Exploring the Essence of Participation of the

Female Puerto Rican Basketball Athlete

By

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ABSTRACT

In Puerto Rico, little is known regarding how female collegiate and professional basketball players perceive and experience their playing participation. The population of girls playing basketball has experienced recent increases. However, the culture in Puerto Rico has yet to embrace the participation of female basketball athletes. Attempting to address the void in scholarly literature, this study explored female athlete participation perceptions in competitive basketball within the Puerto Rican sport culture.

The investigation implemented a qualitative approach using a phenomenological methodology to form descriptive themes. Data was obtained from 14 female basketball athletes, of which 10 were student-athletes, and four were professional players. Participants were purposefully selected, and the interviews were conducted via telephone.

Findings revealed six themes relating to how female basketball athletes perceive and experience their participation in basketball in Puerto Rico. The themes established are the following: (a) Athlete Perception, (b) Benefits of Basketball, (c) Experiences in Basketball, (d) Motivation, (e) Puerto Rico’s Sports Culture, and (f) Puerto Rican’s Society’s view on Women’s Basketball.

Recommendations for further research include: (a) investigate with other universities outside the metropolitan area of San Juan, Puerto Rico and adjacent municipalities, (b) investigate middle school and high school female basketball players to gather information about their social interactions and mindsets affect their participation in basketball, and (c) explore the perception of the general population of college-aged students and their views regarding women’s basketball.

Keywords: Puerto Rico, women’s basketball, experiences, perception
DEDICATION

The thesis is dedicated to my family and friends who helped and supported me during this research endeavor. Their words of encouragement provided that extra push to continue and finish this investigation.
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As I reflect on this fantastic adventure, I am consumed by memories of encouragement and support. I humbly share this achievement with all those who invested time and energy in my journey. This project would not have been possible if not for the effort and interest of many.

Dr. Kevin Heisey, my mentor, I am deeply grateful for your contributions. Your constant influence, council, and revisions helped me navigate this study from beginning to end. To my uncle, Dr. Mario Medina, your proofreading and guidance helped establish the groundwork for this study, thank you. Dr. Luisa Vázquez, thank you for the proofreading and council in the development of my ideas throughout the endeavor. Not to forget, all the professors with whom I got the chance to refine my skills at Liberty University, thank you.

I am very appreciative of all the student-athletes and professional players who participated in this study. A special thanks are due for two individuals who went the extra mile without a second thought. Without your willingness to help and kindness, none of this would have happened. To all the other participants, your stories moved me and served as an inspiration to give your experiences a voice. I am deeply honored to have had the opportunity to listen and learn from your experiences with the sport of basketball in Puerto Rico. Your words are now part of me, and for that, I am forever thankful.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to my family and friends. You encouraged me to see this endeavor through. Your enthusiasm and council re-engaged me during challenging times. Your critical analysis helped me sustain a high standard throughout the project. Collectively, my committee, participants, family, university, and friends are all at the
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The major sports that gather attention in Puerto Rico are baseball, volleyball, and basketball. In this study, the emphasis is on women’s basketball in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Although basketball is a prevalent sport in Puerto Rico, women’s basketball is not as popular as men’s basketball. The purpose of the research is to capture shared experiences of collegiate and professional women basketball athletes and their perspectives on the Puerto Rican sport culture while playing competitive basketball in Puerto Rico.

Sport is fast-paced and adrenaline-filled with show-stopping feats of athleticism captivating audiences. However, the situation with female sports programs is that they are traditionally viewed differently compared to male sports programs in Puerto Rico. During the 1960s and 1970s, the landscape of sport was vastly influenced by the women’s movement, the fitness movement, and government legislation. Coakley (2017) noted until the 1970s, girls were ignored mainly by sports organizers and mostly sat in bleachers during games and, in the United States particularly, given the hope of becoming high school cheerleaders. The following sections are to bring more depth on how Title IX impacts athletic programs and how has it affected girl's and women’s participation in basketball in Puerto Rico.
1.1.2 Title IX and Athletic programs

Francis (2016) defined Title IX as the part of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibiting discrimination based on sex in educational programs receiving federal financial assistance, which has enabled vast increases in the participation of women in sport across educational institutions in the United States. Title IX is a Civil Rights law, approved by Congress and signed into law by President Richard Nixon on June 23, 1972. In addition to traditional educational institutions such as colleges, universities, and elementary and secondary schools, Title IX applies to any education or training program operated by a recipient of federal financial assistance (Overview of Title IX, 2015).

Title IX applies to every single aspect of education, not only athletics. The areas covered by Title IX include course offerings, counseling and counseling materials, financial assistance, student health, and insurance benefits or other services, housing, the marital and parental status of students, physical education and athletics, education programs and activities, and employment. Another misconception is that Title IX benefits only girls and women when in fact, it benefits both males and females. The law requires educational institutions to maintain policies, practices, and programs that do not discriminate against anyone based on gender. Elimination of discrimination against women and girls has received more attention because females historically have faced more significant gender restrictions and barriers in education (NCAA, 2014).

Athletic programs are considered educational programs and activities. There are three essential aspects of Title and their application to athletic programs.

The first is participation. Title IX requires that women and men be provided equitable opportunities to participate in sports. Title IX does not require
institutions to offer identical sports but an equal opportunity to play. Second, are scholarships. Title IX requires that female and male student-athletes receive athletics scholarship dollars proportional to their participation. Third, are the benefits. Title IX requires the equal treatment of female and male student-athletes in the provisions of (a) equipment and supplies; (b) scheduling of games and practice times; (c) travel and daily allowance/per diem; (d) access to tutoring; (e) coaching, (f) locker rooms, practice and competitive facilities; (g) medical and training facilities and services; (h) housing and dining facilities and services; (i) publicity and promotions; (j) support services and (k) recruitment of student-athletes (Title IX Policy Interpretation, 2019).

Title IX does not require an institution to spend significant resources on men’s and women’s sport. The only provision that requires similar spending proportional to participation is scholarships. Otherwise, male and female student-athletes must receive equitable treatment and benefits. The reason for this is the Javits Amendment. As described by the NCAA (2014), The Javits Amendment denotes legitimate and justifiable discrepancies for nongender related differences in sport could be taken into account (i.e., the differing costs of equipment or event management expenditures). A male football player needs protective equipment such as pads and a helmet, and a female soccer player requires shin guards. Title IX does allow for a discrepancy in the cost of the equipment as long as both football and soccer players receive the same quality of equipment. However, a female and male ice hockey player must receive identical protective equipment. Furthermore, Title IX does not require identical athletic programs for males and females. Instead, Title IX designates that men’s and women's programs receive a similar level of
service, facilities, supplies, etc. Variations within the men’s and women's programs are permitted, as long as the variations are justified (NCAA, 2014).

Coakley (2017) argued these changes stimulated the growth of sports programs for girls beginning in the mid-1970s, and by the 1990s girls had nearly as many opportunities as boys. Furthermore, there have been additional changes that have increased opportunities for girls in youth sports organizations. It is essential to understand exposure in youth sports programs tends to “make or break” the willingness to continue participating in sport further on in life for both male and female participants. Coakley noted six changes to society, which are as follows:

The number of families with both parents working outside the home has increased dramatically. Second, there has been a major cultural shift in what it means to be a “good parent.” Good parents today are those who can account for the whereabouts and actions of their children 24/7. Third, most people have come to believe that informal, child-controlled activities lead to trouble. Fourth, many parents, responding to fear-producing news stories about murders and child abductions, now see the world outside the home as dangerous for their children. They regard organized sports as safe alternatives to informal activities that occur outside the home without adult supervision. Fifth, the visibility of high-performance and professional sports has increased awareness of organized competitive sports as a valued part of the culture. Finally, the culture of childhood play has nearly disappeared in most segments of post-industrial society, especially in the United States (Coakley, pp.81-83).
Since Title IX was included in the Education Amendment Act of 1972, it became federal law. Therefore, applying to all of the United States and its federal jurisdictions, including Puerto Rico. All public schools from elementary to high school, colleges and universities, and most private educational institutions. In Puerto Rico, schools receive federal aid via the National School Lunch Program. In universities, federal assistance is commonly seen through financial aid programs for students. By receiving these aids, schools are required to provide equal opportunities in all of their educational programs, including their athletic programs for their student athletic programs.

1.1.3 Basketball in Puerto Rico

The birth and development of Puerto Rican basketball are intertwined with the history of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), where many of the sports from the United States were played (Bonilla, 2014). As it occurred in the United States, sport was mostly for boys and men, and it was not the exception when the YMCA brought its sports program to the island. Women had little to no participation in sport and were relegated to support roles. This being based on the machismo and patriarchal culture of Puerto Rico in which females were subordinated to a certain degree, especially in male-dominated sports.

In the academic year 1928-29, the Athletic Interuniversity of Puerto Rico (LAI) was founded, with three institutions: The University of Puerto Rico, the Polytechnic Institute of San Germán, and the College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts of Mayaguez. During the inaugural year, those institutions held competitions in three male sports: Baseball, basketball, and athletics. It was not until 40 years later (1969-70) that volleyball was offered as the initial women’s sports program. In the 1970-71 academic
year, women competed in tennis and swimming, and the following year 1971-1972 in basketball and athletics (Medina, 2015).

As of 2018-2019 academic year, 15 affiliated universities offered women’s basketball (eight from the University of Puerto Rico system and seven from private universities). Medina (2015) noted although the Athletic School League and the Department of Recreation and Sports of Puerto Rico have organized sporting events for public-school students, no historical data is archived about basketball. On the contrary, in many private schools, they teach the fundamentals of basketball and prepare teams for tournaments and competitions.

Traditionally, Puerto Rico is considered a patriarchal society (Concepción & Echevarría, 1997). A patriarchal society is one in which men hold the highest position in society and see women as the lesser important sex. In a patriarchy, men view themselves as the superior One and women become the Other, effectively stripping them of their individual identities and destroying their humanity (Beauvoir, 1989). Ever since first settled by Spain in 1493, Puerto Rico has been a patriarchy, and men have held all significant positions in society. The island remained a province of Spain for over 400 years until it became a territory of the United States under the Treaty of Paris in 1898. The incorporation of women into sport is accompanied by a patriarchal discourse that dictates what one can or cannot do in this scenario.

The underrepresentation of women in sport was first addressed legally in the United States in an amendment to the Educational Act in 1972, better known as Title IX. This law continues to prohibit discrimination, exclusion in participation or denial of benefits in educational programs on the basis of gender (US Department of Labor, 2005).
Due to the political status of Puerto Rico with the United States, Title IX applies. After Title IX was enacted in 1972, women in Puerto Rico began to have equal access opportunities both in education and sport. Prior to this, women’s sport in Puerto Rico was not regulated lending itself to be subject to discrimination and unfair practices towards females who desired to play sports.

The growth of female basketball in Puerto Rico has been evident as of late with various sports leagues promoting participation for girls ages 6-19 years. The two major club tournaments for women’s basketball at youth categories, apart from the school leagues, is the Puerto Rico Little Lads & Lassies and the Women's Youth League of the Basketball Federation of Puerto Rico. In 2011, Puerto Rico Little Lads & Lassies reported participation of 67 teams with approximately 800 female players (“Al Pachín final femenina de Little Lads,” 2011). In 2013, Puerto Rico Little Lads & Lassies reported participation of 68 teams with a participation of 816 female players (“Inicia Torneo Little Lads & Lassies,” 2013).

The Women’s Youth League of the Basketball Federation of Puerto Rico had 102 teams with a total of 1,300 female players in 2014 (“Inauguran Liga Infantil Femenina,” 2014) and by 2017 it had a record participation of 123 teams with a total of 1,600 female players (“Sin Precendentes Inaguracion,” 2017).

In 2019 the Puerto Rico Little Lads & Lassies held its tournament with a participation of 102 teams from ages 7-19 years with a total of 1,224 female players (“Este fin de Semana,” 2019). These attitudes are slowly changing, and more girls and women are participating in sport. However, there are still situations where established
patriarchal and misogynistic ideas allow for stereotyping of female basketball players to occur.

The Puerto Rican women’s basketball national select team has had recent success. Which includes the country’s first-ever classification and participation in the 2018 International Basketball Federation (FIBA) World Cup, a gold-medal in Centro Basket 2018, a bronze medal in the 2018 Central American games, a bronze medal in the 2019 Pan American Games, and a fourth place in the AmeriCup hosted in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 2019. The most recent achievement was the team’s first-ever classification to the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics in women’s basketball. What the coach Jerry Batista is sure of, is the advancement for women’s basketball achieved by the Puerto Rican women's national basketball team with the conquest of their first ticket to an Olympic Games during the FIBA Qualifying Tournament in Bourges, France (Loza, 2020). All of these events were televised in the media outlets, and multiple public relations tours were held promoting the women’s national team.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore the essence of how female athletes perceive their participation in the sport of basketball within the Puerto Rican sport culture. In researching through existing literature, a noticeable gap was evident in the research related to perceptions of female basketball athletes of Puerto Rico. Aybar (2008) conveyed female perceptions of Puerto Rican athletes. Aybar’s research was general in scope and focused on multiple sports. Therefore, this research will seek to add to the body of knowledge involving female basketball athletes of Puerto Rican ethnicity who participate in NCAA Division II and professionally. The following research will focus on
the experience of the selected participants to create a body of knowledge of the motives, situations, and environment that allowed the athletes to continue their participation in the sport of basketball.

1.2.1 Research Question

The central guiding question for this research is the following:

*How do female athletes perceive their participation in competitive basketball within the Puerto Rico sport culture?*

The themes that emerge from the data provide valuable insight into how females perceive their participation in the sport of basketball in a sporting culture that has been traditionally male-oriented. Arising themes will become the communally shared experiences athletes have through participation in basketball, which suggests possible macro-level experiences.

1.2.2 Research Objectives

This research was guided by the following objectives to collect data from the basketball athletes that were interviewed.

1) How do female basketball players perceive their experience in a contact sport and how did those experiences shape their perceptions within the sport culture of Puerto Rico.

2) Use themes from athlete interviews to gather information about how their social environment and personal motivation play a role in their commitment to play competitive basketball.

Each athlete had the opportunity to respond to open-ended interview questions, allowing insight into their thought process and unique perspective of playing competitive
basketball in Puerto Rico. This information provides first-hand accounts of the phenomena. The objective is to provide a greater understanding of the unique situation in Puerto Rico that females encounter engaging in or pursuit of a career in basketball. Ultimately with the goal of developing a more respectable and healthier environment for women in basketball.

1.3 METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

This study uses a qualitative approach with frames from a feminist empiricism model. According to Creswell (1998), qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting (p. 99). As a way to further develop the qualitative frame of the study, the researcher employed a phenomenological inquiry. Phenomenology assists in discovering and understanding data-rich environments from the actual experiences of participants. Whereas some methodologies strive to determine opinions and a generalization through hypotheses, phenomenology seeks to explore contextual meaning through the situational knowledge of those researched (Creswell, 2009).

Qualitative investigation with the use of phenomenological inquiry initiates an investigatory interest in an area of study that has received widespread attention but no thorough investigation. With a lack of existing research illustrating the female perception of basketball athletes in Puerto Rico, the study seeks to develop understanding through the lived experiences of the participants and opens the door to continued discovery.
According to Creswell, a phenomenological approach can contribute to the literature and provide meaning where a void exists due to a lack of available research (Creswell, 2009).

The thesis follows the guidelines and recommendations of a traditional phenomenology as described by Creswell (2007) and Moustakas (1994), where the role of the researcher is to generate a written description of an individual’s external observations and internal process of cognition. As suggested by Moustakas, bracketing or focusing the researchable interest, ensuring the study design remained methodically connected to the empirical questions while the compilation of the stories associated with the lived personal experience of the participants took place.

The total sample for the study was designed to involve up to 15 participants, but a saturation point was determined at 14 participants. Purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are exceptionally knowledgeable about, or experienced with, a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Based on the specific population that was targeted, female basketball players who played collegiate or professionally, purposeful sampling was chosen as the sampling strategy for this study.

Individuals are selected based on the assumption that they possess knowledge and experience with the phenomenon of interest and thus will be able to provide information that is both detailed and generalizable (Palinkas, 2015). The criterion focused on female participants between ages 18-40 years; were of Puerto Rican descent; played competitive basketball in college or professionally in Puerto Rico; had or were in the process of
obtaining a Bachelor’s degree; resided in the island for more than a year. The university students selected, played basketball and represented the university at the time of the interview process. The professional players who were interviewed played in the 2018 and the 2019 season. Data collection occurred via semi-structured interviews designed to explore how these athletes perceived their participation in basketball.

The process of organizing and analyzing the data utilized Colaizzi’s seven-step data analysis method (Sanders, 2003). In Colaizzi’s approach, the researcher applies personal understanding to the phenomena prior to the interview (Bevan, 2014, p.137). Once all the data is collected, significant statements are extracted from the interviews and themes are established.

The collection of data came through one-on-one interviews with a semi-structured design (Gratton & Jones, 2010). However, to avoid preconceived biases, the researcher bracketed prior ideas of the phenomena. Bracketing is a methodological device of phenomenological inquiry that requires deliberate putting aside one’s own belief about the phenomenon under investigation or what one already knows about the subject prior to and throughout the phenomenological investigation (Carpenter, 2007). The extraction of unique ideas from the interviews became condensed into statements that later turned into themes. Theme clustering provided help in arranging data that congregated from the ideas related to the research question. Themes were composed into a composite summary of the findings and relate directly to how female athletes perceive their experience of playing basketball in the Puerto Rican sport culture.
1.4 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

This research effort consists of a five-chapter design. The second chapter examines the literature and establishes a framework from which the thesis builds on. The third chapter describes the methodology of phenomenology in helping understand the phenomena of women’s basketball in Puerto Rico. The fourth chapter offers the findings of the data collection. Chapter four offers narrative excerpts from the interviews to offer pragmatic authenticity and verification as well as personal perspectives. The fifth chapter provides analysis and discusses the findings regarding Puerto Rican female athletes’ experiences in basketball. Furthermore, the limitations of this study are discussed along with other avenues for research that spawned from this research.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 OVERVIEW

During the review of the literature, three main themes emerged from the research articles that enlighten this thesis. A rigorous search followed, yet no research was found that sought to understand how female Puerto Rican basketball athletes viewed their participation. The related research focuses on the effects of the masculine sports culture of Puerto Rico and its patriarchal system. Multiple subthemes emerged, such as stereotyping and role conflict. An additional focal point of the research was the effect motivation has on these athletes. Motivation sources such as family, peers, and media were subthemes found from research. A final theme that emerged was the importance of physical activity for women. It is essential to acknowledge the lack of research articles regarding the female Puerto Rican basketball athletes. Only a handful of articles came close to investigating the topic. However, they were broad in comparison to the purpose of this study.

2.2 PUERTO RICAN SPORTS CULTURE

The Puerto Rican society is considered a patriarchal (Concepción & Echevarría, 1997). A patriarchal system socializes men to feel superior to women and transmitting simple responsibilities to women (Beauvoir, 1989). With this line of thought, women suffer from stereotyping and are prevented from or shamed upon in participating in vigorous sporting activities. This pattern of behavior has been challenging to influence since it is learned through primary socialization for acceptable ways of behavior for men and women in Puerto Rico (Estrada & Perez, 2009). However, there is evidence of an
ideologic shift, as highlighted by the study done by Ortiz (2013) with results indicating that college-age Puerto Ricans tend to incline and advocate for gender equality. Ortiz revealed shifts within the workplace; the household, finances, sexuality, more egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles, not reinforcing or perpetuating the attitudes of machismo. Ortiz’s study referred to education as a critical factor in the changes in attitudes towards machismo. Sultana (2011) noted that education helps to increase women’s consciousness about gender relations and organize them to engage in grassroots struggles for their rights. Similarly, it is argued that education provides women employment and income (p. 1561). Nevertheless, the impact of the machismo ideology does show itself on occasions.

It is essential to consider the implications of Title IX as it relates to sport in Puerto Rico. After the enactment of Title IX, popularity and opportunities for female sports participation increased exponentially from 294,000 in 1971 to 2.8 million in 2004 (Rayburn, Chen, & Phillips, 2015). Even though with this increase in participation, there are still situations where there is apparent gender conflict regarding sport participation. Aybar (2008) noted that in Puerto Rico, there is no doubt women’s sport participation has increased significantly, yet there is no evidence the latter is occurring under the same level of acceptance, respect, support, and approval received by Puerto Rican males. There are many sociological factors and psychological that have a significant effect on the female athletic experience (Hargreaves, 2001). Aybar (2008) notes that the Puerto Rican society, there are gender stereotypes that powerfully reinforce the roles and expectations about what suitable for women. This concept gives insight into the conflict of roles withing the female athletes.
There are gender stereotypes that powerfully reinforce the roles and expectations about what is suitable for women. In physical activities, images are consolidated and reproduce as ideologies that are the basis of management promotion and development as well as policies that govern sport (Hargreaves, 2001). After Title IX, perceptions, and ideas regarding women and their participation in sport have changed.

However, the type of sport, contact versus non-contact, chosen by the female athletes to play, is still subject to criticism. Basketball, field hockey, soccer, lacrosse, and other open-field or open-court team sports were labeled unladylike, which is why the Olympics excluded women’s team sport until 1964, the first female team sport introduced was volleyball (Coakley, 2016). For a long time, sport has been a social site where beliefs of male-female differences, male power, and male dominance in almost all spheres of social life become celebrated. Coakley (p. 178) noted sport remains one of the only activities in contemporary liberal culture in which gender segregation attitudes are expected, accepted, and mandatory in nearly all competitive events.

2.2.1 Gender Implications and Stereotyping

Schmalz and Kerstetter (2006) reported that participation in sport is perceived as gender specific. The authors outlined three significant findings. First, children curb behaviors and sport participation to fit the social norms of appropriate behaviors based on gender (p. 550). Second, gender-neutral sports (such as swimming, running, soccer, and bicycling) had the highest participation rates for boys and girls (p. 550). Third, “children as young as eight are aware of and affected by gender stereotypes in sports and physical activities” (p. 551). These findings demonstrated although female sports programming and female sport participation have advanced, gender stereotypes are still persistent in
sport and physical activities. Despite the increase in sporting opportunities available to women, stereotypes of socially appropriateness still influence female perceptions related to sport participation. The identification of gender-role stereotype influencing factors in the perception of appropriate sport for females (Riemer & Feltz, 1995). Depending on the athlete's sport participation, she can actively change her status within their social world toward a positive or negative interaction.

Riemer and Feltz (1995) suggested sports that have bodily contact between opponents, use (or resist) heavy objects, or have the participant projected into or through space over long distances or extended periods are inappropriately perceived. Therefore, it would be acceptable for a woman to play tennis rather than basketball, which is a contact and team sport compared to tennis, which is a non-contact and individual sport.

Schmalz and Kerstetter (2006) found men are heavily encouraged to participate in aggressive and competitive team sports. Meanwhile, women are generally steered toward individual aesthetic sports. Women engaging in a sport that is not gendered appropriately, the researchers noted, jeopardized their claim to being feminine and accepted as "normal" women (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983, p. 107). Coakley (2006) refers that as long as stereotypes are ready-made evaluative frameworks for making quick judgments and conclusions about others, they will persist within society. These short-sighted frameworks are sometimes used to maintain control over an individual. Although on occasions, it may be benign with no harmful intentions. In sport, gender stereotypes are evident in media coverage of sports, referees’ calls during games, and funding of athletic programs. Gender stereotypes are also evident in teachers’ and parents’ views and treatment of girls and boys (Hively & El-Alayli, 2014). Hively and El-Alayli discussed
the phenomenon known as “stereotype threat.” The researchers suggested that people can underperform at tasks when thinking about the negative performance expectations for their group. Thus, having negative beliefs regarding female athletic abilities may hinder performance in sport contexts. Hively and El-Alayli (p.49) suggested female athletes may experience stereotype threat even if they disagree with the stereotype or believe that it does not apply to them personally because their goal of disproving the stereotype may be present regardless. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (p. 12) states that the sport arena provides opportunities to reach out to men and boys on issues related to stereotypical attitudes, gender-based discrimination, and violence. Providing a powerful forum for educating and informing men and boys on a variety of issues, such as violence against girls and women, breaking down entrenched attitudes and stereotypical behaviors.

2.2.2 Role Conflict

Going against the status quo established by society usually invites negative comments about a person. In sport, it is no exception, especially in contact sports like basketball. Gender role conflict is when an individual perceives opposing expectations for their gender-role behavior like being feminine and masculine (Daltry, 2013). Royce, Gebelt, and Duff (2003) found female athletes perceive themselves as having both feminine and athletic identity and that each can be salient at different times. Daltry (p. 51) explained an athlete’s athletic identity would be more salient when she is participating in her sport or when she is exercising, and her feminine identity may be more salient when she is out socially with friends, family, or significant other. Daltry noted inconsistencies between roles are more likely to have increased psychological...
distress, which then impacts one’s own well-being and life satisfaction. Aybar (2008) argued role conflict currently should not be a critical problem in the participation of girls, young women, and women in sports. However, studies have not yet been developed to demonstrate this type of change in attitudes within the Puerto Rican and Caribbean sports scene.

2.3 MOTIVATION ELEMENTS

As defined by Oxford’s dictionary, motivation is a reason or reasons for acting or behaving in a particular way. Merriam Webster’s dictionary defined motivation as a force, stimulus, or influence. When evaluating sports participation, motivational factors are an essential element of the formula. Various social, physiological theories have been used to explain physical activities in adolescents and young adults. One such theory is the self-determination theory, which proposes that motivational types form a continuum ranging from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation. Research has shown self-determined forms of behavioral regulation have positive outcomes for young people (Craike, Symons, & Zimmermann, 2009, p. 149). Multiple factors influence an athlete to participate. These factors are internal and external motivational factors. Internal motives are the joy of sports, entertainment, love of action, and the ability to demonstrate and improve the skills. External motives may be in the form of trophies, prizes, praise, or status (Šimková, 2017, p. 239). Craike et al. (p. 150) identified some of those factors as lack of time, self-efficacy, attitude, perceived behavioral control, enjoyment, concerns about body shape and weight management, individual autonomy, and pressure to conform to modern standards of beauty. Šimková (p. 239) noted internal motives are about positive thinking and belief to achieve something more; these sportspeople think in
a self-efficacy way. Self-efficacy is defined as an estimate of one’s abilities to perform a specific task successfully and linked with motivational patterns. Also, the motivational structure is a recognized model that comprises of 4 stages. Šimková further explained the structure in the following manner:

The first stage is the phase of the first expansion of the movement, which groups biological motives, the need to move, have positive arousal, role models in parents, other sportspeople. The second stage is a choice of self-assertion, which involves social enforcement, perceived performance, positive feelings about winning. The third stage is about sports mastery, and the motivational structure is differentiated, personal achievement, prestige, economic advantages, the sport is a purposeful activity. The fourth stage is the involution of motivational structure and regards the involution of elite performance, social-psychological problems because of retiring from the spotlight, change in economic status (Šimková, 2017, p. 240).

Šimková continued to state that every stage is full of external and internal influences, and these are intertwined. Together they create the personality of the sporting individual, the system of values, characteristics, and structure of sports motivation. Players are drawn towards the basketball by the happiness they feel while playing, performance enhancement, achievements of set goals, a feeling of sense and possibilities of self-realization. However, Šimková (p. 247) argued the requirement of some recognition from the outside, especially in the form of praise, encouragement, prizes, awards. Therefore, reinforcing a continuous cycle between internal and external motivational factors. Šimková relayed athletes not only want to prove to spectators, coaches, family but also
team members that their hard work has meaning. The reaction of other people and outward manifestation, such as joy, pride, and admiration, helps players themselves see the meaning in basketball.

2.3.1 Media

Mass communication plays a role in influencing social perceptions in a variety of social issues. In sports, the media may not purposefully marginalize or trivialize women’s sports. However, many pieces of evidence document the media favored and emphasized men’s sport and masculinity (Rayburn et al., 2015, p. 29). In contrast, the critical feminist theory suggests that dominant groups use political, economic, and cultural resources to define societal norms and values and to sustain their influence. These media sources typically present compatible ideologies to those dominant group’s views. When applied to the social construct of sport, men and the theme of masculinity are the dominant groups. As such, females and femininity were perceived and portrayed as lesser and weaker (Villalon & Weiller-Abels, 2018, p. 1138). The portrayal of women in a lesser form is evident in the way broadcasts execute their coverage. Villalon and Weiller-Abels (p.1139) noted common ways in which sports broadcasters have framed female athletes involve using certain words and focusing on specific topics that align with the hegemonic view of what constitutes a female athlete. Specifying “women’s” before the name of the event, whereas male events are just the name of the sport or event, subtly implying men are the natural participants and thus belong, whereas women are projected as “others” (Segrave, Mcdowell, & King, 2006). Villalon and Weiller-Abels (p.1142) identify to the research regarding the sports corpus by Cambridge University Press, where common
word associations in sport demonstrated associations between women, but not men, with age, older, pregnant, married or unmarried.

In contrast, men’s top associations include the fastest, strongest, biggest, and most celebrated possible athlete. When asked about the differential treatment of female athletes, producers, commentators, and editors will usually explain a lack of attention to women’s sports claiming that a combination of market forces constrains them, and by their desire to give viewers ‘what they want to see’ (Cooky, Messner, & Hextrum, 2013, p. 19). Despite the significant increases in women’s participation in athletics over the last 50 years, Messner and Cooky (2010) believed that unless producers decide that showing more women’s sports to be in their best interest, it is unlikely there will be any positive changes involving female athletes in televised media. Based on current hegemony, production ideas are likely pitched to male supervisors with the belief that their audience consists mainly of men. In return, the lack of women sports on TV broadcasts may lead to the false assumption that women's sports are not socially accepted and are not the norm. Thus, applying pressure to drop sports or reduce their active participation in sports.

2.3.2 Family and Peers

Social factors influence adolescent young women’s physical activity on both a micro level through significant others such as parents and peers, and also on a macro-social level, through the dominant discourses of gendering in society and physical activity (Craike et al., 2009, p. 150). Also, it is well accepted that parents, siblings, peers, teachers, and coaches all play a role in influencing attitudes and behaviors, at least during childhood, regarding physical activity and sports participation for both boys and girls (Dixon, Warner, & Bruening, 2008, p. 539). These individuals can exert influence from
encouraging teaching values and norms related to physical activity and sports participation. The latter, especially when combined with opportunities to observe and participate, creates a robust social process for children referred to as socialization.

Dixon et al. (p. 539) revealed socialization is not a one-way process. Individuals do not merely conform to all that is taught. Instead, they participate in and influence the socialization process by embracing, rejecting, and providing feedback to the socializing agents. The expectancy-value model assumes that socializing agents’ values, expectations, and role modeling behaviors influence a child’s choice of academic and co-curricular activities and his or her choice in continuing such activities. In this model, three parental influences contribute to a child’s socialization into a sport. These are being a role model, providers of experience, and interpreters of experience. Dixon et al. (p. 541) stated parents act as role models when their behavior demonstrates the value they place on sport and physical activity through actively engaging in coaching, participating, or just enjoying the sport. Parents are the primary individuals who can allow access to the involvement of their children in the sport by providing the necessary resources, equipment, and opportunities. Dixon et al. (p. 542) discussed the expectancy-value model also assumes that parental influence extends to the interpretation of what children experience. That is, parents can transmit values and norms by communicating their beliefs, acceptance, and support of their child’s participation in sport.

2.4 IMPORTANCE OF SPORT FOR WOMEN

Physical activity and exercise performed regularly have many physical and mental benefits for men and women (Nxumalo & Beetge, 2017, p. 163). Benefits range from mental health towards preventing or limiting diseases. Nxumalo and Beetge (p. 163)
stated physical activity constitutes any bodily movement produced by the skeletal muscles that are enough to induce an increase in energy expenditure above basal metabolic levels, which includes exercise, sports, and physical activities performed as part of daily living. Nxumalo and Beetge (p.163) noted behavioral, and lifestyle choices that people make early in life are likely to influence their health status in later years. Thereby, participating in sports during the childhood and teenage years may influence the young woman athlete to continue pursuing an active lifestyle after her sports participation ends. Nxumalo and Beetge (p. 170) found that the core motive for engaging in physical activity or sport indicated by most students (81%) was ‘to be fit.’ Fitness, mainly when health-related in respect of muscle strength, muscle endurance, flexibility, cardio-respiratory endurance, and body composition, is linked to improved health benefits.

Females that are participating in sports, actively challenge popular gender stereotypes and discriminatory views regarding women and their athletic capabilities. Therefore, sport is a vehicle to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (UNESCO, 2007, p. 3). Sport is a valuable tool that is utilized for improving social empowerment through skills such as teamwork, communication, negotiation, and so on. UNESCO (p. 9) explained social benefits of participation in sport are thought to be especially important for girls, given that many girls, particularly in adolescence, have fewer opportunities than boys for social interaction outside the home and beyond family structures. Women and girls acquire new interpersonal networks, develop a sense of identity, and access new opportunities, allowing them to become more engaged in school and community life. Participation in sport also enables women and girls to enjoy the freedom of expression and movement and increase their self-esteem and self-confidence.
In a study conducted by the Women’s Sports Foundation on sport and teen pregnancy in the United States, researchers found the sense of ownership and respect for their bodies developed by adolescent girls who participate in sport encouraged them to delay sexual activity, thereby reducing the levels of teen pregnancy (Sabo et al., 1998). In their report, UNESCO (p.8) stated that sport offers a valuable channel to strengthen women’s and girls’ capabilities and provide information on critical social issues, such as health, HIV/AIDS, and women’s rights. Women’s and girls’ participation in sport can also challenge gender stereotypes and break down entrenched discriminatory attitudes and behaviors.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 OVERVIEW

Based on the title of the thesis, the methodology chosen was a phenomenology approach. A phenomenological approach differs markedly from other qualitative methodologies, such as ethnography and grounded theory, in the goal of phenomenology is to enlarge and deepen understanding of the range of immediate experiences (Creswell, 2013). This study was influenced by Husserlian phenomenology. Husserl believed phenomenology suspended all suppositions, was related to consciousness and was based on the meaning of the individual’s experience. The experience of perception thought, memory, imagination, and emotion, involve what Husserl called “intentionality,” which is one has directed awareness or consciousness of an object or event (Reiners, 2012, p. 1).

The research principal data source came from female collegiate and professional basketball players of Puerto Rican ethnicity. By purposefully sampling this population, the researcher guaranteed the phenomenon was explored accordingly. With Husserlian’s concepts of intentionality in mind, the researcher developed a questionnaire guide using phenomenological principles to help explore the meaning and experiences of the female athletes and answer this study main research question: How do female athletes perceive their participation in the sport of basketball within the Puerto Rican sports culture. The following sections explain the methodology in greater detail and the processes taken in this phenomenological research.
3.2 METHODOLOGY

According to Gratton and Jones (2010, p. 30), qualitative research aimed to capture meaning or qualities that are not quantifiable, such as feelings or experiences, and uses non-numeric data and analysis to describe and understand concepts. As derived from the title of this thesis, the methodology chosen was phenomenology. Within a phenomenological approach, the focus is to reduce a human subject’s experiences with a phenomenon to a description of its “essence,” written down, usually, and so a qualitative researcher would identify a phenomenon as an “object” of human experience (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenology is best understood as a style of philosophizing, which emphasizes the attempt to describe phenomena, in the broadest sense as whatever appears in the manner in which it appears, that is as it manifests itself to consciousness, to the experiencer (Moran, 2000, p. 4). By nature, phenomenology differs from other qualitative methods such as grounded theory and ethnographies. Essentially, the goal of phenomenology is to enlarge and deepen understanding of the range of immediate experiences (Goulding, 2005, p. 302).

3.2.1 Phenomenology

The modern phenomenological method is credited to German philosopher, and mathematician Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) whose work evolved during the ideological turmoil following World War I. Husserl advocated through his research that objects exist independently and that observations and experiences involving these objects are reliable suggesting that an individual’s perceptions are accurate representations of their consciousness (Fouche, 1993). This study affiliated with Husserl’s descriptive phenomenology. Husserl introduced the concept of consciously setting aside current
thoughts, beliefs, and judgments that lend themselves to bias with the use of the Greek word epoche, “meaning to stay away from or abstain” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). The term epoche is also known as bracketing, which is a technique that excludes existing assumptions relating to the phenomena.

The phenomenological method involves transcending casual knowledge of the phenomenon allowing the researcher to free-up their consciousness to reflect thematically. Still, it is essential to note that the complete abstraction of the researcher from the study is impossible. In descriptive phenomenology, one has the technique of “bracketing off” influences around a phenomenon to get to the essences (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Allowing the researcher to view the phenomenon without any preconceived bias. The focus of descriptive phenomenology is the correlation of the noema of experience (the what) and the noesis (the how it is experienced). Once “the things themselves” have been identified, or otherwise analyzed, descriptive phenomenology considers its work done (Sloan & Bowe, 2014, p. 1300). Consequently, enabling the researcher to understand the phenomena from those who have experienced it. To summarize the use of a phenomenological approach, Fish and Dorris describe it as the following:

The participant is simultaneously subject and object. By allowing the phenomenon to develop its criteria for examination, by recognizing the intentionality of every act including those of the researcher, and by eliminating the subject-object dichotomy as a preconception, phenomenology has no need to be concerned with the confusion of perspective and the so-called “bias” of the researcher (Fish & Dorris, 1975, pp. 9-11).
After determining that a phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study, the following suggestions as outlined by Creswell (2007) and Moustakas (1994) were included in the design and served as a procedural map for my project which explored how female athletes perceive their participation in competitive basketball in Puerto Rico:

- The phenomenon of interest to study is identified.
- The researcher recognizes and specifies the broad philosophical assumptions of Phenomenology.
- Data is collected from the individuals who have experienced the phenomenon.
- Participants are asked two broad, general questions (Moustakas, 1994):
  What have you experienced regarding the phenomenon? What context or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?
- Data analysis occurs through organized “clusters of meaning,” and from these clusters evolve both textural and structural descriptions of the experience, which leads to a composite description that presents the “essence” of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007, p. 60-62).

3.2.2 The Researcher

The researcher’s role in the data collection process is to generate the initial reply from the participant and to let the participant answer without any interruptions. The researcher will then follow up or go back to statements the participant has made during their reply to delve in deeper and obtain more data or clarify statements.
3.2.3 Research Question

The purpose of this study is to obtain first-hand experiences and accounts of the following question:

**RQ1:** How do female athletes perceive their participation in the sport of basketball within the Puerto Rican sports culture.

3.3 SITE AND PARTICIPANTS

The site for this study included a university that is a member affiliate of the NCAA. Before initiating the recruitment of participants, the approval of Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) had to be secured. Once IRB approval from Liberty University was confirmed, the researcher made a formal request for permission to the selected university.

For the selection of the participants, purposeful sampling was determined to be an adequate fit for the study. Purposeful sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are exceptionally knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Clark, 2011). According to Patton (1990, p. 169), the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth, from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling. The sampling strategy chosen for this study was a homogeneous sample. Patton notes that the strategy of picking a small homogeneous sample has the purpose of describing some particular subgroups in-depth (1990, p. 173).

The use of Criterion-I sampling, which helps identify and select all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 535), was
utilized to narrow down potential candidates. In this study, the criterion was the following: (a) participants were female between ages 18-40 years; (b) Puerto Rican descent; (c) played competitive basketball in college or professionally in Puerto Rico; (d) had or were in the process of obtaining a Bachelor’s degree; (e) resided in the island for more than one year.

Each participant received an explanation of the nature of the study and their expected role; if they participated, see Appendix A and B. In conjunction, the participants were handed a promotional flyer, see Appendix J, to generate interest in the study. All selected participants were willing to talk about themselves and their basketball background. Participants were approached various times between June 2019 and September 2019. Before being interviewed, each participant was read to and given a copy of the consent form, see Appendix C or D, which was signed by the participant and given to the researcher denoting consent to participate in the study. The corresponding consent form was handed out once it was determined if the participant was a collegiate student-athlete or a professional player.

Regarding the total number of participants, Creswell (1998) recommends a phenomenological study involve “long interviews with up to 10 people” (p. 65). With these general guidelines in place, the initial sample of 10 participants for this study was determined to be appropriate. However, it was deemed that with 14 participants, a saturation point was appropriate. Saunders et al. (2017, p. 1896) describe saturation when any new data tend to be redundant of data already collected. In interviews, when the researcher begins to hear the same comments again and again, data saturation is being reached.
3.4 DATA COLLECTION

The role of the phenomenological investigator, or researcher, is to ‘construct’ the studied object according to its own manifestations, structures, and components (Padilla-Diaz, 2015, p. 104). If the participants’ experiences are too wide-ranging, then it is challenging for the researcher to identify underlying themes in their responses. The researcher should take measures to ensure as similar an experience as possible to draw commonalities. With an abundance of variability from participant to participant, the phenomenon of the experience can be more challenging to interpret. Measures should be taken to limit the variety by ensuring that the sampling used to collect data intentionally comes from a unit of individuals who were provided with the same experience. Padilla-Diaz implies the use of purposive sampling allows for a selection of participants who have a more familiar experience.

An important target for qualitative approaches is to achieve an understanding of social phenomena (Thagaard, 2009, p. 11). In order to create and develop this understanding of the phenomena, communication of the lived experiences is required. For the foundations of phenomenological methods, language is needed to convey information and describe “reality,” along with the assumption that shared experiences come shared meanings (Goulding, 2005, p. 302). The most optimal form of obtaining such information is through interviews. According to Bevan (2014, p. 137), the interview is by far the most dominant method for data collection in phenomenological research.

A phenomenological study should be more open and less structured, the research methods should be designed in a way that facilitates the description of the experience (Kyale & Brinkman, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2010). Interview questions in a
phenomenological study are designed to get the interviewee to talk freely about their experience and describe them in detail. Furthermore, interviews benefit from being less structured in a phenomenology study. Asking scripted, open-ended questions along with unscripted follow up questions elicit more information providing more substantial data and allowing participants the freedom of having time to contemplate and answer questions on their terms. Since the purpose of the research is to study female athletes’ experiences, semi-structured interviews turn out to be the primary data collection tool.

For the interview, open-ended questions were prepared to guide the experience, but exact wording and order were made flexible to navigate the interactive experience with each participant best. On a related note, many respondents may show concerns about their privacy. Face-to-face interviews may feel more invasive, as they are often conducted in the respondents' home or office (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). Also, respondents cannot hide their nonverbal language. As a result, the option of telephone interviews was available. By increasing the physical and social distance between the interviewer and the respondent, telephone interviews may improve responses from marginalized groups (Oltmann, 2016, p. 11).

The first advantage of this research method is that it provides precise information regarding the research question (Lewis, 2015). Since the information collected is first-hand from the subjects, it is the best information because it has not been corrupted by a passage from one person to another over time. The other advantage of this method is that more information can be collected than intended. In part, due to the development of the interview and the answers provided. For example, follow-up questions are used during research to provide more information about a response.
3.4.1 Interview Frame Analysis

Before the interview begins, the researcher must come prepared with a methodology of interview tactics since they act as a governor for the interview framework (Fernqvist, 2010). There are two significant positions regarding interviews, and they are neopositivism and romanticism. The neopositivist is eager to establish a context-free truth about reality by following a research protocol and getting responses relevant to it, minimizing researcher influence and other sources of bias (Alvesso, 2003, p. 15).

In contrast, the romanticist foments a genuine interaction with the participant. Alvesso (2003, p. 16) noted a prerequisite to have established rapport, trust, and commitment between both parties in order to explore the inner world (meanings, ideas, feelings, intentions) or the experienced social reality of the interviewee. Understanding the differences between these points of view, the interview frame analysis for this study is based on a romanticist interview technique.

Interviews can be categorized into three styles: Structured, semi-structured, or unstructured. Structuring can occur regarding the questions asked, the response scales used, as well as how the information is processed and combined (Farago, Zide, & Shahani-Denning, 2013, p. 225). In contrast, Farago et al. (p. 225) stated one of the reasons for the prevalence of unstructured interviews might be that the interview is seen as social interaction, and applicants might feel more comfortable in an unstructured environment. However, between structured and unstructured style is the semi-structured interview. Since semi-structured interviews combine both structured and unstructured interview styles, they are an alternative that offers the best form
both sides. Hathaway and Atkinson (2003) identified when qualitative researchers seek information that gives life to the feelings and perceptions of individuals, the researcher must foster trust and comfort for the individual of interest. Based on the nature of this phenomenological study, a semi-structured interview framework was to provide enough closeness, flexibility, and order to the interaction between the researcher and interviewee. Therefore, providing an environment to collect rich datasets while maintaining a structure to guide the interview process.

3.4.2 Interview Process

Once approval was received from all IRB’s involved, contact was made with the corresponding personnel in the athletic department of the selected university to obtain access to the potential participants and gather their verbal and written consent. The researcher then programmed in conjunction with the participant a date and time to conduct the interview. Participants were given a choice to select their preferred interview method. The two options available were face-to-face or via telephone. For this research, all 14 participants selected the telephone interview option. The only face-to-face contact was made prior when meeting the participant and obtaining their written consent. Each interview had an approximate duration of between 20 minutes, which included introductions and any clarifications regarding the process. An interview guide, see Appendix F and G, was utilized to conduct the interview process through the following themes: Basketball experiences and interactions with society. The interview guide used aimed to explore each participant's experiences of playing basketball and providing a viable connection where relaxed; open conversation could blossom, obtain information of lived experiences, and how they perceived those experiences. Also, a quick survey was
given to players to determine their eligibility and how many years they had played the sport, see Appendix H and I.

Each interview began with the following question: Can you tell me how you got involved in basketball? This lead-in question was to establish a relative comfort for each participant and to set the ambiance for the following questions. All the questions from the interview guide were asked to each participant. However, if the interviewee had already answered a question, the following statement was verbalized: It seems that you have touched on this on a previous question, but do you have anything else you would like to share or clarify? Once all relevant data has been collected, and data saturation was close to or achieved, the interview finished.

All the interviews were digitally recorded, and a journal accompanied the researcher to ensure relevant information such as voice tone and interruptions were noted since they would not show up in the digital recordings. As Opdenakker (2006) noted, these aspects give the interviewer much extra information that can be added to the verbal answer of the interviewee. Via telephone, most types of nonverbal language are inaccessible, yet interviewers may still make a note of pauses, the tone of voice, and similar paralanguage cues. Notes from phone interviews provide more depth during the transcription process, providing a more accurate audio transcription analysis and a holistic view of the experience told by the participant.

After finishing each interview, each participant received a summary of the study’s findings and a gift card to incentivize their participation. Transcriptions were offered to the participants once the interview process culminated. As soon as the interview culminated, each participant received a formal thank you.
3.4.3 Ethical Considerations

The participants selected for this research were of Puerto Rican ethnicity. A researcher is required to respect the culture so that the participants may open to the researcher through their responses. Culture is one of the main things that make people who they are and disrespecting their culture could mean that one does not respect them. No doubt, it is one of the barriers that is experienced during research, and it is up to the researchers to respect these cultures for quality data. Respecting the culture of a target group ensures that researchers value all people despite how different and diverse their culture.

Females were the ones being analyzed during the research. Since the purpose of the study was to explore the essence of how female athletes perceive their participation in the sport of basketball within the Puerto Rican sports. Females are considered the weak sex, and this can lead to underestimation of their potential by sexist researchers (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The researcher needs to ensure that the participants felt comfortable and respected during the interview process. The purpose is to make sure they are open with the researcher in providing information regarding the research question. Otherwise, respondents could get irritated, and this would limit the quality of the data collected. This respect for females helps in ensuring that researchers do not take sides on either sex. Support for either sex would lead to biased conclusions because one will make recommendations depending on how they feel about males or females. Therefore, neutrality is vital when carrying out this research so that no sex will feel inferior.

The legal and ethical issues presented in this research study are relatively minor but critically important. All participants were of legal age. There were no concerns
regarding the treatment of minors or the need for parental consent. Before beginning the interview, each participant was informed of the general purpose of this study and was offered a consent form for participation. No participants declined to sign the consent form, and all participated willingly. Considering various personalities and situations, each participant received the most appropriate accommodation needed for the interviews.

As previously stated, every participant was assigned a pseudonym to provide privacy and safeguard the identity of each participant. Any reference made to a participant was done so with an assigned pseudonym. Furthermore, all data was reported with the utmost integrity and honesty irrelevant to the results obtained. Copies of the study were made available upon request for each participant involved.

### 3.4.4 Data Analysis

Before describing the analytical procedures of the dataset, a brief description of data collection follows: Semi-structured, phone interviews were conducted using a pre-prepared interview guide. Participants were encouraged to tell stories using their own words. Each interview lasted from 15-20 minutes, and the primary researcher conducted all of them. The researcher, at 14 participants, determined the point of saturation. All interviews were conducted in Spanish, the participant’s primary language. The recorded interviews were transcribed into Spanish, and subsequently, a line-by-line translation was done to English. The researcher ensured that every translation into English was a faithful expression of the original sentiment made in Spanish. The researcher double-checked all transcripts since they were translated from Spanish to English.

Once all digital audio recordings were transcribed, the data analysis process began. For this study, the data analysis used the Colaizzi analysis method. Colaizzi’s
unique seven-step process provides a rigorous analysis, with each step staying close to
the data. The result is a concise yet all-encompassing description of the phenomenon
under study, validated by the participants that created it (Morrow et al., 2015). The
following steps guided the plan for data analysis based on Colaizzi’s method:

1. The researcher thoroughly reads and rereads the transcribed interviews
to identify with the data and to acquire a sense of each and his or her
background and experiences.

2. From the transcripts, the researcher identifies significant statements
which pertain directly to the proposed phenomenon.

3. The researcher develops interpretive meanings of each of the significant
statements. The researcher rereads the research protocols to ensure the
original description is evident in the interpretive meanings.

4. The interpretive meanings become arranged into clusters, which allow
themes to emerge. The researcher seeks validation, avoids repetitive
themes, and notes any discrepancies during this process.

5. The themes become integrated into an exhaustive description. The
researcher also refers to the theme clusters back to the protocols to
substantiate them.

6. The researcher produces a concise statement of the exhaustive
description and provides a fundamental statement of identification, also
referred to as the overall essence of the experience.

7. The reduced statement of the exhaustive description is presented to the
study’s participants in order to verify the conclusions and the development of the essence statement. If discrepancies are noted, the researcher should go back through significant statements, interpretive meanings, and themes in order to address the stated concerns (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 48-71).

Being fully immersed in the data was imperative before analysis. All the notetaking, coding, conceptual maps, and sorting process facilitated a level of organization to achieve categorical saturation. McNabb (2002) suggested developing a map for facilitating qualitative analysis, which influenced early thinking about data collection through the phenomenological approach. In subscribing to this method, the following phases guided the initial data examination for this study before moving into two phases of clustering and coding. First, a reflection of the data was done by stepping back and reading all material used to collect data. Second, a note-taking process began to markup material determined to be interesting, as a reread took place in order to initiate a structured interaction with the data.

Hycner’s (1999) data analysis process recommended to bracket the commentary and begin phenomenological reduction chronologically. The data reduction process began with open coding and interpretive statements, where suggested words were selected to represent best-emerging topics that might serve to form categories of meaning. Afterward, the identification of salient points from within the data took place and was used to shape the development of the core themes further. The following phase again required additional coding and memos but was more focused on justifying the evolving analysis to confirm, revising emerging topics, and redirecting those ideas to meaning units. The final stage required deep thought about the evolving categories and search for
alternative understanding before converting the new categories into thematic units and using the themes to compose the detailed report. Before reaching the final stage of data confirmed themes, it was required to summarize, modify, and validate ideas before settling on the general and unique themes to create the composite summary.

3.4.4.1 NVivo Use

A computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, NVivo 12, was used to aid in the data management and analysis process. The software was also used to code formulated meanings for comparison with manually coded clusters and themes. The research process was directed by the researcher, not by software. However, NVivo 12 was utilized as a primary coding source in conjunction with manually recorded codes and themes done by the researcher. The software was useful for arranging, categorizing, and sorting through data.

3.4.5 Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are essential in establishing trustworthiness. This study utilized various strategies designed to foment credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Lincoln and Guba also indicated one of the ways to ensure credibility and transferability is to ensure that those interviewed have the experience to discuss the phenomenon the researcher seeks to explore. Therefore, all participants were female basketball players who play competitive basketball. One way to establish confirmability involves the elimination of researcher bias. A high degree of bias discredits the research. Therefore, for the findings to be valid and reliable, there should have been minimal (if any) degree of biases. Lack of bias shows that the researcher did not interfere with the
results recorded, and in changing the thoughts of the respondents. To reduce bias in this study, a phenomenological reduction or an epoche took place. The phenomenological reduction resolves to suspend impressions, conceptions, or beliefs surrounding the truth or accuracy of the phenomena in question (Christensen, Welch, & Barr, 2017, p. 118).

During interviews, the use of digital audio recordings permitted the researcher to capture the interviews as they happened in real-time, preventing the addition or exclusion of data from the participant's interviews. The other strategy utilized to ensure that the information was reliable was establishing the clarity of terms used throughout the research (Healy & Perry, 2000). The participants of the research are of Puerto Rican origin, which is a Latino country where not all people are conversant in English. Therefore, a translation was required of the Spanish transcription to the official English version of the transcription. It is critical to ensure that all complex terms are analyzed, ensuring that during data recording, all the data collected is understood. Research cannot be valid if there are cases where the researcher had to assume what respondents meant by various terminologies. This analysis of terms and phrases was done at the same time it was experienced to reduce the chances of various terms not being interpreted accordingly. Manual coding and transcription helped ensure objective interpretation of datasets, which helped reduce bias. Vignettes from the interviews were used to illustrate key themes for this study, which also served as support for the results of the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

The accuracy of the data was developed and assured in various manners. Manual coding and transcription took place and helped ensure a deep understanding of the interviews. Redundant monosyllable words and phrases were left out for transcription
purposes. Each participant evaluated their transcription documents for accuracy, which assisted with validity and reliability. Also, member checking occurred with the participants once the researcher had a fundamental statement of identification, also referred to as the overall essence of the experience. Demonstrating data saturation was a factor in ensuring all gathered data included enough information to provide credibility to the themes proposed. Transferability was limited in this research study, as this study sought to explore a unique topic.

3.5 FINAL COMMENTS ON THE STUDY’S METHODOLOGY

Chapter Three provides a guideline for the methods for this study. The data collection focused on how female athletes perceive their participation in the sport of basketball within the Puerto Rican sport culture. Justification of the decision to embrace a qualitative discovery navigated by a phenomenological method that provides for research focused on the lived experiences of the participants was discussed. The total amount of participants was 14 athletes. All participants were female of 18 years or older, played competitive basketball collegiately or professionally, had a bachelor's degree or were in the process of earning one, were of Puerto Rican descent, and had lived in Puerto Rico for at least one year. The decisions surrounding the selected sample, subjects, access, and setting were outlined to demonstrate a focus for the study, which aligned with personal, professional interests and aspires to contribute to a better understanding of women’s experience of sport. The procedures to analyze the data were based on Colaizzi’s seven-step process (Sanders, 2003). In conjunction with manual coding from the researcher and software of Nvivo. Finally, the strategies used to promote the overall trustworthiness of this study were outlined to ensure the study was legitimate. The goal of Chapter Four is
to provide the findings of the study and demonstrate that the methodology described in Chapter Three was followed.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1 OVERVIEW

The purpose of Chapter Four is to present the findings of the investigative process done to reveal how female basketball athletes in this study, cataloged their experiences, in a phenomenological context. The interviews consisted of 14 college student-athletes and four professional basketball players. The methodology highlighted in Chapter Three provides commonality or the essence of their experiences as women basketball players in Puerto Rico. Chapter Four contains the results of the phenomenological study conducted to answer the research question:

RQ1: How do female athletes perceive their participation in the sport of basketball within the Puerto Rican sports culture?

This chapter includes information on how long each participant has played the sport, implementation of Colaizzi’s data analysis method (1978), and how the transcripts significant statements were clustered to develop themes. Vignettes of the individual interviews are offered to emphasize critical themes found during the research. The data from this study yielded six themes, which are to be explored later in the chapter.

4.1.1 Summary of Participants

The findings of this phenomenological study collected data via 14 interviews with eight student-athletes, two student-athletes that had recently completed their playing-eligibility, and four professional players. The sampling strategy chosen for this study was purposeful and homogeneous. The strategy of picking a small homogeneous sample has the purpose of describing some particular subgroups in-depth (Patton, 1990, p. 173).
Also, the use of Criterion-I sampling, which helps identify and select all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 535), was utilized to narrow down potential candidates.

The participants included those who met the following requisite: (a) participants were female between ages 18-40 years; (b) Puerto Rican descent; (c) played competitive basketball in college or professionally in Puerto Rico; (d) had or were in the process of obtaining a Bachelor’s degree; (e) resided in the island for more than one year. Thirteen of the 14 participants in the study were between the ages of 20-28 years. There was one participant in her early 30’s. Regarding the participation of university players, rapport was built with the team captain of the university’s team; then, she introduced the researcher to potential candidates to participate in the study. In total, the team captain provided a list of 12 players who were contacted via phone to participate. Only nine college players showed interest, the other three never replied. Of the nine players who showed interest, only one athlete declined to an interview due to personal reasons.

Contact with the four professional basketball players was facilitated by approaching them through their social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram. The other two college players were known acquaintances of the researcher, wherein the previous spring semester had culminated their 4-year playing eligibility but were still enrolled in the university.

It was relatively easy for the researcher to interview participants who were college athletes since practices and gameplay had yet to begin early in the fall academic semester. Professional athletes proved more difficult to coordinate an interview date, due
to ongoing responsibilities with personal work and training sessions for the upcoming season.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Playing Experience (Years)</th>
<th>Competitive Level Played</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bianca</td>
<td>22 years</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudia</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frances</td>
<td>25 years</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gigi</td>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haley</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ida</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kendra</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linnet</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milo</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odette</td>
<td>19 years</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1. Participant Level of Experience*

Figure 1 presents a summary of the participants involved with the study by displaying their current playing category and their years playing basketball. Please note that all names used in the interview process are complete fictional pseudonyms to protect the identity of each participant. The introductory statement used to introduce the researcher to the participants is found in Appendix B.

4.1.2 Data Collection

The 14 interviews with the female basketball athletes served as the primary data source for this study. After every interview was transcribed, an extraction of significant statements took place. Those extracted significant statements were converted into
formulated meanings according to Colaizzi’s data analysis process (Colaizzi, 1978). The original interview protocol of the study is provided in **Appendix F and G**.

### 4.2 DATA ANALYSIS

A total of 286 significant statements and formulated meanings were extracted from the 14 interviews. Once the formulated meanings became established, coded clusters were created manually and then with the use of *Nvivo12*. Figure 2, located at the end of this chapter, demonstrates how the coded clusters led to the development of the themes from the research. The six themes that emerged from the formulated meanings were: (a) Athlete Perception, (b) Benefits of Basketball, (c) Experiences in Basketball, (d) Motivation, (e) Puerto Rico’s Sports Culture, and (f) Puerto Rican’s Society’s view on Women’s Basketball.

#### 4.2.1 Athlete Perception

In this phenomenological study, participants were asked to share their experiences and perceptions regarding the phenomenon of playing competitive basketball at the university or professional level. All the participants shared their different takes on their lived experiences while playing basketball in Puerto Rico. For the first theme of *Athlete Perception*, two clusters became evident from the formulated meanings. Each cluster in this theme provides a perspective that the interviewed athletes shared regarding their participation in basketball. Those clusters are labeled as respect and equity that women’s basketball receives. Although some participants had a better conceptual understanding than others, most of them shared very similar ideas regarding their perceptions while playing basketball in Puerto Rico.
4.2.1 Respect

In the second coded cluster, the participants made comments about their participation in teams and organizations during their careers. When the participants made their expressions to the researcher, the majority stated that they could catalog experiences as one of respect. However, various athletes that provided a more detailed view of their current experiences playing. There were instances where positive and negative remarks were made, yet most of the reactions were positive, citing a certain degree of respect. Claudia’s commentary reinforces the idea of improving respect for women’s basketball in Puerto Rico.

Claudia: I already think that they are giving us the same treatment that they give to the men. That same respect, the way how basketball is operated. I believe that with those messages, we have made clear that women can be equal or better than men; it has impacted and has left us with excellent results. Thanks to the training, respect, values, and even in the same game, I think we have seen the difference, the change. There is still room to improve in that aspect, but respect is given to us. We are almost the same level as the men. I would not tell you completely, but almost.

4.2.1.3 Equity

As human beings, we all yearn to be treated with love, respect, appreciation, and dignity. This idea also applies to athletics. Most, if not all athletes, want to feel appreciated, whether it be by their coaches, organization, teammates, or school. With women that play basketball, having fair and equal treatment is not always the case. This cluster encompasses how the players perceive their treatment while they played at the institution, in their professional teams, and with the general public. Milo makes a comparison on how the treatments of the women’s team in the university are different from that of the men’s team.

Milo: When I arrived at the university, the boys were treated super differently. They even practiced with an athletic trainer and had a physical therapist, that if something happened
to them, bend an ankle, a finger, or something, they would quickly check them. We practiced, and we had no trainer nor anything. The boys' team in the university had a dressing room with air conditioning, TV, chairs, drawers to store their uniforms, and we had nothing. The public restrooms used by the entire university community, that was our dressing room. The treatment they gave to the men seemed superior.

The development of the first theme of Athlete Perception consisted of three clusters, which are perceptions, respect, and treatment. The formulated meanings, once coded, led to the overview of this theme, which deals with an athlete’s point of view with their participation. See Appendix K for other significant statements athletes made that provide substance to the clusters and helped define the theme.

4.2.2 Benefits of Basketball

Each participant was asked how the sport of basketball had benefited them through their playing careers. In this being an open-ended question, a multitude of benefits was expressed to the researcher. In this theme, benefits are defined as things or situations obtained while playing the sport of basketball competitively. The benefits mentioned are considered by the athletes to have a positive impact on their lives. Several clusters became evident from the formulated meanings. For the second theme of the Benefits of Basketball, five clusters helped established the theme. The clusters created referred to different areas of an athlete's life where basketball has provided a beneficial impact, as seen through their eyes.

4.2.2.1 Development of Traits

During the research process, the investigator bracketed the idea that sports could teach character or otherwise develop it. When the formulated meanings became clustered, it was evident that a majority of the players interviewed believed basketball benefited them in developing certain traits in their lives. Furthermore, the traits described were
repeated by various athletes independently. Gigi was very expressive with the traits developed through basketball and how her experience from youth categories to professionally have shaped her. Her expressions embody this cluster.

**Gigi:** My experience playing all the stages, from youth categories to playing in college and professionally also. It has been significant. Each of these facets has taught me a little discipline, dedication, effort, give the extra mile, and all those sets of things have achieved in me becoming the player that I really am.

### 4.2.2.2 Friendships

In the Friendships cluster, athletes made direct associations of their inter-personal relationships. A majority of the athletes expressed their friendship circle as mostly constituted by fellow athletes and including basketball team members. However, there was only one athlete that made mention that her close friends were not athletes. Inter-personal relationships play an essential role in the lives of humans. Bianca describes why an athlete may opt to associate with fellow athletes.

**Bianca:** The majority, well, all of them are basketball players. With them, the conversation flows more because we play the same sport. We like almost the same things. That is different from someone who is not an athlete. You do not necessarily have to be a basketball player. I have volleyball friends, baseball players, and like the friendship flows more than with someone who is not an athlete.

### 4.2.2.3 Improved Health

Contact sport typically demand a muscular physique to withstand the bumps, pushes, takedowns, hustle, and tussle. The researcher bracketed this idea at the beginning of the investigation. By the end of the process of clustering the formulated meanings, only a handful of players made direct mention of improving their health and physique while playing basketball. Milo’s statement regarding health and how basketball benefited her covers this cluster adequately.
Milo: More so in the physical part. Because apart from basketball, before I started, I did nothing. I was only in my house. When I started to play basketball, I trained, I went to the gym. I was a non-obese person, but I can tell you I was chubby. Afterward, I have stayed in shape, thanks to basketball.

4.2.2.4 Scholarships

During the interviews, the benefits of obtaining a scholarship to study was a very recurrent concept. In total, 12 of the 14 participants made a direct association that due to their talents in basketball, they were able to receive offers to study in high school and university. This study did not include an emphasis on what type of coverage the scholarships offered the students-athletes. Only one participant made a comment regarding the current situation with the public university and the fiscal situation the country faces in her reduced scholarship contributions. All participants were grateful for this received benefit. Jane expresses how basketball has provided educational opportunities for her since middle school until now in her university stage. Her commentary embodies this cluster.

Jane: Basketball itself has benefited me a lot economically. My parents have not had to pay much for my education since I was in 7th grade. They have not had to pay any kind of significant fee or tuition for my education since basketball has given me many scholarships.

4.2.2.5 Stress Relief

Once the formulated meanings were clustered, the concept of playing basketball and it being a stress relief mechanism for the players emerged. The research found that most athletes enjoyed their time playing the game of basketball, even with academic responsibilities. The athletes expressed that their time on a basketball court was an escape of daily issues, situations, or problems they had. Competitive basketball has its stress factors such as performing at high levels consistently and the pressure to win games, yet
the athletes interviewed did not mind those pressure factors. Kendra talks about how to enjoy her time playing but also finding a balance to meet her academic responsibilities.

**Kendra:** When I am on the court, I am not aware of anything other than my game, my teammates, and my coaches. On the court, it is my free time, my fun time, space for me to have a good time. Being off the court, I do think about the game, I do think about basketball, but when one is in college, one has many other things to do. On the court, it is my free time from all the stress and things that happen in college.

The development of the second theme of the Benefits of Basketball consisted of five clusters, which are the development of traits, friendships, improved health, scholarships, and stress relief. The formulated meanings led to the overview of this theme, which refers to the perceived benefits of playing basketball. The conglomeration of these clusters led to the development of this theme. See *Appendix L* for other significant statements athletes made that provide substance to the clusters and define the theme.

### 4.2.3 Experiences in Basketball

Experiences are subject to be interpreted in different manners. However, once the formulated meanings were clustered, several ideas emerged from the data. The questions asked to the athletes regarding their experiences were open-ended. For the third theme, *Experiences in Basketball*, five clusters were established regarding the athlete's experiences in the sport of basketball through the years of their participation. The clusters range from different situations of their beginning stages in basketball to moments of adversity during their playing career.
4.2.3.1 Beginnings in Basketball

Once the formulated meanings were clustered, several concepts stood out. This cluster has two sub-sections. The interview guide asked the participants how they got involved with basketball and who were some of the influential people who played a role in their sports affiliation. The sub-clusters are categorized as origins and influences. Both sub-clusters help give detail on how the athletes began their participation. All the participants gave concrete answers and references to their beginnings.

4.2.3.1.1 Origins

All the athletes interviewed gave a direct age reference for when they began to play basketball. The athletes also provided the setting where they began their official participation. By official participation, the researcher is referring to organized basketball, whether being in scholastic sports or club affiliation. This sub-cluster has a direct association with its counterpart sub-cluster, influences. It is important to note that the average age of the athletes interviewed began their participation in basketball around the ages of seven through 12 years of age. Again, this average age is making references to participation in organized basketball. Some players made references to their involvement in basketball as going back to as young as four years old.

4.2.3.1.2 Influences

In this sub-cluster, athletes talked about who influenced them in their participation in basketball. There were three family relations that stood out. These were the father figure, the sibling figure [brother or sister], and the cousin figure. It was interesting to find and observe the impacts of family influences. In this case, the impact was creating a deep passion for basketball. Most of the athletes expressed how family figures, like their
father or siblings, played a role in their love affair with basketball. Based on the statements made by the athletes interviewed, family influences play a role in sports participation. Now, these are athletes that made it to the top echelons of competitive basketball.

4.2.3.2 Youth Categories

Sports leagues have increased opportunities for youth sports. Basketball is no exception in Puerto Rico. For young girls, the situation is different. Some of the older participants made references that their early basketball participation was with male teams. However, this is no longer seen due to the proliferation of women’s basketball youth teams and gender separation. The level of competition also differs as far as expectations go. Jane talks about this when expressing her experiences in youth categories from her early playing days.

Jane: In the youth leagues, the atmosphere is a bit freer. Although the pressure of the parents may be present, but it is a bit freer. One still does not know what one is doing. But it is to develop and have fun. In the school leagues, the environment is a bit tenser because of the fans and the expectations of coaches, parents, all people watching the sport. All eyes are on the athlete and is tenser.

4.2.3.3 Challenges

In this cluster, athletes expressed some of the most challenging situations they faced during their careers. Initially, different answers were obtained. When the formulated meanings were clustered, the emergence of some of the challenges for female basketball players came to pass. The following excerpt expresses the challenges athletes perceived while playing competitive basketball. Linnet talks about her transition from high school to university and how playing basketball with academics impacted her.

Linnet: My first year, the academics drained me a lot. It was one of the most stressful moments I have had in conjunction with basketball. The jump that one gives from high
school to university is not so easy for an athlete, of course, if you are a high-performance athlete. I explain the academic workload, at least that I can talk about my university is very strong academically. There are no warm cloths given, even if it is a super good athlete in their sport. You may be the most prominent athlete, but that does not mean that they will pad your hand. That first year I had was a bit stressful; all the classes drained me. I had to take sports psychology to overcome that bitter drink.

4.2.3.4 Gratification

This cluster explored the positive side of the achievements made by the athletes interviewed. Expressions of gratification were made in diverse ways. A noteworthy differentiation is that gratification is not to be confused with motivation. As the study only emphasized on gratifying experiences through basketball. Out of the 14 athletes interviewed, four players represented Puerto Rico in international youth competitions and three players in the adult category. It can be assumed that representing one’s country does carry a sense of gratification since not all basketball players have that opportunity. The sense of gratification validates all the hard work they have put into practice and games. Gigi summarizes some of the gratifying moments shared by various players with the same line of thought.

Gigi: Gratifying, one of the rewarding moments, was being able to represent Puerto Rico. I had the opportunity to represent Puerto Rico. I had the opportunity to win different youth leagues and multiple LAI championships.

The development of the third theme of Experiences in Basketball consisted of four clusters, which are beginnings in basketball, youth categories, challenges, and gratification. The formulated meanings led to the development of this theme, which deals with an athlete’s experiences while playing basketball. See Appendix M for other significant statements athletes made that provide substance to the clusters and helped define the theme.
4.2.4 Motivation

During the interview process, athletes talked about what served as motivation for them to keep playing basketball. Four clusters stood out upon coding the formulated meanings. The clustered statements associated directly with what an athlete perceives as Motivation to play competitive basketball. The following clusters give insight into the motivation of female basketball players to continue participating.

4.2.4.1 Prove Doubters wrong

Doubt gives an invitation to challenge those who may have second guesses about themselves. For female basketball players, this is a current mindset based on the data collected from their expressions. This cluster gives insight into the athletes interviewed mindset when they step on a court and how doubt serves as external motivation. Claudia gave an interesting take on this sense of proving doubters wrong.

Claudia: That they have underestimated me so much. Since I started in this sport, there have been many people who have underestimated me, and that always has motivated me; to improve and show that I can get anywhere I want to go. The criticism, both in my face and at my back, many from coaches who criticized or still criticize in the way I play, the way I am on the court. Because of the court, I am another person. But inside the court, many people judge without knowing. I think that has motivated me a lot.

4.2.4.2 Passion

When individuals genuinely love what they do, it usually is accompanied by a sense of passion. The athletes interviewed made expressions about their love for the sport of basketball. The passion for the game is an important concept to understand. Basketball is a contact sport, and subjecting one’s body to the sport for years demonstrates a devoted mindset to the sport. This motivation is an internal factor. Bianca’s expressions embody this sentiment regarding passion and its link with motivation.
Bianca: I do not know what to tell you about motivation, because I love basketball. I love to play basketball. It is not something that I say I play because it motivates me. Because since I was little, I liked it and I have taken that love to the game because I like it, I love it.

4.2.4.3 Adrenaline

The adrenaline cluster was found to have been accompanied by a sense of passion for basketball. When an individual feels a rush of emotions, like adrenaline, it can be contagious and even addicting. This cluster delves into the expressions regarding the sense of adrenaline as a source of external motivation to play basketball. Action-packed sporting activities like basketball come with adrenaline moments. Audrey expresses this sentiment while playing basketball and the rush she receives when on the court.

Audrey: When I am on the court playing, you feel that adrenaline, that thrill of winning games, what to do if you are losing, what to do to mount a comeback, things like that...but you need that adrenaline, that emotion of returning to the court and playing.

4.2.4.4 Scholarship

This cluster appeared to have relevance among the collegiate players regarding what motivated them to play. The perception they had towards scholarships could be interpreted as a sense of gratitude, and they owed it to the university to give it their best.

The expressions made during the interviews provide evidence of this sentiment. A scholarship can be viewed as an external motivational tool besides being a financial aid.

Milo shares her expression on how her scholarship motivated her to do her best.

Milo: My motivation, I do not know if to call it motivation, but what I thought was that basketball was paying me for my studies because I am one of those students that the Pell Grant does not cover my tuition completely or else my father would have to pay it for the difference. That was my thinking every time I entered the court. “Milo, keep on playing because they are paying for your studies.”

The fourth theme of Motivation was developed with four clusters, which are proving doubters wrong, passion, adrenaline, and scholarship. The conglomeration of the
formulated meanings led to the emergence of the clusters, which led to the creation of this theme, which deals with an athlete’s motivation to play basketball. See Appendix N for other significant statements athletes made that provide substance to the clusters and helped define the theme.

4.2.5 Puerto Rico’s Sports Culture

Three clusters emerged to define the theme of *Puerto Rico’s Sports Culture*. These clusters express the perceptions female basketball players have towards the Puerto Rican sports culture and their participation in competitive basketball. The athletes expressed how they have perceived through the years of Puerto Rican society’s acceptance and support of women’s basketball. In Puerto Rico, basketball is considered a men’s game due to the machismo in the patriarchal system. The findings of this theme help describe what society thinks of women’s basketball from the view of the females who play competitive basketball.

4.2.5.1 Perceptions

When prompted to elaborate on the perception of playing basketball in Puerto Rico, participants alluded to various situations. Throughout most of the interviews, the perceptions tilted towards a negative aspect regarding their participation in basketball. The general perception of the athletes interviewed is adequality expressed by Frances when she states the following.

**Frances:** Most of the people watch male basketball, and most of the people on the street do not even know that there is a female professional league in Puerto Rico. It is for you to see that people are unaware that there are women’s sports such as basketball. In truth, sometimes it is frustrating because you play this sport with a lot of love, and there are people who do not even know who you are and do not know the players that are playing. That same person on the men’s side knows who is who out of the blue. They do not give women’s basketball that affection as they give to men.
4.2.5.2 Lack of Support

The second cluster of this theme, as expressed by the athletes, was a lack of support for women’s basketball. During the interviews, a perception of minimal support was expressed by the participants. When talking about support, the research makes references to general support. Considering an administrative role, equity, support of female basketball programs, and society’s acceptance of women playing basketball, poor fan attendance. Emma described how the male professional leagues get more attention and media coverage and the discrepancies between male and female leagues.

**Emma:** I would say that the Puerto Rican culture still does not accept it. Well, it is not that they do not accept. They are accepting it because they still say that sport is for men. You still see it, and I do not know if you have noticed that Baloncesto Superior Nacional (BSN) games are televised more often, promoted much more, people go frequently to the games, and I say that if there were equity of importance of both the feminine and the male. I think the development of the players from here in Puerto Rico would be much better. Although they are accepting it, as I told you, women do not play the same as men in that sense of basketball. However, they are liking it, you are seeing change, but there is much to do.

Fan attendance in collegiate and professional level gauges the interest society in general has toward that activity. The phenomenon of attendance was emphasized to gather firsthand perceptions about women’s basketball game attendance in Puerto Rico. This cluster gathers expressions made by athletes regarding the fan attendance at their games. In the LAI, female teams play first and then followed by the men. This format has led to perceptions of disinterest from the fans, as expressed by Kendra in the following excerpt.

**Kendra:** When I entered the university, it was very impactful for me, I went through my first year, and our games started at 6:30 pm, and the boys at 8:00 pm. The people arrived at 7:50 pm. It was like the fans did not care for the environment or us playing; it did not matter that we are playing before the boys.
4.2.5.3 Growing Culture Support

Not all is negative regarding support from Puerto Rico’s society. There seems to be positive support towards women’s basketball. Although it is not as massive as compared to the men’s, there are instances where support can be evident as perceived by the athletes interviewed. Gigi expresses her take on the support for women’s basketball in Puerto Rico.

Gigi: Women's basketball has had a breakthrough over the years. Comparing it with men would not be fair; each one has its stride. The male branch has always had a boom. For that reason, they have more emphasis, more sponsors, more fans, although at this time, it has had a notable decrease. The feminine branch has been on the rise with the many achievements that the women's national select team has had in recent years. There are many more girls interested in basketball, and although it is sometimes uphill, they stay because they like it. The support, although sometimes seems to be minimal. There will always be a select group that likes and cares about women's sport and its development.

The development of the fifth theme of Puerto Rico’s Sports Culture consists of three clusters, which are lack of support, fan attendance, and culture support. The formulated meanings led to the development of this theme, which deals with an athlete’s perception and experiences in dealing with the sports culture while playing basketball in Puerto Rico. See Appendix O for other significant statements athletes made that provide substance to the clusters and helped define the theme.

4.2.6 Puerto Rican’s Society’s view on Women’s Basketball

The sixth theme correlates to the perception the female basketball players have when interacting with society. Three clusters were established to help define the theme of the Puerto Rican’s Society's view on Women’s Basketball. These clusters express the perceptions and experiences female basketball players have with the general public. The
findings of this theme help describe what society thinks of women that play basketball from the view of the female athletes themselves

4.2.6.1 Stereotypes

The first cluster makes references to situations where female athletes experienced stereotypes for being basketball players. Stereotyping is biased with pre-conceived negative views directed toward an individual without any valid justification. As expressed through the perspective of the athletes. As gathered from the perspectives of the participants, the stereotype cluster presents instances of interactions the athlete had with other individuals. The following excerpts demonstrate the perspective of the athletes and give insight into how people react to their sports affiliation. The athletes made references to how society tried to label sports opportunities based on their gender. In going against the status quo explains how they were perceived and stereotyped. Odette expresses a struggle she had within her own family when deciding to play basketball.

**Odette:** My mother, I do not know if because of her culture or how she was educated, she thought that, like many people, that because we played a sport, any sport under the categorization that is was for men, we were going to become men or something like that.

A significant stereotype is an assumption that all-female basketball athletes are lesbians, solely for their participation in basketball. Natasha makes a distinction and does clarify that there may be female players who have different sexual orientations, yet not all of them share the same sexual preferences.

**Natasha:** Look, yes, I have had moments where I said I am an athlete, and some people do not like people who are athletes as such, and the why of this I would not be able to tell you. However, I have had that discrimination, as they say, directed to people like me, who are female athletes. I have also had situations in the female basketball environment that the players stand out as if they were homosexual, like that of the lesbian ambiance. I can say that there will be some, but not all of us are the same. They generalize a lot of the time of saying that the female basketball girls are from that environment.
4.2.6.2 Social interactions

The following cluster gathered formulated meaning on the interactions the athletes have with individuals. Most of the interactions were deemed friendly by the athletes, and the ones who showed a negative connotation, the athletes, did not seem to care about the opinion of the other’s involved. Natasha expresses how people with whom she interacts show intrigue in her participation in the university’s team.

Natasha: Currently, it is very interesting since I am in the university team, and because knowing that I am a basketball athlete, not all people have the opportunity to represent the university team. So many people ask me how the experience is, what I did to get there, what are some of the benefits that I have, and how have I enjoyed the experience.

The development of the sixth theme of Puerto Rican’s Society’s view on Women’s Basketball consists of three clusters, which are stereotyping, social interactions, and taboo thoughts. The formulated meanings led to the development of this theme, which deals with an athlete’s experiences while playing basketball. See Appendix P for other significant statements athletes made that provide substance to the clusters and helped define the theme.

4.3 FINAL COMMENTS

In this chapter, the six themes that were explored arose from the research of the Puerto Rican female basketball athletes interviewed. The six themes (a) Athlete Perception, (b) Benefits of Basketball, (c) Experiences in Basketball, (d) Motivation, (e) Puerto Rico’s Sports Culture, and (f) Puerto Rican’s Society’s view on Women’s Basketball provided a contextual approach to help explore the primary objective of the thesis:

How do female athletes perceive their participation in the sport of basketball within the Puerto Rican sports culture?
Figure 2 helps summarize the development of the themes found during the investigation process. Throughout the development of this chapter, it was with all intentions to allow the participant’s experiences to speak for themselves. Their excerpts were to shine above the technical aspects of a phenomenological study. Within the extracted narratives, the researcher guided the voice of the participants to make their experiences and their perceptions as clear as possible to better understand the essence of female basketball participation in Puerto Rico. Through the years, female basketball has not been as promoted, respected, and supported as much compared to men’s basketball. The research focused on giving these female basketball athletes a platform to share their experiences and perceptions about what goes on behind the scenes. Chapter Five will go into detail about further discussions and research opportunities.
Figure 2. Development of Themes
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION

5.1 OVERVIEW

The purpose of this study is to explore the essence of how female athletes perceive their participation in the sport of basketball within the Puerto Rican sports culture. The study utilized a phenomenological approach to achieve the objectives of the study. A semi-structured interview guide with open-ended and directed questions was implemented with 14 basketball players, in which 10 of them were collegiate athletes, and four were professional athletes. Out of the 10 collegiate players, eight were from an affiliated NCAA university. All of the participants were purposefully selected. The interviews were conducted in the player's native language, which is Spanish via telephone and digitally recorded. The transcripts, written in Spanish and once approved by the participants, were translated into English and analyzed using Colaizzi’s data analysis method.

The findings of this thesis emerged from the experiences of the 14 participants. The research question was: “How do female athletes perceive their participation in the sport of basketball within the Puerto Rican sports culture?” By answering this question, the study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

1) How do female basketball players perceive their experience in contact sports and how did those experiences shape their perceptions within the sports culture of Puerto Rico.
2) Use themes from athlete interviews to gather information about how their social environment and personal motivation play a role in their commitment to play competitive basketball.

Also included in this chapter is a discussion of the interpretations of the findings, limitations of this study, recommendations for future research, and a conclusion. Based on the analysis of the data the following themes emerged: (a) Athlete Perception, (b) Benefits of Basketball, (c) Experiences in Basketball, (d) Motivation, (e) Puerto Rican Sport Culture, and (f) Puerto Rican’s Society’s view on Women’s Basketball.

5.2 RESEARCH DISCUSSION

Previously, Chapter Two presented a foundation for positioning this study framework based on existing publications involving women and basketball in Puerto Rico. During the literature review, it was found that few studies have been documented in this specific field of women’s basketball in Puerto Rico. While previous studies such as Aybar’s (2008) and Medina’s (2015) research, superficially explored how the dynamic of women and sports played out in Puerto Rico. Aybar’s (2008) research was detailed enough in exploring the essence of their participation in the sport of basketball.

The first theme represented in the study, Athlete Perception, speaks from the perspective of the female athlete and their involvement in the sport of basketball. The findings of this research study, have a slight parallel to the research based on contact sports and non-traditional sports for females, as described by Riemer and Feltz (1995):
Depending on the athlete’s sports participation, she can actively change her status within their social world toward a positive or negative interaction. Sports that have bodily contact between opponents use (or resist) heavy objects, or have the participant projected into or through space over long distances or extended periods are not appropriately perceived (p. 1).

Another direct connection to the literature is based on Aybar (2008) research regarding women participation in sports in Puerto Rico, where the researchers noted:

In Puerto Rico, there is no doubt that women’s participation in sports has increased significantly, yet there is no evidence the latter is occurring under the same level of acceptance, respect, support, and approval received by Puerto Rican males (p. 44-45). As the participants from the present study described their perceptions, it aligns with the concept of not being appropriately perceived, as they expressed differences in treatment compared to the men. Also, the current study suggests that the priority given to women’s basketball is sub-par, demonstrating some similarities with Riemer and Feltz’s research. An essential element is respect. Within the interviews, the athletes felt that some type of respect towards women’s basketball. The perception of the inconsistencies of respect of the participants interviewed includes the lack of media coverage in newspapers, television and social media, inconsistent fan engagement, and overall perception of recognition of their accomplishments. However, it can be argued that respect toward these athletes has increased recently. The respect is partial at best because of the lack of support for women’s basketball. More so, it seems respect is given to the athlete individually, rather than the sport collectively.
The second theme that emerged from the study *Benefits of Basketball* encompasses various elements athletes mentioned regarding their participation. The data collected on topics such as improved health and stress-relief aligns with Nxumalo and Beetge’s (2017) research regarding women’s participation in sport and states:

Physical activity and exercise performed regularly have many physical and mental benefits for men and women. Behavioral and lifestyle choices that people make early in life are likely to influence their health status in later years.

Some of the other benefits described by the participants are friendships, which is supplemental because of participation in a team setting. Their involvement in teams requires social interactions creating bonds that develop naturally with continuous interactions, as needed to build team chemistry. One could state that an athlete may belong to a team yet does not commit socially or emotionally to its members. Still, for a successful team operation when it is game time, coaches emphasize team chemistry. It could be inferred that continuous basketball participation in a team setting allows for its members to develop and nurture their relationships over a common bond.

Furthermore, in the theme of *Benefits of Basketball*, athletes made various references to the development of traits. This concept aligns with UNESCO’s study regarding women empowerment through sport. The direct connection of the data with the literature is noted by UNESCO (2007):

Social benefits of participation in sport are thought to be especially important for girls, given that many girls, particularly in adolescence, have fewer opportunities than boys for social interaction outside the home and beyond family structures.
Women and girls acquire new interpersonal networks, develop a sense of identity, and access new opportunities, allowing them to become more engaged in school and community life. Participation in sport also enables women and girls to enjoy the freedom of expression and movement and increase their self-esteem and self-confidence (p. 9).

Now, this study focused on high-performance athletes. Therefore, their advanced talent skillsets in basketball allowed them to receive scholarships from educational institutions through middle school to university. However, this area was not emphasized as much in this study. All student-athletes thought highly of achieving a scholarship and were grateful for it. Athletes were aware of the difficulty of obtaining a scholarship and more so at the collegiate level.

The third theme represented is *Experiences in Basketball*, which, by its title, denotes lived experiences through the years by the athlete and seen through their eyes. One of the first experiences was through family members. As expressed by the athletes, family members played an essential role regarding their participation; this aligns with the literature, precisely, with Dixon et al. (2008) identifying:

Parents act as role models when their behavior demonstrates the value they place on sport and physical activity through actively engaging in coaching, participating, or just enjoying the sport. The expectancy-value model also assumes that parental influence extends to the interpretation of what children experience. That is, parents can transmit values and norms by communicating their beliefs, acceptance, and support of their child’s participation in sport (p.541-542).
The majority of the athletes got involved with basketball through their fathers. There were instances in which the athlete was the youngest sibling, and the preferences of basketball among their siblings were already present. Thereby the influence of an athlete to play basketball appears to come from her family environment and the parent’s beliefs regarding sport participation. Some of the athletes expressed that initially, their mothers did not approve their participation in basketball. They are demonstrating that family setting can be split upon deciding on what sport to play and the taboo thought of women and basketball.

Regarding the cluster of youth categories, it expresses more so the experiences of the athletes, which is a very biased concept. The comparisons of youth categories to top competitive categories are implicit that the environment is oriented to be more recreational, and there is less emphasis on competition. It connects partially with the literature regarding UNESCO’s (2007) research as correlated in the theme Benefits of Basketball and with women empowerment. Where there was a more significant association with literature was regarding challenging and gratifying moments and the concept of motivation. Motivation is another theme of this study and will be explored in detail subsequently. Athletes found these moments, positive and negative, to provide a sense of motivation to perform better or keep performing at a high level. This third theme more so expresses the essence of lived experiences in basketball of the athletes interviewed.

The fourth theme represented in this study was Motivation. It was the researcher’s emphasis to explore what motivated these athletes to play competitive basketball. The clusters that defined this theme relates to the determination theory and is consistent with
the research of Craike et al. (2009) and Šimková (2017). In their research, Craike et al. stated that motivational types form a continuum ranging from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation and shown that self-determined forms of behavioral regulation have positive outcomes for young people. While Šimková’s interpretation of the determination theory suggests that internal motives are the joy of sports, entertainment, love of action, and the ability to demonstrate and improve the skills, external motives may be in the form of trophies, prizes, praise, or status. Utilizing this literature helps explain this theme in more detail. Based on the four clusters in this theme, three can be categorized as internal motives (adrenaline, passion, prove doubters wrong). While the fourth cluster that is scholarships, it can be defined as an external motive. Observing how three of the four clusters are internal motivation factors, it lends the research to suggest that competitive basketball participation comes entirely from within the athlete. The motivations of external factors such as a scholarship do not fulfill the athlete enough to keep on playing. While scholarships do motivate an athlete to perform to a certain degree, the desire to play basketball more so comes from intrinsic factors such as the passion for the game and demonstrating doubters that women can play basketball at competitive levels.

The fifth and sixth theme, *Puerto Rico’s Sports Culture* and *Puerto Rican Society’s view on Women’s Basketball*, apart from similar origins yet are different in their contexts. However, they are both supported by the literature articulated in Chapter Two. The findings are congruent with Aybar's (2008) findings regarding women and sport participation. The other primary parallel research is from Schmalz and Kerstetter (2006) and suggested:
That participation in sports perceived as gender-specific was noticeably different between the two sexes. The authors had three significant findings. First, they found that children curb their behaviors and sports participation to fit the social norms of appropriate behaviors based on gender (p. 550). Second, gender-neutral sports (such as swimming, running, soccer, and bicycling) had the highest participation rates for boys and girls (p. 550). Third, “children as young as eight are aware of and affected by gender stereotypes in sports and physical activities” (p. 551).

The findings illustrate that although females in sports have come a long way in Puerto Rico, gender stereotypes are still persistent. Despite the increase in sports opportunities available to women, stereotypes about what is socially appropriate still influence how the females in sports are perceived. The athletes expressed this sentiment in the support they receive from Puerto Rico’s sports culture. The inconsistencies in attendance and lack of interest can correlate to the perception Puerto Rico’s society has towards women’s basketball. With that said, there is a niche group that supports women’s basketball, or otherwise, it would not exist as of now and not have multiple youth leagues offering girls tournaments, collegiate leagues, and even a professional league.

The acceptance and proliferation of women’s basketball in Puerto Rico are intertwined with the media coverage it receives. Athletes did perceive a lack of media coverage. However, the perception of what society thinks links to what the media provides. Villalon and Weiller-Abels (2008) and Segrave et al. (2006) found similar results all identifying:
Common ways in which sports broadcasters have framed female athletes involve using certain words and focusing on specific topics that align with the hegemonic view of what constitutes a female athlete. Specifying “women” before the name of an event, whereas male events are just the name of the sport or event, subtly implies that men are the natural participants and thus belong, whereas women are projected as “others.” These media sources typically present compatible ideologies to those dominant group’s views. When applied to the social construct of sport, men and the theme of masculinity are the dominant groups. As such, females and femininity are perceived and portrayed as lesser and weaker.

The idea is observed with the interactions where they become judged or discriminated against for being basketball athletes. Now, not all those interactions were terrible. Most of the athletes implied their interactions were positive. Nevertheless, alluding to the lack of actual support for the game becomes evident. Courts are still empty when women play when compared to the men’s games when the seats are usually half-full or full. Therefore, it seems there is a contradiction between the support an athlete may receive individually, to the support the actual conglomerate of women’s basketball receives from the Puerto Rican society.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

The credibility of the process is paramount to qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Conducting a qualitative inquiry with a phenomenological methodology provides data that can be very rich and dense with information, which requires effort and time to analyze. In the development of the study, various elements identified by the researcher had the potential of creating limitations for the end-result of the thesis. A
A semi-structured interview with preliminary questions was set in place to ensure that each participant experienced a consistent interview process. After the interview culminated, a transcription process provided an opportunity to check the transcription documents for accuracy, which assisted with validity and reliability. Also, each participant received a summarized “essence statement” derived from the analysis of data, in which they agreed or disagreed with the statement. While this study design creates an opportunity for investigating the way female basketball athletes perceive their experiences are playing in Puerto Rico, the phenomenological design indicates a small study size.

Qualitative research focuses on the experience of a few individuals to infer aspects of a phenomenon involving many (Creswell, 2003). A significant limitation involves the participants themselves. Since the study involves young adult participants, there may exist the possibility of encountering participants who struggle to verbalize and describe their experiences in a coherent manner. For this eventuality, the researcher is obligated to further press follow-up questions to extract all the information possible without allocating too much pressure on the participant. Furthermore, the researcher made a concerted effort to eliminate any potential bias from this study by bracketing off his perception and allowing the participants experience to take center stage.

The total sample involved with this study was 14 female basketball athletes, and 10 of the participants were collegiate athletes from NCAA affiliated universities in Puerto Rico. Experiences of players can vary from university to university. This study was focused exclusively on young women who played competitive basketball at the university and professional levels in Puerto Rico. This study excluded younger female basketball athletes who were still in middle school and high school.
Additionally, the revelations in this study are limited to what the participants deem as their experiences from their perspective. Those perspectives must be taken as fact. While the study did part from a general view of women in basketball, every athlete’s environment is different. Thus, what may be an enjoyable experience for one athlete may not be so for another. This variability demonstrated itself in the study in the different perceptions of the athletes.

The most significant limitation of this research is the foundation on which the research was conducted. Phenomenology is not intended to establish conclusions. By nature of the methodology, more questions will arise after the culmination of the thesis than answers. Though frustrating and trying to researchers or readers inexperienced in phenomenology, this lack of conclusion is inherently good because phenomenological methods seek understanding of the phenomenon of note rather than an explanation of it (Creswell, 2013; Dukes, 1984). The lack of a concrete conclusion is not as bad as it may seem. The value of the newly found questions from a phenomenon of lived experience is that other researchers can take this visceral understanding and can dive into other research methodologies that allow for deeper, more specific forms of explanation (Dukes, 1984).

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Phenomenology by nature offers more questions than can be answered, and the potential for expert researchers in various fields of expertise to seek solutions is tremendous. In vein with the previously discussed limitations, future research studies should seek to understand in greater detail the influential components of early sports
participation in basketball. Many of the athletes in this study were from one university, and the professional players were from different teams.

Future research opportunities could involve multiple female basketball university teams in Puerto Rico to try and understand if the phenomenon of support and perception of women’s basketball varies in different parts of Puerto Rico. The Puerto Rican culture is diverse, and ways of thinking can vary significantly in its geographic regions. This study involved student-athletes and professional athletes who resided in Puerto Rico’s metropolitan area. Investigating this phenomenon with the university and its players outside Puerto Rico’s metropolitan area can complement the groundwork established with this research.

Another potential area for research is with middle school and high school female basketball players. Many of the athletes in this study suggested that stereotyping occurred to them for playing basketball. It can be beneficial research to understand the dynamics of how school-aged female basketball players react and manage those social interactions. Many of the players who play during these years do not reach the collegiate ranks, some due to talent, and others quit or retire. It can be a worthwhile endeavor to understand the mindsets of those athletes that choose to quit or retire from basketball and see if stereotyping played a role in their decisions.

A follow-up study that is recommended is the growth of cultural support for women’s basketball in Puerto Rico. The growth in youth categories is indicative of a shift towards more participation. Understanding the correlations between increases in participation and cultural acceptance is an area where valuable data can be obtained.
A final recommendation that can expand the research about women’s basketball in Puerto Rico is to conduct a study on the perception of Puerto Rico’s society and their views of women’s basketball. Attempting to triangulate the lack of fan support in the collegiate and professional leagues expressed in this research. The target group could focus on college-aged students and their perceptions regarding women’s basketball. Again, this study can be expanded to different campuses across Puerto Rico. With the idea to develop a complete concept of perception with regards to women’s basketball in Puerto Rico.

5.5 CLOSING THOUGHTS

This study is an attempt at significant research at large, and specifically phenomenological research with women’s basketball in Puerto Rico. The effort made with this thesis without prejudice represents an honest and best effort to provide a meaningful addition to the body of knowledge of women athletics in Puerto Rico. Understandably, these experiences are a microcosm of perceptions of a select group of athletes. The views and experiences given by these athletes provided a more precise picture of how Puerto Rico’s society perceives women’s basketball from an athlete's view. It was an exciting experience in hearing out these athletes, and their lived experiences through basketball and giving them a voice provided a more profound sense of appreciation for female basketball players.

Often it was a bit confusing or little idea what direction the study could take. Nevertheless, the freedom that comes with phenomenology was both uplifting and refreshing—driven to continue with the understanding that as long as I stood the course that Husserl and a great many others have blazed before me, I would end up with a
complete work that was simultaneously open-ended and complete. The entire thesis experience brought a depth of appreciation and admiration of scholarly researchers. Each chapter permitted to grow as a researcher and scholar while remaining in focus on the essence of quality research studies. It is with these comments that I proudly offer this thesis as the apotheosis to months of tedious, evaluative reading of literature, an attentive examination of transcripts and interactions with these athletes living the phenomenon of interest; to augment the available body of knowledge regarding athletic equality and acceptance of women in sports, especially basketball.
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Sin precedentes inauguración de Liga de Baloncesto Femenino en Juana Díaz

[Unprecedented inauguration of the Women's Basketball League in Juana Díaz].


Greetings,

You are invited to participate in an investigation about the perception of women who play basketball within the context of the Puerto Rican sports culture. This research is carried out by Roberto Medina, a graduate student of the Liberty University Department of Sports, Events and Tourism Administration in Lynchburg, Virginia. The purpose of this study is to explore the essence and establish internal factors that determine the participation of female athletes in Puerto Rican basketball. In addition, it seeks to define how female basketball athletes perceive their participation in the sport of basketball within the Puerto Rican sports culture. The main question of the study seeks to answer the following: How do female athletes perceive their participation in competitive basketball within the Puerto Rican sports culture? There will be a reward for your participation via a gift card as a token of gratitude.

You were identified as a viable participant because of the following criteria: A) A woman of 18 years or older, B) is of Puerto Rican descent, C) has lived for more than 1 year in Puerto Rico, D) in process or has obtained a bachelor's degree (academic degree), E) participation in the university basketball team and F) play competitive basketball at the university or professional level. It is expected that in this study, approximately 12 to 15 people participate as volunteers.

Your participation is of great importance. Your experiences through basketball are unique. By being able to give voice to your experiences, you can help in understanding better the participation of women in Puerto Rican basketball. As well as providing a better awareness as a society affects or influences the decision to participate in basketball and keep playing over time. Therefore, their experiences will help future generations of women's basketball athletes.

If you are willing to participate in the study, you will be asked to participate in an interview process that includes a short survey and participate in an interview. All interviews will be conducted at the UPRRP campus or by telephone to simplify the process. Interviews will be recorded on audio and transcribed for text analysis purposes. The entire process should take approximately 30–45 minutes. Your participation will be completely confidential, and no personally identifiable information will be published.

To participate, please contact me to schedule an interview. Include your contact information. You can contact me by email or by phone.
A consent and questionnaire document is attached to this letter. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Participants will sign and return a physical copy of the consent form when they meet with the investigator for their interview.

Thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Roberto Medina
Student Researcher
APPENDIX B

Email/Written Introduction Script – Spanish Version
Saludos,

Esta invitada a participar en una investigación sobre la percepción de mujeres que juegan baloncesto dentro del contexto de la cultura deportiva puertorriqueña. Esta investigación es realizada por Roberto Medina, estudiante graduado de Liberty University del Departamento de Deportes, Eventos y Administración de Turismo en Lynchburg, Virginia. El propósito de este estudio es explorar la esencia y establecer factores internos que determinan la participación de las atletas féminas en el baloncesto puertorriqueño. Además, procura definir como las atletas femeninas de baloncesto perciben su participación en el deporte del baloncesto dentro de la cultura deportiva puertorriqueña. La pregunta principal del estudio se enfoca en conseguir una respuesta a lo siguiente: ¿Cómo perciben las atletas féminas su participación en el baloncesto competitivo dentro de la cultura deportiva puertorriqueña? Habrá una recompensa por su participación vía una tarjeta de regalo como muestra de gratitud.

Usted fue identificada como participante viable debido a los siguientes criterios: A) Mujer de 18 años o más, B) es de ascendencia puertorriqueña, C) ha vivido por más de 1 año en Puerto Rico, D) en el proceso o ha obtenido una licenciatura (grado académico), E) su participación en el equipo de baloncesto de la universidad y F) juega baloncesto competitivo en la universidad o nivel profesional. Se espera que en este estudio participen aproximadamente de 12 a 15 personas como voluntarias.

Su participación en este estudio es de gran importancia. Sus experiencias vividas a través del baloncesto son únicas. Al poder darle voz a sus experiencias usted podrá ayudar a mejorar la comprensión de la participación femenina en baloncesto puertorriqueño. Al igual proveer una mejor concientización como la sociedad afecta o influye en la decisión de participar en el baloncesto y mantenerse jugando a través del tiempo. Por lo cual sus experiencias ayudarán a futuras generaciones de atletas del baloncesto femenino.

Si está dispuesta a participar del estudio, se le pedirá que participe en un proceso de entrevista que incluye una encuesta corta y participar de una entrevista. Todas las entrevistas se realizarán en el campus UPRRP o vía telefónica para simplificar el proceso. Las entrevistas se grabarán en audio y se transcribirán para fines de análisis de texto. El proceso completo debe tardar aproximadamente 30-45 minutos. Su participación será completamente confidencial y no se publicará ninguna información personal identificable.

Para participar, favor de contáctame para programar una entrevista. Incluya su información de contacto. Me puede contactar a través de correo electrónico o por teléfono.
Se adjunta un documento de consentimiento y cuestionario a esta carta. El documento de consentimiento contiene información adicional sobre mi investigación. Las participantes firmarán y devolverán una copia física del formulario de consentimiento cuando se reúnan con el investigador para su entrevista.

Gracias por su tiempo y consideración.

Sinceramente,

Roberto Medina
Investigador Estudiantil
APPENDIX C

Consent Form – Professional Players
INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Exploring the essence of participation of female Puerto Rican basketball athletes
Roberto Medina
Liberty University
School of Business, Department of Sports, Events, and Tourism Management

I. DESCRIPTION
You are invited to participate in an investigation about the perception of women who play basketball within the context of the Puerto Rican sports culture. This research is being carried out by Roberto Medina, a graduate student of Liberty University’s School of Business, Department of Sports, Events, and Tourism Management in Lynchburg, Virginia. The purpose of this study is to explore the essence and establish internal factors that determine the participation of female athletes in Puerto Rican basketball. In addition, it seeks to define how female basketball athletes perceive their participation in the sport of basketball within the Puerto Rican sports culture. The main question of the study is based on looking for answers to the following: How do female athletes perceive their participation in competitive basketball within the Puerto Rican sports culture? With the vision of defining what factors contribute to motivation, define the perception of the figure of the female basketball athlete, and analyze how these findings help the athletes continue or stop their participation in women’s basketball.

II. RECRUITMENT
There is no relationship between the researcher and the identified participants. The study focuses on the essence of the participation of female athletes in competitive basketball at the university and professional levels. Each participant will have the freedom to decide if they want to participate in the study or not. The researcher will not have access to the participants until they make the initial contact.

III. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA
You were recognized as a viable participant due to the following criteria: A) Woman of 18 years or older, B) is of Puerto Rican descent, C) has lived for more than 1 year in Puerto Rico, D) in the process or has obtained a bachelor’s degree (academic degree), E) has participated in the university basketball team, and F) plays competitive basketball at the university or professional level. I hope that in this study approximately 12 to 15 people participate as a volunteer.

IV. PROCEDURES
If you agree to participate in this investigation, it will take approximately 45 minutes. These will be the procedures to follow:

1. The consent form will be distributed and the purpose of the study will be presented. Next, the parameters of your participation will be defined, such as your rights to participate in part or in all phases, making it clear that your answers will be confidential.
2. You will be told how the use of pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of each participant. Names of institutions, towns, leaders, family members and demographic regions will be replaced with an unidentifiable noun.
3. The investigator will ask if you have any questions related to the study.
4. If there is no doubt and / or after clarifying them, the participant will explain in their own words the relevant points of the study.
5. Once the participant explains in her own words what the study consists of, she will proceed to sign the informed consent.
6. The first phase of the interview will be to complete an informative questionnaire. Once the questionnaire is completed, the researcher will request the recording permission from the participant.
in order to proceed with the interview with the researcher. The recordings will only be used for transcription purposes.

7. At the end of the interview, you will receive a gift card as a token of gratitude.
8. You will be contacted again to review the transcript of the interview and ensure that the transcript is correct and you feel confident that your identity was protected.

V. DATA MANAGEMENT
The Principal Investigator and his supervisor will have access to the raw data. The person in charge of handling all the documents will be the Principal Investigator.

1. The documents to be collected in this study will be the contact information, consent form, a questionnaire, recording and transcription of the audio of the interview. These documents such as the contact information consent sheet and recordings will have direct identifiers, such as your voice, signature and private contacts.

2. Transcripts and questionnaire will have indirect identifiers.

3. Documents will be stored for three years from the end of the investigation. All digital files will be deleted and all physical documents will be shredded and then discarded at the end of three years of storage.

4. At the time of publication, any name used will be a pseudonym or a non-identifiable noun to avoid traceability and identification of their person.

5. Information that will be published will come from segments of the interview that will be modified to reduce identification.

6. No information related to education, characteristics of the participant, previous participation in clubs or teams, or university will be revealed by name.

7. Due to the nature of the study, the population to which the participant belongs, which would be a university or professional female athlete practicing basketball, will be disclosed. There will only be a general reference of the global population that are female between the ages of 18 to 35 years.

VI. RISKS OF PARTICIPATION
The risks of the proposed research are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks that would be found in daily life. Participants may feel some emotional discomfort when answering certain questions. There is also a possible risk of a breach of confidentiality to name tertiary members by name who did not consent to participate in this study or because they are extremely detailed in their descriptions. To reduce possible risks the following strategies will be used:

1. To guarantee the voluntariness each participant will make the initial contact with the researcher.
2. Before beginning the interview, if you agree to participate, you can refuse to answer a question without repercussions.
3. The participant can stop the interview at any time without any repercussion.
4. If the interviewer observes an uncomfortable reaction on their part or perceives an unusual reaction, the subject will be immediately changed and another question will be continued. You may also be asked if you want to continue or end the interview.
5. If the participant has doubts with any question they will be clarified at the moment.
6. Pseudonyms will be used to identify recordings and transcripts.
7. Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym to refer to their person in the data analysis and thus protect their identity.
8. Any third party members (family members, leaders, colleagues, clubs, towns, universities, etc.) mentioned by name during the interview will be assigned a non-identifiable noun to protect their identity. (e.g., the town, the club, the leader, the coach, the university, etc.).
9. The list of pseudonyms of the participants and the information and documents collected will be kept in separate locations in a locked file in a locked office.

Version 2019-05-28
10. Interview will be on the UPRRP campus, via telephone, or in a place that will guarantee your privacy.
11. In the case of any participant offering personal information that could be considered confidential and not pertinent to the study, it will be omitted during the transcription stage.
12. All information collected will be stored under a password and locked only accessible by the investigator for three years after completing the investigation.
13. Recordings will be deleted after a two-month period once the transcription process is completed in order to further protect confidentiality. No recording will be published.

VII. BENEFITS
Participants will not see a direct benefit. However, the expected benefits of the contribution in the research are the following:
1. Understand how society, their thoughts and perceptions about gender in sport affect the motivation of female athletes who practice sports such as basketball.
2. Know and address barriers that limit or affect the participation of young women who want to play basketball in Puerto Rico.
3. Understand how one can work effectively in the Puerto Rican sports culture to make it more accepting with respect to gender and female participation in sports. Having the goal of creating a more comprehensive sports culture related to female athletes.
4. Bring knowledge to situations to improve relations between players and their university environment where they compete and better relate in their daily lives.

VIII. CONFIDENTIALITY
There is a possibility that although their name will not be published, the person can be identified indirectly by the position they occupy or by other unique characteristics shared by very few people. Your identity will be protected as follows:
1. All interaction will be exclusively with the Principal Investigator.
2. The interview will be in a private place in the UPRRP campus, via telephone or a place that guarantees a private participation.
3. In no instance will be included any personal information such as personal identifiers, positions or characteristics that allow their identification in the recordings, transcriptions and text analysis.
4. No photographs or video will be taken during the interview.
5. Pseudonyms will be used to refer to the athlete and no identifiable nouns for third party members.
6. Recordings will be eliminated once the transcription process is finished in order to protect even more the confidentiality. No recording will be published.
7. All transcripts will be edited to reduce the traceability of the participant with pseudonyms and non-identifiable nouns. Likewise, information provided in the interview that is not related to the study will be eliminated.
8. No digital information will be stored in cloud services.
9. Documents, materials and digital data of the investigation will be stored in a digital file protected by a password only known by the researcher for a period of three years after completing the investigation and then will be erased.
10. Physical documents such as the questionnaire and the consent form will be stored separately in locked files in an investigator's office. These will be conserved for a period of three years, once the research is finished the printed documents will be crushed before being discarded.
11. The information or data that can identify it directly or indirectly will be handled confidentially. The Principal Investigator and his supervisor will have access to the raw data that can identify him, including this consent form.

Version 2019-05-28
Officials from Liberty University or from federal agencies responsible for ensuring the integrity of the research may require the researcher to provide the data obtained in this study, including this document.

IX. INCENTIVES
You will receive a $15 gift card from "Dave & Busters" restaurant as an incentive for your participation once the interview process is completed.

X. PARTICIPANT RIGHTS
If you read this document and decide to participate, please understand that the nature of participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate or to abstain will not affect your current or future relationships with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you have the freedom to refuse to answer any question at any time without affecting those relationships. You have the right to withdraw from this investigation at any time. Your decision to withdraw will not have any type of penalty or loss of benefits to which a participant is entitled. If you choose to withdraw from the study before, during, or after the study, please contact the investigator at the email address or telephone number provided to notify you of your decision not to participate. If you decide to withdraw, all collected data will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Once they are destroyed, the participant will be informed.

XI. CONTACT & QUESTIONS

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher[s], you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

NOTE: You will be given a copy of this information to keep in your own files.

XII. DECLARATION OF CONSENT
☐ I certify the permission to the investigator to record the interview for the purpose of transcription.

Your signature on this document means that you decided to participate in this investigation after reading and discussing the information presented on this consent form and that you received a copy of this document.

Name of participant ______________________ Signature ______________________ Date ________________

I discussed the contents of this consent form with the above signer.

Name of Investigator ______________________ Signature ______________________ Date ________________
APPENDIX D

Consent Form – Collegiate Players
INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Exploring the essence of participation of female Puerto Rican basketball athletes
Roberto Medina
Liberty University
School of Business, Department of Sports, Events, and Tourism Management

I. DESCRIPTION
You are invited to participate in an investigation about the perception of women who play basketball within the context of the Puerto Rican sports culture. This research is being carried out by Roberto Medina, a graduate student of Liberty University’s School of Business, Department of Sports, Events, and Tourism Management in Lynchburg, Virginia. The purpose of this study is to explore the essence and establish internal factors that determine the participation of female athletes in Puerto Rican basketball. In addition, it seeks to define how female basketball athletes perceive their participation in the sport of basketball within the Puerto Rican sports culture. The main question of the study is based on looking for answers to the following: How do female athletes perceive their participation in competitive basketball within the Puerto Rican sports culture? With the vision of defining what factors contribute to motivation, define the perception of the figure of the female basketball athlete, and analyze how these findings help the athletes continue or stop their participation in women’s basketball. It should be noted that the researcher has no link with the UPR-RP university.

II. RECRUITMENT
There is no relationship between the researcher and the identified participants. The study focuses on the essence of the participation of female athletes in competitive basketball at the university and professional levels. Consequently, the participants will be those that represent the institution through the women’s basketball team of the UPR-RP. There is no link with the UPR-RP, so there will be no conflicts of interest with the participants or the institution. To minimize coercion in the recruitment process, promotional flyers will be used. To guarantee the voluntariness each participant will make the initial contact with the researcher. In addition, permission would be requested to send an official communication through email from the athletic director to each member of the team, inviting them to participate in the study on a completely voluntary basis. The reason for sending an official communication would be to avoid the disclosure of emails without consent. Likewise, present this study as a legitimate study to the participants. Each participant will have the freedom to decide if they would participate in the study or not. The researcher will not have access to the participants until they make the initial contact.

III. ELEGIBILITY CRITERIA
You were recognized as a viable participant due to the following criteria: A) Woman of 18 years or older, B) is of Puerto Rican descent, C) has lived for more than 1 year in Puerto Rico, D) in the process or has obtained a bachelor’s degree (academic degree), E) has participated in the university basketball team, and F) plays competitive basketball at the university or professional level. I hope that in this study approximately 12 to 15 people participate as a volunteer.

IV. PROCEDURES
If you agree to participate in this investigation, it will take approximately 45 minutes. These will be the procedures to follow:
1. The consent form will be distributed and the purpose of the study will be presented. Next, the parameters of your participation will be defined, such as your rights to participate in part or in all phases, making it clear that your answers will be confidential.
2. You will be told how the use of pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of each participant. Names of institutions, towns, leaders, family members and demographic regions will be replaced with an unidentifiable noun.

3. The investigator will ask if you have any questions related to the study.

4. If there is no doubt and / or after clarifying them, the participant will explain in their own words the relevant points of the study.

5. Once the participant explains in her own words what the study consists of, she will proceed to sign the informed consent.

6. The first phase of the interview will be to complete an informative questionnaire. Once the questionnaire is completed, the researcher will request the recording permission from the participant in order to proceed with the interview with the researcher. The recordings will only be used for transcription purposes.

7. At the end of the interview, you will receive a gift card as a token of gratitude.

8. You will be contacted again to review the transcript of the interview and ensure that the transcript is correct and you feel confident that your identity was protected.

V. DATA MANAGEMENT

The Principal Investigator and his supervisor will have access to the raw data. The person in charge of handling all the documents will be the Principal Investigator.

1. The documents to be collected in this study will be the contact information, consent form, a questionnaire, recording and transcription of the audio of the interview. These documents such as the contact information consent sheet and recordings will have direct identifiers, such as your voice, signature and private contacts.

2. Transcripts and questionnaire will have indirect identifiers.

3. Documents will be stored for three years from the end of the investigation. All digital files will be deleted and all physical documents will be shredded and then discarded at the end of three years of storage.

4. At the time of publication, any name used will be a pseudonym or a non-identifiable noun to avoid traceability and identification of their person.

5. Information that will be published will come from segments of the interview that will be modified to reduce identification.

6. No information related to education, characteristics of the participant, previous participation in clubs or teams, or university will be revealed by name.

7. Due to the nature of the study, the population to which the participant belongs, which would be a university or professional female athlete practicing basketball, will be disclosed. There will only be a general reference of the global population that are female between the ages of 18 to 35 years.

VI. RISKS OF PARTICIPATION

The risks of the proposed research are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks that would be found in daily life. Participants may feel some emotional discomfort when answering certain questions. There is also a possible risk of a breach of confidentiality to name tertiary members by name who did not consent to participate in this study or because they are extremely detailed in their descriptions. To reduce possible risks the following strategies will be used:

1. To guarantee the voluntariness each participant will make the initial contact with the researcher.

2. Before beginning the interview, if you agree to participate, you can refuse to answer a question without repercussions.

3. The participant can stop the interview at any time without any repercussion.

Version 2019-05-28
4. If the interviewer observes an uncomfortable reaction on their part or perceives an unusual reaction, the subject will be immediately changed and another question will be continued. You may also be asked if you want to continue or end the interview.

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VII. BENEFITS

Participants will not see a direct benefit. However, the expected benefits of the contribution in the research are the following:

1. Understand how society, their thoughts and perceptions about gender in sport affect the motivation of female athletes who practice sports such as basketball.

2. Know and address barriers that limit or affect the participation of young women who want to play basketball in Puerto Rico.

3. Understand how one can work effectively in the Puerto Rican sports culture to make it more accepting with respect to gender and female participation in sports. Having the goal of creating a more comprehensive sports culture related to female athletes.

4. Bring knowledge to situations to improve relations between players and their university environment where they compete and better relate in their daily lives.

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Version 2019-05-28
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   identifiable nouns. Likewise, information provided in the interview that is not related to the study
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    Principal Investigator and his supervisor will have access to the raw data that can identify him,
    including this consent form.

Officials from Liberty University, the Rio Piedras Campus of the University of Puerto Rico, or federal
agencies responsible for ensuring the integrity of the research may require the researcher to provide the data
obtained in this study, including this document.

IX. INCENTIVES
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any question at any time without affecting those relationships. You have the right to withdraw from this
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which a participant is entitled. If you choose to withdraw from the study before, during, or after the study,
please contact the investigator at the email address or telephone number provided to notify you of your
decision not to participate. If you decide to withdraw, all collected data will be destroyed immediately and
will not be included in this study. Once they are destroyed, the participant will be informed.

XI. CONTACT & QUESTIONS

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, a claim or complaint related to your participation in
this study, you may contact the Compliance Officer of the Rio Piedras Campus at the University of Puerto
Rico at (787) 764-0000, extension 86773 or via email: cipsli.degi@upr.edu

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the
researcher[s], you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green
Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

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Version 2019-05-28
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☐ I certify the permission to the investigator to record the interview for the purpose of transcription.

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Name of participant  Signature  Date

I discussed the contents of this consent form with the above signer.

Name of Investigator  Signature  Date
APPENDIX E

Participant Registry
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Info</th>
<th>Interview Date/Time</th>
<th>Email Reminders</th>
<th>Signed Consent Form</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Interview Transcription Sent/Response</th>
<th>Thank You Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jane Doe</td>
<td>MM/DD 7:00 pm</td>
<td>MM/DD X</td>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>MM/DD</td>
<td>MM/DD</td>
<td>MM/DD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F

Interview Guide – English Version
Opening question:
• Can you tell me how and when you got involved in basketball?
• Was there any significant person(s) that influenced your participation in basketball?

Basketball experiences:
• Can you describe your experience playing basketball in Puerto Rico?
• How do you feel when you are on the court playing compared to when you are not?
• Can you elaborate on how basketball has benefited you?
• Can we talk about your most rewarding and challenging moments while playing basketball?
  Follow-up question
  What was the motivation during this time?

Interactions with society:
• Can you elaborate on how people interact with you when they know you are a basketball athlete?
• How do you perceive the Puerto Rican sports culture with respect to women who practice basketball?

CLARIFICATION QUESTIONS
• How do you describe your circles of friends?
• Can you catalog your experience playing basketball as one of respect?
• Have there been moments where you have been stereotyped for being a basketball player, and what did you do with your perception of playing basketball?
• How do you describe the atmosphere in the court/arena at the time of playing compared to male versus female?
APPENDIX G

Interview Guide – Spanish Version
Pregunta de apertura:

- ¿Puedes decirme cómo y cuándo te involucraste en el baloncesto?
- ¿Hubo alguna persona(s) significativa que influyeron en tu participación en el baloncesto?

Experiencias de baloncesto:

- ¿Puedes describir tu experiencia jugando al baloncesto en Puerto Rico?
- ¿Cómo te sientes cuando estás en la cancha jugando en comparación con cuando no lo estás?
- ¿Puedes elaborar cómo te ha beneficiado el baloncesto?
- ¿Podemos hablar de tus momentos más gratificantes y retantes mientras jugabas al baloncesto?

  **Pregunta de seguimiento**

  - ¿Que sirvió de motivación durante este tiempo?

Interacciones con la sociedad:

- ¿Puedes elaborar como las personas interactúan contigo al conocer que usted es un atleta de baloncesto?
- ¿Cómo percibes la cultura deportiva puertorriqueña con respecto a las mujeres que practican el baloncesto?

PREGUNTAS DE ACLARAMIENTO

- ¿Como describes tu círculos de amistades?
- ¿Puedes catalogar tu experiencia jugando baloncesto como una de respeto?
- ¿Han ocurrido momentos en donde has sido estereotipada por ser balonceslista y qué hizo con tu percepción de jugar al baloncesto?
- ¿Cómo describes el ambiente en la cancha al momento de jugar en comparación de masculino versus femenino?
APPENDIX H

Survey – English Version
1. Are you of Puerto Rican descent?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

2. Are you over the age of 18 years?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

3. Have you lived in Puerto Rico for more than 1 year?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

4. For how long have you played basketball? (Write number of years in space provided)

5. What level of education are you currently pursuing?
   ☐ Associate Degree
   ☐ Bachelor’s Degree
   ☐ Master’s Degree
   ☐ Doctorate Degree

6. Highest level of competition reached?
   ☐ Youth Leagues (4-17)
   ☐ University League
   ☐ Professional League
APPENDIX I

Survey – Spanish Version
1. ¿Eres de ascendencia puertorriqueña?
   - Sí
   - No

2. ¿Tiene más de 18 años de edad?
   - Sí
   - No

3. ¿Has vivido en Puerto Rico por más de 1 año?
   - Sí
   - No

4. ¿Por cuánto tiempo has jugado baloncesto? (Escriba el número de años en el espacio proporcionado)

5. ¿Qué nivel de educación está persiguiendo actualmente?
   - Grado asociado
   - Bachillerato
   - Maestría
   - Doctorado

6. ¿El nivel más alto de competencia alcanzado?
   - Ligas Juveniles (4-17)
   - Liga Universitaria
   - Liga profesional
APPENDIX J

Promotional Flyer
SE BUSCAN PARTICIPANTES PARA INVESTIGACION
Explorando la esencia de participación de la mujer atleta en el baloncesto puertorriqueño.

¿Integrante actual del equipo femenino de baloncesto de la UPRRP?

Si lo eres, usted es elegible para ser participe en este estudio.

El propósito de este estudio es explorar la esencia de participación y establecer factores internos que determinan la participación de las atletas féminas en el baloncesto puertorriqueño.

Tus experiencias son importantes para lograr el objetivo del estudio. Su participación es totalmente voluntaria.

Participantes recibirán tarjeta de regalo de “Dave & Busters” valorada en $15 dólares.

Contacto: Roberto Medina
(787) 426-5882
Rmedina3@liberty.edu
APPENDIX K

Athlete Perception Statements
Theme 1: Athlete Perception

Cluster: Respect

Audrey: Well, you can say there is respect. At least my experience, yes, in the clubs that I have been, compared to the masculine and feminine sometimes they try to take them along the same line, although it is difficult. You can say that there is respect despite everything.

Jane: Generally, it can be said that no. Since the male preference is seen without worrying about what happens in the female leagues, so I could say no.

Cluster: Treatment

Gigi: I think that the focus and the necessary attention have not been given, including that people do not go to the women’s basketball games, and very few courts are filled, and I think there is a big difference in that part that is the pay. The difference between women’s and men’s basketball should be cut a little bit more.

Frances: Sometimes they do something by the side, an example in the newspaper, they throw a very small news to the side, and the boys are two pages. It is like something [pause] you know, and it's hard to deal with that. The female league is going down and the credibility too, and nobody respects or anything. Starting with the general managers and the president of the league. They do not respect the players.
APPENDIX L

Benefits of Basketball Statements
Theme 2: Benefits of Basketball

Cluster: Development of Traits

Claudia: Basketball has taught me discipline, character, teamwork, it has taught me to share, to value, we know of today but not of tomorrow. To be able to give everything in the moment and not think about tomorrow.

Linnet: It has benefited me personally, I would say, it has helped me to be braver, less shy, and more expressive.

Cluster: Friendships

Audrey: Most are athletes. They are the ones you live with 24/7 practically. You are at practice, and you see them every day in college. They are the ones you can talk to anything because they understand you, they know the situations you are going through, they are the ones that understand you the most.

Natasha: In the smaller categories, it has been a good experience because I could have great friendships, which I could continue after the sport because there are final stages in the categories, and the teams are separated. But I had the opportunity to maintain a relationship with those teammates, and I was able to maintain a stable friendship with them. It has left friends and family.

Cluster: Improved Health

Emma: Physically, because obviously, that is a fairly physical game, and one has to stay in shape.

Natasha: It has benefited me physically because I have had much improvement in health since I have a sugar condition.

Cluster: Scholarships

Ida: Now, thanks to God, I have a scholarship that obviously does not completely cover me unfortunately because of the economic problem we are suffering, but during my first two years, it was able to help me, and it continues to solve me even a little.

Milo: Academically, it has helped me a lot. When I arrived in the 9th grade, they gave me the scholarship to get me in a school, and from 9th to 12th, I received scholarships in different schools. For university, I was selected by my current institution.
Cluster: Stress Relief

Haley: When I'm on the court, I really try to block everything around me, be it problems, situations, complications that have happened to me during the day, so I can really focus on the goal of the day that obviously nobody plays for to lose. So I focus on doing my best on the court…

Natasha: When I enter the court, I feel calm because when I am on the court, I can forget what the problems are, the stress in this case of the university when I have a lot of work. If I have any problems outside, then when I am on the court because I only concentrate on basketball.
APPENDIX M

Experiences in Basketball Statements
Theme 3: Experiences in Basketball

Cluster: Beginnings in Basketball

Frances: Since I was 7, I got involved in the basketball club of the town.

Kendra: Around seven years old, I started playing basketball with a men's team. My dad was the coach. So, it was he who introduced me to that world just like my sisters who already played basketball for that time, mainly the first ones were those, my dad and sisters.

Cluster: Youth Categories

Natasha: I can say that in youth categories of the female branch is a bit lighter because you do not feel the same pressure that you feel in the male branch since they have the pressure of having to win since they were little; they have to play well. In the feminine branch, it is seen more in minor leagues, what is the recreation, time for having fun.

Cluster: Challenges

Milo: Of challenges, I would tell you my first year of LAI. You arrive as a rookie to a team, and you have to prove why you are there when there are 2 or 3 players before you prior to putting one to play. For me, that was a challenge. In practice, I gave my best to be put in the game. Like every player that does not like to eat bench, and I was able to achieve on my first year LAI where in some games I could start as a regular. For me, that was a challenge.

Gigi: Challenging, if I can mention some, it would be the moments I have had injuries, knowing that everything is a process as much as one wants to do something, you have to accept that you have to go through certain moments and start again in everything basically.

Cluster: Gratification

Linnet: My most rewarding moments have been some championships such as the McDonald’s Tournament, Little Lads & Lassies, and Federation tournaments. In college, I would say it was gratifying that first year of mine.

Ida: Rewarding, when they accepted me on the university team, it was my goal since, and when they gave me a yes, I did a practice for them. Everything I did before this was worth it.

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APPENDIX N

Motivation Statements
Theme 4: Motivation

Cluster: Prove Doubters Wrong

Gigi: …on a particular occasion, it happened to me when I was little. I was in a men’s tournament, and ultimately, they took me out because the girls could not play basketball with the boys. That motivated me, although I did not have as much maturity or maybe knowledge, that if they can, then why can’t I.

Cluster: Passion

Odette: When I am on the court for me is my devotion. It is the only thing I think, and I give my all for all, no matter the opponent, and the final result does not matter. Because at the end of the day, the only thing that matters to you is your passion and that it fills you. When I am on the court, that is what fills me. They forget when we are in there; the important and essential thing is fun.

Gigi: External and internal factors really make you think about whether it is really worth trying so hard, and sometimes people do not see the sacrifice. But the passion for the sport, because I like it, keeps me on track to keep on playing.

Cluster: Adrenaline

Emma: … When I am playing, I feel more adrenaline, more active, more energized. When I am not, it is something that I need.

Cluster: Scholarship

Audrey: Knowing that basketball was there to pay for my studies. That was what motivated me to continue playing basketball. I knew that if I continued, I could take advantage of my studies in basketball and be a help to me.
APPENDIX O

Puerto Rico’s Sports Culture Statements
Theme 5: Puerto Rico’s Sports Culture

Cluster: Perception

Kendra: Many of the students supported us a lot went to the games, they told us, and they supported us but just like the boys. There was not so much difference. When I entered the university, it was very impactful for me, I went through my first year, and our games started at 6:30 pm, and the boys at 8:00 pm and the people arrived at 7:50 pm. It was like the fans did not care for the environment; it did not matter that we are playing before the boys.

Natasha: In my mind, it is that they do not give much priority to women's sport, in what is basketball, but still we let ourselves be heard in the aspect that we bring victories and from a time to here they have given more priority to the women's teams. Since they have realized that we can have victories just like the male branch.

Cluster: Lack of Support

Linnet: I perceive it in a masochistic manner. As I told you, the sport of basketball is seen as a sport for boys. They leave women behind as if they did not care what they played. We have always been a “zero to the left” as they say in society.

Haley: I could easily tell you that sometimes, it does not matter how much we prepare or if we do not have a name. I really do not see that support. That support of equality between the two of us many times, I can tell you that my team had talent, but if we were not the boys, the stands were not filled in the same way. There was no such support on the court or in social networks. What was mentioned was more about the boys than us girls.

Bianca: In the youth categories, university until professionally. You will never see a court filled by women's basketball as opposed to men's, and you will always see them full. You will always see them motivating the team, and in feminine, you do not see that dynamic so often.

Milo: They do not support it. They do not support it at all. Right now, the BSNF tournament is running, which is the equivalent of BSN is of the men. I have had the opportunity to go to a couple of games, and the entrance is free, to say the least, and it is not full. I can count you the people like 50 or 25 and yet a BSN game to say Arecibo against Bayamon, and nobody fits in the colosseum. They do not show support.

Cluster: Growing Culture Support

Bianca: I think that men's basketball receives more support; they sell it more than women's basketball. Although now more is being heard, you see more on television, and they talk more about the women's national team of Puerto Rico…
**Claudia:** As I told you, in measures that we are breaking those barriers, there is more respect. Even young people see us totally different from what they saw us before.
APPENDIX P

Puerto Rican Society’s view on Women’s Basketball Statements
Theme 6: Puerto Rican Society’s view on Women’s Basketball

Cluster: Stereotypes

Frances: But it was a bit frustrating because you are like a teenager and you do not have that knowledge, but you feel it, how can I tell you, they want to separate you from the group like you play basketball then you go over there with the boys, marginalized as they say. They marginalized me a lot because I spent a lot with the boys and thought that it was for boys nothing more regarding basketball.

Ida: But also, in being a female and playing basketball is that small population that discriminates and looks at it sideways. They really discriminate, that is the word, for being able to play basketball and being a female.

Frances: Look when I was younger, there always was, before, because now it does not happen that much, it always happens, but before you saw it more. They said that the girls were not supposed to play with the boys, not supposed to play basketball, that the girls are for volleyball and the boys for basketball.

Cluster: Social Interactions

Kendra: Well, the first comment is always, "Why didn't you play volleyball? You are tall," and I am like because I do not like volleyball. I like basketball. That has always been seen in Puerto Rico that volleyball is feminine, and basketball is masculine. After mentioning that I play basketball, the interactions with people, there are some negative ones, but in my case, the majority are positive.

Natasha: Currently it is very interesting since I am in the university and because knowing that I am a basketball athlete, not all people have the opportunity to represent the university team, so a lot of people ask me how is the experience, what I did to get there, what benefits do I have, how have I enjoyed the experience.
APPENDIX Q

Liberty IRB Approval
June 11, 2019

Roberto Medina
IRB Approval 3627.061119: Exploring the Essence of Participation of the Female Puerto Rican Basketball Athlete

Dear Roberto Medina,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office