uses that knowledge to convince herself to love her body in its current state:

> "I'm like 'other people don't view you like this. You're still relatively fitter than most.' And I try to use that to make myself feel better and it works sometimes. But I also know what my body is capable of and I'm not capable of that now."

Similarly, Vivian (Black, Women's Basketball) says she's "more self-conscious" of her body today than in college but is "trying to be more carefree." She says because of being a student-athlete she knows what her "body can get to" but is also like "okay you're older now, your body does develop, and this is embracing my new body."

The second topic Black women largely discuss when it comes to their bodies after college athletics is: learning how to appreciate their bodies where they are at and often use their college athletic experiences to help with this acceptance. They often find gratitude in thinking about their athletic endeavors and appreciate what their bodies can do now, considering, their previous athletic experiences. Emilia (Black, Women's Gymnastics) says: "I love my body. It's been cool to like figure out what my relationship with is to it [now that I'm done with college gymnastics]." Emilia went on to discuss how liberating it felt to be able to focus on her yoga practice as opposed to constantly pounding her body with gymnastics routines. Cheyanne (Black, Women's Gymnastics) has a much greater appreciation for her body today. She says:

> "I think I'm more confident in who I am and my body type and just being happy with my body for now. I was a whole lot stronger when I was a collegiate athlete…but I don't need that for my life now…I just need to have the strength to be able to lift a patient without hurting myself. And I do believe, like without gymnastics I wouldn't have that."

In other words, gymnastics gave Cheyanne the mental and physical background to be able to maintain the strength and athleticism she needs to confidently do her job as a nurse. Lillie (Black/Latiné, Women's basketball) says nowadays "I think I focus less so on the look and more so just feeling strong and knowing that like.... I could defend myself. I am strong enough to do this."

There is this sense of empowerment and appreciation for one's body that Black women voice which no other race-gender group discussed as paramount to their transition out of college athletics. For Elise (Black, Women's Basketball), playing college basketball both helped and hurt her lifelong struggles with body image. She says: "As a woman you don't really want to hear, the sentiment 'big' attached to your name". As a college basketball player Elise was often complimented and rewarded for her larger, muscular frame by coaches and teammates alike. Yet, she also struggled with the fact these statements of being "big" and "strong" went against societal expectations of what her body should be like. At the same time, being a basketball player helped with Elise's body image because it helped her realize:

> "how strong, I was in the weight room. I realized it's okay to have muscles…getting in that weight room [in college] transferred over into being able to be active post [college] basketball. Because I'm not afraid to go to the gym, and lift, and get toned. A lot of women are like 'oh I don't want to look like a man'. You're not going to look like a man from lifting weights and I know that because I was lifting weights, four days a week, heavy, when I was playing basketball. So it made me really tap into the fact that it's okay to be strong. It's okay to lift heavy. It's okay to work hard in the weight room and not be scared that I'm going to look like Dwight Howard (a professional NBA player) if I lift every day."

As Elise shows, the weight room serves as a fascinating context to explore the ways societal gender norms push these former college athletes to conform. It also shows how at other times, the skills cultivated in college athletics can push back against these societal expectations that define how women and men should be.

Doing Gender in the Weight Room

While not every respondent continued to pursue organized team sport after graduating college, most continued to pursue some form of weightlifting. It is standard practice for all college athletes, regardless of gender or sport played, to regularly follow a strength training program throughout their tenure as student-athletes. This means every respondent came to the interview with background weightlifting knowledge that is likely greater than the average American. Lifting weights is something that does not require teammates. All you need is equipment and a space to perform the exercises in. In other words, access to weight training should not differ between genders. Yet, as my findings show, the ways that women and men former college athletes navigate weightlifting after exiting college athletics are quite gendered.

<u>Men Effortlessly Continue to Lift:</u>

Men, regardless of race or sport played, tend to talk about a smooth transition to public weight rooms. They do not have to change how or when they lift weights. They do not feel like their competence or rationale for being in public weight rooms is questioned. The concern they bring up, if any, is being asked if they are former athletes because of how athletic they look at the gym. Travis (Black, Men's basketball) says "a lot of people will just straight up come up to me and be like 'you must have played somewhere'. That happens all the time. I'll have my headphones on but people will come over and start a conversation with you" Travis doesn't mind this bit of attention, in fact he says, "most of the time it's amusing." Dominic (White, Men's Football) agrees saying that he sees this attention as "a compliment". He says "obviously I've never had anybody come up to me and say that, like I'm doing something wrong. That

would set me off. it's obviously a compliment if someone comes up to you and asks you 'did you play ball somewhere? You look like you played ball'" Notice Dominic's use of the word "obviously". If someone approached him at the gym it isn't because he's inept but rather because he is competent in that setting, he looks like he belongs.

For men, the transition to recreational sport is smooth because they are coming from a social context (e.g. college athletics) that sets them up for success. It's a context that provides them with the physical and social skills necessary to excel in public weight rooms. These are settings defined as inherently masculine, as a place where men belong. The fact that hegemonic US gender norms extols cisgender men for athletic displays makes it so their transition to public weight rooms is relatively seamless. This is in stark contrast to women former college athletes who often feel a tension in navigating newly imposed gender expectations in recreational sporting settings. Women former college athletes do not have such a seamless transition.

<u>Women Must Adapt to New Weight Room Norms:</u>

Women, regardless of race or sport played, not only voice grievances against the "bro-gym culture" associated with recreational weightlifting. They also, unlike their men counterparts, actively change the way they navigate public gyms to circumnavigate penalties associated with breaking hegemonic gender norms (i.e. women displaying athleticism and strength). Some women actively pursue group fitness classes as opposed to lifting free weights to avoid feeling self-conscious and/or negative interactions with men. After discussing how she enjoyed lifting free weights in college Holly (White, Women's Volleyball) explained why she no longer does so today. She says:

> "I would not want to walk in a squat rack by myself and do that… I feel like guys are on the squat rack and they're just like staring at me like 'is she just squatting like 20 pounds over there?', or 'what is she doing?'… I would be worrying

> whatever everybody would be thinking of me, even though probably no one would actually be looking at me."

Holly was not self-conscious about lifting weights in college because she did it with her teammates. The only other people who used her college weight room were fellow women and men student-athletes. Yet now that Holly has left that space, she fears being seen as incompetent or out of place specifically by men in public weight room settings.

Thalia (Black, Women's Volleyball) also stopped lifting free weights after leaving college athletics because she "would stand out" in public gyms because lifting weights and being "super strong" is "appropriate for college sports, but like outside of that you're just kind of like the outlier". Thalia said she "just wanted to feel normal and not feel like there was like an added pressure" when exercising after college so she decided to stop lifting heavy and focus instead on group fitness. This desire to distance oneself from the pressure and judgment of others in weight room settings by gravitating towards group fitness classes is echoed by Dana (White, Women's swimming). Dana spoke at length about how much she enjoyed the culture of her college weight room:

> "because nobody was there who wasn't an athlete… we'd challenge the football players to squats and they would obviously beat us and then we'd be like, 'but can you do handstand walks?' and then we would laugh as they like tried to do different things. So it was just more of friendly competition… nobody felt like they had to prove themselves because everyone was already a D1 athlete. At the gym [today]it feels like just a peacock competition where everybody's like trying to show off and I'm like 'I don't need that'."

Along with choosing group fitness classes predominantly made up of women to avoid women former college athletes rely on an array of social strategies to avoid uncomfortable situations with "bro-workout culture." Heidi (Black, Women's Gymnastics) would try to go to the gym right when it opened (5am) so she would not get "harassed or stared at. Because people

are going to stare. One because, I'm a woman. Two, because I'm lifting a lot more than what they probably think I should be or would expect me to." Kara (White, Women's Rowing) got a personal trainer in a private studio to avoid men leering at her in public gyms. Gemma (Black Women's Volleyball) and Sadie (White, Women's Basketball) purposefully keep their headphones on to "try and seem less approachable" to avoid unwanted interactions from men when they are lifting in public weight rooms.

Erika (Black, Women's Volleyball) says "you're more respected in college if you're lifting those heavier weights or running faster because you're working harder for your sport." Now Erika feels people at the gym look at her lifting heavy free weights and judge her saying: "Now it's like 'what are you doing in the gym? You're supposed to be doing cardio, you're not supposed to be lifting heavy weight'." To try and stop men from questioning her competence, Erika brings her D1 backpack so men at her gym "can see I at least played in college at some point". Again, the point here is that women, regardless of race, are actively changing how they navigate weightlifting settings from the ways they navigated their college weight rooms. Now women are faced with the scrutiny of non-college athletes for breaking hegemonic gender norms by displaying masculine-typed athletic feats. While group fitness classes are deemed appropriate for women, free weight strength training remains more acceptable for men than women.

Playing Team Sports Today

Men Are Assumed to Excel:

While all respondents said they continued to pursue exercise regularly after leaving college sport, relatively fewer said they continue to play organized team sports. Even fewer (virtually no men) discussed playing coed sports. Men who pursued recreational team sport after

college had smooth transitions. Phillip (Black, Men's Football) He says he feels confident playing rec sports because "even now, like there's a lot of people that are younger than me and it's like I'm still faster, quicker. I can still move well."

James (White, Men's Track) smoothly transitioned into playing in a gay men's flag football league. He says his college athlete background was helpful in letting his flag football teammates know "I'm going to be competitive and willing to work hard". Felix (Black, Men's Football) was invited by a coworker to join their recreational football team because of his notoriety as a college football player. While Travis (Black, Men's Basketball) was invited to join a rec basketball team after he was seen shooting hoops on his own one day. George (White, Men's Swimming) was easily accepted by his pickup basketball peers, and often gets mistaken as a basketball player because of his height (he's 6'7).

Not only are men easily accepted once they join recreational sports teams, but they are also actively sought out and praised for their athletic capabilities in ways that women are not. Take Tim (Black, Men's Football) for example. Tim no longer plays football, but he does play pickup basketball. He often says people he plays against compliment him and "ask me if I played professionally. Just like a man my size who is fast and can move like that." Tim says that recognition "makes me feel good." Adam (White, Men's Basketball) also plays pickup basketball consistently and says because of his stature he is also regularly asked if he was a college athlete.

Chadwick (Black, Men's Baseball) easily moved into a recreational men's baseball leagues. Like most other men who played recreational sports that I spoke with, Chadwick felt confident and immediately accepted by his recreational baseball team. If anything, Chadwick's "biggest issue" in playing baseball today is that his "skill set is above what the League's is so it's

not as fun to go out there anymore. But I still go." The one bump, if we can even call it that, men experienced in their transition to recreational team sports was frustration with the relative lack of competition in these new sporting settings. Unlike their women counterparts, men were always accepted at whatever sporting engagement they participated in. They never felt like they had to prove their worth.

Women's Double Bind—Not good enough to play, or so good you are threatening:

While women also voice frustrations regarding the accessibility to competitive team sport opportunities, their primary frustration is a gender paradox. Women, regardless of race, primarily discuss the challenges of playing coed recreational sports. Most women who discussed playing co-ed recreational sports (and there weren't many, just 25% of women sampled), discussed having to "prove" to the men they play with that they are worthy enough to play. It didn't matter what race these women were, nor what sport these women were playing—basketball, softball, soccer—time and again women expressed a double bind: First they must prove they are worthy of being on the court. Then, they cannot be so good that they threaten men's egos.

When I asked Nichole (Black, Women's Lacrosse) what it is like playing pickup basketball with men today, she says: "there's this pressure where you have to like prove yourself right away of being worthy of receiving the ball… I will take fewer risks with men on the court". Here, "risks" means risks in style of play (i.e., playing aggressively, driving to the basket, trying difficult passes). In other words, doing things that might make her look good if she's successful but also might damage her reputation on the court if she is not. Elise (Black, women's basketball) says she experiences "one of two extremes" when playing co-ed pickup basketball.

> "They [men] either go really easy on me because I'm a woman. And then I start dominating and now they want to get all serious. Or they go really had on me from the beginning because I am a woman…I have to come in there and do my

> best just to be taken as an equal with the dude that obviously only played high school B team basketball."

Similarly, in Sadie's (White, Women's Basketball) experience with coed-rec basketball men "play very loose with the ball, like not really trying to post up" (posting up refers to when an offensive player attempts to establish position on the defensive player close to the basket. It requires immense physicality to do so if both players are playing their hardest). Once the men realize Sadie "can actually compete" that is when "they really start bringing the heat". Sadie went on to say that at one point, the man she was guarding subbed himself out of the game because he was too insecure about how well she was playing against him. When I asked how she felt about these experiences, she said:

> "at first it kind of makes you laugh. And then you're like 'just because I'm a girl you automatically assume I can't play at the intensity level you play it?'. I guess women feel it a lot more because it's just like that. When you experience it, you're just like 'you've got to be kidding me right now'".

Rather than responding with a feeling, Sadie responds with a maxim—"it's just like that". The social world of coed U.S. recreational sport is not built for women. Even though she has the skillset and athletic credential of being a former Division 1 basketball player, that is not enough to signal athletic competency to men peers who haven't even come close to engaging in the elite basketball atmosphere Sadie and Elise have.

Casey (White, Women's Field Hockey) also experiences this double bind when playing coed rec sports today. She feels her athleticism is only taken seriously by men when it's convenient. She says she can't just "brag about being athletic anytime" like her men friends can, because she gets "put down" with statements like "oh you're just a girl." The implication here being, because she is a woman, regardless of the fact she played an elite sport in college, she has no interest nor is she athletic enough to compete with men counterparts. Casey goes on to say her

men peers are “impressed by my athleticism when it benefits them” (i.e., when they need a woman for a coed sports league) but then “if it doesn't benefit them, then they feel really intimidated”. Casey used the example of if she were to banter with a guy about playing golf, saying “let's play golf like I’ll kick your ass at golf”, that the guy would likely not want to play and get “very insecure” about her confidence in her athleticism.

Of the women who played recreational team sports after college, only one discussed a smooth transition, and that is Jane (White, Women’s Volleyball). Much of Jane’s recreational sporting life is spent playing coed rec volleyball. Jane says, “I have mostly felt respected” playing volleyball after college. She attributes this respect largely to the position she plays. Jane is a setter. This position is crucial to playing good volleyball as the setter is the player who runs the team’s offense. The setter is to volleyball what the quarterback is to football, what the point guard is to basketball, what the pitcher is to baseball. She says, “oftentimes adult league setters are bad, like everyone was so appreciative when I came in and they're like ‘oh my God your setting is so good!’” Jane emphasized the value of her setting skills, especially in comparison to the men she plays with today, saying:

> “while men who learn volleyball later in life can become good at the other things, I think it's harder for them to become great setters. So I was valued in that way and, you know, setters do touch the ball every time, so you can really like [make a difference]”.

Jane does not experience the gender paradox other women respondents discussed because she has a skill that most recreational volleyball players do not possess. Unlike other sports like basketball and soccer, which have strong recreational followings by men, volleyball is a relatively lesser known and lesser played sport by men. This is likely since youth volleyball has a much larger ratio of girls to boys participating in it. In other words, the over representation of

girls in youth volleyball appears to create a pipeline to adult volleyball. There appears to be a greater representation of skilled women volleyball players than men volleyball players in recreational volleyball such that relative gender parity is possible. Jane has nothing to prove because she comes with social capital most men in the recreational volleyball world do not have.

From a sociology of gender perspective, this shows two things. The good: Jane is accepted outright. She doesn't experience sexism or ostracism from her men peers on the recreational volleyball court. The athletic skills she cultivated in college athletics let her transition seamlessly to the recreational sporting world. The bad: Jane is an exception. To be accepted she still must go beyond the standards and expectations men have for one another in recreational sporting life by being a skilled setter.

DICUSSION

This chapter explored how women and men former D1 college athletes transition into recreational sporting life after graduating from college athletics, focusing on body image, experiences in the weight room, and playing team sports today. First, I find men and women differ in how they view their bodies after leaving college athletics. Men, regardless of race, fall into one of three groups—tempering expectations, relief and relearning, and newfound body autonomy. White women, regardless of sport played, largely discuss their relief and newfound ability to mold their bodies into more feminine statures. Black women, in contrast, discuss tempering expectations and learning how to appreciate their bodies where they are at and often use their college athletic experiences to help with this acceptance. In otherwards, all respondents aside from Black women use the transition out of college athletics to align with hegemonic gender norms that define what women and men should look like outside of college sport.

The first group of men discuss a relatively smooth transition out of college athletics. Their biggest qualm is coming to terms with the fact their bodies will never look as athletic our masculine as they did in college. These men are affected by broader gender norms that rewards men for masculine, athletic physiques. It is not just about maintaining their body figures to be healthy. It's also about recognizing they can no longer embody the pinnacle of masculine physique that they once had in college athletics because their social circumstances have changed. While these men might struggle a little in tempering their expectations, they have a relatively smooth transition in accepting their post-college athletics bodies because they are not breaking any gender norms. They are still upholding the definition of masculinity—athletic physiques that might be "less fit" than in college but are still relatively more attractive by societal standards than the average person.

The second group of men discuss the challenges of losing weight and relearning how to maintain a healthy diet. These men who played positions that socialized them into gaining excessive weight talk a lot about how the loss of structure—especially weight training and diet programs—made it hard for them to figure out how to get their bodies to a healthy sustainable weight after college athletics. They do not discuss experiencing a sense of loss or sadness when reflecting how their bodies looked in college compared to today. From a gender theory perspective, this is because as college athletes, these men did not embody the pinnacle of masculinity unlike the first group of men discussed. They are playing a sport that is arguably the most renowned men's sport in US society. However, their position within that sport puts them in a gender hierarchy below that of the "more prestigious" positions (i.e., quarterbacks, wide receivers, etc.).

The third group of men highlight their newfound sense of body autonomy to exercise and mold themselves as they desire, rather than as their sport required them. These men are former student-athletes who played sports that did not require them to bulk up or put on excess amounts of muscle. In fact, most of these men played sports that required them to have relatively slender frames (i.e. swimming, cross country). These men have smooth transitions in terms of their body image because the tandem of body autonomy and athletic knowledge they take with them from college helps them cultivate bodies that are in even greater alignment with societal masculinity norms than the bodies they were required to have in college. I found no racial differences between men when they discussed their bodies after college athletics. The differences were based entirely on the different expectations college sports placed in these men's' bodies. Regardless of the three groups men fell into, all three ultimately end in the same place: reifying hegemonic gender norms that a) define masculinity as man centric, muscular and athletic, and b) emphasize the belief that it is a worthwhile endeavor to continue to try to meet and embody this gender norm.

White women have a more difficult transition out of college athletics than men and Black women. White women explicitly rationalize changing their bodies (i.e. lifting lighter weights) due to gender threat. In other words, they are worried they will be socially frowned upon if they maintain a muscular physique that is outside of hegemonic gender norms. Strength building/muscular physiques are still outside of hemogenic gender norms for women when it is not deemed a requirement/has a purpose like it did in college athletics. For many white women, it is a relief to longer having to maintain a muscular physique that breaks hegemonic gender norms. In contrast, Black women rarely bring up the desire to redefine their bodies to fit hegemonic gender norms. They either discuss tempering expectations surrounding their bodies or

to talk about how college athletics helps them feel confident in who they are and what their bodies can do today. Unlike white women, Black women often discuss using their athleticism cultivated in college sports to find gratitude in how they look and what their bodies can do.

Second, I find men and women, regardless of race, differ in the ways they navigate public weight rooms today. Men have a seamless transition to public weight rooms. They do not have to change how they navigate that space. Women, regardless of race, often feel compelled to change how they navigate the weight room because they fear they will be penalized for breaking gender norms that did not exist within the context of college athletics. For women, when they exit college athletics and enter public weight rooms, they immediately feel hegemonic gender norms. Some worry they will be penalized for appearing to masculine. Others grow frustrated with having their weightlifting competencies questioned. Some women continue to play and use their college athletics background to defy these norms. While others choose to go to the gym at inconvenient hours to escape the male gaze, or in group fitness classes that are majority women or stop lifting entirely. The point here is that women feel the pressure to, and often do, change their behavior in recreational weight rooms to maintain their athlete identities. Because the athlete identities as they were defined and reinforced in college are at odds with key hegemonic gender norms for women in broader society. Whereas for men, college athletics reinforced hegemonic gender norms.

Third, Men who played team recreational sports after college had a smooth transition where their college athlete background was always seen as a positive. People do not question their athletic intelligence or pay uncomfortable amounts of attention to them in these spaces. Women, in contrast, had a much more difficult time transitioning into recreational team sports. Their gender and college athlete background served as liabilities. Further, virtually no man in my

sample discussed playing coed recreational sports after college. It is not simply the challenges of navigating gender norms that make it difficult for women to transition into recreational team sports. It is also the relative lack of access to women-centric (or even coed) recreational team sport settings.

As the NCAA highlights, most student athletes pursue a professional career in something other than athletics. Yet, there is limited programming and research available to former student athletes to help them specifically make the social transition from college athlete to recreational athlete. Even though research continues to show graduates take their athlete identities with them when they leave college athletics. This chapter sheds light on how former student athletes of different races, genders, and sporting backgrounds make this transition. I show how gender, sporting background, and to a lesser extent, race, differentially impacts the ways former student athletes maintain their athlete identities and engage with the recreational sporting communities around them.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation was to uncover the nuanced ways individuals make sense of shifting gender accountability norms as they transition out of a unique social context and into broader U.S. society. I interviewed 84 former Division I college athletes to answer the overarching research questions: When is being a former college athlete utilized as an asset, and when is it seen as a liability? How does race and gender impact these choices?

I use the case study of former Division I college athletes to investigate three key topics. First, to explore how women and men translate a skillset cultivated by women and men alike in the previous context of college athletics to their current workplace context that associates such skills with the masculine-typed ideal worker image. Second, to uncover the degree to which women and men can use a gendered status marker to their advantage at work. Third, to explore the extent to which broader cultural gender norms impede or facilitate the maintenance of one's athletic identity— a social identity cultivated and rewarded by all genders in the college athletics context, still seen as masculine by broader U.S. society.

I find all former student-athletes use the social skills learned through college athletics in their work life today, but men can benefit from these skills to a greater degree than women because they more directly embody the ideal worker image. Respondents are more likely to use their college athlete credential in workplace contexts that share similar values and norms as college athletics. These workplace contexts were more likely to be predominantly white and men-dominated spaces than not. Thus, unsurprisingly, white men were more likely than Black men and Black and white women to use their athlete credential to their advantage at work. Furthermore, I find men have a smoother transition to recreational sporting life than women because broader gender norms continue to view athletics as a predominantly man-centric

activity. In this concluding chapter, I summarize this study's central research questions and findings, explain how these findings are relevant to gender inequities in sport and beyond, and outline avenues for future research.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Chapter 3 asked how racialized gender accountability norms associated with the ideal worker image impacts when and how former Division I college athletes use or reject the values, norms, and behaviors learned through college sport in their work lives today. I argued the values championed in college sport such as work ethic, competitive drive, and direct communication align with the societal image of what an ideal worker should be. I found regardless of positionality, most respondents continued to enact these values at work today although the degree to which they are rewarded for enacting such values varies depending on one's race and gender. White and Black men seamlessly translate their skillset to the workforce, while Black and white women must negotiate racialized gender stereotypes that are activated when enacting these values at work. Nonetheless, even while conforming to hegemonic workplace gender norms, women also use previous strategies learned in college athletics to simultaneously resist and push back against conventional workplace gender accountability norms.

Chapter 4 asked two key questions: Why do some people actively use their college athlete credential at work while others downplay it? How do gender, race, and profession impact this process? First, this chapter places employee agency at the center of the analysis. Second, this chapter expands literature within Sociology of sport because I explicitly treat the college athlete credential as a cultural status marker Third, I show how race and gender impact former-college athletes' ability to leverage their backgrounds as student-athletes in their professional careers

today. These findings expand on work-place cultural matching theory by providing an intersectional analysis of how employees agentically deploy cultural status markers at work.

Chapter 5 moved beyond the workplace context to recreational sporting contexts. In this chapter I asked: how do former college athletes navigate the transition into recreational sporting culture? How do gender, race, and college sport played inform this experience? I focused specifically on how respondents felt about their body image, experiences in the weight room, and playing team sports today. Chapter 5 expands research on exiting elite athletics to focus on how social context and interaction impact one's athletic identity (as opposed to the usual focus on athlete identity foreclosure). I found all respondents aside from Black women use the transition out of college athletics to align with hegemonic gender norms that define what women and men should look like outside of college sport. Men have a seamless transition to public weight rooms. They do not have to change how they navigate that space. Women, regardless of race, often feel compelled to change how they navigate the weight room because they fear they will be penalized for breaking gender norms that did not exist within the context of college athletics. Further, Men who played team rec sports after college had a smooth transition where their college athlete background was always seen as a positive. Women, in contrast, experienced a double bind. They must prove they are good enough to play but not so well that they threaten the men's who they are playing with ego.

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Doing gender theory posits everyone is held accountable for how we express our gendered selves. The threat of social sanctioning compels us to abide by the gender norms associated with

whatever context we are currently in (Hollander 2013; West and Zimmerman 1987). This dissertation's findings improve our knowledge on three key topics. 1) The social consequences of exiting college athletics and re-socializing into broader U.S. gender norms. 2) how gender and racial hierarchies are maintained. 3) The ways previous gender-socialization can serve as a tool of resistance or way to maintain gender inequality's status quo. I do this in a novel way through personal narratives of former college athletes in which they discuss their agency in navigating the gendered and racialized process of transitioning from being an elite athlete.

This dissertation was primarily about understanding how social actors think about and use (or consciously not use) aspects of their socialization from a context they were required to exit in a new context where norms might not always align. The literature exploring disengagement from elite athletics largely focuses on athlete identity foreclosure, and not on the impact the change in social context, norms, and interactions, have on these retired athletes. Further, this dissertation reveals insight about identity more broadly. As previous research shows, our sense of self-worth is tied to our social identities and the feedback we get from others regarding who we are (Tajfel and Turner 2004). In other words, identity formation and maintenance are social processes. Therefore, this project generalizes beyond the world of college athletics to the social world more broadly. These findings show maintaining our social identities is incredibly complex and requires different strategies depending on what other identities we hold (e.g., race and gender) the social context we are in, and who we interact with. My findings show the transition out of college athletics is so much more than a period of identity loss. It is a period wherein young adults are not only figuring themselves out, but also figuring out how to capitalize on their experiences, skillsets, and credentials associated with being college athletes. It is imperative the NCAA and college athletics departments continue to provide programming to their current

student athletes that prepares them for their transition out of college sport well before their graduation.

As my findings show, former student-athletes use the skills, relationships, and credential garnered through college athletics long after graduating. Yet, as my findings also show, the sexist and racist underpinnings embedded in US society make it so student-athletes do not benefit to the same degree from their college socialization. Therefore, it is important educators, coaches, NCAA governing bodies, etc. understand how the college athlete status can be racialized and gendered. These bodies/individuals must take action to mitigate the perpetuation of racist and sexist stereotypes associated with being a student-athlete. The onus is also on those in positions of power within the realm of college athletics to ensure all student-athletes acquire the knowledge and opportunities to create social networks that can be of service well after graduation.

Within U.S. culture, sport is revered as an inherently worthwhile and positive endeavor. It is true 84 of my respondents agreed they would re-live their D1 athlete experience all over again in a heartbeat. Yet, many of their narratives suggest sport is not simply a panacea of equality and positivity. There are downsides to the structure and culture of college athletics too. College athletics does not just teach you communication and how to work with teammates who are peers. It also socializes athletes into yielding to a singular authority of the coaching staff. College athletics does not just teach you independence, self-discipline, and competitive drive on the court or field. It also teaches you to be dependent on others for basic life necessities (e.g., food, travel, time management, etc.). While there are many skills cultivated through college athletics that successfully help former student athletes navigate their post-college lives, this dissertation also shows how the structure and culture of college athletics often ignores the

potential harms associated with the skills (or lack thereof) athletes to take with them after college graduation.

Thus, it is also important for all those involved with college-athletics to understand the shift out of college athletics requires a huge shift in access to athletic and social resources. As these findings show, women former student athletes don't have the social capital their men counterparts do. The NCAA and member institutions could help alleviate this issue by creating opportunities in college for women athletes to build social networks with potential future employers. My findings also show how women, more than men, struggle with the transition to recreational sporting life in part because of the lack of access to women-centric recreational sporting spaces. The NCAA's mission is to "Provide a world-class athletics and academic experience for student-athletes that fosters lifelong well-being" (NCAA Website). Fostering lifelong well-being should include avenues through which former-student athletes can comfortably access recreational sport. The NCAA and member institutions should work towards implementing some type of programming, social networking cite, etc. that allows former college athletes across the country to build community and continue to play sports together.

This dissertation is also about exploring how our current gender regime continues to maintain gender and racial hierarchies. Across the three empirical chapters, women did not receive the same levels of privilege and rewards for being former college athletes as their men peers. White men received the most benefits. Gender and racial hierarchies persist in America today, in part, because we operate under broader racialized gender norms that continue to say white, cisgender, masculine bodies are superior, are the norm. We continue to define competence in the workplace and recreational sporting contexts as man centric. We continue to define what

the ideal worker should look like as white-man centric. All my respondents acquired skillsets stereotypically seen as something white men embody and they were all content to use these skills at work. When were people penalized? When weren't they? Why?

It is both the social rewards and threat of penalization that that keeps gender and racial inequality persistent at the interactional level. We see this explicitly in the raced and gendered patterns of this dissertation's findings. White men have the smoothest transition to the workplace environment because their race and gender continues to define the cultural image of what an ideal worker should look like. Black men cannot fully experience the same rewards as white men because they face racist stereotypes associated with being a Black men's athlete that undermine the positive characteristics associated with being an athlete writ large. Women, like Black men cannot fully reap the benefits associated with being a former student athlete at work because racialized gender norms uphold a cultural image that defines femininity through narrow lens. Black women, because of their race and gender, don't have the opportunity to reap the full benefits of being a former student athlete that their men counterparts do, but they also don't have the same pressures to conforming to gender norms that their white women peers do. In summary, gender and racial inequality persists because our society continues to define standards of how women and men should behave through a white, gender binary lens. And as a society, we continue to penalize people who do not meet these standards—even when we don't meet them ourselves. This finding is far from novel. Yet, situated within the context of shifting social context and gender socialization, it does provide a roadmap for how social change can occur.

Although most of my respondents conformed to gender norms, many also simultaneously resisted. The fact that most women in my sample actively employed the social skills garnered through college athletics at their jobs today speaks to shifting workplace gender norms that

normalize this type of behavior for women. It also speaks to the nuanced ways women simultaneously resist and adhere to broader gender norms. Women gained confidence in their college athletics socialization, and they used that confidence to maintain their athletic toolkit at work (even if they acquiesced on other dimensions). White women literally use the skillset emphasized in college athletics gain confidence to push back and display masculine characteristics at work without fear of penalization. Black women use previous racialized experiences with teammates and coaches in college to enact current strategies of resistance that include anticipating racial conflict and implementing avoidance strategies beforehand, educating white peers, or choosing not to engage with educating white peers. It is worth reemphasizing that these strategies of resistance were results of experiences garnered through college athletics. This suggests one crucial way in which we can make social change is by providing women safe spaces to cultivate identities and skills without fear of gender penalization.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should consider how other axis of identity impact former college athletes transitioning out of college athletics including: sexuality, socioeconomic status, age, and immigrant status. Future studies should address how the socialization acquired in previous subcultural settings that defy hegemonic gender and sexuality impacts the ways people hold themselves and others accountable to broader racialized gender norms in their lives today. Fruitful future case studies could include leaving grad school; shifting careers entirely; leaving the military, etc. It is not just about the internal struggles individuals undergo with these major shifts in context. It is also about the changes in interactional accountability (i.e., changes in

social norms) and the ways individuals navigate those changes that matter. These patterns tell us where we are at as a society in terms of inequality and shed light on why this inequality persists.

Future studies should continue to explore the impact different athletic subcultures and NCAA divisions have on the transition out of college athletics. I only looked at 84 D1 athletes' experiences. There are thousands of student athletes graduating and transitioning out of college athletics across NCAA divisions and institutions. Different degrees of access to resources and social status very likely shape students' experiences as they exit college athletics. Further, since I began this research, the NCAA adopted a new policy wherein student athletes can make money off their name, image, and likeness. This has already had huge ramifications for current student-athletes, with elite athletes of revenue generating sports gaining large endorsement deals. It is almost certain this policy change will have equally huge ramifications for these students as they disengage from college athletics.

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APPENDIX

Interview Guide

Former Student-Athlete Transitions from College to Adulthood Indiana University 1606235020

INTRODUCTION

Review purpose: Participating in college athletics is often seen as a unique and enriching opportunity. The purpose of this study is to understand your experiences as a college athlete, and how those experiences might inform your current life. If you feel uncomfortable answering any my questions at any time, just let me know and we can skip over them.

Explain confidentiality procedures; obtain informed consent to interview, consent to tape record.

BASIC INFORMATION

I'd like to start off by asking you some basic demographic questions:

1. I.D. # _____
2. Your first name is _____, is that right?
3. What is your age?
4. Which state did you grow up in?
5. Which of the following types of places best describes where you grew up?
    a. Metropolitan, suburban, rural
6. What is the highest level of education your mom completed?
    a. Less than HS degree; some HS, no degree; Some college no degree, Associates, Bachelors, Graduate or professional Degree
7. What is the highest level of education your dad completed?
    a. Less than HS degree; some HS, no degree; Some college no degree, Associates, Bachelors, Graduate or professional Degree
8. Compared to the average American family growing up, how would you describe your family's average income throughout childhood?
    a. Far below average, below average, average, above average, far above average, it varied, DK, rather not say
9. When did you start college and when did you graduate? (year)
10. What sport did you play in college?

11. How many years of D1 college sport did you play?
12. And did you play all of them at one school?
13. What school(s) did you play them at?
14. Which of the following types of places best describes where you went to college?
    a. Metropolitan, suburban, rural
15. Do you still play/do the sport you played/did in college?
    a. If N: Do you still play/do sport?
16. Are you currently—married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married?
17. Where were you born? Inside of or outside of the US?
18. What is your gender? (man, woman, other ___)
19. How would you describe your sexuality? (i.e., identity, attraction, behavior)
    a. Do you consider yourself to be: heterosexual or straight; gay or lesbian; bisexual (sexually attracted to people of more than one gender); pansexual (sexually attracted to people regardless of gender); asexual (not sexually attracted to other people); something else _____
20. Would you describe yourself as Hispanic or Latino?
    a. If Y: cool, what is your background?
21. How would you describe your racial/ethnic background?
    a. American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian, Black or African American; Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; White or Caucasian; Other please specify
22. What is the highest level of education you've completed?
    a. Less than HS degree; some HS, no degree; Some college no degree, Associates, Bachelors, Graduate or professional Degree
23. What do you do for work?
24. Last year what was your annual household income?
    a. >25k, 25-50k, 50-75k, 75-100k, 100-150k, 150-200k, 200+, would rather not answer
25. What state do you live in?
26. Which of the following types of places best describes where you live?
    a. Metropolitan, suburban, rural

27. In general, how would you describe your physical health? Excellent, very good, good, fair, poor
28. In general, how would you describe your mental health? Excellent, very good, good, fair, poor

CULTURAL TOOL KIT ACQUIRED THROUGH COLLEGE SPORT

Awesome! Thanks so much for your response. I'd now like to ask you a few questions about what it was like to be a college athlete and what you learned from that experience.

29. How did you come to be an NCAA college athlete?
    a. Why did you choose to play __?
    b. What was it like playing sports where you grew up? Who'd you play with?
    c. What kind of neighborhood did you grow up in? How, if at all, did that environment effect playing sports & becoming a college athlete?
        i. How does it compare to where you went to college? To where you live now?
    a. How did you decide you wanted to be a college athlete?
30. Why did you choose to go to _____ for university?
    a. Would you have gone to college if you weren't a college athlete? Would you have gone to that particular college?
    b. How do you feel about your university?
    c. What major did you choose? Why?
    d. How do you feel about that choice of major?
31. Thinking back to when you were a freshman in college all the way through college graduation, can you walk me through your experience as an NCAA student athlete? What was it like? What memories stick out to you the most? (highs and lows)
    a. How do you feel about being a former D1 college athlete?
    b. What were the most exciting parts of being a college athlete? What were the most challenging parts?
    c. What was it like being a student at _____? Could you relate to the other students that weren't athletes?

i. Did you feel like you had different expectations in place for you b/c you were a student athlete, as opposed to a regular student? (i.e. can't take pics with red solo cups in them; can't go out on a Tuesday night; etc.)

32. What stereotypes come to mind when you think of the sport you played? (Talk a little about how you perceive the sport you played and how others might perceive it.)
    a. Why do you think people see your sport that way?
    b. How do you feel about that stereotype?
    c. Did it impact your experiences as a college athlete?
    d. Any stereotypes that relate to gender? To race? Or sexuality?
33. How does the image of your sport compare to the image of other men's/women's sports? (*use same gender as R)
    a. How does it compare to men's/women's sports? (use opp gender of R)
34. How feminine/masculine did you feel when you played _____?
    a. Why?
    b. How do you feel playing now?
    c. Did you ever think about how feminine/masculine you felt in college when you weren't playing? (i.e. in the weight room, in class, going out with teammates, etc.)
    d. How feminine/masculine did you feel being a SA on campus?
35. How, if at all, did playing college sport impact your thoughts on what it means to be a man/woman in US society today?
    a. How, if at all, did playing your sport make you aware of being a woman/man?
    b. Did you think differently about gender in college than you do now? Why do you think that is?
    c. Are your experiences with gender today similar or different from what you experienced in college? (prob for sport, work, friendship, romantic, parent context)
        i. What is it like being a *R's gender in US society today vs. being a *R's gender in college athletics?
    d. What was it like being a female/male student athlete on campus?

e. How do you think your experience compares to male/female student athletes you went to school with?

36. How, if at all, did playing college sport make you aware of being *R's sexuality?
    a. Did playing college sports impact your views on sexuality in any way?
    b. Did you ever date anyone of the same sex in college?
    c. Can you think of a time where sexuality came up? (locker room talk)
    d. Did your sexuality influence how you were treated/how others interacted with you?
    e. Did you have any teammates who were *gay/straight? Did their sexuality influence how they were treated/how you or others interacted with them?
        a. If Y: How did you feel about being teammates with them?
    f. what about any friends or coaches from other sports teams who weren't straight? How'd you feel about them?
    g. In previous interviews some respondents have discussed instances of homophobia in college athletics. For example _____. Did you have or witness similar experiences?

37. What is it like being *R's sexuality in US society today vs. being *R's sexuality in college athletics?
    a. Did you think differently about sexuality in college than you do now? Why do you think that is?
    b. Are your experiences with sexuality today similar or different from what you experienced in college? (prob for sport, work, friendship, romantic, parent context)

38. How, if at all, did playing college sport make you aware of being *R's Race?
    a. Did playing college sports impact your views on race in any way?
    b. Did you ever date anyone of a different race in college?
    c. Did your race influence how you were treated/how others interacted with you?

d. Did you have any teammates who were *W/racial minority? Did their race influence how they were treated/how you or others interacted with them?
    b. If Y: How did you feel about being teammates with them?
e. what about any friends or coaches from other sports teams who weren't white? How'd you feel about them?
f. In previous interviews some respondents have discussed instances of racial discrimination in college athletics. For example _____. Did you have or witness similar experiences?

39. What is it like being *R's race in US society today compared to being *R's race in college athletics?
    a. Did you think differently about race in college than you do now? Why do you think that is?
    b. For you, what does it mean to be *state R's racial ID* in US society?
        a. How, if at all, are these ideas influenced by playing college sport?
    c. Do you think *white/racial minorities would feel/think the same way?

OVERVIEW OF EXPERIENCES AFTER COLLEGE: Great! This information is so interesting! I'd now like to shift focus a little bit and ask you about your experiences now that you are no longer a college athlete.

40. Thinking back to when you had just graduated college all the way up until now, can you walk me through your experience transitioning out of being an NCAA student athlete?
    a. What were the first few months like? The first few years? What's it like now?
    b. What were the most exciting parts of leaving college athletics?
    c. What were the most challenging parts? How do you respond to these challenges you've faced?
41. Do you still consider yourself an athlete? Why/why not?
42. How, if at all, did being a D1 athlete prepare you for life after college?
    a. For instance, who you date, who you are friends with, how you parent, or plan to parent, how you work, etc.?

b. How has being a former student-athlete, if at all, affected how you see yourself?
    i. How you dress, how you behave, etc. how you think about who you are as a person?
c. How, if at all, has it affected how you think others might see you?
    i. How others make sense of who you are and what you do?

43. How, if at all, did being a D1 athlete make you feel unprepared for for life after college?

44. How do you feel about your life today? Do you feel relatively stable? Relatively unstable (compared to when first leaving college athletics? (the goals you have for yourself in life)
    a. Why do you feel this way? (financially, emotionally, socially, health wise, etc.)
45. College athletes' bodies are often maintained in particular ways for achievement of the sport being played. That means changing what you eat, how you exercise, etc. How did you feel about your body and the demands your sport put on your body in college?
    a. Now that you're not a college athlete do you think about your body in the same way?
    b. How masc/fem do you think your body is?
    c. How tall are you?

RECREATIONAL SPORTING CONTEXT

46. Do you participate in athletics today? Why/why not?
    a. How do you participate? (i.e., play, coach, watch, etc.) Do you still play your sport? (Why/why not?)
    b. Do/did you use or downplay your athletic background in sport today?
    c. Can you walk me through what your athletic life has been like since leaving college athletics? What are the most exciting parts? What are the most challenging parts?
        i. Do you play rec sports? What's it like playing with people who aren't your teammates/weren't D1 athletes?
        ii. How has being a former student-athlete, if at all, affected your athletic life today?
47. Do you still lift weights?

a. Tell me about your experiences in the weight room. What was that like?
b. How does that compare to your experiences with weightlifting now?

48. How has being a former student-athlete, if at all, affected how you see yourself in your sporting life today?
49. How, if at all, has being a former student-athlete affected how you think others might see you in your sporting life today?
50. How, if at all, does race impact your experiences with sport today? How about sexuality? How about gender?
51. What do you think the purpose of sport is in US society?
    a. is this the same purpose sport serves in your life today?
52. What are your thoughts on the ways US society currently structures sport? ---
    a. Should all levels of sports be separated by gender? (youth, middle school, HS, college, professional, recreational adult sports) Why/why not?
    b. How, if at all, have your own experiences as a college athlete impacted your views regarding gender and sport? (i.e. compare men's college sport to women's college sport—fans, $$, prestige, treatment on campus, etc.)
    a. In your perfect world how would you like recreational sports to look like? (in your own day to day life)

*****ASK IF THEY'D LIKE TO TAKE A BREAK TO USE BATHROOM**

Shifting gears a little bit to the work context, can you walk me through what it was like for you to transition out of being an NCAA student athlete and into the workforce?

b. How did/does it feel to transition out of being a student athlete? (bring up work attire)
c. What were the most exciting parts of starting to work? What were the most challenging parts?
d. How do you respond to these challenges you've faced?

53. How has being a former student-athlete, if at all, affected your working life today?
    a. Do/did you use or downplay your athletic background at work?
    b. Does being a former college athlete influence your interactions with coworkers? (parallels to teammate relationships?)
    c. With your boss? (parallels to coaching relationships?)

d. How does it feel interacting with peers at work who are not former college athletes? Who are former college athletes?

54. How has being a former student-athlete, if at all, affected how you see yourself in your work life?
    a. Has it affected how you dress? How you carry yourself? How you feel about yourself as a worker or how others see you?
55. How, if at all, has it affected how you think others might see you in your work life?
    a. Do you see job as masc/femine? What?
56. Are your experiences with gender at work today similar/different from those you discussed as a college athlete?
    a. Why/why not?
    b. Do you feel like there are different expectations for men and women at your job? Do you conform to/follow these expectations? Why/Why not?
    c. How, if at all, did being a college athlete prepare you for these expectations?
57. What about when it comes to sexuality? Are your experiences with sexuality at work today similar/different from those you discussed as a college athlete?
58. Are your experiences with race at work today similar/different from those you discussed as a college athlete?

FRIENDSHIP CONTEXT: Awesome! Now I'd like to spend some time learning about what your social life has been like since leaving college sport. First, I'd like to ask about what it's like making and keeping friends.

59. How do you feel about making friends today compared to making friends as a student athlete?
    a. How has being a former student-athlete, if at all, affected your friendships today? (parallels to teammate relationships?)
    b. Do/did you use or downplay your athletic background when making or hanging out with your friends?
    c. How do you feel about making friends today compared to making friends as a student athlete?

d. Have you ever used the fact that you are a college athlete to impress a friend? Why/why not?

60. What are your relationships like with your teammates from college? Do you still consider any of them to be friends today?
    a. How do these relationships compare to the friendships you have with non-college teammates?
61. Tell me a little bit about your team. What were your teammates like?
    a. What was the banter like between you and your teammates? What were your interactions like in the locker-room? (rapport probe: I was a college athlete myself so I know the locker-room is a pretty special place; my brother and I are both former DI athletes so it's been really interesting to compare our locker room experiences)
        a. Is there anything comparable to this in your life today?
        b. How do you feel about this fact?
    b. What were your interactions like outside of sport with your teammates? What about with non-athletes? (probe about race and sexuality)
    c. How do these relationships/experiences compare to your experiences with friendship today?
62. What, if at all, did these experiences with your teammates teach you about friendship?
    a. Probe about fact that they were in an environment where they were surrounded by people of the same gender and built strong bonds (teach you about support or communication?)
    b. is there anything comparable to this in your life today? How do you feel about this?
63. How has being a former student-athlete, if at all, affected how you see yourself in your friendships?
64. How, if at all, has it affected how you think others might see you as a friend?
65. How, if at all, does race impact your experiences with making friends today? How about sexuality? How about gender?

ROMANTIC/FAMILY CONTEXT: Great! Related,

66. How has being a former student-athlete, if at all, affected your dating life today?
    a. Do you use anything you learned or experienced in college sport in your romantic life today?
        a. i.e. communication; persistence
    b. Do/did you use or downplay your athletic background when dating? (use Tinder example as probe)
    c. Have you ever used the fact that you are a college athlete to impress a date? Why/why not?
    d. Is it important for you to date someone who is also interested in sport? Why/why not?
    e. Is it important for you to date someone within your race?
67. How has being a former student-athlete, if at all, affected how you see yourself in your romantic life?
68. How, if at all, has it affected how you think others might see you in your romantic life?
69. Do you think there are different expectations for women and men when it comes to establishing and maintaining a romantic relationship in your life today?
    a. If yes, what are they? If not, why not?
    b. Do you feel like you conform to/follow these expectations? Why/Why not?
    c. How, if at all, did being a college athlete prepare you for these expectations?
70. How, if at all, does race impact your experiences with dating today? How about sexuality? How about gender?

PARENT LIFE (*if not parent change tenses to future)

71. Do you have any children?
72. How has being a former student-athlete, if at all, affected your life as a parent?
73. How has being a former student-athlete, if at all, affected how you see yourself as a parent today? (parallels to teammate relationships?)
    a. Do/did you use or downplay your athletic background while parenting?
74. How, if at all, has it affected how you think others might see you as a parent?
75. Is it important to you that your kid(s) play sports? Why/why not?
    a. What's your hopes for your kid(s) when it comes to sports? Would you like them to play in college like you?

a. How do your expectations compare between having a daughter and a son?

76. How, if at all, does race impact your experiences with parenting today? How about sexuality? How about gender?
77. How, if at all, will you use any of the experiences you had as a college athlete in your parenting in the future?
    a. Probe about gender
    b. Probe about sexuality
    c. Probe about race

FINISHING UP: Now I just have a few final questions

78. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience as a college athlete? About your transition out of being a college athlete?
    a. About how being a college athlete shapes your life today?
79. Is there any advice you'd give to people like yourself who are just now leaving college athletics?
80. Is there any advice that you'd like to ask someone who is farther along in their distance from college athletics than yourself?
81. How do you feel about your sport?
82. What are your thoughts on the NCAA? How do you feel about the NCAA?
83. Is there anything that your athletic department and/or the NCAA did/does to help you transition from being a student-athlete? (senior year workshops, alumni events, etc.)
    a. what about particularly for women athletes?
    b. do you think the transition process is different for male and female athletes? If yes, how so? If no, why not?
84. Have you ever had a conversation with other former athletes about the transition process out of college athletics?
    a. If Y: what do those convos look like?
85. How typical do you think your experiences/attitudes are compared to other former athletes?
86. Is there anything you expected me to ask you that I didn't? (If yes, what was this? What would you have said? – This is a good question, thank you.)

87. Do you know anyone else like yourself I could talk to? Would you mind if I used your name as a reference?

Thank you so much for your help with this study! Would you like to be informed of any publications that come from this research? Would it be ok reach out to you in the future if this project continues over the next few years? Please feel free to address any questions or concerns to me at .

. Thank you again!

Study Information Sheet

INDIANA UNIVERSITY STUDY INFORMATION SHEET FOR

Former Student-Athlete Transitions from College to Adulthood
Indiana University 1606235020

You are invited to participate in a research study of former college athletes. You were selected as a possible subject because you have been identified as a former Division I college athlete who has graduated within the last 20 years**.** Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

The study is being conducted by Anna Russian and Youngjoo Cha of Indiana University Bloomington's Department of Sociology.

STUDY PURPOSE

Participating in college athletics is often seen as a unique and enriching opportunity. The purpose of this study is to understand your experiences as a college athlete, and how those experiences might inform your current life

NUMBER OF PEOPLE TAKING PART IN THE STUDY

If you agree to participate, you will be one of 80 former college athletes who will be participating in this research.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY

If you agree to participate in this research, I will conduct an interview with you at a time and location of your choice. The interview will involve questions about your experiences of being a Division I college athlete, relationships, identity, as well as how your experiences as a college athlete impacts your life after exiting college athletics. It should last about 90 to 120 minutes. With your permission, I will video and audio record, and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide, will be used for transcription purposes only, and will be deleted once transcription is complete. If you choose not to be

recorded, I will take notes instead. If you agree to being recorded but feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview, I
can turn off the recorders at your request. Or if you don't wish to continue, you can stop the interview at any time.

I expect to conduct only one interview; however, I might need to follow up briefly for added clarification. If so, I will contact you by mail/phone to request this.

RISKS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY

While in the study, the risks and/or discomforts are:

Some research questions may make you uncomfortable. You are free to decline to answer any questions you don't wish to answer, or to stop the interview at any time. As with all research, there is a chance that confidentiality could be compromised; however, I am taking precautions to minimize this risk. The records of this research will be kept private. Immediately after this interview I will run the video recording file through an automated transcription service and delete the video recording after the interview has been transcribed. Remaining research records will be kept in a locked cabinet in my home office, and access will be limited to the researchers, the college review board responsible for protecting human participants, and regulatory agencies. I will use pseudonyms, alter or omit uniquely identifying information (i.e., de-identify the transcripts), and erase the original recordings once transcription and de-identification have occurred. When not in use, all digital recordings and transcripts will be stored on a password protected computer.

BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY

There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study. It is hoped that the research will help provide a better understanding of how college athletes' lives, relationships, and identities change after entering adulthood.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Your study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study may be published and in databases in which results may be stored. Recordings will be secure, and access limited to the researchers. All audio files with identifying information will be destroyed after transcription.

Organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis include groups such as the study investigator and his/her research associates, the Indiana University Institutional Review Board or its designees.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

For questions about the study or a research-related injury, contact the researcher, Annie Russian at 512-466-5250. If you cannot reach the researcher during regular business hours (i.e., 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.), please call the IU Human Subjects Office at 812-856-4242 or 800-696-2949.

For questions about your rights as a research participant or to discuss problems, complaints or concerns about a research study, or to obtain information, or offer input, contact the IU Human Subjects Office at 317-278-3458 or (for Indianapolis) or 812-856-4242 (or Bloomington) or (800) 696-2949.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THIS STUDY

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with Indiana University Bloomington.

FUNDING SOURCE

Research for this project was conducted with the support of the NCAA. Any opinions, findings and conclusions are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

Recruitment Flyer

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Hello,

My name is Anna Russian, and I am a PhD candidate from the Department of Sociology at Indiana University Bloomington. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about former Division I college athletes. You are eligible for this study because you have been identified as a former Division I college athlete who has graduated within the last 20 years.

If you agree to participate in my research, I will conduct an interview with you at a time of your choice over Zoom. The interview will involve questions about your time spent as a Division I college athlete, as well as your experiences transitioning from college athletics to adulthood, and how things like gender, race, and sexuality might impact your experiences. It should last about 90 to 120 minutes. With your permission, I will Zoom record and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide and will be used for transcription purposes only (all recordings will be erased upon transcription, and transcripts will be completely de-identified). If you choose not to be recorded, I will take notes instead.

I expect to conduct only one interview; however, follow-ups may be needed for added clarification. If so, I will contact you by email/phone to request this. Research for this project was conducted with the support of the NCAA. Any opinions, findings and conclusions are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

Please feel free to contact me (contact information below) if you would like to participate so we can schedule an interview time that works best for you. Likewise feel free to shoot me a message with any questions or concerns you might have regarding your participation in the project. Thank you for your consideration. I hope to hear from you soon!

Sincerely,

Anna Russian

Anna E. Acosta Russian
She/her/hers

Department of Sociology
Indiana University, Bloomington
(512)466-5250
aerussia@iu.edu

[Protocol #, 1606235020] [FORMER STUDENT-ATHLETE TRANSITIONS FROM COLLEGE TO ADULTHOOD **r**ecruitment letter] [02/2021]

ANNA E. ACOSTA RUSSIAN

Department of Sociology Indiana University
Ballantine Hall 744
1020 E. Kirkwood Ave.
Bloomington, IN 47405

aerussia@iu.edu

EDUCATION

2024	PhD, Sociology, Indiana University *Dissertation: Negotiating gender accountability across contexts: the case of the former college athlete* *Committee: Youngjoo Cha (Chair), Stephen Benard, Pamela Braboy Jackson, Jessica McCrory Calarco, Hyeyoung Kwon*
2019	MS, Applied Statistics, Indiana University
2017	MA, Sociology, Indiana University *Thesis: Ethnic Fluidity Among Hispanics Over Time: Does Race matter?*
2015	BA, Global Studies and Spanish, Providence College *Magna Cum Laude*

TEACHING & RESEARCH INTERESTS

Research Design	Gender	Race and Ethnicity	Quantitative Methods
Qualitative Methods	Sexualities	Social Psychology	Sport

PUBLICATIONS

Peer-Reviewed Articles

Forthcoming Benard, Stephen, Bianca N. Manago, Anna E. Acosta Russian, and Youngjoo Cha. "Mapping the Content of Asian Stereotypes in the United States: Intersections with Ethnicity, Gender, Income, and Birthplace." *Social Psychology Quarterly*

TEACHING

Indiana University
Instructor, Department of Sociology
Full responsibility for course, including design (curriculum, texts, exercises, and exams) and execution (classroom activities, lectures, grading, mentoring, overseeing a TA, and office hours)

2022	Sociological Research Practicum (SOC556)	15 graduate students
2021	Statistical Techniques in Sociology I Lab (SOC554)	15 graduate students
2020	Sexual Diversity (SOC321)	80 undergraduate students
2019	Sexual Diversity (SOC321)	80 undergraduate students

Teaching Assistant, Department of Sociology

2017	Society and the Individual (SOC230) – Tim Hallett
2016	Race and Ethnic Relations (SOC335)– Dina Okamoto
2016	Problems in Gender Studies: Sex, Gender, and Politics (GNDR300)– Cate Taylor
2015	Social Problems and Policies: Women, Men, and Society (SOC101)– Cate Taylor
2015	SOC100: Introduction to Sociology (SOC100) – Christine Von Der Haar

Teaching Assistant, O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs

2021	Honors Research in Public and Environmental Affairs (V491)—Alison Schnable

University of Mannheim (Germany)
Instructor, Department of Sociology
Full responsibility for course, including design (curriculum, texts, exercises, and exams) and execution (classroom activities, lectures, grading, mentoring, and office hours)

2020	Comparative Sociology of Sport (SOC200)	15 undergraduate students

Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) Summer Program
Teaching Assistant

2022	Introduction to the R Statistical Computing Environment – Sarah Hunter, Clemson University
2022	Maximum Likelihood Estimation II – Desmond Wallace, Alfred University
2021	Panel Data and Longitudinal Analysis – Andrew Q. Philips, University of Colorado Boulder; Mark Pickup, Simon Fraser University
2020	Panel Data and Longitudinal Analysis – Andrew Q. Philips, University of Colorado Boulder
2019	Longitudinal Analysis – Michael Berbaum, University of Illinois at Chicago
2018	Maximum Likelihood Estimation I – Dean Lacey, Dartmouth College

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Under Review	Russian, Anna E. Acosta. "When is Being Gay Part of the Game?: Gender Accountability and Heteronormativity in Athletic Subcultures."
Draft Available	Russian, Anna E. Acosta. "Negotiating Racialized Gender Accountability Across Contexts: The Case of the Former College Athlete."
Draft Available	Braboy Jackson, Pamela, Anna E. Acosta Russian. "Role Sequencing: Does Social Role Sequencing Predict Resource Availability among Women, across Time?"
In Progress	Benard, Stephen, Bianca N. Manago, and Anna E. Acosta Russian. "Audit Study on Hiring Asian Americans."
In Progress	Russian, Anna E. Acosta, Kristin Kelley, and Jennifer J. Lee. "Gender Overcompensation Thesis Project."

RESEARCH SUPPORT & FELLOWSHIPS

2022 Dissertation Completion Fellowship. College of Arts and Sciences, Indiana University ($25,000).

2021 Graduate Student Research Grant. Indiana University Bloomington, Center for Research on Race and Ethnicity. "The Meaning and Consequences of Gender Socialization Across Context and Over Time: Former Student-Athlete Experiences in Life After College Sport." ($2,000).

2020 Advanced Departmental Fellowship. Department of Sociology, Indiana University ($20,000).

2019 Mannheim University Teaching Fellowship. Department of Sociology, Indiana University; Department of Sociology Mannheim University ($5,000).

2019 Sheldon Stryker Graduate Student Research Grant. Indiana University Bloomington, Sociology Department. "Gender Performance and Sexual Prejudice." ($1,000).

2017 Graduate Student Research Grant. National Collegiate Athletic Association. "From Courts to Careers: Former Women Student-Athlete Transitions from College to Adulthood" ($5,000).

2017 Schuessler Scholarship for study at the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), Department of Sociology, Indiana University ($1,000).

AWARDS

2022 Distinguished Graduate Student Award. Indiana University Latino Faculty and Staff Council, Indiana University

2019 Yolanda Treviño Service Award. Indiana University Bloomington Graduate and Professional Student Government.

2019 Indiana University Sociology Social Action Award. Indiana University Bloomington, Sociology Department.

PRESENTATIONS

2022 Anna E. Acosta Russian, "An Intersectional Analysis of the Cognitive Labor Associated with Doing Gender." *American Sociological Association*. Los Angeles, CA.

2022 Anna E. Acosta Russian, "Negotiating Racialized Gender Accountability Across Contexts: The Case of the Former College Athlete." *North American Society for the Sociology of Sport*. Montreal, Québec, Canada.

2021 Braboy Jackson, Pamela, Anna E. Acosta Russian. "Role Transitions and Financial Well-Being: A Study of Women Across the Life Course." *American Sociological Association.* Virtual.

2020 Anna E. Acosta Russian. "Sport, Gender, and Sexuality: When Being Gay is Part of the Game." *American Sociological Association*. Virtual.

2018 Anna E. Acosta Russian. "From Courts to Careers: Former Women Student-Athlete Transitions from College to Adulthood." *NCAA Graduate Student Research Grant Recipient Presentation*. Indianapolis, IN.

2018 Anna E. Acosta Russian. "Queer in College and Straight Out of Graduation: Discourse Surrounding Former Female College Athletes and Sexual Identity." *American Sociological Association Sexualities Preconference*. Philadelphia, PA.

2017 Anna E. Acosta Russian. "Ballsy Women on and off the Court: The Intersection of Female Masculinity, Sexuality, and Sport." *American Sociological Association*. Montreal, Québec, Canada.

2016 Jackson, Pamela Braboy, and Anna E. Acosta Russian. "Role Sequencing: Does Order Predict Resource Availability among Women across Time?" *Eastern Sociological Society*. Boston, MA.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2022-Present *Statistical Consultant.* Indiana University Statistical Consulting Center. Provides statistical analysis, advice, and training to clients. Quantitative methods employed include: Generalized Linear Models, HLM Models, Nonparametric Statistics, Factor Analysis, Network Analysis, Time series/longitudinal analysis.

2017-Present *Research Assistant* to Stephen Benard. "Labor Market Outcomes for Asian Men and Women in the United States." NSF funded project. Indiana University. Data analyst for large scale experimental survey & audit study.

2017 *Research Assistant* to Jane McLeod. "Strategizing College for Students on the Autism Spectrum." Spencer Foundation funded project. Indiana University. Conducted qualitative interviews with college students.

2016 *Research Assistant* to Dina Okamoto. "Immigrant-Native Relations in 21st-Century America: Intergroup Contact, Trust, and Civic Engagement". Indiana University. Coded and translated Spanish newspaper articles to English.

2014–15 *Undergraduate Research Scholar*. Social Identity as a Minority Student-Athlete. Advisor: Kara Cebulko. Providence College.

SERVICE

Department of Sociology, Indiana University

2019-20 Graduate Student Association Co-Treasurer

2018-19 Sociology Social Psychology Assistant Lab Director

2018-19 Graduate Student Association Co-President

2016–18 Public Sociology Forum Chair

2017–2022 Graduate Student Mentor

2016–17 Assistant Coordinator, SHEL (Social Psychology, Health, and the Life Course) Workshop

2016–2022 Undergraduate Honors Thesis Mentor

Indiana University

2019-2021	Diversity and Inclusion Advisory and Action Committee Member
2018-19	Latino Graduate Association Executive Co-Chair
2017–2020	Latino Graduate Association Executive Board Member

Reviewer

2019	NCAA Innovations Grant External Review Panel Member

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Sociological Association (Sections: Methodology; Race, Gender, and Class; Racial and Ethnic Minorities; Social Psychology; Sociology of Body and Embodiment; Sociology of Culture; Sociology of Mental Health; Sociology of Sex and Gender; Sociology of Sexualities; Teaching and Learning in Sociology); *North American Society for the Sociology of Sport*; *Sociologists for Women in Society; American Statistical Association*

SOFTWARE PROFICIENCY

ATLAS.ti	High proficiency
Qualtrics	High proficiency
R	High proficiency
Stata	High proficiency
SPSS	High proficiency
LaTex	Moderate proficiency
SAS	Moderate proficiency