

# “Double-Edge Sword”: Black Female Student-Athletes Experience at Historically White Institutions

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While there is growing research on how Black student-athletes experience racism in the context of college sports, few studies have examined the experience of Black female student-athletes and the differences they face due to the intersectionality of their gender and racial identities. This qualitative study explores how Black female student-athletes cope with racism and sexism at historically white institutions and how it affects how they identify with multiple roles. Drawing on frameworks of Black Feminist Thought and Intersectionality, this study addresses the following research questions: 1. How do Black student-athletes at HWIs conceptualize their multiple identities?; 2. How does interaction with peers, coaches, and faculty influence their experience of racism and sexism at HWI?; and 3. How do Black female student-athletes cope with multiple oppressions at HWIs? I find that experiences of sexism were often more easily identified by participants than experiences of racism, while their responses generated many examples of racism. This may be because racism was considered a ‘way of life’ by participants, while examples of unfairness between male and female sports teams illuminated sexism within their institutions. In response to these experiences, respondents identified short-term coping strategies that had potential negative long-term effects, such as changing their major or classes to avoid toxic environments or seeking to ignore potentially traumatic events. These findings have important implications for how historically white institutions can better support Black female student-athletes by validating their experiences, providing remedies for toxic environments (e.g., training for staff on implicit bias, recourse for students who experience racism or sexist comments), and providing culturally responsive therapeutic support.