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# Picturing Rest: A Photovoice Study Of African American Women's Perceptions And Practices Of Rest

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PICTURING REST: A PHOTOVOICE STUDY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S  
PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF REST

by

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## DEDICATION

“Never give up on a dream just because of the time it will take to accomplish it, the time will pass anyway.”

-Earl Nightingale

This document is dedicated to the people in my life who challenge me to think critically, be creative, and chase dreams bigger than my imagination. It is in honor of my parents Deborah and Darrell who taught me the values of commitment, perseverance, and faith. It is devoted to my loving husband and children, Terrence, Cayden, and Josiah. You help me see my purpose and provide unending support in the journey to fulfillment. You are my reason and I couldn't ask for more.

In loving memory of Granny Ethel and Momma Sarah.

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## ABSTRACT

African American women are consistently identified as being less likely to participate in sustained leisure time physical activity (Tussing-Humphreys, Fitzgibbon, Kong, & Odoms-young, 2013), yet more likely to be overweight or obese (Levi, Segal, Laurent, & Rayburn, 2014). There has been a wide range of initiatives directed towards preventing and/or reducing obesity among African Americans, such as targeted physical activity and nutrition interventions involving goal setting, group and individualized counseling, and social support. Previous research focused on African American women's perceptions toward physical activity, nutrition, and weight; emphasize the consideration of cultural attitudes like placing a high value on rest (Health & Services, 1996; Schiller, 2012a). Specifically, African American women prioritized *rest* over physical activity, considered rest necessary for gaining the energy required for other activities; and identified *rest* as a barrier to physical activity participation in studies that explored African American women's perceptions of rest related to physical activity (Airhihenbuwa, Kumanyika, Agurs, & Lowe, 1995; Caprio et al., 2008). Investigation of African American women's perceptions and practices of rest is needed in order to address disparities in obesity and improve health outcomes through implementation of culturally tailored interventions.

This research addresses the need for further research on the ways in which African American women conceptualize and place value on rest; their daily rest practices and perspectives; and contextualization of rest within their various social environments

(i.e., home and family, work and employment, spiritual and religious practices). I used a Photovoice approach to discover and explore the meanings, perceptions, and practices of rest among African American women living in an urban area in the Southeastern US. The qualitative data uncovered five themes: Rest as self-care, restful context and environments, rest rituals, psychological safety, and opposite of rest. This research shows that for these women, there is a clear difference between rest and sleep; rest is obtained in a variety of positions; and activities that provided peace, promoted calm and organization were essential for rest.

The results provide nurses and public health practitioners with an improved understanding of the cultural beliefs, meanings, and practices associated with *rest*. The findings are important for future development and implementation of culturally appropriate physical activity and health promotion interventions aimed at reducing both obesity and the resultant chronic disease morbidity and mortality rates among African American women.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Obesity in America has been the focus of public health efforts for more than 20 years (Amos et al., 2012; Jeffrey Levi, Segal, Rayburn, & Martin, 2014). Data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (2010) show approximately 35% of all adult Americans are overweight or obese (Flegal et al., 2010). The prevalence of obesity is higher in southern states than other regions (*Adult Obesity Facts*, 2015; Schiller, Lucas, Ward, & Peregoy, 2012). Obesity and overweight status are highly correlated with other chronic disorders, including hypertension, diabetes, and hypocholesteremia (Foundation, 2011; Jeffrey Levi et al., 2014). The obesity epidemic in America is a major health concern, associated with increased risk for chronic disease among millions of Americans with severe financial burdens for individuals, families, and the health care system (Jeffrey Levi et al., 2014).

Although researchers have reported a general stabilization in the prevalence of obesity among American adults since 2014, obesity continues to affect a disproportionate number of African Americans and the prevalence in this population has continued to rise in recent years (Jeffrey Levi et al., 2014). The health status among African American women is a major public health concern. According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (2012), African American women are a high-risk group for obesity and associated comorbidities. More than 80% of health care expenditures are related to chronic disease care in America (National Heart Lung and Blood Institute, 2012). The

percentage of overweight and obese women is highest in African American women (82%) compared to 77% of Hispanic women and 63% of White women (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). Risk for chronic disease is significantly increased when coupled with obesity (Ogden, Carroll, Kit, & Flegal, 2014a). Compared to White women, African Americans are twice as likely to die from diabetes mellitus and are 1.6 times more likely to have hypertension (Field et al., 2001). There is a clear need for nursing research aimed at developing and testing interventions that are effective in reducing obesity related comorbidities among African American women.

The prevalence of obesity-related comorbidities increases the need for concerted efforts to prevent and treat obesity rather than just its associated comorbidities (Office of Minority Health, 2014). African American women struggle with both weight loss and management (Must et al., 1999). For the past 20 years, the primary foci of obesity interventions have been increasing physical activity levels and improving nutrition. African American women are consistently identified as less likely to participate in sustained leisure time physical activity (Tussing-Humphreys et al., 2013), necessary for weight loss and weight management. The existing research includes examinations focused on African American women's perceptions toward physical activity, nutrition, and weight, highlighting the need for culturally tailored interventions. These include consideration of cultural attitudes such as placing a high value on rest (Health & Services, 1996; Schiller JS, 2012a), the need for social support and time for health behaviors (Airhihenbuwa et al., 1995); and the tendency to equate being 'busy' with being active (Henderson & Ainsworth, 2003).

Social and cultural norms and attitudes toward being overweight may contribute to African American patterns in participating in physical activity (Wilcox, Richter, Henderson, Greaney, & Ainsworth, 2002). Inclusion of cultural adaptations within weight loss interventions for African American women have had positive influences on both weight loss and continued weight management (Im et al., 2012). However, despite the indication that culturally appropriate interventions may contribute to permanent positive change, overall obesity rates among African American women have remained high (Blixen, Singh, Xu, Thacker, & Mascha, 2006; Tussing-Humphreys et al., 2013).

Over the past 20 years, there has been a wide range of initiatives directed towards preventing and/or reducing obesity among African Americans. These have included targeted physical activity and nutrition interventions involving goal setting, group and individualized counseling, social support, and maintenance phases specifically directed towards reduction and prevention of obesity among African American women. However, obesity reduction and physical activity promotion remains an under-studied area among African American women (Kumanyika, Whitt-Glover, & Haire-Joshu, 2014). More specifically, African American women's cultural and personal values and practices related to *rest* is an area that merits further investigation. The meanings and practices associated with rest vary across a range of dimensions, including gender, culture, age, educational level, occupation, and location. In 1995, Airhihenbuwa and colleagues published the findings of a study in which they explored African American women's perceptions of rest related to physical activity. They reported that African American women prioritized *rest* over physical activity, considered rest necessary if they were to have, the energy required for other activities; and identified *rest* as a barrier to physical

activity participation. More recently, Caprio and colleagues (2008) reported African American's considered rest to be healthier than engaging in physical activity and other findings suggested African American women valued rest over physical activity, particularly at the end of a day's work (Caprio et al.). These studies suggest the need for further investigation of African American women's perceptions, practices, and values of rest, in order to better design and implement interventions targeting obesity and encouraging physical activity among this population.

The Picturing Rest Project addresses the need for further research on the ways in which African American women conceptualize and place value on rest; what their daily rest practices and perspectives are; and how rest is contextualized within their various social environments (i.e., home and family, work and employment, spiritual and religious practices). It is imperative for nurse researchers to address concepts within the phenomenon of obesity in the African American female population in order to improve community health and a reduce rates of chronic disease. In order to develop, implement, and evaluate culturally appropriate interventions aimed at reducing both obesity and the resultant chronic disease morbidity and mortality rates among African American women, nurses and public health practitioners need a better understanding of the cultural beliefs, meanings, and practices associated with *rest*.

## **RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS**

The primary aim of this research was to explore the meanings, perceptions, and practices of rest among African American women living in an urban area in the Southeastern US. The specific research questions were:

- How do African American women assess their need for rest?

- What values do African American women place on rest?
- What are African American women's practices of rest?
- What factors (i.e., people, places, conditions, time, support, attitudes) contribute to African American women getting the rest they need or desire?
- What factors (i.e., people, places, conditions, time, support, attitudes) prevent African American women from getting the rest they need or desire?
- What indicators do African American women use to assess whether or not they have met their need for rest?

Developing an understanding of rest from the perspective of African American women will serve as a basis for future research. Knowledge and understanding of African American cultural health practices will lead to development of culturally appropriate weight loss and management intervention and prevention programs. In the following chapters, I present three manuscripts prepared for journal submission. In Chapter 2, I examine the current state of the science on *rest* in a manuscript submitted to *Holistic Nursing Practice*. Chapter 3 presents a methodologic critique on the use of Photovoice methods to examine rest perceptions and practices in a manuscript prepared for submission in *Western Journal of Nursing Research*. Chapter 4 discusses the findings of the Picturing Rest Project in a manuscript prepared for submission in *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*. Chapter 5 includes conclusions, implications for practice and research; and presents recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2  
BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE MANUSCRIPT:  
REST AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN: THE CURRENT  
STATE OF THE SCIENCE

<sup>1</sup>Harris, E., Messias, D.K. H., Timmons, S., Estrada, R., Felder, T., Submitted to  
*Holistic Nursing Practice*, April 13, 2017



The high rates of obesity and associated comorbidities among African American women are a significant public health concern (United States Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2013). Approximately 82% of black women are overweight or obese, compared to 63% of white women and 78% of Latinas (Ogden, Carroll, Kit, & Flegal, 2014b). For the past 20 years, a significant number of interventions designed to address overweight and obesity among African American women have focused on increasing levels of physical activity and improving nutrition (Sutton, Magwood, Jenkins, & Nemeth, 2016). Various researchers have evaluated perceptions of African American women toward physical activity, nutrition, and weight, highlighting the need for culturally tailored interventions (Airhihenbuwa et al., 1995; Henderson & Ainsworth, 2003; Mama et al., 2015; Wilcox et al., 2002). However, within this body of research, an area that has received limited attention is African American women's perceptions and practices of *rest*. Rest has been broadly defined as an ending in work or movement for strength recovery.

To address this gap in the literature, the aim of this scoping review was to examine rest-related concepts and themes in the nursing and health literature and comment on the current state of knowledge regarding perceptions and practices of rest among African American women. A scoping review was appropriate, given the aim of creating an integrated review of the limited body of research on the phenomenon of rest among African American women (Dijkers, 2015; Estrada & Hilfinger Messias, 2015). The review process included an initial search of the databases PubMed, CINAHL, and Google Scholar, using the following key terms: rest, relaxation, fatigue, physical activity, exercise, African American, African American women, women, perspectives, practices,

culture, weight, obesity, and sleep. Included were English-language articles, published between January 1995 and March 2016 that examined the concept, practices, or perceptions of rest with a focus on African American women. The resulting sample consisted of both conceptual analyses (n=2); assessments of perceptions and practices of rest (n=4) and related concepts sleep (n=13) and fatigue (n=10). The analysis of this literature is presented in the following sections: distinguishing related concepts of sleep and fatigue; the conceptualization of rest in nursing and the health sciences; research on the related concepts of sleep and fatigue; and an assessment of the current state of the science on African Americans' perceptions of rest and physical activity.

### **Distinguishing Related Concepts: Fatigue and Sleep**

Fatigue is commonly defined as weariness or exhaustion from work or exertion ("Fatigue," n.d.), and is often presented as an antecedent to rest in the nursing literature. Fatigue is a complex concept influenced by multiple factors. Three studies identified role stress as direct cause of fatigue (Durrence & Lichstein, 2006; Mezick et al., 2008; Woods-Giscombé, 2010). African American women have reported fatigue as a barrier to participation in physical activity and/or exercise (Bopp et al., 2007; Nelson, 1997; Nies, Vollman, & Cook, 1999). These research participants reported feeling too fatigued and preferred to rest rather than participate in physical activity. In other evaluations of African American women, respondents noted that exercise caused fatigue and thus, because they wanted to avoid fatigue, they avoided physical activity (Airhihenbuwa et al., 1995; Henderson & Ainsworth, 2003; Nies et al., 1999; Wilcox et al., 2002). The evidence from existing research on African American women suggests that fatigue may constitute both a deterrent to and an unwelcomed consequence of physical activity that

may influence African American women's preferences and decisions regarding whether or not to participate in physical activity or to rest.

In both scientific and colloquial descriptions of rest, there is often an implicit assumption that rest is equal to sleep (Allison, 1968, 2007; Nurit & Michal, 2003). There is significant overlap in the definitions of the two concepts. For example, the dictionary definition of *rest* ("Rest," n.d.) includes the word *sleep*: posing that the action use of rest is to "get rest by lying down; especially sleep." The positions of rest and sleep are often similar, as both rest and sleep can be achieved in the position of lying and are associated with a decrease in level of physical activity (Faestel, Littell, Vitiello, Forsberg, & Littman, 2013; Plant, 2013; Robinson, Weitzel, & Henderson, 2005). However, although sleep and rest may be closely related concepts, they are distinct and different phenomena. Sleep is a natural state of rest in which individual's eyes are closed and there is a loss of consciousness ("Sleep," n.d.). In contrast, the closing of eyes and loss of consciousness are not defining characteristics of rest. Rest and sleep may be associated through a specific stage of sleep called REM (rapid eye movement). During the period REM sleep, there is restoration of cellular function in the body (Swann, 2013). Restoration is ultimately achieved through the action of sleep and the action of sleep leads to the attainment of rest and restoration.

Sleep is a commonly identified strategy for rest (Helvig, Wade, & Hunter-Eades, 2016; Siegel, 2003). Further, sleep and rest have both position and shift in activity level in common as noted in the conceptual analysis (Allison, 2007; Berryman, 2012; Helvig et al., 2016; Lipson & Steiger, 1996; Mornhinweg & Voignier, 1996; Nurit & Michal, 2003;

Plant, 2013; Swann, 2013). The key difference between sleep and rest is a loss of consciousness during REM that occurs during sleep.

Sleep is an essential function for human life (Allison, 1968; Asp, 2015; Mornhinweg & Voignier, 1996; Nurit & Michal, 2003). In the research on self-care, exercise and health, sleep is cited as a requirement for adequate health (Allison, 2007; Berryman, 2012). Wilson (2005) described sleep as the new “vital sign,” stating that there are multiple health issues that can occur with prolonged sleep impairment including obesity and impairments in immune function. Two studies found as sleep time decreases, body size increases are noted (Grandner et al., 2013; Nelson, 1997; Robinson et al., 2005). This strengthens the proposition that there is a sleep, health, and weight connection. African American participants in two studies were noted have shorter sleep duration with poor sleep quality when compared to other ethnicities (Patel et al., 2008; Siegel, 2003). The sleep-weight connection and short sleep duration appears to be connected to obesity rates among African Americans. Understanding the connections between sleep, rest, and weight will be imperative to future study and intervention development for health promotion and obesity prevention.

### **Conceptualizations of and Research on Rest within Nursing and the Health Sciences**

According to the Nursing Interventions Classification (McCloskey & Bulechek, 1996), rest is a nursing intervention aimed at energy management (Martin, Morrow, Jackson, & Dunn, 2000; Tudor-Locke & Myers, 2001). Within nursing and medicine, the term *bed rest* refers to time spent lying down or being confined to a bed, with the goals of avoiding physical activity and conserving energy (McCloskey & Bulechek, 1996).

However, despite the fact that rest has traditionally been considered a critical element of nursing care, the nursing literature's specific focus on rest is sparse. It was not until the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> Century that the concept was more fully explored and explicated in nursing literature (Sprague, 2004). Whereas related concepts, such as fatigue, physical activity, bed rest, and sleep have been examined in much greater detail within the nursing and health literature, the lack of specific definitions or detailed descriptions of rest suggest that the meaning was considered to be evident or implicit. Over the past 50 years, there have been only three published examinations of rest as a singular concept in the nursing literature (Allison, 1968; Asp, 2015; Bernhofer, 2016; Mornhinweg & Voignier, 1996) and one conceptual examination of rest in the occupational therapy literature (Nurit & Michal, 2003).

The body of nursing research on rest includes Allison's (1968) descriptive study of the perceptions of rest among a sample of 122 healthy, middle aged (34-65 years) New York businessmen. The researcher conducted brief structured individual interviews with each participant. In addition, each participant rated various activities on a scale from very restful to not restful and assessed as either pleasant or unpleasant on a paper and pencil survey. Participants also completed a personal and work habits background information survey. Consenting participants completed the surveys as part of the physical examination provided by the employer health service. All data related to personal rest behaviors consisted of self-report; the researcher did not conduct any actual observations of participants resting. In the analysis of the data, Allison identified a conceptual framework for rest that included two components: "rest" and "restful" which were clarified as the Basic Rest Notion and Restful Notion, respectfully (Allison, 1968).

Examples of personal rest activities the businessmen reported included engaging in specific activities and being a spectator (i.e. exercise, watching television, reading, eating, and having sex). Few men in the study identified religious or spiritual activities when defining rest. Allison (1968) concluded that among these businessmen, rest encompassed activity, inactivity, and/or a change of activity.

Nearly 30 years after Allison's study<sup>17</sup>, Mornhinweg and Voignier (1996) conducted a conceptual analysis of rest in which they examined both the physiological and psychological components. They noted the common generalizations for the physiological component of rest as defined in the English language, and that when viewed as an activity, the purpose of rest is to conserve and restore energy through reduction in the level of activity. The psychological component involves restoration of energy through mental and emotional changes involving performance of activities to provide relief from stress for relaxation. Expanding on prior conceptualizations, Mornhinweg and Voignier (1996) addressed the spiritual dimensions of rest, and noted that unlike physiological and psychological components, the spiritual component of rest may be prayer or meditation periods and could not be induced through external or physiologic stimuli.

Within the nursing literature, the most recent exploration of rest is Asp's (2015) phenomenological study of Swedish adults. Asp examined the lived experiences of rest among a diverse sample of participants. The purposive sample of 19 included both men and women, ranging in age from 18 to 85 who had varying occupations and health status. Participants were selected in a tiered fashion with an initial sample of seven and subsequent participants selected based on gaps from data collected in the initial selection.

For example, if the first group provided examples of physical activities providing rest, the following sample would include participants with physical disabilities to attempt to provide diversity within the sample data. The aim of the research was to further understand lived experiences of rest with the goal of informing clinical applications. Asp found participants situated their need for rest along a continuum from rest to non-rest. Depending on specific life situations, individuals determine where they need to be on the continuum. Examples of practices identified included being in nature, taking intentional breaks from work or responsibility, and being in pleasurable situations. In addition to describing practices of rest, Asp's contribution was the notion that rest exists on a continuum and identified practices of rest. In both Allison's (1968) and Asp's (2015) analyses of rest, participants identified participation in pleasurable situations or activities as providing rest or being restful.

### **Health Sciences Literature and Research on Rest**

The health sciences literature includes Nurit and Michal's (2003) literature review of conceptualizations of rest through the lens of occupational therapy. The authors identified rest as obtaining optimal balance between work, play and rest being crucial in obtaining maximal function and health based on occupational therapy perspectives. They equated rest with interrupting physical and mental activity resulting in a relaxed state, and noted that rest is differentiated from sleep. Nurit and Michal (2003) specifically noted the association between rest and positionality, observing that rest may be obtained not only by lying down but also by sitting quietly. Furthermore, they included a variety of other activities that could contribute to achieving rest, such as listening to music,

hypnosis, reading, walking or sitting quietly. Thus, rest is not only a lack of physical activity.

In this small diverse body of literature on rest, areas of consensus include the universal need for rest, rest as both a positional and psychological process, and rest as situated along a continuum of level and intensity of activity. Although rest is generally defined as an action or process achieved in a certain position, including lying supine, reclining, sitting, or even standing still (Asp, 2015), it is important to note that rest may involve physical activity, ranging from sitting while reading a book to playing golf, tennis, and walking. Knowledge gaps or areas where there is a lack of consensus identified by these authors include the lack of differentiation of rest from related concepts such as sleep and fatigue, the lack of research and understanding of the impact of culture on how rest is defined and practiced, and the lack of a consensus regarding recommendations for appropriate practices of rest (Allison, 1968; Asp, 2015; Mornhinweg & Voignier, 1996; Nurit & Michal, 2003).

To date, evaluations and conceptualizations of rest have been mostly descriptive. Descriptive research informs the “who, what, and where” of phenomena (Sandelowski, 2000). Exploratory descriptive evaluations are useful for informing interventionist in planning intervention designs. The exploratory descriptive evaluations presented above provided insight for developing cultural adaptations for future interventions. The most recently published research by Asp (2015) was a phenomenological study, which aimed to produce concept development and improve application in nursing practice. Findings from these studies have furthered both the conceptualization of the phenomenon and the exploration of diverse practices of rest.



The diverse practices of rest appear to be influenced by culture. For example, practices identified by Allison (1968) with northeastern businessmen included reading and playing golf whereas Asp (2015) study with blue-collar Swedish adults included being in nature and taking mental breaks. Understanding culturally specific practices of rest is helpful for making individualized nursing recommendations for rest. In the following section, I will discuss cultural perspectives and practices of rest related to physical activity, nutrition and weight management for African American women.

### **African American's Cultural Perspectives and Practices on Rest related to Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Weight Management**

Culture shapes the ways in which individuals interact with each other and the world around them and make meaning of those interactions (Banks-Wallace, 2000), is dynamic and varies across time and physical or geographical settings, and influences values and social norms. The major influence that culture has on what people do and their values makes it important to consider for study when evaluating perceptions and practices of individuals.

There is a significant body of research on cultural influences on African American women's lifestyles and in particular, body size and weight (Airhihenbuwa et al., 1995; Befort, Thomas, Daley, Rhode, & Ahulwalia, 2008; Caprio et al., 2008; Kumanyika, Whitt Glover, & Haire Joshu, 2014; Rowe, 2010; Wilcox et al., 2002). Rowe (2010) found cultural influences affected nutritional choices of African American women interested in a healthy lifestyle. Similarly, Kumanyika et al. (2014) found cultural influences concerning nutrition and physical activity that impeded success of interventions directed towards African Americans. Culture was an identified factor

influencing decisions to exercise, rest, or participate in activities for weight loss (Walcott-McQuigg & Prohaska, 2001; Young, Gittelsohn, Charleston, Felix-Aaron, & Appel, 2001). Two additional studies evaluating perceptions of physical activity among African Americans (Airhihenbuwa et al., 1995; Wilcox et al., 2002) identified culturally constructed values of rest.

Recognition of cultural values and influences is important in examining the phenomenon of weight management. Prior examination of cultural influences on obesity in non-white populations have suggested that African Americans value the ability to rest and relax following their employment-related work activities, and consider rest to be healthier than exercise (Befort et al., 2008; Caprio et al., 2008). However, these authors did not find this same value of rest among other cultural groups. Participants in descriptive studies on perceptions of health issues engaged in activities to obtain rest or at a frequency based on the value placed on rest. A similar engagement ratio was noted with physical activity engagement (Befort et al., 2008; Caprio et al., 2008).

### **Discussion**

Rest has multiple definitions and paralleling concepts that are influenced by culture and society. Despite the lack of consistent meanings or measures of rest in the nursing and health literature, rest is a concept present in everyday life and therefore has a generally understood meaning. Areas of agreement between meanings and processes include: (1) rest is differentiated from sleep; (2) rest and relaxation have similar meanings that are defined by activities; (3) culture and social influences frame the practices and meanings of rest. However, these multiple meanings may pose challenges for nurses and other health professionals in their efforts to both assess rest practices and develop

recommendations and guidelines regarding rest in relation to physical, social, and psychological practices. There appeared to be a clear need for further concept development in order to more clearly recognize and distinguish rest from other related concepts. Two recent concept analyses have attempted to distinguish rest as a concept used in nursing (Bernhofer, 2016; Helvig et al., 2016). In Helvig's (2016) concept analysis of rest and restorative sleep, she also noted rest to have physiologic, psychologic, and spiritual components and called for further research to examine diverse perceptions of rest and generate a more applicable and useful definitions.

An exploratory study of African American women perspectives of physical activity revealed a connection between rest and physical activity that was duplicated with different samples (Airhihenbuwa et al., 1995; Wilcox et al., 2002). This replication indicates the significance of the concept to African American women when considering physical activity. The concept of rest requires further exploration of its meaning from a cultural perspective. Understanding rest and its influence on African American women's lifestyle choices related to health can have a critical impact on creating successful weight management and physical activity interventions.

In conclusion, this review of the nursing and health sciences literature on rest identified several knowledge gaps. These include the lack of distinction between fatigue and sleep and the lack of research on cultural meanings and practices of rest across cultural groups, including African American women. To advance nursing practice in the areas of health promotion for weight management and physical activity promotion, further investigation and exploration to fully understand cultural influences on [rest] for development of effective interventions is necessary.

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CHAPTER 3  
METHODOLOGY MANUSCRIPT:  
EXPLORING AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN’S PRACTICES OF REST  
THROUGH PHOTOVOICE: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Harris, E., Messias, D. K.H., Timmons, S., Felder, T., Estrada, R. To be submitted to *Western Journal of Nursing Research*

Although *rest* is a universal practice, the meanings and practices of rest vary across cultures and societies. In the nursing and health literature, there are a lack of consistent definitions or measures of rest. However, there is consensus that rest is differentiated from sleep (Allison, 1968; Asp, 2015; Mornhinweg & Voignier, 1996). Rest and relaxation share similar definitions and often are characterized by specific activities. For example, rest is associated with the activity of sleep, while relaxation is associated with activities that provide enjoyment like watching a movie or reading a book. These multiple, overlapping definitions and meanings may pose challenges for nurses and other health professionals in their efforts to assess patients' rest practices and develop appropriate recommendations and guidelines for rest among diverse patients and population groups. Current barriers to developing a body of nursing research on rest include the lack of clear operational definitions and validated measurement tools. This barrier is especially relevant as nursing and other health care providers seek to address health problems related to physical activity and weight management in African American women.

Prior research on cultural perceptions of health and weight status suggests that African American women engage in and value activities aimed at obtaining rest to greater extent than women from other cultural groups (Airhihenbuwa et al., 1995; Befort et al., 2008; Caprio et al., 2008). Caprio and colleagues (2008) noted African Americans' cultural valuing of rest as being a healthier practice than exercise. Gaps in the current literature on African Americans' perceptions and views of physical activity include the lack of cultural definitions and descriptions of rest practices. Therefore, a better understanding of rest may help to inform weight management interventions among

African American Women. The purpose of this article is to describe and comment on the methodological processes involved in the implementation of a Photovoice project aimed at exploring African American women's knowledge, practices, perceptions, and descriptions of rest.

### **Challenges of Engaging African American Women in Research**

The limited body of conceptual and research literature supported an investigation of African American women's perceptions and practices of rest. However, given widespread mistrust of researchers among African Americans (George, Duran, & Norris, 2014), recruitment is challenging and often expensive using traditional methods (King, O'Rourke, & DeLongis, 2014; Loftin, Barnett, Bunn, & Sullivan, 2005; Patrick, Pruchno, & Rose, 1998). Difficulties researchers may encounter in researching and engaging diverse pools of African American women in research include limited access and lower socioeconomic status of potential participant communities (Amon, Campbell, Hawke, & Steinbeck, 2014; Loftin et al., 2005; Taylor, 2009; Yancey, Ortega, & Kumanyika, 2006). Researchers investigating sensitive issues such as weight or body image may face further challenges in recruiting and retaining African American women as research participants.

Given this underlying mistrust of research and the multiple barriers to accessing minority populations, researcher-community relationships that foster trust are essential to improve participation of African American women in research. Advocates for community based participatory research (CBPR) note the necessity of effectively engaging with underserved populations and the importance of partnership and trust between community and researchers in knowledge creation (Viswanathan et al., 2004). For this exploratory research on rest among African American women, we employed

Photovoice, a CBPR approach that is useful for reaching hard-to-reach populations by encouraging participant engagement in the research process and empowering participants through creative expression (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Ornelas et al., 2009).

### **Methods**

The pilot phase of this research consisted of a single focus group with 5 participants and individual, face-to-face interviews with three African American women aged 23-47 years old. The focus group guide included open-ended questions such as “Tell me what rest means for you.” and “Describe methods or practices by which you get rest.” aimed at eliciting participants’ experiences and perspectives on rest. In examining both the process and content of these individual and collective interviews, it was evident that although the women were able to identify and describe some rest and rest-related activities, they clearly had difficulty verbalizing the deeper meanings of the concept. To more effectively elicit personal descriptions and explore the multiple meanings of African American women’s practices of rest, the current study incorporated Photovoice with individual interviews.

Photovoice (also called photo elicitation) is a participatory research methodology that actively engages individuals or groups in the production and interpretation of personal or collective perspectives through photography (Wang & Burris, 1997b). The method has roots in the photo novella medium, often designed for low-literate populations, and consisting of printed illustrations that tell a story or provide instruction. Originally developed by Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris (1997a), the goal of Photovoice is to enable people to record, reflect on collective concerns, and promote critical dialog about important issues through discussions of the photographs produced by group participants.

As a nursing research methodology, Photovoice has been successfully implemented with diverse populations and used to assess and evaluate a wide range of issues, from exploration of health and illness issues of minority populations to evaluations of education techniques (Evans-Agnew, Boutain, & Rosemberg, 2016; Leipter & Anderson, 2012; Moffitt & Vollman, 2004; Riley & Manias, 2004). Advantages of Photovoice-based CBPR include the ability to assess perceptions through visual image; sample a variety of different social and behavioral settings; assess or reaffirm program goals; and enable participants to express their personal explanations, ideas, and stories (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Hergenrather, Rhodes, Cowan, Bardhoshi, & Pula, 2009; Horwitz, 2012; Leipter & Anderson, 2012). The use of photography is a creative approach to data collection that can promote understanding of the human experience through the generation of substantive data and knowledge that otherwise might be difficult to construct (Balmer, Griffiths, & Dunn, 2015; Riley & Manias, 2004).

### **Photovoice Research Design and Implementation**

This research was conducted in an urban area in South Carolina, where approximately 27% of the state's population is African American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Eligibility criteria included self-identifying as female, African American, age 18 years and older, and resident in target area. Recruitment involved dissemination of an invitation through Facebook™ events and by word of mouth through community partnerships with a religious and a civic organization. The information posted on the Facebook™ event included a flyer, inclusion criterion, and a brief outline of the projected study. The event posted for 14 days and interested participants completed a Survey Monkey platform where they could access more information about the research and

submit contact information. Subsequent communication with each individual was through her stated preferred method of communication (i.e. Facebook™, email, text message, or phone call). There were 10 responses posted to the Facebook event and 14 on the Survey Monkey site. Additionally, three persons contacted the nurse researcher directly to indicate their interest in the study. Eight African American women, aged 30-59 (average 42 years) attended the initial session. Seven of the eight women attended the subsequent sessions.

The four Photovoice sessions were held over a 3-month period between July and October 2016. The nurse researcher, an African American woman resident of the local community, personally developed and facilitated the workshops. Each of the first three sessions consisted of an hour-long workshop held during the evening hours at a public meeting room in the county library. The fourth session was an hour-long follow-up confirmation session held a month later at the same site.

**Session 1: Introduction to Photovoice.** The first Photovoice workshop began with an icebreaker designed to promote participant comfort level and enhance the initial group dynamics. Each participant received a point-and-shoot digital cameras and a personal reflection journal. The facilitator then provided a brief Photovoice training, consisting of a mini-guide both photography in general and Photovoice more specifically; a discussion of ethical considerations and the need for consent when photographing others; and instructions on utilization of the digital camera, followed by practice using the cameras. Throughout the session, participants had an opportunity to ask questions. At the completion of the first session, the facilitator provided instructions for participants to take photographs of their individual perceptions and practices of *rest*, and select no more

than five of their photos to present to the group at Session 2. The researcher sent an electronic save-the date reminder to all participants 1 week prior to the second session.

**Session 2: Photographs of rest.** Using the PHOTO method (Figure 3.4) (Horwitz, 2012), the nurse researcher facilitated the group discussion. In turn, each participant showed her chosen photographs, explaining the meaning of rest represented in each photograph, followed by a group discussion of their representations and responses. The photographs represented both practices of rest (i.e., playing a computer game) and symbolic meanings (i.e. Nature scenes). Two participants were inspired to write prose in their journals when reflecting reasons for taking photographs. In commenting on one of her photos (Figure 1), LG shared "...rest is drinking chamomile tea. It helps to ease me from the troubles, challenges of the day, to reflect upon the positive experiences I've had." (Figure 3.1). Another woman's photo showed her daughter's hands on top of her own hands, to represent knowing that her children were safe and well gave her rest and peace of mind. At the completion of this session, the participants began exploring potential avenues for dissemination of their photographs to the broader community.

**Session 3: Photographs of the "Opposite" of Rest.** The assignment for the third session was to take photographs representative of the "*opposite*" of rest. Similar to the previous session and guided by the PHOTO discussion method, each participant shared her photos and discussed how she represented "not rest" in daily life. Representations of "not rest" included employment environments, employment, doing household chores, and afternoon traffic. In describing the photograph of cooking a meal (Figure 3.2), TB commented, "*That's me trying to prepare a meal after a twelve-hour shift. So that is stressful and I'm tired from working twelve hours, so meal prepping after work is the*



*opposite [of rest].*” Participants frequently nodded and verbally agreed with each other’s descriptions of their photographs. After completing the discussion of this second series of photos, participants had the opportunity to present their other photos picturing rest that had not previously been shared. The group then discussed potential audiences for dissemination of their Photovoice project, identifying local public health program planners and LiveWell at Worship participants, a church-affiliated community-health enhancement program, as potential targets. The session concluded with scheduling of individual interviews for data confirmation and scheduling of a final checking session. Prior to the final session, the researcher conducted the initial Photovoice analysis, which consisted of reading transcripts, listening to audio recordings, reviewing field notes, and determining preliminary coding.

**Session 4: Data Confirmation Session.** The final Photovoice session, held a month later, consisted primarily of data checking. All photographs previously presented at prior sessions were displayed for the women to view and collectively provide captions. For example, one participant shared a photograph of wine and cheese that she had prepared for herself at the end of a long day, prior to taking a bath and preparing for bed (Figure 3.3). However, she was having difficulty determining a caption title for this photograph. The group collaboratively decided the title “Wine Down” to show how having a glass of wine would allow them to wind down and feel rested. The participants then identified salient themes they noted across the photography collection and determined which 2 participants would lead the community presentation of the Picturing Rest photography exhibit at a local LiveWell at Worship event held in November 2016.

The group brainstormed about methods for dissemination and decided to create a digital slide presentation that could be shared on social media and with public health professionals. Participants agreed on photograph presentation ordering and accompanying music style. Following completion of the presentation, the researcher collaborated with participants virtually for confirmation of final presentation prior to dissemination. At the conclusion of the research, the participants were gifted their digital cameras and reflection journals as an incentive for participating in the research. Additional communication and collaboration with participants following session four commenced through email and the online meeting platform GoToMeeting as they planned for the public presentations and the researcher compiled the video presentation of photographs representing rest.

### **Methodological Considerations and Critique**

The use of digital cameras to *picture* and document personal practices of rest, and the subsequent process of sharing and discussing the photographs allowed this group of African American women to more fully explore the multiple meanings and facets of rest, a seemingly mundane concept. Through the process of sharing and discussing their photographs with one another, the women identified commonalities and developed a complex conceptualization of rest. The women were thoughtful and creative in their image selection. To some viewers, at first glance, the images might not appear to portray rest. For example, a photograph of a garden or devotional text may not trigger thoughts of rest for some. However, participants' descriptions of the personal meaning and intention underlying the photos evoked intriguing, in-depth discussions about rest. Photovoice traditionally is a method that empowers participants for social change (Wang & Burris,

1997b; Wang, 1999; Wang, Yuan, & Feng, 1996). The intent of this project was not to create social change per se but to promote awareness and understanding of African American women's practices of rest. The women reported that they derived enjoyment in taking pictures and sharing with the group, and several described their experience as "therapeutic." One participant commented on how the process made her more reflective and aware of rest, noting, "Talking about it [rest] has definitely caused me to think about it more." The experience increased participants' awareness, valuing of their own, and others' self-care practices, which may lead to further prioritization of these behaviors.

The participants' level of active engagement and interest clearly indicated that they enjoyed participating in the research and took ownership of the results. In several instances, when a participant was running late or unable to attend a session they emailed their images and written descriptions to the researcher. Following Session 4, two participants presented a selection of photographs and described their participation in the project to a group of women at a *LiveWell at Worship* community gathering at a local church.

All participants were provided digital cameras and memory cards for the project. However, three participants actually opted to take photographs utilizing their personal mobile cellular devices. This highlighted not only the increasingly widespread utilization of cellphone cameras but also the opportunities for using cellphone camera technology in research. Participants presented creative ideas for disseminating the findings from the research, suggesting creation of an electronic visual presentation with music. This presented a technical challenge for the researcher, who had no prior experience in developing video presentations platforms like YouTube™. Despite this challenge, the

idea of a virtual presentation maximized the time and opportunity to communicate this group of women's practices and perceptions of rest to the public and professionals who would be responsible for incorporating rest into health promotion interventions.

Not surprisingly, scheduling the Photovoice sessions was the most challenging aspect of conducting this CBPR Photovoice project, a frequently noted concern in participatory research (Madrigal et al., 2014; Morales-Campos, Parra-Medina, & Esparza, 2015). The original plan was to schedule the three sessions on subsequent Tuesday evenings. Schedule conflicts resulted in having the second and third sessions two weeks apart. However, having additional time between sessions did not appear to lessen participation or engagement and the increased time for participant introspection may have enhanced the quality and depth of the group discussions. In hindsight, allotting for an additional meeting for preparing the public presentation of the Photovoice findings could have further enhanced participant engagement in the research. Limitations of this research include the restricted geographical sample and small number of participants. Similar research with more geographically diverse samples, including large urban centers and small rural communities, is needed to fully explore African American women's experiences and practices of rest.

## **DISCUSSION**

Engaging African American women through Photovoice expanded the type and quality of data collected in comparison with that collected through focus groups or individual interviews. As participants shared their photos with each other, they not only described the settings or activities, but also discussed the thoughts and feelings they experienced when capturing the images.

In prior research on rest, investigators have incorporated other qualitative data collection modalities including individual interviews, surveys, and focus groups (Allison, 1968; Asp, 2015; Mornhinweg & Voignier, 1996). Although these studies contributed to refining and advancing nursing knowledge related to rest, there was little opportunity for the research participants to reflect on the meaning of their personal practices of rest. Another advantage of the Photovoice approach was that it encouraged creative expression, introspective reflection, and collective discussion. Using Photovoice in this research facilitated elicitation of African American women's perspectives and practices that would have been difficult to achieve through individual interviews or focus groups. Furthermore, Photovoice was an innovative approach to engaging and empowering African American women in the process of creating knowledge and exploring self-care concepts and practices. Rather than focusing primarily on external or environmental issues, these women engaged in introspective *work* as they portrayed personal practices of rest through photography.

As evidenced through the processes and results of this research on African American women's perceptions and practices of rest, Photovoice methodology is a promising research methodology in conducting community-based investigations with women and other underserved populations. The resulting photographs, participants' descriptions, and audience reactions provide nurse researchers with data that can help to understand complex social and cultural issues. For marginalized populations, the methodology is mutually beneficial for investigators and participants because of the reported therapeutic value to participants (Balmer et al., 2015). Furthermore, with the rapid evolution and

dissemination of digital photography, Photovoice methodology is versatile and easily adaptable to examine specific concepts and groups of interest to nurse researchers.

Photovoice and photo elicitation are promising methodologies for conducting research with African American women in diverse social and geographic contexts. With the proliferation of digital technology, across socio-economic groups photo elicitation studies using mobile technology and social media platforms like Instagram<sup>TM</sup> provide opportunities for innovative and engaging research with hard-to-reach groups. Use of mobile technologies might enhance data collection by improving spontaneity of picture capture and increase the quality and quantity of these images. If the adage “A picture is worth a thousand words” is true, the worth of a picture and a discussion of that image could be immeasurable and a rich measure of describing the world around us.

The use of virtual technologies expands the reach and application of Photovoice methodologies and offers expanded opportunities for engagement with group discussions without participants having to be physically present. Virtual Photovoice discussions using platforms like Instagram<sup>TM</sup> and Facebook<sup>TM</sup> would potentially alleviate some of the difficulties in scheduling face-to-face groups, allow participation across larger geographical areas, and facilitate simultaneous collaborations across multiple groups. Photographs help describe the world around us in a personal, contextualized fashion. The integration of photographs in qualitative nursing research has the potential to allow improved understanding of complex concepts and enhance translation of concepts to the public.



*Figure 3.1* Soothing at the end of the day.



*Figure 3.2. Work after work.*





*Figure 3.3.*The wine down.

### PHOTO Discussion Prompt

- Describe Your **P**icture
  - What is **H**appening in your picture?
  - Why did you take a picture **O**f this?
  - What does this picture **T**ell us about rest?
  - How can this picture provide **O**pportunities for physical activity intervention planners to incorporate rest in interventions?
- (Horwitz, 2012)

*Figure 3.4 Photo Discussion Prompt*

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## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS MANUSCRIPT:

# *PICTURING REST: AN EXPLORATION OF CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF REST AMONG SOUTHEASTERN AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN*

<sup>1</sup>Harris, E., Messias, D.K.H., Estrada, R., Timmons, S., Felder, T. To be submitted to *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*.

African American women have higher rates of obesity and lower levels of participation in sustained leisure-time physical activity compared to women of other racial/ethnic groups (Blixen et al., 2006; Tussing-Humphreys et al., 2013). Social and cultural norms and attitudes related to body weight and appearance may influence African American women's patterns of participation in physical activity (Wilcox et al., 2002). Although overall obesity rates among African American women remain high, there is evidence that culturally appropriate interventions may contribute to long-term positive changes in health behaviors (Blixen et al., 2006; Tussing-Humphreys et al., 2013). Culturally adapted weight loss interventions for African American women have resulted in improved weight loss and continued weight management (Im et al., 2012). A related phenomenon that has received less attention from researchers is African American women's views of rest. The meanings and practices associated with rest vary across a range of dimensions, including gender, culture, age, educational level, occupation, and location. Findings from a study by Airhihenbuwa and colleagues (1995) highlighted the importance of both social support for health behaviors and time to engage in healthy behaviors. Prior research on African American's cultural attitudes indicated a tendency to equate being *busy* with being *active* (Henderson & Ainsworth, 2003) and personal and social valuing of rest (Health & Services, 1996; Schiller, 2012b). Airhihenbuwa and colleagues' (1995) specifically explored African American women's perceptions of rest related to physical activity. They found women prioritized *rest* over physical activity, considered rest necessary in order to have the energy required for other activities; and specifically identified their need for *rest* as a barrier to participating in physical activity. More recently, Caprio and colleagues (2008) found African Americans considered *rest* to



be healthier than engaging in physical activity and suggested they valued rest over physical activity, particularly at the end of a day's work. Although limited, the existing research clearly indicates the need for further investigation of African American women's perceptions, practices, and values of rest, in order to better design and implement culturally tailored interventions to increase physical activity and reduce rates of overweight and obesity among this population. To this end, the aim of this research was to explore African American women's meaning, perceptions, and practices of *rest* in their daily lives.

### Background

In the prior studies on rest, researchers' conceptualizations of the phenomenon focused on the universal need for rest, a positional and psychological process along a continuum. Rest is defined as an action or process achieved in a certain position, which may be lying supine, reclining, sitting, or even standing still (Asp, 2015). The identified knowledge gaps identified by previous researchers include: the lack of differentiation of rest from related concepts (e.g., sleep and fatigue); inadequate examination of cultural impact on defining rest and identifying practices of rest; and a lack of a consensus of recommendations for appropriate practices of rest (Allison, 1968; Asp, 2015; Bernhofer, 2016; Helvig et al., 2016; Mornhinweg & Voignier, 1996; Nurit & Michal, 2003). Understanding culturally specific practices of rest is helpful for making individualized nursing recommendations for rest.

The exiting research on rest consists primarily of descriptive studies, which are useful for informing interventions. The most recently published research by Asp (2015) was a phenomenological study of Swedish blue-collar workers aimed at concept

development and improved application in nursing practice. Findings have furthered both the conceptualization of the phenomenon and the exploration of diverse practices of rest (Allison, 1968; Asp, 2015; Mornhinweg & Voignier, 1996). The diversity in rest practices appears to be influenced by culture. For example, northeastern businessmen's personal rest practices included reading and playing golf (Allison, 1968) whereas blue collar Swedish adults described rest as being in nature and taking mental breaks (Asp, 2015).

### Methodology

The specific research questions were 1) What are African American women practices of rest? 2) What factors (i.e., people, places, conditions, time, support, and attitudes) contribute to African American women getting the rest they need or desire; and 3) What factors (i.e., people, places, conditions, time, support, attitudes) prevent African American women from getting the rest they need or desire? Prior to initiation of the research, institutional review board approval was obtained and all participants provided informed consent.

### Sample and Setting

The community setting was an urban area in the South Carolina, where approximately 27% of the population is African American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Recruitment involved dissemination of an invitation through a Facebook™ Event and by word of mouth through individuals in the community. Inclusion criteria were African American women residents in target area between 18 and older. Eight women consented to participate and seven actually completed the study. Participants ranged in age from 30 to 59 years (M= 42). The setting was a local community library meeting room.

## Procedures

The Photovoice project consisted of four sessions, held over three months. Activities in the first session included informed consent, introductions, study purpose and explanation, an outline of the project, instruction on camera mechanics and photography tips, a review of photography ethics, and instruction on first photo assignment. Prior to convening for the second session, participants took pictures that represented personal rest practices in their daily lives. Between sessions, two and three participants took pictures that represented the *opposite* of rest and *barriers* to rest. At each session, the nurse researcher downloaded the pictures onto a computer and projected images onto a screen placed at the head of the meeting table. The researcher guided the discussion using the PHOTO technique (Horwitz, 2012) which consisted of the following questions: (1) Describe your Picture. (2) What is happening in your picture? (3) Why did you take a picture of this? (4) What does this picture tell us about rest? (5) How can this picture provide opportunities for physical activity intervention planners to improve interventions incorporating rest? This resulted in rich dialog as the women listened and discussed multiple perspectives and practices of rest. All participants remaining in study after session three participated in brief semi-structured individual interviews to ensure data saturation. All discussions were audio recorded and the researcher maintained field notes to provide context for the discussion. Participants kept reflection journals to record notes about the pictures they had taken.

## Data Analysis

Leininger's (1997) ethnonursing framework guided the analysis of data. The ethnonursing framework includes five general principles to guide the researcher to

discover knowledge through a cultural lens (Leininger, 1990; McFarland, Mixer, Wehbe-Alamah, & Burk, 2012). Electronic verbatim transcriptions, field notes, and images were reviewed, read and reread at each stage of the analysis process. The first phase of analysis consisted of data immersion to develop interpretations and descriptions to aid coding (Creswell, 2013). The analyst highlighted recurrent words or concepts and meaningful segments in the text to identify relationships and overarching themes (McFarland et al., 2012). Phase 2 involved the use of Nvivo qualitative data analysis software (2014) for organization of the data. The researcher developed coding categories through multiple readings of the data. In the third phase, the researcher read and re read transcripts, listened to audio recordings, and reviewed field notes to discover saturation of ideas and recurrent patterns. The final phase involved explication and confirmation of major themes through collaboration with project participants. Semi-structured participant interviews and Participant validation in the fourth session addressed rigor. Additionally, the dissertation advisor coded the data for comparison to evaluate for congruency. Five major themes were abstracted from the data.

## Findings

Five themes were constructed through the analysis of the photographs, participants' journals, and recorded Photovoice sessions. The following sections contain the analysis of each theme. Participant photographs and dialogues seen displayed in Tables 1-5.

### Rest Rituals

The theme *Rest Rituals* emerged as participants photographed and described activities that led to rest. Participants shared activities including massage therapy, enjoying a glass of wine with friends or alone, and soaking in a tub (Table 4.1). All

participants shared photographs of devotional and spiritual materials. There was a strong sentiment that rest was a result of engaging in spiritual studies.

#### Restful Context and Environments

*Restful Context and Environments* represents the importance of specific places and situations in supporting or enhancing rest. Photographs shared by Denise and Maxie were of nature with discussions of how their environment had a direct relationship on their ability to rest. Denise shared how placement of roses in her work place provided her a reprieve from a busy workday (Table 4.2). Other participants echoed sentiments that their environment had a direct effect on their ability to get rest, sharing photographs of chairs, blankets, and ocean views.

#### Rest as Self Care

*Rest as Self Care* was evident in photographs of places where women took time for themselves. Tina's photograph of her meal at a restaurant represented taking time away from work to have lunch (Table 4.3). In the ensuing group discussions, participants agreed that time for self was necessary for rest. In reflecting on her photo of taking a walk by herself, Kennedy noted it provided her with time alone to reflect and was a health benefit for her body. In her individual interview, Maxie revealed she desired to have taken a photograph of her swimming, as it was one of her activities used for rest. She provided a similar rationale of the health benefits.

#### Psychological Safety

The theme *Psychological Safety* involved situations and factors that decreased worry or perception of danger and contributed to feeling rested. This theme also included a subtheme of "Mental Rest", depicted in photographs by Kennedy and Tina,

respectively. Photographs shared by other participants about their children echoed the photograph shared by Kennedy. In their maternal roles, these women all identified the need to know their children and families were safe and well in order to obtain rest. Tina photograph sparked conversation among the group with agreement that being organized and prepared provides them rest. Maxie added, “It’s relaxing for me to see something organized because I think oh I don’t have to clean it up or there it’s already taken care of.”

#### Opposite of Rest

Participants also shared photographs that depict the opposite of rest. Photographs of work (for pay) environments, disorganization, and household chores were shared for discussion. Denise, Tina and Maxie all shared photographs of their work environments agreeing that the work environment involved disorganization and often caused them to feel stressed. Denise shared “My desk reminds me of stress. I get emails all day long, phone calls all day long, and my order screen never stops....I’m constantly busy; it’s a never ending task. It continuously stresses me out.” A photograph of burned oatmeal represented Kennedy’s feelings of being stressed, over committed, and quest for perfection. These attitudes can block a women’s ability to adequately rest. The group all agreed that women tend to overcommit themselves, which leads to stress and inhibits rest.

Maxie reflected on the difficulty she experienced in taking on the task of representing the opposite of rest. During the prior week’s activity, she recognized the personal value of having reflected on *rest*, and was reluctant to turn her focus opposing practices in her daily life:

It was very hard for me to switch from rest to the opposite of rest because I was so proud of myself for being able to be calm and revel in that calmness and peace. So, it took me a while to be able to regroup and to even admit I had times that I was not restful...so I took pictures of my office.

Of note, during session three when the discussion transitioned from description of photographs depicting the opposite of rest to depiction of rest and restful activities, the vocal tone of participants also changed from loud to soft. Participants engaged in discussion that stress and work could be described as the opposite of rest which for them, represented peace and calm.

### Discussion

The findings from the Picturing Rest project are consistent with previous explorations of rest in that rest involves activities that are enjoyable (Allison, 1968), allows for mental or psychological pause (Allison, 1968; Asp, 2015; Mornhinweg & Voignier, 1996) , and can vary in body position (Asp, 2015). It is notable that the women in the Picturing Rest project did not take any pictures of themselves lying in their beds or sleeping. However, they did discuss positions like sitting and lying as important to getting rest. The results clearly show that for these women, there is a difference between rest and sleep. As suggested in studies from Allison (1968) and Asp (2015) the activities engaged for rest vary and are culturally specific. For these women in particular activities that provided peace, promoted calm and organization within varying environments and context were essential for rest.

The Picturing Rest project provided important insight into Southern African American women's perspectives and practices of rest. This knowledge is essential for

incorporation of activities of rest into health promotion programs. African American women place high value on rest (Caprio et al., 2008). This implied value suggest that these women prioritize rest over other equally important health behaviors including physical activity. For health promotion practitioners, knowing the culturally specific activities of rest is important for creating innovative methods of generating lasting health behavior change. The pictures produced by the project provide a link for understanding.

The Picturing Rest project presents promise for future implementation in other cultural groups to understand complex concepts that are difficult to describe verbally. Participants noted their increased attention to personal rest practices because of having participated in this Photovoice project. Increased awareness was the first step in purposefully incorporating restful activities into their daily routines. One women reported participation in the project made her more aware of rest and even influenced her to incorporate restful activities into her routine. They also enjoyed the comradery of the group sessions. In addition to the social interactions and support, which are beneficial in sustaining health behaviors, this Photovoice project engaged participants in active reflection that may also be useful for fostering and sustaining purposeful behaviors. Public health and parish nurses might find Photovoice a useful strategy for reinforcing or highlighting important health and self-care behaviors. Results from Photovoice projects are often used to promote social change (Wang, 1999; Wang et al., 1996). Nurses might find Photovoice projects useful in understanding complex culturally influenced health behaviors for planning intervention strategies.

\*Note all names used are psydonyms for actual participant names to protect their identity.



Table 4.1. Rest Rituals: Pictures and Reflections


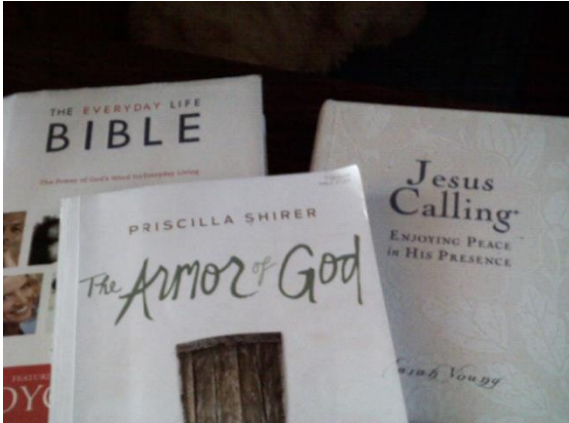
Photographs	Reflections
	“I just lit the candle and I had one side light on...me sitting in my bath to relax and rest.”
Bubbles, Candles, and Bath	
	“Just quiet time with the father, getting in his presence, there is just nothing like it...just remembering his protection and just who he is.”
Peace of God: Quiet time with the Father	

Table 4.2. Restful Context and Environments: Pictures and Reflections



Photographs	Reflections
	“That is my corner where I sit down and tis curved out, I kind of fluff up my pillows and I get a book or magazine and I lay back on the couch and take a nap or read. That’s my Friday night chair where I sit and catch a nap after work.”
My Spot	
	“Rest is sitting alone and in the quiet of the morning, thanking God for the beauty of the trees, so lush and the light of the sun that shines on the leaves, listen to the birds skinging and chirpting and watching the squirrels run up and down the trees. What peace you give me lord, thank you for the beauty of nature, what peace you give me before I begin my busy day.”

Table 4.3. Rest as Self Care: Pictures and Reflections



Photographs	Reflections
 <p data-bbox="250 764 399 800">Solo Lunch</p>	<p data-bbox="859 394 1349 680">“I wanted to get away from the office, get away from everybody. I went across the street to this restaurant...eventually I was the only person in the restaurant. There is no noise, there was nothing but me, my iPad and my food.”</p>
 <p data-bbox="250 1276 667 1312">Ambulation is a Beautiful Thing</p>	<p data-bbox="859 831 1360 1077">“Those are my feet because I like to ambulate, walking in the morning, it’s a beautiful thing. It is so important to me to go out and walk and it clears my mind...puts things in perspective and it’s more than just this moment.”</p>

Table 4.4. Psychological Safety: Pictures and Reflections




Photographs	Reflections
	“It gives me peace to know that my children- they’re healthy and they’re sound and for them to know we are there for them.”
My Babies	
	“I went ahead and prepped my lunch for the next day and for whatever reason I just felt so relaxed because I didn’t have to do anything else that night but eat dinner....I just felt so- I guess I felt like I could sit on the couch and rest and relax and not have to worry about doing anything else.”
Lunch Prep	

Table 5. Opposite of Rest: Pictures and Reflections

Photographs	Dialogue
	“My desk does remind me of stress. I have three monitors....I get emails all day long, phone calls all day long, and my order screen never stops. I’m constantly busy; and it’s a never ending task”
Unplanned Chaos	

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## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary aim of this exploratory, descriptive study was to examine the perceptions and practices of rest among Southeastern African American women. Rest is a ubiquitous practice. The findings of this participatory research highlighted both the complexity of this culturally embedded concept and the wide range of participants' views and practices. In this chapter, I discuss the strengths and limitations of research and identify implications for nursing practice and research.

#### Strengths and Limitations

This study of African American women's perception and practices of rest contributes to the limited body of research on rest, an important self-care concept. Prior research utilized individual interviews, surveys, and focus groups to assess practices and perceptions of rest (Allison, 1968; Asp, 2015; Mornhinweg & Voignier, 1996), contributing to the refinement of the concept and to advancing nursing knowledge related to rest. However, participants in these previous studies had little opportunity to reflect on the meanings of their personal practices of rest. This study advanced nursing science in relation to the conceptualization of rest in several ways. The adoption of the Photovoice methodology with African American women resulted in an enhanced ability to uncovering and further understanding of this complex behavior, compared to other data collection strategies such as focus groups or individual interviews (Darbyshire, MacDougall, & Schiller, 2005). In a prior pilot study that involved face-to-face

individual interviews and a single focus group with African American women, it was evident that although the participants were able to identify and describe some of their personal rest and rest-related activities, they clearly had difficulty verbalizing and reflecting on deeper personal meanings of the concept. To more effectively elicit personal descriptions and explore the multiple meanings of African American women's practices of rest, the Picturing Rest project incorporated Photovoice with individual interviews as a means to elicit rich response for a complex concept.

Another advantage of the Photovoice approach was that it actively engaged the participants and encouraged creative expression, introspective reflection, and collective interaction and discussion among participants. Utilizing Photovoice with African American women is an innovative approach to engage and empower participants through active exploration of self-care concepts and practices and personal and collective knowledge generation. Rather than focusing on external, environmental issues, these women engaged in significant and meaningful introspective *work* as they portrayed personal practices of rest through photography.

Among the limitations of the research are the restricted geographical sample and small number of participants. Clearly, these findings are not representative of nor can be generalized to the broader population of African American women. Further studies, using similar approaches and more geographically diverse samples, including large urban centers and small rural communities, are needed to build the state of the science on African American women's experiences and practices of rest.

## Implications for Practice

An important finding was the participants' reflections on how their engagement with the Photovoice project enhanced their attention to personal rest practices. They noted that increased awareness was the first step in purposefully incorporating intentional restful activities into their daily routines. One woman reported participation in the project made her more aware of rest and even influenced her to incorporate restful activities into her routine. Participants also enjoyed the comradery of the group sessions. Beyond the social interactions and support, which are beneficial in sustaining health behaviors, this Photovoice project engaged participants in active reflection that may also be useful for fostering and sustaining purposeful behaviors. Nurses and other health care providers might find Photovoice a useful strategy for reinforcing or highlighting important health and self-care behaviors. Results from Photovoice projects are often used to promote social change (Wang, 1999; Wang et al., 1996). Practitioners might find Photovoice projects useful in furthering their understanding of complex, culturally embedded health behaviors for planning intervention strategies. In this study, the participants identified the opposite of *rest* primarily as *stress*. Primary care providers should consider adding questions about rest and rest practices in health assessment interviews. The addition of rest practices in the assessment will help inform recommendations for self-care and potentially improve health outcomes through stress reduction.

## Methodological Implications

The Picturing Rest project has the potential for expanded implementation in other cultural groups with the aim of furthering understanding of common lived

experiences that may be more difficult to describe in words. Photovoice and photo elicitation are promising methodologies for conducting research with African American women in diverse social and geographic contexts. The rapid adoption of digital technology across diverse socio-economic groups is an indication that photo elicitation studies using mobile technology and social media platforms like Instagram™ offer opportunities for innovative and engaging research with hard-to-reach groups. Use of mobile technologies might enhance data collection by improving spontaneity of picture capture and increase the quality and quantity of these images.

Building on the common adage “*A picture is worth a thousand words,*” the value of photographs and the ensuing personal and collective reflection and discussion of that image could be an important source of information for community members, patients, families, health care providers and researchers. The use of virtual technologies expands the reach and application of Photovoice methodologies and offers expanded opportunities for engagement with group discussions without participants having to be physically present. Virtual Photovoice discussions using platforms like Instagram™ and Facebook™ would potentially alleviate some of the difficulties in scheduling face-to-face groups, allow participation across larger geographical areas, and facilitate simultaneous collaborations across multiple groups. Photographs represent the world around us in both personal and contextualized ways. The integration of photographs and photo-elicitation in nursing research has the potential to allow improved understanding of complex concepts and enhance translation of concepts to the public.

## Implications for Future Nursing Research on Rest

It is important to identify and understand specific African American cultural conceptualization of rest in order to make future recommendations for rest and its related concepts. The findings of this research with a small sample of urban African American women indicate women may have personal rest rituals, prefer certain restful context and environments, and consider rest as a form of self-care, and psychological safety. These findings are consistent with previous research on rest, which indicated rest involves activities that are enjoyable (Allison, 1968), allows for mental or psychological pause (Allison, 1968; Asp, 2015; Mornhinweg & Voignier, 1996) , and is associated with a variety of body positions or activities (Asp, 2015). As noted in Chapter 4, the women did not take photographs of themselves lying in their beds or sleeping, however, they discussed positons like sitting and lying as important to getting rest. For these women activities that provided peace, promoted calm and organization within varying environments and context were essential for rest. There is a need for further examination on self-care practices of rest and further description and categorization of rest-promoting self-care practices. There is also a need for measures related to the degree of *restfulness* associated with participation in specific activities. Recommendations include the incorporation of time for rest and restful activities as adjunct strategies to enhance long-term behavior modification. Future development of weight management and self-care interventions for African American women should consider the incorporation of a photo-elicitation or Photovoice component similar to this Picturing Rest project to promote mindfulness and subsequent increased performance of desired behaviors.

## Conclusions

Rest is a complex physical, psychological, cultural, and social phenomenon, with many and varied definitions and manifestations that differ from individual to individual and across social groups. The findings of this exploratory, descriptive research suggest the presence of multiple meanings and practices of rest contribute to the difficulty in developing and implementing recommendations and practices within and across diverse cultural groups (Leininger, 1991, 2002). The aim of this research was to clarify and explicate personal meanings and practices of rest among African American women. Areas of agreement between meanings and processes confirmed in this project include that rest is different from and distinct from sleep; is an intended outcome of rest is relaxation; and that social and cultural influences frame the practices and meanings of rest. Prior evaluations of African American women's perceptions of rest related to physical activity indicated participants prioritized *rest* over physical activity; considered rest both necessary in order to have the energy required for other activities and to be healthier than engaging in physical activity; and specifically identified the perceived need for *rest* as a potential barrier to participation in physical activity (Airhihenbuwa et al., 1995; Caprio et al., 2008). This research on African American women's perceptions and practices of rest contributes to enhanced understanding of specific practices of rest. The knowledge generated from the Picturing Rest project is useful for improving design and implementation of culturally tailored nursing and public health interventions that include a focus on restful practices to enhance physical activity and obesity reduction in this population. The concept of rest, influenced by cultural practices, is complex. Future research should include study of perceptions and practices of rest in other cultural groups.

Knowledge of cultural differences in rest perceptions and practices would be beneficial to determining best practice recommendations for health promotion.

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## APPENDIX A - RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

(Posted on Facebook and handed out):

My name is Eboni Harris. I am a nurse and graduate student in the College of Nursing at the University of South Carolina.

I am interested in learning more about African American women's beliefs and practices of rest. I am inviting you to participate 4 small group meetings where we will discuss photographs that you take to describe a health behavior.

I will be conducting a photography project with a small group to obtain visual descriptions of how African American women picture rest.

I am asking women to come to 4 small group meetings to last no longer than 1-2 hours over 4-8 weeks.

Each person who attends all the sessions and completes the photography activity and all meeting sessions will receive a digital camera in appreciation of her time and effort.

Participate in a study  
about health practices of  
African American Women  
living in South Carolina



For more information or to participate  
please contact: Eboni Harris  
[eharris@sc.edu](mailto:eharris@sc.edu) or 803-470-5680

### *Picturing Rest*

We Want Your Pictures!

You are eligible to participate if you:

- Identify as an African American woman
- Are 18 years of age or older
- Live in the Columbia SC area

What is involved?

- You will take pictures that describe a health practice
- Over a 1 month period you will participate in weekly 1-hour sessions with other women
- You will participate in a 1-hour interview with the nurse researcher

Upon completion of these activities you  
will be able to keep the camera.



## APPENDIX B -INFORMED CONSENT

### Through your eyes: Picturing Rest Informed Consent Form

#### **PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND:**

You are being asked to volunteer for a research study conducted by Eboni Harris. I am a doctoral candidate in the College of Nursing at the University of South Carolina. This research is sponsored by the University of South Carolina. The purpose of this study is to determine African American women's meanings, perceptions, and practices of rest. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an African American women. This study is being done at one site and will involve approximately 10 volunteers. This form explains what you will be asked to do if you decide to participate in this study. Please read it carefully and feel free to ask questions before you make a decision about participating.

#### **PROCEDURES:**

If you agree to be in this study, the following will happen:

1. You will be asked to complete a questionnaire about your background, education, and activity level.
2. We will audio record our discussion/interview to ensure we accurately capture the details that you provide.
3. You will be asked to take photographs to describe your meanings, perceptions, and practices of rest.
4. You will be asked to participate in 4 planned group sessions lasting no longer than 2 hours each.
5. You will be asked to participate in 1 interview session lasting no longer than 1 hour.
6. You will be asked to participate in data analysis and confirmation of themes discovered in the study.
7. You will be asked to participate in selection of an audience to present research findings. You will be asked but not required to assist in the development of the exhibit for presentation.

#### **DURATION:**

Participation in the study will take about 4 visits over a period of 4 weeks. Each study

visit will last about 2 hours.

### **RISKS/DISCOMFORTS:**

There are no physical risks associated with this study. Since you will be asked to take photographs, you must first consider your safety in taking all photographs before completing the activity. Others in the group will hear what you say, and it is possible that they could tell someone else. We cannot guarantee what you say will remain completely private, but we ask that you and all other group members respect the privacy of everyone in the group.

Loss of Confidentiality: There is the risk of a breach of confidentiality, despite the steps that will be taken to protect your identity.

### **BENEFITS:**

Taking part in this study is not likely to benefit you personally. However, this research may help us understand African American women's perceptions and practices of rest. Further, this research may help inform cultural tailoring of interventions promoting physical activity among women.

### **COSTS:**

There will be no costs to you for participating in this study (other than parking or transportation).

### **PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS:**

In return for your time and effort, you will be receiving a digital camera, memory card, and a photobook collection of pictures collected for participation in this study. If you do not complete the study you will be given the digital camera and pictures taken up to the point of ending participation.

### **USC STUDENT PARTICIPATION:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free not to participate, or to stop participating at any time, for any reason without negative consequences. Your participation, non-participation and/or withdrawal will not affect your grades or your relationship with your professors, college(s), or the University of South Carolina.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS:**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your express written permission, unless required by law. The information will be securely stored in locked files and on password protected computers. The results of the study may be published or presented at seminars, but the report will not include your name or other identifying information about you.

## **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free not to participate, or to stop participating at any time, for any reason without negative consequences. In the event that you do withdraw from this study, the information you have already provided will be kept in a confidential manner. If you wish to withdraw from the study, please call or email the Principal Investigator.

I have been given a chance to ask questions about this research study. These questions have been answered to my satisfaction. If I have any more questions about my participation in this study or study related injury, I may contact Eboni Harris at 864-313-3748 or email [eharris@sc.edu](mailto:eharris@sc.edu).

*If I have any questions, problems, or concerns, desire further information or wish to offer input, I may contact Lisa Marie Johnson, IRB Manager, Office of Research Compliance, University of South Carolina, 1600 Hampton Street, Suite 414D, Columbia, SC 29208, phone: (803) 777-7095 or email: LisaJ@mailbox.sc.edu. This includes any questions about my rights as a research subject in this study.*

I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form for my own records.

If you wish to participate, you should sign below.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent    Date    Signature of Participant    Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Legally Authorized  
Representative (if applicable)    Date



## APPENDIX C - DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Participant ID: \_\_\_\_\_ (number provided to you on arrival)

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Are you single, married, separated, divorced, or widowed? (circle one)
3. How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_
4. If you have children, what are their ages? \_\_\_\_\_
5. In which state were you born?
  - a. South Carolina
  - b. Other (write in) \_\_\_\_\_
6. If you were not born in South Carolina, how long have you lived in the state?  
South Carolina? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Please indicate the level of formal education you have completed.
  - a. Less than High School
  - b. High School Graduate
  - c. Some College Credit, no degree
  - d. Associate Degree
  - e. Bachelor's Degree
  - f. Master's Degree
  - g. Professional Degree
  - h. Doctoral Degree
8. What is your current employment status?
  - a. Employed for wages
    - b. Self-employed
    - c. Out of work
    - d. A homemaker
    - e. A student
    - f. Military
    - g. Retired
    - h. Unable to work

9. How many hours a week are you employed?
10. Where are you employed/ what type of employment do you have? ) What type of work do you do? \_\_\_\_\_
11. In a typical week, how many days do you exercise for at least 30 minutes? Circle one.  
0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 - 7
12. How do you describe your current level of physical activity? (Circle one option):  
not active at all   somewhat active   active   very active

## APPENDIX D - PHOTOVOICE PROJECT PARTICIPANT TOOLS

Photo Taking Tips:

Keep these tips handy as you take photos

### **Tips for taking good photographs**

- Try different angles
- Try different points of view
- Keep the sun to your back, or to the side
- Is your subject in the center of the photo?
- Does your subject fill the photo?

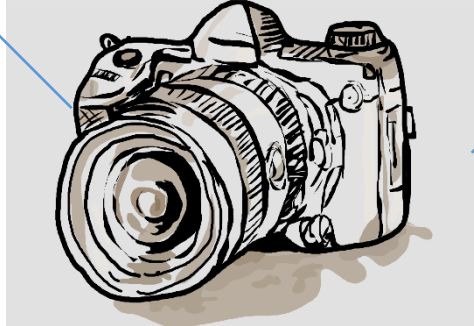
### **Tips for avoiding common mistakes**

- Keep your finger away from the lens
- Don't cover the flash
- Stand about 3 to 8 feet away from your subject
- To prevent blurry pictures, hold your elbows close to your sides, and hold your breath when you press the shutter (button)

### **Shooting**

Hold the camera with both hand, elbows against your body and feet spread apart and release the shutter carefully. This helps avoid blurry pictures.

Avoid putting fingers in front of the lens.



### **Lighting**

Place the sun at your back when taking photographs.

Use the flash outside and indoors.

Adapted from Amos, Read, Cobb & Pabani,



### **Composition**

Pay attention to how you arrange the people, objects, or environment in your photograph. The object doesn't always have to be centered.

Take a combination of posed or un-posed shots

Always consider your distance from the subject.