4F Jasmine Hamilton, Prairie View A&M University  
“Black Girls Do Run: Perceived Identity Association of Female Runners”

Two African American women created a running group in order to combat the obesity epidemic within the African American community. The duo sought to provide encouragement, resources, and access to make healthy living a priority. Since the inception of the organization, local running groups have become more prominent. The purpose of this investigation is to explore the perceptions of racial identity, gender-role identity, and exercise identity of African American females who are regularly active. Additionally, it seeks to understand the possible influence of the desired social association of group membership has on racial, gender, and exercise identity. The findings indicated a disconnect with physical activity, the presence of cultural barriers (i.e. food, hair maintenance, ideal body image), and the implications of educational, practical, and social components of the running group.

4F Brandon Crooms, University of Texas-Austin; Sam Twito, University of Texas-Austin; Latrice Sales, University of Texas-Austin & Ajanai Channel Inez Newton-Anderson, University of Texas-Austin  
“The Fallen Athlete: Future of Black Female Participation in Sports”

Youth sports and physical activity (PA) participation declined while youth obesity is increasing in the U.S. Access to PA as a means to combat childhood obesity may be even more limited for communities most at risk. African American girls experience greater decreases in PA in high school and a higher attrition rate in sport, leading to a questionable future for the next generation of African American female athletes (Perkins, 2014; Withycombe 2011). With little athletic support services compared with male sports in high school and college, female athletes face systematic bias leading to attrition (Bruening, 2005). Finally, while sports media emphasized the success of professional African American female athletes such as Serena Williams, Gabby Douglas, Sanya Richards-Ross, it also objectifies and minimizes their performance relative to their male counterparts (Bruening, 2005). This presentation examines current literature on the impact of athletic support services on continuation in sport (i.e. athletic training, nutrition, strength and conditioning, and academics), participation among Black adolescent females in school sports, and how media portrayals model a mechanism by which black females leave sport. We will make recommendations for high school and collegiate athletic programs that manage allocation of support services that supports Black female athletes.

4F R.C. George, York University  
“She’s Got Game: An Exploration of Black Canadian Female Basketball Athletes and NCAA Scholarships”

Scholarly research indicates that Canadian Black students often use sports, such as basketball, to negotiate inequitable schooling environments and define athletic success as obtaining U.S. athletic scholarships. These discourses tend to be highly dominated by the experiences of Black males, who receive more social and economic supports and opportunities at all levels, which boosts athletic performance, but often at the cost of eventual poor social, economic and educational outcomes. Obscured from the narrative are the specific and gendered experiences of Black Canadian female student-athletes also engaging with sport in these ways, but with significantly less social and economic supports and opportunities than their male counterparts. How do they navigate their athletic and academic goals? How do race, class and gender shape their social, educational and athletic experiences? Are they successful or unsuccessful in their objectives and in which ways? With these questions in mind, my research aims to theorize how Black Canadian female athletes operate within the racialized, gendered and classed context of competitive sport. I will also examine the specific ways in
which Black female athletes navigate the contested space of competitive basketball, giving voice to its impact on their social, athletic and educational outcomes and experiences. My research contributes to a body of knowledge that currently neglects the specific experiences of Black Canadian female athletes by elucidating the ways in which the axis of gender, intersecting with class and race, creates distinct social athletic and educational experiences and opportunities from those that currently dominate the Black male-centered discourse.

4F Cat Ariail, University of Miami
“Willye White’s ‘Flight to Freedom’”

In 1993 Willye White, a long jumper and sprinter who participated in five Olympic Games from 1956 to 1972, told “Runner’s World” magazine, “Athletics was my flight to freedom: freedom for prejudice, freedom from illiteracy, freedom from bias. It was my acceptance in the world” (Litsky, 2007). Because of the historically marginal position of black female athletes, White’s discovery of freedom through sport proves curious and warrants analysis. A historical examination of White’s experiences, such as winning the silver medal at the 1956 Olympic Games, leaving the Tennessee State University track team, and competing in elite sport for two decades, indicate that she used her athletic body to “sing” her “freedom.” In the context of the historical violation of black female bodies, her ability to find freedom by athletically asserting her body is significant. For instance, White’s silver-winning jump displayed a degree of bodily control and autonomy that challenged those who wished to confine black bodies and contested dominant conceptions of elite athleticism. White’s experiences thus exemplify how black female athletes physically script alternative narratives of blackness and femaleness that not only counter the racist and sexist presumptions of sport and society but also express a self-determined claim to freedom.

4F Tomika Ferguson, James Madison University
“How Black Female Student-Athletes Contend with Race, Gender, and Stereotypes”

The responsibility of negative images of Black women within society cannot be assigned to a particular entity, be it the media, education or sport. Rather, the complex and often contradictory images of Black female athletes are the results of lingering histories of racism and oppression faced by Black women at various social institutions. College athletics is a microcosm of society and provides an environment to examine how racism and oppression, which have bred harmful stereotypes, influence the daily lives and athletic experiences of Black female student-athletes. This paper investigates the ways in which stereotypes influence the college experiences of Black female student-athletes through a Black feminist lens. Derived from interviews with Black female student-athletes in NCAA Division I track and field, volleyball, and women's basketball, this paper's findings argues that athletics is a platform to enhance the college experiences and voices of Black female student-athletes. Coach-player relationships, academic experiences, and physical appearance are pivotal to the engagement with and relationship of Black female student-athletes and their institutions. This paper looks at intersections of race, gender, and athletics within a college environment to identify areas where higher education institutions can take more responsibility in their commitment to Black female student-athletes.