

## Abstract

# Picturing Rest: African American Women's Conceptualizations, Perceptions, and Practices of Rest

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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 JS, 2012). 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.