

Sanuel R. Hodge is an associate professor of physical education in the School of Physical Activity and Educational Services at The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. Francis M. Kozub is an associate professor in the Department of Physical Education and Sport, State University of New York at Brockport, Brockport, New York. Adrienne D. Dixon is an assistant professor in the College of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. James L. Moore III is an associate professor in the College of Education and Human Ecology, coordinator of the Counseling Program, and the inaugural director of the Todd Anthony Bell National Research Center on the African American Male at The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. Kwesi Kambon is the director of Multicultural Education and Equity with the Columbus Public School District, Columbus, Ohio.

## **A Comparison of High School Students' Stereotypic Beliefs about Intelligence and Athleticism**

**By Samuel R. Hodge, Francis M. Kozub,  
Adrienne D. Dixon, James L. Moore III,  
& Kwesi Kambon**

Since the nineteenth century and still today, persistent stereotypic beliefs about Blacks<sup>1</sup> have portrayed them as athletically superior while intellectually inferior to Whites<sup>2</sup> (Harrison, 2001; Harrison, Harrison, & Moore, 2002; Harrison & Lawrence, 2004; Miller, 1998; Wiggins, 1989). In contrast, Whites have been portrayed as athletically inferior but intellectually superior to Blacks. These types of race-based stereotypic beliefs have present day implications for youth, such as imposing social and psychological burdens on performance and thus potentially reducing a student's ability to perform to her or his potential (Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling, & Darley, 1999). For instance, Stone et al. (1999) asserted that athletic performance is impeded out of concern about confirming a negative stereotype

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which “increases anxiety and in part because it creates self-doubt about the ability to perform” (p. 1224). Research supports the plausibility that for Black student-athletes' negative stereotypic beliefs about their intelligence can lead them to lower their expectations in academic contexts (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Stone et al., 1999). It is important that teachers, coaches, and other school personnel (e.g., counselors) understand how race-sport stereotypes can impact the aspirations of youth toward or away from varied athletic pursuits often at the expense of their academic success (Harrison, Azzarito, & Burden, 2004).

What's more revealing about this issue is that it is held that internalized acceptance of race-based stereotypic beliefs about intelligence and athleticism confounded by a lack of access, opportunity, and economical variables plus other factors (e.g., socio-cultural) lead some Black and Hispanic<sup>3</sup> youth toward more economically accessible sports (e.g., baseball, basketball, football) and away from exposure to less economically accessible sports such as golf and tennis (Burden, Hodge, & Harrison, 2004; Edwards, 1998; Harrison et al., 2004; Harrison et al., 2002; Harrison & Lawrence, 2004). On this issue, Burden et al. (2004) examined Black and White students' beliefs about theirs (in-group) and each others (out-group) ethnic groups' intentions to participate in various sport activities. They reported that respondents from both groups were influenced by socio-cultural variables (e.g., absence or presence of sport role models as portrayed by the media). Specifically, both Black and White students believed that socio-cultural variables influenced Blacks to more likely participate in basketball and football than Whites, and that Whites were more likely to participate in tennis, golf, and swimming. Burden et al. also found that respondents from both groups held beliefs that Blacks' intent to participate in varied sport activities are hindered by socioeconomic inequalities. Most respondents believed that sport activities such as basketball and football were accessible to most Blacks, whereas golf, swimming, and tennis were much less accessible to Blacks; but accessible for most Whites in their communities. Plus, the large presence of Blacks in basketball and football at the collegiate and professional levels affects some Black (self-stereotyping) and White (stereotyping) students' beliefs about Blacks' intent to participate in these sports. In contrast, the dominate presence of Whites in tennis and golf at the collegiate and professional levels influences some Black (stereotyping) and White (self-stereotyping) students' beliefs about Whites' intentions to participate in these sports (Burden et al., 2004).

Research that examines different ethnic<sup>4</sup> groups' beliefs about theirs and others intellectual and athletic abilities is important to understanding how best to counter harmful stereotypes (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Hence, more research is needed to better understand various ethnic groups' race-based stereotypic beliefs about theirs and the intellectual and athletic abilities of others (Burden et al., 2004; Harrison et al., 2004; Harrison & Belcher, 2006; Steele, 1992, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). The purpose of this study was to compare the beliefs of Black, Hispanic, White, and biracial students on their own (*in-group*) and the intellectual and athletic abilities of other (*out-group*) ethnic groups. The central research question

was what are the beliefs of Black, Hispanic, White, and biracial students on their own and the intellectual and athletic abilities of other ethnic groups. This research was part of a larger study designed to examine high school students' attitudes and motivations toward urban education and sports.

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### Theoretical Framework

Still today, the dominant culture in the United States (U.S.) of America is reflected in the teaching-learning process in most public schools (Azzarito & Solmon, 2006). This culture usually refers to the hegemony<sup>5</sup> of White male domination within a Euro-American paradigm (Gordon, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Too often, the meanings students attach to their educational experiences (Azzarito & Solmon, 2006) and teachers' understandings, perspectives, and pedagogies are situated in this epistemology (DeSensi, 1995), and “[t]he hegemony of the dominant paradigm makes it more than just another way to view the world—it claims to be the only legitimate way to view the world” (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 258). To challenge the dominant orthodoxy,<sup>6</sup> increasingly legal and educational scholars have promoted critical race theory (CRT; Dixon & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 1998a, 2000).

In education, CRT situates research on social justice and racial equality in schools and schooling (Jay, 2003). It emerged as a counter legal scholarship to positivist and liberal legal discourse of civil rights (Ladson-Billings, 1998a, 2000). Important to CRT is the position that “individuals and social groups construct their own reality regardless of the oppressive elite-dominated social hierarchy in which they exist, and thereby have the capacity to resist and reconstrue their relationship to it” (Knapp & Woolverton, 1995, p. 551). Dixon and Rousseau (2005) co-edited a special issue for the journal *Race, Ethnicity and Education* which provides a series of excellent articles situated in CRT that the reader is encouraged to examine.

Psychological CRT (Jones, 1998) is an extension of CRT (Ladson-Billings, 1998a) and serves as an apposite framework for understanding the role of social psychological processes such as race-based stereotyping which is linked to persistent racial disparities. Psychological CRT asserts that *race* is both socially and psychologically constructed from accessible social information. Race, as a social construct, has defining properties that amplify group differences and contributes to perceptual and behavioral biases. Such biases, in turn, create inconsistent experiences for persons across different racial groups. Similarly, inconsistencies in experiences lead to divergent understandings of what social justice is, and, as a result further amplifies the differences in social perception across the varied racial groups (Jones, 1998). Psychological CRT posits five major tenets as: (a) spontaneous and persistent influences of race, (b) fairness derived from divergent racial experiences, (c) asymmetrical consequences of racial politics, (d) paradoxes of racial diversity, and (e) salience of racial identity. Although, these tenets are briefly summarized below, Jones (1998) provides a full discussion of psychological CRT and its major tenets.

The first tenet, *spontaneous and persistent influences of race*, postulates that

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there are three factors pertinent to the social and psychological construction of *race*, which is spontaneously activated in cognition. First, people naturally tend to categorize things, including themselves and other people, which sustains racial categories. Second, knowledge of race-based stereotypes is pervasive and well embedded in cognition. Third, knowledge of stereotypes can and often has automatic influences on beliefs, social judgments, and behaviors. Perpetuating race-sport stereotypic beliefs, for example, the University of Norte Dame's legendary football player and alumnus Paul Hornung's comment that, "the school needs to lower academic standards to 'get the black athlete' (i.e., football players) ... if we're going to compete" was considered by some as racist (Whiteside, 2004). This type of stereotypic belief that Blacks are athletically superior but intellectually inferior to Whites and vice versa, plus other historical and contemporary factors (racism, socio-cultural, economic), continue to influence youth to participate or *not* participate in selected sport activities (Burden et al., 2004; Harrison et al., 2004). Unknowingly, stereotypic beliefs accentuate perceived similarities and differences between racial groups (Jones, 1998).

The second tenet, *fairness and divergent racial experiences*, implies that our divergent social histories and the construction of race therein means that diverse groups inevitably view fairness differently. The beliefs of fairness are not consistent across racial lines and the psychological experience of fairness has not kept pace with the measurable indices of progress in the U.S. (Jones, 1998). For Black student-athletes, divergent racial experiences at predominantly White institutions of higher education (PW-IHE) campuses are cause for concern (Benson, 2000; Brooks & Althouse, 2000; Donnor, 2005; Lawrence, 2005; Singer, 2005). For example, Black student-athletes have voiced concerns that racism is manifested in Blacks being: (a) denied access to leadership positions on and off the playing field in sports, and (b) being treated differently compared to White student-athletes (Singer, 2005).

In the third tenet, *asymmetrical consequences of racial policies*, racial groups diverge as a result of their "calculations of costs and benefits of racial policies" and "color-blind strategies violate this asymmetry principle" (Jones, 1998, p. 653). For targets of racial discrimination, psychological CRT posits that "acting as if race doesn't matter, when in fact it does" places one susceptible to missed opportunities and acceptance of a notion "whose very enunciation puts one in a 'one-down' position" (Jones, 1998, p. 653). In sports, during the late 1980s, a Major League Baseball (MLB) official, Al Campanis, stated that "[B]lacks performed well on the field but lacked 'the necessities' to occupy managerial positions or places of responsibility and authority in the front offices of sports organizations" (Miller, 1998, p. 137). Such comments serve to perpetuate lingering stereotypic beliefs about Blacks, which arguably contributes to the under-representation of Blacks in sport leadership positions (Bell, 2005a, 2005b; Walker, 2005). For example, a legacy of race-based stereotypic beliefs and "good old boy" practices is manifested at the collegiate level, as today there are few Black coaches in Division I-A basketball and even less represented in football (Walker, 2005). Walker (2005) explained that of

the 117 Division I-A football programs in the US almost 50% of the players were Black, while only about 6% of the head coaches were Black.

Moreover, policies of race neutrality (e.g., so called “colorblind” admission policies) have aversive consequences for targets of racial discrimination, particularly Blacks and Hispanics in the U.S. For Black and Hispanic student-athletes who hope to one day attend a PW-IHE, policies of race neutrality can have far reaching consequences. Today, discrepancies exist at colleges and universities as admission officers struggle with the question of whether or not to consider race in their admission decisions. For example, the University of Texas has adopted race-neutral admissions policies, while on the other hand, the University of Georgia reports to consider race as an admissions factor (Lum, 2005). Both race-neutral and race-conscious admission policies can be in compliance with the U.S. Supreme Court rulings in light of the recent University of Michigan cases<sup>7</sup> allowing race to be used as an admissions factor. Thus far, universities lack consensus on this issue (Hodge, Harrison, Burden, & Dixon, 2008).

The fourth tenet, *paradoxes of racial diversity*, posits that race is “both less and more than it seems” (Jones, 1998, p. 653). In sports, race becomes both more and less than what it seems. It seems more than with it is with the stereotypic beliefs that Black and Hispanic athletes dominate sports, partly due to their presence and successes in the National Basketball Association (NBA) and MLB, respectively. It becomes less salient with the dominant group, specifically, White athletes who actually dominate most sports in the U.S. Steele and his colleagues have found that the salience of racial stereotypes can adversely impact individual’s academic and athletic performances (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Stone et al., 1999). Jones (1998) explained that *out-group* “homogeneity supports the social significance of race, yet psychological and behavioral facts attest to significant heterogeneity within racial groups” (pp. 653-654). But as people try to suppress racial influences in their judgments, it is possible that they make race even more salient cognitively, resulting in a ‘rebound’ effect, which heightens racial salience on those occasions where suppression becomes no longer compulsory. Given that “we all belong to multiple groups, we can create groups whose members have multiple things in common and as a result, racial dimensions recede in importance” (Jones, 1998, p. 654).

In the last tenet, *salience of racial identity*, Jones explained that racial identity is often a source of in-group pride and out-group hostility. Often a source of in-group pride, Ogden and Hilt (2003) claimed that Blacks *consume* basketball and use it as a part of their culture and collective identity. They stated that a *consumption* of basketball is influenced by social and cultural variables to include: (a) societal [stereotypic] expectations of Blacks to pursue basketball participation, (b) prevalence of Black role models in basketball at the collegiate and professional levels, and (c) perceptions of some Blacks that basketball is a viable means for social mobility.

Again, the salience of race affects judgments about in- and out-groups. For instance, Stone et al. (1997) found college students (a sample of predominantly White undergraduate students) held stereotypic beliefs about Black and White

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athletes and these beliefs influenced their judgments about athletic performance of basketball players. In their experiment, half of the participants were led to think that the target player on a radio broadcast of a college basketball game was Black and the other half were led to think that the target was a White athlete. These mostly White college students judged the Black male target as more athletic and less intelligent; and the White male target as less athletic but possessing more basketball intelligence and hustle. Later, Stone et al. (1999) found that making salient negative racial stereotypes about Black and White athletes had adverse influence on athletic performance of both groups.

In accord with psychological CRT, prevalent race-sport stereotypes can impact the aspirations of youth toward or away from varied athletic pursuits often at the expense of their academic success (Harrison et al., 2004). Scholars argue that prevalent race-sport stereotypic beliefs can have detrimental consequences (Hall, 2002; Harrison et al., 2004; Harrison et al., 2002). On this point, Taylor (2000) asserted that schools in the US are “saturated with images of Black athlete stereotypes, ...Not only does the reinforcement of physical ability over intellectual capability diminish the potential of young Black men, but it also perpetuates the myth that the road to success is paved with sports contracts, not diplomas” (p. 75). Importantly, the current research provides insight into students' beliefs about theirs and peers' intellectual and athletic abilities in urban schools. Psychological CRT (Jones, 1998) was used to situate and better understand an ethnically diverse cross section of 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students' beliefs about theirs and peers' intellectual and athletic abilities in a large urban school district.

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## Method

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### Research Design

The research method was descriptive cross sectional survey (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990). This methodology allowed the researchers to access numerous high school students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds attending physical education classes at multiple schools within a large urban school district.

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### Participants and Sampling

Participants ( $n=819$ ) were a cross section of 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students of various ethnic groups. They were randomly sampled from six high schools within a large urban school district in the Midwestern part of the US. Due to small disproportionate returns from Asian/Pacific American and Native American respondents, a decision was made to omit these cases. Further, a decision was made to omit cases where responses included missing data points from 40% or greater of the variables of interest. This resulted in 688 usable data sets. Table 1 shows gender proportions ( $n=324$ , 47% females and  $n=364$ , 52.9% males) for Black, Hispanic, White, and biracial respondents. The sample ranged in age from 12 to 18 years with a mean value of 16 years ( $SD=1.03$ ). Gender and ethnic group differences in age were not

found in the sample ( $p > .05$ ). The sample was mostly comprised of Black students ( $n=437$ , 63.5%) but no gender proportion differences were found ( $p > .05$ ). Students in physical education classes voluntarily participated in this study after informed consent was secured from their parents.

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### Instruments

Descriptive data (e.g., students' ethnicity, gender, grade level, and age) were collected from a demographic questionnaire, Tannehill and Zakrajsek's (1993) *Modified Student Descriptive Questionnaire*<sup>8</sup> (MSDQ).

Data on respondents' stereotypic beliefs were collected using the *Beliefs about Intelligence and Athleticism Scale* (BIAS). It was developed for this study and is comprised of six items postulated to assess a diverse cohort of high school students' beliefs about their own (*in-group*) and other (*out-group*) ethnic groups' intellect and athletic abilities. Content validity of the BIAS was established through a panel of two sport sociologists and a physical education teacher educator. Panelists were selected, based on their established reputation as a leader in research on issues of stereotyping and/or issues pertinent to race/ethnicity in physical education. A cover letter, copy of the instrument, and a rating sheet were sent through electronic mail (with the document attached) to each panelist. The instructions were to critique the BIAS on: (a) parsimony and completeness, (b) accuracy, (c) suitability, and (d) utility (Antonak & Livneh, 1988). Panelists' feedback confirms that the BIAS has content validity.

Following content validation procedures, we administered the BIAS instrument to the current sample of high school students. Reliability estimates were encouraging and demonstrated internal consistency in responses to the six items ( $\alpha = .88$ ,  $n=688$ ). Exploration of the underlying dimensions followed using principal component analysis to examine structural relationships among variables (BIAS items). Evidence of a lone underlying dimension was consistent with a hypothesized construct and provided evidence of validity (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1995). The lone component extracted included all six items explaining 63% of the variance and supporting the existence of a single paradoxical construct of *stereotypic beliefs about intellect and athleticism* for the sample. These preliminarily psychometric measures offer evidence of validity and reliability of the BIAS (Antonak & Livneh, 1988; Hair et al., 1995).

Using the BIAS instrument students' beliefs were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale. The panelists were asked to indicate their level of disagreement or uncertainty to agreement to the following stereotypic statements.

1. Ethnic minorities<sup>9</sup> (African Americans/Hispanics) are naturally better athletes compared to White/European American athletes.
2. White/European Americans are naturally better athletes compared to ethnic minorities (African American/Hispanic).
3. Ethnic minorities (African Americans /Hispanics) dominate most sports.

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4. White/European Americans dominate most sports.
5. Ethnic minorities (African Americans /Hispanics) are naturally more intelligent compared to White/European Americans.
6. White/European Americans are naturally more intelligent compared to ethnic minorities (African Americans/Hispanics).

Responses were coded as: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=unsure, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. Scores were calculated by averaging participants' responses (1-5) for each item on the BIAS scale.

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### Data Analysis

BIAS data were analyzed using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) on untransformed data with a conservative alpha level at  $p < .01$ . A group by gender (4 x 2) factorial MANOVA and Scheffe post hoc analyses were used (Hair et al., 1995) to study differences among ethnic groups in relation to beliefs about intellectual and athletic abilities.

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### Results

Descriptive statistics for items related to intellectual and athletic abilities are found in Table 1. Assumptions of covariance matrices statistics indicated unequal variances across groups (Box's  $M = 1074.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Main effects resulted for both ethnicity and gender analyses of items. These included group differences in responses to Blacks/Hispanics athletic ability,  $F(3, 688) = 9.83$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\text{Eta}^2 = .04$ ; Blacks/Hispanics dominance in sports,  $F(3, 688) = 29.66$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\text{Eta}^2 = .12$ ; Blacks/Hispanics intelligence,  $F(3, 688) = 15.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\text{Eta}^2 = .06$ ; and Whites intelligence,  $F(3, 688) = 7.27$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\text{Eta}^2 = .03$ . Gender differences were noted in the samples responses to Whites athletic ability,  $F(1, 688) = 11.77$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\text{Eta}^2 = .02$ ; Whites dominance in sports,  $F(1, 688) = 14.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\text{Eta}^2 = .06$ ; and Blacks/Hispanics intelligence,  $F(1, 688) = 9.7077$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\text{Eta}^2 = .01$ . No significant group by gender interactions were noted in these data.

Scheffe post hoc analyses of differences indicated that the group differences were in relation to the higher responses of Black students on Black/Hispanic athletic ability over their White peers. Black students also scored significantly higher in comparison to the other three study groups on responses to Black/Hispanic athletes' dominance in sports. The same group differences were noted in Blacks' higher responses to the BIAS statement on intelligence of Blacks. Further, Black students were more likely than Hispanics to agree with the BIAS statement related to Whites' intelligence. Hispanics scored significantly lower in their levels of disagreement to this same item soliciting beliefs about Whites' intelligence.

*BIAS Item 1.* On athletic ability, Black students' responses were significantly higher on average in their agreement with the stereotypic statement that "Ethnic minorities (African Americans/Hispanics) are naturally better athletes compared

Table 1  
Beliefs about Intelligence and Athleticism by Ethnic Group and Gender (n=688)

Variable	Black		Hispanic		White		Biracial	
	Male n=242	Female n=195	Male n=6	Female n=9	Male n=86	Female n=81	Male n=30	Female n=39
BIAS Item 1								
<i>M</i>	3.41	2.84	3.00	1.67	2.78	2.18	2.10	3.08
<i>SD</i>	1.24	1.35	2.19	1.00	1.48	1.42	1.32	2.71
BIAS Item 2								
<i>M</i>	2.68	2.64	2.50	1.67	2.84	1.81	2.90	2.15
<i>SD</i>	1.20	1.34	1.64	1.00	1.43	1.06	1.24	1.37
BIAS Item 3								
<i>M</i>	3.62	3.10	1.50	2.00	3.05	2.15	2.50	2.08
<i>SD</i>	1.18	1.34	.55	1.50	1.34	1.28	1.04	1.16
BIAS Item 4								
<i>M</i>	2.77	2.45	3.00	1.67	2.84	2.07	2.60	2.08
<i>SD</i>	1.31	1.22	2.19	1.00	1.22	1.28	1.22	1.28
BIAS Item 5								
<i>M</i>	3.14	2.74	2.00	1.67	2.80	1.70	2.70	2.15
<i>SD</i>	1.27	1.28	1.20	1.00	1.34	.98	1.20	1.42
BIAS Item 6								
<i>M</i>	3.06	2.51	1.00	1.67	3.00	2.07	2.90	2.31
<i>SD</i>	1.20	1.25	.00	1.00	1.31	1.34	1.32	1.66

to White/European American athletes” than the responses of uncertainty to disagreement by their Hispanic, White, and Biracial peers. Though not statistically different, Black males were consistent in levels of agreement and tended to favor the uncertain response on this position. Further, Hispanic and White females, and biracial males were in disagreement to this statement, while Hispanic and White males and, biracial females scored in the unsure range on average.

*BIAS Item 2.* These diverse ethnic groups (i.e., Black, Hispanic, White, and biracial students) did not differ significantly in their tendencies to disagree with or indicate an unsure or neutral response to the statement that “White/European Americans are naturally better athletes compared to ethnic minorities (African American/Hispanic).” However, significant gender differences were found between male and female students in their responses to this item. On average, males from each ethnic group disagreed with or were ambivalent in their responses while female students were mostly in disagreement to strong disagreement with the stereotypic belief that White/European Americans are better athletes compared to “ethnic minorities.”

*BIAS Item 3.* Black students also scored, on average, significantly higher in their levels of agreement with the stereotypic statement that “Ethnic minorities

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(African Americans/Hispanics) dominate most sports.” Black males were inclined to agree with this statement. In contrast, Hispanic, White female, and biracial peers responded in a way that indicate levels of disagreement, especially by Hispanic males to this belief statement, along with levels of uncertainty by Black females, White males, and biracial females to this position.

*BIAS Item 4.* The groups (i.e., Black, Hispanic, White, and biracial) did not differ significantly in their disagreement or uncertainty with the stereotypic statement that “White/European-Americans dominate most sports.” But, significant gender differences were found between female and male students in their responses to this statement. On average, female students from each ethnic group were inclined to disagree with the stereotypic belief that White/European Americans dominate most sports. Overall, males were unsure. Although statistically non-significant, Hispanic and White males had the higher average scores on this item compared to their female peers, as well as Black and biracial peers.

*BIAS Item 5.* Black students, males in particular, response scores were statistically higher on average than other groups on the statement that “Ethnic minorities (African Americans /Hispanics) are naturally more intelligent compared to White/European Americans.” However, as was the case for other items, values indicating uncertainty to this statement (particularly by Black females) were indicated along with levels of both agreement and disagreement or unsure responses by Hispanic, White, and biracial students. More specifically, both the Hispanic females and males and White biracial female students were along the continuum of disagreement to strong disagreement; and the White and biracial males, on average, were unsure of the position that “ethnic minorities” were naturally more intelligent than Whites.

*BIAS Item 6.* Hispanic students, males in particular, response scores were lower and on average indicated disagreement to strong disagreement to the stereotypic statement that “White/European Americans are naturally more intelligent compared to ethnic minorities (African Americans/Hispanics).” Comparably, Blacks differed significantly from Hispanics in their responses indicating more uncertainty to agreement on this statement. Black, White, and biracial males did not differ in their uncertainty to this position; and White and biracial females disagreed with the position that White/European Americans have higher intelligence.

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to compare the beliefs of Black, Hispanic, White, and biracial students on their own and the intellectual and athletic abilities of other ethnic groups. The central research question was “What are the beliefs of Black, Hispanic, White, and biracial students on their own and the intellectual and athletic abilities of other ethnic groups?” On that question, similar to other studies (Burden et al., 2004; Harrison et al., 2004; Harrison & Lawrence, 2004; Harrison, Lee, & Belcher, 1999), this study’s findings indicate that students from racially diverse backgrounds differ as a function of gender and ethnicity in their beliefs about in-group and out-group intellectual and athletic abilities. It was found that

the Black males were of a mind to agree with two of the six statements comprising the BIAS. Their tendency was to agree with the BIAS statements that: (a) "Ethnic minorities (African Americans/Hispanics) are naturally better athletes compared to White/European American athletes," and (b) "Ethnic minorities (African Americans/Hispanics) dominate most sports." All other groups were disposed to express uncertainty or disagreement to strong disagreement with the BIAS statements. Across ethnic groups, girls were less inclined than boys to agree with any of the stereotypic statements on athleticism, sport dominance, and intelligence. Typically, Black female and Hispanic males' responses ranged from uncertainty to strong disagreement. On average, White males mostly expressed uncertainty to disagreement with each of the statements. But, Hispanic, White, and biracial females typically disagreed or strongly disagreed with the BIAS statements.

On intelligence, Black males, particularly, held significantly higher scores indicating uncertainty to agreement to the stereotypic statement that "Ethnic minorities (African Americans/Hispanics) are naturally more intelligent compared to White/European Americans." Similarly, Black males were more likely than Hispanics to agree with the stereotypic statement that "White/European Americans are naturally more intelligent compared to ethnic minorities (African Americans/Hispanics)." In contrast, Hispanic students were in disagreement to strong disagreement with this stereotypic position. These findings partially support the postulation in psychological CRT that people have race-based stereotypes well embedded in their minds. This was most evident among the Black males.

In psychological CRT, the tenet *spontaneous and persistent influences of race* posit that individuals naturally tend to categorize things, including themselves (e.g., Black males) and other people, which maintain racial categories (Jones, 1998). Further, knowledge of race-based stereotypes is pervasive and well embedded in cognition, and knowledge of stereotypes can and often has automatic influences on beliefs, social judgments, and behaviors (Jones, 1998). Some scholars argue that Black youth, are influenced by race-based stereotypes and as such "place a tremendous emphasis on and identity with athletic achievement" (Harrison et al., 2002, p. 129), too often, at the expense of academic pursuits (Harrison et al., 2004; Harrison et al., 2002). Harrison et al. (1999) found that Black adolescents' sport activity preferences differed from their White peers. Black adolescents identified much more with participation in basketball, football, and track than Whites (Harrison et al., 1999). Some argue that sports mainly basketball is a means of racial or collective identity for Blacks and is viewed as a vehicle for social and economical progress (Harrison et al., 2002; Ogden & Hilt, 2003).

Research shows that college students tend to harbor stereotypic beliefs on Blacks, particularly males, underachievement in academic pursuits due in part to supposed inferior intellect (Burden et al., 2004; Harrison et al., 2002; Sailes, 1993). Steele and Aronson (1995) reported that Black college students' performance on difficult academic tasks deteriorated when racial stereotypes about intellectual inferiority (i.e., stereotype threat) were made salient. Moreover, teachers may harbor views that

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manifest stereotypic beliefs about students of color (Ford & Moore, 2004; Harrison & Belcher, 2006; King, 1994; Schultz, Neyhart, & Reck, 1996). Some teachers may even have stereotypic beliefs about Black and Hispanic students as intellectually less capable and more likely to create disciplinary problems (King, 1994). Aligned with this notion, Su (1997) asserts that novice teachers, at times, have little awareness of racism or discrimination and the effects on schooling. Because most teachers will teach students whose cultural and ethnic backgrounds are different than their own (Fox & Gay, 1995; Griffin-Famble, 2006), this is a significant assertion.

In American society, misguided stereotypic beliefs about Blacks' athletic superiority and intellectual inferiority influence the minds of thousands perhaps millions of people (Harrison & Lawrence, 2004). In this study, it was evident that society profoundly influences high school students' beliefs and impressions. For example, the Black male students held strong beliefs on perceived athletic superiority and sports dominance, but they were unsure on questions of intelligence. These findings indicate that Black males, perhaps more so than other ethnic groups and females, are influenced by stereotypic beliefs regarding their perceived athletic superiority and sport dominance. Such findings are consistent with previous studies in other domains other than athletics (Moore, Madison-Colmore, & Smith, 2003; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Psychological CRT posits three factors underlying the social and psychological construction of race. First, individuals naturally tend to categorize things, including people, this sustains racial categories. Second, knowledge of race-based stereotypes is pervasive and often well ingrained in cognition. Third, knowledge of stereotypes unknowingly influences beliefs, judgments, and behaviors (Jones, 1998).

Liking to the beliefs held by Black male students in this study, previous research has shown that college students harbor self-stereotypic (in-group) and stereotypic (out-group) beliefs about Black athletes' superiority and dominance in a few sports, such as basketball, football, and track (Burden et al., 2004; Harrison et al., 2004; Harrison & Lawrence, 2004; Sailes, 1993). But, on the notion of sport dominance, Harrison and Lawrence (2004) pointed out that 90% of "all sports have less than 1% of African American participation and presence in their sports" (p. 42). Yet, the myth of Black athletes dominating sports still exists, due to lingering vestiges of racism that magnify their overrepresentation in a few selected sports (i.e., mostly basketball, football, and track). This occurs, despite the fact that White athletes have a dominant presence in most sports (e.g., hockey, baseball, soccer, golf, tennis, volleyball, wrestling, skiing, bowling, auto racing, and so on).

Disproportionate to Whites, more Black youth aspire to professional careers in such sports as basketball and football (Lee, 1983), while Hispanic youth aspire more to careers in baseball as a means to social mobility from poverty (Rudman, 1986). Today, Blacks represent some 76% of the players in the NBA. This is the lowest percentage of Black NBA players since 1991-1992 (Branom, 2005). On an ascending trend, some 30% of current MLB players have Hispanic or Latino ancestries (Draper, 2006; Lapchick, 2006).

In these sports, Black and Hispanic athletes have experienced successes (Lap-

chick, 2006). But their successes and failures are often magnified owing to the social construction of race as these athletes “represent their race.” Paradoxically, Black and Hispanic athletes’ absence or under representation in most all other sports is marginalized as a consequence of the construction of “their race” with such stereotypic notions as “Blacks and Hispanics don’t swim, ski, or race cars.” In psychological CRT, race is posited as “both less and more than it seems” (Jones, 1998, p. 653). Jones explained that, as people try to suppress racial influences in their judgments, it is possible that they make race even more salient cognitively, resulting in a “rebound” effect, which heightens racial salience on those occasions where suppression becomes no longer compulsory.

In stereotyping, race becomes both more and less than what it seems. It becomes more than with it is with the stereotypic beliefs that Black and Hispanic athletes dominate sports, partly due to their presence and successes in the NBA and MLB, respectively. It becomes less salient cognitively for the dominant group, specifically, White athletes who actually dominate most sports in the US. Of concern, Steele and his colleagues have found that the salience of racial stereotypes can adversely impact individual’s academic and athletic performances (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Stone et al., 1999).

Steele (1992, 1997) posited that when a person encounters a situation that represents a domain with which she/he is identified, a *stereotype threat* exists of performing poorly and possibly harming her/his self-esteem. Scholars assert that negative stereotypes hinder performance by causing persons within a stereotyped group to become apprehensive that their performance may serve to confirm the negative stereotype others have of their group (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000; Steele & Aronson, 1995). This leads to the cyclical effects of self-stereotyping (Harrison & Worthy, 2001). On the contrary, Moore et al. (2003) and Mavis (1997) have found that negative stereotyping can also positively influence academic performance. They asserted that negative stereotyping can sometimes motivate students to “prove” the negative stereotype wrong. In the case of academics, if the negative stereotype is that Black students do not perform well in school, then some students might work extra hard to perform well. As it relates to athletics, it is quite likely that this could be the case with some of the students in this study.

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### Limitations

Three limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the group samples were disproportional in size with a large group of Black students compared to smaller groups of Hispanic, White, and biracial students. Hispanic female ( $n=9$ ) and male ( $n=6$ ) student groups were very small. However, these student groups were reflective of the schools’ population ethnic compositions. Second, the groups were not distributed evenly between male and female students. Third, the BIAS instrument should be revised to represent Black and Hispanic groups separately rather than as *ethnic minorities*, which may have confounded the results. The intent in using the description *ethnic minorities*, was to assess stereotypic beliefs com-

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mon to both Black and Hispanic athletes as athletically superior but intellectually inferior to White athletes. But, surely these groups have different sport participation patterns, as well as uniqueness in their cultures, languages, music, foods, and so on, which should be recognized and assessed accordingly (Marin & Marin, 1991). Despite these limitations, there is still useful information to be gleaned from the study's findings for teacher education programs and school districts responsible for ensuring that teachers are culturally competent to address, such issues as race-based stereotyping (Burden, Hodge, O'Bryant, & Harrison, 2004).

### **Implications and Recommendations**

Race-based stereotyping has its roots in the psychological underpinnings of racism, both of which are epidemic to American society and by extension its educational institutions, which influence the beliefs of teachers and students as well as coaches and student-athletes (Harrison & Lawrence, 2004; Singer, 2005). Educational scholars assert that whenever teachers, coaches, and other school professionals accept and articulate, knowingly or unknowingly, prevailing theories of athletic superiority and intellectual inferiority of Black and Hispanic youth, they do psychological harm to these impressionable youth (Burden et al., 2004; Harrison, 1995, 2001).

The study's findings provide insights on Black, Hispanic, White, and biracial students' beliefs about in- and out-groups' intellectual and athletic abilities in urban schools. The information can be used by teacher education programs to better prepare teacher candidates and school districts to provide effective professional development initiatives to help teachers more effectively promote academic achievement of all students. To do so, means that educators must become culturally competent and responsive practitioners (Sparks, 1994; Martens, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Likewise, Martens (2004) stated that coaches should seek to become culturally responsive.

To address these issues, teacher preparation institutions and school districts must ensure that coaches and educators are prepared to and willing to create culturally relevant sport and academic learning contexts that reduce the impact of psychologically harmful stereotypes (Griffin, 2002; Martens, 2004). This means, for example, ensuring that coaches in sport settings and teachers in classes are culturally competent, which would enable them to implement culturally responsive practices (Foster, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1990, 1994, 1995; Martens, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) and challenge athletes and students' stereotypic views through informed dialogue (Burden et al., 2004; Harrison et al., 2004; Harrison & Lawrence, 2004; Sparks, 1994).

Culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1994) or responsive (Gay, 2000) teaching has proven to help students, particularly Black and Hispanic children and youth, value academic achievement and thus identify more with the educational process (Cazden & Leggett, 1981; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 1998b). Culturally responsive pedagogy brings the language, values, and culture of a diversity of students into the educational process including those from ethnically, culturally, and

linguistically diverse ancestries (Nieto, 1999; Quintanar-Sarellana, 1997; Sparks, 1994; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). To build “cultural bridges” in today’s richly diverse schools and communities (Cothran & Ennis, 2000; Nieto, 1999), researchers and practitioners advocate a curriculum framework that emphasizes cultural competence and awareness, uses culturally responsive pedagogies (Ford, Moore, & Harmon, 2005; Quintanar-Sarellana, 1997) and encourages dialogue and reflective practice (Cazden, 2001; Hodge, Tannehill, & Kluge, 2003).

To demonstrate cultural competence and in-turn effectively implement culturally responsive pedagogies, teachers must first progress from ethnocentric<sup>10</sup> perspectives owing to the dominant hegemonic culture to a place of cultural awareness (DeSensi, 1995). Quintanar-Sarellana (2002) identified three stages of cultural awareness, which typify teachers as either: (a) culturally unaware, (b) in a transitional stage, or (c) culturally aware. Influenced by America’s dominant culture, teachers who are culturally unaware “actively reject students’ language and culture, either overtly or covertly” (Quintanar-Sarellana, 2002, p. 44). Those educators, in the transitional stage, begin to gain insight into the cultures and languages of their students, and they are more apt to communicate with parents and engage in professional development initiatives on such topics as student diversity. Teachers who are culturally aware are responsive to the distinctions between the cultural capital<sup>11</sup> of the students and the school.

Furthermore, culturally aware teachers are able to: (a) integrate the students’ languages and cultures in the teaching-learning process, (b) use a variety of teaching strategies apposite for their diverse classes, (c) communicate effectively with students and parents, and (d) use effective interpersonal skills and strategies to better relate to students (Cazden, 2001; Cazden & Leggett, 1981; Foster, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 1998b; Quintanar-Sarellana, 2002). Ladson-Billings (1994) asserted that teachers with culturally relevant pedagogies have high self-esteem and a high regard for and connect well with others (e.g., students, parents, and members of the community). To help teachers move toward cultural awareness, scholars advocate the infusion of content on such issues as diversity and multiculturalism within teacher education curricular (Burden, Hodge, O’Bryant, et al., 2004; DeSensi, 1995; Flowers, Milner, & Moore, 2003; Milner, Flowers, Moore, Moore, & Flowers, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Culturally aware teachers who are responsive to students’ languages and cultures have proven effective (Foster, 1995; Cazden, 2001; Grant, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1990, 1995; Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990).

Evidence of this is given in a review of the extant literature by Foster (1995), who reported that effective culturally responsive teachers: (a) express caring behaviors through their personalized interactions and close relationships with their students; (b) communicate high expectations for effort and achievement of students; (c) link classroom content to student experiences; (d) focus on the development of the whole child, not merely her or his cognitive maturation; (e) organize learning as a social event, rather than as a competitive or individual experience; and (f) incorporate aspects of students’ home and cultural communication patterns in their teaching. In their culturally responsive curriculum model, Villegas and Lucas (2002)

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envision teachers who (a) are socioculturally conscious in recognizing that “there are multiple ways of perceiving reality and that these ways are influenced by one’s location in the social order” (p. 21), (b) have affirming views of students’ diversities, (c) view themselves as change agents for making schools more responsive to all students, (d) understand how students construct knowledge and promotes students’ knowledge construction, (e) know about the lives of their students, and (f) uses what they know about students’ lives to design and implement “instruction that builds on what students already know while stretching them beyond the familiar” (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 21).

Teacher preparation institutions and school districts need to better ensure that coaches and teachers are prepared and willing to create culturally responsive sport and academic learning contexts that reduce the adverse impact of race-based stereotypes. This can be achieved through the systemic infusion of content and exposure to issues of diversity and multiculturalism in teacher education curricular and in professional development opportunities for coaches and practicing teachers at the school district level (Burden, Hodge, O’Bryant et al., 2004). In a culturally responsive framework, teachers are best able to connect with a diversity of students and contribute meaningfully to their schooling experience (Flowers et al, 2003; Ford et al., 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Quintanar-Sarellana, 1997; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Further to counter stereotypic beliefs, coaches and teachers should espouse ethnorelativistic<sup>12</sup> views in their interactions with student-athletes and actively engage students in informed dialogue on such issues as racism and stereotyping of varied ethnic groups regarding intellectual and athletic abilities (Burden, Hodge, O’Bryant et al., 2004; DeSensi, 1995; Harrison & Lawrence, 2004).

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The term *Black* is used to identify participants in this study who self-identified their race or ethnicity as Black, African, African American, or Afro-Caribbean (Westat, 2005). These participants were mostly African Americans native to the US and other individuals of African ancestry.

<sup>2</sup> The term *White* is used to identify participants in this study who self-identified their ethnicity as European American, White, or White American as an approach to recognize Anglo (White) descendants from European and non-European countries (Westat, 2005). These participants were mostly Whites native to USA.

<sup>3</sup> The term *Hispanic* is used to identify participants in this study who self-identified their race or ethnicity as Hispanic, Chicano/a, Cuban, Latino/a, Latin American, or Mexican American. These participants were mostly Hispanic or Latino and other individuals of Latin American or other Spanish ancestry (Westat, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> *Ethnic* group or *ethnicity* refers to cultural traditions and languages, family ancestry, and historical background and practices (e.g., African American, Asian American, Italian American, and Mexican American people) (Coakley, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Hegemony refers to domination, control, power structures, and authority.

<sup>6</sup> Orthodoxy refers to the holding of correct or generally accepted views or beliefs.

<sup>7</sup> The U.S. Supreme Court on June 23, 2003 ruled in two cases (i.e., Gratz v. Bolling

and *Grutter v. Bollinger*) on admission policies at the University of Michigan. The Court ruled that race and ethnicity among other factors can be taken into account in the admission process, but racial quotas are prohibited (American Council on Education, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Demographic data on the sample was collected in conjunction with a larger study of high school students' motivations and beliefs about education and opportunity.

<sup>9</sup> In this study, we used the term ethnic *minorities* to more authentically reflect common reference to African Americans, Hispanics, and other people of color. But, we generally avoid using this term in identifying individuals or ethnic group status with respect to people of color because the term lacks global validity and often imparts a negative connotation on such individuals (Coakley, 2004). We more often use the term *people of color* in referring to Blacks/African Americans, Asian/Pacific Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans, for example.

<sup>10</sup> Ethnocentric perspectives reflect an individual's "denial of, defense against, and minimization of difference" (DeSensi, 1994, p. 36) with respect to other cultures.

<sup>11</sup> Cultural capital refers to "the behavior patterns, set of values, and linguistic expressions that members of a certain socioeconomic or ethnic group transmit to other members of society" (Quintanar-Sarellana, 1997, pp. 40-41).

<sup>12</sup> Ethnorelative views reflect an individual's "acceptance of, adaptation to, and integration of difference" (DeSensi, 1994, p. 36) with respect to other cultures.

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