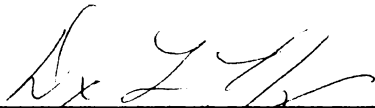
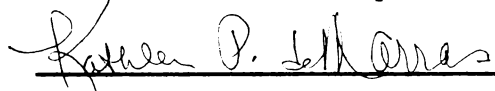


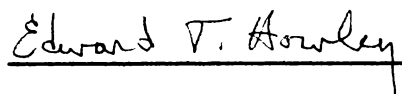
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Sue R. Leggett entitled "The Exercise Experiences of Active, Older African-American Women." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Human Performance and Sport Studies.


Dixie L. Thompson, Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:


Kathleen P. Lethbrun


Edward T. Howley

Accepted for the Council:


Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of The Graduate School

**THE EXERCISE EXPERIENCES OF ACTIVE, OLDER
AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN**

**A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Science Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville**

**Sue R. Leggett
December, 1996**

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all the special people in my life who have loved, supported, challenged, and encouraged me throughout this process. Thank you so very much.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my major professor, Dr. Dixie L. Thompson, for her guidance, patience, and encouragement. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Edward T. Howley and Dr. Kathleen Bennett deMarrais for their insights and support. Finally, I would like to thank the participants of this study. Without their willingness to share their lives , this thesis could not have been written.

ABSTRACT

Increased longevity in the population makes the health benefits of exercise more pronounced. Although limited, research indicates that the majority of older African-American women are sedentary. Gaining a fuller understanding of the exercise experiences of those who are physically active may lead to successful interventions that promote healthier lifestyles and enhanced quality of life.

In the present study, an attempt was made to identify physically-active African-American females over the age of 55 years and, using a qualitative interview methodology, characterize their exercise experience and identify reasons why they choose to participate in regular physical activity. By using an inductive approach, a window of understanding was opened to the exercise behavior of older African-American women. One interview was conducted with each participant and lasted approximately one hour. Five major themes emerged from these interviews: (1) The Segregated South, (2) Physical Work, Activity, and Walking as a Way of Life, (3) External Support, (4) Determination, Positive Attitude, Strong Sense of Self, and (5) Awareness of Aging and Commitment to Activity. This information could be beneficial to health professionals in the development of focused interventions to promote physical activity within this subgroup. Moreover, the results might allow the generation of more enlightened research hypotheses which could then be subsequently tested on larger samples using standard quantitative methods.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	5
Definition of Terms	5
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	7
Introduction	7
The Aging Process	8
Positive Benefits of Exercise Upon Aging	9
Exercise Prevalence Among the Elderly	13
Factors Contributing to Exercise Participation	14
Ethnicity and Health Risk: Older African-American Women	17
Summary	19
III. METHODOLOGY	22
Research Design	22
Participants	23
Procedures for Data Collection	25
Data Analysis	26
Subjectivity Statement	27
IV. DATA PRESENTATION	29
Thematic Structure	29
Theme 1. The Segregated South	30
Theme 2. Physical Work, Activity, and Walking as a Way of Life	33
Theme 3. External Support	37
Theme 4. Determination, Positive Attitude, Strong Sense of Self	41
Theme 5. Awareness of Aging and Commitment to Activity	44
Summary	47
V. SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS	49
Summary	49
Discussion	52
Implications	57
REFERENCES	59
APPENDICES	66
Appendix A: Informed Consent Form	67
Appendix B: Health and Personal History Questionnaire	68
Appendix C: Interview Guide	70

Appendix D: Theme 1. The Segregated South	71
Appendix E: Theme 2. Physical Work, Activity, and Walking as a Way of Life	75
Appendix F: Theme 3. External Support	85
Appendix G: Theme 4. Determination, Positive Attitude, Strong Sense of Self	94
Appendix H: Theme 5. Awareness of Aging and Commitment to Activity	105
VITA	112

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The fastest growing segment of the population in the United States is the sixty-five and older age category. During the past two decades, this group grew twice as quickly as the rest of the population and in 1989 comprised a full 9% of the citizens (Ostrow, 1989). By the year 2000, the number will increase to 12%, bringing the total number of older Americans to 34.9 million (Rikkers, 1986). In this group females significantly outnumber males and have an average life span that extends 7 or 8 years beyond that of men (O'Brien & Vertinski, 1991).

Advances in medicine and technology have reduced the occurrence of acute diseases, postponed the onset of chronic illnesses, and nearly eliminated premature death, thereby increasing the average life expectancy by approximately thirty years since the turn of the 20th century (Ostrow, 1989). With current trends indicating a growing number of individuals are surviving into their 80s and 90s (McMurdo, 1993), it is important to shift the attention from mere extension of life to increasing the levels of physical functioning in old age. Recent research focuses on how to obtain a higher quality of life during these extended years (Voorrips et al., 1991; Kaplan et al., 1993). Two factors that may influence quality of life in the elderly are general health status and mobility (Voorrips et al., 1991). Physical activity has been shown to have an impact on these factors.

Several studies suggest that regular physical activity can significantly reduce the occurrence and degree of a number of age-related declines in health. For example, exercise has been associated with a reduced risk of coronary heart disease, obesity, hypertension, and diabetes and with increases in metabolic rate, bone mineral content, strength and sensorimotor function (Blumenthal, 1989; Ferrini, 1989; Gill et al., 1993; Greendale et al., 1996; Lord et al., 1995; Nichols et al., 1993).

The increasing size of the older population has given rise to many interesting questions about the role of physical activity among the aged. Participation in regular exercise is highly promoted for the young and middle-aged, but less is heard about its importance for the elderly. Although evidence shows that maintaining a physically active lifestyle is related to better health, the percentage of elderly individuals participating in regular exercise is low (Gill et al., 1993). Fifty percent of North Americans report exercising three or more times a week (O'Brien & Vertinski, 1991) but the proportion of those who say they never exercise doubles from 19% for those under 55 to 36% for individuals 55 and over. Moreover, women make up a large portion of this sedentary group (Janzen & Cousins, 1995).

Recently, Willis and Campbell (1989) suggested a number of factors that might influence exercise participation. These include exercise history, socioeconomic conditions, attitude, health knowledge and beliefs, spousal support, peer social support, work demands, convenience, program social support, program leadership, perceived choice, health, sense of well-being, and enjoyment. Gill and Overdorf (1993) also suggest that the meaning of an exercise experience for an individual is a

psychosocial factor which may influence participation in physical activity.

Although a variety of factors have been associated with physical activity levels in adults, little research has focused on the physical activity behavior of women as they age. Even less information is available regarding the aging and activity behavior of African-American women (King et al., 1992). The limited current literature suggests that African-American women have extremely low levels of physical activity (Washburn et al., 1992). This finding is particularly disturbing in light of the fact that there is a higher prevalence of obesity and other coronary risk factors in this group (Farrell et al., 1987). Moreover, African-Americans have poor health status on a variety of outcomes such as, mortality, morbidity, and disability (Belgrave & Lewis, 1994). Taken together, the available findings highlight the importance of examining determinants associated with initiating and maintaining physical activity within the older African-American population, particularly females.

To date, research on the determinants of exercise participation has been primarily quantitative investigations utilizing forced-response survey instruments (Ainsworth et al., 1991; Jones & Niles, 1996; Macera et al., 1995; Washburn et al., 1992). While such an approach has offered a general introduction to the possible factors that contribute to peoples' decisions to exercise, it is rooted in the assumption that survey items are accurate reflections of the participants' actual exercise experiences. A more direct approach to determining the exercise experiences of participants would appear to be one that uses a more open-ended format of questioning and uncovers the first-person perceptions of individuals. In recent years,

a number of qualitative methods have been developed that allow a richer analysis of the lived experience of participants (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Van Manen, 1990; Wolcott, 1990). These approaches are based on the assumption that the perceptions of individuals are an important component of their personal reality and, in order to really understand the reasons why people behave as they do, it is essential that these perceptions be directly tapped. In order to increase our understanding of exercise behavior, Ford et al. (1991) called for more detailed investigations of both a qualitative and quantitative nature.

In the present study, an attempt was made to identify physically-active African-American females over the age of 55 years and, using a qualitative interview methodology, characterize their exercise experience and identify reasons why they choose to participate in regular physical activity. By using an inductive approach, a window of understanding was opened to the exercise behavior of older African-American women and to their reasons for regular participation in physical activity. Such information could be beneficial to health professionals in the development of focused interventions to promote physical activity within this subgroup. Moreover, the results might allow the generation of more enlightened research hypotheses which could then be subsequently tested on larger samples using standard quantitative methods.

Statement of the Problem

Increased longevity in the population makes the health benefits of exercise even more pronounced. Although limited, research indicates that the majority of older African-American women are sedentary (Janzen & Cousins, 1995). Therefore, gaining a fuller understanding of the exercise experiences of those who are physically active may lead to successful interventions that promote healthier lifestyles and enhanced quality of life.

This qualitative study was guided by the following research objectives:

- (1) To explore the perceptions of older African-American women who successfully engage in physical activity experiences.
- (2) To identify, from the participants' perspectives, possible factors contributing to exercise participation.

Definition of Terms

(1) *exercise adherence* - the state of continuing; for the purposes of this study, participating in physical activity for one year or longer.

(2) *epidemiology* - a systematic approach to the collection and analysis of health data, the essence of which is the calculation of rates. These may be the rates of events, conditions, or diseases for a community or selected subgroups of the population (Powell, 1988).

(3) *intervention* - a set of targeted activities designed to foster increased physical activity in a population - an intervention may be carried out in isolation or combined with other interventions to constitute a "program" (King, 1992).

(4) *demographics* - vital statistics related to a population (i.e., age, race, gender, socioeconomic status, education, etc.)

(5) *self-efficacy* - one's confidence of being able to successfully perform a specific activity or behavior.

(6) *mortality* - the ratio of the number of deaths to the total number in the population.

(7) *morbidity* - the relative incidence of disease

(8) *motivation* - an incentive that prompts a person to act with a sense of purpose.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

"The graying of society has begun" (Piscopo, 1985). The North American population is aging. From 1980 to 1985 the number of older Americans increased by 11%. By the year 2000, the over-65 age group is expected to represent 12% of the population and, by the year 2030 it is predicted to climb to 21% (Ostrow, 1989). After age 65, there are dramatic changes in the ratio of men to women. The population of women over 65 years of age will reach an estimated 18.5 million by the year 2000 as compared to 12 million men in the same age group, and there will be 6 females for every male over the age of 80. (Vertinsky & Auman, 1988).

Older people are also living longer. The earliest data recorded in 1789, indicated that the average life expectancy was 35 years. By 1900, life expectancy had increased to 47.3 years, and, by 1987, it had risen to 74.7 years (Harris, 1990). Currently, the number of people in the 75 to 84 year old age group is 11 times larger than it was in 1900, and the over 85 year old group is 22 times larger. These longer life spans can be attributed to factors such as the control of communicable diseases, improved health care, better nutrition, and expanded health education programs (Ostrow, 1989).

The changes that have occurred in the age structure of the United States have prompted increased attention to ways of improving the quality of life of older

persons, adding "life to years" instead of just "years to life" (Kaplan et al., 1993). Research indicates that exercise can make a major contribution to quality of life by improving physical functioning and reducing age-related decrements in health (McMurdo & Rennie, 1993).

The purpose of this study was to examine the exercise experiences of older African-American women in an effort to understand possible factors that contribute to their participation in health-enhancing activities. The literature reviewed in the present chapter is subdivided into sections dealing with the aging process, the positive benefits of exercise upon aging, exercise prevalence among the elderly, predictive factors contributing to exercise participation, and the high health-risk of older African-American women.

The Aging Process

Sedentary individuals reach the end of the plateau of their physiological capabilities around age 30. These capabilities then decline at an average of 1% per year. Maximal work capacity decreases 25% to 30% between the ages of 30 and 70 years (Smith, 1984). During this time period there is an 8% to 12% decrease in metabolic rate, a decline in cardiac output due to decreases in stroke volume and maximum heart rate, and a 40% to 50% reduction in vital capacity. Nerve conduction velocity is reduced by 10% to 15%, resulting in an increase reaction time and a slowing of movements (Smith, 1984). Decreased strength in bones is caused by the depletion of minerals which occurs at a rate of 1% to 3% per year in both

sexes. An additional mineral loss of up to 6% per decade occurs in postmenopausal women (Ostrow, 1989).

Although age-associated declines are inevitable, many physiological changes may be attributed to disuse and atrophy that comes with inactivity (Work, 1989). Since as much as 50% of the reduction in physiological function may be due to lack of use, regular exercise would appear to be an important vehicle for promoting a higher level of physical functioning and an enhanced quality of life (Spirduso, 1986).

Positive Benefits of Exercise Upon Aging

There is a great deal of evidence that suggests that physical activity can significantly affect the degree to which physiological changes occur due to aging. Moreover, exercise is an inexpensive intervention that can provide substantial benefits to both healthy older adults and to those who are chronically ill (Buchner et al., 1992; Spirduso, 1986).

Recently, McMurdo and Rennie (1993) attempted to evaluate the benefits of exercise on functional capacity. In their study, 49 residents aged 64-91 years from homes for the elderly participated in either a twice-weekly exercise program or in group reminiscence and music sessions, each lasting 45 minutes. In view of the frailty of the exercise participants, all exercises were performed in a seated position and concentrated on the strengthening of upper and lower limbs. The reminiscence and music sessions were designed to promote social interaction. By the end of the 7-month project, changes in functional ability of the exercise group were significantly

greater than those of the reminiscence group for grip strength, spinal flexion, chair to stand time, activities of daily living and self-rating of depression. These results indicate that even very elderly residents of homes for the aged can benefit from participation in a modified exercise program.

Blumenthal et al. (1989) examined the association between cardiovascular adaptations and aerobic exercise training in a group of healthy older adults aged 60 to 83 years. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups that engaged in 4 months of aerobic training (AE), yoga and flexibility exercises (YO), or no activity (WL). The results indicated that the AE group improved significantly in aerobic capacity and lowered cholesterol levels. This group also showed a trend toward increased bone mineral content. In contrast, the YO and WL control groups experienced no significant changes. The results of this study suggest that 4 months of aerobic training has the potential to significantly alter the cardiorespiratory functioning of healthy older men and women.

Aging is also associated with decrements in muscular strength which may be due in part to reductions in physical activity. Diminished muscle strength has also been associated with increased incidence of falls in elderly populations. Approximately 40% of the population over 65 years of age fall at least once a year (Work, 1989). Recent studies have investigated the effect and feasibility of resistance training programs for the elderly. The results of these studies indicate resistance training is a safe intervention which can increase muscular strength and reduce the frequency of falls in older persons (Lord et al., 1995; Nichols et al., 1993; Work,

1989).

Tortura and Anagnostakos (1987) contend that "osteoporosis is responsible for shrinkage of the backbone and height loss, hunched backs, hip fractures, and considerable pain." Due to the increased likelihood of bone breakage, falls become increasingly dangerous when coupled with osteoporosis, which is a condition that is particularly prevalent in older women (Ballard et al., 1990) and one which has also been associated with inactivity, particularly in the case of bedrest (Buchner et al., 1992).

In an attempt to determine the effects of exercise on bone mineral content, Dalsky et al. (1988) assigned 35 women, age 55-70 years, to either an exercise group that participated in weight-bearing exercises for 50 minutes, 3 days a week, or to a control group. The results revealed that bone mineral content of the lumbar spine increased significantly in the exercise group but not in the control group. This finding suggests that physical activity may be a promising treatment for osteoporosis. A recent review of studies by Buchner et al. (1992) provides additional supporting evidence that physical activity is positively related to bone density and may, therefore, be an important factor in the prevention of osteoporosis.

Heart disease is the primary cause of death and disability in the United States. There is convincing evidence that physical activity reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease and increases longevity. In a prospective study by Blair et al. (1995), two treadmill tests were completed between December 1970 and December 1989 in order to assess changes in physical fitness in a group of 9777 men aged 20 to 82 years.

These changes were then associated with the relative risk of mortality during a mean follow-up period of 5.1 years after the second examination. The men who were unfit at the time of both examinations showed the highest age-adjusted all-cause death rate. The men who had a high level of physical fitness at both examinations had the lowest death rate. Compared to men that remained unfit, a 44% reduction in relative risk was found in those men who improved their fitness level from unfit to fit from the first examination to the second. Less is known about the effects of physical activity on cardiovascular disease in older females. Blair et al. (1989) found higher fitness levels to be associated with lower all-cause mortality and lower mortality rates for cardiovascular disease and cancer in both men and women. Recently, results of a study by Greendale et al. (1996) revealed that both leisure time and home physical activity were positively associated with HDL-C levels, thereby reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease in postmenopausal women. In addition to reducing the risk of heart disease, physical activity has also been shown to moderate obesity, hypertension, and blood lipid concentrations in older adults (Arroll & Beaglehole, 1992; Ballor, 1991; Cononie et al., 1991; Reaven et al., 1991).

A great deal of the literature on the relationship between physical activity and aging has focused on physiological changes. This is somewhat surprising in light of the fact that the most frequent functional disorder of aging is depression, a psychological disorder (Harris, 1990). Moreover, older persons have been described as possessing little initiative, having lowered self-esteem, and more symptoms of depression (Valliant & Asu, 1985). While there has been, to date, little investigation

of the psychological effects of exercise in the elderly, the results of several studies suggest that physical activity may be helpful in promoting psychological well-being and treating the symptoms of depression associated with aging (Blumenthal et al., 1989; Netz et al., 1988; Riddick et al., 1984; Ruuskanen & Ruoppila, 1995; Valliant & Asu, 1985). Although there are still some questions as to why physical activity influences psychological well-being, research indicates an association between the two.

Although the physiological and, to a lesser extent, psychological benefits of physical activity are well documented and it is generally acknowledged that sedentary behavior is a health hazard, the number of older adults participating in regular exercise remains low (Janzen & Cousins, 1995). In the following section a review of the current research on exercise participation among the elderly is presented.

Exercise Prevalence Among the Elderly

There are many misconceptions about older persons. They are often stereotyped as being senile, institutionalized, and in poor health. Many believe that individuals over 65 years of age live in poverty, loneliness and isolation (McPherson, 1986); however, only 4% of the population over 65 years of age live in institutions. The majority of older adults live independent, active lives and are fully capable of participating in physical activity (Ostrow, 1984).

For years it was believed that strenuous exercise would cause problems for the elderly such as elevated blood pressure, musculoskeletal injuries, and the aggravation

of arthritic conditions. Also, the subjective norm was that, upon retirement, individuals had earned the right to slow down. Misinformation concerning the negative effects of exercise, coupled with social expectations of decreased activity with increasing age, may have caused many people to gradually disengage from sport and physical activity as they grew older (Ostrow, 1989).

Studies consistently show that inadequate levels of physical activity is one of the most common health risks among the elderly (Janzen & Cousins, 1995; O'Brien & Vertinsky, 1991; Vertinsky & Auman, 1988; Young et al., 1995). In spite of these findings many older individuals continue to have completely sedentary lifestyles, with 32.7% of the adults between 45 and 64 years of age, and 42.6% of those who are 65 years of age or older, participating in no physical activity (Caspersen et al., 1986). Moreover, women make up a large portion of this sedentary group with 68.8% of those over the age of 60 years being considered sedentary, 15.8% minimally active, and only 15% adequately active (Mason & Powell, 1985). The fact that a higher proportion of women than men live past the age of 65, makes it increasingly important to address the physical activity patterns of this population. In the following section, factors that have been shown to influence exercise participation are discussed.

Factors Contributing to Exercise Participation

An understanding of what motivates individuals to exercise is very important in the development of successful interventions that encourage positive changes in

physical activity patterns (Dishman et al., 1985). Possible determinants of exercise adherence that have been studied include personal characteristics, environmental factors, and psychological variables (Marcus, 1995). Although considerable research has been conducted to determine factors that contribute to exercise participation, few studies have targeted older persons and even fewer have included women.

Personal Characteristics

Studies indicate that women who exercise are nonsmokers, have a higher socioeconomic status, are more highly educated, less obese, and report better health relative to others their age (Branigan & Cousins, 1995; King et al., 1992; Kriska et al., 1986; Marcus, 1995; Young et al., 1995). The age range of women included in these studies was from 50 to 83 years.

Environmental Factors and Program Characteristics

Social support has been identified as an important factor in exercise participation in women (King et al., 1992; Marcus, 1995). Social support may be gained from interactions with family members, friends, neighbors, and participation in formal activities (Ishii-Kuntz, 1990). Research varies on the relationship of marital status and spousal support to exercise participation. Janzen & O'Brien (1995) found exercise patterns in married women to be positively influenced by a physically active and supportive spouse. However, a study by Ishii-Kuntz (1990) indicated that single and widowed women over 65 years of age were more likely to participate in senior center activities than were married women. The extent to which children influence activity levels of parents is unclear; but recent data suggests that having children

raises the likelihood that a mother will continue to be physically active with increasing age (Branigan & Cousins, 1995).

Program-related variables such as intensity, complexity, convenience, and cost may also influence exercise participation levels (Marcus, 1995). King et al. (1992) found that home-based programs of moderate intensity had greater adherence rates and produced greater physiological and psychological benefits when compared to higher-intensity programs.

Psychological Variables

Among the psychological variables that have been studied, self-efficacy, self-motivation, perceived good health, perceived benefits, and enjoyment have been the factors most often associated with higher levels of physical activity (Branigan & Cousins, 1995; Heck & Kimiecik, 1993; King et al., 1992; Marcus, 1995). Although limited, recent research indicates that some active older women perceive the benefits of exercise to be greater than the risks. In a study of 43 women, 52-73 years of age, Branigan & Cousins (1995) found that the experience of motherhood as a young adult, accompanied by a sense of high self-efficacy for exercise, were significant in explaining the higher rate of perceived benefits. The results of this study also indicated that women with children rated the perceived risk of physical activity to be lower than did women with no children. Compared to women with children, those without children also rated themselves lower on health and well-being, were more sedentary, and judged themselves to be less capable of participating successfully in physical activity.

Many older women tend to exaggerate the health risks and underrate their health and physical ability to participate in exercise (Vertinsky & Auman, 1988). Ishii-Kuntz (1990) found age and perceived health status to be strong predictors of elderly women's participation in formal activities at senior centers. In a sample of women 65 years of age and older (n=1,051) the younger elderly women who perceived themselves to be in better health were more likely to participate in senior center activities than the older frail elderly.

Although a number of personal, environmental, and psychological variables appear to be associated with physical activity levels in adults, relatively few studies have addressed exercise determinants specific to the aging female population. Research is even more limited regarding the exercise behavior of older African-American women (King et al., 1992). The exploration of possible factors contributing to exercise participation within this subgroup is clearly needed in light of the high-risk status of African-Americans with respect variables such as obesity, hypertension, diabetes, and coronary heart disease (Kumanyika et al., 1993; Myers, 1987; Folsom et al., 1991).

Ethnicity and Health Risk: Older African-American Women

Approximately 22% of the U.S. population is classified as nonwhite, with African-Americans comprising the largest minority at 12% (Harrison, 1995). African-Americans in general have a shorter life expectancy than Caucasians (Jones & Nies, 1996). Although adopting a physically active lifestyle has been associated with

multiple health benefits, current research suggests that the African-American women lead extremely sedentary lifestyles (Jones & Nies, 1996; Macera et al., 1995; Washburn et al., 1992). A survey study by Myers (1987) revealed that the amount of leisure-time physical activity of a group of 56 white women (WW) from central Pennsylvania was 2-3 times higher than that of 134 African-American women (AAW) from North Carolina. The results of this study also showed that 68% of the WW were obese and 6% were hypertensive as compared to 80% and 33% of the AAW. In addition, 10% of the AAW were diabetics. Although it is unclear whether the different regions affected the results, these findings suggest at least a moderate association between physical activity and health status and that lower levels of both are found in AAW than in their WW counterparts.

Studies indicate a higher incidence of hypertension and obesity in African-Americans than in Caucasians, with both factors being associated with increased mortality from cardiovascular disease (Ford et al., 1991; Jones & Nies, 1996). The prevalence of obesity in African-American women is approximately twice that of Caucasian women (Kumanyika et al., 1993). The results of a study of African-Americans conducted by Folsom et al. (1991) revealed a positive association between obesity and other CVD risk factors such as systolic blood pressure, atherogenic blood lipids, and the prevalence of diabetes mellitus. Moreover, subsequent research by Lackland et al. (1992) indicated that African-American females had the highest age-adjusted rate of hypertension (39.6%). This group also had the highest values for body-mass index (BMI) and waist hip ratios (WHR), both of which have been

associated with hypertension.

An interesting study by Farrell et al. (1987) examined the independent effect of ethnicity on cardiovascular fitness. All were teachers, had bachelor's degrees or higher, and received comparable salaries, thereby eliminating the possibility that socioeconomic factors would contribute to the results. The findings indicated that African-American women were still significantly higher in weight, blood pressure, and percent body fat than were their Caucasian or Mexican-American counterparts. Of additional significance, cardiovascular fitness was found to be lower for the African-American women when compared to those from the other ethnic groups.

Socioeconomic disadvantages have commonly been associated with poor health practices in ethnic minorities (Ford et al., 1991). Other factors such as cultural norms, health-related beliefs and behaviors, social support, and self-efficacy may also be involved in the lifestyle choices made by older African-American women (Gottlieb & Green, 1987). However, the exercise behaviors of this subgroup remain largely a mystery.

Summary

The current literature indicates that physical activity may help in preventing or delaying functional declines that occur with age and thereby improve the quality of life of older persons (Spiriduso, 1986). Numerous studies provide strong evidence that regular physical activity is beneficial for the treatment of hypertension, obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease (Arroll & Beaglehole, 1992; Ballor, 1991; Blair

et al., 1995; Blumenthal et al., 1989; Cononie et al., 1991; Greendale et al., 1996; Reaven et al., 1991). Resistive training has also been shown to improve strength, endurance, mobility and balance in older individuals (Lord et al., 1995; Nichols et al., 1993; Work, 1989).

The benefits of exercise in older adults seem to strongly outweigh the hazards. Nevertheless, the frequency of exercise participation remains extremely low (Janzen & Cousins, 1995). Attention to subgroups of the older population that are considered to be high risk, such as the aging African-American female, has been glaringly absent. The high prevalence of hypertension, obesity and other cardiovascular risk factors within this group suggest the added importance of identifying factors that contribute to increases in physical activity behaviors.

Effective health promotion programming must also be sensitive to the issue of cultural diversity. Gaining an understanding of factors that influence the adoption of physical activity by individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds will help in the development of interventions specific to the needs of individuals and groups.

In the present study, an attempt was made to obtain the perceptions associated with exercise experiences from older African-American women who have been successful at initiating and maintaining a regular pattern of physical activity. To accomplish this purpose, a qualitative interview methodology was used. This inductive approach allowed the participants to discuss their exercise experience directly, from the framework of their own personal reality, and thereby was intended to uncover culturally-specific lifestyle beliefs and practices. It was hoped that the

information might be beneficial in the development of exercise and health interventions that would begin to close the "ethnic gap" in morbidity and mortality between Caucasians and African-Americans that presently exists.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology used in this study including the research design, participants, procedures for data collection, and data analysis. The objectives of this qualitative research study were (1) to explore the perceptions of older African-American women who successfully engage in physical activity experiences; and (2) to identify, from the participants' perspectives, possible factors contributing to exercise participation.

Research Design

Qualitative methodology was chosen for this study in order to allow the participants to speak for themselves. The open-ended format of questioning enabled the women to freely discuss their perceptions of the topic under investigation. Ford (1991) observed that current data provide only general descriptions of physical activity levels and patterns in the African-American population and called for more detailed qualitative studies. Branigan and Cousins (1995) recognized the need for qualitative research to clarify the beliefs and life circumstances that form a positive attitude about late life physical activity.

Participants

Network selection was used to find participants due to the difficulty in locating physically active African-American women. One individual enrolled in a walking class at the University of Tennessee met the selection criteria. She referred the researcher to others who met the guidelines for the study.

The participants in this study were eight physically active African-American women ranging in age from 55 to 79 years of age. In order to be classified physically active, the individuals must have engaged in exercise or work that was strenuous enough to cause sweating, at least twenty minutes, three times per week, for at least one year. Three of the women participated in structured exercise classes three times a week, the other five engaged in walking and other individual activities. The length of involvement in physical activity varied from one year to twenty-one years. Six of the women were married, one single, and one divorced. One participant is a nontraditional student currently enrolled in graduate school after taking many years off to pursue a job and raise a family, one has two years technical training, one has a bachelor's degree, two have master's degrees in education, two withdrew from high school after the 11th grade, and one after the 9th grade. The number of siblings range from two to seven. Although the activities varied within the group, all of the participants expressed the importance of exercise in their lives. Further description is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Information.

Participant	Age	Marital Status	Education Level	Employment	Health Status	Current Physical Activity	Years/Days Participated
Sister	58	Married	M.S.	Teacher	Excellent	Walking	10/5
Mac	69	Married	11th grade	Retired	Excellent	Ex. class	1.5/3
Jerry	63	Married	11th grade	Part-time	Good	Ex. class	1.5/3
Lizzie	79	Married	9th grade	Retired	Good	Ex. class	3/3
Mary Lula	64	Single	B.S.	Retired	Good	Ex. class	1/3
Swampfox	56	Married	M.S.	Teacher	Excellent	Walking*	21/6
Pat	55	Divorced	B.S.	Student	Good	Walking**	19/5
Bev	58	Seperated	Vocational	O.T.	Good	Walking	8/6

* In addition, stationary bike

** In addition, aerobic video tape

Procedures for Data Collection

Contact with the participants was made in two different ways. Three were contacted by telephone after they had been informed of the proposed study by a friend and indicated their willingness to become involved. Upon the advice of the original contact, the researcher went to a local senior citizens center during a weekly exercise class to discuss the study. The four remaining participants came from this group.

Once the participants were identified, arrangements were made to schedule a convenient time and place to conduct the interviews. Four of the interviews took place in a quiet room at the senior center immediately after the exercise class was completed. Three interviews were conducted in the homes of the participants and one at the workplace.

An overview of the purpose of the study was given at the start of the interview. Each participant was informed that the interview would be audiotaped and was asked to sign a consent form (Appendix A) and fill out a health and personal history questionnaire (Appendix B). Pseudonyms were selected by the participants in order to protect their anonymity.

Each participant took part in a single interview lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes. In the semi-structured interview format several open-ended questions (Appendix C) were asked relating to the individual's experiences in physical activity. (e.g., "Tell me about the type of physical activity you are currently engaged in and the length of time you have been participating in this activity.") The interviews were

informal and follow-up probes were determined by the responses given to the above mentioned questions. At the end of each interview an attempt was made to bring the participants through time, back to the present, and summarize participation from their youth to their current involvement in physical activity. This was done to avoid any misunderstanding by the researcher.

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed as soon as possible after they were conducted. After transcription, the tapes and written data were compared for accuracy. Notes were added to the transcriptions and passages identified for possible quotations within the text. The data were then read and reread in order to identify raw data categories, or meaning units from specific participant responses. These categories were then coded based on Glesne and Peshkin's (1992) inductive analysis method. Patterns developed in these categories and themes emerged showing the relationship between these categories. The themes could be considered as possible hypotheses for further research. This inductive process of analysis was supported by participation in a qualitative research group, the guidance of Dr. Kathleen Bennett deMarrais, and the books by Glense and Peshkin (1992), Wolcott (1990) and Van Manen (1990) that focus on qualitative research.

In summary, the following research methods were used: (1) the exercise experience of older African-American women was chosen as the focus of this study; (2) participants were identified through network selection; (3) in-depth interviews

were conducted using open-ended questions regarding the participants' physical activity; (4) the interviews were transcribed for data analysis; (5) the transcribed interviews were read for categories from which themes developed; (6) these themes provided the findings for the study and are reported in Chapter Four.

Subjectivity Statement

One of my first recollections on the topic of aging was a story about my grandfather who was in his 90's at the time. The story told of his alertness and agility. I began to think about the older adults that I had met, noticing the differences in attitudes and physical abilities. I also became aware of the stereotyping of senior citizens, the emphasis on youthfulness, and the general disrespect for individuals as they grow older.

In August of 1985 I was given an opportunity to begin teaching physical fitness classes at a retirement community in Florida. I was cautioned that this population would be difficult to teach, have a variety of health problems, and express a great deal of negativity. Since then I have been involved in a variety of classes, activities, and interactions with senior adults. My awareness of the diversity of this population has grown. It has become evident that age is strictly a chronological listing and has nothing to do with physical ability, intellect, life experiences or ambitions.

As I explored this research topic, I had to be aware of my intensity about the subject. I was very interested in the socialization of older females into physical

activity. During ten years of teaching senior fitness classes I had never encountered an African-American. Research is limited on the physical activity patterns of African-Americans, but the general consensus is that this population is extremely sedentary. I was, therefore, interested in exploring the exercise experiences of this group. Care was taken not to let enthusiasm outweigh my ability to listen to the participant's responses.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION

The goal of this investigation was to explore the experiences of eight older African-American women who successfully engage in physical activity, and also to identify, from the participants' perspectives, possible factors contributing to exercise participation. Interviews were conducted in an open-ended format allowing the women to freely discuss their perceptions of the exercise experience. This chapter presents a thematic structure of these experiences. As suggested by Van Manen (1990) these themes are not exhaustive of the experience of physical activity for the participants but they allow for a systematic investigation. The themes should be considered as overlapping parts of a whole. In addition, certain themes may have had greater meaning for one participant than another.

Thematic Structure

The overall structure of these interviews consists of five major themes which include:

Theme 1. The Segregated South

Theme 2. Physical Work, Activity, and Walking as a Way of Life

Theme 3. External Support

Theme 4. Determination, Positive Attitude, Strong Sense of Self

Theme 5. Awareness of Aging and Commitment to Activity

The first theme addresses the lack of opportunity provided for these women while growing up in the South during a time of racial segregation, and how that affected their physical activity patterns. The second theme relates to the physical activity patterns of the women in this study as a way of life, in work and play. The third theme involves external support, that comes from a variety of sources, such as family, friends, and church. The fourth theme in the overall structure is concerned with the determination, positive attitude, and strong sense of self expressed by the women in this study. The fifth theme focuses on the participants' awareness of the aging process and along with this, their commitment to continued activity.

Theme 1. The Segregated South - "That was just the way life was."

The participants talked about growing up in the South during a time when there was little opportunity for structured leisure-time physical activity offered to African-Americans. Mae stated:

That is one reason why I love coming over here (senior center) because in my childhood we didn't have this...well one thing...blacks didn't have anywhere to go.

Pat supported this idea by saying, "Black people...had nothing to do." and she continued,

I was born in 1941 and on up until the 60's it was segregated...the only activities that you had was that you had to buy something to use to make your own recreation. Cause you couldn't go places and you couldn't do things. So you had to get a bicycle...skate...play ball or something to keep yourself active.

There was an attitude of acceptance as they told of life during that period. As they spoke of their lives, many of the women ended their descriptions with..."that was just the way it was," or "we didn't have much but we were happy!" They told of making their own fun.

...there were very few activities for black people at that time. See I was born in 1932. So it was whatever your parents could arrange or whatever the school arranged... There were not other parks and things we could go to. We could only go to [city park] once a year. And at [local park] there wasn't much that you could do...nothing but a field. So in the community you made your own (fun)..[.Mary Lula]

Lizzie did not seem to think that the schools offered much opportunity for African-Americans.

I lived in the country on the farm until I was 13 years old...we had a good living but the school wasn't much way back then...nothing much for black people. Now the white people had schools but all the black people, as soon as they were old enough to go to work the farm...everybody farmed.

Since transportation was not provided for black students during that time, due to the Jim Crow Laws, the location of the schools provided a certain amount of physical activity for most of the women during their childhood.

We couldn't ride the school bus as a child...[I] lived way out there in the country. Walking to school was a 6 mile trip and I did that. [Sister]

...the high school was on [street]. Of course there was a high school right across from me I couldn't go to because it was for white kids so we had to walk to high school every day. [Swampfox]

We went to [school]. Of course it was rather new then and we had to walk a long way because we didn't have transportation...about 4 or 5 miles, maybe more than that. [Mae]

There was a general consensus that the lack of opportunity provided a strong incentive to become physically active.

I think that we (African-Americans) are very active people because I feel that we didn't have the proper...places to go, that many things to get involved in, so we always had to find some way of keeping busy and make ourselves feel good. [Pat]

We organized ourselves. There was no team things like that when we were growing up. [Swampfox]

...public dances and stuff, we didn't get to go. Back then they didn't have nothing too much no way. We didn't go, but we would have our dances and parties there at the house and invite our friends. [Lizzie]

Four of the participants mentioned an event for African-Americans that was held only once a year in a local city park. However, positive statements were made concerning the increased opportunities for African-Americans today.

...one park. We had only one day that we could go to [local park] that was the [date]...One day a year and when that day came it was so crowded. Everybody was going. But now, the opportunities open up and you probably could go wherever you wanted to go...[Mae]

This is just something as a child that you dream about, you know you see things...playgrounds and everything that wasn't around when we was coming up. We didn't have that. [Mae]

Lack of opportunity due to race was mentioned in various ways during the interviews, but always as an historical overview of the way things were at that time. This lack of opportunity seemed to be the basis for the physical activity patterns of these women.

Theme 2. Physical Work, Activity, and Walking as a Way of Life - "We've always been active."

All of the women in this study considered themselves to be extremely active throughout their lives; whether it was working on a farm, walking for exercise or transportation, playing neighborhood games and team sports, or raising a family.

Sister talked about growing up on a farm and working in the fields.

And the thought ran into my head...you know what, we have always exercised but it wasn't anything structured...it was something that we did because of survival. We were hard workers and as a child I did physical field work.

Lizzie also remembered life on a farm.

I can remember...well back then I didn't know any better so I was happy. I lived on a farm. Everybody farmed and everybody had...plenty of food and it was good food. Now living in the country we was all over the place. People were at our house and we were at their house. Everything everybody else done, we done it. I was a child in the country, I had an uncle, he played a guitar...he could sing, he could dance. He could play that guitar! Sometimes he would play for parties and things like that and we would dance as children and we would have a good time!

After leaving the farm she continued to have an active lifestyle.

And I would get up at 6:00 a.m. and try to be on the track by 6:30 a.m. And I would walk for about 4 or 5 hours each day. I was working at this time, too. Of course I still took care of my house work, and worked in my flower garden. Oh, I loved my garden, I loved it. I enjoyed it...I just work and swing and work and swing and cool off and go in and take a shower.

Mae lived in an urban setting, but also had physical work to do on a daily basis.

Well, active because we had physical chores to do. And during the summer when the blackberries were out we had to go pick blackberries. And we had fruit trees in the yard. We had things to do around the house...help with the work around the house.

Physical work seemed to be an integral part of the life of all the women, but along with the physical work there was a great deal of recreational physical activity.

Mary Lula did a great deal of roller skating, along with other activities in her neighborhood, but chores always came first.

Most of the things I remember (outside of school) is my skating. We would get skates every Christmas. I would use my skates and my sisters' and brothers' if I could find them. I would wear out everybody's skates in the house, skating. It was either skating or the softball field, depending on the time of year...roller skating, we jumped rope...there was a huge field in front of the house and every afternoon we would have a baseball game...we would play until dark...we had chores to do and after you finished your chores...that's what you did unless there was a church picnic and that was in the summer time.

Sister came from the country and did a great deal of physical work which increased her level of physical fitness. This helped her in her school activities.

I have always been a physical person. In high school I was a majorette in the band and I remember my cousin and I we were raised in the country and we were the only two majorettes from the country and all the rest of the majorettes were from the city. We went to Mardi Gras for parade and we had to march 6 miles and all the other majorettes were just falling over and it was hot. My cousin and I looked at each other and said 'Watch us, we are not falling, we from the country, we don't faint!'

Pat remembered skating and riding bikes.

...skates for Christmas or whatever and then you would go up and down the sidewalk. Everybody used to do that I am sure. But that is one of the activities, and bicycle riding.

Although a few of the women recalled the years of raising children as less active, most felt that although the activities changed, their level of physical exercise remained high. Even after her 5th child, Sister was still involved in helping with the National Youth Sport Program.

I had my 5th child...in the meantime I got involved with the National Youth Sport Program, that was a lot of fun and it was a sport based, physical type thing during the summer...I did that even after my kids were grown. As a matter of fact, my daughter worked in the program with me.

Jerry and Lizzie both remembered a high level of activity associated with the raising of their children.

Me and my children would get out and go walking to get on the bus and wherever we had to go we rode the bus or walked. [Jerry]

Leisure time? (laughter) No, just working at home is all. Like I said I had my garden and flowers and I just made myself satisfied. Other than going with the children, doing things for the children. [Lizzie]

Walking was one common activity for among all the women; walking for exercise, walking for transportation, and walking as a way of life.

I never remember my mother having a car...we had to walk everywhere we went. Before, when I was a child I had to do it (walk), I didn't have a bicycle. I didn't have no transportation. I had to get from one place to the other walking. [Sister]

Mary Lula walked many miles helping her older brother deliver newspapers.

Really, I had to help my brother every day. So we walked all over [town] carrying papers. He had a route of 200 customers so we walked...carried all those papers.

She continued by saying,

I would say that I was very active. Yes, if it was no more than just walking because we had to walk...to the grocery store. And my mother bought groceries by the week...and you had to carry all those groceries...So we walked wherever we went...We walked all the time.

Jerry spent many hours walking with her mother. Without a car, walking or the bus were their only forms of transportation.

...me and my mother always did a lot of walking. I didn't own a car until I was 40 years old. So when I lived in [state] I go around walking because the bus stops were a long way. We walked, did a lot of walking.

It was interesting to note that several of the participants did not realize just how active they had been throughout their lives prior to the interview. Pat seemed surprised and said,

So I can say that...there has been physical activity all through my life. But I think that it was just a part of life. I didn't know that it was anything, (until) I am saying it now. I didn't really know I was active to tell you the truth.

Other participants seemed to feel the same way.

So it wasn't like, you know, it was just something natural...you didn't think about it...I didn't realize I was doing that much walking until this. I just walked all my life...When I think about it, golly, I have just put in a lot of time with this physical activity. [Swampfox]

"It was natural! I didn't give it a lot of thought." [Sister]

Physical activity was a very important part of the lives of each of the women in this study. Although some seemed surprised at the amount of exercise they had been involved in, all of the women believed it was the "natural" thing to do.

Theme 3. External Support - "We are our own club."

As mentioned earlier, external or social support has been identified as an important factor contributing to exercise participation in women. External support was provided in various ways to the women in this study. Family, friends and the church were all mentioned. Family, primarily the mother, provided support and encouragement for the majority of the women. Jerry and her mother walked together.

As a rule me and my mother used to walk. My mother used to walk. She would go one block and then go another block. As a rule we always just walked.

Pat's mother played basketball on a women's team that traveled from city to city in the late 1930's. She felt her mother had a major influence on her participation in physical activity.

..I guess she (mother) would have been the one who sorta pushed and stuff with the activity, physical activity really. Cause we heard that story - years that she was on those buses going and playing (basketball)...we heard it so much until we probably just picked some of that up...She must have been an awful good player cause even her friends have said that to me that she was a wonderful basketball player. When we were playing in the yard, 'you are not doing so and so. You need to do so and so,' she would holler out the window or something. I would say that most of that came from that...from her.

Mothers not only encouraged their children, but were also important as a role models. Sister felt she inherited her love for both walking and dancing from her mother.

I never had a problem with walking but I think I inherited it from my mother because she was a walker. And there is a thing that I like to do - and I was told that my mother loved to do it and that was dancing. And they say my mother used to be in dancing contests and

I love to dance too... But my mom, God, you would think, you think I was physical. Oh, my mamma was something else! She was such a strong person. And it was just like she wasn't afraid of anything.

She remembered her mother being active right up until the day she died. She never slowed down.

You see my mother died when she was 92...she was really active until she just couldn't go anymore. She just slipped away. There was no retire for mom, she just worked til she couldn't anymore.

Jerry talked with pride about her mother.

My little mother is 83 but she is a busy little lady. Got a good mind - little house - hats - likes to dress up.

Friends were a strong motivating factor for the women in this study. Sister said that she has walked with three friends for the past 4 or 5 years. She said they are like a club.

They are about as faithful to walking as I am. We all are. We are a club. I've got a T-shirt, the walking T-shirt...we all got one like this. Sometimes we say 'Hey, we gonna wear it.' We have to wear it together...

They motivated each other to continue exercising and keep up the intensity of the activity.

There are three of us, myself and two other walking partners, and we walk very, very hard. We always pick somebody that walks faster than us. We always say we are going to pick them up and we go for it...it is like letting the team down when you don't show up to walk.

Motivation to begin an exercise program is often influenced by a friend.

Jerry's neighbor suggested that they join an exercise class together.

...I had a neighbor who lived across the street. She wanted to go (to exercise class) and she just involved me in going. Me and her would go together.

Even though many of the women exercised alone at times, they seemed to enjoy a change in schedule that allowed them to interact with friends who came to town to visit or with people they met while exercising. Swampfox talked of a friend who visits every summer.

Now my girlfriend who is in Michigan - she comes home every summer - she probably will turn 50 this year - and she is a fanatic on being thin. When she comes in...I will exercise with her. Like the aerobics and the steps. She likes that step type stuff. That stuff just drives me crazy. But I will do it with her.

Lizzie went to the track alone, but she was never by herself.

...somebody different would come up at different times and I would just walk with them. Just with them and not walk off and leave them. I enjoyed the fellowship there. We would just talk - just walk and talk about I say "sweet nothin's" cause it was first one thing and then another... I met so many people (walking on the track) and we just got to become friends. Just enjoyed talking with each other...I was never up there (on the track) by myself. There was always somebody up there.

External support was found in a group setting for all of the women who participated in a weekly exercise class at a local senior center. Jerry changed her exercise program from walking to participating in the class because she felt she wanted to be around people her age.

I guess the walking benefit is just as good but I want to be around people...more than the people I work with, or me and my sisters. I come to be with the people. I enjoy people...So I come to check it out to see what was going on with the people in my age group. And for me it has been very beneficial and the people that are here (senior center) are very friendly. I'm used to being around people...you start talking to people like they have been there all along and you don't even know their name.

Lizzie also found a group of people with whom she had things in common. She switched back to a class setting when she didn't have anybody to walk with down at the mall.

It helps to get out with other people, to talk with them, with things that you have in common. I enjoy the class. I enjoy the fellowship... So that is the main reason I come to this class. I enjoy the class.

Mary Lula joined the exercise class after trying to walk on her own. She felt she needed group support to be successful in her physical activity program.

So I joined the exercise class. I enjoy exercise. I had tried walking on my own but I do better with a group rather than by myself so I felt I would get more out of it if I worked with this group. It has been very nice.

The church also provided a place of support for activity and fellowship Mae, Bev, and Lizzie. Mae stated that she was very active in her church and often mentioned the exercise class she attended at the senior center to people she met at church.

Well, I am real active in my church...at church sometimes (promotes exercise class).

Mae remembered the many opportunities for physical activity provided for the youth by her church.

We did a lot of stuff at church cause I was very much involved with my mom's church...we would have (activities) to entertain the kids and keep us interested in coming to church. We would go to church camps, fellowship camps, once or twice a year. They would set up things for us to do...archery, games, and stuff. I have always been involved in the church. [Bev]

Lizzie has attended church all of her life and is still very involved in church activities, 'Sunday School, Missions, and all that...' In a more emotional and tearful moment, she expressed a strong sense of spirituality when talking about a time when she was walking.

I was thinking what a beautiful world this is and how thankful I am to be in it. And God let me have real model health. And I would be walking and thinking and I just get happy cause I can walk and think about it. Oh, it was wonderful, it was wonderful! (tears, very emotional)

Sources of external support included family, friends and activities in the church. Although this support came from different sources, the women in this study seemed to feel that their lifestyle choices were due in part to the influence of others.

Theme 4. Determination, Positive Attitude, Strong Sense of Self - "Don't tell me I can't do anything...I am determined...I'm going to do it if I want to do it."

Self-efficacy, or one's confidence of being able to successfully perform a specific activity or behavior, has been shown to be an important factor contributing to exercise participation in women (Marcus, 1995). This, along with two other psychological variables, perceived good health and self-motivation, was quite evident among the women in this study. The women showed determination, had a positive attitude about their health and life in general, and revealed a strong sense of who they were and the belief that they were capable of doing whatever they set out to do.

Sister talked of needing to do something to improve her fitness, "...we just decided we needed to do something about ourselves!" She continued by saying that

she was self-motivated to continue her walking program, even if her partners were not available.

I don't like to (walk alone), but I do . Like I am going to do it today. You would go regardless. I mean it would be something that you would do. Your enjoyment is more as a group with your partners but you are still motivated to do this even if you don't have them.

When Sister found she was not skilled enough at basketball to be on the team, she found another way to be involved in the sport that she loved.

I never could play basketball. I always wanted to be on the basketball team but I was too awkward with my hands. I couldn't dribble the ball. So I did the next best thing, I became a trainer. I traveled with the basketball team.

Even housework was viewed as a physical challenge to Sister who was determined to accomplish her chores within a certain time limit.

I remember when I was a housewife, that was my job, and even when I was doing my housework, it was like a time factor...everything was just a routine for me. It was something I always wanted to do...I had accomplished something in a time frame. Everything had to be done. I have seen myself wash the whole apartment, stand back and see a spot and I would wax the whole thing over again.

Mae expressed a positive attitude about her life as a child and felt that her childhood experiences shaped the type of person she was as an adult.

...my father left, and my mother had to raise us. Of course we had to scrub. We had a hard time as a child but we always had a good time.

Mae went on to say that she had always been healthy and that she felt good about herself.

I am an outgoing person...I got some black friends and some white friends...we call and stay in touch...Yeah, I like people! It (exercise class) is somewhere to go that is different. It is not like going to work. You get to go out and meet more people, different people. I like

being around people and I don't want to be a person nobody wants to be around.

Jerry had some problems adjusting when she moved from one state to another, but she seemed determined to find a way to improve her state of mind.

...maybe my personality, I am not so outgoing. I really can appear to be but I am not...like I say, I've been really talking to myself and trying to adjust to here in [state] and trying to find something to keep me going. Maybe this (exercise class) is the something I was looking for...

At 79 years of age, Lizzie was still willing to push herself to accomplish what she wanted to do. She has expressed having some problems with allergies, but she accepted these and made the changes in her physical activities so that could keep right on going.

Well, it sounds like quite a bit (reference to activities) if you do, if you are pushing yourself sometimes. You don't always feel like it, but sometimes you just do.

She continued with reference to her health,

Other than that, (allergies) I have had a good life. I have been healthy all my life. A good healthy life. But these things just come on...that is just one of those things...after I came down with this allergy...I couldn't do as much outside as I had done. So I said I have got to do something. I cannot sit around and do nothing...I have just got to get out of this house.

Swampfox cannot start her day without exercise. She is highly motivated and usually exercises alone. Her sense of identify is closely related to her physical activity.

...It is like I can't start my day until I exercise. And I can't end my day, cause I just came in from walking...People know where to find me in the mornings. I have walked all weekend and it has really been hot...I put my little towel over my head like a sheik...I am fine. I'm

just cool...everybody out there is shaking their head.

Pat is a nontraditional student who is currently in graduate school after raising two sons as a single parent. Her determination began early in life when she set out to learn how to swim and broke a long time family barrier which prevented involvement in water activities.

I was a person that loved swimming - being that I was older getting started, my parents were very, very afraid for me (to swim) so I just bluffed them. I just bluffed them. I was determined to learn to swim...but I had to break the barrier in my family...I was determined to really get a good skill for swimming...I changed a lot about that. That is a big barrier in my family that I think that I broke.

She is currently on medication for a pulmonary disorder but had no doubt that she would return to her previous fitness level with some extra work.

I think it (medication) is just necessary. I don't plan to quit those. I plan to get up above where they make me like I am, and that would bring that weight back down. But I think it (exercise program) is going to have to be a five day thing instead of a three day.

All of the women in this study told of their experiences in an upbeat, positive way. There was never the suggestion that they would not succeed in whatever they tried to do. Each one had her own unique story. They gained support from different sources and faced individual problems and remained clear as to who they were.

Theme 5. Awareness of Aging and Commitment to Activity - "It keeps you young, and nobody wants to see themselves as an old person."

Nobody wants to see themselves as an "old person"; and although the women in this study were very aware of the aging process they did not see themselves as old.

Furthermore, they indicated that they had made plans to keep going as long as possible. In most cases, when asked about future plans, they expressed the intention to increase their activity and certainly not to reduce it! They felt retirement was a time to actively enjoy life, not to go home and sit down.

Sister was aware that she was the oldest of the three women in her walking group and seemed proud of the fact that she was the "speed getter."

I am the oldest of the walkers, and they say, 'Sister, you can get it, go, get it.' Here I am, I am just the walker, the speed getter.

Exercise is an integral part of her life and she didn't see anything changing in that area.

Yes, it (exercise) has become part of my lifestyle, a conscious part...I have always wanted to be a physically active person...I can't see us stop doing it (walking). We wouldn't have any reason to. We do make an effort to walk in all these walk-athons.

Mae's husband was warned against going home and sitting down upon retirement and she fully agreed with that advice.

When my husband retired...the "man" (husband's boss) said, 'Don't go home and sit down. Don't go home and sit down.' They actually preached that to them. 'Don't go home and sit down. It is the worst thing that you can do.' I don't want to go home and sit down, and eat, and lay down on the couch and just...I want to stay active.

Mae was aware of those around her and seemed to realize the importance of an active lifestyle.

Of course I'm old, but I mean, they (friends) just old...they just sit around..Well if you aren't active you are going to be old at 40 or 50. Now people that are 60 or 70 (are) like people used to be in their 40's...I like to be around people younger than me, more so than people really my age. They are old. They act old a lot of them do. I run with a younger group.

Jerry was also looking for a group of "younger" elderly people. She believed that exercise kept you young and really admired the oldest member of her exercise class who was 88 years old.

...she is wonderful, she comes here and she does it and she is not some old woman. I am telling you, she is not an old woman. There are lot of young women around here that are old, but not her.

At 79, Lizzie's joints were getting a little stiff, but she did not plan to let that slow her down. She felt that her exercise class helped with the stiffness and she had a positive outlook on the future. She indicated that she might even increase her level of activity.

I hope I will be able to do the same things. I am going to do my best to try to physically be able to do the same thing. I can't think of any changes that...I would be trying to do. I have in mind to do. Of course I would like to travel. I will continue on with it (exercise class) as of now, but I think that sometimes that I am going to see if I can't combine both of them (walking and class) because I'm in an apartment now. It isn't as much housework to be done. No yard work. That makes me sick 'cause I enjoyed it.

Lizzie wanted to keep on going as long as she possibly can. Smiling, she remembered what her aunt had told her before she died.

I want to do like my auntie told me, she has been dead about 2 years now. She says, 'Lizzie, when my time comes to go, say, I just want to lay down and close my eyes and go to sleep.' So that is what I would like to do. I really would, cause sure as we live; we know we are going.

Mary Lula had an enjoyable retirement planned, traveling and taking part in the activities offered at the senior center. The center met her needs and she had no intention of becoming sedentary.

I decided to come over here (senior center) on a regular basis because...the activities are designed for seniors rather than young children...To my liking, I find this more comfortable.....I know if you go home and sit down, well many people have died and I have no intention of dying! I am going to do whatever it takes to stay alive and I enjoy the exercise...

It was easy to see the excitement generated by all of the women in this study as they thought about their future. Pat described her life in this way:

I am very happy with my life because if I want to get up now - retired...and stay all day at the track I can. As long as I am healthy and feel good. If I want to do anything physical I don't have to listen to what somebody else is saying. So I am my own boss. This is the first time in my life that I have ever had this much freedom.

Swampfox had it all planned.

...right now I am thinking about retiring. I will probably be retiring after next year, and all I can think about is...when I retire, I can get up in the morning when everybody else - when it is real fresh outside and I can get up and I can walk for 2 or 3 hours and then come back home and eat. In my old age all I want to do is sit back and play with my grandchildren, walk every morning and evening and ride the bicycle.

The women in this study were not only physically active, they seemed to love life and were looking forward to an enjoyable retirement. Mae's final remark may have expressed the feelings of all of the women. "If the good Lord spares my life I'm going on a 3-day cruise!"

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a thematic structure of the experiences of a group of older, active African-American women who successfully engage in physical activity. The themes that surfaced included: The Segregated

South; Physical Work, Activity, and Walking as a Way of Life; External Support; Determination, Positive Attitude, Strong Sense of Self; and Awareness of Aging and Commitment to Activity. Examples from the interviews were cited to provide support for the thematic structure.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to obtain a thorough description of the experiences of eight, older, African-American women who successfully engaged in physical activity, and to ascertain possible factors that they have felt contributed to their exercise participation. In the previous chapter, a thematic structure of these experiences, as it emerged from data analysis of the interviews, was provided.

This chapter begins with a summary of the methodology along with the major themes of the present investigation. The findings are then discussed in relation to the existing literature on physical activity within the female African-American population. Finally, implications of the present study for future researchers are offered.

Methodology

The women in this study were chosen because of their participation in physical activity. All of the participants were eager to discuss their experiences. This might have been due to the fact that all were successful at the activities in which they were involved and enjoyed what they were doing.

As mentioned in Chapter One, qualitative research on exercise participation is extremely limited, with the majority of published studies having employed quantitative methods. In order to further our understanding of the exercise

behaviors of older African-American women, it is important to utilize methodologies that allow these women to best describe their experiences from a personal perspective.

The purpose of the present study was not to predict participants' responses, or to restrict their answers by having them respond to a predetermined set of specific questions. Rather, the purpose was to determine the experiences of a group of eight African-American women by using open-ended format of questioning that allowed the women to freely discuss their perceptions about their physical activity.

After all interviews had been conducted and transcribed, data analysis began. Categories, or meaning units were identified from the raw data. These categories produced five major themes each of which is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Major Themes

Theme 1. The Segregated South - This theme provided the basis for the participants' physical activity throughout their lives. The women felt that the lack of opportunity for African-Americans during their youth proved to be a strong incentive to "find ways of keeping busy," to find their own fun, and stay active. The attitude of the participants seemed to be one of acceptance, "that was just the way life was." The women also expressed appreciation for the increased number of opportunities that are available today for African-Americans.

Theme 2. Physical Work, Activity, and Walking as a Way of Life - Physical activity was an integral part of the lives of all of the women in this study. Many of them were required to do physical work, such as field work on a farm or household

duties. While a variety of different activities were mentioned, walking, for both transportation and exercise, seemed to be the prominent activity for all of the women. These women considered themselves to be extremely active; however, during the course of the interviews, several seemed surprised by the amount of physical activity that had characterized their lives. This may have been due to the fact that all of them believed that being physically active was the "natural" thing to do.

Theme 3. External Support - Family, friends and activities at the church all represented sources of external support for the participants in this study. Family support was provided primarily by the mothers of the women. In several cases, mothers not only encouraged their daughters but were also strong role models for physical activity. Friends were important in a variety of ways. For some, friends provided incentives to begin an exercise program. For others, they served as motivators to continue exercising and to keep activity at a high level of intensity. Friends were also important in a group setting. Several of the women said that they changed from individual walking programs to group activities at a senior center in order to do things with people their own age. External support was also provided in the form of church activities that influenced the lives of many of the women. They remembered fellowship camps and church picnics during their youth and indicated that church activities remain an important part of their adult lives.

Theme 4. Determination, Positive Attitude, Strong Sense of Self - At 79 years of age, Lizzie was thinking about increasing her level of physical activity. She formerly walked for exercise and then later switched to an exercise class. At the end

of her interview she talked about the desire to do both! Determination was a common trait of all of the women in this study. Not one word of doubt about their ability to engage in physical activity was spoken during any of the interviews. These women believed that they could accomplish whatever they set out to do. Although their experiences varied, all expressed a positive attitude toward life. Even though life was not easy for many of them; they talked of times being hard but also good. These women seemed to have a strong sense of who they were and what they intended to do in the future.

Theme 5. Awareness of Aging and Commitment to Activity - It was evident that the participants were very aware of their age, but, interestingly, none considered themselves old. When they talked of retirement, it was about a time to maintain or increase activity, not to go home and sit down. The women were adamant about the importance of continuing their active lifestyles. They had been active all of their lives and there was no question they intended to persist with their activities in the future. That was the way it has been and the way it would continue to be. Being physically active was a "natural" way of life for all of the women in this study.

Discussion

Current literature indicates that the adoption of a physically active lifestyle may be beneficial in reducing the functional declines associated with aging. Numerous studies have provided support for the use of exercise for the treatment of hypertension, obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease in older adults. (Arroll &

Beaglehole, 1992; Ballor, 1991; Blair et al., 1995; Blumenthal et al., 1989; Reaven et al., 1991). Although limited in number and scope, the results of studies investigating the psychological benefits of exercise on the elderly indicate an association between physical activity and an increased sense of well-being (Blumenthal et al., 1989; Valliant & Asu, 1985).

The benefits of physical activity for the elderly have been established, however the available research indicates that the frequency of exercise participation among older people remains extremely low, especially among female African-Americans (Jones & Nies, 1996). Gottlieb and Green (1987) suggested that factors such as cultural norms, health-related beliefs and behaviors, social support and self-efficacy may be associated with lifestyle choices regarding physical activity within this population.

The studies on ethnicity and physical activity have commonly used surveys for data collection rather than in-depth interviews. In these studies, investigators have discussed the limitations of the survey instrument in gaining an understanding about the influence of culture on physical activity patterns (Gottlieb & Green, 1987; Jones & Nies, 1996; Macera et al., 1995). Theme 1, *The Segregated South*, emerged as the participants gave their historical overview of life during a time when opportunities for African-Americans were limited. The women grew up in a time of segregation when opportunities were few yet a positive attitude allowed them to accept cultural differences. The women said that they felt the lack of access to facilities and reduced opportunity for structured leisure-time physical activity inspired them to find

creative ways to keep busy and have fun.

The second theme, Physical Work, Activity, and Walking as a Way of Life, overlapped and extended the first theme. All of the women considered themselves to be extremely active throughout their lives. Their earliest memories were of field work on farms, household chores, neighborhood games, or walking as their only form of transportation. The finding that the physical activity patterns these women developed as children continued through adulthood is consistent with the observation made by Harrison (1995). He found that African-American children develop a prototype of behaviors they perceive to be appropriate. This perception then forms the basis for adult behaviors. Dishman et al. (1985) also proposed that past exercise experience may have an influence on participation in physical activity in later years. Consistent with this notion, Jones and Nies (1996) suggested that older women might have difficulty beginning an exercise program if they have had no previous experience with it. The women in this study stated that, for them, a physically active lifestyle had always seemed "natural" and they felt something was missing when they were inactive.

Encouragement to participate in physical activity from a number of external sources was another theme that emanated from the comments of the women in this study. External Support, the third theme, was primarily provided by family, friends and church activities. Recent studies have shown external or social support to be a particularly important factor in exercise participation among women (King et al., 1992; Marcus, 1995). Of additional relevance to the present results, Gottlieb and

Green (1987) found that African-Americans tend to rely on multiple family members and friends for external support. Most of the women that were interviewed in this study indicated that their mother had the greatest impact, both in providing encouragement and in serving as a strong role model. Friends also appeared to serve a motivational function, both on an individual basis and in a group setting. Even though several of the women exercised alone, they mentioned the enjoyment of interacting with others. A strong sense of community seemed to exist between walking partners and among members of an exercise class. Seven of the eight participants in this study talked about being involved in church related events involving physical activity such as fellowship camps and picnics. In some cases, the church was considered to be part of the individual's extended family. This is consistent with research by Gottlieb and Green (1985) who found that the church was a more important external support factor for African-Americans than for other ethnic groups.

Among the psychological variables shown to be effective in promoting physical activity, self-efficacy, or one's confidence of being able to successfully perform a specific activity or behavior, may be one of the most important for women (King et al., 1992; Marcus, 1995). The fourth theme that developed in the current study, Determination, Positive Attitude, Strong Sense of Self, supports this finding. Although their experiences varied, the women showed determination and confidence that they could accomplish whatever they set out to do. Perceived good health and self-motivation, two other psychological variables found by Marcus (1995) to be

associated with participation in physical activity, were also quite evident among the women in this study. All professed good health, a positive outlook on life, and a strong sense of who they were and what they wanted to do.

Current research on exercise participation among older African-American women suggests that the majority lead sedentary lifestyles (Jones & Nies, 1996; Macera et al., 1995; Washburn et al., 1992). The results of the present study indicated that not only were these women active throughout their lives, but they indicated a strong commitment to remain active. As stated in Theme 5, the women were not naive about the aging process, but rather than "giving in to it" were determined to continue or increase the amount of exercise in which they were involved. The discrepancy between the present study and earlier works may be due in part to the use of different methodologies. The forced-response questionnaires used in the previous studies may not address the cultural differences in physical activity choices and lifestyles. Additionally, this unique group of individuals was selected based on current physical activity and therefore may not represent the majority of older African-American women.

Contrary to the general consensus found in the existing literature suggesting low levels of exercise participation, the women in this study seemed to feel that the African-American population as a whole was very active. Many of their statements started with a comment such as, "The reason our people (African-Americans) are so active..." The participants seemed to believe that, due to cultural norms, all African-Americans had similar physical activity patterns.

In conclusion, the results of this study suggest the existence of a number of factors that may contribute to successful exercise participation in older African-American women. These include a previous history of physical activity as well as external support from family, friends and the church. The psychological variables of self-efficacy and perceived good health were highly evident among these women. All of the participants expressed positive attitudes about life, both past and present, and a strong commitment to continuing their active lifestyles. Contrary to results of earlier studies, the women in this study felt that African-Americans were, and always had been, extremely active.

Implications

This study examined the exercise experiences of eight, older, African-American women using interpretive qualitative methods. The interviews and inductive analysis provided information, from the participants' perspective, concerning factors that contributed to their involvement in physical activity. The strength of this study is found in the depth of information gained from interviewing those who are involved in their exercise experience. Limitations of the present findings include the small number of participants, all of whom grew up in the South, and the lack of generalizability to larger populations. Future research could further the understanding of the physical activity patterns of this group in the following ways:

1. In-depth interviews of participants living in different regions of the country to evaluate the effects of racial segregation on physical activity in other areas.

2. Interviews of participants who are sedentary to determine factors that reduce or prevent exercise participation within this population.

3. If the pattern of responses are similar for other African-Americans in future interview studies, modification of physical activity survey instruments to include activities and routine events common to this population may be necessary to develop a clear description of exercise patterns in older African-American females.

4. Investigation of methods for increasing levels of self-efficacy and/or the activity patterns of older African-American women who do not participate in physical activity.

5. Considering the importance of church related activities to the older female African-American population, further research into the utilization of churches for health education and physical activity programs should be considered.

Finally, it is recommended that future studies be conducted in which quantitative and qualitative approaches to the study of exercise participation are combined. Such research should provide a much better picture of the beliefs and life circumstances that affect the physical activity patterns of older African-American women.

REFERENCES

- Ainsworth, B., Keenan, N., Strogatz, D., Garrett, J., & James, S. (1991). Physical activity and hypertension in black adults: The Pitt County study. *The American Journal of Public Health*, 81(11), 1477-1479.
- Arroll, B., & Beaglehole, R. (1992). Does physical activity lower blood pressure: A critical review of the clinical trials. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, 45(5), 439-447.
- Ballard, J., McKeown, B., Graham, H., & Zinkgraf, S. (1990). The effect of high level physical activity (8.5 METs or greater) and Estrogen Replacement Therapy upon bone mass in postmenopausal females, aged 50-68 years. *International Journal of Sports Medicine*, 11, 108-114.
- Ballor, D., & Keesey, R. (1991). A meta-analysis of the factors affecting exercise-induced changes in body mass, fat mass, and fat-free mass in males and females. *International Journal of Obesity*, 15, 717-726.
- Belgrave, F., & Lewis, D. (1994). The role of social support in compliance and other health related behaviors of African Americans with chronic illnesses. *Journal of Health and Social Policy*, 5, 55-68.
- Blair, S., Kohl, H., Paffenbarger, R., Clark, D., Cooper, K., & Gibbons, L. (1989). Physical fitness and all-cause mortality: A prospective study of healthy men and women. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 262(17), 2395-2401.
- Blair, S., Kohl, H., Barlow, C., Paffenbarger, R., Gibbons, L., & Macera, C. (1995). Changes in physical fitness and all-cause mortality. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 273(14), 1093-1098.
- Blumenthal, J., Emery C., Madden, D., George, L., Coleman, E., Riddle, M., McKee, D., Reasoner, J., & Williams, R. (1989). Cardiovascular and behavioral effects of exercise training in healthy older men and women. *Journal of Gerontology*, 44(5), 147-157.
- Branigan, K., & Cousins, S. (1995). Older women and beliefs about exercise risk: What has motherhood got to do with it? *Journal of Women and Aging*, 7(4), 47-66.
- Buchner, D., Beresford, S., Larson, E., LaCroix, A., & Wagner, E. (1992). Effects of physical activity on health status in older adults II: Intervention studies. *Annual Reviews in Public Health*, 13, 469-488.

- Casperson, D., Christenson, G., & Pollard, R. (1986). Status of the 1990 physical fitness and exercise objectives-evidence from NHIS 1985. *Public Health Reports*, 101, 587-592.
- Cononie, C., Graves, J., Pollock, M., Phillips, M., Sumners, C., & Hagberg, J. (1991). Effect of exercise training on blood pressure in 70-to 79-yr-old men and women. *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 23(4), 505-511.
- Dishman R., Sallis J., & Orenstein, D. (1985). The determinants of physical activity and exercise. *Public Health Reports*, 100, 158-171.
- Farrell, S., Kohl, H., & Rogers, T. (1987). The independent effect of ethnicity on cardiovascular fitness. *Human Biology*, 59(4), 657-666.
- Folsom, A., Burke, G., Byers, C., Hutchinson, R., Heiss, G., Flacke, J., Jacobs, D., & Caan, B. (1991). Implications of obesity for cardiovascular disease in blacks: The CARDIA and ARIC studies. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 53, 1604S-1611S.
- Ford, E., Meritt, R., Heath, G., Powell, K., Washburn, R., Kriska, A., & Haile, G. (1991). Physical activity behaviors in lower and higher socioeconomic status populations. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 133, 1246-1256.
- Ferrini, A., & Ferrini, R. (1989). *Health in the later years*. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown.
- Gill, K., & Overdorf, V. (1993). Incentives for exercise in younger and older women. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 17(2), 87-97.
- Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers: an introduction*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Gottlieb, N., & Green, L. (1987, Summer). Ethnicity and lifestyle health risk: Some possible mechanisms. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 37-46.
- Greendale, G., Bodin-Dunn, L., Ingles, S., Haile, R., & Barrett-Connor, E. (1996). Leisure, home and occupational physical activity and cardiovascular risk factors in postmenopausal women. *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 156, 418-424.
- Harris, D. (1990). *Sociology of aging*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.
- Harrison, L. (1995). African Americans: Race as a self-schema affecting physical activity choices. *Quest*, 47, 7-18.

- Heck, T., & Kimiecik, J. (1993). What is exercise enjoyment?: A qualitative investigation of adult exercise maintainers. *Wellness Perspectives: Research, Theory and Practice*, 10(1), 3-21.
- Ishii-Kuntz, M. (1990). Formal activities for elderly women: Determinants of participation in voluntary and senior center activities. *Journal of Women and Aging*, 2(1), 79-97.
- Janzen, W., & Cousins, S. (1995). "I do" or Don't: Marriage, women, and physical activity throughout the lifespan. *Journal of Women and Aging*, 7(1,2), 55-70.
- Jones, M., & Nies, M. (1996). The relationship of perceived benefits of and barriers to reported exercise in older African-American women. *Public Health Nursing*, 13(2), 151-158.
- Kaplan, G., Strawbridge, W., Camacho, T., & Cohen, R. (1993). Factors associated with change in physical functioning in the elderly. *Journal of Aging and Health*, 5(1), 140-153.
- King, A., Blair, S., Bild, D., Dishman, R., Dubbert, P., Marcus, B., Oldridge, N., Paffenbarger, R., Powell, K., & Yeager, K. (1992). Determinants of physical activity and interventions in adults. *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 24(6), Supplement: S221-S236.
- Kriska, A., Bayles, C., Cauley, J., LaPorte, R., Sandler, R., & Pambianco, G. (1986). A randomized exercise trial in older women: Increased activity over two years and the factors associated with compliance. *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 18(5), 557-562.
- Kumanyika, S., Wilson, J., & Guilford-Davenport, M. (1993). Weight-related attitudes and behaviors of black women. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 93, 416-422.
- Lackland, D., Orchard, T., Keil, J., Saunders, D., Wheeler, F., Adams-Campbell, L., McDonald, R., & Knapp, R. (1992). Are race differences in the prevalence of hypertension explained by body mass and fat distribution? A survey in a biracial population. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 21, 236-245.
- Lord, S., Ward, J., Williams, P., & Strudwick, M. (1995). The effect of a 12-month exercise trial on balance, strength, and falls in older women: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of the American Gerontological Society*, 43, 1194-1206.

- Macera, C., Croft, J., Brown, D., Ferguson, J., & Lane, M. (1995). Predictors of adopting leisure-time physical activity among a biracial community cohort. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 142, 629-635.
- Marcus, B. (1995). Exercise behavior and strategies for intervention. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 66(4), 319-323.
- Mason, J., & Powell, K. (1985). Physical activity, behavioral epidemiology and public health: editorial. *Public Health Reports*, 100(2), 113-115.
- McMurdo, M., & Rennie, L. (1993). A controlled trial of exercise by residents of old people's homes. *Age and Aging*, 22, 11-15.
- McPherson, B. (1996). Sport, health, well-being and aging: Some conceptual and methodological issues and questions for sport scientists. In B.D. McPherson (Ed.), *Sport and aging* (pp. 3-23). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Myers, B. (1987). Implications for physical activity as a risk factor for CHD among black and white women (abstract). *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 19(Suppl.), S90.
- Netz, Y., Tenebaum, G., & Sagiv, M. (1988). Pattern of psychological fitness as related to pattern of physical fitness among older adults. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 67, 647-655.
- Nichols, J., Omizo, D., Peterson, K., & Nelson, K. (1993). Efficacy of heavy-resistance training for active women over sixty: Muscular strength, body composition, and program adherence. *Journal of the American Geriatric Society*, 41, 205-210.
- O'Brien, S., & Vertinsky, P. (1991). Unfit survivors: Exercise as a resource for aging women. *The Gerontologist*, 31(3), 347-357.
- Ostrow, A. (1984). *Physical activity and the older adult*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Book Company.
- Ostrow, A. (1989). *Aging and motor behavior*. Indianapolis, IN: Benchmark.
- Powell, K. (1988). Habitual exercise and public health: An epidemiological view. In R.K. Dishman (Ed.), *Exercise adherence* (pp. 16-39). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Piscopo, J. (1985). *Fitness and aging*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.

- Reaven, P., Barrett-Connor, E., & Edelstein, S. (1991). Relation between leisure-time physical activity and blood pressure in older women. *Circulation*, 83, 559-565.
- Riddick, C., & Daniel, S. (1984). The relative contribution of leisure activities and other factors to the mental health of older women. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 16(2), 136-148.
- Rikkers, R. (1986). *Seniors on the move*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Robinson, J., & Rogers, M. (1994). Adherence to exercise programmes: recommendations. *Sports Medicine*, 17(1), 39-52.
- Ruuskanen, J., & Ruoppila, I. (1995). Physical activity and psychological well-being among people aged 65 to 84 years. *Age and Aging*, 24, 292-296.
- Smith, E. (1984). Special considerations in developing exercise programs for the older adult. In J. P. Matarazzo, S.M. Weiss, J.A. Herd, & N.E. Miller (eds.), *Behavioral health: A handbook of health enhancement and disease prevention* (pp. 525-546). New York: Wiley.
- Spiriduso, W. (1986). Physical activity and the prevention of premature aging. In V. Seefeld (Ed.), *Physical activity and well-being* (pp. 142-160). Reston, VA: American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.
- Tortura, G., & Angnostakos, N. (1987). *Principles of anatomy and physiology*. New York: Harper.
- Valliant, P., & Asu, M. (1985). Exercise and its effects on cognition and physiology in older adults. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 61, 1031-1038.
- Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Vertinsky, P., & Auman, J. (1988). Elderly women's barriers to exercise, Part I: Perceived Risks. *Health Values*, 12(4), 13-19.
- Voorrips, L., Ravelli, A., Dongelmans, P., Deureberg, P., & Staveren, W. (1991). A physical activity questionnaire for the elderly. *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, 23(8), 974-979.
- Washburn, R., Kline, G., Lackland, D., & Wheeler, F. (1992). Leisure time physical activity: Are there black/white differences? *Preventive Medicine*, 21, 127-135.

- Wolcott, H. (1990). *Writing up qualitative research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Willis, J., & Campbell, L. (1992). *Exercise psychology*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Work, J. (1989). Strength training: A bridge to independence for the elderly. *The Physician and Sportsmedicine*, 17(11), 134-140.
- Young, D., King, A., & Oka, R. (1995). Determinants of exercise level in the sedentary versus underactive older adult: Implications for physical activity program development. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 3, 4-25.

APPENDIX A

THE EXERCISE EXPERIENCES OF ACTIVE, OLDER, AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, _____, hereby volunteer to participate in a research study exploring the experiences of older African-American women who successfully engage in physical activity. Specifically, the study is designed to attempt to identify factors that contribute to exercise adherence within this population and also satisfy partial thesis requirements for Sue R. Leggett.

I understand that I will be participating in one interview, lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. My responses will be audiotaped and transcribed. The tapes, transcriptions, consent forms, and written identification of the participants will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the office of Dr. Dixie L. Thompson, Room 347 of the HPER Building at the University of Tennessee, during the course of the study. After transcription the tapes will be erased and the written identification will be destroyed. Consent forms will remain stored for three years following completion and will then be destroyed.

I understand that there are limited risks because I will be responding to open-ended statements such as: Please tell me about the type of physical activity you are currently engaged in and the length of time you have been participating. If at any time I am uncomfortable about answering a question I am free to say so and we will go on to the next question or terminate the interview.

An anticipated benefit of this investigation is the identification of factors that contribute to exercise participation within the older African-American female population. This would prove helpful to the exercise practitioner who designs programs for older populations.

I understand that my participation is strictly voluntary and I may ask questions of Sue Leggett at any time and may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or prejudice. I also understand that my responses will remain confidential and that my identity will remain anonymous (all data will be coded with pseudonyms to preserve anonymity).

I HAVE READ THE ABOVE STATEMENTS AND I UNDERSTAND THE EXPLANATION OF THE PROJECT, THE PROCEDURES TO BE USED, MY ROLE IN THE RESEARCH, AND THE POTENTIAL RISKS AND BENEFITS INVOLVED. I HAVE RECEIVED A COPY OF THIS FORM FOR MY FILES.

Date: _____

Participant's
Signature _____

Date: _____

Principal
Investigator _____

Sue R. Leggett
Exercise Science Unit
The University of Tennessee
Knoxville, Tennessee 37996-2700
Phone: (423) 974-5111

APPENDIX B

HEALTH AND PERSONAL HISTORY QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: _____ DATE: _____
DATE OF BIRTH _____
NUMBER OF SIBLINGS (AGE&GENDER): _____
LEVEL OF EDUCATION: _____
MARITAL STATUS: _____
PREFERRED PSEUDONYM _____

Answer YES or NO to the following questions:

Have you ever had:	YES	NO
Free or easy bleeding (hemophilia)	()	()
Rheumatic fever	()	()
Heart murmur	()	()
High blood pressure	()	()
Any heart problems	()	()
Varicose veins	()	()
Lung disease	()	()
Seizures	()	()
Irregular heart beat	()	()
Bronchitis	()	()
Emphysema	()	()
Diabetes	()	()
Bronchial asthma	()	()
Kidney disease	()	()
Liver disease	()	()
Hay fever	()	()
Anemia	()	()
 Have you recently had:		
Chest pain	()	()
Shortness of breath	()	()
Heart palpitations	()	()
Leg or ankle swelling	()	()
Coughing of blood	()	()
Low blood sugar	()	()
Fainting or dizzy spell	()	()
Frequent urination	()	()
Blood in urine	()	()
Burning sensation	()	()
Severe headache	()	()
Blurred vision	()	()
Difficulty walking	()	()
Weakness in arm or leg	()	()
Joint or back pain	()	()

Do you smoke
If so, how many per day? _____

YES NO
() ()

Have you lost or gained weight in the past six months? _____
How much? _____

Please list all medications you are currently taking or have taken in the last month:

Have you ever been hospitalized? _____
For what? _____

Do you have any medical condition not listed here? _____
If so please describe: _____

Circle the days you usually exercise:

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

On the days you exercise, how many minutes do you exercise? Circle your answer.

<10 11-20 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 >60

How would you classify the intensity of your exercise? Circle your answer.

very light light moderate hard very hard

Describe your typical exercise session _____

How long have you been participating in this activity? _____

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

"Tell me about the type of physical activity you are currently engaged in and the length of time you have been participating."

"What motivated you to begin this activity?"

"Tell me what keeps you motivated to continue being physically active."

"Look back at your youth and tell me about your experiences pertaining to participation in sports, games, and physical activity."

Use the following questions as probes if necessary:

"Was Physical Education a part of your experience in school?"

"What opportunities were available for you to participate in physical activity?"

"What part did your siblings play in your participation in physical activity as a child?"

"Were you encouraged to participate in sport and physical activity as a child (by parents, peers, siblings)?"

**Move from youth to young adult (college, marriage, work).
Questions will depend on individual experience.**

"Tell me about your physical activity as a young adult."

Bring participant through time back to present and summarize their participation from youth through current activities.

Summarize motivating factors for exercise adherence.

APPENDIX D

Theme 1. The Segregated South "That was just the way life was."

-
- Sister** *We couldn't ride the school bus as a child...lived way out there in the country. Walking to school was a 6 mile trip and I did that. (136)
- *I really wanted to be (teach) in middle school and at that time you know they were sending most of the black teachers, candidates for student teacher, were sent to black schools...at that time we didn't have but two that I knew of...(366)
-
- Mae** *That is one reason why I love coming over here (senior center) because in my childhood we didn't have this. (63)
- *...of course our neighborhood was mixed...we fight...they were mad at each other but they were friends. (94)
- *We went to [name of junior high school]. Of course it was rather new then and we had to walk a long way because we didn't have transportation...about 4 or 5 miles, maybe more than that. (240)
- *It was past [name of high school]. And of course kids will be kids. Sometimes the white kids and the black kids, honey, they would probably get into it sometimes...(254)
- *A lot of times we eat out on Sundays. That is something that we never did comin up...so eating out is a treat. (401)
- *Well one thing...blacks didn't have anywhere to go. (480)
- *...well now things are opening. Just in recent years. It hadn't been no - no last ten years maybe. If it has been that many. (483)
- *...one park. We had only one day that we could go to [local park] that was the 8th of August. One day a year and when that day came it was so crowded. Everybody was going. But now, the opportunities open up and you probably could go wherever you wanted to go and still have some people who hold old grudges from years back. Black and white. (495)

*This is just something as a child that you dream about, you know you see things...playgrounds and everything that wasn't around when we was coming up. We didn't have that. These kids now, they have a lot more. They don't seem to appreciate...if you don't have it and you see it happening you have a different perspective then. (694)

Jerry *We were just typical black teenagers. (95)

Lizzie *I lived in the country on the farm until I was 13 years old...we had a good living but the school wasn't much way back then...nothing much at all for black people. Now the white people had schools but all the black people as soon as they were old enough to go to work on the farm...everybody farmed. (122)

*...public dances and stuff we didn't get to go. Back then they didn't have nothing too much no way. We didn't go, but we would have our dances and parties there at the house and invite our friends. (184)

Mary Lula *Schools I attended were so small, well, we didn't have much land around it...so we did not have softball, baseball and those types of things. (44)

*Sometimes we went to [local park] when there were activities being sponsored there but there were very few activities for black people at that time. See I was born in 1932. So it was whatever your parents could arrange or whatever the school arranged. (54)

*There was only one high school for blacks...we did activities there. (82)

*...there were not other parks and things we could go to. We could only go to [city park] once a year. And at [local park] there wasn't much that you could do...nothing but a field. So in the community you made your own (fun)...(103)

*The recreation department had trained persons who ...brought in the different activities into the different communities. (309)

Swampfox *We organized ourselves. There was no team things like that when we were growing up. We didn't have anything like Little League...we did our own thing. (144)

*...the high school was on [name of street]. Of course there was a high school right across from me I couldn't go to because it was for white kids so we had to walk to high school every day. So walking has just been like what we do...wherever we went, we had to walk. (171)

Pat *I think that we are very active people because I feel that we didn't have the proper...places to go, that many things to get involved in, so we always had to find some way of keeping busy and make ourselves feel good...(107)

*I don't know why, it is just more of an active life. I think that is why blacks are so sporty. (116)

*...because we didn't have the money for a lot of good recreational, especially leisure. An our leisure has always been working with our bodies I think. (119)

*I was born in 1941 an on up until the 60's it was segregated...the only activities that you had was that you had to buy something to use to make your own recreation. Cause you couldn't go places and you couldn't do things. So you had to get a bicycle...skate...play ball or something to keep yourself active. (129)

*...finally I just say we are going back to what we always did from child up...I am almost sure that is basically why blacks are so active...nobody had grass cause everybody had basketball goals...it was just a dirty place and you stayed dirty and that was just part of life. (148)

*And you see they didn't integrate until '60 and I was at [university] when they integrated in '61. You still did the same thing, you only went to the little park...every other Thursday. I hate to bring all this racial stuff in. (167)

*...periodically there has been physical activity all through my life...I didn't really know I was active to tell you the truth. But I think that is just the way it is. Black people...it boils down to about the same, you have nothing else to do. (350)

Bev *Well, we didn't have too much activity when I was coming along. Basketball was about the thing, played softball. (131)

 *No, we didn't have any (neighborhood activities, structured). We would get out in the street and play ball or something...(134)

 *Yeah, we could go to the park, of course during our time we could only go to the park once a year and that was the 8th of August. They would set things up for us to do. (204)

APPENDIX E

Theme 2. Physical work, activity, and walking as a way of life "We've always been active."

- Sister** *And the thought ran into my head...you know what, we have always exercised but it wasn't anything structured...it was something that we did because of survival. We were hard workers and as a child I did physical field work. (128)
- *I never remember my mother having a car...we had to walk everywhere we went. (133)
- *...remember that I lived in the country and my brothers during the fall, they had to drop out of school and they would do the field work. I had to leave school and take them their lunches in the fields and then I would go home, pick up their lunch, take it to the field and then go back to school. And that is what I did. (145)
- *...the older people would be working in their yards as I would pass. And they would see me and say "Oh, that Winnie's daughter could walk, oh, that little girl could walk." Boy, would I walk! (150)
- *I have always been a physical person. In high school I was a majorette in the band and I remember my cousin and I we were raised in the country and we were the only two majorettes from the country and all the rest of the majorettes were from the city. We went to Mardi Gras for parade and we had to march 6 miles and all the other majorettes were just falling over and it was hot. My cousin and I looked at each other and said "Watch us, we are not falling, we from the country, we don't faint!" (197)
- *I played first base and shortstop, that was my thing. And I remember my coach would tell me I was a little Gil Hodges...and he would say nothing come past Sister. (218)
- *Even with my children...it (National Youth Sport Program) was a lot of fun and it was sport based, physical type thing during the summer. (284)
- *The coach at [a local college]... said he would give me a job because he noticed how physical I was. (290)

*We had to walk from one site to the other to participate in what activity it was. We did just about all types of physical exercises and games. (299)

*...once you start doing this (walking) as a form of exercise, it becomes a mental part of you and...you just got to do it...mental, physical, like getting up in the morning, brushing your teeth. (402)

*Before, when I was a child I had to do it (walk), I didn't have a bicycle. I didn't have no transportation. I had to get from one place to the other walking. (419)

*I mean I am talking about acres and acres of stuff and we kids did all that kind of stuff and that is how our family lived. Farming was the in living. It was a big deal thing. (465)

*At about 15 or 16 years of age most of my brothers...would drop out of school to do fieldwork. The majority of my brothers left home when they were 15 or 16. (472)

*It (being active) was natural! I didn't give it a lot of thought except when I used to deliver those lunches to the field, Oh, God, I just loved it! (543)

*I would wash my clothes myself...I have washed clothes by hand in the tub...sheets and things in the tub. (569)

Mae

*Oh yes, we played. A lot of times we had a little field right back of us, that maybe the older kids would play ball. (139)

*Hopscotch...and ring games. (157)

*Well, active because we had, we had physical chores to do. And during the summer when the blackberries were out we had to go pick blackberries. And we had fruit trees in the yard. We had things to do around the house...help with the work around the house. (161)

*...we didn't sit around. We had a radio, that was a big deal. (167)

*I guess around sixth grade we would go and hunt for jobs during the summer. We would go and knock on doors and see if we could do something...(193)

*We had our regular gym class, we took gym in school...we would really take exercise and again...we had our little volleyball and basketball. (211)

*I think no more than just gym (in high school). We spent our time working after school...(293)

Jerry

*I was raised here but I moved to California and you know people in California exercise. (59)

*I grew up in [name of town]. I went to [name of school]. We took gym...I used to play basketball in high school. (95)

*We played ball, we lived in the projects and we played in the streets. (135)

*...me and my mother always did a lot of walking. I didn't own a car until I was 40 years old. So when I lived in California I go around walking because the bus stops were a long way. We walked, did a lot of walking. (159)

*Me and my children would get out and go walking to get on the bus and wherever we had to go we rode the bus or walk. (162)

*Yeah, I went to Jack Lalane for a long time...they had a lot of machines and stuff that you use and they had a swimming pool. (166)

*33 (years participation in exercise) The whole time we would walk. We would go to school, we would walk on the track. (197)

Lizzie

*And I would get up at 6:00 a.m. and try to be on the track by 6:30 a.m. And I would walk for about 4 or 5 hours each day. I was working at this time, too. Of course I still took care of my house work and worked and worked in my flower garden and I just stopped comin over here [senior center] for about 4 or 5 years, about 8 or 10 years ago. (35)

*Oh, I loved my garden, I loved it. I enjoyed it...I just work and swing and work and swing and cool off and go in and take a shower. (43)

***I can remember...well back then I didn't know any better so I was happy. I lived on a farm. (107)**

***Everybody farmed and everybody had...plenty of food and it was good food. (131)**

***Well in school they didn't do much as they do now, but we did take gym. (171)**

***Well I tell you we would just get out an play ball or something like that. We wasn't allowed to visit people (after moving to the city)...I would say I was active but I didn't get to go to things. (179)**

***Now living in the country we was all over the place. People were at our house and we were at their house. Everything everybody else done, we done it. (215)**

***Leisure time? (laughter) No, just working at home is all. Like I said I had my garden and flowers and I just made myself satisfied. Other than going with the children, doing things for the children. (269)**

***I didn't do nothing special other than just walking...still working and gardening. (311)**

***It was about 10 years ago I quit (exercise class) and started walking. I didn't walk when it was real cold. After they built this mall out here so you can walk in the mall, I would walk in the mall when it was real cold. (330)**

***I wasn't a baby at the time. I just started walking more and more. Other than walking that 4 or 5 hours I put in quite a few hours at home cause I used to really keep house. (344)**

***I enjoy, I really enjoy and I always like I said, I like dancing...when I was a child in the country, I had an uncle, he played a guitar...he could sing, he could dance. He could play that guitar! Sometimes he would play for parties and things like that and we would dance as children and we would have a good time. (511)**

***Years ago, before they had TV, you might not remember before TV, they had radios. We had a radio and I would listen to old songs on the radio and dance by those songs...you just pick it up. If you like something you will learn...(539)**

*During WW II, this friend of mine, her husband was in the service and my husband was too, we just had ourselves a ball...went to dances when I was grown and had a chance to go. (557)

*I got some of it (dancing) in! (laughter) I would have gotten a lot more in had I been able to start a lot earlier. (571)

Mary Lula *In elementary school we participated in whatever activates the health teacher had set up for us. (44)

*In the community where I lived in elementary school, there was very little to do as a young child, you did only what your parents carried you to...(51)

*Junior high school we did quite a few different things. In our physical education class we were taught badminton, shuffle board, tennis, and I do love tennis. They taught different dances. Each six weeks they covered a different sport or dance exercise...one thing I did enjoy is tennis and since no one will know who this is, I used to cut class to go play tennis! (56)

*We played softball. About this time they build a swimming pool at the [local park]. I used to go over there and swim. (63)

*...roller skating, we jumped rope, we played, I lived in [project] on [street] there was a huge field in front of the house and every afternoon we would have a baseball game...we would play until dark. (75)

*We did activities there (in high school). We had softball and did a lot of square dancing and round dancing...(83)

*I guess they (teachers) made sure that every child participated. There was no such thing as sitting on the sideline and I can't do this. (90)

*Most of the things I remember (outside of school) is my skating. We would get skates every Christmas. I would use my skates and my sisters and brothers if I could find them. I would wear out everybody's skates in the house, skating. It was either skating or the softball field, depending on the type, the time of year. (100)

*At [local park] there wasn't that much that you could do...nothing but a field so there was softball and baseball and the swimming pool...so in the community you made your own fun. (106)

*Those were the types of things you did...we had chores to do and after you finished your chores...that's what you did unless there was a church picnic and that was in the summer time. (112)

*...I went to [name of college]. My old PE teacher was an old Army sergeant so you know what we did every day! ...I enjoyed it...I thought it was real funny making us march every day and drilling us. (127)

*...we did tumbling exercises, tennis. Well, I took tennis as a class. I didn't live on campus so I had to go back to the campus for whatever activities were going on up there. (139)

*...we used to catch the bus from [town] and come over to [local park] and play tennis. We used to get up at 5:30 in the morning and play until 10:00. (144)

*And then after college...the school where I worked, they had a tennis court so we played tennis there. We would go to different beaches and swim. (179)

*Really, I had to help my brother every day. So we walked all over [town] carrying papers. He had a route of 200 customers so we walked...carried all those papers. (214)

*I did walking because we didn't have a car...we did a lot of dancing...we would meet at someone's house and play cards and dance. Other activities (after starting work), no, I don't recall many of those (251)

*...while I was still in the school system, we joined an exercise water aerobics class over at the Y...(264)

*I would say that I was very active. Yes, if it was no more than just walking because we had to walk...to the grocery store. And my mother bought groceries by the week...and you had to carry all those groceries... So we walked wherever we went... We walked all the time. (407)

Swampfox

*Oh gosh, I was always active. I mean, of course I was born during the days before cars. Well, I mean we had cars. We didn't go anywhere in them. My father had a car but we walked everywhere. We walked to school. (118)

*Walking was so much a part of my life. You know we walked to town. If we had to go shopping... We walked to school...and then we would come home and we would play. We rode bikes. We skated. I mean this is what we did every day, we weren't fat. (123)

*We rode bikes, we walked, and we skated. (138)

*We had physical education, it was just exercise. I don't remember playing in PE like they do now... We didn't have fun like that. Jumping jacks, I mean we did so many jumping jacks, I hate those things to this day! (laughter) We took gym three days a week. (149)

*If we wanted to go to the park we had to walk to the park...and the park was like 7 or 8 miles away. Everywhere we had to go, we had to walk. Wherever we went, we had to walk. Only time we could ride was at night. (175)

*That is all I can remember about exercising. So it wasn't like, you know, it was just something natural...you didn't think about it. (184)

*When I got out of high school. Hey, I had the best walking that you could possibly do cause I went to [college] and you know it is on a hill. So three times a day I know I was walking up and down...we just did it you know. Gosh, I can't believe all the walking I did back in those days. (204)

*I didn't realize I was doing that much walking until this. I just walked all my life. (249)

*Then from college I went straight into working - teaching and having a baby. I had my first child when I was 23. I was always working - teaching, mothering, running around after the baby. Then 6 years later I had my daughter. I was still being "Mommy". And I like I said when she was 6 years old was when I started walking. (255)

*Well I was walking with them (children). Like I had a bicycle with the baby seat on the back and I would ride my bicycle in the neighborhood. Just the normal things. (265)

*That was one of our daily things. Walking to the river every day. We walked to that river. Throw rocks in the river. See how high the river has risen. Walk across the bridge...and then back home. That is what we did every Sunday. Take those little walks. We had to walk everywhere. We had to walk to see our cousins...my first cousins lived over in that area and that is a good, I say that is a good 2 miles. We did that every day just like it was nothing, 2 miles over and 2 miles back. (491)

*When I think about it, golly, I have just put in a lot of time with this physical activity. (645)

Pat

*...in the early 70's they started...walking programs around the plant...so I started back to my basic walking program. And if I wanted to stay over in the afternoon to do the machines, I would do that. (20)

*Doing about 3 to 4 miles, 3 to 4 times a week, sometimes 5. I always did Jane Fonda...I have actually memorized it. So I decided it really wasn't doing me as much good as I could do on my outside program. (42)

*We buy skates for Christmas or whatever and then you would go up and down the sidewalk. Everybody used to do that I am sure. But that is one of the activities, and bicycle riding. (111)

*Cause you couldn't go places and you couldn't do things. So you either had to get a bicycle or you had to skate or you had to do something, play ball to keep yourself active. (133)

*We had a basketball goal here and from those early years I think that it is sort of imbedded. (138)

*...and I just got more involved in exercise. Then my sister would come up and we get in the floor in there...I just say we are going back to what we always did from a child up. (144)

*Back when I was playing basketball you played half court and then you had your volleyball competition...(182)

*...competitive basketball (at the local recreation center). Mostly in the winter as far back as I can remember. I can't remember volleyball being real big back then but it was in the daily classes that

we took PE in like maybe 3 times a week. I was a person who loved swimming. (191)

*At one time now, remember they cut basketball for girls. I kinda got caught in that era and then all of a sudden basketball starts back up for women. Now I probably would have gone out for the teams if they had been during the times that I was...in school. (266)

*1959, went straight to college. I took archery and was very interested in it. (300)

*1961, physically I was in love. (laughter) So really I didn't do anything except walking up and down...that hill. Everybody rode bicycles. And I could ride a bicycle and put on tennis shoes, smoke cigarettes in class and do all this strange things and I was just happy as a lark. (321)

*So I can say that...there has been physical activity all through my life. But I think that it was just a part of life. I didn't know that it was anything, (until) I am saying it now. I didn't really know I was active to tell you the truth. (347)

Bev

*I played basketball on the basketball team at [junior high school]...I played on the team at [high school]. (95)

*In elementary school we would go outside and play ball and back then it was sock ball. Throw and hit with your hand...and run. (100)

*We did a lot of relays...sack...slide in a sack and running. (107)

*Yes, we would get out in the street and play sock ball...real active, very active. (112)

*I was the only girl...they (parents) also wanted me to be home to do all the work. (119)

*Yeah, I was very active in school. I stayed busy all the time. Never been one to sit around. (122)

*...I came home (from school) and cooked. Then after I got my homework done and stuff...we would get outside and play..we always had some kind of little games...(145)

*We played hop scotch all the time. That is what we did in the evening. We played that until dark. (152)

*We played hop scotch in high school. But then...they opened up the center and I played basketball down there. We had teams and we would go down to the center and play. (166)

*I was real active in the Y-Teens. We would go over to the Air Base and have dances for those Air Force men. We were young, what 15 or 16 years old and our group leader would carry us over there to the Air Base...I used to like that, stay busy. (175)

*I did a lot of skating in high school. (183)

*(at fellowship camp) Yeah, all the camping things. We would get out and we would walk, play ball, and do archery. (210)

*I got married when I was 21 and I worked cause I couldn't decide what I wanted to do...we did a lot of dancing. I might have played some ball, softball out in the field. (236)

*I got real physical when I got here (present job) cause at that time we had a baseball team and all the track teams. We was doing a whole lot then. (255)

*in the 80's...we walked 6 miles a day 5 days a week, Monday through Friday and we would rest on Saturday and Sunday...felt real good, real good, real good. (349)

APPENDIX F

Theme 3. External Support Family, Friends and Church "We are our own club."

Sister

*There are three of us. Myself and two other walking partners and we walk very very hard. We always pick somebody that walking faster than us. We always say we are going to pick them up or and we go for it. (14)

*We have each tried it individually for walking one round in less than 15 minutes because right now it is 15 minutes. And I have tried it by myself. My walking partners have tried it by themselves but it seems like we just can't do it. I think I did it one time by maybe 2 or 3 minutes and we just really have to pump real hard. And I think we have all come to the conclusion that when we walk, we are walking at our maximum. And it is a lot of fun. (18)

*Yea. Well even if we do by ourselves we are still motivated but by the partners but the partners if they are not there, there is a good reason for them not to be there. They expect for us, the individual, to keep it going. (83)

*They (walking partners) always said that I could walk faster. I am the oldest out the group...And they always say, "Sylvia, you can get it. Go on, get it." So they always push me. "You go and get it. We can't do it. You get them." Okay, here I go. I get them. I get them. (164)

*I never had a problem with walking but I think I inherited from my mother because she was a walker. And there is a thing that I like to do - and I was told that my mother loved to do it and that was dancing. And they say my mother used to be in dancing contests and I love to dance too. (249)

*But my mom, God, you would think, you think I was physical. Oh, my mamma was something else! That woman was something like a Harriet Thugman. She was such a strong person. And it was just like she wasn't afraid of anything. (499)

*So a part of it I really got from my mom. And by her being younger than my dad, she was always the breadwinner. She was like head of the house. (520)

*I have three girls but you know my girls are very active just like me. The baby girl was in gymnastics - just a little bitty kid. She ran track. They exercise hard. Especially the oldest one - she does - it just a routine thing for her. But she does aerobics. I don't like doing aerobics. (613)

*They are about like faithful to walking as I am. We all are. We are a club. I've got a T-shirt, the walking T-shirt...we all got one like this. Sometimes we say "Hey, we gonna wear it." We have to wear it together...(623)

*So from now on whenever somebody stops, to talk to somebody, everybody just sorta like swirl around - so we pack together. (669)

*We sorta just complement each other. We are just a great team. And people just actually stop and look at us when we walking in the mall. We have had - the person who is working - cleans the windows - he says "How do you all do it?" How and every time you are walking you are talking. How could you walk so fast and talk at the same time. (753)

*It is like letting the team down when you don't show up to walk. (762)

*You see my mother died when she was 92...she was really active until she just couldn't go anymore. She just slipped away. There was no retire for mom, she just worked til she couldn't anymore. (808)

Mae

*Well I am real active in my church. And of course the neighbors and of course when we take vacations and things that you know as coming up we didn't have a chance to do...(35)

*And sometimes that we would feel so good my mother would ever now and then would get out and play ring games with us knowing she did all this work, took in washing with a scrub board...(147)

*You know the neighbors would come down, that was a big thing for us, you know the mothers would come down and bring the

children and sit down and visit our parents out in the yard. We would play High Spy. We would play Ring Around the Rosie. We played games with their children and then we would get out in the back and play ball. (222)

*Oh, being with people, you can't enjoy things by yourself. (reason for coming to exercise class) (335)

*We have this lady - and I don't even know her name. She might be the oldest white lady in class there. Oh Lord, when I first started I would suddenly plop. She come over there a got me. I got so mad at her. I would say to myself - she don't know my feelings. She would say "Un Un - come on." Take me around and around in the room in there. I thought "Oh goodness." I tried to get way over on the end and here she would come. And I began to look at her. At her age and she is trying to go - it kinda helped me. I appreciate that now. (355)

*No, (see people outside of exercise class) because I am real active in my church and with the grandchildren. I help raise them still trying to help them out. (376)

*Well we always sit out there (after class) one girl I already knew, and sit around the table a few minutes before we get ready to go home and talk and then we go on home. (515)

*At church sometimes. (promotes exercise class) (631)

*You start talking to people (in class) like they have been there all along and you don't even know their name. (739)

Jerry

* As a rule me and my mother used to walk. My mother used to walk. She would go one block and then go another block. As a rule we always just walked. This is my first time doing aerobics. It is something different. (20)

*Where my sister lives in hills, and I try to walk over there. (25)

*Well there was six of us (siblings) and we didn't need nobody else. (to play with) (132)

*...like I say we were a family. We mostly did things together whatever we did. Of course my little brothers - when I grew up the older children took care of the younger children - so me and my sister each had a brother. (142)

*My mother told us to do everything but her funds were limited. So we did what sports we could. (148)

*I tell you I had a neighbor who lived across the street. She wanted to go (to exercise class) and she just involved me in going. Me and her would go together. Like I said me and mother always walked. (180)

*I guess the walking benefit is just as good but I want to be around people - no more than the people I work with or me and my sisters. I come to be with the people. I enjoy people. (231)

* So I come to check it out to see what was going on with the people in my age group. And for me it has been very beneficial and the people that are here (senior center) are very friendly. I'm used to being around people. (239)

*I thought that I could go to church and I could make it with my church family...when I don't have my church family I am kinda left out. (344)

*Yea, just move. My little mother is 83 but she is a busy little lady. Got a good mind - little house - hats - likes to dress up. She is not in to housework. I have to go over there and do the work but other than that...we go up to Watson's and browse through the stores....(588)

Lizzie

*It helps to get out with other people - to talk with them - with things that you have in common. I enjoy the class. I enjoy the fellowship and the instructors - oh they are just lovely - they are so helpful. So that is the main reason I come to this class. I enjoy the class. I enjoy the fellowship and the instructors - they are - they are just as sweet as they can be. I enjoy them too. So that is the main reason that I come. (93)

*Oh yes, I played games with my children. All kinds of little games and we would sit down and enjoy little games and then we would go out sometimes and throw a ball things like that you know. (273)

*somebody different would come up at different times and I would just walk with them. Just with them and not walk off and leave them. I enjoyed the fellowship there. We would just talk - just walk and talk about I say "sweet nothin's" cause it was first one thing and then another. (387)

*I met so many people (walking on the track) and we just got to become friends. Just enjoyed talking with each other. (406)

*I was never up there (on the track) by myself. There was always somebody up there. I don't know what time they came but when I get there they was always somebody there. You just get to know people by seeing them all the time. And after so long of time then they leave and there is always somebody coming at different times. That way I get a chance to meet a lot of people that way. I was never up there by myself. (410)

*But I didn't have anybody to walk with me down at (the mall) and so after so long a time - in other words 3 years ago I came back over here cause I like the fellowship. In other words I like getting out with people. So I decided I am going back to the Center and so I am really enjoying it. (461)

*...it is a small track back down there. I have been down there and walked a little but the only thing that I don't like about it, it is deserted all the time. People is so mean now that I don't feel comfortable by myself. If somebody else was up there walking I would like it. I wouldn't have to know them but you can get to know people. You just speak to people and get to know them. Each time I have been there it has been deserted and that is why I don't like to go anywhere that is just deserted, nobody but me. (607)

Mary Lula *So I joined the exercise class. I enjoy exercise. I had tried walking on my own but I do better with a group rather than by myself so I felt I would get more out of it if I worked with this group. It has been very nice. (31)

* It was very difficult to find people who had time to do anything... I do not like to do a lot of things by myself - well other than that skating. You know skating you can do by yourself and enjoy...most of my friends were all married and they had children so you know I am single - that made a difference. (268)

*Well she (mother) encouraged us to participate in some things but back then parents were very careful with their daughters. (289)

*As long as you had completed your chores you could go outside and play. If you had not there was trouble in the camp! (318)

*Yes, I am comfortable with the group. They are (a wonderful group of people)...we have a lot of fun in there (exercise class). It is nice. (510)

Swampfox

* I will meet some of my friends - either we will walk in the neighborhood or we will go up to UT and I will walk another hour in the evening after it has cooled down. And I do that every - I have been doing that every summer. (33)

* I do aerobic dancing and sometimes with my friends. I don't do it by myself...to a video with my friends. I don't do that by myself. That is too boring but walking I will do by myself anywhere. It don't take much for me to put on my tennis shoes and go. (52)

* Now my girlfriend who is in Michigan - she comes home every summer - she probably will turn 50 this year - and she is a fanatic on being thin. When she comes in that is when I will exercise with her. Like the aerobics and the steps. She likes that step type stuff. That stuff just drives me crazy. But I will do it with her just to say "Okay if I do this then I can eat that much more." (337)

*The only time that I really think about getting tired is when if I am by myself - after I know I have walked like four miles and I might start getting bored cause I change locations you know go the other way - go the opposite direction or something like that to break the monotony up. (524)

*See my daughter was doing it too (aerobics class)...me and my daughter and girlfriend that moved to Michigan who comes in the summer and girlfriend too - she used to exercise with me but she is working nights now so she can't exercise with me anymore. She used to walk with me. She come all the way over here and walk with me. And her two daughters so we always had a nice family class. And we did that. When (instructor) left town and we tried other aerobics instructors...it just wasn't the same. It wasn't like being with (instructor). Cause (she) worked us so hard and she would, she did everything. (595)

*No, it was gradual (change in activity pattern). It was gradual. And I think it had more to do with my friends leaving town now that I think about it. (629)

Pat

*I really do try to push my family into exercising. My brother we had a walking thing with him because he had a heart attack one time. So we would all get together in the evenings and do different things and time each other and that kind of thing. My sister was involved in that. (87)

* We hoping with his work schedule if we could get back and then...get back into the schedule which will include most of my family again. My mother is 74 years old and she has been on a little walking thing but she is not doing it well right now. So we are trying to do something to encourage her to get back in to the swing of walking. That is the most enjoyable thing I do. I used to bowl but I have lost so many friends, most of them were bowlers, in death and I haven't been able to get back into the bowling. I think that is the main reason, psychological. (95)

* My brother was pushed all the time to get out and run like 5:00 a.m. but he was. My father was an uneducated man and my mother was a high school graduate and they needed that scholarship to help him to go to college and I am sure that Daddy's ego inflated too when my brother made captain of the Austin High School team as a football player and I think that is where I see the drive in him having to get up and run and to all this kind of stuff. I don't think that they knew what they were doing but they were encouraging me. If he could get up and do certain things - why not me? (229)

*My mother played team, she actually was on a basketball team up in 1939 and she loves to tell you how - she know every hoop...she has pictures of her on the teams. Isn't that funny? (274)

*..I guess she would have been the one who sorta pushed and stuff with the activity, physical activity really. Cause heard that story - years that she was on those buses going and playing...we heard it so much until we probably just picked some of that up. (280)

* She must have been an awful good player cause even her friends have said that to me that she was a wonderful basketball player. When we were playing in the yard - you are not doing so and so. You need to do so and so she would holler out the window or something. I would say that most that came from that - from her. (293)

*...these ladies we are going to start walking before our (pinochle) game. Now we met for the first time last week and we said no food... but we do want to walk...it is just a foursome. Maybe warm up before we leave, at least stretch. And I thought that if we do 30 minutes of that or work to maybe 40 minutes and if we sit down to the table 3 hours, we won't feel so guilty. So that is the main thing that I was trying to get in their heads when I was up there the other day. We got to start doing that. I think that I am doing it with somebody to get me back into my program and it is going to help me. (587)

Bev

*I exercise every day. The reason why I do it is for my job sake because I do have to take my patients out. Every day the doctor wants you to take them out...and give them exercises. (7)

*We do that (walk the greenway) and I also take patients with me. (37)

*Oh yeah, my parents were very supportive. I was the only girl, but they also wanted me to be home to do all the work. (119)

*We did a lot of stuff at church cause I was very much involved with my mom's church...to entertain the kids and keep us interested in coming to church. (193)

*We would go to church camps, fellowship camps, once or twice a year. They would set up things for us to do...archery, games, and stuff. (205)

*I have always been involved in the church. (250)

*Yeah, they (job responsibilities) really got me back into the active. (272)

*I encourage my daughter now cause she always...in high school would look at me and say she will never get as fat as me, she wore a

size 3...but now her clothes are too big for me! (511)

*...I encourage her to walk, exercise. I keep telling her, "You need to walk...to exercise." So she is doing better. (515)

*...my son...he knows I like clothes and he always buy me an outfit...he brought it by and I tried it on and it fit perfect. Perfect...so he go, "Ohhhh!" I said, "You better come on in and join the crowd boy." He used to walk to work. He said he was going to start back...(528)

APPENDIX G

Theme 4. Determination, Positive Attitude, Strong Sense of Self "Don't tell me I can't do anything...I am determined...I'm going to do it if I want to do it."

- Sister** *I don't like to but I do (walk alone). Like, I am going to do it today. You would go regardless. I mean it would be something that you would do. Your enjoyment is more as a group with your partners but you are still motivated to do this even if you don't have them. (75)
- *...we just decided we needed to do something about ourselves. (99)
- *Boy would I walk! They (neighbors) just gave me gratification when they would say that. And I would say if you think that I can walk, watch me! (154)
- *Yea, I get them (the faster walkers)...but I paid for it. When I was through, Oh God! (170)
- *...I know that man is in his sixties...or maybe seventy, he flies. We don't touch him. I probably could if I wanted to, but no, there is no need in me. (180)
- *I never could play basketball. I always wanted to be on the basketball team but I was too awkward with my hands. I couldn't dribble the ball. So I did the next best thing, I became a trainer. I traveled with the basketball team. (214)
- *...I started going to evening school. And I remember I used to bring my little girl with me and another little girl I would babysit with. Maybe that was it too, that helped me to get an "A"...the professors must have said, "Gosh, this lady is determined!" (332)
- *...during the summer I would go at night...and I eventually finished up (masters degree). (341)
- *Whatever they called me to teach! I was a substitute teacher and I substitute hard in every class. I even did substitute work for the secretary. The history teacher was an older lady, and that lady never missed. And that was the only teacher I didn't work for. (350)

*What I really wanted was to work with teenagers...I wanted to work with kids who I felt could be responsible for their actions and I could just say, here are the rules, you follow them. So I did student teaching...it wasn't hard for me because I have always been and aggressive person...(380)

*I teach Resource Math, Reading and Language Arts. I have a certificate in regular education but my heart is with special education...(387)

*I had to get from one place to the other walking. I didn't mind doing it. But now you know I enjoy doing it but it is more part of my physical exercise. (417)

*I wanted to leave home. I wanted to leave [state]. I had gotten a...nursing scholarship...and I could have gone to [college] like everybody...the majority of students went to [college] because it wasn't so far. But said, I have got this opportunity to leave this little town and I am leaving. Just never did go back. (524)

*I remember when I was a housewife, that was my job, and even when I was doing my housework, it was like a time factor...everything was just a routine for me. It was something I always wanted to do...I had accomplished something in a time frame. (584)

*Everything had to be done. I have seen myself wash the whole apartment, stand back and see a spot and I would wax the whole thing over again. (602)

*I wouldn't dare not at least walk twice (a week), so I could at least say I walked twice. (770)

Mae

*...my father left and my mother had to raise us. Of course we had to scrub. We had a hard time as a child but we always had a good time. (76)

*And sometimes we would find some nice people. Sometimes we would be so tired we would stop and knock on somebody's door and ask for a drink of water. And I remember one lady just spread us a picnic out on the lawn and fed us. (199)

*Of course I have dropped from (size) 26. I got clothes that...just hang on me now. I come down about 2 dress sizes...I say everything has its...cause I have to buy more clothes, but then I still fell a lot better. I feel great! (453)

*Not at all, just people, I don't see color. (369)

*I have always been a healthy person. (463)

*I got some black friends and white friends...we call and stay in touch. (505)

*I said, I know what I'll do...I decided to visit some of the old senior citizens that is homebound, just go in and say "Hello, how are you doing?" and I did that...visit the people that is...shut in. Why not now? So I just turned the car around and went to two peoples houses. (546)

*I feel good about myself. I think that life is just passing them (friends) by. (641)

*I am an outgoing person. (677)

*Yeah, I like people! (686)

*It (exercise class) is somewhere to go that is different. It is not like going to work. You get to go out and meet more people, different people. I like being around people and I don't want to be a person that nobody wants to be around. (721)

Jerry

*Like I said, I came back to [state] and got fat sitting around and this is really not me. (63)

*I guess the walking benefit is just as good (as class) but I want to be around people...more than the people I work with or me and my sisters. I come to be with people. I enjoy people. (232)

*Well, I feel good, I feel more energized and you know I can go on about my own business. (251)

*For me, I would have been better off to have stayed in [state] but I am here and I invested my money in stuff here. (281)

*...maybe my personality, I am not so outgoing. I really can appear to be but I am not. It has been difficult here for me but you know I have a mother and I don't sit around here all day! (326)

*Me and him (son) took some weights and brought them on the bus. We went to Sears and picked the weights and took them home on the bus. (366)

*Well, like I say, I've been really talking to myself and trying to adjust to here in [state] and trying to find something to keep me going. Maybe this is the something I was looking for...(391)

*...if I can do it you can do it. I know you guys are my age and if I can do it, I know you can do it! (444)

*I think a hard lifestyle and no fun and all that, is where we have developed this disease (hypertension). I think so. (472)

*I used to work for another (lady) from 3 to 11...we would get in the car. We would go out...look at the flowers and then we would go eat. There is no point in just sitting there looking at the TV. (531)

*She wants to browse...I put myself in her place...and when I am there the whole weekend she is busy getting up. (551)

*The girl says, you are not supposed to let her go and blah, blah. Honey, you ain't her, let the lady go. She opens the door, she noses out to her neighbors, that is life! Don't take life from people just sitting, sitting, sitting. (558)

*Don't just sit me in a chair and I just got to sit there. I couldn't make it. (569)

*She (patient) likes for me to be there on the weekend. She likes to eat. She likes to, you know, she likes to talk. Sometime that stuff don't make no sense but I talk. In the past, that is okay, I can listen to what she did back (then). (615)

*Let people do for themselves. I just hope the Lord will let me be me until I get out of here. (631)

Lizzie

*Well, it sounds like quite a bit (reference to activities) if you do, if you are pushing yourself sometimes. You don't always feel like it, but sometimes you just do. (20)

*Other than that (allergies) I have had a good life. I have been healthy all my life. A good healthy life. But these things just come on...that is just one of those things. (56)

*My father died back during WWI. My father and mother married as children...My brother hadn't ever seen his father. (107)

*...my step-daddy, I didn't care for him, this is why I didn't go back. I lived with my father's people up here...(146)

*I went to school here (lived with aunt) and had a fair life. (163)

*This one I married, he just kept coming (to visit). Had he not it would have still been alright with me. I just wasn't a person who cared too much for boys. (234)

*She was telling me about how much she enjoyed herself. So I said I believe I will go (to exercise class). So I came...(322)

*My husband named me "Busy Lizzie". I stayed busy all the time. I think part of it was nervous energy though. I could not sit and just sit. Seems like to me I just couldn't stand it. I had to be busy...(347)

*...everybody was going to walk with me...well they just kinda held me back. And that kinda bothers me...I felt like a brisk walk was better for me than that slow pace. (372)

*I would go around it (track) about 16 to 20 times. I just enjoyed walking, that is why...occasionally after waking so long...somebody different would come up and I would just walk with them...not walk off and leave them. (381)

*Well, I tell you after I came down with this allergy...I couldn't do as much outside as I had done. So I said I have got to do something. I can not sit around and do nothing... Of course I was keeping house...but I get tired of the same old thing over and over. I wanted to do something different. I have just got to get out of this house. (480)

*I decided I was just going to do something so I started walking.
(489)

*...like I said, I walk pretty fast and I passed up everybody. Not that I was trying to, but I think what it was...I was thinking what a beautiful world this is and how thankful I am to be in it. And God let me have real model health. And I would be walking and thinking and I just get happy cause I can walk and think about it. Oh, it was wonderful, it was wonderful! (tears, very emotional) (497)

*And we would sit out there in the summer time and enjoy...once in a while somebody will come by (front stoop)...I always have my flowers and I can enjoy them and just nobody to bother you. (655)

Mary Lula *I learned to swim over there. My brothers were lifeguards...so I managed to scrape up a dime every day from the money my mother gave to buy groceries...saved myself a dime so I could go swimming.
(65)

*Yes, I went to [college]. The old P.E. teacher was an old Army sergeant so you know what we did every day...I enjoyed it! I forgot her name. I thought it was funny, making us march every day and drilling us. (127)

*...three of us were in college at the same time. It was rather difficult to come up with funds for three kids to go to college. We had to work and do it ourselves. The major portion of my time was spent working to get the tuition for the next quarter...(152)

*...[name of principal] recommended me so I went to [state] (for a job). My youngest brother loaned me \$50 so I could get a train ticket and get to [state] so I went to [state]. (193)

*Returning home, I worked at night school, Adult Education, and I substituted in the day time...I did that for 13 years. Then I was able to get a job in day school full time..I started out as school clerk, although I had a college degree. Finally, I got into the classroom as a classroom teacher. (197)

*We would go to different campgrounds. My sister lives in Indiana, drive that camper all the way to Indiana, pick them up and go to different parks, wherever in Illinois and Missouri around the area.
(273)

*...and I was determined to travel and do just whatever I wanted to do. (440)

*Well, I have always known that physical fitness was necessary for good health and that one should find some activity to participate in...I knew about the [senior center] or had heard about it and so I had planned that, before I retired, that I would check it out and in fact I did come over before retirement to see what they were doing and all. (461)

*...I am single and I draw a fairly good retirement and I am going to spend every bit of it! (546)

Swampfox

*I don't know what else to do (reference to physical activity). I mean I have done it so long, started when I was 35 and I just like the way, I like doing it so I just do it...if I go on vacation I still walk. (40)

*...I said OK, let's walk on the track. After I started walking, then I started getting into exercise. I took swimming lessons for years...I used to swim all the time. Never did learn to swim to well...I was mainly doing it for exercise. (72)

*I even walked on Sunday. I was doing it all the time. It was like an obsession with me. (97)

*I have to do it (exercise) before I come home cause once I get here and tear into the food, there is no limit! I can eat more than anybody I know...I exercise a lot cause I can at least say I'm burning those calories. (106)

*But I didn't think anything about it cause I love hills. Like I walk up this hill at [school], the hill is steep. Everybody says "How do you walk up that hill?" Just do it. (216)

*I had my first child when I was 23. I was always working, teaching, mothering, running around after the baby...6 years later I was still being "mommy". (255)

*...It is like I can't start my day until I exercise. And I can't end my day, cause I just came in from walking...People know where to find me in the mornings. I have walked all weekend and it has really been hot...I put my little towel over my head like a sheik...it keeps

the mascara from running or it would probably run down my face...I am fine. I'm just cool...everybody out there is shaking their head. (286)

*He is an older person...probably my age. He is out there walking and I say, "We are the diehards aren't we?"...we comment about the weather and keep going. I guess that is what you have to do. (295)

*...I have never been one to care about the way that I dress. I'm not obsessed with looking good or being who I am not...I kinda look at it (exercise) as being natural. (354)

*He (husband) couldn't keep up with me. He could not walk with me at the pace that I walk. He couldn't do that but he would say he could but he couldn't. (440)

*There used to be men who would come in my aerobics class...those first couple of days they just be doing all the "Oh, Ha"...we wouldn't see them back anymore...they just couldn't hang. (445)

*All these special shoes for walking and stuff like that...is just a money making gimmick. You don't need anything. All you do is just get up and go. It is so natural, you don't have to think about it. (520)

*My mile is 13 1/2 (minutes). I could probably go faster. (538)

*And one thing about me know, I am not going to put myself out to do anything...(652)

Pat

*I find that I feel much better when I walk at least 3-4 times a week. I have more energy and I am able to handle my family and my stress life better. And any time that I bog down and feel real upset, I go to the track - somebody's track. (51)

*and from those early years I think that it (physical activity) is sort of imbedded, and if you are not doing that stuff or not doing that in later life, you are wondering, what is missing. You realized that is what is missing. Sort a got so busy working to where that good feeling of that Adrenalin rolling back is what is really missing. So I just decided that I will get back out there and do it again and see if I can't get back with it. (138)

*...we didn't have anything but we were really happy. (155)

*And I think that we could use the skating ring some many times a month or something. You just looked forward to that. That was our treat and you worked up to that. To being so competitive when you got out there to show them your stuff that you worked on it all week. The week would go by so fast and we get to go and skate and show our parents the tricks that we learned and all this kind of stuff. That was just my life. (173)

* I was a person that loved swimming - being that I was older getting started, my parents were very, very afraid for me so I just bluffed them. I just bluffed them. I was determined to learn to swim...but I had to break the barrier in my family...I was determined to really get a good skill for swimming...I changed a lot about that. That is a big barrier in my family that I think that I broke. (192)

*Girls at that time, he (father) felt that you stayed home and learned whatever - cooking and all that. We were slipping out and doing all the stuff that brother was doing. They just didn't know it. We would do it our way. (239)

*You have to make the extra effort...you have to push or want to do it. (256)

*I think I am just that kind of person. Don't tell me that I can't do anything...I am determined, I am going to do it if I want to do it. You know that kind of thing. (259)

*I enjoyed that archery class simply because it was difficult. It was competitive. I was determined. Strange woman I am! (laughter) (306)

* She said they don't make dresses have that size in that pattern. Said okay - fine. I was determined to be her matron of honor. I stayed on that track over there...I lived and breathed there. I do Jane Fonda. I would go to the track. I worked and go to the track and when I got ready you could take the dress and pin up with me walking down the aisle. It was amazing. (391)

* I love my sister to death and I was the only married sister and why shouldn't I be matron of honor? And so I got in that dress. It hung on me. (415)

* I think back - how did I do that? I would get up here at night 1 or 2 and go all the way to [steam plant] and they didn't even know that I had gone cause I had been called in. Sometimes I go out there and come right back - go back to bed and try to go to sleep. It wasn't easy. (506)

* I think it (medication) is just necessary. I don't plan to quit those. I plan to get up above where they make me like I am and that would bring that weight back down. But I think it going to have to be a five day thing instead of a three day. (627)

*I tell the youngest one you can work a little bit harder. I said you see what it takes to an A. You see what it takes. All night long. Every night mother. (698)

*...but they love mommy I know. Cause I have worked awfully hard. I have almost raised both of these boys - almost by myself. (706)

Bev

*When I graduated from high school I went to work and then I got married and then my husband died and then I went to OT school... because I decided that I needed to do something...I came here and applied for a job in the activities, in recreation. I got hired and told me that I needed more than what I had cause I didn't have background as far as crafts and them things. They sent me to school... which I thought was really good. And then I came back and been here ever since. (215)

*...I had another physical...and that was when they found the sugar. So I knew I had to get busy. (300)

*I am doing a whole lot better now cause I am determined! I have to go back in July. I am determined to have 10 of those pounds off. So I am doing good. (310)

*My health. Cause I definitely don't want my health to go you know. And I used to drink beer - I love beer but I quit that because I know beer has a lot of sugar in it. And I know that I am not going to do anything to mess with my health. (313)

* So I said come on let's go. They said this is your first day. I said I don't care I believe that I can make it. So we went to [street]. I

walked the first day - I walked 6 miles...(362)

*Felt real good. Real good. Real good. I don't feel like I could do it now because my wind is so short. But I climb these hills here you know. But the doctor tells me I have glaucoma did I say that? I have those drops...the drops that I put in my eyes, the side effects of it is shortness of breath...he said if you don't take the drops you might go blind. So I would rather have shortness of breath than go blind. So I just bear with it. (367)

*And it is not bad really cause once I get up the hill and come back and start down it is fine and I feel real good after I get to walking. I feel real good. So that is one thing about the walking. It makes me feel really good. (377)

*...I feel real good! You know like this morning I came in and I was just dragging and I knew at 9:30 I'm going to take my patients out. I take them on the track. Start building up feeling really good. Been feeling really good rest - that walking does something for me. (401)

*No. I never got a weight problem until my husband died in '62 and I started drinking beer. I never drank until he died and I don't know I started feeling sorry for myself cause I had those two little babies you know and I was just feeling sorry for myself. I started drinking beer like water. I love beer and I still like it but I don't have no desires for it anymore. (421)

*Willpower and faith, cause I have faith in the Lord, honey, he is gonna bring me through that mess. And he did. (485)

*That is right cause if you don't have it (will power and determination) you lost, hon. But I enjoy walking. I sure do. (490)

*Made up my mind. I was determined. I was going to get them licenses. Yes sir. That is the best thing that ever happened to me cause I can get up and go. I go my own ways - you know back roads and stuff. I make it. I make it. I go around and do my own thing! (593)

APPENDIX H

Theme 5. Awareness of Aging and Commitment to Activity "It keeps you young, and nobody wants to see themselves as an old person."

- Sister**
- *I am the oldest of the walkers, and they say, "Sister, you can get it, go, get it." (164)
 - *Yes it (exercise) has become part of my lifestyle, a conscious part. (412)
 - *I have always enjoyed walking but it wasn't something that I, right now the difference...is that I am doing it for exercise. (418)
 - *I have always wanted to be a physically active person. (452)
 - *I can't see us stop doing it (walking). We wouldn't have any reason to. We do make an effort to walk in all these walk-athons. (700)
 - *Here I am, I am just the walker, the speed getter. (753)
 - *I'm the senior citizen, no Harriet is a little bit older...by a couple of years. Harriet may be closer to 60 and Sue might be in her 50's. If you saw Sue you wouldn't...well none of us probably look our age. (793)
-

- Mae**
- *To keep me going. I don't want to go home and sit down and eat and lay down on the couch and just...I want to stay active. (321)
 - *If I don't get to come to class, I'll stay active...cause about two weeks ago had to sit in the hospital with my daughter and Oh, I just missed it! (436)
 - *This class? I feel fine. I guess I am more energetic. I never go home and lay down anymore. (522)
 - * When my husband retired...the man said "Don't go home and sit down. Don't go home and sit down." They actually preached that to them. Don't go home and sit down. It is the worst thing that you can do. (589)

*Of course I'm old, but I mean, they (friends) just old...they just sit around...(638)

*Come into church sometime and some of the younger, they will do something and I will take off and they start running after me...maybe the ones that are 18 to 20. I'll take off. (647)

*Well if you aren't active you are going to be old at 40 or 50. Now people that are 60 or 70 like people used to be in their 40's. (657)

*I like to be around people younger than me, more so than people really my age. They are old. They act old a lot of them do. I run with a younger group. (679)

*I like being around people and I don't want to be a person that nobody wants to be around. (723)

*Well, if the Lord spare my life I'm going on me and 3-day cruise! (762)

Jerry

*Well I haven't really participated in anything but coming up here to this exercise because I really don't have the time. I work. I work in the evenings and by the time I go home and do chores and things. But someday when I can get things a little bit more round up and don't have to work I will come over here and check it out. (222)

*I felt that it (just being at home) was not for me. I don't think I will ever retire. If the Lord lets me have good health I plan to keep on working because I don't have enough money for one thing and I like to spend money and I don't like sitting around pinching pennies so if I can keep my health I plan to work. (266)

*The older you get, it is very hard to adjust. (289)

*Maybe this (exercise class) is something I was looking for, trying to find something to do. (391)

*...well, people my age, I really don't have too much in common with...see if I can find some of these young old people. (397)

*...in California...there are no old people. People just don't get old, they just refuse to. I see a lot of old people here...(408)

*It (exercise) keeps you young and nobody wants to see themselves as an old person, (you) think you might stay young. (450)

*I work with these old people where I'm working now. They just sit there the whole time. They don't do nothing. (503)

*OK, so she is 90, no point in her just sitting there looking at that TV all day...she needs to go out, she needs to go out! (522)

*Well, maybe I am more her age and I understand...she wants to move. When I am there I let that lady walk. Don't take that from her. I put myself in her place. Lord, please never let me be that I can't walk out. (549)

*If you fall, you fall, at least you live falling. Don't just sit me in a chair and I just got to sit there. I couldn't make it. (568)

*Yeah, she is wonderful, she comes here and she do it and she is not some old woman. I am telling you she is not an old woman. There a lot of young women around here that are old but not her. (651) (In reference to 88 yr. old women in exercise class)

Lizzie

*Well it (physical activities) is quite a bit if you do, if you are pushing yourself. You don't always feel like it but sometimes you just do. (20)

*Well why I come to this class - first thing it helps me. When you are getting older you joints - you get stiff. You can't bend about like you want to and it really helps. (93)

*I hope I will be able to do the same things. I am going to do my best to try to physically be able to do the same thing. I can't think of any changes that at time that I would be trying to do. I have in mind to do. Of course I would like to travel. (589)

*Well I will continue on with it (exercise class) as of now but I think that sometimes that I am going to see if I can't combine both of them (walking and class) because I'm in an apartment now. It isn't as much housework to be done. No yard work. That makes me sick cause I enjoyed it. (597)

*I moved off the second floor cause I could not stand to steps. My old arthritis. But when I am walking, it don't bother me. Taking exercise - it don't bother me. (644)

*Yes I would try to walk at least an hour because in going - I don't know how many times I would go around that place in an hours but I don't walk as fast as I used to I know that. (666)

*Well, I tell you the truth, I try not to let things slow me down cause one of these days, it will not be as long as it has been, I will slow down. (684)

*I want to do like my auntie told me, she has been dead about 2 years now, she says Lizzie, "when my time comes to go, say, I just want to lay down and close my eyes and go to sleep." So that is what I would like to do. I really would, cause as sure as we live; we know we are going. (688)

Mary Lula *I do not miss (exercise class) if I can help it. (27)

*I intend to enjoy retirement by traveling and taking part in the activities over here. Now that I have regained part of my physical fitness, that I intend to increase my activities by one day. I come over here three days a week and I've learned that there are different activities for seniors that the [local recreation department] sponsors and also that there is a couple of things that [local recreation center] has for seniors that I am going to check out and see what they are offering to increase my activities at least one more day. I intend to do quite a bit of traveling. (446)

*I decided to come over here (senior center) on a regular basis because...the activities are designed for seniors rather than young children...To my liking, I find this more comfortable...(462)

*I am still overweight but I've lost quite a few pounds. I've regained a lot of mobility. So I know that I have gained from it and I intend to continue. (482)

*...I know if you go home and sit down, well many people have died and I have no intention of dying! (495)

*I am going to do whatever it takes to stay alive and I enjoy the exercise...(497)

*Well I know to stay in good health you have to exercise. You can't sit down and expect to maintain your mobility, your mental clarity, and so forth. You have got to stay mobile. You have got to do things. (540)

*I intend to increase it (physical activity). Yes. (545)

Swampfox

*All I have to do is look at them (family) and I see me. Cause mamma used to be real little and as she got older, then she started getting a big stomach We call it "that dreaded Smith shape." (313)

*In my old age all I want to do is sit back and play with my grandchildren, walk every morning and evening and ride the bicycle. (334)

*...right now I am thinking about retiring. I will probably be retiring after next year, and all I can think about is...when I retire, I can get up in the morning when everybody else - when it is real fresh outside and I can get up and I can walk for 2 or 3 hours and then come back home and eat. (453)

Pat

*...seem like to me life was such a - I mean it is a chore now - it was so happy then. I basically feel that is why it is like that for this age group. I mean it is just part of what we used to do all our lives. (161)

* I am very happy with my life because if I want to get up now - retired...and stay all day at the track I can. As long as I am healthy and feel good. If I want to do anything physical I don't have to listen to what somebody else is saying. So I am my own boss. This is the first time in my life that I have ever had this much freedom. (534)

*I want the type of life where I have some security...but I am able to make my own decisions to do what I want to about my life. (545)

*I have been pretty happy. I am going back into my regular PE classes. I am not forfeiting those...I can just keep on going and take what I want to take. (556)

*...you know you are going to restrict yourself age wise to a certain extent anyway. There are some things that I wouldn't possibly get out there and do. But, if I am able I would like to keep going as much physically, as much any other thing like musically or whatever I want to do. I want to cause this is the time in my life when I am able to. I want to...If there are any restrictions I hope it is on my part...not medically. (563)

*I think that it is just the nature of some people to stay active. When we are around sluggish people...I don't understand them. I don't criticize...but it just bothers me. (738)

Bev

*...there is this steep hill in the village, I will walk two men, two old men, well they not really that old but they act older than their years. (71)

*...because I don't want no needles and taking no pills. (to control diabetes)...yeah, diet and exercise. (87)

*You know I always got something to do so I am still very, very active. (128)

*I miss it (if don't get to exercise). Yeah. I miss it. Like on Saturdays and Sundays - and sometimes on Sunday mornings I get up and walk in my neighborhood cause I live in a good neighborhood...so I can get out and walk through there. And I sometimes I get up and if I feel like I need to walk this morning. Maybe I ate a little too much on Saturday so I get up and go walk on Sunday morning before I go to church. (407)

*I'm too old now to lose all that weight, if I get down to...I will be happy. I'd be happy. (439)

* I'm getting to the point where I'm getting kinda paranoid about, not age, but I don't want to be where I won't be able to move...when I sit down I'm gonna get stiff when I get up, but if I move I'm not gonna be stiff. And I don't want to be no - yeah, I would exercise. (470)

*To walk, to continue to exercise. Yeah, I am gonna walk and this ain't no lie. I have walked with my back hurting me so bad...I could not hold up and I walked the whole 6 miles until my back straightened out. Oh yeah, I recommend exercising. It is good for you. (480)

**Yes I will and now it is gonna be - I might be doing it on my own probably after the 15th of June because I am going to be working with the geros and they are not going to be able to do all that. So I will go walk on my lunch break. (492)

*I just don't think I could go home and sit down. That is not me. That's why I don't want another husband until I get 65 or 80! Because I like to go....I like to travel, I like to move, I don't like to sit still. That is not my bag. I get on the church bus or the city bus and I am out of here. (538)

VITA

Sue R. Leggett was born in New York City, New York on May 6, 1950, and graduated from Cocoa High School in Cocoa, Florida in 1967. After devoting time to raising a family she entered the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and received her Bachelor of Science degree with a major in Education in August of 1994. Sue was then accepted into the masters program in Exercise Physiology. She received the Master of Science degree with a major emphasis in Exercise Physiology in December, 1996.