The African-American Woman Un-Athlete
A Magazine Content Analysis

R.Q.

How are African-American women athletes portrayed in popular magazines?

1. What gender norms are present?
2. Do they perform sport or physical activity?
3. Are racial and cultural meanings present?

• Less sport and physical activity (PA) participation for African-American women
• Little previous analysis of mass media by race and gender for athletic role
• Most studies address advertisements and endorsements only
• African-American women view PA, sport and body image in culturally relevant terms

Sample:
Images in 2013 - 2015 popular print magazines targeted to women (55 issues; n = 158)
• Essence (African-American women’s lifestyle, 18 issues)
• Health (women’s health and fitness, 12 issues)
• O! The Oprah Magazine (women’s lifestyle, 14 issues)
• Runner’s World (sport-specific, 13 issues)

METHOD
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Codes:
• Gender Norms: body type, posture, clothing, make-up
• Activity Type: competitive, fitness/exercise, other physical activity
• Colors: feminine, masculine, neutral
• Image Subject: real, celebrity, celebrity/elite athlete, model
• Subject Characteristics: cultural representations, facial expression
• Image Usage: cover, article or advertisement

RESULTS

# of AA women images/magazine; Average (M) # images/issue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magazine</th>
<th># Issues</th>
<th># Images (Total)</th>
<th># Images with Ideal Feminine Norms</th>
<th># Images with Competitive Athletic Portrayal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essence</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O! Oprah</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>43</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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CONCLUSIONS

• Only one (1) image of women in athletic team competition (Essence Jan 2014)

The African-American woman athlete is highly feminized & presented using many “ideal” norms of feminine gender display.
• Many feminine norms present: similar slim build, long hair, make-up, partially clad, younger age, smiles, feminine colors, lighter/fairer skinned subjects
• Most activities performed happily, quietly and alone (i.e. running solo)
• Little variety in body sizes and shapes typical of African-American women

Be physical, be fit, but not competitive.
• Celebrity athletes presented as fashion models in passive or suggestive postures
• Limited images of competitiveness or performing against others at high levels

Encouraging Trends:
• Majority of postures were of active participation, even if staged
• Essence and Health presented the most African-American women with culturally meaningful hairstyles and various skin tones.

Future Research:
• African-American women’s perceptions of images, sport and physical activity
• Interviews with magazine editors and reporters on underrepresentation and gender displays of African-American women
• Images of online magazines and websites targeted to African-American women