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I Am Not My Hair…Or Am I?: Exploring the Minority Swimming Gap

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Dawn Michelle Norwood
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DEDICATION

I dedicate my work to my grandmother, Frances L. Yates, who was only able to go to school through the sixth grade but, in many respects, has wisdom that no formal education could ever offer. I admire her for being a great mother, grandmother, wife, accountant, entrepreneur, community leader, Christian, and overall, a genuinely sweet person. I also dedicate this dissertation to my grandfather, Curtis "Tom" Lee Yates, Sr., whom I never had the pleasure of meeting but am told I am like him in many respects. Education was extremely important to him and I hope I have made him proud.

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"There, but for the grace of God, go I" – John Bradford

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ABSTRACT

A review of literature has revealed a dearth of research on leisure swimming patterns of Black females. Black youth, both male and female, have a higher rate of drowning than any other racial/ethnic group in the United States ("Water□related injuries: Fact sheet", 2005). Two known studies produced by (Irwin et al., 2009; 2010) examining hair as a constraint to swimming for African American youth produced conflicting results. In order to comprehensively examine hair as a constraint to African American female participation in swimming, the current study adopted a qualitative approach which allowed exploration of the cultural background and experiences of the participants enrolled in a required swimming class at Yates University (this is a pseudonym used throughout this research). The following research questions guided the study (a) How does hair influence swimming participation choices of Black females and (b) What is the self-reported degree of difficulty in the constraints negotiation process for Black females who do swim? The major finding is that hair acts as a constraint to swimming for participants of this study, but participants offered ways of negotiating this constraint to still be active participants in swimming.

Keywords/terms: Black, African American, female, minority swimming gap, leisure constraints, Black hair

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I first became interested in conducting this study one night while I was home watching a DVD I rented from a video store. The movie was *Pride*. Released in 2007, it is based on the life of 1970's African American swimming coach, Jim Ellis. He forms a mostly male swimming team in inner-city Philadelphia and struggles to gain recognition and respect for the team in a racially tense climate. In one scene, a young Black girl, Willie, comes to the pool to join this all-male team, much to the dismay of the members, but she is not shaken in the least. Willie has on her bathing suit and her hair is down, about chin length. It looks as if her hair may have been straightened by way of a pressing comb and lightly curled under.[1] As she boldly tells Coach Ellis she is there to join the swim team, he agrees to let her show her skills.

Flashing a huge smile, Willie accepts the challenge and confidently walks over to the edge of the pool to jump in. However, before she does, Willie puts on a swimming cap. When I saw this, I laughed because my initial thought before she even pulled out her swimming cap was, "Hmmm, I know she's not going to jump in the pool without a swim cap on"! And sure enough, she does not. I admittedly assumed she did this in an attempt to protect her hair from getting wet. Seeing that clip reminded me of my summers as a little kid in day camp. I loved getting in the pool! On the off chance I would forget my swim cap, I knew I could not get in the pool because my mother would

[1] Discovered in France Circa 1845, the pressing comb is used to temporarily straighten natural hair of Black females (Byrd & Tharps, 2001).

be upset if my hair got completely wet. Since she was the one responsible for maintaining my hair at that time, I had to follow her rules. A swimming cap was essential to my swim participation. I must acknowledge that even in my experience with swimming, the swim cap never kept my hair completely dry, but it was the best chance I had at not *completely* getting my hair wet.

Pride also made me think about the Black family I met during freshman orientation at a major state university only a few weeks earlier. The parents were there with their 18 year-old daughter, who is proudly the university's first African American swimmer. I recalled her mom pulling me to the side to ask if I knew of any local hair braiding shops for her daughter, as maintaining her hair would be extremely important for her as a Black swimmer. I also thought back to a pool party I attended at a university, which was sponsored by an African American student organization, during the beginning of the school year. There was a diverse crowd of students including Blacks, Whites, and Latinos/as. However, as I took notice of who was actually swimming or even *in* the pool, I realized that only White people were in the pool (with no swim caps on, by the way), as Black females (and males) stood along the deck of the pool, many in swimwear, just mingling. I was not surprised, because from my own experience and that of my peers, swimming is not an activity we would participate in unless it was mandated through Physical Education class in high school. Anecdotal evidence (*The sinking truth: Why Black kids can't swim*, 2008) suggests some Black females may not participate in swimming or anything that threatens to get their hair wet or damp because it will mess up the style of their hair, cause possible chemical damage, and may take a generous amount

of time to re-groom. The process of having to do the hair over again yourself can be a hassle and/or the cost of going to the beauty shop can be expensive or simply not an option. A Black female who frequents the beauty shop every two weeks (which is common in the Black community) could easily spend approximately fifty dollars each visit. While this is not to suggest hair is the *only* constraint to swimming, it is one worth further exploring.

Misconceptions of the Swimming Cap

Though I know how to swim, rarely do I participate. I have not gone swimming as often as I could for the simple fact that it would interfere with the maintenance of my hair. Some may say, and have said, "Just wear a swim cap" as a remedy to getting my hair wet. In response, I would reply and explain that wearing a swim cap will not necessarily keep the hair dry. In fact, the original purpose of a swim cap was not to keep a swimmer's hair dry. According to one source, "The real purpose of wearing a swimming cap is to keep your hair out of your face, protect your hair from the brunt of the pool chemicals, and keep some of your body heat in" (*Swimming gear*, 2009). In other words, the swim cap becomes virtually obsolete in the quest of keeping a swimmer's hair dry, as it was not designed for that purpose in the first place. However, it is the best attempt one may have to completely keep her hair from completely getting wet. In fact, for Black women attempting to maintain a straightened hairstyle, Brittenum Bonner (1991) said there is "No swimming allowed", unless she has a waterproof swimming cap (p. 80). She further explained that a waterproof swimming cap is actually

an oxymoron. I know some of my friends would even put on two swim caps during Physical Education class in high school to avoid getting their hair wet.

Admittedly, there can be a plethora of constraints to one's participation in swimming. Some Black females may see maintaining their hair in ways other than its natural state as a constraint to participating in swimming, and for this reason, may not swim.[2] The aforementioned observations and personal experiences have led me to this study. I want to examine whether hair acts as a constraint at a significant level as it relates to the swimming participation choices of Black females in the United States (those who self-identify as American and of African descent).

Statement of Problem

Drowning at High Rates

Even though accidental drowning accounts for less than one percent of deaths in the United States each year, Blacks are disproportionately over-represented in that one percent (Hastings, Zahran, & Cable, 2006). According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), fatal unintentional drowning rates for Blacks ages five to 14 years old are 3.2 times higher than drowning rates of White youth in the same age group ("Water-related injuries: Fact sheet", 2005). Overall, Black males are found statistically to have a higher drowning rate than Black females ("Water-related injuries: Fact sheet", 2005). This is, in part, due to the lack of Black females participating in swimming at all. In fact, a survey showed Black females to have a 77 percent self-reported inability to swim compared with only 44 percent of Black males, and 45 percent of White females ("Special report:

[2] Natural hair references hair among Black females that is void of any chemical or heat straightener.

Minority drowning", 2005). While this statistical information is alarming, very little research has been done to examine the leisure swimming patterns of Black females.

Suggested Factors behind the Minority Swimming Gap

Previous research has suggested that some contributory factors behind the minority swimming gap "…are conditioned by the availability of swimming infrastructure and the principle of social exclusivity that limits access of lower status groupings, even where pools and programs are available" (Hastings et al., 2006, p. 894). This may aid in explaining the swimming ability and drowning differentials *between* racial groups, but does not account for the *within-race* differentials. It is still unclear why Black males have a higher swimming participation and drowning rate than Black females.

In short, there is a dearth of research, particularly qualitative, that explores the swimming leisure patterns (or lack thereof) of Black females in the United States. This makes it difficult to adequately create and implement aquatic programs designed to close the minority swimming gap. If the contributing constraints have not properly been identified, designing an aquatic program to increase participation may fall short of its intended purpose. Thoroughly researching and identifying constraints specific to Black females in the U.S. may be beneficial in alleviating part of the problem associated with the minority swimming gap.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the role hair plays, if any, in a Black female's participation in swimming. This study explored the implications low or no

participation in swimming has on Black females and how Black females who do swim negotiate constraints to participate in swimming. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How does hair influence swimming participation choices of Black females?
2. What is the self-reported degree of difficulty in the constraints negotiation process for Black females who do swim?

Operational Definitions

African American – "An American of African and especially of black African descent" (In *Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online*). African American and Black are used interchangeably throughout this study.

Braids – synthetic or human hair that is woven into one's real hair; extensions; usually worn by African American females

Constraint(s) – that which interferes with or precludes participation in a given activity

Culture – the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group (In *Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online*)

Ethnicity – "Refers to shared cultural practices, perspectives, and distinctions that set apart one group of people from another. That is, ethnicity is a shared cultural heritage. The most common characteristics distinguishing various ethnic groups are ancestry, a sense of history, language, religion, and forms of dress. Ethnic differences are not inherited; they are *learned*" ("Race and ethnicity defined", 2010).

Exercise – "Exercise is a form of physical activity that is specifically planned, structured, and repetitive such as weight training, tai chi, or an aerobics class" (Rodgers,

2009, p. 7). This term will be used interchangeably with physical activity throughout this research.

Kinky/Nappy – hair that is tightly coiled and/ curled together (Dickey, 2003)

Leisure – time free from work or duties (In *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*)…also involves engagement in an activity (Henderson, 1990).

Physical Activity – "Physical activities are activities that get your body moving such as gardening, walking the dog, raking leaves, and taking the stairs instead of the elevator" (Rodgers, 2009, p. 7). This term will be used interchangeably with exercise throughout this research.

Natural hair – hair that has not been altered by any chemical or heat straightening apparatus

Negotiate – "To successfully travel along or over: to complete or accomplish" (Samdahl, Hutchinson, & Jacobson, 1999).

Perm(ed) – hair that has been chemically altered to be straight

Race –"race refers to groups of people who have differences and similarities in biological traits deemed by society to be socially significant, meaning that people treat other people differently because of them. For instance, while differences and similarities in eye color have not been treated as socially significant, differences and similarities in skin color have" ("Race and ethnicity defined", 2010).

Swimming –"The act, art, or sport of one that swims and dives" (In Merriam-*Webster Online Dictionary*)…A physical activity that may be done competitively, recreationally, or leisurely with a varying degree of competency.

Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions were relevant to this research:

- The majority of the females in the study had low to no swimming ability.
- Personal hair care factored into the swimming participation choices of the participants.
- Semi-structured interviews were a valid way to reveal the nuances behind the quantitative data on the minority swimming gap.
- Participants responded to interview questions with a reasonable degree of honesty.

Limitations and Delimitations

Some quantitative critics may argue that the results of this qualitative study will lack generalizability (Hamel, J., Dufour, S., & Fortin, D,1993; Yin, 1994). While the generalizability will be limited, the findings of this research are not intended to be generalizable in explaining the swimming patterns and habits of *all* Black females. Rather, as a general rule of thumb in qualitative research, the results are intended to be trustworthy and add to the existing body of knowledge (Morse, 1999). Another limitation of the study is the self-reporting of participant background information captured from the interviews, particularly in the race category. Participants were also asked to self-assess their own swimming ability. This information is subjective. There is no way to control for dishonesty or inaccuracies reported by participants.

Delimitations of the study required participants to be African American females, 18 to 25 years old, who were enrolled in a required beginning swimming course at the university where the research was conducted.

Significance of Study

Irwin, Irwin, Ryan and Drayer (2009) have identified a minority gap in swimming as it relates to self-reported swimming ability and/ participation. Black youth, both male and female, have a higher drowning rate than any other racial/ethnic group in the United States ("Water-related injuries: Fact sheet", 2005). Simply having research that *identifies* the minority swimming gap is not enough for the advancement of swimming/water safety among minorities because it has not explained the cultural nuances embedded in the statistics. Moreover, there is only one known study to date that examines hair as a constraint to swimming for low-income, African American youth (Irwin et al., 2009). For this reason, it is hoped that this research study will add to the existing body of knowledge with its use of a qualitative approach which allowed a humanistic exploration of the topic, hence, providing an outlet for the experiences of the participants to be heard and considered in the findings and data analyses. The research will also add to and, in some instances, be introduced to existing bodies of knowledge in Recreation and Leisure Studies, Sport Sociology, and even Cultural Studies. For instance, in some cases, disciplines such as Recreation and Leisure Studies and Sport Sociology have been slow to introduce, adopt, or share scholarship from each area with one another from an academic teaching standpoint and even a research standpoint. It can be argued that many issues affecting the Recreation and Leisure Studies field have strong sociological underpinnings. Thus, it would seem appropriate and almost necessary for the two fields, Recreation and Leisure Studies and Sport Sociology, to function more inter-disciplinary as opposed to anti-disciplinary.

In addition, the findings may also reveal a segment of participants who do swim outside of the required swim course and have found unique ways to successfully negotiate the constraints of personal hair care. This information could be processed and distributed to other Black females who may have a desire to swim but do not, simply because of the rigors posed by personal hair care. This may increase Black females' participation in swimming, thus narrowing the minority swimming gap which currently shows at least 36 percent of African Americans reporting not being able to swim ("Water safety poll", 2009).

Finally, there is research to support the health benefits that can be gained from swimming (Meyer & Leblanc, 2008). The CDC and Surgeon General suggests regular exercise such as swimming can yield cardiovascular benefits. "In fact, researchers estimate that as much as a 30 percent to 40 percent reduction in cardiovascular events is possible if most Americans were simply to meet the government recommendations for activity" (Myers, 2003, p. 3). With cardiovascular disease being the leading cause of death among Black women ("Women and cardiovascular diseases: Statistics", 2009) increased participation in swimming could help lower the percentage of Black women affected by the disease.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the role hair plays, if any, in Black females' participation in swimming. This chapter will offer a review of literature regarding the topics of identity development, swimming participation and drowning, and the significance of Black hair. In addition, the topic of cardiovascular disease in African American women and the benefits of swimming on overall cardiovascular health will be briefly discussed. Finally, a detailed explanation of leisure constraints theory, which is used to guide this research, is presented.

Identity

One aspect of exploring leisure swimming patterns of Black females in the U.S. lay in deconstructing the identity make-up of Black females. Having psychoanalytic and psychosocial insight into the identity development of Black females may aid in identifying factors, both personal and social, that influence their leisure participation choices. This information can also be useful in exploring constraints negotiation.

Some of the earliest, and probably most notable, philosophy on identity development comes from psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. His analysis of human development centered primarily on the inner psyche of an individual, with very little emphasis on any effects culture may have on development. His understanding and explanation of human development is broken down into three structures which consist of the *id*, *ego*, and *super-ego* (Freud, 1949).

The *id* is present at birth. It encompasses all parts of individual identity that are inherited. The *id* is responsible for meeting the needs of the pleasure principle such as the primitive needs of hunger and thirst, for example. If not met, some sort of tension or anxiety may arise (Freud, 1949). For instance, a hungry baby will cry if not fed.

Developing from the *id* is the *ego*. Its primary function is dealing with reality and responding to stimuli outside the psyche (Freud, 1949):

> As regards external events, it performs that task by becoming aware of stimuli, by storing up experiences about them (in the memory) by avoiding excessively strong stimuli (through flight), by dealing with moderate stimuli (through adaptation) and finally by learning to bring about expedient changes in the external world to its own advantage (through activity) (p. 14).

The *ego* is the portion of an individual's personality that is in control and deals with reality. It is considered the "executive branch" of the personality (Santrock, 2002).

Responsible for the moral reasoning of one's personality is the *super-ego*. It is seen as an individual's conscious, helping to determine what is right from wrong (Santrock, 2002). Freud (1949) espouses that the *super-ego*, along with the *ego*, can be traced back to the influence parents have on individuals during childhood. Attention is also given to the child's attitude toward the parent(s):

> This parental influence of course includes in it its operation not only the personalities of the actual parents but also the family, racial, and national traditions handed on through them, as well as the demands of the immediate *social milieu* which they represent (Freud, 1949, p. 16).

Freud's explanation and description of the *super-ego* is one of the rare times, maybe the only time, he gives credence to the sociocultural influence on identity development. Nonetheless, Freudian theory of human development is abundantly psychoanalytic. Freud's influence can be seen in the work of other psychoanalysts such as Carl Jung (1915) and John Bowlby (2005), and even in work proposing that identity is a psychosocial function.

Credited with contributing early research in identity construction, Erik Erikson (1980) began his career by taking a cue from Sigmund Freud (1949), studying the psychoanalysis of development. Erikson's research stretched across cultures and, eventually, concluded that human beings have the same set of basic needs and in some way, each society has to provide for those needs (Woolfolk, 2001). The relationship between culture and the individual led to Erikson's proposal of the psychosocial theory of development.

Identity is a construct that seeks to answer the question, "Who am I"? More precisely, it references "…the organization of the individual's drives, abilities, beliefs, and history into a consistent image of self" (Woolfork, 2001, p. 68). According to Erikson (1980), identity development begins at the adolescent stage and continues through adulthood. His psychosocial model of development consists of eight stages that encompass the individual's entire lifespan from birth to death. Erickson (1980) posits that each stage of development is marked by some type of significant crisis or conflict that is meaningful in transitioning to the next development stage.

The first stage in Erikson's psychosocial development is *basic trust versus basic mistrust* (1980). Starting from birth to about 18 months the infant learns to develop a loving, trusting relationship with its caregiver. If this sense of comfort is not fostered or developed, mistrust can occur. The sense of trust is most often achieved through the act of feeding (Woolfork, 2001).

From 18 months to three years old, the individual begins developing a sense of *autonomy versus shame and/doubt*. Through the rigorous act of toilet training, the child develops skills in walking, grabbing on to things, letting go of things, and being able to control his/her bodily waste (Woolfork, 2001). "The overall significance of this stage lies in the maturation of the muscle system, the consequent ability…to coordinate a number of highly conflicting action patterns…and the enormous value with which the child begins to endow his autonomous will" (Erikson, 1980, p. 66). When a child fails in his/her attempts at autonomy (i.e. trying to walk but falling down) a sense of shame and/doubt can develop (Erikson, 1980).

In the third stage, the child tries to assert his/her independence between the ages of three to six years old. The *initiative versus quiet* stage shows the child sometimes becoming too forceful which may, in turn, lead to feelings of guilt (Woolfork, 2001). It is during this age the child realizes s/he is a person and is now faced with the task of finding out what kind of person to be (Erikson, 1980). "He wants to be like his parents, who to him appear very powerful and very beautiful…he 'identifies with them,' and he plays with the idea of how it would be to be them (Erikson, 1980, p. 74). It is also during

this stage that children learn to keep a zest for the things they are allowed to do while understanding the things they may be forbidden to do (Woolfork, 2001).

During the elementary and middle school years, ages six to 12 years old, children experience a sense of *industry versus inferiority* (Erikson, 1980). Simply put, the child must deal with the rigors of acquiring new skills or accept the consequences of feeling (and actually being) inferior to her/his peers (Woolfork, 2001). According to Erikson (1980), "…this is socially a most decisive stage: since industry involves doing this beside and with others, a first sense of division of labor and of equality of opportunity develops at this time" (p. 88). It is also at this stage where the child becomes acutely aware of his/her sociocultural and socioeconomic sense of identity that is a direct response to interaction with different members of society. Erikson (1980) further explains:

> When a child begins to feel that it is the color of his skin, the background of his parents, or the cost of his clothes rather than his wish and his will to learn which will decide his social worth, lasting harm may ensue for the sense of identity (p. 88).

This potential crisis marks a crucial period moving toward the next stage of development.

During adolescence, peer relationships are the important events a teenager must use in order to achieve identity in his/her politics, gender roles, occupation and religion (Woolfork, 2001). In this stage of *identity versus identity diffusion*, the concern for the individual primarily lies in "...attempts at consolidating their social roles. They are sometimes morbidly, often curiously, preoccupied with what s/he appears to be in the eyes of others…" (Erikson, 1980, p. 89). When the individual is able to successfully

integrate stages of childhood development, ego identity begins to take place. This synthesis in ego identity is a perfect alignment of the individual's basic drives, endowment, and opportunities (Erikson, 1980). The danger of this stage is identity diffusion, which occurs when an individual cannot commit to an identity and has trouble drawing conclusions as to who they are (Woolfork, 2001). Young people at this stage will either take on a rebellious nature, distancing him/herself from others or by over-identifying "…with the heroes of cliques or crowds" (Erikson, 1980, p. 92).

Moving into young adulthood, Erikson (1980) espouses that an individual goes through three stages. The individual first faces *intimacy versus isolation* with love relationships being the important event during this stage. Intimacy at this level refers to the individual's willingness and openness to having a deep relationship with plutonic, mutual need (Woolfork, 2001). Unfortunately, some adults who have yet to achieve a strong sense of identity will be stifled in this area of development and can become introverted. The second stage of adulthood is *generativity versus stagnation*. During this stage, the adult finds some way to support and encourage the next generation either through parenting or mentoring (Woolfork, 2001). In the last stage of adulthood development, late adulthood, the individual contends with *ego identity versus despair*. This is a time of reflection and acceptance of one's life (Woolfork, 2001). The hope at this stage of development is fulfillment. "It is the acceptance of one's own and only life cycle and of the people who have become significant to it as something that had to be and that, by necessity, permitted of no substitutions" (Erikson, 1980, p.98). Those who are

not able to make peace with the way their life has unfolded and become increasingly aware of their own death can experience feelings of despair (Erikson, 1980).

While Erikson (1980) and other scholars such as Bowbly (2005), have presented different models of identity development, the models seem to serve as a blanket explanation for the development of both males and females. Only briefly does Erikson (1980) discuss some differences in terms of genetalia sensory between girls and boys during the *autonomy versus shame/doubt* stage. Freud (1949) takes a psychoanalytic approach to explaining the differences in identity between boys and girls from a sexual awareness standpoint. However, beyond that, there exists a segment of literature devoted to the intricacies of female identity development.

Female Identity

In the literature, female identity appears to be a function of learned sex roles and socializations. Katz (1979) suggests the distinction of the male/female binary serves to assist others in gaining basic information, role expectations, and shared cultural assumptions concerning individuals. "Gender role socialization begins at birth and continues throughout life. Thus, gender is an integral part of who individuals are, how they think about self, and how others respond to us" (Katz, 1979, p. 155). Based on this explanation from Katz (1979), gender roles are a function or learned behavior from early sociocultural influences such as parents, which is something Freud (1949) acknowledges in *The outline of psychoanalysis*.

Direct reinforcement, usually done by parents, begins early in life and continues through childhood (Katz, 1979). For instance, direct reinforcement may occur when a

young girl is praised or even rewarded for helping her mother with the laundry or cooking and cleaning. Stepping into what has traditionally been referred to as "women's work" is praiseworthy. According to Katz (1979), the girl will most likely continue this pattern into adulthood. On the other hand, should the young girl decide to involve herself in "men's work" such as working under the hood of a car or even playing certain sports and the activity is frowned upon by parents, it is likely she will not try the activity again.

A second approach to sex role acquisition is the modeling process, which posits that "…behaviors involved in gender-role patterning is accomplished primarily by years of observing parents and imitating characteristic behaviors of the same-sex parent" (Katz, 1979, p. 157). Some psychoanalytic theorists postulate that identification and imitation is presumably the same thing. According to Katz (1979), Freud espoused that during the identification stages of development, females will develop some form of sexual feelings toward their father and a sort of rivalry with their mother. This Oedipal conflict is eventually resolved, however psychoanalytic theory suggests that "…stronger identification with the mother and repression of sexual feelings towards the father are seen as the normal ways of resolving this conflict" (Katz, 1979, p 158).

While Katz (1979) and Freud (1949) may use psychoanalytic theory to describe female and male identity from a sexual development standpoint, feminist researchers such as Gilligan (1993) and Chodorow (1989) offer a perspective of female identity that values and clarifies the differences in development. "These differences had previously been seen as women's deviation from the norm rather than as a distinct female norm" (Allen, 1994, p. 107). The psychoanalysis of female development, as put forth by

Gilligan (1993), needs to be examined as an independent entity instead of always in comparison to male identity development. Using traditional male-centered psychoanalytic theory to study female development is inadequate for capturing norms and nuances unique to females. That is not to say that psychoanalytic feminism completely dismisses the usefulness of psychoanalytic theory. Chodorow (1989) agrees with the basic underlying tenets of psychoanalytic theory in that "people everywhere have emotions that they care about, connections to others, sexual feelings, and senses of self, self-esteem, and gender. People everywhere form a psyche, self, and identity" (p. 4). That being said, female gender identity is marked by a girl's identification with her primary caregiver, who is similar to herself, unlike male gender identification which requires a boy to be different from his caregiver (Allen, 1994). Gilligan (1993) asserts:

> For boys and men, separation from the mother is essential for the development of masculinity. For girls and women, issues of femininity or feminine identity do not depend on the achievement of separation from the mother or on the progress of individuation (p. 8).

Thus, female identity is marked by attachment and male identity, conversely, is marked by separation.

Although Chodorow (1989) and Gilligan (1993) have carved out a psychoanalytic feminist model to use in examining female identity, a critique of the model could be its lack of explicit consideration of women of color. "Some have argued that the generic model of female psychological development is as inappropriate for women of color as the white male model" (Allen, 1994, p. 107). To this end, Black feminists and womanists

such as bell hooks (1989) and Patricia Hill Collins (2000) have developed a wealth of scholarship devoted to understanding the identity development and experiences of women of color, particularly Black females.

As with the Women's Rights Movement, female identity is often constructed, developed, and researched from the Western White female perspective. While (White) female identity is understood from a comparative perspective (of masculinity), Black female identity is often examined in contrast, or comparison, to White females. Having a basic foundation and understanding of Black identity is helpful, and in many ways, necessary to understand Black female identity.

Black Identity

According to Parham (1989), William Cross introduced his theory of Nigrescence, "Negro-to-Black", in 1971 that hypothesized the racial identity changes a Black person goes through at various stages of the life cycle. Cross (1971) purported a Black person comes to terms with her/his racial identity via movement through stages of racial identity development. In a 1970 issue of *Ebony* magazine, Cross indicated that Black psychologist Joseph White made the charge for Black psychology and research to be developed. White was disgruntled by "…the so-called neutral value paradigms currently being used to evaluate and conceptualize the behavior of Black Americans" (Cross, 1971, p. 13). He felt White middle-class values and norms were unfairly, and improperly, used to measure and research lived experiences of Blacks. According to Cross, White espoused that the development of Black psychology would involve a basic understanding of human behavior but then further contextualize psychosocial and cultural

experiences of Blacks. Accepting the charge by White, Cross wanted to create a model of Black liberation that concerned itself "…with the creation of developmental theories, personality constructs and Black lifestyles that promote psychological liberation under conditions of oppression" (p. 16). He proposed a five-stage process of nigrescense, which is referred to as the "Negro-to-Black" conversion experience (Cross, 1971).

In Stage One, *pre-encounter*, the individual is mentally prone (and maybe trained) to view the world from a White frame of reference (Parham, 1989). Euro-American values and norms dominate the Black person's worldview, both lower and middle class:

> That is to say, the content of the pre-liberation Black experience within the class system differs but the context is similar since both think, act, and behave in a manner that *degrades* Blackness. Thus, putting lye on your hair as opposed to getting it cut in an "Ivy League" fashion (content) are different styles of Black degradation (context) (Cross, 1971, p.16).

Cross (1971) insists that "brothers" and "sisters" who reside in the ghetto functioning at the *pre-encounter* stage somehow view their economic level of misfortunes being closer to the "Black experience" than Blacks who live outside the ghetto.

Also during the *pre-encounter* stage, Cross (1971) sees Blacks as having a rather unhealthy dependency on White leadership. In the minds of Black people, assimilation/integration is thought to be the only way to achieve racial cohesion in White America. "Under the dictates of the assimilation-integration paradigm the development of an American identity involves affirmation of "White Anglo-Saxon Protestant" characteristics, and negation, diffusion, or even denial of non-WASP behavior" (Cross,

1971, p. 16). The search for Black identity at this stage appears to be enveloped in searching for acceptance by and into White America.

As with other models of development, the "Negro" eventually transitions from *pre-encounter* to *encounter*. It is here that the individual "encounters" some crisis, as Erikson (1980) would denote, that is inconsistent with his/her White frame of reference (Parham, 1989). Better yet, it is a specific experience that disrupts the individual's current feelings of self and also his/her thoughts on the state of Black folks in America. Some of these highly visible, pivotal moments for many Blacks were the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the lynching of Emmett Till, and even the "not guilty" verdict in the police-beating of California motorist Rodney King. For the contemporary Black person, being denied access to an exclusive golf club based on race can evoke this crisis/new awareness. "These encounters successfully shake a person's self-image of non-Black…and makes him/her vulnerable to a new interpretation of self in relation to the world" (Parham, 1989, p. 189). It is at this point of realization that the Black individual removes the proverbial blinders and sees the world in a whole new light. S/he feels lied to and cheated, and ultimately, angry. The "White man" is viewed as the enemy and from whom the Black person wishes to distance him/herself as much as possible. Now, the quest for self-discovery and Black identity emerges, almost to the point of obsession. Perhaps this is better explained by Cross (1971) who said, "A Negro is dying and a 'Black American' is being resurrected" (p. 18). This new Black identity is ready for a breakthrough.

The *immersion-emersion* stage is marked with the struggle to send out the old and usher in the new. The individual begins embracing and exploring all things Black: "Everything that is Black is good and romantic. The person accepts his hair, his brown skin, his very being as now 'beautiful'" (Cross, 1971, p. 18). While this outer expression of Blackness is evident, the internal security of the newfound Blackness is minimal. Even still, the individual has a sense of "Black pride" (Cross, 1971; Parham, 1989).

Summarized by Cross (1971) as most complex to explain, the *internalization* stage presents a sense of Blackness. The individual is at peace with his/her Blackness and has replaced the tension and high emotions experienced during the *encounter* and *immersion-emersion* stages with a relaxed and secure demeanor (Parham, 1989). With Black identity security, comes a decline in anti-White feelings. Blacks also begin to open themselves up to new groups of people, exploring different ideologies and present a "…willingness to renegotiate relationships with people from other ethnic groups" (Parham, 1989, p. 190).

In the fifth and final stage, Cross (1971) stresses the *internalization-commitment* of Black identity. Still operating somewhat from the previous stage, the individual in Stage Five is making a commitment to his/her Black identity and with that, a plan of action to embrace the new identity as a complete lifestyle. Not to be confused with *internalization*, *internalization-commitment* entails a holistic submergence of the self in the newfound Black identity, through thought *and* action: "…the 'self' (me or "I") must become or continue to be involved in the resolution of problems shared by the 'group'

(we) (Cross, 1978, p. 18). This means the individual will forever be committed to and engaged in the politics of Black people.

As ground-breaking as Cross's model of Black identity development may have been, it was reflective of inequality in gender relations in the U.S. during that time. Throughout his writing on nigrescense, Cross (1971) seems to use the term "he" to refer to males and females. While the '70s was a time of Black unity, it did not do enough to include Black females as equal and active participants in the struggle for civil rights. In fact, some efforts were crafted to intentionally push Black women away from the heart of the Movement. "The Black Power Movement, although varied by organization, attempted to redefine black women's role as child bearers for the revolution. Certain groups issued calls for black women to figuratively and literally, walk behind black men" (Springer, 2006, p. 111). Whether or not Cross's use of the term "he" was an intentional act to dismiss Black women is not known however; it is worthy of scholarly critique. The question still remains as to how and where Black females form their identity in a society where they find themselves wedged between racial exclusion from the Women's Rights Movement and gender exclusion from the Black Power Movement.

Black female identity. Because of the way Western society has positioned White males, and, to a certain extent, White females in positions of superiority and power, it is almost impossible to explain Black female identity (particularly in adults) without comparing and contrasting it to the identity of White females. That is not to say that Black female identity is too weak to exist independent of taking White women into account rather; because of Black females' position of racial and economic inferiority,

their identity is somewhat reactive to the social circumstances handed to them. Moreover, Black female identity is better viewed, and, thus, understood, through a psychosocial lens as opposed to a psychoanalytic lens. To understand the formation of Black identity, Greene (2000) suggests it is necessary to have a foundational understanding of the unique features of African American culture and history and their effect on women. Furthermore, one would be remise if a probe into Black family socialization was not at least considered.

The influence of the dominant culture is critical in the formation of Black female identity as it places Black females in the "other" category. Black women are also heavily influenced by their own community and cultural history (Greene, 2000). "Of particular importance for African American women are the historical legacy of slavery and the significant impact of the interaction between institutionalized racism and sexism on the African American community" (Green, 2000, p. 242). The introduction of the slave trade was the cause of African women being stripped of their identity and having to rebuild and rediscover it in the midst of and in comparison to the Euro-American female. Even today, Black women on some level "…share the legacies of being victims of the Atlantic slave trade" (Greene, 2000, p. 242). Prior to slavery, African women were a heterogeneous group in many ways including tribal membership and customs, language, and family values. This rich diversity also accounted for the various expressions of female sexuality and identity among African women (Greene, 2000):

> Despite their pre-slavery differences, when African women entered the United States they confronted race-based distinctions that resulted in their being viewed

> as if they were homogenous, primarily because they were not White. This distorted 'homogenous' view has continued to have an impact on the lives of African American women today (p. 243).

In addition to racial oppression, African women were *given* the identity of being sexual prey for White male slave masters. While White women's sexuality was identified and constructed as something sacred to behold, value, and protect, African women's sexuality was exploited, devalued, and used as an expendable resource: "Life within plantation households deprived slave women of the option of traditional gender roles and whatever protection those roles afforded other American females" (Greene, 2000, p. 243). In this case, being a woman was superseded by being a slave (Greene, 2000). It is at this point in history that African American women first experienced the intersectionality of race and gender (Crenshaw, 1995). Race-based U.S. female identity divide is at the root of major differences between White and Black female identity.

According to Shorter-Gooden and Washington (1996), the challenge of weaving an identity for Black females lies in weaving together "…an identity comprised of attitudes and feelings about themselves as Black, as women, and as unique individuals" (p. 467). After completing 17 semi-structured interviews of the experience of identity in late adolescent (18-22 years old) African American college women, Short-Gooden and Washington (1996) found several participants connected their female and racial identities. They were not expressed as separate entities. More than any other aspect of identity, race was a main source of self-definition for the participants:

> While gender identity was noted by all the participants as an important aspect of identity, the limited comments about gender identity and the fact that gender identity was often talked about concurrently with racial identity suggest that it is less salient than issues of race (Shorter-Gooden & Washington, 1996, p. 472).

In fact, of all 17 participants of the study only one mentioned the terms "feminism" or "feminist" in discussion of her gender identity. This may be in large part due to the exclusion of Black women from the Woman's Rights Movement by White females and Black women's consequential association of feminism (or being a feminist) with White women.

The larger capitalistic system of oppression has been designed to suppress the intellect of Black females and to exclude them from White mainstream America (Collins, 2000). "Even though Black women intellectuals have long expressed a distinctive African-influenced and feminist sensibility about how race and class intersect in structuring gender, historically we have not been full participants in White feminist organizations" (p. 5). Western feminism is not a sufficient site for articulating the interests of Black women (Barker, 2003). As a result, Black feminist thought has been developed in the scholarship as a site for deconstructing the complexities of Black female identity.

Personal and social construction of identity. Personal and social construction of identity in its simplest forms asks "Who am I?" and "How do others see me?" respectively. Various theoretical lenses may position identity as either a personal or social construct. For instance, postmodernists would argue that identity is socially

formed and that the individual is not "the source of itself" (Barker, 2003, p. 224). However, at the same time, it is not a "whole" as essentialism would assert. "In the essentialist version identity is regarded as the name for a collective 'one true self'. It is thought to be formed out of a common history, ancestry, and set of symbolic resources" (Barker, 2003, p. 231). For instance, Black females may indeed develop parts of their identity based on the assumptions of essentialism; however, other aspects of their identity are socially constructed as an inevitable result of being positioned as "other" against the majority. Consequently, for Black females, identity is both personally and socially constructed.

Essentialism is premised on the idea there is one universal construction of identity. It is believed to exist as a "timeless core of the self" that everyone possesses. "By this token there would be a fixed essence of femininity, masculinity, Asians, teenagers and all other social categories" (Barker, 2003, p. 221). Because the construction of Black female identity has competing layers that are formed as a result of social and personal constructs, essentialism is not sufficient in explaining the identity development of Black women. Anti-essentialism is a better theoretical framework for exploring the construction of Black female identity in the U.S.

Anti-essentialism acknowledges points of similarity in identity construction, but also embraces the notion of identity being constructed around points of difference. Thus, cultural identity is viewed as more than "…a reflection of a fixed, natural, state of being…" (Barker, 2003, p. 231). Black women may share some experiences with White women on the sole ground of biology, i.e. childbirth; however, the point of departure for

other experiences centers on race. Since race is a social construction, part of a Black woman's identity *is* socially constructed. As with "Americanness", masculinity, and more, Blackness is subject to constant change (Barker, 2003) and this change is contingent upon the negotiation of power constraints imposed by the majority.

Many African American girls are socialized by their families to have pride in their race and are encouraged to be assertive (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger, 1996). Although some Black families and Black communities are able to shield Black females from a considerable amount of the impact of sexism and racism, "…what has been described is the larger societal context that surrounds these women as they develop an identity" (Shorter-Gooden & Washington, 1996, p. 466). Hence, when answering the question, "Who am I?", it stands to reason that Black females personally construct this answer/identity as a result of the Black family socialization process, while the question of "How do others see me?" accounts for the social construction of Black female identity.

Weaving social and personal patterns together is how the essence of Black female identity in the United States is developed. "We can thus conceive of persons as operating across and within multiple subject positions constituted by the intersections…of discourses of race, gender, age, nation, class, etc. Further, we do not *have* a weave of multiple beliefs…rather, we *are* such a weave" (Barker, 2003, p. 262). Anti-essentialism allows Black females to deconstruct race and explore their personal and social construction of identity as well as deconstruct the constructs for other groups of people.

U.S. Black female identity negotiation in leisure. As the aforementioned literature reveals, race becomes a point of departure for Black women in America in terms of

female identity. History and culture have contributed to the construction of Black identity and that, in turn, has had an effect on differences in leisure activity choices of Black females. For the purpose of the current research study, leisure is being operationalized as freedom from work to participate in an activity that one deems enjoyable (Haywood, Kew, Bramham, Spink, Capenerhurst, & Henry, 1995).

Recognizing the need to study and identify the leisure patterns of females, Henderson (1996) conducted a meta-analysis of leisure research of females from 1990-1996. She espoused "…the main North American concerns as well as those of other Western countries, have been in exploring women's experiences of leisure within the context of women's lives" (p. 140). Henderson (1996) concluded that more researchers acknowledged differences in leisure patterns between males and females than in the past. One of the three themes presented in the results was about diversity. Previous research revealed there were both *between-gender* and *within-gender* differences as it related to leisure patterns (Henderson, 1996). However, the *within* difference leisure patterns and constraints were measured with mediators such as income, family structure, and age, but not race. Henderson (1996) pointed out that literature prior to 1996 "…reflects a greater concern with the diversity of women and the efforts to understand how gender combines with other lifestyle factors to create opportunities for, as well as constraints to, leisure" (p. 142). At the same time this concern with diversity of women in leisure has only alluded to issues of race.

Research on the identity development of Black girls revealed a different pattern of development than for White girls; it was concluded that identity development in Black

teens consisted of a personal identity and a racial identity (Henderson, 1996). This difference in identity development can account for the differences in leisure patterns of Black females because identity development is not fixed. "Identity development influences participation in recreation and leisure because it influences interests, motivations, and opportunities" (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger, 1996, p. 138). In terms of understanding how Black females negotiated their identities related to leisure patterns, it was important to note the leisure activity preferences.

A 2004 study tracking the three-day physical activity recall of African American and Caucasian girls in the eighth grade revealed there were significant differences in the types of activities chosen by each participant group (Dowda, Pate, Felton, Saunders, Ward, Dishman & Trost, 2004). Results also showed African American girls were more likely than their Caucasian counterparts to report snacking, watching television, going to church, playing basketball and dancing socially. Caucasian girls were more likely to report participating in ballet and other dance forms, horseback riding, soccer, rollerblading, homework, softball and baseball, exercise machine use, "getting ready" (to go out) and swimming (Dowda et al., 2004). The differences in types of activities chosen could be a direct result of sociocultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Since Whites statistically possess more economic means than Blacks (Finegold & Wherry, 2004) leisure choices and opportunities will probably differ between the two groups. For instance, horseback riding is an activity that favors the socially and economically privileged, which generally tend to be Whites.

As it stands, more research needs to be done on Black female identity negotiation and the differences in leisure participation between Black and White females. Henderson et al. (2003), asserts "Racial minority girls' negotiation of gender and race in the process of development has rarely been studied" (p. 136). The literature does reflect some early work of Floyd and Shinew (1999) Henderson (1998, 1997, 1996) and Philipp (1998) that researches issues surrounding race and/or gender in leisure participation however, very few pieces have specifically focused on leisure patterns of Black girls. The paucity of literature on Black female leisure patterns in the U.S. makes it difficult to deconstruct the ways they negotiate their identities to be active leisure participants. A component of this research study was to examine the constraints negotiation process some Black females overcome in order to participate in swimming.

Swimming Participation and Drowning

Research reflects that drowning and low swimming ability is a problem in minority households, specifically among Black youth. Unintentional drowning is a leading cause of death among U.S. youth (Saluja, Brenner, Trumble, Smith, Schroeder, & Cox, 2006). Black males have the highest reported drowning rates in comparison to White and Hispanic youth (Saluja et al., 2006). And, in terms of participation choices, one research study found that only about 24 percent of African American girls compared to about 29 percent of Caucasian girls ages 11-13 years old chose swimming as a favorite activity (Grieser, Vu, Bedino-Rung, Neumark-Sztainer, Moody, Young & Moe 2006).

Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Drowning

According to the CDC (2005), fatal unintentional drowning rates for five-to-14 year-old African Americans are 3.2 times higher than those for Caucasian children of similar age. In a study of swimming pool drownings, Saluja et al. (2006), sought to further explore the circumstances surrounding swimming pool drownings among U.S. residents ages 5-24 years to determine why the drowning rates of Black males and other racial groups are so high. The study also examined whether income and race are independent risk factors associated with drowning. In addition to identifying groups most susceptible to drowning (i.e., Black males 5 to19 years old and foreign-born males 5 to 9 years old) the study also indicates areas for drowning prevention such as having more lifeguards present at public swimming pools (Saluja et al., 2006).

Between 1995 and 1998, of the 678 U.S. residents who had drowned, 47 percent were Black and 49 percent came from low-income families (Saluja et al., 2006).[3] The data affirmed a previous study by Brenner et al. (2001) that showed Black males have the highest drowning rate among all other racial/ethnic groups. The study also cited similar patterns of drowning among females, i.e. Black females having the highest percentage of drowning among the racial groups researched, but these researchers found that rates and ratios were lower in comparison to Black males (Saluja et al., 2006). Simply put, Black females drown at a lower rate than Black males. This important finding needs to be examined further. It raises questions as to why Black females have a higher drowning rate than other female racial groups, yet have lower rates compared to Black males. The

3 Zip codes were used to estimate families' income levels. This information was available for 94% of the cases. See Saluja et al, 2006

research seems to be pointing to issues surrounding participation in the activity itself. If Black girls participate less in swimming than Black boys, it would begin to explain the gap in the ratios; however, the reasons behind the participation disparity is not known.

Swimming Participation and Ability

Further analyzing the disparity in drowning rates among African Americans and other ethnic/racial groups, swimming ability comes into question. A survey on self-reported swimming ability conducted by the CDC (2005) found that African Americans reported having the least amount of swimming ability across racial/ethnic groups. While several different factors may act as constraints to swimming participation and ability of African Americans, CDC researchers report "If minorities participate less in water-related activities than Whites, their drowning rates (per exposure) may be higher…" ("Water-related injuries: Fact sheet", 2005).

More specifically, a study conducted by Dowda, Pate, Felton, Saunders, Ward, Dishman, & Trost (2004) comparing the physical activities and sedentary pursuits in African American and Caucasian girls reported differences between the groups in 11 physical activities including swimming. Using a Three-Day Physical Activity Recall (3DPAR), the researchers collected data from 2,746 eight grade girls from 31 middle schools in South Carolina; 47 percent were Caucasian and 49 percent were African American. Participants were asked to recall their activities, physical and sedentary, from three days of the previous week in which data was collected. A total of 55 activities were listed and each participant was asked to indicate the number of the activity participated in

and to also report the level at which the activity was performed, i.e. light, moderate, hard, or very hard (Dowda et al., 2004).

Results showed a clear difference in the type of leisure activities chosen between African American and Caucasian girls. In fact, 8.7 percent of Caucasian girls reported participating in swimming/water exercise compared to that of only 5.4 percent of African American girls (Dowda et al., 2004). Based on these statistics and the participants of this study, African American girls participate in swimming at a significantly lower rate than Caucasian girls. Discovering the reason(s) behind the statistical difference was not a component of this study, but perhaps could have been helpful in explaining the disparity.

The major implication of this study lay in developing and implementing instruction in physical education courses centered on activities reported as most enjoyable and pertinent to each group of girls. Researchers of the study also recommended using the results to aid in planning interventions to prevent the increase in sedentary activity among girls. It is believed these interventions may contribute to a decline in obesity and other cardiovascular disease risk factors in girls and women of all groups (Dowda et al., 2004). "The findings [also] suggest that interventions to promote physical activity in adolescent girls should focus on lifetime physical activities, such as walking, swimming, and social dancing" (Dowda et al., 2004, p. 358).

While the analyzed differences in participation choices among African American and Caucasian girls may prove useful in developing physical education programs as suggested, the admitted limitations of the study did not examine the factors (e.g. possibly cultural) behind the differences in chosen physical and sedentary activities. Based on the

design of the study (e.g. being confined to South Carolina and socio-economic status not being measured) financial limitations or issues of access could account for the differences in activity choices (Dowda et al., 2004). The authors did acknowledge that "Cultural and social differences between African American and Caucasian girls may also be an important factor in their choices of specific physical activities" (Dowda et al., 2004, p. 357). This may account for the participation differences in the swimming category.

Toward a cultural understanding of the minority swimming gap. Moving toward an examination of possible cultural differences between Blacks and Whites as it relates to swimming, Irwin, Irwin, Ryan and Drayer (2009) conducted a quantitative study to test what they refer to as "myths" associated with the minority swimming gap. Among the four myths was the statement: "They don't want to get their hair wet and it will mess up their make-up" (Irwin et al., 2009, p. 12). Those statements were then put in a research survey to measure significance. "Therefore, the purpose for this…research study was to examine respondents' responses to the myths (barriers) and evaluate if any or all are really significant impediments to swimming for disenfranchised minority children" (Irwin et al., 2009, p. 12).

Using a purposeful sample of 1,680 respondents (parents of kids 4-11 years old and adolescents themselves 12-17 years old) survey data was collected from individuals residing in metropolitan areas including Chicago, IL, Houston, TX, Memphis, TN, Miami, FL, Oakland, CA, and Philadelphia, PA. In response to the survey statement "I do not swim because I do not want to get my hair wet", only 15 percent of the respondents agreed while 85 percent disagreed (Waller & Norwood, 2009). Researchers

said "…specifically, the 'I don't swim because it gets my hair wet' issue was primarily directed at lower income, African American children by experienced swimming advocates" (Irwin et al., 2009, p. 12). A less than one percent difference was found between the lower income and more economically affluent respondents (Waller & Norwood, 2009). Irwin et al. (2009) felt "…the only difference worthy of discussion concerning the "hair wet" matter was found with African American females who agreed with this statement at a 10-12 percent higher rate (19.7 percent) as compared with their White peers (9.8 percent) and Hispanic/Latino females (7.3 percent)" (p. 18). With no further analysis of this finding, the researchers qualify the statistics by saying "…African American females still disagreed with this statement at a rate of 81.3 percent, which obviously dispels the "hair wet" myth among this group of respondents" (Irwin et al., 2009, p. 18). Though statistically sound, the findings are not sufficient to dispel what Irwin et al. (2009) regard as a "myth" (Waller & Norwood, 2009).

Moving beyond the descriptive. One major concern with Irwin et al's. (2009) research study as it relates to the "hair wet" statement is, though that information was drawn from inadvertent qualitative statements, it is strictly quantitative (Waller & Norwood, 2009). What is missing from the study is the use of an exploratory instrument that would offer an explanation or understanding cultural nuances embedded in the quantitative data. The authors do not appear to have researched or considered the Black family socialization process (Waller & Norwood, 2009). Hill and Reed (1993) believe failure to use proper theoretical/conceptual frameworks to holistically study Black family life and behavior is a mistake many analysts make in their attempts to understand how

Black families function. “Invariably, the influence of Black family life may have been missed as they [Irwin et al., 2009] analyzed the quantitative data” (Waller & Norwood, 2009, p. 346). Furthermore, because the design of the study combines both Blacks and Hispanics together, isolating the experiences of a single race is difficult (Waller & Norwood, 2009). On the other hand, the researchers did report that Black females agreed with the “hair wet” statement at a 12 percent higher rate than Hispanics (Irwin et al., 2009). But, in reviewing the overall statistic of 81.3 percent of respondents who disagreed with the “hair wet” statement, Irwin et al. (2009) concluded the “myth” among this group of respondents was obviously dispelled. On the contrary, this finding is not obvious nor does it conclusively dispel this “myth” (Waller & Norwood, 2009). “This type of value-laden language (e.g. obviously, dispel, and myth) sends a message that trivializes and devalues the lived experiences of Black females’ personal hair care challenges, particularly as it relates to swimming” (Waller & Norwood, 2009, p. 346).

In addition to the finding, it is, at times, somewhat unclear as to whom the actual respondents are in the “parents of children ages four to 11” category. “Is the instrument actually being posed to the parents, thus, capturing their thoughts? Or is the instrument being posed to the child of that parent and responses then documented based on the child’s thoughts/responses” (Waller & Norwood, 2009, p. 346)? “Regardless, it is problematic because more often than not children aged four-to-11 have not developed agency to the point where they are able to articulate whether hair is an issue in their swimming participation choices of not” (Waller & Norwood, 2009, p. 346). At that age parents, particularly mothers, are probably the ones responsible for maintaining their

child's hair thus, would better be able to articulate hair care rigors. Specifically, some data reported the parents' swimming ability of the four-to-11 year old children (Waller & Norwood, 2009). "An alarming number of respondents (20 percent of the adolescents and 25 percent of the parent respondents) admitted to being unable to swim" (Irwin et al., 2009, p. 14). Again, if this survey also captures the responses of parents, it goes against the stated purpose of the study which was to solicit responses from minority children, not their parents (Waller & Norwood, 2009).

Next, the study included males. Though only by a small margin, males outnumbered females in the study by one percent. Males, no matter their race, simply do not encounter the same hair maintenance issues as females. "This is in part due to the fact that as a societal norm, males typically wear their hair cut short or even shave their heads. This is something that is not mentioned in the limitations of the study" (Waller & Norwood, 2009, p. 348).

Another potentially problematic aspect of the study is some of the word choices. First, though no specific theoretical framework is stated, it appears the researchers are loosely using the leisure constraints model to guide this study; however, on several occasions the researchers use the term "barriers" to describe obstacles individuals encounter during the swimming participation/non-participation process. This term is somewhat antiquated in the field of leisure research. Changes in the late 1980s and 1990s saw the word "barriers" dropped from the lexicon of leisure research. Currently "…the more inclusive term 'constraints' is now preferred to 'barriers', because the latter fails to capture the entire range of explanations of constrained leisure behavior" (Jackson, 2005,

p. 4). As mentioned before, the term "myth" in this entire study is slightly misused, specifically as it relates to the "hair wet" issue for Black females. By their own reporting "myths are fictitious stories or half-truths, especially ones that form part of the ideology of a society" (Irwin et al., 2009, p. 10). This definition underscores the anecdotal evidence of Black females who have reported hair as a constraint to their swimming participation.

In response to an *Essence Magazine* article entitled "The Sinking Truth: Why Black Kids Can't Swim" posted on Essence.com (which ironically used data from USA Swimming that Irwin et al. used in their early research), some women posted their own reasons as to why they do not swim. MP wrote:

> My sister and I never learned how to swim because we had a lot of kinky hair, and my mother didn't want to be bothered with washing, blow drying and pressing it all the time. Most of our little girlfriends never learned to swim for the same reason (2008).

Angel wrote:

> I too have swimming lessons a couple of times and still cannot swim. I dread my son going swimming even though he's a pretty good swimmer. I think that the association of death and water does play a great role in the way I think about swimming. Besides, as an African American woman it's more work on my hair to swim. I do not see swimming as an activity. I see it more as a survival technique if it's ever needed (2008).

To suggest that the lived experiences of these Black women are myths is culturally insensitive. Moreover, it points to the absence of cultural context in this research study.

Suggestions for a qualitative approach. Employing a qualitative approach will aid in properly examining the "hair wet" issue Irwin et al. (2009) have begun to research. Using qualitative methods will allow future researchers to ask a carefully designed series of questions that will get at the thoughts, opinions and experiences of the respondents. "It also allows the researcher to use probing techniques to gain more understanding of the interviewees' responses as opposed to pigeon-holing them into 'agree' or 'disagree' responses" (Waller & Norwood, 2009, p. 348). The questions/statements posed to survey respondents only skim the surface of issues surrounding "myth 4" in Irwin et al.'s (2009) study. "Because of the complexity of the issues relating to Black hair care, responsibility for care, time allocated for hair, and cost are variables that must be considered" (Waller & Norwood, 2009, p. 350). As it now stands, Irwin et al.'s (2009) study seems dismissive of the "hair wet" matter for Black females and, based on this one sample, have taken a broad brush and painted "hair wet" as a non-issue (Waller & Norwood, 2009). Perhaps a qualitative study "…will yield different results that will include how Black women negotiate the racial and cultural trappings of participation in swimming and personal hair care" (Waller & Norwood, 2009, p. 348).

Swimming and Cardiovascular Health

On any given summer day, beaches and public swimming pools are bound to be filled with people looking to cool off from the heat. Children, with every swim stroke, imagine s/he is the next great U.S. Olympic swimmer like Michael Phelps. Unfortunately

in the Black community, swimming is not typically a favorite pass-time, life-saving skill acquired, or a form of exercise sought. Moreover, a self-report survey indicated that 77 percent of Black female respondents could not swim ("Special report: Minority drowning", 2006). Throughout the years, doctors, swim coaches, and exercise enthusiasts alike have viewed swimming as a life-saving skill that can offer measurable benefits to combat various forms of cardiovascular disease. A healthy diet along with regular exercise, such as swimming, can reduce the risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease.

Cardiovascular disease is generally defined as a disease that adversely affects the heart or blood vessels (www.medicinenet.com). It is the leading cause of death among women in the United States (www.americanheart.org). Blacks are disproportionately affected by cardiovascular disease and some of its associated risk factors such as hypertension, diabetes, and obesity. Statistical reports indicate that African Americans are 50 times more likely than Caucasians to have hypertension (Black, 2006), and 3.7 million African Americans have diabetes ("The diabetes epidemic among African Americans", 2009). Therefore, reducing the risk factors associated with heart disease decreases the incidences of cardiac episodes (Myers, 2003). This is especially vital to African American women who are most at risk for developing cardiovascular disease and have higher mortality rates, as compared to their Caucasian counterparts. (Gillum, Mussoline & Madans, 1997). A robust review of literature consistently purports that aerobic exercise significantly impacts or reduces cardiovascular disease (Black, 1992; Gillum, Mussoline, & Madans, 1997, Myers, 2003; Haskell, Lee, Pate, Powell, Blair,

Franklin, Macera, Heath , Thompson, & Bauman, 2007; Ignarro, Balestrieri, & Napoli, 2007).

Health experts from the CDC, American College of Sports Medicine and the U.S. Surgeon General have all produced reports with supporting evidence associating a healthy cardiovascular prognosis with regular aerobic exercise (Myers, 2003). National guidelines recommend that American adults participate in at least 30 minutes of exercise on four or more days per week to obtain optimal cardiovascular health. Research has confirmed "that as much as a 30 percent to 40 percent reduction in cardiovascular events is possible if most Americans were simply to meet the government recommendations for activity" (Myers, 2003, p. 3). Recommended forms of aerobic exercise include swimming, walking, and jogging. Consistent with other forms of exercise, swimming has measurable cardiovascular benefits that are evident and vast.

There has been research that supports the cardiovascular benefits of swimming. Chomentowski, Nagle, Robertson, & McLaughlin (2006) conducted a study examining the effects of a 14-week fitness swimming class on aerobic fitness and swimming time. The study included 27 college students, aged 18-23 years-old. Subjects participated in a pre-test consisting of a treadmill test to measure maximal aerobic power and two 12-minute freestyle swimming trials along with two 500 yard timed freestyle swimming trials. Participants took swimming classes three days per week for 60 minutes. A post-test was administered to each participant during the last two weeks of the program. The results showed a 6.1 percent increase in maximal aerobic power in females. Results also showed a 14.7 percent increase in the 12-minute swim test and a 12.4 percent increase in

the 500 yard swim test for females (Chomentowski et al., 2006). While there were increases with the male participants, the most significant increases were among the female participants. Results from Chomentowski et al. (2006) support the premise, "that a fitness swimming program can serve as a beneficial aerobic conditioning modality for improving cardiovascular fitness in college aged men and women" (p. 492). Despite the apparent benefits of swimming on cardiovascular health and the fact that Blacks are disproportionately affected by various forms of cardiovascular disease, swimming is still not a popular therapy, sport, or pass-time in the Black community.

Black females, who are most affected by cardiovascular disease, are not able to reap the health benefits from swimming because of their overwhelming self-reported inability to swim. While this reality may be unfortunate, it is not irreversible. The first step to increasing the participation and swimming ability of Black females is to understand and give credence to the cultural trappings that constrain their swimming participation. In a proactive effort to reverse the current disparities among Black women that are negatively impacted by cardiovascular disease as well as those who cannot and do not swim, researchers must increase awareness, educate, and teach Black communities about swimming and associated benefits.

Understanding the Roots of Black Hair

The outcome of this study may show hair to be a constraint to swimming for Black females. It may also show hair to have varying degrees of constraint for the participants involved. However, it is necessary to have a foundational and fundamental understanding of Black hair, thus, lending insight into why it would be significant to the

study. Hair in the Black community has historical and generational roots, stretching back to Africa before the tortuous slave trade. This is where the key to understanding the roots of Black hair should begin.

From Africa to America

Black women have a rich history with hair. It has been and continues to be an important part of Black culture since before Blacks were enslaved, living freely in Africa. According to Byrd and Tharps (2001) in *Hair Story*, hairstyles in Africa were often used to indicate various attributes such as age, marital status, wealth, rank within a community and more. The styles and lengths varied and depending on what region of the continent one was from, the texture varied. One thing that remained constant was everyone had natural hair and took great pride in styling it.

With the introduction of the African slave trade came the stripping of pride and culture of Africans who were enslaved and brought to America:

> One of the first things the slave traders did to their new cargo was shave their heads if they had not already been shorn by their captors. The shaved head was the first step the Europeans took to erase the slave's culture and alter the relationship between the African and his or her hair (Byrd & Tharps, 2001, p. 10-11).

Under the watchful eyes of their masters, slaves worked from sun up to sun down in the cotton fields. If they did not work to meet their master's expectation, consequences included whippings, amputations of digits and limbs and other forms of torture (Byrd & Tharps, 2001). Needless to say, hair maintenance was impossible at this point. Moreover,

it was of little concern to slaves measured against the burden of slavery. Byrd and Tharps (2001) described the internal conflict African women experienced as it related to their personal hair care:

> Whereas in Africa, women could spend hours a day grooming their hair and arranging it in traditional styles, on the plantations they used scarves or kerchiefs fashioned from coarse fabric scraps provided by stingy masters to keep their hair well hidden. Partly as protection from the scorching sun and hovering flies and partly out of shame for the now unsightly hair, the head rag became ubiquitous in slave culture (Byrd & Tharps, 2001, p. 13).

Also ubiquitous to slave culture was slave women being raped by their White masters. As a result, many mixed-race babies were born into slavery; however, it was those slaves who drew the more "desirable" tasks of working in the master's house, out the way of the scorching sun. This was due to the European features they inherited from their slave master fathers. These children were referred to as *mulatto* (Byrd & Tharps, 2001). They typically had lighter skin and fine hair. Many light-complected slaves escaped their plantations and tried to pass themselves off as White, hoping their European features would evade bounty hunters (Byrd & Tharps, 2001). This is quite possibly the origin of White/European standards of beauty being normalized as some Blacks tried to assimilate into a culture dominated by White ideology.

Normalizing Whiteness: White Standard of Beauty

Whiteness, as McLaren (1998) explains, "Functions through social practices of assimilation and cultural homogenation…White people participate in maintaining the

hegemony of institutions and practices of racial dominance in different ways and to greater or lesser degrees" (p. 165). Whiteness has normalized features of the White female, such as her hair, thus, influencing hair maintenance choices Black females make. Owens Jones (2006) insisted that since 1619, the African American woman has had her beauty juxtaposed against the beauty standards of Caucasians, particularly as it pertained to hair texture and skin color/tone. White normalization presents long, straight, fine-textured hair as beautiful and acceptable. Consequently, anything contrary to this may be met with resistance, in turn putting pressure on Black females to compromise parts of their identity by choosing a variety of hair straightening techniques.

Pressing natural hair with a straightening comb is a staple in Black history. Often associated with bringing the technique to prominence in the Black community, Madame CJ Walker became the first Black female millionaire in 1910 as a black hair-care entrepreneur (Byrd & Tharps, 2001). Many styles of this era became chique and en vogue. However, hair straightening in the Black community has not come without controversy. Blacks who opposed the technique saw it as "…a pitiful attempt to emulate Whites and equated hair straightening with self-hatred and shame" (Byrd & Tharps, 2001, p. 37). On the contrary, some Black women felt hair straightening was not an attempt to emulate Whites or assimilate into their culture, but was simply a result of modern hairstyling (Owens Jones, 2006). Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) supported this view by explaining that "Not every [Black] woman who decides to straighten her hair or change the color of her eyes by wearing contacts believes that beauty is synonymous

with whiteness. Trying on a new look, even one often associated with Europeans does not automatically imply self-hatred" (p. 178).

Over several generations, Black hairstyling has evolved and transformed, but always trendy and bearing some resemblance to their White counterparts. One exception was the Black Power Movement, which made the Afro "cool" among Blacks, but controversial and political to the dominant culture. This image of the Afro as militant and male-gendered "…describes how race and gender merge(d) to stigmatize and repress black woman, a point that would surface almost twenty years later when black women's hair was at the center of legal battles" (Banks, 2006, p. 16). In the late 1980s, Black female employees of both Hyatt Hotels and American Airlines sued those companies citing they were discriminated against based on the fact that they wore their hair in braids. Hyatt Hotel fired a Black female cashier citing her braided hairstyle violated company policy that prohibits "extreme and unusual hairstyles" (Caldwell, 1991, p. 367). Both companies created a defense centered on the basis of "appropriate" grooming practices, arguing braids violated this rule (Banks, 2006).

Popular television programs such as *20/20* and *the Oprah Winfrey Show* have done some in-depth examination of the tension hair creates for Black professional women. The *20/20* episode revealed how a woman was terminated because management determined her hair to be "extreme", while another woman received a written warning that deemed her braids "too ethnic" (Banks, 2006). Even the slightest possibility of a Black woman coming under fire for the "ethnic" styling of her hair may be an unspoken, unforced persuasion for a Black woman to alter the state of her natural hair in order to

assimilate into her environment. Thus, hair maintenance may be viewed as a constraint in many day-to-day activities for African American women and may pose more of a constraint to leisure participation such as swimming.

Theoretical Framework

Leisure Constraints Model

According to leisure constraints theory, there are three types of constraints involved in leisure participation/non-participation. This hierarchical model of constraints, developed by Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991), has been used and tested in a variety of studies in the field. "Leisure constraints research aims to investigate and understand the factors that are assumed by researchers and perceived by individuals to inhibit or prohibit participation and enjoyment in leisure" (Jackson, 1993, p. 273).

The current hierarchical model of constraints lays the framework for researchers to study leisure constraints from an *intrapersonal*, *interpersonal*, and *structural* level, respectively. Constraints at the *intrapersonal* level speak to the internal psychology an individual may encounter when deciding upon participation in any given activity. For instance, a young girl may be thinking about taking swimming lessons but fear of drowning (an *intrapersonal* constraint) keeps her from participating in the activity. Next in the hierarchical model is *interpersonal* constraint. While less likely to be encountered with individual or "solitary leisure activities" (Crawford et al., 1991) such as swimming, the *interpersonal* constraint most often presents itself in activities requiring a partner, such as tennis.

The final level of constraints comes at the *structural* level, but only when "antecedent constraints" (Crawford et al., 1991) - *intrapersonal* and *interpersonal* – have been overcome. *Structural* constraints can come by way of family income, availability of /access to the opportunity, climate, or busy work schedules. For example, the young girl who wants to take swimming lessons overcomes her fear of drowning (*intrapersonal*) and decides to ask her mother to check with their local parks and recreation department for a facility where swimming lessons are given. The young girl's mother finds out their local community center has a pool and offers lessons, unfortunately she is not able to afford them. This *structural* constraint (e.g. lack of financial resources) leads to the young girl's non-participation in swimming.

Unlike its first iteration in 1987 by Crawford and Godbey, which presented the constraints to leisure as three separate, distinct parts, the current hierarchical model presents an integration of constraints. This allows the researcher to not only study leisure in a simple dichotomous manner of participation/non-participation, but it also creates *some* room to explore the negotiation of constraints for participants. Crawford et al. (1991) support and suggest this idea of studying constraints to leisure – *intrapersonal, interpersonal,* and *structural* – holistically and simultaneously. "It is only in this broad context that it will be possible to test the propositions that people negotiate through sequential levels of constraints and that these levels represent a hierarchy of importance" (Crawford et al., 1991, p. 318).

Leisure Constraints Theory and Swimming

As it relates to the proposed research study, the leisure constraints model is applicable in understanding and explaining the trends and issues surrounding Blacks in swimming, which include low to no participation, accessibility, both financial and facility-wise, and limited swimming ability. Research has shown that each of these entities has played a role in nearly 60 percent of Black children not being able to swim ("60 percent of black children can't swim", 2008).

In collaboration with USA Swimming, researchers at the University of Memphis' Department of Health and Sports Sciences surveyed 1,772 children ages six to 16 year old, two-thirds being Black or Hispanic, to investigate the contributing factors of the minority swimming gap ("60 percent of black children can't swim", 2008). It appears parental influence played a role in the minority swimming gap. "If a parent could not swim, as was far more likely in minority families than white families, or if the parent felt swimming was dangerous, then the child was far less likely to learn how to swim" ("60 percent of black kids can't swim", 2008). This *intrapersonal* constraint – perceived danger by the parents – may be transferred to the child, creating the same constraint to the child's participation in swimming. Based on the results of the study, researchers suggested learn-to-swim programs should be established for parents.

In addition to these empirical findings, USA Swimming's diversity specialist John Cruzat mentioned the significant impact that racism has had on the minority swimming gap. Prior to World War I, "…pools were melting pots where blacks, whites and immigrants interacted. Men and women, however, swam on separate days" (*Plunging*

into public pools' contentious past, 2007). In a 2007 National Public Radio interview, author John Wiltse explained, "Throughout the 19th century and even really through the first two decades of the 20th century, swimming at pools divided along class lines and along sex lines, not along racial lines" (http://www.npr.org/templates/player/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=10495199&m=10495202). Eventually, pools did segregate along racial lines. The primary reason for this type of segregation at public municipal pools was because Whites did not want Black men interacting with White women. White men feared the sexual atmosphere at the pool would somehow promote interracial mixing (NPR, 2007). Coupled with this *structural* constraint of access, there was a widespread myth perpetuated through academia which espoused "…blacks' swimming ability was comprised by an innate deficit of buoyancy" ("60 percent of black kids can't swim", 2008). This rhetoric was most infamously stated in a now widely discredited study done in 1969 by Allen and Nickel. The findings of their study entitled "The Negro and Learning to Swim: The Buoyancy Problem Related to Reported Biological Differences" were reported in the *Journal of Negro Education*. Based on a survey of students at universities in the U.S., Allen and Nickel (1969) concluded Blacks could not swim due to heavy bones and other contributing genetic factors. Such information only helped perpetuate the buoyancy deficit myth. This cultural mis-education has since been debunked over the past few decades; unfortunately, some people still believe there is some truth to it.

In spite of the aforementioned *intrapersonal* and *structural* constraints to swimming participation, there are Blacks who do swim. Nevertheless, a 2005 study on self-reported swimming ability conducted by the Centers for Disease Control found Blacks reported the most limited swimming ability compared to all other racial groups. This data indicates Blacks are finding ways to overcome the hierarchical constraints to swimming but suggest the level of constraints negotiation may not be particularly fluid and/ consistent.

In short, the constraints model is valuable in that it helps researchers begin to unpack and comprehend the issues surrounding Blacks, both male and female, in swimming. It acts as a springboard for the proposed research of Black females in swimming; however, as it stands, the constraint model may not adequately capture the constraints specific to Black females in swimming. Thus, it is necessary to expand the model to accommodate a plethora of *cultural* constraints, a category not currently represented in the leisure constraints model.

North Americanization of leisure constraints. Though leisure constraints theory has grown by leaps and bounds over the last two decades, the hierarchical model of constraints falls short in being intentional (not implied) at recognizing culture as a constraint and the need for it to be a fixed part of the traditional hierarchical model. Having a greater cultural understanding of various groups of people may be of value to leisure researchers seeking to fully understand all contributing factors in leisure participation/non-participation. Cultural perspectives of leisure pursuits may also be of value to policy makers and practitioners in designing programs that speak to specific

groups and are implemented with cultural constraints in mind. As it stands, the leisure constraints model is highly predicated on the leisure behaviors of people in Western civilization; and within this westernized model there is little to no room for contextualization of leisure as it applies to areas of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, etc. Based on an assessment study of leisure research in North America, Jackson (2004) concluded "…the leisure research field in North America has not only grown larger and become more established but also more cohesive, self-contained, and inward looking" (p. 326). A concern has also been raised about the "…possible intellectual and disciplinary isolation of the North American leisure research community" (Jackson, 2004, p. 324). Exploring and incorporating other academic disciplines needs to be a part of leisure research. Incorporating research and theory from the social sciences can prove beneficial in understanding leisure patterns of all minority groups. "Although a substantial body of research exists that has identified ethnic/racial differences in recreation preferences and participation patterns, new directions must be taken in this research if researchers are to address the range of questions that loom on the horizon" (Shinew, Stodolska, Floyd, Hibbler, Allison, Johnson, and Santos, 2006, p. 404). To be more precise, Shinew et al. (2006) suggest paying attention to two societal trends when considering the future research on leisure behavior of racial and ethnic minorities: (a) the formation of a new racial and social structure and (b) the continued and increasing rigors of measuring and articulating racial/ethnic identity. In order to advance the study of leisure constraints, the hierarchical model should be expanded to include *cultural* constraints as a fourth dimension within the three-tier model.

Recognizing the need to explore culture as a constraint to leisure participation, Chick and Dong (2003) conducted a study examining the validity of the leisure constraints model in Japan and China, two societies outside of North America. The researchers interviewed couples ages 20-40 years old about their leisure pursuits and their perceptions of constraints to their leisure involvement. Chick and Dong (2003) also wanted to determine if culture is indeed an important constraint category.

While Chick and Dong's (2003) research is highly important to the leisure research field, its focus was on cross-cultures (e.g. cultures outside the U.S.) as opposed to focusing on various cultures *within* the U.S. (e.g. race, religion). The researchers were not able to draw conclusions about the validity of the leisure constraints model cross-culturally however, based on the results, they suggested a refinement of the hierarchical model. "In particular, culture is a constraint category that may substantially enhance the validity of the model when it is applied to other societies" (p. 338). This is an important and necessary step in the right direction of leisure constraints research because it sheds light on the limitations the current hierarchical model poses on leisure research. Their argument for the inclusion of a cross-cultural constraint category can be paralleled with my suggestion for the addition of a cultural constraint category intended to capture participation patterns of individuals from diverse backgrounds within the U.S. If leisure research is to expand to study leisure from a cross-cultural perspective in terms of differing societies, researchers must develop a solid line of research that explores culture as a constraint with the U.S.

Gender and leisure constraints. Moving toward research that contextualizes differences in leisure participation, early work of Karla Henderson (1996) is devoted to understanding leisure constraints of women. Using gender as a theoretical framework Jackson and Henderson (1995) conducted a quantitative study to examine the differences and/ similarities of leisure constraints identified by men and women. The secondary analysis of data was drawn from two previous surveys distributed in 1988 and 1992. The survey addressed two main questions: (a) "What constraints to leisure are experienced by women and men?" and (b) "How does the context pertaining to personal and situational circumstances (e.g. age, income, and family structure) alter, reinforce, and perhaps alleviate the effects of constraints among women and men"? (Jackson & Henderson, 1995).

Results of the study showed "…between-gender comparison of constrains was characterized by both convergence and divergence. On the basis of the factor analysis, no between-gender differences existed on the general constraints dimensions of Commitments, Facilities, Geographical Isolation, or Cost" (Jackson & Henderson, 1995, p. 46). There were differences observed between genders in that in terms of specific constraints, such as finding partners to participate, lack of ease in social settings, transportation difficulties, no physical ability, or not knowing where to participate, women reported higher scores than men (Jackson & Henderson, 1995). The data also showed a *within-gender* difference in experience of leisure constraints. The study stated women "…differed in their experience of constraints depending on their personal circumstances – expressed in terms of age, income, and family structure – and the

constraints that were associated with these personal circumstances" (Jackson & Henderson, 1995, p. 47). From this, Jackson and Henderson (1995) suggested "…the need to think in terms of diversities and pluralities rather than dualisms and universals".

Race and leisure constraints. In light of their own recommendations for future research, Jackson and Henderson (1995) failed to acknowledge the possibility of race playing a role in the *within-gender* leisure constraint differences of women. Moreover, no facets of race and ethnicity are mentioned in the limitations of the study. In addition to using qualitative methods to enhance the findings of this research, contextualizing constraints of women through a cultural lens is needed, as culture plays a significant role in leisure choices and participation of individuals. African American cultural is one in particular that brings a unique understanding to some of the leisure participation choices of Blacks, and demands moving beyond studying leisure constraints simply from a majority perspective to one that includes a deeper understanding of marginalized groups.

Seminal research of Steven Philipp (1995) on race and leisure constraints noted the "…evolving generalized model of leisure constraints [had] not directly addressed race as an important factor affecting leisure preference and participation" (p. 109). Thus, Philipp's (1995) research study focused on exploring group differences in leisure constraints, preferences and participation, which tends to be associated with different types of discrimination, sub-cultural values, and marginality. Philipp placed a great amount of emphasis on the absence of race in leisure constraints models during that time. In fact, he suggested "Race, as a category of measurement, should not be hidden in other measurement categories that appear to transcend race because the assumption then

becomes that racial differences are no longer of primary importance to leisure participation preferences and choices" (Philipp, 1995, p. 110). For example, because intrapersonal constraints deal with the inner psyche of an individual which could include issues concerning his/her race does not mean the category is sufficient enough to capture all race-related constraints. Philipp (1995) further dissected the complexities of measuring African American behavior at the intrapersonal level, which Crawford and Godbey's (1987) constraints model theoretically rests upon. *Intrapersonal* constraints for Blacks needs to be given special attention "…in light of current racial theories to avoid behavioral analysis that appears detached from a cultural understanding of prejudice, discrimination, and segregation…In other words, many intrapersonal constraints might more appropriately be termed racial constraints when considering African Americans" (Philipp, 1995, p. 111).

Philipp (1995) produced a quantitative study, based on his assumptions on racial constraints of African Americans, which investigated how race related to two measures of leisure constraint – comfort and appeal. The results showed a significant difference between racial groups concerning appeal for 12 out of 20 leisure activities. A total of seven activities were reported by African Americans to be less appealing when compared to European Americans. Among those activities were camping in the mountains, bicycling, snow skiing, going to a museum, going to zoos, dining out, and going to the beach. A similar pattern held true when tested for comfort of leisure activities between African Americans and European Americans. For instance, based on a Likert-type scale, African Americans reported a 2.59 mean score compared to only a 1.93 mean score for

European Americans in the category ‘going to the beach’. This category is of particular importance because ‘going to the beach’ could be synonymous with the act of swimming in the minds of participants who were surveyed. Assuming this is the case, the finding supports other research that reflects a similar pattern of African American participation preference in swimming as compared to Caucasians (CDC, 2005; Dowda et al., 2005). Based on the ever-growing minority population in the United States, Philipp (1995) suggested further refinement of the leisure constraints model be made. “Constraints models are needed that reflect the importance of these powerful social forces in forming leisure preferences and tastes” (Philipp, 1995, p. 119).

Advancing a little more beyond researching race and leisure through a lens of discrimination and injustice, researchers need to look at the cultural norms that influence leisure participation behavior for members of that culture. “A primary concern among researchers working in race and leisure has been to understand how racial prejudice, discrimination, and structural inequalities constrain leisure among racial groups” (Shinew & Floyd, 2005, p. 34). While the contributions of studies pertaining to race and discrimination in leisure (Stodolska, 2000; Philipp, 1999; Floyd, Gramman, & Saenz, 1993) have been beneficial to leisure studies, it still does not directly address the complexities of culture in leisure. “The conventional approach has been to interpret significant differences in participation rates that remain after controlling for socioeconomic factors as cultural differences, without specifying which aspects of ethnic culture affect leisure” (Floyd, 1998, pg. 4). Researching different aspects of culture can

not only benefit researchers in understanding how people of different races participate in leisure, but also those of different religious backgrounds and more.

Religion and leisure constraints. In the 2004 Summer Olympics, Muslim sprinter Roqaya Al-Gassar of Bahrain had to overcome religious constraints in order to compete as a runner. Because Muslim culture requires women to wear a hijab at all times in public, a Hijood, described as a sporty version of the hijab with a sports hood, was designed for Al-Gassar by an Australian sports clothing company (Muslim sprinter wins Olympic sprint dressed heat to toe in hijab, Firth, 2008). Al-Gassar expressed how happy she was to have a "high performance" outfit that offered a combined need for comfort and modesty due to her religion. "I hope that my wearing the Hijood sports top will inspire other women to see that modesty or religious beliefs don't have to be a barrier to participating in competitive sports" (Muslim sprinter wins Olympic sprint dressed head to toe in hijab, Firth, 2008).

Al-Gassar was able to negotiate the *cultural* constraint imposed by her Muslim religion to compete in the Olympics alongside women of other cultures where religious constraints do not manifest themselves in their sports attire. Under the current hierarchical leisure constraints model, religious constraints does not fit, thus making it difficult for a researcher to theoretically explore leisure participation experiences of Muslim women. Expanding the model to include cultural constraints will provide room for more exploratory (qualitative) research involving beliefs, values, practices, and ideologies germane to particular groups of people such as Black women or Muslim women.

Other critiques/shortcomings of leisure constraints model. Despite the advances in constraints research since the first leisure constraints model was introduced in 1987 (Crawford & Godbey), there still exists criticisms of the traditional leisure constraints model. As mentioned before, Floyd (1998) and Philipp (1995), avid researchers in race and ethnicity in leisure, take issue with intrapersonal constraints being used as a catch-all for racial, ethnic, and cultural matters. Samdahl (2006) devoted an entire chapter in *Constraints to Leisure* discussing the shortcomings of the leisure constraints model and subsequently the research that stems from it.

Samdahl and Jekubovich (1997) responded to some of the earlier criticisms of the leisure constraints model and noted some needed changes. They pointed to five interrelated criticisms of leisure constraints and listed them as follows:

> (a) a narrow choice of criterion variables, with an over-emphasis on participation vs. nonparticipation in leisure and recreation activities; (b) over-emphasis on investigations of structural/intervening constraints to the neglect of intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints; (c) over-emphasis on constraints as obstacles, coupled with neglect of adaptive strategies (negotiation); (d) over-reliance on quantitative methods of data collection and analysis and; (e) a fundamental questioning of the premises, objectives, and insights of leisure constraints research (p. 447).

Jackson (2000) surmised that these critiques are a reflection of the concern regarding the dominance of social-psycho approaches in North American leisure research and the neglect of contextual issues.

As a starting point, Jackson (2000) called for some changes to be incorporated into the future research of leisure constraints. First, to expand research on structural constraints, Jackson (2000) offered a broadening of criterion variables associated with this constraint. Next, he proposed that researchers investigate antecedent constraints, and at the same time, work from a more sociological perspective. Also, there should be an investigation into the leisure constraints negotiation process so researchers can gain insight into the short-term and long-term strategies that lead to achieving leisure goals. The final suggestion is for leisure constraints to incorporate qualitative methods.

Even with the aforementioned suggestions for improving the field, Samdahl (2006) still sees the same issues present in leisure constraints research. Her issues primarily deal with constraints research design, decontextualizing participation, the portrayal of constraints as negative barriers, and an over-emphasis on individual agency in negotiating constraints. Overall, Samdahl (2006) does not appear optimistic about the future of leisure constraints research and relayed the following thoughts on the progress of leisure constraints research:

> The culminating effect of two decades of research on leisure constraints has not, in my mind, significantly enhanced our understanding of the dialectic of freedom and constraint at the heart of leisure. Nor does it engage in what I find to be the more significant issues facing our field (p. 337).

Part of what Samdahl (2006) sees as the problem in not getting at deeper issues relating to leisure research is the continued over-reliance on quantitative methods. In response to abundant use of quantitative methods in leisure research, Samdahl (2006) asked: “How

did using the lens of leisure constraints…enhance our understanding of what people do or experience in their leisure lives? The research on leisure constraints seemed descriptive and stopped short of asking deeper, more interesting questions" (p. 338). Because much of the data collected in leisure research stems from questionnaire items, this methodological limitation "…seems intent on studying the constraints model rather than using that model as a tool to enhance our understanding of some other aspect of leisure" (Samdahl, 2006, p. 338)

Focusing on activity participation in leisure independent of social factors is problematic. This is another criticism of the leisure constraints model. The activity focus does not mirror "…current theoretical definitions of leisure and represents a limited interpretation of the original constraints model, yet participation persists as a significant dependent variable in much of the research on leisure constraint negotiation" (Samdahl, 2006, p. 340). This limitation does not capture or value the complexity of choices made by individuals in the leisure process. The continued decontexualization of leisure participation will only show leisure constraints as an unrealistic binary – with people either facing constraints or being free to participate in the activity (Samdahl, 2006).

Another shortcoming of the constraints model seems to be the inherent negative value the word "constraints" holds. This negative value "…follows directly from the original model, which established a binary between constraints (bad) and participation (good)" (Samdahl, 2006, p. 340). The established binary that stems from the model influences how researchers study leisure and may be difficult to escape.

Finally, the early foundation for studying leisure constraints negotiation has placed a lot of emphasis on human will, privilege, and behavioral strategies. Samdahl (2006) believes there is an over-emphasis on the individual and a thought presupposes the individual has agency in finding his/her own solutions to negotiating constraints. Though there is practical use for studying individual behavior in negotiating constraints, researchers are cautioned that "…individualized response is only one way to alleviate a constraint; collective action designed to change the structures that generate constraints is another (overlooked) solution" (Samdahl, 2006, p. 343). Showing a commitment to advancing leisure constraints research, Jackson (2000) believes "…new substantive directions are…required, because the field cannot continue with 'business as usual' without becoming repetitive and redundant" (p. 66).

Constraints Negotiation

In an effort to advance leisure constraints theory, some researchers have progressed beyond studying leisure participation as an "all-or-none" concept and, instead, are now focusing more attention on the constraints negotiation process. According to Jackson (1993), past research on leisure constraints has focused on constraints as impossible road blocks to participation, followed by an abrupt assumption "…that if an individual encounters a constraint, the outcome will be non-participation" (p. 1). In spite of existing obstacles, constraints can be negotiated to where participation can occur, especially if the interest and desire to participate is present. "The idea of constraint negotiation is consistent with social cognitive view that people actively respond to conditions that impede their goals rather than passively accept them" (Mannell &

Loucks-Atkinson, 2005, p. 226). Leisure research is catching up to this notion by taking a closer look at the constraints negotiation process:

> This development signifies a move away from atheoretical studies based solely on the collection of empirical data. It represents a shift toward a deeper level of understanding of the leisure constraints construct and the desire to interpret empirical results within a theoretical framework (Jackson et al., 1993, p. 2).

A British investigation conducted by Kay and Jackson (1991) examined the socioeconomic and activity-based differences in the constraints experienced by their participants. The two most frequently reported leisure constraints were finances and time. Kay and Jackson (1991) asked their participants to explain how they dealt with the constraints. As a result of this probing question, the researchers were able to gain a deeper understanding of how the subjects negotiated their financial and time constraints. For example, 60 percent of the respondents experiencing financial constraint reduced the frequency of participation, while another 11 percent saved up money to participate. In reference to the time constraint, 27 percent reduced the time spent on household chores and two percent reduced time at work (Kay & Jackson, 1991). This qualitative inquiry pushes the research beyond merely reporting leisure participation taking place. It tells the story of *how* participation takes place and may even present data that tells the degree of ease in the constraints negotiation process, i.e. it being easy, difficult, or moderately difficult to negotiate the constraint. A revised view of leisure constraints, that includes the negotiation process, can tell "…the roles constraints play in people's leisure life-styles, how widely and in what ways they are experienced, and what strategies people

adopt to negotiate them (i.e., how people adapt to leisure constraints)" (Jackson et al., 1993, p. 9).

Evolving Constraints Research

Constraints research has grown over the last few decades within the recreation and leisure field. Related fields such as sport management and sport sociology have been slow to adopt the model in their own research. This may be in part due to the lack of collaboration among the disciplines.

Sometimes leisure and sport are treated as two unrelated entities in academia, with sport being something individuals engage in on a competitive level and leisure being something one does during their free time to relax. The reality is, the activity one engages in, basketball for instance, can be done at the leisure level or competitive sport level. But what many researchers may not realize is that the leisure constraints model is somewhat versatile enough to study different trends and phenomenon both in sport and leisure.

Sport sociology is a field that can benefit from the cross-discipline use of a modified version of leisure constraints that would include cultural constraints. "The sociology of sport is a sub-discipline of sociology that focuses on the relationship between sport and social relations" (Coakley, 2008, p. 3). Within this discipline researchers study the socialization of different groups of people into sport and how differing cultures function as a determining factor in who will or will not participate in certain sports.

Culturally and historically, African Americans have not been well-represented in aquatics. This has been due to a denial of access to public and private facilities, lack of finances, and also a lack of interest fueled by within-culture ideologies about swimming that have been passed on from generation to generation. Black women, in particular, share a common cultural understanding of hair and some have reported it as a constraint to their swimming participation. Unfortunately, the current leisure constraints model does not offer a cultural constraint component that allows researchers to study culture as a legitimate constraint to leisure participation. Indeed, researchers such as Philipp (1995) and Henderson (1996) have studied race and gender, respectively, in leisure through a cultural lens however, it has been done without cultural constraints being a fixed entity of the leisure constraints model. The work of Philipp (1995) and Henderson (1996), along with the current research study regarding Black females, hair, and swimming, can only be executed and understood from a cultural perspective. Henderson (2005) insisted "…leisure researchers will need to continue…in borrowing from other disciplines so that we might better understand our transdisciplinary field" (p. 46). Thus, the current research study includes a modification of the existing models of constraints that incorporates a fourth tier in the hierarchical model, which would be *cultural* (Appendix A). The modified model will hopefully trigger researchers to consider cultural trappings of specific groups of people when studying leisure participation/non-participation. The model will also hopefully push researchers to focus more attention on the constraints negotiation process

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

Positionality

Max Weber insists that we are indeed cultural beings equipped with the capacity to take deliberate stances and attitudes toward the world, thus lending to it significance (Ruggie, 1998). "This capacity gives rise to a class of facts that do not exist in the physical object world: social facts, or facts that…depend on human agreement that they exist and typically require human institutions for their existence" (Ruggie, 1998, p. 856). There is value in the human experience as it relates to research and ways of knowing. Because of my on-going experiences with personal hair care and swimming continue to be a challenge to me, I have chosen to undertake a research project designed to investigate the cultural nuances behind race, personal hair care, and swimming. I agree with Gilgun (2005) who argued that writings are reflections and interactive processes between researchers and the researched. Therefore, I am a co-constructor of this research.

As a Black female who has struggled with her own hair, I recognize that I enter this research with important and layered subjectivities. Atkinson, Jackson, Sibley, and Washbourne (2005) support the notion of inevitable bias by espousing "…that academic and other knowledges are always *situated*, always produced by *positioned* actors working in/between all kinds of locations, working up/on/through all kinds of relations(hips)" (p. 16). My own personal experiences informed my current research study, and I am a positioned actor in this study. My race and gender have positioned me in a marginal

status in society, thus, affecting the way I view and interpret those in centered positions (hooks, 1984). In the next section I share some of my experiences that have influenced my positionality and how I approached this research.

I currently wear my hair natural, but often feel a little insecure about how it is perceived on a predominantly White campus in the south, where I attend school. Since I have permed my hair in the past, I often have to fight the urge not to go back to that. I am trying to embrace my natural hair and feel okay about doing so. Being a Black woman trying to negotiate living in the U.S. where White culture has been normalized, I often wonder what I will do with my hair when I re-enter the workforce. One thing I do know for sure, at least today anyway, is that I will not go on any job interviews wearing my hair natural.

Thinking about my topic of research, it forced me to reflect on my own upbringing as it related to my hair and swimming. I remember having very thick hair as a child. It was often hard for my mother to comb through it and I hated getting it done. My hair in its natural state was somewhat hard to manage for my mother. Every now and then my mom would press my hair and that of my sister. I remember so well getting my hair washed at the kitchen sink, blow-drying it and then bracing myself for the long, and sometimes grueling, process of sitting for hours in the kitchen by the stove to get my hair pressed. Straightening our hair also incited competition between my sister and me as to who had the longest hair. Sometimes, I would go over to my godmother's house to get my hair pressed because she was known to have a great hair pressing technique that was sure to get my hair extremely straight.

Though I hated the process it took to get there, having straight hair was great for me, and it saved my mom time during the week from doing my hair. My straight hair was so pretty to me. I often got compliments on it. But the other thing I specifically remember during this time was that I did not want to do *anything* that would jeopardize my hair reverting back to its kinky, natural state. This included sweating under any circumstance, taking a shower without a shower cap, and, yes, swimming.

Even though swimming is a skill I learned (not that well) in summer camp when I was in grammar school, it is not an activity I was encouraged to participate in nor was it something I wanted to participate in as I got older. By high school, I had a perm and was into actually styling my hair more. I wanted to look acceptable among my peers. I was not fortunate to be able to go to the beauty shop every two weeks like many of my peers, but I did take care to do my own hair at home, which would often be a long process from beginning to end. Again, doing anything that would jeopardize the style was not a good fit for me. However, I thoroughly enjoyed playing basketball and volleyball, but would have to find some creative way to do my hair, such as pulling it back in a ponytail, French braids, or a French roll, when I would play as to not look too disheveled afterward. Or, better yet, I just knew during those periods from one day to the next, I would just have to live with my hair not looking its best. This was definitely the case when my Physical Education class would reach the multiple-week swimming requirement. I dreaded this period of time because I knew the swimming cap was not going to keep my hair dry. I would not have enough time between classes to fix it back the way I felt comfortable with it; and having a perm, I would run the risk of the chlorine

mixing with the chemicals in my hair and it falling out. Since I cared about my grades more and being in the National Honor Society, I took the risk. There would be no way I could explain to my parents, especially my father, that I received anything less than an "A" in Physical Education due to low participation because I did not want to get my hair wet during swimming. With that, I did the best I could with my hair during that time, sometimes suffering some damage to my hair from the chemicals and/or going through the school day with my hair looking bad. I can also remember friends I had class with in high school having similar problems. Some girls who got their hair done every week at a beauty shop simply refused to get in the pool some days during Physical Education class. Some girls would tie a scarf around their heads, put on a shower cap and then a swimming cap in order to keep their hair dry. This did not always work, however, and some girls would be really upset when they discovered their hair had still gotten wet. One close friend of mine recently told me that she would just put her face in the water, careful not to submerge her head in the water, because it would be enough to pass the class and would keep her hair dry. Some people may wonder what the big deal is about getting the hair wet. I will say that the hair type of Black females is very unique compared to other ethnic groups. Typically, when it gets wet, it does not dry in a straight pattern. It frizzes/draws up, can become kinky or nappy, and may require a lot of time to style it back to the way it was before it got wet. And, because there was only a short time between classes, it would almost be impossible for girls, including myself, to do anything meaningful to our hair and still be on time for the next class.

Since that time, I have gone through different phases with my hair from perms, coloring, braids, and back to being natural. I have wished for longer hair, curly hair, or naturally straight hair. None of the aforementioned was to be. Because I spent so many years being permed and pressed, going natural has not come without exposing my own insecurities about being natural.

When I went away to graduate school at a Historically Black College/University (HBCU), I traded in my perm for my natural roots. Surely at an institution with a majority of African Americans, I would feel just fine with my natural look. That was not necessarily the case. The majority of the African American females there wore their hair straightened in some kind of way, either chemically or by some heat device. Even at a place where mostly everyone looked like me, women's hair still bore some resemblance to the images of White women I grew up seeing on the cover of magazines and on television. What would my peers think of me "going back to my roots"? In spite of my insecurities, I continued on my journey of going natural. [4] When I completed my coursework at this HBCU, it was time to embark on an exciting internship at a very well-known sports complex in Florida. I was so excited about this internship because only about twenty graduate students from universities across the country got selected for this top honor and I was one of them.

Once in Florida, I was kind of happy to have natural hair because the humidity was unbearable and it rained at approximately two o'clock everyday for about fifteen

4 "Going natural" means to completely stop perming the hair to allow the natural hair to grow in from the roots. Once enough of the "new growth" has grown in, one may decide to cut any remaining permed texture hair off.

minutes. This would not have been good for me had my hair been permed or pressed. I worked in an office unlike the undergraduate interns who worked outside all day, and had to maintain a certain appearance from day to day among my peers. Having a perm or pressed hair that would undoubtedly be ruined by the humidity by the time I would get to work would definitely have been a problem. Instead, I had a nice natural hairstyle that I kept maintained neatly. Unfortunately, that all too familiar feeling of being insecure about my hair began to set in very soon. I was placed on a racially diverse team in the office. My mentor, "Lisa" and team leader, "Frank" were White; the other intern and her mentor (female) were Black. The majority of the people in the office were White. To my recollection, I was the only African American female there who wore her hair natural. My co-intern team member would compliment me on my hair from time to time and I would always ask, "You really think it is ok"? But her mentor, "Tasha", a Black woman who had advanced a little in the company, always looked at me strangely in team meetings. It could have been my own insecurity, but I always felt like she was looking at my hair. I always wondered if she was thinking that I should not be wearing my hair natural in an office of majority White peers if I wanted to succeed. It always seemed as if she looked at me with disgust or embarrassment. Then again, I could have been a little paranoid. But why did it even have to be an issue?

I remember one day I came to work with the front of my hair braided to the back in very tiny cornrows and the rest was combed out in an Afro. I was passing an older White man in the hall and he stopped to compliment me on my hair. I thanked him and then he proceeded to tell me a long story about an African American woman he used to

work with who would come to work with her hair done in different braided styles from time to time. He said it would be amazing to see some of the "creations" she would have. As I smiled and nodded, I could not help but think of how ridiculous this man sounded to me. Why in God's name was he telling me this? Is *that* what my hair looked like to *these* White people, a creation? I wanted to be known for the good work I would do as an intern, not as Dawn, the Black girl with the natural hair or the Afro.

Caving under the perceived pressure to assimilate, I eventually broke down and went to a local beauty salon and requested that my hair be permed. In some ways, I guess I "sold out". Either way, my hair looked fabulous! I loved it! But, I was not looking forward to what I knew it would take to maintain it. After all, that was not my hair in its natural state. To keep my hair looking fabulous would mean bi-weekly trips to the salon and maintenance in-between on my own, neither of which were feasible or practical for me on an intern's salary.

When my peers at work saw my new hairstyle, I got so many compliments. It was as if I was a new woman. Even "Tasha" complimented me on my hair and wanted to know where I got it done. I cannot say for sure if my natural hair caused any kind of problems for me in this work setting or not, but I often reflect on that period and choices I made regarding my hair and wish race and power structures were never a part of it. I share these stories here in order to position myself in my research and to invite the reader to see my work as both luminal and textual in coding and analysis, as I acknowledge knowledges of emotion and observation in this work.

Based on my own experiences with my personal hair care and swimming, and also recalling and valuing the similar anecdotal experiences of my Black female friends and family, I believe constructivism influences my positionality and research**.** A constructivist view holds that multiple realities exist and are constructed by individuals who experience these realities from their own vantage point. This makes their realities inherently unique (Hatch, 2002). "The constructivist perspective holds as a chief assumption about much complex behavior that the 'subjects' being studied at a minimum be considered knowing beings, and that this knowledge they possess has important consequences for how behavior or actions are interpreted" (Magoon, 1977, pp. 651-652). This is to say that the subjects and their experiences yielded the most vital information in the study. Their experiences as Black females are real to them, thus, valuable to me as the researcher. Constructivism required me to approach the phenomenon (e.g. hair as a constraint to Black female participation in swimming) as a sociologist "…with corresponding attention to social definitions, rules, norms, values, etc." (Magoon, 1977, p. 657). Constructivisim asserts that the world is constituted by social relationships. While I do believe in some universal facts/'T'ruths, I do not believe in cookie-cutter human experiences. Everyone has some type of unique experience to offer in terms of understanding the world and human experience cannot simply be reduced to numbers.

Limitations of Constructivism

Although the exploratory nature of the constructivist approach is advantageous when studying complex phenomena, there are some disadvantages. I use a constructivist approach to frame a case study using leisure constraints theory to understand swimming

participation by African American female students at an HBCU. Because the data collection techniques, such as interviews and focus groups, are extremely time-consuming, sample sizes need to be somewhat small (Williamson, 2006). Critics of the constructivist approach argue that small samples are unreliable and have no generalizability. Positivists would argue that another disadvantage of the constructivist approach is:

> The apparent discursiveness of the answers from participants, which often do not fit neatly into easily managed categories. Interpretivists would counter…by pointing out that, in positivist studies such as surveys people's views will often not fit neatly into the little boxes representing categories chosen by researchers (Williamson, 2006, p. 98).

I do not believe human behavior can be reduced to simple causal relationships, such as X causes Y, as with positivism. In particular, sport sociology theorists/researchers value the human experience of individuals because "…sport is a social phenomenon, that is those who participate in, watch or manage sports are acted upon by a number of external social forces…and are not inanimate objects, whose behavior can be understood in terms of causal relationships" (Grafton & Jones, 2004, p. 19). Again, Hatch (2002) purports the underlying ontology of the constructivist paradigm is that multiple realities exist. And, as previously indicated by Grafton & Jones (2004), external social forces such as socioeconomic status (SES), race, and gender, all play a role in the human construction of reality. All things considered, advantages and disadvantages, constructivism was a sound approach to framing this case study. The exploratory nature of the research questions fit

best in the constructivist paradigm which calls for naturalistic qualitative methods that produce case studies, interpretations, reconstructions, and/or narratives (Hatch, 2002). The answers to these questions are too complex to be reduced to statistical data.

One hope of this study was that through a qualitative approach, I could unearth the cultural and social nuances behind the descriptive quantitative data that shows Black females having a self-reported low swimming ability and higher rate of drowning than their White counterparts ("Water-related injuries: Fact sheet", 2005). The experiences of the Black female participants were vital to the research study.

Method

Qualitative Research Methods

Traditionally, researchers have fallen into and held fast to either qualitative or quantitative methods. Purists on each side have advocated heavily for each method and why one is better than the other. Quantitative purists believe that social science research should be completely objective and that researchers need to remain completely unbiased (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). They err on the side of positivist philosophy which contends "…that the only 'true' or valid form of knowledge is that which is 'scientific'…Measurements themselves should be objective and not subject to the influence of the researcher's values or interpretation…" (Gratton & Jones, 2004, p. 16). Conversely, qualitative researchers reject this notion of positivism and believe that "…multiple-constructed realities abound, that time – and context-free generalizations are neither desirable nor possible, that research is value-bound…and that knower and known cannot be separated because the subjective knower is the only source of reality" (Johnson

& Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 14). Some qualitative researchers embrace an interpretive worldview. Those who advocate for the constructivist approach believe the human experience is "…too complex to be reduced to numbers. Rather, they are 'measured' using words, statements, and other non-numerical tools, collecting data from the viewpoint of the participant" (Gratton & Jones, 2004, p. 19). While the debate continues over which method is better or best, for this research study qualitative seemed to be the best approach because I am interested in the human experience that extends beyond the quantitative data on Black females and swimming participation. The characteristics of qualitative methods align better with my philosophical beliefs and research questions than quantitative methods. Using qualitative methods will add to the existing body of literature by offering a more in-depth viewpoint of the subject matter as opposed to quantitative methods, which may only attempt to explain a portion of any given phenomenon.

A case study method. This research was conducted using the case study method. "By concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity (the case) the researcher aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon" (Merriam, 1998, p.29). While the majority of previous researchers have studied the personal and social constructed meanings of Black hair and the minority swimming gap independently, there appears to be a void of research synthesizing the two phenomena together. In the current research, I set out to explore the workings of two phenomena (e.g. the culture of Black hair as it relates to constrained swimming participation of Black females) in one centralized study. Although all data gathered was examined carefully, I

was most interested in hearing the experiences of the participants. According to Collins (2000), "Experience as a criterion of meaning with practical images as its symbolic vehicles is a fundamental epistemological tenet in African American thought systems" (p. 258). In this study, I specifically sought to understand the lack of Black females in swimming at a particular HBCU.

Site Description and Participants

Data was collected from participants at a prominent Historically Black College/ University, Yates University, in the northeast. It is one of the very few HBCU's out of 103 with a women's and/ men's swim team. Also unique about this site is it requires all students enrolled in the College of Arts and Letters to pass a swimming course during their matriculation at the university which is also a graduation requirement.

In order to gain access to the swimming facility at Yates University, my first course of action was to contact the Department Head in the Physical Education Department research site via email and subsequent follow-up phone calls expressing my interest to observe and interview students from beginning swimming classes. Once contact was made, she was given a brief introduction to the research and the desired data collection process. I then formally submitted a solicitation letter to her electronically (See Appendix B). Upon receiving official written confirmation from the department head (See Appendix C), I submitted the proposed research study via an Internal Review Board (IRB) form for approval at the department level and then the university level at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Included in the IRB application were the solicitation and confirmation letter for the research site. Once IRB approval was granted, I

coordinated with two instructors of Physical Education swim classes on days and times their classes would meet so I may observe and solicit volunteer participants to be interviewed. Based on the literature that reports Blacks having a much lower self-reported swimming ability and higher drowning rate than any other racial group in the U.S. ("Water-related injuries: Fact sheet", 2005), I believed this HBCU would have the ideal target demographic for the study – Black, female, ages 18-25, born and/raised primarily in the United States.

Bracketing Interview

Prior to data collection, I had a fellow doctoral student in sport sociology with experience doing bracketing interviews conduct an audio taped bracketing interview with me. "Bracketing requires that we work to become aware of our own assumptions, feelings, and preconceptions, and then, that we strive to put them aside – to bracket them – in order to be open and receptive to what we are attempting to understand" (Ely, 1991, p. 50). Since this research emanated from some of my own experiences with swimming and personal hair care as a Black female, bracketing my own biases and assumptions was both necessary and vital to the research, in terms of the design of the interview schedule and even the type of follow-up questions I asked. Another thing I had to keep in mind was the slight age difference between me and the participants which could have an effect on the type of responses I may receive. For instance, in my bracketing interview I recalled vividly getting my hair pressed as a young girl and what that experience was like for me. I realized that because I may be as many as 14 years older than some of my participants, they may not have experienced getting their hair pressed as it has become

somewhat of a lost art over the past two decades or so. This was also one of my assumptions - that virtually all my participants would be able to personally and extensively relate to hair pressing. Moreover, the bracketing interview simply reminded me of how much hair is a constraint to my own swimming participation. It reminded me of just how much personal hair care was an inconvenience for me when I had swimming class in high school. One other thing that became evident for me was the type of jargon I used when describing certain things about my hair that may not be universally understood by all races of people. The interviewer for my bracketing interview was White. I recall telling her how I hated the actual process of getting my hair pressed because when it would come to pressing the "kitchen", I would usually get burned. While I have no idea where the term originated from (and I have tried to research it) the "kitchen" is a term commonly used among Black females to refer to the hair at the very nape of the neck. I had to explain this to my interviewer. But I realized I said it so casually in my interview, taking for granted she knew what I was talking about. I made a mental note to look out for similar jargon used among my participants. If used, I would have them explain so I could make sure I had the same understanding as opposed to assuming I knew what they were referencing.

The bracketing interview helped me to realize just how passionate and connected I was to this study. I definitely wanted to curtail this passion during the interviews as to not influence the responses of my participants. For instance, during my bracketing interview, I explained to the interviewer what the experience of getting my hair pressed as a child was like for me. I recalled being afraid to get burned and the long amount of

time it would take to get done. When asking one of the participants to recall her experiences with getting her hair pressed, her story sounded so similar to my own. I could completely relate; however, I had to mentally remind myself not to show any emotion one way or the other that would affect her response. Throughout the interviews I conducted, I made a conscious effort to not comment on what the participants were saying. My mindset during interviews and observations was to be open to whatever information would come my way. I tried to compartmentalize my own experiences with hair and swimming until data coding and analysis, where I used my experiences that informed the motivation of this work to help guide me in interpreting layers of experiences.

Data Collection

Instrumentation

I developed a semi-structured interview schedule (See Appendix D) based on the leisure constraints theory. For instance, the leisure constraints model takes into consideration three different types of constraints to leisure participation, such as structural constraints, which would include having access to participate. One of my first questions was intentionally designed with access to swimming in mind. I asked each participant to tell me what type of swimming facility they have/had in their neighborhood. Other questions in the interview schedule were designed in the same manner.

Procedure

The interview schedule was approved by the dissertation committee and later approved by the department and university Internal Review Board. The interviews were conducted to gain the rich, thick data from the participants of the study. The participants (females who self-identified as Black or African American) were solicited as volunteers from the swimming classes. Once I completed the observation of each class, I was introduced to the students by their instructor. I gave a brief synopsis of the study to the students and asked that if anyone would like to volunteer to be interviewed, they needed to see me before they left the class. I waited outside the pool area and on their way out, some students were able to set appointments with me immediately. I gave my business card to those who were not able to briefly speak with me after the class to set up an appointment, but who were possibly interested in being interviewed later. The number of interviews conducted was not pre-determined; rather, the aim was to interview until saturation was reached. This refers to the point at which the researcher is no longer finding new information from additional interviews that will add insight to the understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Though there are some suggested differences from researchers in terms of the adequate number of interviews for saturation, there seems to be agreement that using a homogenous sample requires fewer interviews- six to 12- than a heterogeneous sample (Creswell, 1998; Kuzel, 1992; Guest, Bunce, and Johnson, 2006). A total of nine interviews were completed. A list of participants can be found in Appendix E. Saturation was reached around the sixth interview, as I did not hear any new issues, constraints, or items of concerns as it related to swimming from the

participants. Each interview was audio taped using a digital recorder and lasted approximately 30-60 minutes. Each participant chose a pseudonym in place of her real name in an effort to maintain anonymity. Interviews took place at a time and location chosen by the participant, such as a quiet room in the library, or in a quiet room I was given access to at the school by the head of the department. Each location offered privacy to carry out the interview. Each participant was asked if she was comfortable with the location; all agreed.

For the observation data, I sat in the pool bleachers and observed two beginning swimming classes during the spring 2010 semester on three separate occasions. "The goal of observation is to understand the culture, setting, or social phenomenon being studied from the perspectives of the participants" (Hatch, 2002, p. 72). I was a non-participant observer and remained open to whatever unfolded. Since the focus of the study was on Black females, I was particularly interested in their activity and interactions in and out of the pool, i.e. were they actively engaged in swimming? Were they wearing swim caps? And/or did they appear afraid to swim? Anything else that took place? I also observed the culture of the classes. The whole point of the observations were to actually be in the social setting where the phenomenon occurred, documenting what people did and said, and making sense of how the participants negotiate and make sense of the setting (Hatch, 2002). This information was also used to strengthen findings from interview data.

There were no known physical risks to students who participated in this study. Prior to each interview, an Informed Consent form (See Appendix F) was issued to each

participant. All forms were collected prior to data collection. Each participant was given a signed copy of the Informed Consent form for her records. Participants were informed they had the right to discontinue the interview at any point without penalty and informed their information would be destroyed. In an effort to protect the identity of the participants, each participant was asked to choose a pseudonym to be used in place of her real name in all written and recorded documents produced from the research. Confidentiality of data was ensured by limiting access to data only to the investigator, members of the dissertation committee, and the qualitative review group. Every member of the qualitative review group signed Confidentiality forms (See Appendix G) before analyzing data. Upon completion of the research study, all information collected from participants will be destroyed after three years.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began during data collection as I recorded memos and impressions during the observation and interview process. I followed the typological approach to analyzing the interview transcripts. According to Hatch (2002), "Typologies are generated from theory, common sense, and/or research objectives and initial data processing happens within those typological groupings" (p. 152). As previously stated, this research study was guided by the leisure constraints theory which is based on categories of constraints including intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural. Interview questions were created with these constraint categories in mind; thus, typologies were fairly simple to form based on predetermined categories presented by the leisure constraints theory.

The first step in analyzing the interview transcripts was to identify typologies. Seven typologies were drawn from the interview question topics including (a) access; (b) swimming ability; (c) expressed constraints; (d) hair maintenance/styling; (e) money spent on hair; (f) time spent on hair and; (g) open typology (reserved for data that did not fall into other typologies). Secondly, I read the transcripts, assigning a highlight color to entries that related to each typology. I then wrote the main idea of each typology in a summary. Once the summaries were completed, I looked for patterns or themes within the typologies. Hatch (2002) suggested it would be at this point where I could start to look for meaning within data from the typologies and also begin to try out my own hypothetical patterns and themes drawn from the summary data. The next step was very important because I had to decide if patterns I identified were supported by the data and I also had to search for opposing data to the patterns. "Searching for non-examples of your patterns is a systematic measure that should be undertaken in any qualitative study…purposefully asking: 'Is there anything in the data that contradicts my finding'?" (Hatch, 2002, p. 157-158). This is a way of ensuring findings are credible and trustworthy. I then took all previously identified patterns and found relationships between them. I wrote one-sentence generalizations for the patterns. Generalizations in this sense are not to be confused with nor imply generalizability. "Expressing findings as generalizations provides a syntactic device for ensuring that what has been found can be communicated to others…Generalizations are special kinds of statements that express relationships found in the particular contexts under investigation" (Hatch, 2002, p. 159).

The final step was to select supporting data excerpts from the transcripts for each generalization.

Additional data analysis was completed by a qualitative review group made up of two African American women and one Caucasian woman. I met with them as a group to give instructions on how the transcripts were to be analyzed. All steps of the typological analysis approach were followed by each member of the group. All individual analyses were collected for final review and reporting which are revealed in the next chapter. I did not review their analyses until after I completed my own.

Finally, member checking was done by e-mailing each participant a complete transcript of her interview. Participants were asked to review the transcript and report any inaccuracies or information they wanted to change or omit. I received feedback from two participants who asked if I could make grammatical corrections to some of their statements. Two other participants responded saying they approved of everything in their transcripts. The remainder of the participants did not respond to the e-mail.

Triangulation

The two data collection methods, semi-structured interviews and observations (from literature, interview data, and research site) were the basis for the triangulation of data. "Triangulation involves reviewing evidence from multiple sources such that a study's findings are based on the convergence of that information" (Johnstone, 2004, p. 264). Since I am so closely tied to the topic of study with my own experiences surrounding swimming and personal hair care, triangulation also aided in neutralizing "…any bias inherent in a particular data source, investigator, or method when used in

conjunction with other data sources, investigators, and methods" (Johnstone, 2006, p. 264). In addition to controlling for biases, triangulation is good for improving the reliability and validity of the research. Validity concerns itself with the explanation to the research study being credible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Reliability is concerned with the consistency of obtained results (Gratton & Jones, 2004). Though both terms and their use is debated in qualitative research, some researchers do agree that the goal of finding plausible and credible outcome explanations is central to all research (Morse, 1991).

Also important to the execution of the data triangulation method lay in the order in which data is collected. Specifically, I used a sequential triangulation method (Morse, 1991), completing the observations first and the semi-structured interviews afterward. The rationale for this structure was primarily to minimize the biases or influence the interviews may have on the participants' actions/interactions during the observation period. For instance, conducting the interviews before the observation would inform participants of the scope of the study in some way. This knowledge may have influenced the way the participants acted/interacted during the actual swim class, thus, potentially tainting the observation data.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the role hair plays, if any, in a Black female's participation in swimming. This study explored the implications low or no participation in swimming has on Black females and how Black females who do swim negotiate constraints to participate in swimming. Based on data collected from three observations of two swim classes (one swim class was observed on two separate occasions) and nine semi-structured interviews with Black females students at an HBCU, this chapter details patterns from a total of seven typologies drawn from the interview schedule, designed with leisure constraints theory in mind. Typologies include (a) access to swimming; (b) swimming ability; (c) expressed constraints; (d) hair maintenance/styling; (e) money and hair; (f) time and hair; and (g) open typology. The last typology was reserved for any information deemed valuable and pertinent to the study that did not directly fall under the aforementioned typologies. Each typology includes salient quotes from participants to illustrate the patterns identified in that typology.

Observational Notes

The purpose of the observations was to understand the culture of the swimming classes and to actually see participants in the social setting of the phenomenon being studied. The classes I observed were two different sections of *Physical Education 002: Beginning Swimming*. It is a one credit hour course "Designed to teach individuals to

swim, including such basic skills to make them safe in deep water as floating in a prone position as well as supine position, breath control, and rhythmic breathing" (www.provost.yates.edu/PROVOST/bulletin2/u/v2uphysicaleducationnRec_a.htm). Everyone I observed during the classes appeared to be Black, with the exception of the instructor. Since this study is delimited to Black females, I paid close attention to them, but still documented observances as they pertained to male students. I also included observational notes on the instructors as well. The following is a summary of the observational notes.

Observation 1

Possibly due to inclement winter weather conditions, there were not very many people in attendance during the first class I observed. Less than 10 students were present and two student lifeguards were on duty. The class was scheduled to begin at ten o'clock in the morning. I sat high in the bleachers with a clear, unobstructed view of the actual pool. Flags of several countries hung around the swimming hall. Before doing this observation, I wondered what the instructor would be like, if actual instruction would take place, would students just play around in the pool, if all the women would be wearing swim caps, and most of all, did anyone actually know how to swim. All my questions were answered.

The instructor, a White female, was very engaged in teaching her students how to swim. She did not get in the pool with the students, but walked back and forward along the deck, giving instruction. The class began with students lined up against the wall of the pool, performing instructed maneuvers across the width of the pool to the other side.

Each student swam across the width of the pool. This was done in a staggered fashion. The instructor gave personal feedback to every student.

There were six females in the class. Four had on swim caps, one had long braids in her hair with no swim cap, and one young lady had her hair up in a pony tail with no swim cap. None of the males wore swim caps. The males had close haircuts and one had a very low afro. All students were completely engaged in the assigned swimming activities. They practiced going under water, different kicks, pushing off the wall, and more. All the females wore full-bodied swim suits. One young lady wore board shorts (longer, loose fitting shorts typically worn by surfers) over her suit. I noticed another young lady who tugged at her swim cap throughout the class. I do not know if it just was not a good fit or if she was concerned about her hair getting wet.

Overall, the students appeared to enjoy the class. They seemed fairly relaxed and exhibited some amount of swimming skills. The instructor was very encouraging and supportive. Class was dismissed at 10:41 a.m. By 10:50 a.m., two of the young men were dressed and leaving for their next class or to go home. At 10:57 a.m., only three young ladies came out of the locker room. All three of them wore swimming caps during the class and all three of them left with wet hair.

The pool area was extremely hot as I sat and observed the class. Overall, the facility seemed to be pretty old, but in working condition. There were names and times for swimming events posted on one of the walls on the side of the pool. This was perhaps from record holders of the swim team. Yates University is one of the few HBCU's in the country with a swim team.

Observation 2

I returned to Yates University a month later to complete my data collection. I observed the same swimming class from the first observation where the instruction was a White female. There were no major differences during the second observation. One male and one female lifeguard were on duty. One noteworthy difference I saw was the removal of the international flags around the pool. The only flag hanging was the American flag. The overall winter weather in the area was better, which may be a reason more students were in the class that day. There were a few more females than males in the class this time. All the females, except for three, wore swim caps. No males had on swim caps. No swimming instruction took place in the deep end, only in the shallow. As with the first observed class, students appeared to be having fun. They were laughing and were fully engaged with the instruction being given to them. Students also cheered for and supported one another when s/he successfully completed an assigned exercise, i.e. doggy paddling from one wall of the pool to the other. The students were also instructed to count as they did side kicks across the width of the pool. The instructor was pleased with the students and yelled out, “Awesome! Awesome”! Students did more swimming maneuvers such as dropping deep under the water and gliding across the width of the pool. This task proved a little more difficult than previous tasks. The instructor still encouraged them. She also talked about how certain exercises/swim strokes work certain muscles groups. She mentioned that their heart rates should be elevated, as it was a sign of life. With that said, class was dismissed.

Observation 3. The last class I observed was taught by a Black male instructor. As with other classes, there were more females than males. The pool area was still very hot and humid. There were five student lifeguards on the premise' three women and two men. All the female students wore swimming caps, but none of the males wore one. Interestingly, the instructor had on a swimming cap. I did not see him before the start of the class (I had permission from the department head to observe any class and was given the times each beginning swimming class met, so I did not meet this instructor prior to observing his class) I was not sure what the instructor's hair was like underneath the swim cap. He did get in the pool with the students. Once the class was over, he took off his swim cap to reveal (dread) locs. I wondered if he wore the swim cap to keep his (dread) locs out of his face or to keep them dry.

Unlike the first two observations I completed, this instructor had students do some swimming maneuvers in the deep end of the pool, such as diving in and swimming over to the shallow end. The class started out in the shallow end. The first instruction given was the elementary stroke in which the legs are moving in a frog-like manner. One young lady laughed at herself because she could not get it right. The instructor told her to keep trying. The next exercise was the underwater swim. One of the female students seemed afraid to go deep under water. She stopped midway to the other side of the pool. The instructor told her she was thinking too hard. Another female student had trouble as well with the underwater exercise.

Next, the instructor told everyone to get out of the shallow end of the pool and walk over to the deep end; several of the young ladies looked at each other with what

appeared to be apprehension. They hesitated to get out of the shallow end. The instructor yelled out, “I know I don’t have a class full of wimps”! The exercise was for them to dive in and swim across to the shallow end. The instructor jumped in first to show the students what he wanted them to do. A male student was first to complete the exercise with no problem. A few females followed, but it took some coaxing and reassurance from the instructor. The last person to jump in the deep end was extremely afraid. She eventually asked if she could just jump in the water and come back up to the surface. The instructor agreed and helped her to the side of the pool instead of making her swim to the shallow end.

Once everyone was back to the shallow end of the pool, they floated in a circle for ten seconds. This was probably a final, low-skill exercise to end the class period. At some point during the class period, one of the female lifeguards apparently went to shower and change into her regular clothes. While the students were floating in the pool, I saw the lifeguard come from the women’s locker room and walk over to the other lifeguards. Her hair was not in the ponytail she had it in earlier. It was hanging freely and a little past the nape of her neck. It was a mixture of a curly and wavy texture. One female lifeguard said, “Ooooh, see, you have that good hair”. They all laughed at the comment. After the class was dismissed, one female took her swim cap off and began feeling her hair. A couple of other females gathered around her and one said very matter of fact, “You know it’s going to get wet”. Two young ladies remained in the pool, one giving the other pointers on swimming, as it appeared she already knew how to swim. Another young lady remained in the pool with the instructor to get help with her back

stroke. One of the other young ladies got out of the pool and made a short run-and-leap into the pool. The instructor reprimanded her about doing that and told her he wants all students to practice pool safety. Overall, this group of students seemed a little more advanced in their swimming ability than the other class. They were all supportive of each other. The instructor was very hands-on and encouraging to his students.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to explore the experiences of Black females' participation in swimming at Yates University. In particular, the interview schedule was designed to explore any possible constraints, including hair, to the participants' swimming participation. A total of nine interviews were conducted. Saturation was reached around the sixth interview.

Typology A: Access to Swimming

Public and Private

All nine participants reported having access to some type of swimming facility in their hometowns. Nonetheless, there was a patterned difference in the type of access to swimming as it related to geographical location. Those permanently residing in the northeastern region of the U.S. reported the availability of more public facilities such as the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), whereas those located in the southern region of the U.S. reported having private access to swimming such as at a club or pools in their backyard. One participant had easy access to swimming because she resided in a beach house. Interestingly enough, at least two of the participants cited water/amusement parks as a type of public swimming facility. In fact, Giselle stated, "I've swam before

when I went to amusement parks". Kiara added, "…we would go to Wet 'n' Wild and places like that". All participants had access to the open swim period at their university; however, several reported not knowing it existed. Once informed of its existence, many were open to taking advantage of the open access as a way to practice what they have learned since being in the beginning swimming class and/or for the health benefits. Alicia is one of the few who has already participated in the open swim as a form of exercise. She stated:

> I even did it last summer when I didn't even have swimming. Some of my friends were like 'we want to exercise' and I can't run, I just cannot do it so I'd rather get in the pool where you can run in the pool in the shallow end and that's good exercise. So we did it a couple times last summer.

Pending no scheduling conflicts, Kiara mentioned now that she has been informed about the open swim period, she was likely to participate "For the health reasons because I actually like swimming and taking this course, it helps me with my exercise routine that I already have and it's very relaxing".

Discussion

The point of not having access to swimming was not an issue for the participants in this study. Each participant either had access to a public facility or a private facility. All participants also had access to the open swim period at their university. The findings of this study may partially refute the suggestion of Hastings et al. (2006) that social exclusivity and lack of available swimming facilities to lower status groups are major culprits behind the minority swimming gap. Because this study was not designed to measure socio-economic status, I cannot say definitively that social exclusivity did not factor into the *type* of access to swimming the participants had. However, each

participant had access to the open swim period at their school and all reported having some type of swimming facility in their hometown where they grew up.

In the past, and sometimes still today, proximal access was not as much of a problem as denial of access based on race. According to USA Swimming (2008), racism significantly contributed to the minority swimming gap. With the passage of desegregation and time, segregated public pools have all but disappeared. Facilities such as local YMCA's and local parks and recreation pools have steadily been added across the country. Denial of access based on race was not reported in the findings of this study.

Typology B: Swimming Ability

Self-Reported Ability and Location

Prior to the interviews, I held the assumption that the majority of the participants would not already know how to swim outside of what they would have learned in the required swimming class they were taking. However, seven out of nine participants reported being able to swim. Of the seven who reported they could swim, Keisha, from New York, offered a disclaimer by saying, "I couldn't Michael Phelps it or nothing. I get from point A to point B. I can get from one side to the other. How pretty it's going to look getting there may vary, but I'll get across". Keisha does not swim in deep water. Along with Keisha, Tequoya and Jade, also from New York, were emphatic about their lack of swimming ability. In fact, at the time of Tequoya's interview, she had just come from her swimming class where she was able to float for the first time. In response to the question, "How well do you swim?" she responded through laughter by saying, "Based on my performance today, I would say I'm at a three. I think that's good for starters for

someone who started at a negative 50". Similarly, Jade said, "Oh, I'll say I started out at a negative five and now I'm at a one". Others such as Florence from California stated, "I can go to the deep end, swim under water, go to the bottom, I can go all the way out into the ocean way past where most people go. So I think I can swim really well…". Sasha Fierce, originally from California, but now residing in Texas, also said "I think I swim pretty well. Maybe not technically well but as far as form and things I definitely, well, I swim a lot. I'm really confident in my swimming. I swim in the ocean. I think I'm okay".

Again, the evident pattern among this group of participants indicated there was a link between geographical location and swimming ability. The participants residing in western or southern regions of the U.S. reported being able to swim well and have confidence in their swimming ability. There was a different pattern for participants from the northeast region of the U.S. All three participants from New York reported limited to no swimming ability at all. Alicia was one exception to this pattern. She is from Connecticut and reported being able to swim very well. Geographical location was not the only factor in the participants' swimming ability. On some level, parental involvement was also a factor in self-reported swimming ability.

Parental Influence

There was a pattern of parental influence as it related to the participants' swimming ability. The majority of participants who reported being able to swim well, were enrolled in swimming lessons by their parent(s) as a child. Though most of them did not continue with the lessons, it served as a way to become acclimated to the water

and learn the basics of swimming. They also had opportunities and access to go swimming for leisure once they were no longer enrolled in swimming classes. On the other hand, Tequoya, a non-swimmer, admitted to having swimming lessons around the age of five. In terms of not continuing with her early swimming lessons, she explained, "I didn't trust the water. I was so frightened so, I guess my parents withdrew us because of course they were paying for it and we weren't getting anything significant from it". When asked about her participation in swimming outside of the required swimming class Tequoya said, "The most I do with swimming is watch other people swim".

In short, participants were first exposed to swimming by their parents who enrolled them in a swimming class. That was pivotal in some participants learning how to swim. However, that pattern did not hold true for every participant. Though enrolled in a swimming class at an early age, Tequoya did not learn to swim and did not return to the activity until she enrolled in the required swimming class at her university.

Discussion. According to a study released by the CDC in 2005 and Irwin, Irwin, Martin and Ross (2010), Black females have the highest self-reported inability to swim. Though drawn from a considerably smaller sample size, the findings of the current study do not support the literature on the self-reported swimming ability of Black females. Based on the literature on self-reported swimming ability of Black females, I held the assumption that most of the participants in this study would report not being able to swim. However, the majority of participants reported being able to swim; some very well.

Typology C: Constraints

Expressed Constraints

Hair was the most frequently cited constraint to swimming among this group of participants. Seven out of nine participants said it was a constraint for them. Some participants, such as Sasha Fierce and Kiara, said hair was not as much of an issue when they were younger because their mothers would wash and braid their hair for them. Others noted as they got older and became responsible for their own hair maintenance, hair was of more concern as it related to swimming participation choices/patterns. Sasha Fierce said:

> Well, when I was younger it wasn't a big deal because if I went swimming my mom would just handle [my hair] for me. She'd wash my hair and fix it up. But when I came to school and started having to do my hair by myself, it definitely was a concern. I don't like washing it too much…I haven't washed it since my swim class yesterday and I look like a Pomeranian, clearly. I think taking care of it after swimming becomes such a hassle. At this point, with having so much to do, it's just bothersome.

Others, like Tequoya who wears locs, considered going to extremes to avoid taking the required swimming class just so she would not have to deal with hair maintenance. When asked about any constraints or barriers to participating in swimming, Tequoya said:

> You know what? The main reason why most people [Black women] don't want to take swimming is because of their hair. I tried to switch out of this school into the school of communications for the sake of not having to do my hair.

Even though some participants chose to wear braids to ease the rigors of personal hair care while taking swimming, in Kiara's case, it proved to be more of a hindrance than a help. She explained:

> First I had braids and found it very annoying because they were extra long and I have thick hair so it was a lot more braids, considering how some of the other girls' hair was easily manageable and was going under their caps. Mine would not go on. It just wouldn't fit. So, mainly I had braids and that helped a little bit with not having to wash my hair every week, but now that I don't have my braids, I have to wash my hair every Thursday. And I have gone through a lot of hair products!

For a few participants, hair was not seen as a constraint to their own swimming participation. Keisha was not really happy about getting her hair wet, as she admitted trying several techniques to keep it dry. However, she has accepted the fact it is going to get wet and revealed, "I'm not that fussy about my hair to the point where I won't play in water just to save my hair". Florence, who has a perm and thoroughly enjoys swimming, did not see hair as a constraint to her swimming participation. She said:

> I mean, a few times I feel like I don't want to get my hair wet or something like that, but I love swimming and I know how to do my own hair…and I've been told that I do my hair more often than most, I guess, quote unquote Black people because I do my hair every two to three days. So I wash my hair every few days anyways so that's never really been an issue for me…my hair is usually not a big issue for me as far as swimming is concerned.

Florence is possibly referencing the fact that, typically, Black people do not wash their hair as often as Whites.

Ashley-Marie, who has also been active in swimming since childhood, did not view hair as a constraint when she was younger and had a perm. "Well, you know, permed hair, when it's straight, it's straight. So when you get out the shower, it's like White girl hair, pretty much". She currently wears her long hair natural and occasionally gets it pressed. She still does not feel hair is a constraint for her, due to her nonchalant attitude when it comes to hair and image in general. She stated:

> I have swimming Tuesdays and Thursdays. I'm kind of one of those people who doesn't really care too much about appearance everyday at school. I feel like I'm going to sit in a classroom for a bunch of hours so I could care less about how anybody else thinks I look. So I'm kind of the person who just gets out the pool, throws my hair in a bun and walks out the door.

Body image was the second most frequently cited constraint. Four participants discussed initially feeling uncomfortable about being in a bathing suit when they learned they would have to take swimming class. Kiara said that being out in a swimsuit and being overweight is a constraint for her. "Certain things you want to hide but then certain things you can't hide because the swimming suit doesn't hide it". Jade, who had recently lost forty pounds, expressed, "When you don't have the right body for something you don't take part in it…So having all that excess weight on me, I just never felt comfortable". Alicia and Florence briefly mentioned body image as a constraint as well, but said they just "got over it". Alicia was uncomfortable with exposing too much of her skin and Florence spoke about not having the right "booty" for certain swim suits. I was surprised that either of them had body image issues because Alicia appeared to be an ideal size to me and Florence was tall and very thin.

Finally, *fear* was the least cited and only other constraint expressed by participants. Jade, Tequoya and Keisha all cited fear as one of their constraints to swimming. In particular, Jade and Keisha's fear stemmed from bad experiences while being in a pool or large body of water as a child. Keisha described her experience:

> When I was nine, I guess, we went back to my parents' island and they discovered that I didn't know how to swim. They just thought that was a problem…so my uncle took me to the middle of the ocean and thought it would be funny to disappear for a second and I got scared and nervous. So since then, the deeper the water gets, the more nervous I get.

Jade had someone repeatedly dunk her head under water in a pool as a kid and never wanted to go near water again. Even though Tequoya had taken swimming lessons as a child, she was still very apprehensive about being in a pool of water.

Constraints Negotiation

The presence of one of more constraints does not necessarily lead to non-participation in a leisure activity. On the contrary, a constraint can be negotiated so participation can still take place. This group of participants presented some creative ways to negotiate certain constraints, such as hair, in order to be full participants in their swimming class.

Negotiating hair maintenance. Several participants who cited hair as a constraint to their swimming participation explained some elaborate measures they have taken to maintain their hair during this semester of swim class. The first thing is securing the hair with several things including a head scarf, shower cap, multiple swim caps, and surprisingly, saran wrap, which is commonly used to cover food. Giselle was the first to detail her routine of securing her hair for swimming:

> Well, right now I have a weave in my hair and I really try to keep it as dry as possible so I wrap saran wrap around it then put my swim cap on. But you're supposed to use a scarf. I don't have a scarf but it [the saran wrap] keeps it pretty dry except around the perimeter, which gets wet. But it's better than the whole thing being soaked.

Tequoya offered a similar technique:

> To tell you the honest truth, I see a lot of students wear saran wrap around their hair, and this is what I do. I put my du-rag (a type of scarf) on and make sure everything is up. I make sure that all my locs are up. Then I put a shower cap over that and then I tie my scarf over that. Then I put a shower cap on top of my scarf and then I put the saran wrap to seal everything. Then I put my swimming cap on. It works!

Jade reported that even though her swimming cap alone does not keep her hair from getting wet, she is not willing to try the saran wrap method.

> I've seen a lot of girls doing that. I'm not a sandwich. I'm not baking, you know? That's just not something I want to do. If you want to go to extreme measures then I completely understand.

While not every participant reported using saran wrap to keep their hair dry, all of them were familiar with other young ladies in their swim class who have used it.

In addition to using various hair wraps and protective gear to keep their hair from getting wet while swimming, participants revealed a pattern of scheduled hair styling from week to week. For instance, participants had swimming twice a week; either Monday and Wednesday or Tuesday and Thursday. Thus, they would not do a full styling of their hair, such as washing, blow drying, and flat ironing until they had their last swimming class for the week. To illustrate, Kiara mapped out her week of hair maintenance:

> I have swimming Mondays and Wednesdays. Mondays I basically just rinse out my hair, that way the chlorine doesn't do any damage. Usually, I just wrap my hair and put it under a cap for the next day and then Wednesday when I come back, that's when I actually do all the shampooing, the conditioning, moisturizing and everything like that. That way, on Thursday, I can style it if I want to or Friday I can just leave it alone.

Kiara further explained why she purposely does not do much to her hair between Monday and Wednesday:

> Because it'll be kind of a waste, at least in my eyes it's a waste. Monday I'll get out of the pool but then I'm right back on Wednesday getting right back in so everything I would have done Tuesday was basically just for that day. Whereas if I do [my hair] on Wednesday, I can have it for Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and be okay.

Sasha Fierce reported fully styling her hair only after her last swim class has met for the week because she does not want to go swimming once she has done her hair. She at least likes to have a few days where she can wear the style without having to worry about it getting wet. "When it's closer [to swim class], I have to do it [go swimming], so it doesn't bother me too much when I have to swim but…I'm still trying to devise a way to keep my hair dry in the pool". Sasha Fierce laughed and admitted, "It's still a work in progress".

Jade wears a lot of half wigs while she has swimming class because it is the easiest and quickest way to manage her hair, especially with having to go to another class right after she has swimming. However, she did express that Mondays and Wednesdays, the days her swim class meets, are not her best days in terms of appearance:

> I always tell people, swimming on Mondays and Wednesdays are not my pretty days because I'm exhausted after I get out the pool, the bathroom is disgusting so you don't want to walk around there. But, I have found a way to take care of my hair where wearing the half wigs, the back of my hair is braided so I can take the wigs off and put my swimming cap on. No one knows the difference. The minute I get out, I go to the ladies room, fix my hair, and put it back on. Then, I tighten it up and no one knows the difference.

Correspondingly, Ashley-Marie, like Jade, did not express hair as a constraint to her swimming participation; however she was very clear about scheduling trips to the beauty shop in relation to her swimming activity. For the time she is enrolled in the required swimming class, she will not go to her beautician to get her hair pressed:

> If I go to get my hair done, I usually get it done knowing I don't have to do any activities that are going to get my hair wet. I try to work around it. But if I just get my hair done, I'm not going swimming the next day. I could miss a week of swimming class [if I just got my hair done].

Ashley-Marie further explained:

> I think it's a waste. Spring Break is coming up. I would get my hair done because I have an entire week or week and a half to wear it and I haven't had it straightened for a while. But let's say I got my hair done this weekend and I knew I had swimming class the next week, it would be pointless. So I would go in [to the beauty shop] getting my hair done knowing that I'm not swimming the next week.

As previously stated, Florence's swimming participation was not constrained by hair maintenance at all. She did not fit the pattern of strategic hair styling from week to week like the other participants. Her normal hair routine before having the swimming class was to wash, blow dry, and style her permed hair every two to three days so keeping the same routine through a semester of swimming was not a burden to her.

It should also be noted that differences in hair texture has an effect on how difficult it is to negotiate hair maintenance during swimming. For instance, Ashley-Marie has naturally curly and wavy hair. When her hair gets wet, the curl and wave pattern simply becomes more defined. Florence has relatively thin hair. She has a perm and wears it straightened every day. Blow drying and flat ironing her hair is not a long process at all because her hair is so thin. On the contrary, Kiara explained how the texture of her hair is so thick, that blow drying and flat ironing can be a long, grueling process. So again, variations in texture will vary the hair constraint negotiation process depending on the individual.

Negotiating body image. Negotiating the constraint of body image seemed to have a lot to do with the type of swim wear participants chose and their personal decision to not focus too much attention and energy on their body image. While Kiara was initially concerned with being overweight in a bathing suit, she quickly found comfort in

the leniency her instructor offered in terms of acceptable swim attire. She wears shorts over her swimsuit to make her feel more comfortable. Alicia has a similar routine:

> I don't wear just the bathing suit, I wear shorts with it. So, that makes me feel more comfortable. The bathing suit in the Yates University bookstore, the entire back is out and that makes me uncomfortable. Why do I want to swim with my entire back out? So I went and got just a regular Speedo where it's covered. I have my own little insecurities…I just don't want the world to see me but to get over it you just realize no one's watching you. We're all here to learn about the water so get over it. That's what really helped me a lot. And my teacher is just really spontaneous, open and friendly. She takes the hype off of body image, I think. She's just all about swimming.

Florence has the same female instructor as Alicia and also credits the instructor's leniency with swim attire as one of the things that helped her be more comfortable about her body image.

> [My instructor] said 'You can wear shorts and it needs to cover what needs to be covered and it needs to not inhibit your swimming or show too much'. So that was the number one thing I feel let me get comfortable because I got a swim suit that I really feel comfortable wearing, and I mean, just coming to terms with my body issues.

It appears that with the right type of swim attire and/ or an internal dialogue that says to accept one's body image as it is, has been the key to helping these participants negotiate the body image constraint.

Negotiating fear. Finally, three participants who expressed fear as a constraint to their swimming participation have slowly but surely found a way to cope with it. Since there is no magic pill to eliminate fear, the negotiation of that constraint has come with mental positive internal dialogue and coaching and reassurance from their swim instructors. Jade expressed having a great amount of fear on the first day of class, but with the swim instructor's help, she was able to overcome it:

> The very first day that I had swimming class I kind of had a panic attack. I didn't go under the water…When we were all told to go to the middle of the pool I started to panic because I just felt that it was too far out, even though it was just three feet of water, it was just too far out. I remember repeating, 'I can't breathe! I can't breathe! I can't breathe!' because it was like a new atmosphere for me. I'm not used to being in water. I'm used to being on land. So, my professor was like, 'Calm down. You can breathe because you're talking'.

Jade also credits staying after class for extra instruction and encouragement from her peers, with being able to negotiate her fear of water.

When I interviewed Tequoya, she had just come from swimming class where she learned to float for the first time. It was a triumph for her because she believed fear had kept her from being able to float before:

> This is the first day I know how to float and get my feet off the ground! You just have to relax…Relax your body and let the water take control. The water's not there to hurt you, not at all. You hurt yourself, not the water.

Tequoya reported listening to her teacher's instructions and continuously telling herself to relax in order to overcome her fear.

Like Tequoya and Jade, Keisha is still working through her fear of deep water. I asked how she was able to handle or overcome her fear and she replied:

> I'm still afraid. The last couple of weeks they had us going into the deep end. My teacher says I'm a drama queen but I'm like, 'I'm serious! I'm scared! I'm going to need you all to be real close to me as I get into this water'. They'll try to make us swim from the deep and I say, 'Can I just jump into the deep to show you that I'm in here and not have to swim'? He'll let me get out. But that's it. I still get nervous. Before the class, I wouldn't go where the water is over my head but now that it's part of the class, I'll wait until I have to jump in and I'll do it. I'll be scared while I'm doing it but at least I'll actually do it. Then I just try to get out.

For the three participants constrained by fear, there is no clear pattern of overcoming the constraint other than to tell oneself to relax and to just get in the water. Constant support and encouragement from their instructor and peers also appeared to be a vital component

to helping the participants calm their fears. The presence of fear is not necessarily erased; rather it is negotiated to still lead to participation in swimming.

Discussion. There was no limit to the number of constraints to swimming the participants could report however; only three different constraints were reported. The most cited constraint, hair, was in contrast to the limited literature on hair as a constraint to swimming for Black females. The results of this study refute the findings of Irwin et al. (2009) who concluded hair was not a constraint to swimming for Black females of their study. Irwin et al. characterized the issue of getting one's hair wet as a myth. Conversely, it was not a myth for the participants of this study. In fact, it was a very real constraint the participants had no trouble verbalizing. However, pursuant to further analysis of the data, Irwin, Irwin, Martin, and Ross (2010) surmised that wet hair is a major constraint to swimming among African American girls. Furthermore, the finding on hair as a constraint to swimming echoed the sentiments of Waller and Norwood (2009) and the personal experiences of Brittenum Bonner (1991) in *Good hair*. She said, "One of the most frustrating things about wearing straightened hair is trying to keep it that way – and live a normal, active life. We all know ladies who can't swim 'cause they refuse to ruin their hair" (p. 80). The word "can't" in this instance may be slightly misused. Much like the participants of this study, it is not necessarily the case that Black women *can't* swim; rather they *won't* swim because of their hair. The findings of strategic constraints negotiation of hair maintenance align with Brittenum Bonner's (1991) suggestions on negotiating hair care if one chooses to go swimming in spite of her

recommendation of no swimming at all. “The exception to this rule is if you’ve scheduled a hair appointment after the swim. *Immediately* afterward” (p. 80).

Though not the leading constraint expressed by the women of this study, fear was cited as a constraint to swimming by a few of one third of them. This finding supports some information from the CDC (2005) and USA Swimming (2006) that reflect minority youth are afraid of being in water. According to USA Swimming, this fear emanates from parents’ attitudes of fear. The issue of body image surfaced as a secondary constraint. Since only four of the participants cited this as a constraint to their swimming participation, this finding somewhat supported the finding of Irwin et al.’s (2009) study in which 83 percent of survey respondents disagreed with the statement “I do not swim because of how I look in a swimsuit” (pg. 18).

All in all, because the swimming class is a requirement for graduation for students enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences at Yates University, the participants were somewhat forced to face their constraints and find ways to negotiate them in order to be actively engaged in the swim class. Granted this is a circumstantial situation of leisure participation, but it still represents what constraints are and how they can be negotiated to lead to participation.

Typology D: Hair Maintenance/Styling

Childhood

There was a clear pattern of similarity among the participants when it came to hair maintenance and/styling during their childhood and teenage years. The mother or grandmother was the primary person who did their hair as children on into their teenage

years. The routines were quite similar. As children, at least six participants reported getting her hair pressed. Some recalled the experience with glee, while others remembered it as an experience they did not enjoy. Through laughter, Giselle recounted her mother's hair maintenance routine:

> When I was growing up my mom would press and curl my hair…shampoo, condition, and let it air dry. We used to sit in the sun and let it air dry. Our mom used to put us on the porch and let our hair dry. And then she would press it.

I asked Giselle to tell me a little bit about her mother's decision to maintain her hair with a press 'n' curl. She explained, "One time my mom made a comment to me. She said, 'I can't stand a nappy-headed girl'. But, I mean, I don't consider my hair nappy".

Tequoya vividly recalled her experiences getting her hair pressed by her grandmother:

> Ooooh, she would put the hot comb on the stove. Well, she was like the only person I know that could perfect it. Oh my God! She used to get like eeeevery little bit of hair, my edges used to be on point! Grandma was no joke when it came to the hair!...She used this pressing cream she put on my edges; she greased my scalp, and then put the hair grease on the hair shaft…down to the ends. She put the hot comb on the stove. She didn't use the electric comb at all. It actually worked. I felt like my hair was permed.

Other participants had less than fond memories of getting their hair pressed. Keisha said she got her hair pressed and it fell out:

> I guess my hair doesn't take well to perms and presses and it was really thick so I guess it bothered my mother that it was that thick…[so] she decided to press out my hair. It was cool for a minute and then my hair was in my hand. It just started falling out.

Jade said:

> I guess growing up as a child, my hair was extremely long and getting my hair pressed was always like a battle…hearing the grease go 'sssssss' as it's straightening, [trying to not sweat] out your hair so your mother doesn't have to do it again, and curling it also; it was just an experience, just having to have your hair straightened.

Teenage Years

As hair pressing is somewhat of a lost art in the African American hair profession and because it is a temporary straightener, (i.e. once any type of precipitation touches it, it will revert back to its natural state) several participants reported their mothers made a decision to give them a perm, which keeps the hair straightened for a longer period of time. With the exceptions of Jade, who has never had a perm, and Tequoya, who received her first perm at the age of five, participants received their first perm between the ages of eight and 11. Many cited ease of maintenance as the reason their mother's decided to have their hair permed. Tequoya said:

> When grandma stopped pressing…my mother said she's not dealing with this so she just permed it. I used to always beg to look like the girls on the perm box. I was like 'oh mom, I want to look like that girl'! They looked really nice! They looked pretty! They were beautiful!

Kiara said:

> For the longest time I was natural but my mom could not handle my hair because it was just very thick and very tightly coiled so it was even harder to manage so she eventually just gave me a perm.

As participants moved into their teenage/high school years, all reported continuing some form of hair straightening technique, be it via a perm, flat iron, or pressing comb. It appears the trend during that time was straight hair. Tequoya admitted she used to get perms a lot when she was a teenager.

> I know I used to apply a lot of heat to [my hair]. I would get the flat iron or I would go to the Dominicans (hair dressers). I was always going to Dominicans. They used to put me under the dryer, then, blow dry it out, and then curl it. I didn't see a big problem with that. A lot of people will say you can't apply a lot of heat to your hair like that but I didn't care. My hair was looking nice at the end of the day.

Alicia, who also has a twin sister, really wanted a perm because it was popular. "We wanted the perms for whatever reason. You're in school and you're like 'oh, this one is doing this', so we got the perms". The upkeep of a perm atop a very active athletic schedule, proved too burdensome for Alicia. She, along with several other participants decided during their latter high school years to go natural again, some due to experiencing extreme hair breakage, while others reported missing their natural grade of hair. The transition from the perm to natural involved wearing braids a lot.

College years. Currently, only Florence, Sasha Fierce, and Kiara have a perm. All other participants are natural. Tequoya has locs, Alicia is natural but wears micro-braids, and Ashley-Marie will still get her hair pressed from time to time, but admits her natural state of hair is curly and wavy and is okay with pulling it up into a bun. Giselle, Keisha, and Jade regularly wear hair weaves of some sort for ease in maintenance. Jade remarked, "After graduating high school, my sister's friend who was like the neighborhood stylist introduced me to weaves, which was just like a door-opener for me".

In short, the pattern of hair maintenance from childhood to present day seemed to be very similar for most participants. There was a presence of the mother-daughter dynamic when it came to hair maintenance as a child. Eventually, all participants, with the exception of Jade, received a perm before the age of eleven. By their late teen/early college years, many participants who previously had perms decided to go natural. Only three of the nine participants have maintained wearing a perm.

Perceptions of natural hair. One question I asked each participant, whether they had natural hair or not, was how they thought they would be/are perceived by their peers at school with natural hair. A common pattern of acceptance was revealed by each participant. The perceived acceptance was in direct relation to the reported accepting and embracing culture of their university. Kiara thinks if she were to go natural she would be embraced. "A lot of my friends are natural and so they're always trying to get me on the natural band wagon". Giselle said, rather matter of fact, "Well this is Yates University so people here are pretty natural". Alicia further explained:

> I think that at Yates University it's different than anywhere else because when I go home, I feel like I'm alienated because of my 'fro. When I'm here, I feel like 'oh, she's one of the other afro-centric people on campus'. It's like a norm when you're here. [My 'fro] makes me feel liberated but when I'm at home I feel kind of weird. I don't know that they're open and they don't understand the culture or anything like that.

When asked who the "they" are that Alicia was referring to, she explained, "…it's Caucasian people because I grew up with a mix of people but a lot of my friends are White from home and they just don't understand…". Florence also referenced the accepting culture of their school by saying, "At school I don't think it [natural hair] would be an issue. Yates is really good about being very open-minded, especially when it comes to females and their hair". While this information was enlightening, I wondered if the same feeling of acceptance with natural hair at school would hold true in the workplace.

Thoughts from the participants about natural hair in the workplace did not yield the same type of openness and acceptance as they perceived to be the case with their

school. The general thought was that natural hair in the workplace would not be perceived well, though the hope was that it would not be a problem. Florence said:

> I feel like people consider hair that's straightened or weave to be a cleaner look. I feel like people that have their hair naturally curly or leave it out, people are just like, 'Why don't you do something with your hair?' I would like to think that it wouldn't be a problem but I think on some level it might be an issue.

For clarity, I asked Florence who she was specifically referring to when she said "people" think straight hair is neater. She replied, "I'm thinking about a non-Black person, probably White, to be honest. Or a Black person…who feels like there is a right way to do stuff and that right way is not the way that natural hair would look". Giselle felt similarly in that "If you're in a really, really, really corporate, high-end business setting, I'm sure they would probably want you to wear your hair closer to the dominant case, like more straight as opposed to it being natural".

Discussion. That development of the mother/daughter relationship at an early age is a vessel for Black girls to learn certain lessons about life, including those on beauty, culture, ethics, and more. Hill Collins (1990) believes some of these early lessons include the notion of light skin and straight hair as a standard of beauty. My findings illustrate that some Black females have their hair straightened at a very early age by their mother. However, this decision seemed to reflect more of a desire for easier manageability and not necessarily a push toward the standard of White beauty in America. As participants got older and became responsible for their own hair care, their styling choices of straight hair via a perm, weave, or press were a result of a desire for easier maintenance and not an obvious deeper underlying feeling of self-hatred that Owens Jones (2006) said W.E.B. DuBois or Marcus Garvey would suggest.

The general consensus was that the culture of Yates University presented a more welcoming and accepting environment for natural hair than would a corporate environment. Participants generally felt comfortable at their school with any type of hairstyle, but felt there may be some pressure to conform to the dominant population once they enter the workforce. Their concern is supported by some of the late 1980's cases filed against major companies such as American Airlines and Hyatt Hotels where Black employees made claims of discrimination against them based on the styling of their hair. The stigma of Black hair, particularly in its natural state, has not completely been erased from corporate America, and other like entities. Black women want to be in a work environment where their success is not linked to something as frivolous as a hairstyle; however, the possibility of that happening is not farfetched. A couple participants remained hopeful that their hair would not be a problem for them in their careers.

Typology E: Money and hair

No matter if participants had natural hair, permed hair, or a weave, one thing that was evident is that hair maintenance could be costly. Participants spent anywhere from thirty dollars per month to two hundred dollars every two months. The young ladies who wear weaves spent the most money on their hair. Giselle, who had a chin-length weave at the time of the interview, said, "The weave I have currently costs two hundred dollars. I go to the shop at least once a month if not once every two months". Bi-monthly visits to the hair salon costs Giselle approximately twelve hundred dollars per year. Keisha, from New York, also wears a weave but goes through arguably more extreme measures

for her personal hair care. At least every month and a half, Keisha takes a thirty-five dollar bus trip back to her hometown to get her hair done. She explained:

> The woman charges me seventy dollars to do my hair and I probably do it every one and a half months…and then the hair [I get], cost like thirty-five dollars [when my mother gives me the money for it]. [I buy hair that is] seventy dollars and higher when [I have] my own money, maybe one hundred and something dollars.

Comparatively, Jade, also from New York, takes a bus trip to her hometown to get her weave done. She spends forty dollars on a bus ticket, anywhere from thirty to one hundred dollars for the actual hair, and then sixty dollars for the stylist. Monthly trips to New York to get her hair done would cost Jade approximately fifteen hundred dollars a year. After a while, Jade realized she was spending too much to get her hair done. As a result, she learned how to do certain weave styles herself. She admitted to still spending approximately thirty dollars every two weeks on hair weaves or pieces.

Although Tequoya wears her hair in locs, free from the rigors of chemical and heat straighteners, it is still costly to maintain that form of natural hair. I asked Tequoya how much she spends on her hair per month. She laughed and replied, "Per month? Let's try every other month. Let's say about sixty-five dollars". She goes to a natural hair salon where her beautician will wash and re-twist her locs. Bi-monthly visits to the salon costs Tequoya about three hundred and ninety dollars a year.

Finally, participants who wear their hair permed, pressed, or occasionally in micro-braids spend a minimum of ten dollars to one hundred dollars a month. Alicia had micro-braids in her hair and said, "Actually one of my friends did these so I got off the hook. She only charged me forty dollars for these, but micros in [this city] go for about

one hundred dollars or more and I'll keep these in for three months". Ashley-Marie spends fifty dollars to get her hair pressed and that will usually last her about a month.

Discussion

While there is a lack of scholarly literature regarding the amount of money Black women spend on hair care, industry statistics reflect that African American women are responsible for 30 to 34 percent of all hair products purchased in the United States ("Hair in the Black community: Roots of a debate", 2009). This is nothing new in the Black community. The early twentieth century brought about an economic peak in the purchase of hair products by Blacks. It also produced some of the most successful entrepreneurs in the Black hair care industry such as Annie Turnbo Malone and Madam C. J. Walker. After her death in 1919, Walker's company sales, which included profits from the Caribbean, Central America and South America, were valued at five hundred ninety-five thousand dollars (Byrd & Tharps, 2001). This type of success continued throughout the century. In 1971, Johnson Products, a major producer of Black hair care products, was the first Black-owned business to trade on the American Stock Exchange (Byrd & Tharps, 2001). Black hair care has been and continues to be "big business" in the United States. Patrons of the Black hair care industry spend money faithful, wanting to achieve a certain look and much like a consumer of any other product or service, they spend their money with the intent of getting their money's worth.

In brief, this group of participants spend anywhere from ten dollars per month to two hundred dollars every two months on personal hair care. There is a relational pattern between the types of hair styles worn to the amount of money spent. Participants who

wear weaves tend to spend the most money whereas those with perms or a press spend less. No matter how much money is spent, participants are concerned with getting their money's worth. Part of that worth includes having a style that will last beyond a day or two. It also includes taking what they see as necessary precautions to protect their hair in an attempt to ensure they get their money's worth.

Typology F: Time and hair

Similar to the pattern with money and hair, time expended on hair styling seems to be related to the type of style the hair is generally worn; the more elaborate the hair style, the more time is spent on getting it done. Hair weaves and braids take the most time to complete. Giselle's weave took about three hours. Keisha and Jade both spend at least four and a half hours on the bus going home to New York to their stylists, then spend at least two hours to actually get their hair done. Both feel like the time spent to get their weaves done is worth it because in the long run it provides easier day-to-day maintenance.

Generally speaking, getting braids is often done for long-term ease in maintenance; however getting a style such as micro-braids can take a long time. For example, Alicia explained the process of getting her braids done by her friend, "In terms of the braids, it took her nine hours. So it's a long [time]. It's a day. It's like a job". Likewise, Kiara said when she had her braids, it took her from eight a.m. to eight p.m. to get them done. Apparently, taking the braids out is no easy feat either. It took her five hours to take her braids out.

Participants who wear their hair permed or pressed have the shortest hair styling time, whether they do it themselves or get it done by a beautician. Florence related knowing how to do her own hair well and said she never spends more than thirty minutes washing, blow drying and styling. She also commented it does not take her too long to do her hair because it is very thin, and a little easier to manage than if she had thick hair. Sasha Fierce takes about an hour to wash, blow dry, and flat iron her hair. It also takes Ashley-Marie about an hour to have her hair washed, blow dried, and pressed by her beautician.

Discussion

As with money, the amount of time it takes to style or have one's hair styled factors in to the type of leisure activity a Black female may pursue. For some of the participants of this study, going swimming after taking the time to do their hair or go to a beauty shop to have it done, is viewed as a waste of time. Much like the findings with money and hair, there is a paucity of literature on the time it takes to care for Black hair, thus making it difficult to make a distinct connection of this finding back to the literature. Consequently, the need for more scholarly research of this nature is evident.

All in all, time needed for full hair styling (i.e. wash, blow dry, and style) depended on the type of style worn by participants. The more intricate styles such as hair weaves or micro-braids took more time than participants with perms or a press. On the other hand, those participants with more intricate styles did not have to get their hair done as often as others.

Typology G: Open

Narrative on Black Hair

Hair was the most often cited constraint by participants in this study. Admittedly, some participants did not cite hair as a constraint to their own swimming participation. Nevertheless, it seemed that when given the opportunity to express their thoughts about the study and types of questioned asked during the interview, every participant could relate to hair as a constraint for Black females in terms of swimming, either through personal experience or that of friends and/ or family. The concept did not appear foreign to them at all. Keisha shared her feelings about the topic of this study:

> I think that it's interesting because I personally don't have that many problems with me getting my hair wet but I know a lot of people who do and complain a lot like, 'I'm not going to go to swim class this week', or 'I'm not going to get my hair wet', or 'I'm going to do the saran wrap'. I think it's interesting. I know that's a lot of the reason a lot of us don't get in the water because we're afraid about our hair. I just happen not to be one of them.

In the same way, hair is not a cited constraint for Ashley-Marie, yet she has heard that complaint from other female classmates:

> I think it's definitely hair, especially hearing the girls in the locker room. I remember the first day they were like, 'Oh my God! I need more swimming caps'! They brought like three swimming caps to put on their hair and wrapped their hair with all kind of [stuff]. I was like 'wow'!

Florence could also relate to hair being a constraint to other's swim participation.

> It's not a new topic to me and especially coming here when you have to take swimming to graduate, everyone was like, 'Man, I can't get my hair messed up! I can't do that!'...I understand that people are paying money to go and get their hair done because either they can't do it themselves or prefer someone else do it. So, I understand how swimming is interfering with that. But I guess for me, I do my own hair. I'm not shelling out extra money for anybody else to do it. I can do it myself. So I don't mind jumping in the pool because I know that it's not going to cost me anything to get it straightened back or to dry it back myself.

In general, whether directly affected by the rigors of hair maintenance or not, the narrative of hair among African American women seemed evident among this group of participants.

Good Hair

"Good hair" and "bad hair" are terms that are part of the language and dialogue of Black hair. "Good hair" generally refers to hair that is naturally curly or wavy, possibly long, and easily managed without the use of a perm. "Bad hair", on the contrary, is associated with hair that is very coarse, tightly coiled, not easy to comb, and generally requires the use of a perm or styling apparatus like a flat iron or pressing comb, to achieve a straight look. Since the interviews took place not too long after the release of the box office hit move, *Good Hair*, produced by comedian/actor Chris Rock, I thought I would ask each participant at the end of their interview to tell me what "good hair" is to them. Understanding the intrinsic stereotypical value of the term, the participants presented a different view of what "good hair" meant to them. Several participants said "good hair" is healthy hair and whatever makes one happy. Alicia said, "Good hair is whatever you're confident and comfortable wearing". Kiara believed "good hair" is healthy hair. She further explained that "If your hair is permed or relaxed, as long as it is healthy, you have good hair". Likewise, Jade said, "Good hair is healthy hair no matter how short or how long it is. As long as it's healthy and it's something you're comfortable with, then go for it". Ashley-Marie was passionate about creating a new meaning of the term "good hair":

> Good hair is whatever you think is good hair. I hate these ideologies that the oppressor has created. It's really, really, really annoying. But, good hair is whatever you think good hair is. I mean, obviously there are different grades of hair but who's to say what's good and what's not?

Ashley-Marie also clarified for me that, "The 'oppressor' is clearly White, dominant, supported people in power".

Attitudes about swimming. Aside from the expressed constraints and oppositions to being required to take the beginning swimming class, overall, participants seemed to enjoy participating in and learning how to swim. Jade, who is the first in her family to learn how to swim, said, "It's great to begin your own legacy". She also sees the value in the required swim class in that, "Yates wants to get rid of the stereotype that African Americans can't swim, which is absolutely true. Yates wants to get rid of, not even the stereotype, but the truth that African Americans are obese, out of shape, and overweight". Jade also said it gives her a good option for a work out.

Tequoya was not thrilled about having to take the beginning swimming class and even thought of changing her major to avoid it. However, after being in the class for a few weeks, she had a different outlook on swimming. "I just opened myself to something new [and I'm] enjoying it…I'm learning something new and I guess that's what college is all about. You open up yourself to the world".

Kiara recognized the practical value in knowing how to swim. On first learning about the swim requirement, she said:

> I thought it was really silly! I was like, 'Why do I have to take swimming to graduate? I'm going to be a lawyer. We don't swim, we argue in courts. And then it kind of made sense when professor was talking about just in case you're on a yacht, or you're on a cruise, you want to know how to get around the water and not feel any type of panic or anything like that. So it made sense after that.

Finally, Alicia, who also was not initially excited about having to take the swimming class said it is highly likely that she will continue swimming regularly once the class has ended for the semester:

> "I've been talking to my teacher about being a teacher's assistant for her if I come here for grad. school. That would be really interesting, being a teacher's assistant for swimming. It would be beneficial to me and I could help people that are overcoming swimming because I'm comfortable in the water. Every Friday we go for open swim. I know this class will be over in six more classes so we're going to go every Friday. Me and my friends go for our little work out session for the week".

Discussion. In summation, this group of participants seemed to reject the traditional meaning and implications of the term "good hair" by turning it into something that is positive and moves away from its historically divisive value within the Black community. In a 2009 Los Angeles newspaper article, Byrd and Tharps explained to a reporter that "good hair" was a personal construction of identity created during slavery. "The closer your hair was to white European hair, the more likely that it was that you had white blood in you. That meant that you would have more access to better food, better education, preferential treatment and be more likely to be set free – so literally good hair meant a better chance at life" (Hair in the black community: Roots of a debate, Dawson, 2009). The participants made a conscious effort to reject the traditional meaning and implications of "good hair" and created their own meaning. The personal construction of this part of their identity pushes against the historical social construction of "good hair". It supports Chodorow's (1995) argument regarding the examination of how women construct their identities on a personal, social, and cultural level. "Good hair" is hair that is healthy as opposed to referring to a particular length or texture.

Analyses from the Qualitative Review Group

The qualitative review group was given copies of all transcripts and asked to review them using typological analysis. The aforementioned typologies are a fusion of my analysis and that of the qualitative review group, as they reported similar, and in some cases, identical findings as those presented above for each typology. On the other hand, there were a couple of differences in our analyses. The major differences lay in the patterns I indicated in the open typology. Only one of the reviewers indicated a pattern of participants being aware of hair as a constraint for Black female participation in swimming, regardless of whether it was a personal constraint. None of the reviewers made note of seeing a pattern of enjoyment of swimming while taking the swimming class.

Summary

The results of the semi-structured interviews and observations indicated there are three main constraints to swimming participation for the Black females in this study. Based on the leisure constraints model, body image and fear can be categorized as intrapersonal constraints, as they have to do with the internal psychology one must reconcile within oneself to engage in a leisure activity. Through a combination of positive reinforcement from peers and instructors and constantly reminding oneself to relax, participants were able to successfully negotiate their fear to participate in the swimming class. Likewise, participants were able to mentally tell themselves to "get over" their body image issues because they had to take the swimming class. In addition

to that, leniency with swim attire, such as the instructors allowing the young ladies to wear shorts over their swim suits, also aided in negotiating the body image constraint.

Granted, hair was the most often cited constraint; however, results showed participants had unique ways to negotiate managing their hair while enrolled in the swimming class. The negotiation process included several forms of protective head gear, including multiple swim caps and saran wrap. It also involved a strategic weekly hairstyling schedule which only allowed for a full wash, blow dry, and style once swimming classes were done for the week. Several participants reported this as a hassle but they have not let it stop them from learning to swim and actively engaging in the class.

Access, a structural constraint, was not an issue among the participants as all of them had access to some type of swimming facility or private pools while growing up. Several of the participants learned to swim from taking swimming lessons as a child. In addition, their college campus also offers open access swimming, so the issue of access to swimming was not a factor for these participants.

In summary, the Black females in this study experienced at least three different types of constraints, that being hair, body image, and fear. All constraints were negotiated to lead to participation. Some negotiation processes were a little more in-depth and strategic than others, particularly as it related to hair maintenance. The swimming ability of the participants ranged from novice to advanced. Several participants have plans to continue swimming even after the required swimming course is complete.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine, from a qualitative perspective, the role hair plays, if any, in a Black female's participation in swimming. It further explored implications low or no swimming ability has on Black females, and finally explored the constraints negotiation process of Black female swimming participants. This was done through observations and semi-structured interviews.

The major conclusion of this study is that hair acts as a constraint to swimming participation for the Black females at Yates University who participated in this study. Specifically, it is the time and money expended for Black hair care that is taken into serious consideration when it comes to choosing whether or not to participate in swimming. For example, if a Black female spends three hours and sixty-five dollars at a beauty shop on a Saturday afternoon to get her hair done, she will not be inclined to go swimming the next day. Her hair will get wet, ultimately making the time and money she spent in the beauty shop a waste. It is important that researchers not dismiss the rigors of personal hair care for Black females as a mythical constraint because peoples' experiences shape their realities. Black women spend a significant amount of time and money to maintain their hair; thus, it influences their swimming participation choices.

The presence of hair as a constraint is not to suggest that Black females do not or will not participate in swimming. Quite the contrary, it offers an explanation as to why some may choose not to participate. More importantly, the findings of this study lead me

to conclude that hair is a constraint that can be negotiated and thus, lead to participation. The degree of difficulty in negotiating that constraint is relative depending on the individual and hairstyle. Nonetheless, there is value in exploring the constraints negotiation process, as it creates a more holistic view of leisure swimming participation of Black females. To achieve this requires an expansion of the leisure constraints model to include cultural constraints.

The addition of a cultural constraints category is also necessary because it permeates other categories of the constraints model. For example, structural constraints deal with issues such as facility and financial access to leisure participation to activities such as golf, a rather expensive sport to participate. Due to the overall lack of financial means as a whole for African Americans as compared to Caucasians (Hoover & Yaya, 2010), golf is not an activity frequently participated in by them. Another example is how culture permeates intrapersonal constraints, which are believed to affect the type of leisure preference of an individual. Culturally, Muslim girls and women are not encouraged to participate in sports. In some instances, it is even frowned upon. So for a Muslim girl whose cultural generally does not support girls and women in sports may not even be inclined to certain leisure pursuits such as basketball or baseball.

Hair, the most often cited constraint of this study, does not readily fit into any specific category on the current leisure constraints model. Because the culture and styling of African American hair is unique when compared to some other racial/ethnic groups, it can act as a constraint to certain types of leisure activities, such as swimming. As it stands, the leisure constraints model would only allow me as a researcher to report

my finding of hair as a constraint in the intrapersonal, interpersonal, or structural constraints category, which do not apply at all or do not appropriately capture the nuances of this constraint. By expanding the model to include cultural constraints as a category, as I have proposed, the findings of this study can properly be categorized as a cultural constraint as opposed to forcing it into a categorical constraint that is inappropriate. The addition of cultural constraints to the model will hopefully urge researchers to study and understand the unique identity development of individuals from different cultures. In general, the Black female experience differs from the White female experience (Allen, 1994). Moreover, there is a dire need in research to understand how the uniqueness of Black female identity development shapes or influences their leisure pursuits. That being said, the approach to research on leisure activity of Black females should be done with this in mind.

The results of this research may be used not only inform future sport and leisure research, but can also be used by aquatic practitioners and policymakers who manage and govern swimming programs. For instance, in light of the findings of this research, the YMCA could market learn-to-swim programs to African American girls and young women by first acknowledging that they are aware of the hair constraint and empathize with the strain it places on swimming participation. Secondly, the YMCA could attempt to make it a community effort to increase Black female participation in swimming by building partnerships with local beauty salons and hair braiding shops that may offer free or reduced services to Black females as they matriculate through swimming programs. This would help to alleviate the rigors and expenses associated with hair care during

swimming participation for Black females. Finally, as a component to the swimming programs, the YMCA could bring in Black hair care professionals to do seminars addressing questions and concerns for maintaining healthy hair while being active participants in swimming. The main point is for programs to be designed with all relevant constraints in mind. Otherwise, programs may be unsuccessful at capturing the type of participation it originally intended to have.

The most important conclusion that can be made based on this research is that hair as a constraint to swimming can be negotiated in several creative ways. As Byrd and Tharps (2001) noted, hair does matter in the lives of Black females and it is a valid concern for the participants in this study. Nonetheless, it should not be a constraint that will ultimately lead to non-participation in swimming. Yes, negotiating the hair constraint may require a certain level of creativity and prove to be a hassle at times. However, the benefits of learning to swim are valuable. Swimming is a life-saving skill that offers health benefits and can open one up to a host of other leisure activities.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this research are the first step in understanding and giving credence to hair as a constraint to a Black female's participation in swimming. Hair matters and is important to Black females. That is not to say women of other races do not experience personal hair care challenges; however, the implications of a Black woman's "bad hair day" may be vastly different than a White woman's "bad hair day". To gain a deeper understanding of the minority swimming gap as it pertains to Black females, I would suggest conducting a comparative qualitative study of the role hair plays in Black and

White females' swimming participation choices. It would be interesting to see if White females think about hair the same way Black females do when it comes to swimming. Currently, there is a dearth of scholarly literature exploring personal hair care issues of White women as it relates to maintaining an active sport and leisure lifestyle, thus suggesting a need for further exploration. Expanding the sample size would be important in order to gain a fuller understanding of this phenomenon and strengthen the findings.

I recommend doing an isolated study on hair as a constraint to swimming for Latina women. As with Black women, Latina women also have a wide range of hair textures, including coarse and tightly coiled. As a minority group in the U.S., they may also experience the pressure of assimilating to European standards of beauty, which would include using a heat altering device, such as a flat iron, to achieve a straight look.

Another recommendation for future research would be to see if hair is a constraint for females who identify as Black but who were primarily raised outside the U.S., such as Jamaica or Virgin Islands, areas where Blacks are the majority. The possible absence of European standards of beauty in those geographical areas could have a profoundly different effect on how potential participants view hair in relation to swimming participation. In addition, swimming may be more a part of the culture of some geographical areas outside the U.S., particularly the islands; thus, negotiating constraints to swimming, if any are present, may be easier than participants from the U.S.

Next, I would explore this same topic using an older population of Black females. Instead of using Black females in the 18 – 25 age range, I would seek out participants in the 45 and over age group in order to ascertain if they share the same thoughts on hair as

a constraint to swimming as the population of the current study. Hairstyling trends are understandably different between the two generations; for instance, a 55-year-old woman may not be inclined to the hairstyling trends of an 18-year-old female, such as micro-braids or sew-in weaves. In addition to this, a 55-year-old Black female may have memories of a time when public pools were segregated under federal law, which may have some affect on how she views swimming as a leisure activity choice. Furthermore, older Black females may be able to relate more to the era where using a pressing comb rather than a perm to straighten their hair was most popular. Being open to fewer hairstyling trends leaves fewer options to negotiate the hair constraint to swimming, should hair indeed be found to be a constraint to their swimming participation.

A finding that developed from the research was a pattern between swimming ability and geographical location. I would recommend doing a study that still looks at hair as a constraint to swimming for Black females but divides the population by geographical location and examines how each population negotiates hair as a constraint. The rationale for this approach to the study is that while hair may be a constraint to swimming for Black females in various geographical locations, the presence of swimming as a norm in that particular area may have an influence on one's willingness to overcome barriers personal hair care may present.

The current research involved a delimitation of Black females who were enrolled in a required beginning swimming course at Yates University. For future research, I would recommend using participants who have self-reported that they do not swim. I

would be interested in seeing if the same type of constraints to swimming are reported, specifically hair, as with the current study.

Also, I would consider infusing the exploration of SES into future studies. While it was not the focus of the current study, findings suggested it may influence swimming participation patterns for some Black females; however, the intended purpose of the current study was to probe the possible cultural nuances behind the minority swimming gap.

Finally, since at least four of the participants cited body image as a constraint, a qualitative study further exploring this constraint is recommended. Part of female identity development involves physical development and a level of comfort or acceptance with one's body. A vital part of this line of research would entail having a fundamental understanding of Black female identity and would need to include a strong review of literature on self-perceptions of the Black female body, including various media influences.

Further recommendation. Another recommendation from the results of this study is disseminating this valuable information to the masses. This cannot be effectively done by publishing this information in scholarly journals alone, where the readership targets an older population mostly made up of academicians. Instead, transforming parts of this research for publication in contemporary media outlets whose target audience coincides with or is closely linked to the population of this study is vital. Effectively spreading the word of different ways to negotiate the hair constraint in swimming for Black females would be ideal for magazines such as *Ebony*, *Jet* or *Essence*, whose target

audience is African American women and whose publication has a monthly circulation of 1,050,000 and a readership of 8.5 million (www.essence.com/about/about_magazine.php).

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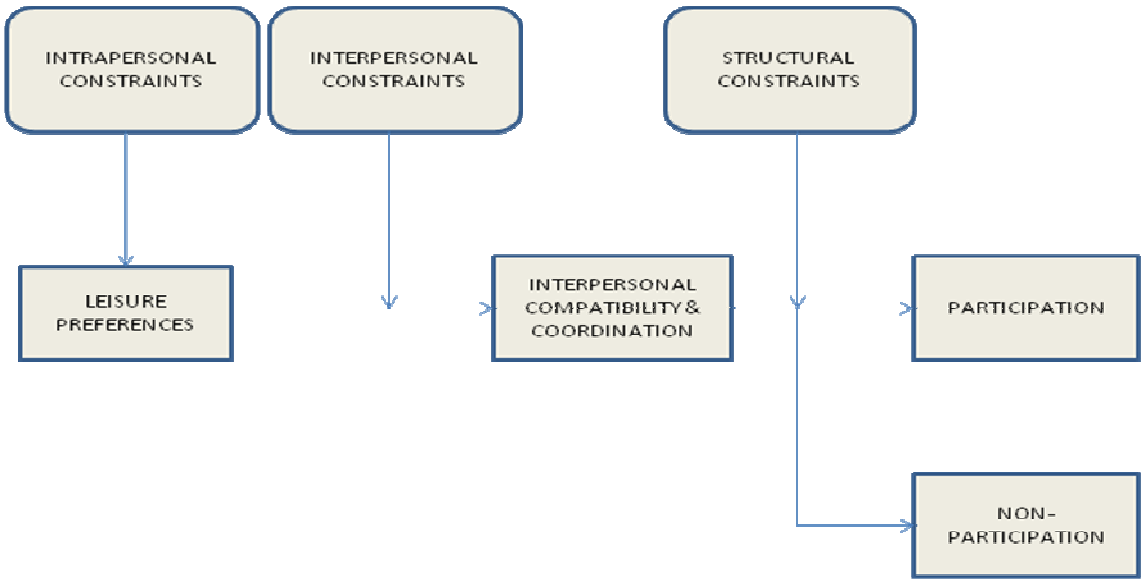
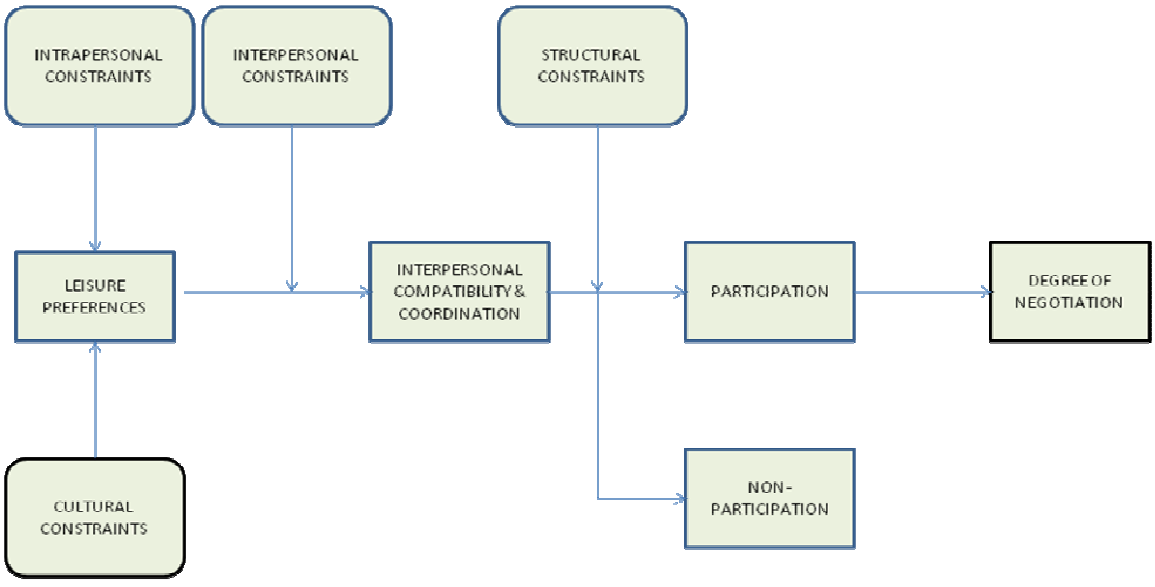
APPENDIX A

LEISURE CONSTRAINTS MODELS

Original Model[5]



Modified Model



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APPENDIX B

SOLICITATION LETTER

November 17, 2009

Dear, Dr. X:

My name is Dawn Norwood and I am a doctoral student working on my dissertation under the direction of Dr. Joy DeSensi at the University of Tennessee in the Sport Studies program. The topic of my dissertation explores hair as a constraint to swimming participation for Black females.

With your permission, I would like to carry out my data collection process at Yates University where students have access to swimming classes. In order to receive IRB approval from the Exercise, Sport, and Leisure Studies Department and the University of Tennessee to carry out the purposes of my dissertation which are to (a) explore the role hair plays in a Black female's participation in swimming (b) explore the implications low or no participation in swimming has on Black females and (c) explore how Black females who do swim negotiate constraints to participate in the activity, I must have your written permission as Department Head of the Physical Education Department at Yates University to observe and interview 8-12 Black female students who are enrolled in swimming classes during the 2010 spring term. I also need your permission to use a room or quiet place to conduct the interviews.

The women students would be invited to take part in the interview process and their participation would be voluntary. I would provide them with the enclosed Informed Consent Form to sign. The Interview Schedule is also provided for your review.
I would be glad to speak with you further and provide any additional information you may need. Please feel free to contact me at 773-726-xxxx or via email at dnorwoo1@utk.edu or Dr. DeSensi at 865-974-xxxx or via email at desensi@utk.edu. I look forward to hearing from you and appreciate your consideration of my dissertation research.

Sincerely,

Dawn Norwood
Enclosure

APPENDIX C

LETTER OF CONSENT FROM YATES UNIVERSITY

YATES
UNIVERSITY

College of Arts and Sciences
Department of Health, Human Performance and
Leisure Studies

December 11, 2009

Ms. Norwood:

Permission is granted for you to conduct your Doctoral Research Project with Yates University Aquatic students in the Department of Health, Human Performance, and Leisure Studies (HHPLS).

Sincerely,
Dr. X

Dr. X, Ph.D.
Professor & Chairperson
Department of Health, Human Performance & Leisure Studies

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Demographic Questions

1. Where are you from?

2. How old are you?

3. How do you define your racial/ethnic background?

Category: Swimming

1. How do you define swimming?

2. What is/has been your level of participation in swimming?

If answer is: "With the exception of this class, I don't participate in swimming"….will follow this line of questioning:

a. What type of public swimming facilities, if any, did you have in your neighborhood where you grew up?

b. How open are you to participating in the open-swim here at your university? Tell me more about that.
(*The site offers open-swim through the aquatic program*)

c. What are the reasons you don't swim?
Tell me more about that.

If answer is: "I do/have participated in swimming outside of this class"….will follow this line of questioning:

a. How did you get involved in swimming?

b. What type of public swimming facilities did you have in your neighborhood?

c. If you were able to participate in open swim here at your school, how would you be to doing so?
Tell me more about that.

d. How well do you swim?
Tell me more about that.

3. Tell me your thoughts or experiences around your hair and swimming. (if hair is cited as a constraint – this can be the case for a self-identified swimmer or self-identified non-swimmer).

Category: Hair Maintenance

4. Who did your hair when you were growing up?

5. Tell me about your regular hair care regime, maintenance etc. as a child?

   Possible follow-ups:

   a. Tell me more about your mother's (or aunt, sister, grandmother, father – whoever the participant names is #4) decision to maintain your hair that way.
   (*If interviewee describes hair as being nappy, big, kinky, go to b.*)

   b. Tell me what you mean by that.
   (*If hair was pressed as a child, go to c.*)

   c. How long do you recall it taking to get your hair pressed as a child? Describe to me what that experience was like.

6. Tell me about your hair care maintenance from your teenage years to now.

Category: Money and Time Spent on Hair (currently)

7. Approximately how much money do you spend on your hair per month?

8. How long does it take to get your hair done/ to do your hair yourself?

   Possible follow-ups: (*If hair is chemically/heat altered*)

   a. Have you considered going natural? Why or Why not?

   b. Tell me your thoughts on how you would be perceived with natural hair at school; the workplace.

Debriefing Questions

9. Is there anything else I didn't ask you about that you would like to add?

10. Do you have any questions/comments for me regarding the questions I have asked you?

11. What do you think of this topic and the types of questions I have asked you?

APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Participant Pseudonym	Self-Reported Race	Age (yrs.)	Hometown
Alicia	African American	22	Bloomfield, CT
Ashley-Marie	Black	23	Houston, TX/ Northridge, CA
Florence	African American	23	San Jose, CA
Giselle	African/Nigerian American	24	Washington, DC
Jade	African American	24	New York, NY
Keisha	African American	21	Brooklyn, NY
Kiara	African American	21	Lake Wells, FL
Sasha Fierce	Black	21	Los Angeles, CA
Tequoya	African American	19	Brooklyn, NY

APPENDIX F

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to take part in this research as a participant. This research is intended to explore the role hair plays in Black females' participation in swimming. I will be looking to find what factors, if any, act as constraints to your swimming participation.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANT'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

You will be requested to volunteer to participate in a 30-60 minute, face-to-face, audio recorded interview regarding your participation in swimming. The interview will be conducted on University grounds in a location comfortable for you. You and I will decide on a date for the interview.

Prior to the start of the interview, you will provide your informed consent by signing this form. Both you and I will retain a copy of the consent form with both signatures on it. In an effort to protect your identity, you will be asked to choose a pseudonym to be used in place of your real name in all written and recorded documents produced from the research. Audio recordings from the interview will be transcribed. I will then send the completed transcript of the interview to you for review and approval. You may change any part of the interview which does not accurately reflect your comments. You have the option of terminating the interview at any time without any repercussions. If you decide to terminate the interview, all data collected up to that point will be destroyed.

RISKS

There are no obvious risks to you in this study.

BENEFITS

This study may potentially spark your interest in you learning how or continuing to swim outside of your required swimming course. It may also help you and other participants become aware of constraints negotiation strategies that may lead to increased participation in swimming. You may also learn all the health benefits swimming has to offer.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information in the study will be kept confidential. Your data will be stored securely and will be made available only to me, my faculty advisor, and a research group who will help me analyze your comments. You will choose a pseudonym which will be used in

reference to your responses so you will not be identified. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study) you may contact the researcher, *Dawn Norwood,* at *University of Tennessee, 1800 Melrose Ave, Black Cultural Center, Knoxville, TN, 37996,* and *865-974-9945* and *dnorwoo1@utk.edu*. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw from in the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before all data collection is completed your data will be destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I agree to participate in this study. I will receive a copy of this form with signatures.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX G

QUALITATIVE REVIEWER CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

I acknowledge that all transcripts are confidential. I will not discuss any information from any transcripts I review with anyone other than the primary investigator and other members of the qualitative research group.

_____
Name of Reviewer

_____
Signature of Reviewer

_____
Date

VITA

Dawn Norwood is originally from Chicago, Illinois. She received her M.S. in Sport Administration from Grambling State University in Grambling, Louisiana, and her B.A. in Corporate Communication from Northern Illinois University. She worked as the Graduate Advisor for the Black Cultural Programming Committee (BCPC) in the Office of Minority Student Affairs at the University of Tennessee. Dawn would like to continue doing research on the minority swimming gap and plans to open her own non-profit youth sports and life skills development center.