

Faculti Summary

<https://faculti.net/denied-women-sports-and-the-contradictions-of-identity/>

The speaker discusses their motivation for writing a book on women's athletics, which stems from a lifelong curiosity about how larger social structures—such as race, gender, and sexuality—shape the experiences of female athletes. They approach the topic from an intersectional perspective, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive understanding of how these factors influence women's participation in sports, especially given that many sporting institutions were not designed with women's needs in mind.

Through ethnographic research, the speaker immersed themselves in the lives of female athletes to observe how structural inequalities manifest in everyday scenarios, rather than relying solely on interviews. They reflect on their own experience as a collegiate athlete and note how it impacts their analysis of current athletes, discovering that many challenges are still present today.

The discussion highlights the tension female athletes face between athleticism and societal expectations of femininity. Examples of well-known athletes like Serena Williams, Brittany Griner, Gabby Douglas, and Caster Semenya illustrate the unique challenges and criticisms—often rooted in racism and sexism—that they endure. The speaker calls attention to the need for greater inclusivity and understanding within sports, urging readers, including coaches and sports administrators, to recognize the multifaceted identities of athletes and the systemic issues that affect them.

The overarching hope is that readers will develop a nuanced understanding of how identity factors interplay in shaping the experiences of women athletes, especially those at the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality, underscoring the need for change within the sports institution.