

**The "Twofers": Black Women Athletic Directors**

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Black women occupy a minute percentage of senior leadership positions in intercollegiate athletic departments. In fact, during the 2005-2006 school year, the number of Black women athletic directors was approximately 1.2% and the number of Black women associate athletic directors was 2.8% (DeHass, 2007). When excluding Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) from the data, Black women comprised 0.3 % of the athletic director and 1.9% of the associate athletic director positions.

Regardless of their low representation, an exploration, understanding and dissemination of these women's experiences is important in order to improve their and future aspiring minority women's experiences within intercollegiate athletic departments. Current knowledge of Black female athletic administrators' experiences have come primarily from Abney's (1988), Benton's (1999), and Nelson's (1999) dissertations, and as such in the 21st century new insights into their experiences is warranted. Accordingly, this presentation will disseminate recent information about Black female athletic directors' experiences in NCAA collegiate athletic departments.

As a result of their low percentages, many Black women that obtain senior administrative jobs in intercollegiate athletic departments, especially at Predominately White Institutions, are "solos" (Thomas, 2005). A solo is an individual who is the only one or one of a few that is representative of a particular group. Solos are typically expected to be representative of their entire group, and research has demonstrated that solos face heightened scrutiny from their peers, extreme evaluations, and are prone to stereotypical assessments of their behavior (Kanter, 1977; Pettigrew & Martin, 1987). Solos, especially racial or ethnic minorities, are frequently viewed as tokens whose hire was solely a result of affirmative action (Pettigrew & Martin; St. Jean & Feagin). Because tokens are different from the majority, they stand out in the organization, and similar to solos their behavior is attributed more to their social category membership than it is to their own individual characteristics. However, they also have the additional stigma of being categorized as incompetent (Kanter, 1977; Reyes & Halcon, 1991). As a result, tokens experience pressure to perform well, to know their job well with minimal or no help or guidance, to avoid making mistakes, and also to take on myriad tasks and roles to prove their worth (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Spangler, Gordon, & Pipkin, 1978; Thomas, 2005).

The purpose of this presentation will be to divulge how a select group of women, Black female athletic directors occupying solo and token roles, have encountered skepticism about their qualification to be athletic directors, and have had their hiring attributed more to their race and sex. In doing so, attribution theory will be employed to explain why these women's hire is credited to reasons other than their legitimate qualifications for the job (Northcraft, 1983). Moreover as a result of the stigma of incompetence that is attached to individuals viewed as tokens (Kanter, 1977; Reyes & Halcon, 1991), these women have sought to discount misperceptions about why they got hired as athletic directors by presenting signs of their competence by working harder at tasks or putting more stress on themselves than individuals that don't have to contend with such misperceptions. The women whose experiences will be expounded upon in this presentation are Black female athletic directors of NCAA Division I, II, and III intercollegiate athletic departments. At the time of data collection, eleven women held this status, of which ten participated in the study. Data was collected via a qualitative semi-structured interview methodology, and all of the interviews were conducted in Nashville, Tennessee, at the NCAA Convention between January 10, 2008 and January 14, 2008. All ten women were asked the same primary questions; however, depending on responses, different probes were used to further facilitate the interview of each athletic director. Questions were centered on the women's self-defined definitions of their race, gender, and class identities and the potential benefits and detriments that are associated with their identities in relation to their position as an athletic director.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the data analysis consisted of coding the data at two levels: first-level coding and pattern coding. First-level coding entailed summarizing the information gathered from the interviews, and then pattern coding was conducted to group the summaries together based on categories, themes, and patterns that linked the women's discourses together (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). In line with a critical paradigm that seeks to generate emancipatory knowledge, the presentation will conclude with a discussion of possible diversity management perspectives (e.g. learning and effectiveness; Thomas & Ely, 1996) and diversity training initiatives (e.g. recategorization; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) that can be used to lessen the tokenism tendencies in the workplace.