SPORT PARTICIPATION AND THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALE: 
HER EXPERIENCES IN HER OWN WORDS

By
NNEKA ARINZE

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL 
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT 
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF 
MASTER OF SCIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2011
To my father, who instilled in me my great love for sport
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank first and foremost Dr. Charles S. Williams for convincing me first to come to the University of Florida and then to write a thesis. I am indebted to my advisor, Dr. Shannon Kerwin, for her invaluable help in completing this project. Without her help I am positive this would have never been completed. I would also like to thank the rest of the committee, Drs. Connaughton and Sagas, for their guidance in this project. I thank all my friends for their support. Most importantly, I thank all of the participants for their willingness to provide their stories and thus contribute to the body of research.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TERMS</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of Purpose</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport Participation</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers/Motivations</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility Access</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Influence</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Influence</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Motivations</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Identity</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 METHODS</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumentation: Interview Guide</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 FINDINGS</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Sport Participation</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Participation</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub theme 1: fitness/health</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub theme 2: habit</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub theme 3: influence of friends</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub theme 4: accessibility</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General View of Sport</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub Theme 1: Positive Social Benefits through Sport</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub Theme 2: Negative Sport as a Wasteful Activity</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for or against Sport Participation in High School</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-1</td>
<td>Participant characteristics</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-1</td>
<td>Descriptions of current participation</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-2</td>
<td>Descriptions of the reasons for and against high school sport participation</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TERMS

Athlete  Used in reference to those participants who did participate in sport during high school

Non-athlete  Used in reference to those participants who did not participate in high school sport
Sport is believed to provide a number of benefits, especially to its adolescent participants. However, not all adolescents participate in sport and are thus unable to reap these benefits. Black high school girls have the lowest sport participation rates. Some possible reasons for this are due to the availability of opportunities and the influence of parents and peers.

This study used an interview based approach to further address sport participation issues among black girls. Eleven college women were asked to reflect on their experiences and views of sport during their high school years. Many of the reasons for participating in sport echoed those expressed in the current research literature. However, this study adds to the literature by asking how issues regarding social identity affect participation choices.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The mental and physical benefits of youth sports have been widely acclaimed (cf., Guest & Schneider, 2003; Kjønniksen, Anderssen, & Wold, 2009; Taliaferro, Rienzo, Miller, Pigg, & Dodd, 2008). Specifically, research on the psychological outcomes of sport participation has shown that cohesion amongst team members can boost an athlete’s feelings of self-worth (Bloom, Loughead, & Newin, 2008). Findlay and Bowker (2009) also found that athletes had higher scores of self-esteem and self-concept than non-athletes, where participation in strenuous activity for females in particular was linked to higher physical self-competence. Relatedly, sport participation has been associated with a decrease in feelings of hopelessness and the number of suicide attempts, particularly amongst adolescent males (Taliaferro et al., 2008). The influence of sport was also highlighted within the immigrant youth population, where participation in sport aided the adaptation of immigrant children into their new surroundings (Doherty & Taylor, 2007).

An individual’s academic performance may also be influenced by sport participation (Guest & Schneider, 2003). While both sport and non-sport activities positively affect academic outcomes, athletes in schools with low academic expectations (i.e., students are not expected to go on to four year colleges) or in areas of low socioeconomic status were more likely to be perceived to be good students by their peers and have higher actual achievement and grade point averages (GPAs) (Guest & Schneider, 2003). Thus, it may be likely that increased participation in sport as an extracurricular activity throughout adolescence provides opportunities to develop positive relationships with teachers, administration, and classmates. Beyond positive
peer perception, in the same study, participation in sport was associated with higher educational outcomes such as attendance and GPA (Videon, 2002). This positive effect was seen to be greater for males than for females. This may be attributed to the fact that girls have been documented as already having high GPAs and low numbers of excused absences, or possibly because boys and girls have different experiences in sport (Videon, 2002).

In addition to the educational and general psychological benefits, both males and females can reap physical activity benefits derived from sport participation (Taliaferro, Rienzo, & Donovan, 2010; Snyder, et al., 2010). Sport participation is associated with a healthier diet and regular participation in physical activity (Taliaferro et al., 2010). Athletes also perceive themselves to be healthier, have higher physical function, and have lower pain scores (Snyder et al., 2010).

Despite the benefits of sport participation, various demographic factors have been linked to low sport participation rates (Lown & Braunschweig, 2008; Powell, Slater, Chatoupka, & Harper, 2006; Videon, 2002). First, the age of the child may be a factor worthy of consideration. Specifically, Videon (2002) found that as students move up in the grade school system, the likelihood of sport participation decreases. Second, there is a participation gap by gender as males participate in sport at higher rates than females (Kjønniksen et al., 2009; Videon, 2002). Third, this gender gap is greater among black adolescents than in white populations with black males participating at much higher rates than black females (Eaton, Kann, Kinchen, et al., 2010; Videon, 2002). Given the cross section of risk factors, black high school girls have a greater likelihood of decreased sport participation.
The value of sport participation described above is a description of the potential benefits that can be extracted from participation. It is important to recognize that not all youths will realize the positive effects of sport participation, and further not all youths will be involved in sport-related activities. Thus, simply uncovering the benefits of sport participation may not be enough. Taking a step back to gain a comprehensive understanding of adolescent views of sport participation and their sport experiences may become necessary in determining if and how these benefits are being reaped. Further, it is important to understand the sport participation experiences of marginalized groups (i.e., adolescent black females), who are often outside the majority currently seen to participate in sport, and to learn how they view and define their level of sport participation. This information could increase our understanding of the potential barriers that are preventing adolescent black females from engaging in sport participation, which may in turn aid sport managers in enhancing their experiences.

**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to explore African-American females’ perceptions of and experiences with sport participation. The study used a qualitative research design. Specifically, African-American university women were interviewed to gain retrospective insight into their athletic identity, their parents’ involvement in their sport (or non-sport) experience, and the role of their high school environment in shaping their perception and attitudes toward sport participation. These factors were then analyzed to determine how each one influences participant perceptions of sport participation and what it “means” to be a black female sport participant.
Research Questions

**RQ1.** What are some of the reasons black females choose to or not to participate in sport during their adolescence?

**RQ2.** What types of activities are chosen in lieu of sport?

**RQ3.** What role do parents/guardians play in their choices to participate in sport?

**RQ4.** What role does family income and economic status play in a young black female’s choice of activities?

**RQ5.** Does the racial make-up of the residential area and high school influence sport participation?

**RQ6.** Does social (e.g., race, athletic) identity inform extracurricular activity choice?
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Sport Participation

While the listed benefits make sport an enticing venture for children and help parents justify sport participation for their kids, there are still individuals who are not participating. In a study of sport participation and adolescents, Baecke, Burema, and Frijters (1982) stated that it is important to also study physical activity rates because sport is often used as a measure of physical activity and participants often link sport to leisure time physical activity. As such, this link may provide valuable information regarding levels of sport participation.

Physical activity and sport participation levels vary on race and gender lines (Eaton et al., 2010; Kimm, Glynn, Friska, et al., 2002). A longitudinal study by Kimm et al. (2002) discovered lower physical activity levels for African-American girls compared to Caucasian girls, beginning at the young ages of nine and ten years old. Girls of both races experienced a drop in physical activity rates, but the rate of decline in physical activity amongst African-Americans led to only 44% of girls reporting activity, compared to 69% for Caucasian girls. Another study by Lown and Braunschweig (2008) focused on overweight low income African-American girls. Eighty percent of the participants were living with single mothers and at a poverty rate of 64% (Lown & Braunschweig, 2008). Using a Body Mass Index (BMI) based measure for obesity, they found 58% of the girls to have a BMI ranking in the 95th percentile when compared to other girls their age, classifying them as obese (Lown & Braunschweig, 2008). Furthermore, only 27% of the girls were characterized as active (Lown & Braunschweig, 2008). It is also interesting to note that higher activity correlated with a lower BMI. In another study
which examined high school students, black females were the most likely to be physically inactive (Eaton et al., 2010).

Race and gender differences are further seen when sport is looked at specifically. For example, forty-three percent of the black high school girls polled did not participate in any form of physical activity; while among white girls, this number was only 25.4% (Eaton et al., 2010). Black high school girls' sport participation rate of 46.7% also lagged behind white high school girls and black males, who had rates of 57.7% and 67.6%, respectively (Eaton et al., 2010). Because the rate of black girls' participation trails so far behind comparison groups, it is important to review the possible barriers to and motivations for participation.

**Barriers/Motivations**

**Facility Access**

The level of physical inactivity amongst minorities, especially African-American girls, is startling. It becomes necessary to look for the possible reasons for this inactivity. Research has shown that access to facilities may be a contributing factor (Powell et al., 2006). A study by Powell et al. (2006) found that the existence of higher proportions of minority groups in a neighborhood correlated to a decreased availability of physical activity related facilities. Wilson, Kirtland, Ainsworth and Addy (2004) conducted a telephone survey to gauge the perceptions of residents regarding access to outdoor venues for physical activity, such as nature trails. They found that lower income residents were more likely to perceive the barriers of safety concerns and lower access to facilities (Wilson et al., 2004). When lower income residents perceived high access to trails and used them, they were more likely to meet recommended levels of physical activity (Wilson et al., 2004).
The community in which a child lives may also limit opportunities and foster concerns about safety, limiting the child’s ability to participate in sport-related activities (Outley & Floyd, 2002). The degree of facility access is a likely cause for concern as it correlates to income level and level of facilities in the area (Powell et al., 2006; Wilson et al., 2004). Physical activity centers, such as fitness centers and sport clubs, were least prevalent in lower income areas and in areas with higher percentages of African-American residents (Powell et al., 2006). If these findings can be generalized to the greater black population, then it is likely that black girls’ inactivity may be linked to the absence of proper facilities. Safety concerns about the neighborhood or environment were also raised by Outley and Floyd (2002) and Wilson et al. (2004). This again may be a contributing factor to the limited physical activity of black girls.

The link between income status and facility access provides a useful window into the possible reasons for low physical activity levels. The high rate of poverty within the black community makes it more likely that blacks may live in neighborhoods with fewer recreational facilities, limiting access to sport participation opportunities. It also increases the likelihood that blacks will live in neighborhoods where they feel physical activity may not be safe due to their surroundings. However, while the poverty rate among blacks remained relatively the same at 24.5%, real household income rose between the years of 2006-2007 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Thus, while it may still be a likely cause of inactivity, a focus on poverty may not provide the full answer to the problem.

**Parental Influence**

Another important aspect of physical activity participation is the characteristics of parents and children. More specifically, having both parents in the home leads to a
greater likelihood of participating in sport (Videon, 2002), and the educational backgrounds, employment, and work hours of their parents may affect the level and choice of activity of adolescents (Barnett, 2008; Videon, 2002). Further, Kimm, et al. (2002) found that lower education levels of parents decreased the likelihood of their child’s participation in physical activity. Having parents with some college was related to a greater likelihood of decline than having parents who completed four years. This trend is further evidenced as girls whose parents had only completed high school experienced the greatest declines in activity (Kimm et al., 2002).

The interest of parents also influenced youth participation (Thompson, Rehman, & Hubert, 2005). Thompson et al. (2005) found that the level of support and encouragement that parents do or do not provide their children influences their level of participation. This trend may be particularly salient for young girls. Younger girls were more likely to feel encouraged by others, such as their family or friends, to be physically active (Lown & Braunschweig, 2008), but younger adolescents may experience an inability to access opportunities if parents are not supportive and/or refuse to provide transportation to events (Casey, Eime, Payne, & Harvey, 2009). Further, parents’ concerns about injury may limit opportunities for their children’s participation (Thompson, et al., 2005). Conversely, Thompson et al. (2005) uncovered that adolescents with family members who are also active in sports may be more encouraged to engage in sport participation.

**Peer Influence**

Peer groups also have influence on participation decisions. Fun with friends was a key factor for participation, as sports provide a venue to either make new friends or further relationships with existing ones (Casey et al., 2009; Thompson et al., 2005).
Peers can also have a negative influence as teasing, especially from boys, was also a concern. Girls were teased particularly regarding weight and dress. They were also teased in reference to their skill levels, whether they were perceived to have little skill or be “too” talented in relation to their peers (Casey et al., 2009). Thus, negative feedback from peers regarding female sport participation may be a dissuading factor, leading to lower participation rates.

**Personal Motivations**

In an Australian study (Casey et al., 2009), when adolescent girls were asked to reflect on their personal reasons for sport participation, the girls reported various reasons, including fitness concerns, socialization, skill improvement, and fun and enjoyment (Casey et al., 2009). These factors were also found in other studies (Allen, 2003; Weiss & Petlichkoff, 1989). Socialization concerns were discussed as a need to affiliate with others and a desire for recognition from peers (Allen, 2003). Goal attainment, as exhibited through things such as “competition success” and recognition from others, increased the likelihood of continued participation, self-competence, and enjoyment (Casey et al., 2009). Conversely when these goals were not met and participants felt inadequately skilled, continued participation was less likely (Casey et al., 2009). One strategy was to gear themselves towards less popular sports so as to avoid competition for spots on popular teams but still ensure participation (Casey et al., 2009).

Another factor was a lack of opportunities to play as the few spots available were limited to competitive teams as few or no recreational teams are available at older age levels. Students’ activity choices are thus further limited by their awareness of their own skill level. The degree to which they are confident in their skills affected their decisions...
to try out for school or community competitive teams. Those who were unable to play at younger ages were further dissuaded by a belief that they were too old to develop all of the necessary skills and would thus be far behind their peers (Thompson et al., 2005). Additionally, for high school students, increased academic responsibilities are perceived as a barrier to sport participation as the amount of homework and limited exposure to physical education affects physically active leisure (Thompson et al., 2005).

Moreover, the development of an athletic identity may be influenced by when sport participation first occurs for an adolescent. Specifically, Kjønniksen et al. (2009) found participation in sport in adolescence to be linked to higher levels of physical activity and that association varied by age. In particular, the age at which all adolescents began sport participation and the number of teams joined (i.e. the frequency of participation) during adolescence was significantly related to adulthood physical activity (Kjønniksen et al., 2009). For adolescents who continued to participate at age 16 rather than dropping out, it was more likely that they would continue to be physically active in adulthood (Kjønniksen et al., 2009). This was especially true for females as a correlation between physical activity in adulthood could be made only with participation in sport at ages 16 and 18, while in males participation at every age was correlated to physical activity in adulthood (Kjønniksen et al., 2009). Thus, it becomes increasingly important to understand the context and experience factors that may influence beginning or continued sport participation in adolescent populations. It may be particularly relevant to study how these facts affect marginalized populations, those groups who are underrepresented in previous studies.
Social Identity

Further research reveals that the personal views of girls may also be a major factor that limits their sport participation (cf., Tracy & Erkut, 2002). Social Identity Theory (SIT) looks at the way members of marginalized groups come to identify themselves in terms of the group’s shared experiences (Tajfel, 1974). In general, a social identity is formed based on the awareness of membership in a social group and the meaning that the group holds (Tajfel, 1974). Social groups are in turn not necessarily groups of regularly interacting people but instead a “cognitive entity” comprised of shared meanings that inform members’ actions and perceptions (Tajfel, 1974). In groups such as the African-American community, these shared meanings may arise as result of similar experiences such as encounters with discrimination and stereotypes (Hogg, 2006). As Tajfel (1974) writes:

For our purpose, social categorization can be understood as the ordering of social environment in terms of social categories, that is of groupings of persons in a manner which is meaningful to the subject….In other words, social categorization is a process of bringing together social objects or events in groups which are equivalent with regard to an individual’s actions, intentions, attitudes, and systems of beliefs (p. 69).

After one recognizes her membership in a group, she will stay in that group and join others as well if they positively affect her social identity. She will also remain if there are reasons that make it impossible to leave the group or if doing so presents a value conflict, even if the group negatively affects her social identity. In these cases she may seek to reinterpret group attributes so as to make them seem more positive and/or try to improve the status of the group. Another strategy is the creation of characteristics which create a new form of distinction that will be viewed positively by other groups (Tajfel,
1974). It becomes important to establish distinctions, whether existing or newly created, between ones’ group and others (Abrams & Brown, 1989; Tajfel, 1974).

The ways in which African-American girls define themselves may be due to their shared experiences. More specifically, their various patterns of behaviors that may reveal a desire to create distinctiveness may contribute to their definition of self. Contrary to the behavior of their peer groups, Tracy and Erkut (2002) found that African-American girls are the least likely adolescent group to link popularity to sports participation. They found that African-American girls tend to have the lowest association between sport participation and self esteem. Instead popularity for them was more closely associated with high grades in school, with sport participation ranking second. This was in stark contrast to all other groups in the study as both Caucasian boys and girls and African-American boys stated that sport participation was number one. Instead, African-American girls associate popularity with performance in school. For them, the best way to become popular is not to become a stellar athlete, but to become known as the smartest student. It is possible that they seek to define themselves collectively in ways that do not include sport.

A study comparing sex role perceptions of black female athletes and non-athletes found no significant differences in their views of expected behaviors (Rao & Overman, 1984). Both groups held traditional views of the role of a wife and a mother and liberal views of the other roles of women. This finding was significant as other studies reported that female athletes typically held more traditional views of their sex roles as a coping mechanism for their participation in a male dominated field. Thus, there is less psychological conflict for black women negotiating their roles as athletes
and women (Rao & Overman, 1984). The study illustrates that black women are distinct in their formation of their role perceptions. Their perceptions shift collectively as a group from societal norms. However, in-depth exploration of these identities or roles has received relatively little scholarly attention.

Philips (1998) found distinctiveness exists in leisure choices. Black and white high school students differed in their preferences of leisure activities. Blacks had strong approval for basketball, going to the mall, singing in the choir and dancing, while white students indicated approval for six activities more so than blacks. These included soccer, horseback riding, water-skiing, camping, fishing, and golfing. The differences in approval show a difference in approved activities. Black students indicated peer approval for fewer physical activities; in particular, the only highly approved sport in the study was basketball. This may indicate that leisure choice is informed by racial identity. It may be that the choices made can be used to either affirm or diminish one’s blackness in the eyes of in-group peers. Lastly, black students also considered a smaller group of people to be their friends than whites, which means that their decisions would be affected by a smaller number of individuals. More specifically, blacks reported a lesser degree of peer influence than reported by white students (Philips, 1998). This further leads to the notion that activity choices may not be merely influenced on a peer level, but affected on a more widespread scale.

Blacks in general experience lower levels of physical activity than whites. Black girls have the steepest inactivity levels as they are affected by lower levels of activity due to both their race and gender. Much has been written about the low physical activity levels of African-American females. Many studies have remarked the trend of the
African-American female’s decline in activity throughout adolescence. However, research identifying how African-American females perceive sport participation and their roles as sport participants is sparse. Accordingly, most research has focused on quantitatively linking potential factors affecting participation. For example, research has looked into the issue of facility access as a possible reason (Powell et al., 2006). Further, it has been concluded that because the black community is disproportionately affected by poverty, the levels of inactivity among African-Americans may be due to the high levels (64%) of poverty within the group (Lown and Braunschweig, 2008).

Unfortunately, previous conclusions related to low income populations may be generalized to multiple findings regarding low physical activity levels amongst African-Americans. Specifically, in the literature reviewed here, much of the data focuses on the issues of low income and/or overweight girls. This however casts an unrepresentative image of the group. For instance, the African-American middle class is expanding, easing some of the past restrictions on access, yet, these members are largely ignored in the present studies. It is possible that by looking at blacks across multiple income brackets, more light can be shed on the true extent of African-American girls’ sport participation experiences. The present study seeks to understand the participation patterns amongst more diverse populations of this group to reveal the motivations, perceptions, and experiences that may contribute to sport participation.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

The goal of this study was to uncover black females’ athletic experiences and their views of sport participation. In particular, I sought to understand if athletic identity, parental involvement and school environment played a role in the sport activity experiences of black female students. To gauge these factors, interviews were conducted wherein the participants provided their stories. Questions and concepts covered in the interview guide touched on their personal experiences in sport, their family’s beliefs about athletics, and their peers’ views of black female athletes.

Participants

After Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained, the participants included eleven women drawn from major southeastern universities using snowball sampling. After contacting initial participants through a convenience sampling strategy (N=x), those interviewed provided contacts for other potential participants (N=x). Participants were given consent forms to be completed at the start of the interview session. Other than those consenting to impromptu interviews, all participants were provided with electronic copies of the form and the interview questions for review in advance. Upon receiving consent, all interviews were tape recorded, and the participants were made aware of their right to stop recording at any time. I, the researcher, proctored the interviews which took place in the venue of the participants’ choosing. These locations included public student centers, restaurants, and by phone.

Participants in the sample ranged in age from 19 to 23. The mode age was 21, which included five participants. Nine participants were still pursuing bachelor’s degrees, one a graduate degree, and one recently graduated from university with a
bachelor’s degree. Eight of the participants lived with both parents in the home during high school. One lived with a single mother. The two others had mothers who had remarried. Table 3-1 is a summary of the participant characteristics.

Because the sample is removed from high school, it offered the benefit of looking at the totality of high school experiences. However, in spite of this benefit, retrospective recall is often open to criticisms of reliability. Several authors have found that this may not be a problem (Hardt, Sidor, Bracko, & Egle, 2006; Snelgrove & Havitz, 2010). Hardt et al. (2006) found moderate to good reliabilities in their study of adult recall of childhood experiences. Nonetheless, because the sample in this study was drawn from current and recently graduated university students, and not current high school students, it was important to ensure the trustworthiness of their responses as they were asked to reflect on their past experiences. Snelgrove and Havitz (2010) suggested several ways to reduce the bias and error in retrospective studies. Using fixed response questions can lead to recall error if participants are forced to respond to questions using set answers that do not apply to their experience or if they are unable to answer a question. To further reduce bias, memory recall can be aided by using cues, such as providing general questions to the participant before the interview (Snelgrove & Havitz, 2010). It is also helpful to ask participants to reflect on their experiences and summarize that information (Roberts, 2005). Per their suggestions, the interview questions were open-ended, allowing participants to report freely about their experiences and reducing the likelihood of forced responses. Participants were also given the opportunity to reflect back on their experiences prior to the interview as they were provided the questions in advance and given time just before the start of the interview.
Instrumentation: Interview Guide

The interview process used a combined approach, drawing from both the standardized open response and the general interview guide approaches to draw upon the strengths of both approaches to help minimize their weaknesses. The standardized approach has the benefit of ensuring that each participant is presented the same questions which increases the comparability of the data and reduces bias. In contrast, the interview guide approach allows flexibility in the order and wording of questions, allowing the researcher the ability to alter questioning per the participant’s experiences or the flow of the interview (Patton, 2002). Combining the two approaches best served the purposes of this study because it provided structure so that certain questions were asked of all participants for comparability, as drawn from the interview guide, and still allowed the rest of the interview to evolve based on the individual’s circumstances so that she would feel most comfortable speaking about her unique experiences.

The questions within the interview guide (Appendix A) were influenced by the survey items within two questionnaires: the Questionnaire Assessing School Physical Activity Environment (Q–SPACE; Robertson-Wilson, & Holden, 2007) and the Athletic Identity Questionnaire (AIQ; Anderson, Måsse, & Hergenroede, 2007). These studies provided starting points to discuss sporting experiences, but interview questions were not limited to items within these scales. Additional interview guide questions were based both on a review of the literature and on my personal experiences and assumptions as an African-American female who has participated in sport. Specifically, questions tailored to uncovering how parental support and income status played a role in the description of sport participation experiences were informed by previous research. However, questions about personal appearance and culture were informed by my
recognition of peer concerns about hair and body image and the impact of culture on
sport choice. As such, in Chapter 5 my voice is represented in the writing as I reflect on
how the findings corroborate or reject my assumptions.

The final interview guide was presented to a panel of experts comprised of two
professors and two black college women (who did not participate in this study) to
establish item relevance and best wording and order to ensure readability and clarity.
Minor adjustments were made as a result of their comments.

Data Analysis

Tape recorded interviews were transcribed into word processing software
(Microsoft Word) and then transferred to qualitative data analysis software (i.e., NVivo
9.0). NVivo is software program that allows the user to import documents and code
textual data. It facilitates the establishment of relationships between the data to build
codes and sub-codes. The text was then coded by the researcher using the stages of
analysis as proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998). As such, after the first interviews
were transcribed, they were microanalyzed, as the transcript was read through and then
analyzed line by line to develop the concepts and categories that will be used
throughout coding. Next, open coding was used to further develop concepts and
categories by delineating the characteristics of each, using the findings of the
microanalysis and the research questions as a basis. Later axial coding was used to
further categorize the data and develop relationships and conditions for the categories.
It was also used to establish subcategories for higher order categories that were initially
developed. To enhance credibility in the coding process, the coding scheme that was
developed was given to an individual (i.e., my thesis supervisor) who was not involved
in the interviews to independently review the codes, coding categories, and interview transcripts. No discrepancies or inaccuracies were noted.

Because the goal of the study was to determine participants’ views of sport, symbolic interaction theory proved useful during coding. Symbolic interactionism looks at the shared meanings people develop as a result of their interactions and the ways in which those meanings in turn affect their descriptions of their actions (Patton, 2002). The meanings for things are derived from the ways in which they affect a particular course of action. Shared meanings arise when people come to a consensus over the ways in which meaning is attached to that thing and the appropriate reaction to it (McCall, 2006). It was hoped that the commonalities discovered in recurring themes would reveal the meanings that participants’ attach to sport participation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>High school racial characteristics</th>
<th>High school sport participation</th>
<th>Current sport or physical activity participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dori</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>MB</td>
<td>Track and field, volleyball</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabra</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Intramural sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloe</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>MB</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breni</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frances</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>MW, MH</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeannette</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>Track and field, volleyball, cross country</td>
<td>Running</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>MW, D</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenay</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsie</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>Basketball, volleyball</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erin</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terren</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>D, MH, MB, MW</td>
<td>Basketball, tennis</td>
<td>Intramural sport</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D-Diverse
MB- Mostly black
MH- Mostly Hispanic
MW- Mostly White
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

The following section provides a summary of the themes generated from the interview data. Both common and unique themes will be discussed and supporting quotations will be provided to provide context to the themes described. Pseudonyms have been used to ensure confidentiality.

Current Sport Participation

Each participant was asked to comment on whether or not she currently participated in sport. Detailed reasons for participation and non-participation were solicited. A summary of the participants’ descriptions of participation and non-participation is presented in Table 4-1.

Non-Participation

Participants were also asked about their current participation in sport or physical activity. Among those who did not currently participate in sports or physical activity (4 participants), there were two groups. The first two individuals were those who had participated in high school but now could not due to the time constraints of their current schedules. The second group comprised of those who were neither active in high school nor now. Their reason for current inactivity was a lack of interest.

Participation

Among those who currently participate in sport or physical activity (7 participants), the reasons for doing so were more diverse. Not only was there more, each participant also gave multiple reasons. Among these were the influence of friends, concerns about health and fitness, lifelong habit, and accessibility.
Sub theme 1: fitness/health

Health and fitness concerns were raised that revealed participants’ desires to manage their weight and body image and maintain sport-specific skills. Three (3) of the participants indicated health and fitness concerns. Jeannette and Terren discussed a desire to maintain weight. Terren put it simply saying, “Um because it’s college and I gained an excess amount of weight that I need to get rid of.” Jeannette instead mentioned a desire to return to a body ideal, mentioning the body she attained through sport in high school: “I had a fantastic body leaving senior year. Now it’s gone! That is one of the reasons. Um, it was good too. Abs, girl let me tell you.” But beyond maintaining body shape, they also indicated that remaining active helps to manage the stress in their lives. Erin’s fitness concerns revolved around her desire to maintain her skill level in her sport: “I felt that my skills in tennis were declining, and I wanted to make them better.”

Sub theme 2: habit

Habit refers to the participant’s recognition of the role of sport or physical activity in her life and a desire to thus maintain participation as a lifestyle choice. In talking about their reasons for participation in sport, four (4) of the participants indicated that they continue to participate because sport and physical activity have become habitual. For example, Jeannete said, “I don’t know. I was just always on a sports team. Just habit I guess. I always ran. It’s easy. Get your shoes and just go.” Elsie mentioned that her continued participation after high school was never doubted. It had become ingrained in her. Terren likewise mentioned:

“I’m not used to just going to school and not doing anything. Because, you know, I was active in high school. So I kind of want…kinda depend on that to keep me balanced. I want to be, like, a hard working student, as far as
like my mental capabilities, but I also want to be physically active in my physical capabilities with the rest of my body.”

The participants show an attraction to sport because of their past experiences. “Normal” life became playing sports, so it is only normal that they continue to do so.

**Sub theme 3: influence of friends**

The influence of friends on sport participation is evident through their suggestion of involvement and co-participation with the participant. Three (3) of the participants indicated the influence of their friends in their decisions to continue participation.

Frances pointed to her best friend as the reason that she participated in intramural sport, in the past in order to support her friend’s creation of the team. Erin continues to participate because she is able to play with her boyfriend and other friends. As she says, “Um, cuz my boyfriend plays [tennis]. And because I also have other friends that play. And so it’s just easier and more fun when you have other people who do it with you.” Lenay, who was not active in high school was motivated by her roommate:

> Usually because my roommate asks me. My roommate is super fit, super active. Oh goodness, this girl is crazy. She’s insane. So usu…Uh she asks me if I wanna, like, run with her for a little bit, do stadiums, or do yoga. Usually, I do it with her if I don’t have anything else.

Friends help to facilitate activity for the participants in each case by providing the participants with opportunities to participate.

**Sub theme 4: accessibility**

The last reason for current participation given was that of greater accessibility to participation opportunities. Only one participant, Sabra, indicated this reason for her current involvement in sport. She currently participates in intramural sport in college because opportunities for her are more accessible than they were in high school.
Yes I did volleyball, Frisbee, and basketball and I did volunteering with [youth physical activity initiative], so I’m doing a lot more physical activity than I did in high school. I think just cuz of…. I mean first off intramurals are free, so I don’t have to pay. And I, uh… I mean my parents aren’t, like, there to be like, “You know you probably shouldn’t do this. You should stay home and do this instead.” And it’s easily accessible. It’s not like a hassle to try and get myself to like… I’m on campus already, and if not, there’s buses that will bring me here and so I can play. And I just … it fits in with my schedule better now than it probably did back then.

The free entry for participants regardless of skill level, access to transportation, and scheduling of matches of the college intramural games eliminate the obstacles of participation that she experienced in high school.

**General View of Sport**

Because this study sought to uncover the views and experiences of young females with sport, it was important to understand how the participants viewed sport generally. They were asked to define sport in their own terms. In doing so, one main theme emerged. Specifically, six (6) of the participants thought physical activity was essential in the definition of sport participation. The following sample of quotations captures this theme:

Chloe: Just anything that involves you to… I would say, work out and, like, get… just any like physical thing…that it…it exerts physical energy I would say is a sport.

Melanie: Um, just hard strenuous activity, that’s not really, like, for me.

Lenay: I consider a sport anything where you’re really exerting physical effort and you’re exercising and getting your heart rate up.

Lenay further elaborated: “Bowling I have a hard time considering a sport. I don’t know. I feel like a sport, you have to sweat, you know. Bowling, you know, I mean maybe if you’re nervous. It’s not really….I don’t consider that too much of a sport.”

Three (3) others emphasized the importance of organization and structure to the
activity. It was important the sport be “organized” or that the athlete be playing on a school or community sponsored team.

**Sub Theme 1: Positive- Social Benefits through Sport**

After defining sport, the participants were asked their personal view of sport participation. This was then coded into two broad categories: positive or negative. Most participants (10) viewed sport positively. The main theme here was the effect of organized team membership, specifically the benefits it provides. Participants listed among the benefits the presence of coaches as positive role models, opportunities for physical activity, the ability to develop team work skills, and chances to meet new people.

Dori highlighted the influence of coaches to keep players out of trouble, especially males in single parent homes in need of positive male role models, saying, “but I do think it provides a structure that a lot of, in particular males, who many times at my school, were living in single parent homes, and the father was absent from the home, so you have that male figure in their lives still keeping them in check.” Frances saw sport as important for delivering values:

Sports is very important. It isn’t…It’s not just about physical activity, which is very important, but it’s also about working with others, working as a team, being competitive, winning and just being a part of something.

Lenay also saw sport as beneficial, in particular because it provides opportunities for physical activity that otherwise wouldn’t occur in our modern society:

I mean the physical activity, I think, is the biggest benefit. Um, just getting outside and doing something really working your body. I feel like a lot of people today, with technology, um…People just sit down on the computer on Facebook. They don’t really go out and do stuff.
Sub Theme 2: Negative- Sport as a Wasteful Activity

Only one participant, Melanie, had a negative perception of sport participation. To her, it seemed like a wasteful activity. Time would be better spent in furthering education or “more important” aspects of life. She saw athletes as “people who don’t have academic tendencies.” Athletes, especially male athletes received credit for their talents in sport while “you have your doctors who are out there saving lives, your lawyers who are doing things that are professional, really well in the world and they aren’t getting as much credit.” She put it bluntly, “But more or less for sports, it’s just, like, a waste of time and money. Like, what is it furthering, like, [in] my life? How is it saving people?”

Reasons for or against Sport Participation in High School

The interview questions allowed the participants the opportunity to elaborate on their own perceptions of the positive and negative aspects of sport participation in high school as well as the reasons for their participation or non-participation. Specifically, assumed lack of skill was the most common reason for non-participation in high school, and sport for activity’s sake, suggestion, fitness, and support for sport by parents were the reasons for sport participation identified by those that did participate in high school. A summary of the participants’ descriptions of their reasons for and against their own high school sport participation is presented in Table 4-2.

Sub Theme 1: Assumed Lack of Skills

The greatest reason for avoiding sport participation was the participant’s personal belief that she was unqualified to participate. After assessing her own skills and in comparing them to her perceptions of required standards, she deemed herself incapable, not giving coaches the opportunity to assess her talent. Three (3) of the four
(4) non-athlete participants mentioned that they did not feel capable of making the team.

Sabra mentioned:

Um…I was more so nervous that I wasn’t gonna be good enough for the team, cuz back then, like, our… I wanted to do basketball and the women’s basketball team at our school is really good. And so I didn’t think I would be able to, uh, meet up with expectations and, like, make the team, so I didn’t bother trying out.

Further, while she had experience in the sport in 8th grade, Lenay mentioned having started too late to be go out for the high school soccer team:

I started too late. I feel like if you want to do sports later on, you need to start them--to me, like, certain ones like soccer, basketball, stuff like-- that you need to start when you’re young, as in elementary school so that by the time you reach middle school or high school, if you want to play you’re….Cuz I think that’s the big reason why. If I started it earlier, if sports was something more that my parents did, um, when we were growing up, I probably would have played in high school.

Other reasons given for not participating in sport included bad previous experiences, injury concerns, and scheduling conflicts.

**Sub Theme 2: Sport for Activity’s Sake**

The most common reason given for joining a team was simply a need to find an activity to do to fill the time. Four (4) participants expressed this as a reason for their participation in high school sport. As Dori said, “For sports, it was more of a ‘I need to do something and I don’t want to walk through school just having done extracurricular activities.’” Terren said:

Um, (laughs) that’s an interesting one. I like those sports, and they were easy for me to do. And I wanted something to do after school so I didn’t have to go home, right away.
Terren moved around often throughout high school and sport remained a constant in her life. Sport became a greater weight as an activity that provided a vehicle to get more involved and restart:

Well for me, particularly, um, because I went to so many high schools, every time I’d restart. And sports was the easy way to restart and to feel part of the school, I guess, even though I didn’t have that much team spirit. But…I really didn’t. But my main thing was always, like, to get settled, and feel like I’m, I guess, acclimated to the situation and to play sports.

For all, there was interest but there seemed to be a “why not” attitude. For all the reasons possible, the simplest was looking for another opportunity to get involved and avoid having to go home too early.

Sub Theme 3: Suggestion

Getting involved was as simple as being asked to try a sport. Two (2) participants listed suggestion as one of the reasons they began participation. Dori pointed out: “Also someone asked me, um to do it, volleyball, and that’s how I got started….So, uh, the reasons why I did it: it was just an invite. All it took was an invite and then everything else was kind of… fell in place.” In contrast, Chloe pointed to the lack of invitation as a reason why she didn’t get involved:

Uh.. I was interested in tennis and, um, it seemed like I was gonna go out and do it but I didn’t because I guess nobody was really pushing me. I’m the kind of person who needs to be pushed towards an idea, if I’m not 100% passionate about it. So nobody was really pushing me, but I knew who to go to. I actually knew the guy, the coach. I knew who to go to to get involved, but I never actually did it. Um and I would say that it that’s because I wasn’t really pushed.

Sub Theme 4: Fitness

Two (2) participants also mentioned fitness concerns as reasons to be involved.

Jeannette originally saw joining the cross country team as an opportunity to get in
shape for track season. Similarly Dori saw the weight loss benefits of participating in track and field:

And then at the time I was a lot larger then I … then I am now and really helped me to tone up and shape up, and lose a lot of weight. And then I did shot put and disc to remain in shape. And that was interesting because you had quite a few, um, I had…There were quite a few times I had to go into the gym, and different things like that ,and bench press. And I didn’t know how to do that stuff but that’s kind of what made me do it. Just getting involved and not walking out of high school just being socially involved but also physically involved as well.

Family

The influence of the family was seen in three areas: economic factors, culture, and parental support for participant’s activities. Based on previous literature, when asked to comment on their reasons for participation or non-participation in high school sport, the participants were probed to specifically comment on economic, cultural, and support factors. The following sections detail the perceptions elaborated on by the participants.

Economic Factors

Potential economic factors encompassed the costs of activities and the burden presented by them. Only two (2) participants spoke of cost being a factor in their participation choice. The others recognized the help of fundraising or simply did not feel costs to have had an effect. Some mentioned that while they recognized the expense of the activities, their parents were willing to do all in their power to make things happen. The following quotes provide examples of how potential financial concerns were addressed by their parents.

Lenay: It was definitely tough for them to pay for these activities for us but I don't think they ever wanted to tell us, “No, you can’t do that because we didn’t have enough money.” So if it wasn’t something absolutely extravagant, they really tried to see what they could do so we could participate in the activity.
Dori: I remember like sometimes coming to my mom about that. Like, “oh yeah, I want… I want to do this, but I know it’s gonna…,” she’d be like, “What are you saying?” like, “Don’t even come to me and say that. If you wanna do it, like you’re gonna find a way. Like, we’ll get the money. Like that shouldn’t be a reason why you don’t do anything.” Like, um, like we not rich or anything like that, like far from it. But I could honestly say that they always made the ends connect. Always.

Culture

Participants were asked whether or not they felt that culture may have had an effect on their parents’ views of sport. Three (3) participants believed that culture may have an effect on the sports their parents preferred or saw as more African-American. Two participants recalled that their parents’ native culture affected their views of masculinity and femininity.

Two (2) participants explained cultural view of femininity found amongst Haitians. There is an acceptance of an ultra-feminine image. A strong distinction is made between women and men. Traditional masculine tasks are still unacceptable for women. Makeup, dresses, and cooking are the domains of women. The following quotations from Dori and Chloe explain the differences.

Dori: I think because of the way that my culture is, there are some things that I already know that ladies just aren’t supposed to do, so I kind of accepted that so when I would be confronted with that I’d brush it off, so I wouldn’t remember. Um but now that, I mean trying to recall. I don’t recall any instance that came to my mind.

Me: And when you say things ladies aren’t supposed to do, what type of things would those be?

Dori: Like, uh, the more manly sports, like wrestling. You know, “Ladies shouldn’t wrestle. Well that’s… that’s a man’s thing” Just getting your hands dirty. Doing car work. Different things like that. That’s just not something ladies do. I mean you call the men for that. You don’t repair. You call the men for that. Well sports, I think there’s just certain things we’re you…People don’t take you seriously because you’re quote, unquote “in the wrong,” um sector of the athletic realm, but…
Chloe: “But in the Haitian culture, like, a woman is supposed to be really feminine and a man is supposed to be really masculine. So I guess as far as her wanting me to dance, like...I mean knowing me now, it might be surprising to you, but I didn’t like... I didn’t really like to dress up, when I was younger. But, like, my mom, she would always be pushing me like, “Oh, you should put this on, you should wear some heels. Put some powder on your face.” I’d just be like, “Calm down. I don’t have time for all of this.” But um, but it’s like,... And wanting me to always watch her in the kitchen, like, “Oh you need to know how to cook. You need to know how to cook cuz your man is gonna expect that out of you,” and stuff like that. And me just kinda being like, “I don’t really wanna watch you cook right now.” Um so I definitely, cuz of the Haitian culture… Like it’s very…Like, it’s like that. You’re expected… like a woman is expected to know how to cook, to know how to clean, to be very feminine, like to walk a certain way. Um and a man is expected to, like, take care of his…take care of your family.”

Support for Sport by Parents

Support for sport was divided into three categories: emotional, financial, and transportation:

- Emotional: attendance at events when possible, positive encouragement
- Financial: provision of funds to cover costs of activities
- Transportation: willingness to provide rides to and from activities.

Each participant talked about the support they received differently. While none spoke of a parent’s outright disapproval of their participation, each participant received a different level of support. Unlike those who discussed their parents’ support of their extracurricular activities, those who participated in sport related more of a balance between their parents’ support levels. The support they received ranged from high to low. Erin spoke of a traditional level of high support of support, while Dori spoke of a lower level of support.

Erin: Yes, they were very supportive. If I needed something for tennis, they would eagerly buy it for me. And they always came to, um, practice, and they always encouraged me.
Dori: They allowed me to do it, but they never assisted in anything. In any way shape or form...it was not that they didn’t support me. Anything that I did, my parents supported, in terms of allowing me to do it. Actively supporting, they took more of a passive role. My dad’s a jokester and he kind of thinks a lot of things are funny and he can crack himself up. But one of the reasons why he kind of laughed one of the times was because I asked him to come to my game and he was like, “How’s your season doing?” I was like, “It’s doing alright, but we’re not winning a lot of games.” And he was like, “so you want me to what watch you lose?” And I was like, “No you’re there for support,” but he was like, [said in jest] “But you’re gonna lose.” And so the joke of the house was, we brought it up last year, or two years ago. I brought it up and was like, “You never even supported my games.” He was like, “Cuz you lost all the time.” And like everybody started laughing. And it was funny to them, not funny to me cuz I still had to go play. But in that respect, they didn’t laugh at me because I was playing a sport. They laughed at me because my season wasn’t doing as well as we would have hoped.

Social Identity

To better understand how the participants have shaped their identities within their membership groups (i.e., women and black women specifically), participants were asked questions related to those identities.

Theme: Importance of Education

Because the role of education emerged as a theme in the research (Tracy & Erkut, 2002), participants were asked questions about their views on and the role of education in their sporting lives. Some participants (3), while not asked directly, expressed strong views on the topic when asked about other topics, such as culture, income, or sport in general. Seven participants spoke about the importance of education to both them and their parents. Sabra and Chloe, both of Haitian descent, indicated that a focus on education was an aspect of their parents’ culture.

Sabra: Like the culture is really for them, it’s more of your time needs to be spent on getting good grades and being with your family. So sports is kinda...I mean if that’s what you wanna do, then okay, but it’s not like it’s something that’s like, you know, highly encouraged. You should probably,
like, more so, like really stay home and study and then maybe get a job when you’re a little older.

Chloe: So my mom, she went, like she got a certificate to teach and my dad got a certificate as a mental health technician, but nothing beyond that, because they started having a family and um it was kinda like, “Okay, I’m gonna work to take care of my kids and I expect them to... like.. um...
Because I sacrificed and I am sacrificing for them, like I expect them to go to school and like do well.” So I guess like with them building on the family and not being born here, um, they kinda, like, stopped going to school to help support the family and then kind of said, “Okay, I’m gonna support the education of my children,” instead of being like putting them on the back burner.

Four others simply related it as important to their parents, as exemplified by this quote from Melanie:

Both my parents graduated from college, and stuff. So it was more or less, like school, school, school, school, school if anything. Don’t get too involved so that you can’t concentrate on school, but just get involved enough so you can build up a resume and something to talk about with people in interviews.

When reviewing the relationship between sport and education in their lives, the four athletes who commented on the topic saw no conflict.

Terren: Personally, no, [there was no conflict], um, because I told you, my parents were very strong advocates of education. I knew where to draw the line. And there were some games I did miss because I had, like, a dual enrolled class or something. So personally, for me it was not an issue. I didn’t go to high school to play sports. I went to high school to learn.

Frances saw sport as beneficial to helping her achieve her educational goals because of the time management it forced her to acquire:

For me, I feel when I’m doing multiple activities, and balancing things, my grades tend to be better cuz there’s less time for me to, like, do nothing, slack off, and procrastinate, so I’m more on top of my game, when there’s a.....So having sports helped me to balance things, and not procrastinate and get things done.
Theme: Gender Identity and Sport

To gauge the participants’ views of women in sports, they were asked whether there were acceptable or unacceptable sports for women and a similar prompt in reference specifically to black women. Contact sports, such as football and hockey, were deemed unacceptable for all women by four (4) participants. Other than that, no major distinction was made. By and large, they saw sport as not being racialized in their own minds. However, they did name sports in which black women are not traditionally involved, such as golf, swimming, and hockey. Rather than their own personal views, they seemed to relate what others might think were they to see black women involved.

Chloe: But I think people would be really odd [confused] if they saw, like, a black woman playing golf. They’d probably…probably be like, “What?!” That’s new.” And like, hockey. I don’t know.

Terren: I guess in a lot of people’s mindsets, that, oh I play tennis and that’s a white sport. You know except for Venus and Serena. Everyone’s like, “Oh, is that why you play?” I kinda started playing before they were even known. So that’s kinda funny to me to say that.

From the discussion of sports, participants were led to think about their views of female athletes and black female athletes, specifically.

Sub theme 1: Williams effect

Participants were asked to say what the terms “female athlete” and “black female athlete” brought to mind. By and large, the image of a female athlete was Venus and Serena Williams. Six (6) of the participants indicated one or both when asked to think of a female athlete. Two (2) others mentioned other notable black athletes --Marion Jones and Wilma Rudolph-- as coming to mind first when thinking about female athletes in general.
Sub theme 2: butch and lesbian

In describing female athletes in general, the most common theme was the manly, butch, possibly lesbian female athlete. This view was held by both athletes (2) and non-athletes (3). Melanie was not an athlete and described herself as delicate. The girls who were athletes were in stark contrast to her and femininity:

Like, if there were girls who participated in sport, they were your butch very, very, you know, aggressive girls. You know, like for me it was kinda like, I know this sounds really bad, but it was kinda like shrug your shoulders, they’re kinda like guys in dresses anyways, and stuff.

Terren, an athlete, based her description on her personal experiences with her peers.

She had this to say in her description of female athletes:

Uhm, first thing that comes to mind is scary, butch looking females, (laughs) unfortunately. I mean, there was at least one on the team. But, uh, I...I hate the fact that we have that stereotype, that you have to be, you know, like, this overbearing looking, man-looking person. But, uh, a lot of sports that’s the case. Especially my…on my basketball team. I know that we had a lot of manly looking girls, that may or may not have preferred, um, the regular sexual orientation. But um, I don’t… I don’t think that we should have that idea. But unfortunately, that was the first thing that came to my mind.

Stereotypes about basketball players were expressed by other women as well. In particular, there was a link between basketball and lesbianism. Chloe didn’t personally subscribe to the belief but recognized the stereotype as popular and foremost in her mind when thinking of female athletes in high school:

Like they had this thing, which is not true, but, like, based on, like, girls on the basketball team was gay and stuff like that, which I know is not true. But some of them tended to be. Um, but that’s like the really…that’s like the most popular stereotype I’ve heard.

Frances was a member of the basketball team and was concerned about how the stereotype may have affected others’ view of her.

I mean you’re in high school and stuff like that. Definitely worried, like you know. I don’t want people to think I’m gay. You know girls, especially, like
black girls playing basketball. So...cuz you see that stereotype, or whatever, in the media sometimes.

Sub theme 3: breaking stereotypes

Athletes were also described in more positive terms traits by five participants. In particular, they were noted for positive personality described with terms such as “more outgoing and more social (Erin),” “mental endurance (Jeannette),” “not afraid of what people are gonna say (Frances).” There was the idea that the female athlete defies the stereotypes that dictate what a woman should be. There was a notion of strength which enables them to persevere and do what others don’t expect. Lenay summarized it based in saying:

I feel like that’s very...How can I say this? Um...defying, like, sexual stereotypes. If you’re really, like...you’re a great athlete and you’re female...I don’t know. They just seemed a lot more, like, bad ass to me. That’s what I liked. They...I don’t know, I really admired them for that. .... Well defying stereotypes are like girls who are really weak and just like to sit at home and like bake cookies, or, you know, watch movies, read. Not that there’s anything wrong with those activities, but really like girls getting out there exerting themselves and pushing themselves to the limit, I think that’s really cool. When I see the Olympians or the women on TV, I’m so much more impressed by them than I am by, like, male Olympians.

Theme: Appearance Concerns

To better understand how concerns about personal appearance factor into decisions about sport participation, the participants were asked, “Can you describe a time in high school when you were concerned with how sports participation would affect the maintenance of your personal appearance?” The main sub themes emerging here were issues concerning hair and skin darkening.

Sub theme 1: hair

Five participants described concerns they had with revolving around their hair. Concerns about hair were mostly due to the effects of water or sweat. Avoidance of
swimming was common as a way to keep hair manageable. Erin, concerned about the damaging effects that the chlorine would have on her hair, said, “I know I couldn’t do [swimming] because the chlorine would affect my hair, and I didn’t want my hair to… I didn’t want that for my hair.” Sabra also ruled out swimming, but the desire to maintain her relaxer (also referred to as a perm) also led her to avoid cross country as well:

I immediately crossed out swimming because I knew … I’d have to wet my hair, which my hair was permed and perm and water don’t mix. So I didn’t, you know… I didn’t want to have to go through the hassle of trying to manage my hair or just, like, have it thrown back the whole time. And that’s also the reason why [when] I started to do cross country and I was just like, we have to run outside too much, I’m gonna sweat, I’ll sweat out my perm.

After achieving a straight look with a relaxer, water would cause the hair to revert back to its curly state. Additionally, “to sweat out a perm” would be to cause a similar reversion, albeit more costly as it negates the effect of the freshly applied chemical straightener. Chloe’s main concern was not maintaining a relaxer but the hassles of frequent styling. Speaking of her decision not to become a majorette, she said:

I didn’t wanna do it because I didn’t want to wear my hair like everybody else’s cuz I’m natural, a lot of them had relaxers. And I just felt like that would be a lot. Like the way…what they used to do to their hair. Would I probably have to be relaxed? So that was another thing that kept me.

Sub theme 2: fear of darkening

The last appearance concern was a fear of getting darker. Three of the participants discussed this concern. This was evident by an aversion to outdoor sports and trying to stay out of the sun. Chloe best illustrated this concern:

I know that sounds, like, superficial, but not wanting to be in the sun. Like band would be in the sun. Like…like, you would have your…your band season complexion and then your normal complexion. Like, people who was supposed to be really, really light and bright would be really, like, chocolate because it was band season. And I’m like…I’m already chocolate so, um…but yeah.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes Discussed</th>
<th># of participants</th>
<th>Sample quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non participation (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time constraints</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;I've had a lot of ... a lot of things going on...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of interest</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;Lack of interest is why.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation (7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habit</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>&quot;I don’t know. I was just always on a sports team.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of friends</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;Um, cuz my boyfriend plays [tennis]. And because I also have other friends that play.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness/Health</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;Um because it’s college and I gained an excess amount of weight that I need to get rid of.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;And it’s easily accessible. It’s not like a hassle to try...&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4-2. Descriptions of the reasons for and against high school sport participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High school participation</th>
<th># of participants</th>
<th>Sample quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-participation (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumed lack of skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“Um…I was more so nervous that I wasn’t gonna be good enough for the team…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injury concerns</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;Um for me it was really like I just see how many people get hurt, and I’m like I’m very, very, cautious or prudent more or less.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduling</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“By that time I had all my other activities and I didn’t have time.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad previous experience</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;I did club soccer for my city. And it was fun, but the coach was really terrible, and his attitude towards us was terrible, so I never, like, wanted to pursue it more.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation (7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport for activity’s sake</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>&quot;And I wanted something to do after school so I didn’t have to go home, right away.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;So, uh, the reasons why I did it: it was just an invite&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;And then at the time I was a lot larger then I … then I am now and really helped me to tone up and shape up, and lose a lot of weight.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of African-American women’s experiences and views of high school sport. It was important to seek the participation of both those who did and those who did not participate in high school sport to gain a fuller understanding of the African-American experience. With seven of the eleven participants reporting high school sport participation, the sample had a higher percentage (~ 64%) of participation than the national average for of 46.7% black females reported by Eaton et. al. (2010). While unrepresentative statistically, the higher percentage allowed a greater number of sporting experiences to be uncovered than would have otherwise been possible.

During the course of the interview process, six research questions were addressed. Broadly, they regarded (a) the reasons for sport participation, (b) activities chosen instead, (c) the role of parents/guardians, (d) the role of income and economic factors, (e) the influence of the high school, and (f) role of social identity. The first five questions were answered in relation to factors directly impacting participants’ experiences in sport, while the last was answered by their descriptions of their identity in light of sport participation.

**Experiences**

The factors related to the participants’ experiences in sport were their reasons for or against participation and economic factors.

**Reasons**

The participants’ reasons for their current participation support the findings in the research mentioned above. The sub theme of accessibility supports the findings of
Casey et al. (2009). The authors recognized the possibility of reduced opportunities of participation when parents are not supportive and do not provide transportation. Here in this study, Sabra felt sport was now more accessible because she was no longer hindered by her parents’ views of sport and because she had easy access to transportation to games that she began participating intramural sports. The sub theme of suggestion supports both the findings of Casey et al. (2009) and Thompson et al. (2005). While both studies recognized the importance of peers in adolescent participation, the current study shows peer influence continues to factor in the participants’ lives after high school. The work of Kjønniksen et al. (2009) was supported, as five of the seven athlete participants continued to participate in physical activity after high school. The current study adds to that research by revealing the establishment of habit as a potential reason why female high school athletes in that study were more likely to be physically active adults.

In terms of their high school participation, again Casey et al. (2009) was supported by the finding of an assumed lack of skill as a reason for inactivity and the influence of suggestion to be a reason for activity. Because the Casey et al. study was based in Australia, the current study adds to the literature by addressing the participation concerns of American, specifically African-American, girls. Also, because much of the research focused on the level of influence from parents and peers, the findings in this study suggest that other elders in high school girls’ lives, specifically school personnel, may also play role in getting involved in sport by suggesting their participation and encouraging them to try out for school teams. The findings here provide insight into the influence of “perception” and the perceived perception of others’
on the experiences of African-American females in sport. Understanding how these perceptions develop and then manifest into young adolescent females’ lives is an important area for future research.

**Economic Factors**

Economic factors did not play a large role in this study. The majority of participants did not see costs as important factors in their decisions. This was not expected given previous research pointing to the influence of race and income on sport and physical activity. However this may be because the sample had demographics vastly different from those explored in previous studies. Previous research (Kimm et al., 2002; Lown & Braunschweig, 2008) overwhelmingly explores issues using populations comprised of low income black girls from urban areas. The sample was overwhelmingly middle class and grew up with, for the most part, both parents in the home. This study adds to current literature by providing a voice to an often overlooked segment of the black population: the middle class. That most of the women in the study believed cost was not an issue and yet not all participated in sport suggests that reasons not directly linked to financial expense should be uncovered in exploring inactivity amongst black girls. In particular exploring factors related to social identity may prove helpful.

**Social Identity**

Social identity was included in this study as a means of understanding the implications of the membership in the social group, black women, had for sport participation. The three main issues that developed were gender identity, education, and appearance concerns.
Gender Identity

When participants were asked to identify their thoughts on the term female athlete, the question sought the participants’ first impression of the term to determine their general view of female athletes. While Venus and Serena Williams, Marion Jones, and Wilma Rudolph are national sport icons, it is interesting that no athletes of other races were named. That all of the famous athletes named by the participants were all black athletes suggests that the participants identified more readily with black athletes. This is in keeping with SIT in that there is a greater identification with in-group peers. Their view of gender and sport may be racialized due to their shared experiences in sport and out in their greater lives.

The racialization of their gendered experience was further evident in the presentation of lesbian and butch stereotypes. In light of the findings of Rao and Overman (1984), I did not expect as many of the participants to present lesbian stereotypes in their descriptions of athletes. There should have been a greater acceptance of traditional masculine traits among female athletes rather than stigmatizing effect. It was most surprising, however, that these views were held by athletes, those involved in the sport. SIT suggests that shared meanings may arise from encounters with stereotypes. Because basketball is the sport that the stereotype was most directed to, it is possible that Frances and Terren had much more experience and found much of their athletic identity formed in defense of it. More research should be done to understand the effects such stereotypes have on the athletes.

The discussion of culture provided further counters to the acceptance of masculine traits with feminine identity. Originally, I believed that culture would have an effect in terms of sports chosen, enthusiasm for those sports, and possibly a distaste for
sport. The revelations about Haitian culture came as a complete surprise. The finding is in stark contrast to the findings of Rao and Overman (1984). Rather than being more open in their view of femininity, culture had the effect of pushing a more feminine ideal, which would lead to greater conflict between the roles of athlete and woman. Because this finding was related to the Haitian heritage of the participants, it gave voice to a subgroup of the black population not yet explored in sport research. Rather than looking at blacks as a homogenous group, more notice should be taken of cultural subgroups. Because immigrants from the Caribbean, Africa, and other places are classified as black, they may be subject to both the same and completely different influences from the general black population in America.

**Education**

Many of the participants had both a positive view of sport and education. This was expected. What was not expected was the view of sport as a waste of time in light of the importance of education. While only one participant expressed this view, it was particularly strong enough to merit discussion. Her statements related directly to the research of Tracy and Erkut (2002) about black high school girls. That research indicated that black girls saw education as the best route to popularity. Melanie likewise indicated a preference for education over sport. Specifically she saw greater importance in the professions of medical doctors and lawyers than in the pursuit of athletics. Because her viewpoint was so strong, further research should be done to determine whether this is a prevalent view among black girls.

**Appearance Concerns**

In asking about personal appearance concerns, it was expected that hair would be an issue for many of the black women. What was not expected was the concern
about skin darkening. That three of the women expressed a decision to avoid sports because of this fear suggests that it was salient enough a concern to warrant recall. The sun and outdoor sports may have been avoided in order to avoid the greater distinction that darker skin brings in relation to one’s peers. It may also be an action related to shared experiences with discrimination due to skin color and a desire to minimize further instances.
CHAPTER 6
LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Limitations

Because I, the researcher, am also an African-American female, it is possible that the answers I received from the participants would differ from those collected were a researcher of a different race or gender had conducted the interviews. It is also possible, however, that my similarity to the participants allowed a greater freedom in their answers that would be otherwise possible to achieve.

Nevertheless these findings are not generalizable to the African-American female population as a whole. First, the pool of potential participants was limited to schools in the southeastern United States. Because there may be regional differences in the experiences of African-Americans, this poses a limitation. Second, the participants have described their unique experiences. A number of factors specific to the individual colors each experience. Thus while this research has found similarities in the participants’ experiences, it makes no claim that these findings will apply to the African-American female population as a whole.

Implications for Future Research

Future research arising from the findings of this study would further explore the experiences of black women in sport. In particular, a greater breadth of the population should be studied. First, while studies have explored immigrants and their sport participation, future research should explore the impacts of immigration or first-generational status on sport participation. This would look directly at the intersections between their native cultural identities, assimilated American black identity, and sport. Second, the findings suggest that more income groups should be included in studies of
sport participation experiences. By expanding research studies to include a greater span of the economic spectrum, more issues that are specific to participants’ identities as black girls rather than their parents’ income will be uncovered. This will be important to determine whether the best ways to address inactivity would be based on socioeconomic status or social identity. Finally, and more specifically, more information should be collected regarding the breadth of the impact hair, skin, and other appearance concerns have on participation levels. These identity issues are often overlooked in survey research as the scale of measurement is often hard to quantify. As such, continued research should incorporate interview samples from across the country that examine the potential social identity factors that are involved in shaping and defining the female sport participant’s experience.

Moving beyond the black community, more research should be conducted on girls of all races and income. More can be done to learn their reasons for and against sport participation. Because an assumed lack of skill appeared in this study and in Casey et al., future research should seek to understand how girls come to perceive these skill differences. Further qualitative study can be undertaken to understand the mechanisms by which they compare their skills to others and the ages at which such comparisons cause girls to begin to exclude themselves from sport.

Each of the reasons given for and against sport participation can provide a starting point for future research. However, the impact of friends on participation choices should especially be studied. In this study, friends were listed as a reason not just in high school participation but in participation beyond in to early adulthood. The role of peer influence in adult activity choices should be researched to better understand the
power of this potential resource in encouraging higher levels of sport participation and physical activity among women.

**Implications for Sport Managers**

The current research has implications for those involved in youth sport initiatives at all levels of competition, from community to high school. Because the assumed lack of skill was a major factor against sport participation, it is important that sport managers provide opportunities for sport participation that are not tryout based. At the community level this would require ensuring recreational teams are available for older children, and in the high school setting this may involve the installation of intramural programs. This may encourage girls who are not yet confident in their skills to join teams at a higher rate.

Issues directly tied to race should also be addressed. Race based initiatives should take into account the possibility of multiple cultural groups within the black population and the different needs of those groups. The initiatives should also account for specific appearance concerns of black girls. More can be done to lessen the impact of such concerns have on participation. This can be done by educating girls about their options for reducing possible problems with hair while maintaining participation. Skin color concerns will need to be addressed in a sensitive manner taking into full account the reasons for concern.
APPENDIX
INTERVIEW GUIDE

• Opening prompt (2 minutes allotted)
  The goal of this study is to take a look at African-American women’s experiences with high school sport and extracurricular activities. So, before we start, I would like you to take a moment to reflect back on your high school experience. Think about all of the extracurricular activities you participated in (for example, sports, clubs, an after school job), what your friend group was like, what your peers were like, and your high school in general.

  Next reflect on what your relationship with your family was like during your high school years, specifically think about the role your family played in your extracurricular activities as well as some of the activities that your family may have been involved in. Finally, with your permission, I would like to audiotape this interview. This data will be kept confidential. (If prefer not to audiotape, ask if notes may be taken and used as data).

  I would also like to highlight that you may skip any questions you don’t want to answer and that you may ask to withdraw from the study or stop recording at any time.

• Preliminary questions
  • What is your age?
  • Your year of study and the degree you are pursuing at the University of Florida (UF)?
  • What high school did you attend and where was it located? (To help ensure sample includes diversity in schools and cities represented)
  • Main questions
  • Extracurricular high school involvement
In this next section, I am particularly interested in the extracurricular activities that you were involved in high school.

- **Topic: Sports - school and community**
  - Did you participate in any sports while in high school? It is important to note that during this discussion sports may include all levels of involvement, ranging from organized team participation (varsity, JV, church leagues, community sports) to informal pick-up games.
    - If no, why did you choose not to participate in sports?
    - If yes, answer (a-g). If no, skip to (h).
    - If yes, which sports were you involved in?
    - How long were you involved in that sport? (years, hours a week)
    - How did you get involved?
      - Can you provide an example or story that comes to mind of a particularly positive experience with your sports involvement?
      - Can you provide an example or story that comes to mind of a particularly negative experience with your sports involvement?
      - What were your reasons for participating in formal (organized) sports? (if applicable)
      - What were your reasons for participating in pick up sports? (if applicable)

- **Topic: Clubs at school, community organizations**
  - Did you participate in any clubs at your high school or within the community?
    - If yes, which clubs were you involved in?
  - What were your reasons for participating in high school or community clubs? (if applicable)

- **Topic: Jobs**
  - Did you have a part-time or full-time job during high school?
    - If yes, did this job take away from your other extra-curricular involvement? Did it limit your ability to participate?

- **Topic: Informal activities**
Were you involved in other informal activities during high school? This may include, but is not limited to time spent “hanging out” with friends, hobbies, church or other solitary activities outside of sport and organized clubs and programs.

- If yes, what portion of your time outside of school was spent on these activities?
  - Probe: Hours per day/week, days per week

In the next few sections, I will be asking questions to gain an understanding of what factors may have played a role in your participation (or lack thereof) in sport activities.

- Role of high school environment in activity choices
  - What activities did your high school offer?
    - Probe: Sports teams, clubs and organizations
  - Were there participation costs for these activities? (Membership fees, dues, uniform costs, etc.) Were the fees higher for certain activities? Please explain.
    - Probe: Exact costs, which particular activities were most expensive
  - Did your school provide transportation to students to participate in these activities?
    - Probe: Was this the case for sports and club activities?
  - How would you describe the racial make-up of your high school?
    - Probe: The racial make-up of the high school as a whole? Sport teams?
    - Probe: The racial make-up of your friend group?
  - What was the economic status of the area surrounding your high school?
    - Probe: Would you describe the area as low, middle, or high income? What factors lead you to this conclusion?
    - Probe: Did your school have a free and reduced lunch program?
    - Probe: Did your school have adequate classroom resources? (Enough textbooks per student, condition of materials, etc.)
  - (Note: Last two probes give an idea of the economic make-up of the student body and high school itself, respectively)
In this section, I will be asking questions regarding your family and their role in shaping your involvement in high school activities. I would first like you to tell me a little about your family structure. For instance, did you live with one or both of your parents or with another guardian?

- Role of parents/guardians and family in activity choices
  - What are/were your parents’ views on sport participation/alternative activities?
    - Probe: Were they supportive? Emotionally? Financially?
    - Probe: Did they provide transportation to activities (if applicable)?
    - Probe for: Which activities? Transportation to sports? Clubs? All?
  - What is the highest level of schooling that your parents have completed?
  - What is your parent’s sport participation background? For example, did they participate in sports? If yes, which sports?
  - Did any of your parents’ own cultural influences affect their view on sport? For example did they come from a culture where sport was viewed favorably, or instead sport was seen negatively?
  - Did your siblings participate in sport?
    - If yes, do you have brothers or sisters? Which sport(s) did they play?

In this section, I will be asking questions regarding how economic factors may have influenced your involvement in high school activities.

- Role of family income and economic status in activity choices
  - Did the actual cost of high school or community sports, activities, or clubs ever influence whether or not you could participate?
    - Probe: If yes, were clubs or sporting activities influenced more by cost? Or were they about the same?
    - Probe: If you are comfortable, can you describe a situation where money was an issue in your participation?
In this final section, I will be asking questions regarding how you view sports participation.

- **Role of Social Identity in activity choices**
  - How would you define sport participation?
    - Probe: What activities or sports are included in this definition?
  - In your mind, are there acceptable and unacceptable sports for females? If so, what are they?
  - In your mind, are there acceptable and unacceptable sports for black females? If so, what are they?
  - What comes to mind when I say “female athlete”?
    - Probe: Are there stereotypes that come to mind with the term “female athlete”? If yes, what are they? Does it call to mind particular famous athletes, personality types? Do you consider yourself an athlete?
  - What comes to mind when I say “black female athlete”?
    - Probe: Does it call to mind particular athletes? Are there stereotypes attached to the term “black female athlete”? If yes, what are they?
  - How do you see/perceive/view other females who participated in sport in high school?
    - Probe: A positive or negative perception of other females who may be involved in sport? Provide an example of a female in high school who you associate with sports participation.
  - What is your personal view of sport participation?
    - Probe: Do you see it as positive or negative? Why? (Gauging personal views of sport participation, meanings attached to athletes.)
    - Probe: If mentioned participation in academically focused extracurriculars, then- Were you concerned that it may interfere with your academic success? In what way?
  - How did your friends in high school view sport participation?
    - Probe: What gives you the impression that they had this view?
o Can you describe a time in high school when you were concerned with how sports participation would affect your maintenance of personal appearance?
  ▪ Probes: Concerned with hair? (Concerns with sweating out “perm,” ruining a new style) Concerns with changes in weight/size? Concerns with losing too much weight or gaining too much mass? Concerns with the required uniform/attire?
  ▪ Probe: Any other concerns with personal appearance?

• Final Comments: Current opinion on participation
  o Do you currently participate in any sports? Physical activity programs? Clubs?
    ▪ Probe: Explain why or why not.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME
LIST OF REFERENCES


65


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Nneka attended the University of Georgia where she received a Bachelor of Science in sport management in 2009. She served as a teaching assistant at the University of Florida.