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# Sports and Somali Girls: Increasing Participation and Acculturation

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Sports and Somali Girls: Increasing Participation and Acculturation

By

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of  
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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Sports dominate our culture. Whether that is good or bad is a matter of opinion. Being part of a team is an important facet of American life, a key part of American culture that can teach life skills. This is an aspect that should be encouraged and facilitated for all youth. However, immigrant youth, especially girls, are not as involved as their American counterparts. Specifically, the presence of Somali girls is almost non-existent in sports.

The high school where I coach tennis has one of the highest diversity rates in the state. The school has always had diverse populations and many cultures represented on the sports teams. Though we have always had these groups on the team, the school and I have not always fully succeeded in endeavors to get them to see the importance of being a part of a team. I still have struggled, even after ten years, with getting girls to not skip practice because they are needed at home to take care of younger siblings, or because they call last minute saying they're going to miss a match because they are needed to take their mother to the hospital and be the translator. I have lost a couple girls to pregnancies and family duties. Lastly, another issue has been losing girls because now that they have discovered sports, they want to try all of the sports available. Immigrant girls tend to view the competitive high school sports world more as a social activity rather than a competitive hobby as boys often do. This makes it difficult to build a strong

competitive team, and results in an inconsistent, unsuccessful team, a team that is not as much fun to play for.

The boy's tennis team certainly has issues as well, but usually problems of a different sort. In fact, my experience with the boys was that I wanted practice to end so I could go home to my family and they wanted to continue to play. After matches, they wanted to go back to our courts to practice. There seemed to be a huge difference in the expectations of the girls in these families and the boys in that girls were expected to be home, and the boys had few familial duties.

Throughout these nine years of coaching, there has been one population that the school and I haven't yet been able to encourage to join sports teams, the Somali girls. This chapter introduces the issues associated with getting Somali girls to join high school sports and the impetus for my research.

#### High School Sports Programs and the Somali population

With sports programs being an American institution and part of the American high school experience, students should have access to programs and be encouraged to join. Studies show that participation in sports leads to higher academic achievement (Kleindienst-Cachay, 2010). Involvement in sports teaches students life skills, including determination, delayed gratification, leadership, self-confidence, teamwork, cooperation, goal setting and achieving, success, and dealing with failure, all skills needed to be an active contributing member to society. In addition there are health benefits of leading an active lifestyle.

Sixty-nine percent of all girls are in sports nationwide, still lagging behind boys at 75% (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). However, high school girls from low-income



families and the inner city are further behind at 59% while boys in the same population are at 68% (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). Furthermore girls from different ethnicities are more likely not to be involved in sports: 47% of Asian females are non-athletes, compared to 22% of Asian males, and 36% of Hispanic and African American females are non-athletes, compared to 28% and 21% of Hispanic and African American males (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). We need to give opportunities to girls and get them involved in sports.

However, it's not an easy task to get these girls involved. Immigrant families tend to be stricter with girls, expecting them to take care of family responsibilities at home, do housework and take care of younger siblings (Walseth & Fasting, 2004). There are even more reasons Muslim girls and women are not encouraged to be involved in sports. Religious and family duties are seen as more important for women, with sports being seen as a distraction from these pursuits (Dagkas, Benn & Jawad, 2011). Sports is seen as play and not worthy of time and commitment (Dagkas et al., 2011). Furthermore, Muslim women who do decide to partake in physical activity have issues of dress and having to maintain separation from boys and men. Girls from immigrant cultures are less likely to participate in team sports; getting Somali Muslims girls to participate may be a bigger challenge due to the religious and gender restrictions with sports.

#### Role of the Researcher

With the focus on removing or accommodating barriers and including Somali females into Twin Cities high school sports, this research project is a series of interviews seeking answers on how to involve Somali adolescent females in high

school sports. My role in this research is to be an interviewer with the aim of collecting and analyzing information in order to provide recommendations to high school coaches and athletic directors on how to recruit and involve the Somali female population at their schools onto the schools' sports teams. Participants in the interviews are coaches that have already successfully incorporated this population into sports, former or current Muslim athletes who have had to navigate both their home and American culture and, lastly, Somali parents. My goal is to get the points of view and perspectives of these families while respecting their traditions and values. I admit that my bias is that I assume it is best to be involved in high school sports, and that students do better in school if they're involved in the school activities. I believe participation in sports will have a positive impact both on the student and family while further integration of immigrants at the sports level will have a positive impact on the school and sports community.

#### Background of the Researcher

I've been involved in sports my entire life, from joining t-ball as a five-year-old and participating in all park and rec programs to being a three-season athlete at the high school level and an all-conference player in tennis. I then coached that same high school tennis team as my first job post-college and have coached it for ten years.

As well as being a high school tennis coach in a public school, I've been a teacher in the same public school district for ten years, and a teacher of English learners (ESL) for the past four years. I feel the sports mentality and the benefits of sports are what students are missing out on, and not just immigrant students, but

also many of the students in our inner city schools. I can't tell you the number of times I've monitored recess and watched kids just run back and forth kicking a soccer ball or shooting a basketball with no concept of how to actually organize a game. My school has a great English as a second language (ESL) teacher who spends one day a week teaching fourth graders how to bike and how to cross country ski (in the winter) and it's amazing how many are just learning how to ride and skiing is their first experience playing in the snow.

I have been the head (and only) coach of the girls' tennis team for the past nine seasons, since 2005. I was later hired to be the boys tennis coach at the same high school and have coached the boys team for four years on and off during this time period. I am known in the neighborhood as the tennis coach as I run several tennis camps in the summer for children of all ages. My experiences as a coach and the struggles I have had recruiting and keeping immigrant players has led me to this current research. The struggles I have seen students have in wanting to participate but having obstacles in their way has led me to specifically investigate how I can help these students participate.

### Guiding Questions

The overall aim of this research is to provide recommendations to coaches and athletic directors of high schools on how to incorporate more of their Somali population, specifically females, into their athletic program. The study includes a literature review, interviews and the recommendations that I will derive through the research and interviews. The primary focus is to come up with

recommendations to encourage more Somali adolescent females to become involved in high school sports. The research seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the current barriers in high schools in a large mid-western city that prevent Somali girls from joining high school sports?
  - What are the roles of family in preventing Somali girls from participating in high school sports?
  - What are the roles of Somali cultural values in preventing Somali girls from participating in high school sports?
- Which local programs have been successful in recruiting Somali girls and how has this been accomplished?
- What are some solutions to overcoming the obstacles that are preventing involvement?

### Summary

In this chapter, I have focused on the perceived need to increase Somali adolescent female involvement in the high school sports programs. Currently, this population is underrepresented in high school sports, yet studies show an enormous amount of benefits to students participating in high school sports. I have described the current state of the high school sports program, highlighting the situation and circumstances that have led to this study. I have described my role as the researcher, have indicated who the participants will be, and have made clear the biases that I bring to this research. Lastly, I included the questions that will guide this research.

## Chapter Overviews

In chapter 1, I have introduced the study and the research question that I will seek to answer. In chapter two, literature will be presented that addresses the guiding questions. In chapter three, the research methodologies and design of the questions used in interviews and focus groups will be provided. In chapter four, I will present my findings from the interviews. In chapter five, I reflect on my findings and present recommendations on how to incorporate Somali adolescent girls into high school sports.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to determine the barriers that prevent or limit athletic participation at the high school level by Somali adolescent females. The study also considers why it should be a goal to encourage Somali adolescent girls to become involved in high school sports and solutions and accommodations to overcome the barriers. Through this study, I will try to determine the barriers that exist and possible solutions to overcome these barriers. Furthermore, this study describes how sports involvement is one possible pathway towards helping children adapt to a new culture. The ultimate goal for the study is to provide recommendations to coaches and athletic directors on how to successfully recruit Somali adolescent females at their school into the sports program. The research questions, based on my experience and the literature reviewed here are the following:

- What are the current barriers in high schools in a large mid-western city that prevent Somali girls from joining high school sports?
  - What are the roles of family in preventing Somali girls from participating in high school sports?
  - What are the roles of Somali cultural values in preventing Somali girls from participating in high school sports?

- Which local programs have been successful in recruiting Somali girls and how has this been accomplished?
- What are some solutions to overcoming the obstacles that are preventing involvement?

This chapter presents an overview of acculturation and how sports can help achieve acculturation while also respecting cultural values, the benefits of sports to all people and to immigrants specifically, why non-participation is a problem, the barriers and finally the solutions and considerations that researchers have tried thus far. The barriers limiting participation will be broken into the sub-categories of societal barriers, gender barriers, cultural barriers and religious barriers.

#### What is Acculturation?

The definition of acculturation that this research will operate under comes from Taylor and Doherty (2005), who describe it as a situation in which cultural groups hold onto their cultural norms but also implement aspects of the main culture they are now a part of. In the process of immigration, cultures come into contact. Acculturation is a process of “cultural and psychological change” that is a natural and unavoidable result of contact with other cultures (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006, p. 305). This process is similar to integration in which “both cultural maintenance and involvement with the larger society are sought” (Berry et al., 2006, p. 306). This process is in contrast to the process of assimilation, in which there is little interest in maintaining one’s own culture in preference to the new culture (Berry et al., 2006). Assimilation is generally viewed as negative while acculturation and integration are seen as positive goals, situations in which

immigrants maintain their culture, but also involve themselves in the larger society. Furthermore, immigrants who acculturate have “competence within more than one cultural setting” (Kapteijns & Arman, 2004, p. 23), a benefit in today’s increasingly globalized world.

#### Acculturation for children and adults

Often children acculturate as they attend school and are more involved in the wider community than their parents. Parents and other adults may have a harder time acculturating. Kapteijns and Arman (2004) suggest that the best outcome for immigrants is when selected acculturation occurs; this is when children acculturate naturally, but the community helps the parents acculturate as well. Since children more naturally and quickly acculturate, it would be best if communities, schools and society continued to have programs for incoming immigrants and refugees to help them acculturate. Bigelow (2010) points out that often first generation immigrants worry that the younger generations will lose its culture and traditions. However Bigelow (2010) offers a different perspective: “...youth are engaging in the creation of new identities in third spaces. Youth are hybridizing and negotiating new identities that have very much to do with who they were, who their families are, and who they are hoping to become” (p. 10).

To help acculturation and to reduce parent-child family conflicts, parents need assistance to acculturate along with their children. Parents need to be able to continue to bond with their children, share thoughts and feelings and to have fun. Being involved in the school and their children’s lives help to achieve this bonding. However, parents often don’t feel they can participate in their children’s educational



life because of embarrassment about their own education and a cultural paradigm in which parents are not expected to be involved in school activities. In addition many refugee parents do not have the “psychological wherewithal to be of support to their children” (Kapteijns & Arman, 2004, p. 31); parents may be unable to emotionally support their children due to their own traumas and the stresses of being an immigrant. Lastly, many immigrant families struggle economically and parents have to work long hours; they are not able to be as involved as they may like. Parents should be encouraged and personally invited to participate in their children’s athletic lives (Kapteijns & Arman, 2004).

Furthermore, with selective acculturation, in which children acculturate naturally and the community helps the parents acculturate, youth get the support they need from both their ethnic community and their new country. Kapteijns and Arman (2004) found that this selective acculturation helps youth develop higher self-esteem and positive ethnic identity. Selective acculturation therefore can lead to the healthiest mental state for immigrant youth.

#### Avenues towards Acculturation

Berry et al. (2006) have identified four different avenues towards acculturation: integration, assimilation, separation, or marginalization, the last meaning that neither cultural maintenance nor interaction with others is sought (Berry et al. 2006). My interest in the present study is the integration pathway, as research by Berry et al. has shown that this is the best path for psychological and socio-cultural health. The integration pathway, as Kapteijns and Arman’s (2004) research suggests with acculturation, seeks maintenance of one’s culture along with

involvement in the larger society. Berry et al. (2006) found that the integration pathway towards acculturation leads to the most positive outcome. In their research first or second-generation immigrant teens used questionnaires to assess attitudes towards acculturation, cultural identity, language proficiency and use, ethnic and native speaker peer contact, family relationship values, perceived discrimination, psychological adaptation, and sociocultural adaptation. Society and the immigrant cultural community should encourage and support cultural maintenance and inclusion into society as a whole. Youth should not be isolated in their own community and alienated from society or cut off from their own culture. Research has shown that youth who followed the integration pathway adapted the best both psychologically and socio-culturally, meaning they were in good health both physically and mentally and had competence in managing their lives in an intercultural setting (Berry et al., 2006).

The research reviewed above indicates that integration as a path to acculturation leads to the most positive outcomes for immigrant youth and their families. Acculturation as researched by Berry et al. (2006) and Kapteijns and Arman (2004) lead to higher levels of physical and mental health for all, building confidence and competence in immigrants to handle two different cultures. In addition to higher levels of physical and mental health, Taylor and Doherty (2005) found that acculturated youth have higher prospects in terms of their future socio-economic status.

## Benefits of Sports

Being physically active has major personal benefits (Jaffee & Ricker, 1993; Sabo & Veliz, 2008; Sabo, Miller, Melnick, & Heywood, 2004); just the health benefits alone are reason enough to seek an active healthy lifestyle. However, involvement in sports also leads to social and emotional skills, skills that transfer to work environments, problem solving, anger management, and higher levels of academic achievement (Okamoto, Herda, & Hartzog, 2013). There are benefits to being involved in sports for all individuals, but there are also benefits specifically for immigrants in participating in sports teams; Taylor and Doherty (2005) found that youth who seek to become acculturated and adopt the new language have higher prospects in terms of their future socio-economic status, and sports can help them with these prospects.

### Health, Social and Academic Benefits

There are certainly unarguable health benefits to participating in sports: increased energy, decreased stress and depression and anxiety, improved sleep, stronger heart, muscles, bones and joints, longer life, and lower risk of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity and cancer (Guerin, Diiriye, Corrigan, & Guerin, 2003; Sabo et al., 2004). Women also have a reduced risk of breast cancer when they lead physically active lifestyles. Likewise, the health benefits are extended to mental and emotional well-being. Athletes report lower levels of depression and are at a lower risk for suicide than non-athletic peers (Sabo et al., 2004).

Sports involvement leads to more confidence, higher self-esteem, and a positive body image (Jaffee & Ricker, 1993; Kleindienst-Cachay, 2010; Sabo & Veliz, 2008) along with enhanced assertiveness, emotional stability, independence and self-control (Jaffee & Ricker, 1993). It has been found that involvement in sports leads to the development of decision-making abilities in terms of a commitment to or rejections of certain practices, meaning young women are deciding for themselves how to observe their culture rather than adopting only the traditional cultural norms. (Kleindienst-Cachay, 2010). Girls involved in sports are significantly less likely to begin smoking or using other drugs and they are less likely to be sexually active (Sabo et al., 2004). Lastly, sports help youth develop teamwork skills, learn about proper nutrition, and set goals (Sabo & Veliz, 2008).

Many parents worry that if their child is involved in sports teams, their academic life will slip. However, Fleck, Gardner, and Kasper (2009) show that athletes tend to do better in school, stay in school longer and are active in all aspects of school life. School drop-out rates are lower among youth who are involved in extracurricular activities. Several researchers find that sports involvement leads to higher achievement in education and athletes are more likely to attend college and vote and volunteer (Fleck et al., 2009; Kleindienst-Cachay, 2010; Sabo & Veliz, 2008). This may be because athletes tend to have higher grades and study for longer (Sabo & Veliz; 2008; Sabo et al., 2004). Additionally, school attendance rates among athletes are better and enrollment in honors courses is higher among athletes (Sabo et al., 2004).

Sabo et al. (2004) also find that athletic participation is linked with increased academic success. However, they also introduce the idea that poverty and racial discrimination can negate the benefits of athletic participation and academic performance. This can lead to the dumb jock stereotype that some people hold. Nevertheless, Sabo et al. (2004) find that students of diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds still benefit from sports participation.

Sabo and Veliz (2008) identify several other benefits. Athletes, specifically female athletes, report higher rates of quality of life, meaning they feel content with school, family and friends at higher rates than their non-athletic peers. Communication and trust between parents and children is better and family satisfaction as a whole in terms of harmony, cohesion and communication is improved. Furthermore, with higher rates of quality of life comes a sense of belonging at school and the development of a network of friends (Walseth & Fasting, 2004). As Sabo and Veliz (2008) find, sports provides a social network for students where they develop social and emotional skills which carries into their family relationships as well.

#### Specific Benefits for Immigrants

Though Somali immigrants face many barriers to sports involvement, their parents understand the benefits of physical activity. In one study, it was found that Somali parents understand children are happier and healthier when they are active and they see the benefits of children burning energy in physical activity since those that do are easier to manage and there is less conflict among siblings (Rothe, et al., 2010). Being involved in sports can challenge the dominant culture's societal

stereotypes about a culture. In Norway, Walseth and Fasting (2004) found that the stereotype commonly held about Asian women as passive and “victims of a patriarchal culture” has been challenged as participation in sports has increased among Asian women (p. 119). In the United States, a common stereotype is that the Somali Muslim culture is male-dominated; sports participation could help modify this view. Kleindienst-Cachay (2010) finds that “some Muslim women are becoming agents of change, using sports to challenge cultural and family restriction while retaining important aspects of religious observance” (p.92). Though sports involvement can be one avenue for changing the dominant culture’s perception, the health benefits previously mentioned are especially important for the refugee woman in that the challenges of being a refugee impact health more (Guerin et al., 2003).

English learners themselves have identified the benefits of sports involvement as being able to develop skills, have better health, make new friends, have a sense of achievement, feel happier, get to relax and increase the chance to learn English and American culture (Taylor & Doherty, 2005). Social involvement in school is especially important for immigrant youth as valuable skills are developed, social norms, practices and the culture are learned, and interaction and cooperation with native peers is experienced (Okamoto et al., 2013). Such involvement also helps youth to have a sense of belonging at school (Rothe et al., 2010), and sports participation has a positive correlation with acculturation (Taylor & Doherty, 2005). Walseth and Fasting (2004) find that participation in sports is one way immigrant

youth can learn values and norms in the American culture such as fair play and democratic values.

The benefits to youth participating in sports are immeasurable and the benefits interact with another. The physical health benefits connect with the mental, emotional and social benefits, and can lead to better family relations. Better family relations can lead to higher feelings of quality of life, leading to higher academic achievement. Immigrant youth involved in sports have more opportunities to acculturate, and feel like they belong, leading to better academics and learning how to function in American society. The benefits of sports involvement are interdependent and numerous; schools should be encouraging and making sports involvement accessible to all of our youth.

#### Barriers to Participation

Although it is important for people to lead a physically active lifestyle, the problem, and not just for immigrants, but as doctors and health advocates are finding, for American society as a whole, is that generally people are not leading an active lifestyle (Sabo et al., 2004; Sabo & Veliz, 2008). However, given that programs are readily available at the park board level and through schools, immigrants are not using these opportunities at the same level that native-born American youth are. Sabo and Veliz (2008) show that immigrant girls have lower rates of participation in sports than other girls. Twenty-four percent of Caucasian girls identify as non-athletes while 47% of Asian girls identify as non-athletes, and 36% of African Americans and Hispanic girls identify as non-athletes. Girls of color are participating in sports at lower rates than Caucasian girls, and the difference

becomes greater as they age. The steepest decline in physical activity for girls is when they move into high school (Sabo & Veliz, 2008).

Statistically, girls from a lower socio-economic status are at an increased risk for being overweight and having a lower health status (Rothe et al., 2010; Sabo et al., 2004). For example, since skeletal mass is 98% developed by age 20, building strong bones is the best preventative to osteoporosis (Sabo et al., 2004).

Furthermore, research shows that girls who are obese attend college at lower rates than non-obese girls (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). Compared to non-immigrant women, Somali women are not as physically active and have higher rates of overweight and obesity (Rothe et al., 2010).

Immigrant students may be doing well in school academically, however, if they are not involved in the social aspect of school, they may be socially isolated from native-born peers. Okamoto et al. (2013) say that students' social involvement in school is key to their future integration into mainstream groups as adults. Moreover, Fleck et al. (2009) have shown that few youth have even one close relationship with a non-familial adult before they become adults themselves, which limits students' abilities to access societal resources as they enter into adulthood. Coaches can serve as role models and provide a relationship with a non-familial adult, thereby giving students a broader perspective on accessing resources beneficial to them.

Not only is recruiting Somali students into sports a positive outcome for the schools, sports programs and community, it is positive for the youth. However, even though the programs are available, Somali immigrant youth are not participating.



Given the benefits of participation, coaches, athletic directors and teachers should encourage these students to become involved. The reasons for low participation among Muslim females are complex. There are certainly religio-culturally related barriers but there are also barriers in terms of economic, educational and class status (Kleindienst-Cachay, 2010).

### Gender Specific Barriers

Looking at reasons why Asian women do not participate at the same level as native girls in sports in the U.K., Walseth and Fasting (2004) noted that women and girls report doing household work at the ratio of 51:5 from women to men. In Turkey, free time for married women is generally not available because of the expectation that they take care of children (Walseth & Fasting, 2004). If women do have a chance for some leisure time, they are expected to have the children with them (Walseth & Fasting, 2004). This traditional view of women as caregivers responsible for the household transcends cultural boundaries. Farid and McMahan (2004) say that in the Somali culture men are responsible for everything outside the home and women take care of the household and children. These traditional gender roles “complement each other, reinforcing Islamic values and social harmony” (Farid & McMahan, 2004, p. 8). Somali females recognize they have family duties, such as watching younger siblings and taking care of the house (Guerin et al., 2003; Kahan, 2003). In a study done by Guerin et al. (2003) in which a Somali community center offered exercise classes and gym memberships were offered to Somali women at a reduced rate, the most common reason cited for not attending the classes or the gym was childcare responsibilities. A study done in Clarkston,

Georgia and a review of a similar study done in Canada show that even though Somali women immigrants have generally recognized the benefits for gender roles to change and some have jobs, husbands still do not take on household and childcare responsibilities as they are used to extended family helping with this (Crosby, 2008). As per tradition, men still control the home but women do most of the housework and childcare. Some Somali women feel that their role as a wife and mother is sacred based on Islamic scripture and they commit to maintaining that role in the United States (Crosby, 2008).

Research reviewed above indicates the barriers to playing sports specific to females across different cultures with some specific references to the roles expected of Somali females. There are more barriers tied to gender and the role American society plays that will be discussed in the next section. There are also certainly more barriers identified to the female Somali culture, which will be further covered when culture and religion are discussed as barriers.

### Societal Barriers

American society has not always made it easy to participate in sports. Title IX has been in effect for over forty years, yet female participation still lags behind male participation across all demographics. Children of lower economic status participate in sports at a lower rate than those from higher statuses. Children of non-white races and ethnicities participate at a lower rate than white children. This section will address what is happening in American society that affects sports participation rates.

The Women's Sports Foundation notes that participation in sports for children is primarily determined by the access and opportunity they have to play sports (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). The cost of sports is a primary barrier limiting participation. Clark points out that because sports involvement often requires economic resources and because new immigrants often struggle with economic stability, there clearly are financial barriers preventing these children from playing sports (2008). Also, in single parent households, households that have increased costs or job loss, sports tend to be sacrificed for girls before they are cut for the boys in the family. Given that the average spent per year on sports participation and equipment alone, not counting tournaments, clubs and the such, is \$579, it is no wonder that girls from lower income families are particularly disadvantaged. Girls of color and girls from low-income communities have limited opportunities to play since they lack the financial means to pay fees and buy equipment (Cooky, 2009). However, as household income rises, the gap between girls' and boys' participation narrows (Clark, 2008).

Somali immigrant parents experience difficulties having their children in sports programs because they don't know about programs offered, they lack resources, transportation may hinder them and their time is demanded elsewhere (Rothe et al., 2010). This issue doesn't just affect immigrant parents; girls of color and from low-income communities also face barriers such as transportation, a sheer lack of number of organizations or programs to play for and a lack of space in urban communities (Clark, 2009). Taylor and Dohery (2005) interviewed ESL students, who identified heavy school load, not enough free time, language difficulties,

unfamiliarity with the activity, family responsibility, jobs, cost and feeling excluded from the group as reasons why they don't play sports. Money is a big factor in participating in sports.

Education levels are also tied to participation in sports. Studies show that lower parental education levels correlate with lower involvement in sports (Clark, 2008; Kleindienst-Cachay, 2011). Clark (2008) finds that the lower the education level among parents, the lower the rate of children's sports participation. Only 22% of children of parents with no high school diploma are involved in sports. Because Somali immigrants tend to be refugees and have spent time in refugee camps, they often have lower education levels. It is possible that as the 1.5 generation (children born elsewhere but who immigrated to the United States at a primary school age) and the second generation achieve greater social and financial status here in the United States, participation levels in sports increase.

With the introduction of Title IX and the subsequent dramatic increase of opportunities for girls to be involved in sports, it is a common belief that if a girl is not involved in sports, it must be because she is not interested in sports (Cooky, 2009). "Societal gender roles" and views that still equate athleticism with masculinity continue to act as a barrier (Cooky, 2009, p. 261). As Cooky (2009) notes, this commonly held belief that girls are not interested serves as a barrier unto itself and even more so to girls of color who are also burdened with "race, gender and class inequalities" (p. 261).

Furthermore, as a girl reaches her teen years, she feels even more pressure from society to conform to the social standard of femininity. Girls internalize these

societal views. As one immigrant girl said, “You’re not supposed to do childish things” (Jaffee & Ricker, 1993), and sports are seen as childish. A lack of interest in sports is not a barrier to participation; given a chance to participate, studies show that women want to play (Walseth & Fasting, 2004).

The barriers are those presented here. The perception that girls are not interested is the barrier, not that girls actually are not interested. Cooky (2009) found that girls have had less experience playing sports because there are fewer sports programs offered to them. Due to their inexperience with sports, they don’t play (Kahan, 2003). In Cooky’s study (2009) of two basketball programs set in the same city, one that experienced great success with a program geared for immigrant teen girls and one that did not experience success with the same population group, the level of success was due to how the program was run. Because the program that did not experience success had the attitude that these girls were just not interested, they ran their program differently. This recreation center scheduled the girls’ program after the boys’ program, which had the prime time spot; this sort of gender discrimination in terms of scheduling is a common problem. Furthermore, this particular reduced-fee program was often rescheduled or cancelled to make way for the programs for participants who paid full price. However, since girls of color and from lower income communities participate at a much lower rate, programs must be more accommodating to these population groups to ensure success for the program and for the girls.

### Cultural Barriers

Leet-Otley (2012) has found that immigrant youth who speak a language than English and attend places of worship tend to have more conservative attitudes towards social behavior than American youth. There is a concern from the Somali community as a whole that if their daughters wear tight pants or clothes like those often associated with sports they may lose their cultural values and act like girls from the dominant culture and become more sexually promiscuous (Leet-Otley, 2012). There is also concern as Farid and McMahan (2004) point out, that Somali children tend to lose their Islamic and Somali values as they adopt English and American culture. This is concerning to Somali parents as “Islamic law must be followed in order to reach heaven, and it is parents’ responsibility to raise their children to follow that law” (p. 24). Robillos (2001) finds that Somali students feel uncomfortable at school because of cultural differences such as the intermingling of genders, eating together, and physical education classes, causing these students to be withdrawn. Furthermore, Bigelow (2010) found that some Muslim adolescents have worries of how teammates will perceive them. One cross-country runner quoted “I don’t want to be thought of as selfish (because of fasting), as someone whose religion is hurting the team” (Bigelow, 2010, p. 31). Participation in sports can help them feel more comfortable, but it will be a bigger challenge to recruit this population group.

Culturally and historically, immigrant girls tend to have more responsibility in the home than boys. Parents tend to be stricter with girls because girls represent not just the family’s reputation, but are representative of the ethnic group. As a result immigrant parents tend to hold more traditional values about their daughters,

specifically immigrant fathers (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). Immigrant parents want to protect their daughters against the “promiscuity of American influences” (Leet-Otley, 2012, p. 19). Another barrier for immigrant girls is that immigrant parents at a rate of 25% more than non-immigrant parents think that boys are more interested in sports than girls.

Lastly, there may be a societal or cultural problem with the way programs and centers are run. Kahan (2003) has found that part of the problem may lie in the inflexibility of programs and facilities in accommodating Muslim youth. Facilities risk upsetting members of the mainstream culture that use their facilities. There is the possibility that other users would view the facility as favoring the Muslim culture. Also, separating cultures and genders tend to go against programs’ goals of integration.

Finally, somewhat linked to cultural barriers, at least for the Somali Muslim immigrant population here in the United States, are barriers that are presented because of the nature of Islam.

### Religious Barriers

Islam as a religion does not prohibit sports participation and, in fact, it is supportive of physical activity. Indeed, not all Muslims view sports as an issue, however, some do. The issue with sports for some Muslims is that they are not organized to accommodate Islamic cultural traditions. There are no accommodations for fasting during Ramadan (Dagkas et al., 2011), there tends to be contact between the genders, unveiling is often required and parts of the body that should be hidden are exposed (Walseth & Fasting, 2004). Gender separation during

sports is an Islamic practice because of the Islam prohibition that women not perform sexually exciting actions in front of men. Because commitment to religion is placed at a higher value than interest in sports, girls do not play sports (Kahan, 2003). Not all Muslims feel that sports are seen as exciting, but conservative Muslims can view sports as sexually exciting; this divergent view causes conflict among members of the religion (Walseth & Fasting, 2004).

In some Muslim communities, sports are viewed as play and participation in such play is viewed as a distraction from higher valued pursuits such as religious and family duties (Dagkas et al., 2011). As Muslim girls age, religion and the religious practices become more important; specifically the need for gender segregation during periods of physical activity (Dagkas et al., 2011; Kleindienst-Cachay, 2010). Muslim youth, as do members of other religious groups, have the burden of trying to maintain a balance between their religious duties and society's expectations. This can lead to feelings of shame and guilt when faced with having to expose their bodies, navigate locker rooms, hear comments about their dress and trying to participate during Ramadan (Kahan, 2003).

As Muslim girls and women try to balance between the Somali culture and the American culture, they have to navigate the perceptions and views from American society. There are various reactions from the American public to women who wear a veil. One view is that the veil worn by Muslim women is a forced practice and a sign of a male-dominated culture. However, the veil worn by Muslim women often is a choice made by the women themselves in order to reconnect and/or maintain a cultural/religious tradition, to resist Western culture and to



identify as belonging to the Muslim community (Leet-Otley, 2012; Walseth & Fasting, 2004).

Religion plays a complex role in just how it creates barriers to sports. Muslims don't belong to just one culture, and Muslims that belong to the same culture hold different views in how strictly they practice their religion. The Somali culture is, at least, Muslim by heritage, but Muslims belonging to different nationalities as well as different cultural groups have a varying degree of strictness to their Muslim religion.

Religion and American reactions to Islam continue to act as a barrier in that Muslim girls are often characterized as unathletic and uninterested and because of this, it ends up being true, as the girls then don't participate; it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy (Benn & Pfister, 2013). However, not all girls fit this stereotype. They exhibit a range of attitudes. As one Muslim girl from Benn and Pfister's study (2013) states: "Some make a fuss to get out of P.E." meaning some Muslim girls use the issue of clothing and gender to get out of activity (p. 568). Girls' attitudes are shaped through family and society. As one parent said, "My daughter can do what she wants to do and wear the scarf when she wants to, not when I say" but another says "I don't like my daughters running and swimming; it is against our culture" (Benn & Pfister, 2013, p. 570).

Different girls have different ideas about what they can and cannot do. Generally, education is deemed as very important in the Somali community; it is more important to go to college and have a career than to get married (Benn & Pfister, 2013; Leet-Otley, 2012). Leet-Otley (2012) feels that the longer immigrants

are in America, the less conservative and more open to American values and norms they become. Somali teens are figuring out for themselves what it means to be a Muslim American and are transforming what it means to be a Muslim in America. Individually, teens are deciding what is appropriate in terms of dating, dancing, praying and wearing the hijab (Leet-Otley, 2012).

Hamzeh and Oliver (2012) seem to argue that there are religious barriers that prevent Somali girls from participating in sports, but American society's view of other cultures as "inferior and overly patriarchal" and attempts to "fix the system" actually take away from Muslim girls and their ability to negotiate for themselves between the two cultures (p.331). Hamzeh and Oliver (2012) argue that instead of solving these perceived issues, it would be better to empower Muslim girls to help them ease their way into American culture.

#### Possible Solutions and Considerations

The purpose of my research is to investigate possible solutions and considerations specifically to increase participation rates in high school sports among Somali teenage girls. In the research I reviewed there have been attempts made at helping increase participation in sports, however, it does not address Somali teenage girls specifically; instead addresses either teenage immigrants or the Somali culture as a whole. I want to briefly include the research I reviewed as it helped me determine how to conduct my research and there are parallels between the reviewed research and what I found through my research.

Cooky (2009) did research on sports participation rates among low-income minority girls. She found that the program itself and the facility that runs it play a

large role in the success of the program and getting girls interested. This researcher determined that by having quality coaches who know the sport, keeping a consistent schedule, and running the program the same as one would for girls of a higher socio-economic status; are all ways to generate success. Also, marketing seemed to make a difference in this research. When there is a concentrated effort in terms of recruiting, such as recruiting in the school, hanging banners outside park buildings, having girls-only bulletin boards at the rec center, and coaches who actively engage potential participants and to let girls know about a low-cost program, the ability to develop interest is greatly enhanced (Cooky, 2009).

Much of the research I reviewed suggested that there is a lack of role models in sports for females and an increase in such may lead to higher participation rates. Dagkas et al. (2011) indicate that Somali female youth would participate more if there are Muslim women role models as coaches and teachers. Sabo and Veliz (2008) show that youth are more likely to participate if they have role models. Fleck et al. (2009) and Kahan (2003) suggest that there needs to be collaboration between the school and key Somali leaders who can serve as role models and mentors to show that sports participation does happen and is okay for Muslims. Sabo and Veliz (2008) indicate that there seems to be an absence of role models in the area; they propose that programs could create mentoring partnerships between local colleges and high schools.

Dagkas et al. (2011) advocate, the best solution to getting high school Muslim girls involved in the sports program is having a whole-school commitment to health with clear policies and organization of sports and aligning programs with Islamic

religious standards. Furthermore, sports programs should include families and students in discussion about how to make accommodations in the program so that there can be “shared decision-making” and a “sense of ownership” in how the program runs (Dagkas et al., 2011, p. 233). Clark (2008) shows that despite the barriers of financial costs and education levels, by involving parents in sports, children’s participation rates more than double compared to children whose parents are not involved. 2008). Farid and McMahan (2004) find that in the state they live and work in, parents want to be involved in the education of their children, “however, parental involvement is impeded by differences in language, culture, and the fact that many Somali parents do not know that they have a great deal to contribute” (p. 2). Farid and McMahan (2004) therefore suggest that Somali parents be invited to participate in “specific and structured ways” (p. 3).

Girls are interested in playing sports, but often for different reasons than boys (Cooky, 2009). Girls often are not as interested in competition and winning; instead, they often join sports for “play, enjoyment, connections to others, and competing WITH someone, rather than against someone” (Cooky, 2009, p. 277). Girls want to meet others, spend time with friends and get out of the house (Cooky, 2009). However, as Walseth and Fasting (2004) point out, this particular group lacks a network of athletic friends.

Additionally, instead of just offering traditional sports offerings, developing programs that are of interest to girls can help (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). As indicated above, partnering the school with the family to involve girls in community and school sports programs so that girls get a chance to learn remedial athletic skills can

help the athletes be involved year round and possibly younger siblings may start to get involved with community sports programs (Sabo & Veliz, 2008).

Finally, the research I reviewed suggests accommodations to make sports accessible to Muslim female youth. Dagkas et al. (2011) suggests allowing modified clothing like long pants and jackets as well as allowing donning of the headscarf. For example, the invention of the burkini, a full body swimsuit, is one such accommodation that has made it possible for Muslim women to swim. According to Sabo and Veliz (2008) there should be an attempt to make programs culturally sensitive and appropriate to assuage parental fears. As Guerin et al. (2003) suggest, programs should provide a safe place to dress so no males can see. Programs also need to be flexible during religious periods, specifically during Ramadan.

The research reviewed suggests possible ways to include Muslim girls in sports if programs and schools are willing to make accommodations, include families, and run a program specifically designed to attract this group. Based on existing research, this study will investigate whether the suggested solutions align with solutions interviewees in this research suggest in order to increase the participation of Somali girls in sports in a large Midwestern city school district.

### The Gap

There have been some studies done on why Somali girls are not playing sports and how to overcome the obstacles. However, there is no information regarding low participation rates of Somali girls at the high school sports level. The research gives reasons why Somali women are not playing: societal barriers, gender barriers, religious barriers and cultural barriers. Research also suggests accommodations

that can be made in order to negate these barriers. However, the accommodations suggested target the general population of immigrants and children of lower socio-economic status, adult Somali women or Somali children's participation level at recreation centers. There is little information specific to adolescent Somali girls playing high school sports in state-run and mandated competitive high school programs, where policies such as those involving dress are counter to cultural norms. The accommodations suggested in the literature are also theory. This research will look to see what has worked for coaches in the area and what the Somali population in this area suggests as possible ways to include adolescent females.

#### Research Questions

- What are the current barriers in high schools in a large mid-western city that prevent Somali girls from joining high school sports?
  - What are the roles of family in preventing Somali girls from participating in high school sports?
  - What are the roles of Somali cultural values in preventing Somali girls from participating in high school sports?
- Which local programs have been successful in recruiting Somali girls and how has this been accomplished?
- What are some solutions to overcoming the obstacles that are preventing involvement?

## Summary

As the literature suggests, acculturation is a natural and unavoidable result of immigration; however, it should be viewed as a positive goal (Berry et al, 2006). Sports involvement is one avenue for immigrants to acculturate into American society and indeed there are many benefits for immigrants to participate in sports, and in fact sports involvement has a positive correlation with acculturation (Taylor & Doherty, 2005). Furthermore, involvement in school activities leads to development of skills and learning of social norms and the new culture (Okamoto et al., 2013). However, immigrant students are participating in sports at a much lower level than their native peers (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). There are many barriers to participation that are complex and tiered, including barriers from the acculturating culture itself, barriers related to being an immigrant and gender and socioeconomic barriers. Society places further barriers for girls of lower socio-economic status and of other cultures. The culture itself presents barriers and the Muslim religion sets barriers. However, there have been programs and places that have worked around these obstacles in order to increase involvement from girls of other cultures and girls from lower socio-economic statuses. There are ideas presented in the literature that may help make it possible and more likely for Muslim girls to participate in sports. In the following chapter, I will discuss the methods used to collect the data in order to answer the research questions.

### CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study is designed to explore solutions that can be made to increase participation rates in sports programs among Somali adolescent girls attending Twin City public high schools. In this chapter I will describe how I assessed the needs of this population group and determined what barriers are in place that are currently curtailing involvement in high school sports from this group. I discuss who the participants are in this study, the setting of the study, and the methods I used to determine the barriers and solutions to participation in high school sports. The research methods I used attempted to answer these questions:

- What are the current barriers in high schools in a large mid-western city that prevent Somali girls from joining high school sports?
  - What are the roles of family in preventing Somali girls from participating in high school sports?
  - What are the roles of Somali cultural values in preventing Somali girls from participating in high school sports?
- Which local programs have been successful in recruiting Somali girls and how has this been accomplished?
- What are some solutions to overcoming the obstacles that are preventing involvement?



To find answers to these questions, coaches of athletic programs and athletic directors in Twin City schools were interviewed as well as former female Muslim high school athletes in order to gain explicit insight about their beliefs of the benefits of athletic programs, how they can be an avenue for acculturation, the barriers in having Somali girls on sports teams and ways they were able to overcome and/or accommodate these barriers. In addition, group interviews were conducted with Somali parents of school-age children and adolescents. The interviews aimed to gain the perspective of the population that this research is targeting. The group interview sessions sought answers from parents to the question about barriers preventing athletic involvement and solutions and accommodations.

### Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research methodologies that were used. Along with the description of the qualitative paradigm, description of the research design with a rationale will be presented. The protocols for data collection are discussed along with how the data was collected and analyzed. Finally, the data verification will be addressed and the ethical considerations of the research are examined.

### Qualitative Research Paradigm

The main method used for this study is qualitative. Interviews were used as the research technique in this study in order to access the expertise of coaches who have successfully incorporated the target population group in sports programs, or have failed to, and the experiences of former athletes who have had to negotiate

between their two cultures in order to play. The interviews seek to get direct feedback from the targeted culture population about the barriers and possible accommodations to involvement in sports programs. This type of qualitative research uses data that is descriptive (Mackey & Gass, 2005). This research method is suitable for this type of study because it seeks to get direct feedback from participants who have had successful sports programs with the targeted population. In addition, there is a need for discussion and conversation among athletes and parents in the targeted culture in order to come to conclusions about what are the perceived barriers in place preventing athletic participation. With conversation and discussion, brainstorming can occur in order to discover solutions to the barriers. Although qualitative research is somewhat subjective, and reliability and validity cannot always be established, this is still an effective method for this purpose due to the fact that this study focuses solely on Somali adolescent girls' in this specific Midwestern city. Although the recommendations given at the end of this study may be extended to other geographic areas of the United States, the purpose of this research is to increase involvement in sports programs in this specific Midwestern urban area.

After the interviews were completed, the descriptive data was analyzed. Qualitative data can provide in-depth, comprehensive data, and they can provide "a wide understanding of the entire situation" (Key, 1997). Due to the open-ended nature of qualitative research, an interviewer must attempt to avoid preconceived ideas, with the focus being determined as conversations and answers emerge (Mackey & Gass, 2005 p. 163).

After the data was analyzed, I worked with the data and employed a qualitative method in order to provide descriptive data in hopes of answering the research questions. I compared the themes and categories in terms of how many times they came up across different interviewees. I took the data and broke down how many times the themes and categories came up as a whole, and then how many times they came up by different groups of interviewees.

### Data Collection

#### Participants

Individual interviews were conducted with coaches of two different high school athletic programs held in a large Midwestern city and two female Muslim former high school athletes. The coaches were one female tennis coach and one male high school girls soccer coach. The athletes were two Somali-Muslim females that played a variety of sports as they grew up and in high school. One athlete played for her high school sports teams and the other played in after school sports clubs for Somali girls. They both played soccer as their primary sport. The interviewees were recruited based on personal contacts that have been made over the years I was a coach in this district. Additionally, some of the interviewees were found and recruited because I had heard about a program they had run or participated in geared for Somali youth or young adults through the research I have been doing. In this case, an email was sent to them explaining the research project and requesting an opportunity to interview them. Although the interviewees varied in terms of ethnicity and gender, they were similar in terms of profession, field of education, education levels, experience as a coach or as an athlete.

Group interviews were also conducted with parents of Somali students in the district. They were recruited on a voluntary basis through help from a Somali community member that I have a professional relationship with. I conducted two group interviews, one with Somali fathers and one with Somali mothers of students in the district. I aimed to have three participants in each group, although I was only able to get two fathers and two mothers in each group. Participants all identify as Somali and Muslim and all have school-age children. Most were not born in the United States. However the length of time they have been here varied from sixteen years to twenty-two years. All participants speak English, fluently enough that they do not need a translator.

### Setting

This study was conducted in an urban area of an upper Midwestern state. The public schools in this setting have an English language learner (ELL) population of 24% with a total student body population of 35,356 (\*\*Office of Communications, 2014). ELL is defined as students who speak a language other than English as their first language. ELL students that identify as Somali in this district are at 30.6% of the total ELL population.

### Data Collection Technique 1

To gauge the barriers and possible solutions of sports involvement from Somali adolescent females, semi-structured interviews (See Appendix A) with the coaches and athlete participants were used. Semi-structured interviews are interviews in which the researcher uses a set of questions as a guide but has the freedom to further explore for more information that interviewees may bring up

(Mackey & Gass, 2005 p. 173). These differ from structured interviews in which all the questions asked of all interviewees are the same. Because the interviews were interactive, the researcher could probe for more information.

### Data Collection Technique 2

Group interviews were conducted with Somali parents. These interviews were also conducted as semi-structured interviews in which a pre-determined set of questions was used. Group interviews are similar to one-on-one interviews but there are more participants involved, no more than three however. See Appendix B for the group interview questions.

Along with the benefits of group interviewing come some disadvantages. Interviewees and group participants can sometimes not remember clearly or answer in a way that may be distorted or in a way that puts themselves in a favorable light (Mackey & Gass, 2005). In group interviews, there is the danger of groupthink, when participants go along with the group and individual voices of dissent are not voiced (Thomas, 2008). However, groupthink is not necessarily a problem in a culture that operates less at the individual level and more at the collective level as Gulf-Arab cultures do (Thomas, 2008). In the Gulf-Arab culture, a culture that is similar to the Somali culture, the “collective voice is the only one of significance within the cultural framework; the public voice is the private voice” (Thomas, 2008 p. 86). In other words, a collective response would be culturally appropriate in such a setting. Because of Thomas’ (2008) research and because of Walseth and Fasting’s (2004) research about Asian women and what Farid and McMahan (2004) say about traditional Islamic gender roles, I felt it important to

one, separate fathers and mothers in individual interview groups, and two, to elicit and ask about each groups' viewpoints about Somali females playing sports.

Interviewees can also base their responses on what they think the interviewer wants them to say or what they think is expected of them, known as the halo effect (Mackey & Gass, 2005). I tried to overcome this by keeping my responses neutral and not giving my opinion on the issue of females and sports. Lastly, miscommunication can happen, made all the more likely when dealing with members of different languages and cultures (Mackey & Gass, 2005). An interviewer needs to encourage open-ended discussion and not automatically accept the first answer from an interviewee.

An interviewer needs to anticipate and address communication problems and make the interviewee as comfortable as possible. Key questions should be asked in the middle to accommodate for nervousness at the beginning of the interview and weariness at the end. Lastly, responses from the interviewee should be mirrored back neutrally by the interviewer to provide the interviewed a chance for reflection and further input (Mackey & Gass, 2005). As an experienced teacher, I have developed skills such as mirroring back responses and remaining silent or by probing neutrally while students continue to think and discuss.

#### Procedure

To address the concerns above, multiple people were interviewed and individual interviews with former Muslim athletes helped to balance out this effect in the group interviews. One group included only Somali mothers and another group only Somali fathers. All parents speak English fluently.

To create a comfortable setting for the interviews, interviews were held at places the interviewees chose and the interviewer started with small talk to put interviewees at rest. The interviews were held at recreation centers and coffee shops. The interviewees chose the places to meet; in one case, an interviewees' home was used.

I based my interview questions on my own experience as a coach and on successes I've had in programming and struggles I've had as well as the research literature I reviewed. Through my experiences I was able to anticipate what some of the issues may be for coaches as well as for athletes. However, as I read through others research, it reiterated and made clear what kinds of questions to ask. Some of the content in my interviews has to do with acculturation and if sports can help immigrants acculturate. I use the definition of acculturation as opposed to integration or assimilation, from Berry et al. (2006), in my questioning to athletes and coaches. Furthermore, as Sabo et al.,(2004); Sabo & Veliz (2008) and several other researchers have found, there are health benefits to playing sports. In addition, Taylor & Doherty (2005), Fasting (2004) and Okamoto et al., (2013) there are specific benefits for immigrant groups. I used this as reasoning to ask interviewees what they felt were the benefits of sports and what were specific benefits to immigrants. Several researchers found barriers to sports participation, not just specifically for Somali girls, but for females specifically, low-income families, and societal barriers. Based on my experiences as a coach, and reinforced by the research, it stood to reason that other coaches and athletes would have their own

experiences with barriers to participation, hence this line of questioning in the interviews.

Prior to the interviews, an email or information sheet was sent out explaining my research, why I was conducting this research, and why the research is important (see appendix B). The interviews were set up based on availability and convenience of the interviewees; all took place in January 2015.

### Participants

All participants, whether an interviewee or a member of the group were given the informed consent letter and asked to sign prior to any discussion. Participants were informed that they were allowed to withdraw from the interview at anytime and would be guaranteed anonymity. All individual participants were given detailed information about the research through an email request for an interview, or from a description given when recruiting participants and at the beginning of the interview. Interviews were conducted based on availability and convenience. The date, time and location for the group interviews were determined, based on advice of my Somali liaison, and then participants were recruited by personal invitations, either through phone calls or emails or personal contact. My established contacts that work closely with the Somali community helped me recruit Somali parents.

Both group and individual interviews were used. Group interviews were used with the parents in order to allow for parents to build upon each other's ideas and brainstorm together. Along with this advantage, group interviews served to put the participants more at ease than they may be in a one-to-one interview with a



researcher who is of a different ethnicity and professional status. Individual interviews were conducted with coaches and athletes, as it was the aim of the interview to find out their personal experiences, challenges and successes rather than their experiences as a group.

### Materials

The only item given to participants was the list of interview questions that I planned to ask them in the interview. Recordings on a Sony IC recorder were made during the interviews. Anonymity was guaranteed through assigning numbers to participants.

### Data Analysis

The interview data was transcribed and then analyzed using themes and categories. The overarching ideas that emerged from the data was identified as themes. Themes emerged such as the need for participation, benefits of participation, barriers to participation and possible solutions to increase participation. Categories were used on a more descriptive level to identify the different topics in a theme: religious barriers, gender barriers, monetary barriers, and societal barriers, among others. To identify themes and categories, all interview data was transcribed. The answers to each question were then sorted into related answers. From the sorting, categories emerged under the over-arching themes of benefits of participation, issues with participation, solutions to participation and whether or why participation should be encouraged.

From this analysis of the data, the three-step analysis formula of Describe-Compare-Relate was used to analyze the themes and categories (Bazeley, 2009). In

this formula, the categories and themes were described in terms of characteristics, boundaries, the context in which each came up, the demographics of who relates to this theme, and the frequency in which it was identified. Then the themes and categories were compared, not to each other, but instead across the participants and across groups. The themes and categories were analyzed for variations among participants. For example, did coaches view a theme or category similarly or differently from parents of Somali girls and Somali college students? Lastly, the themes and categories were compared to each other to identify how they relate to each other, in that themes are the overall picture and categories are more specific to each theme. The themes were linked to form a “coordinated picture” (Bazeley, 2009) in an attempt to answer the research questions.

The data should be seen as reliable as multiple people were interviewed in several different population groups. As the data was collected and analyzed, the different themes and categories emerged as multiple people’s answers supported a theme and/or category.

#### Verification of Data

To ensure validity of the data, triangulation of the data was a goal. Since the data was gathered through personal interviews, multiple questions in the interview keyed in on the same information in order to verify. Also, four individuals and two groups were interviewed, including coaches, former female Muslim high school athletes and Somali parents, resulting in a broader sample.

To keep bias out, open responses to answers were used such as asking for anything else, asking if interviewees could say more about that, repeating the

answers given in a neutral manner, or keeping silent about answers. Every effort was made to meet interviewees and groups in a location they chose or in a familiar place to keep them comfortable (Mackey & Gass, 2005). After the interview completed, participants were offered the opportunity to review the transcription and have it emailed to them; none of the participants wished to review the transcriptions.

### Ethics

In order to ensure participants' rights, the following precautions/safeguards were taken:

- 1) the research objectives were shared with all potential participants;
- 2) a human subjects review was submitted and approved by the university before proceeding;
- 3) informed consent was given by participants (see Appendix B)
- 4) and anonymity of participants was guaranteed.

Recordings will be kept for one year in the researcher's house in a locked personal safe. Transcriptions of the interviews will be stored on a jump drive and hard copy that will also be stored for one year in a locked personal safe and then destroyed.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter discussed the interview method that were used to assess participants' views of the barriers limiting participation in sports by Somali female adolescents, and their views on accommodations and solutions that could have potential to increase participation. In addition, how the data from the interviews were analyzed was discussed along with how to ensure reliability,

validity, and follow the ethics. The following chapter shows results from the research.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This study took place in a large Midwestern inner city. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with participants in individual interviews and group interviews. After the interviews were recorded and transcribed, the data that emerged was sorted into common themes and categories. The themes that emerged were: the need and benefits of participation, barriers to participation, and solutions for participation. Each of these themes was then broken down into categories describing the different types of benefits, barriers and solutions. In this chapter, each of the themes and categories is described in terms of their demographic features, characteristics and the context in which they were discussed. The data are compared to each other and then related in terms of the context each theme and category arose. Through the collection and analysis of these data, I sought to find the answer to the following questions:

- What are the current barriers in high schools in a large mid-western city that prevent Somali girls from joining high school sports?
  - What are the roles of family in preventing Somali girls from participating in high school sports?
  - What are the roles of broader cultural values in preventing Somali girls from participating in high school sports?

- Which local programs have been successful in recruiting Somali girls and how has this been accomplished?
- What are some solutions to overcoming the obstacles that are preventing involvement?

The following sections present the themes that emerged during the interviews. In the first section, I describe the different themes and categories that emerged from the data and describe how the interviewees talked about the different themes and categories. The themes that arose were the need, benefits of participation, barriers, and solutions. Secondly, I compare the data numerically. I use figures to show how many times each theme and category was mentioned by different interviewees. Lastly, I describe the relationships among the data.

### The Need

The theme of whether or not there is a need for Somali girls to be playing sports arose several times across most of the interviews. It is apparent from the data that there does seem to be a need to take action in order to involve more Somali adolescent girls in sports. It was highlighted the most by coaches, but also by mothers. The coaches were asked to describe the typical participant in their program and to also estimate how many Somali females they have had participate over the years. The parents were asked how many had daughters in sports programs, whether they felt sports involvement was important and if they would, or would not, like their daughter involved in sports.

The coaches highlighted the fact that there have only been a few Somali players on their teams in their experiences and also mentioned that they see only a

few across other programs they have seen. Far and away, Somali girls are the least represented demographic among the participants in their program based on the answers given. This corroborates what Sabo and Veliz (2008) find in their research, immigrant girls are far less represented on sports teams.

However, one coach mentioned that Somali boys were highly represented in sports, at least in terms of the soccer team, the sport this coach is involved with. Furthermore, interviewees indicated that when given an opportunity, Somali girls wanted to participate in sports. One of the coaches interviewed started an after-school tennis program at a Somali charter high school. The coach ran this program at other high schools as well, but it was the most successful at the Somali school in terms of number of participants. The coach had a waiting list at the Somali school, something that never happened at the other high schools. In addition, the coach highlighted the need of having Somali girls involved in sports because the physical condition was generally poor among the Somali girls, also corroborating Sabo et al. (2004) and Rothe et al. (2010), that girls from a lower socio-economic status have a lower health status.

The need for physical activity and sports involvement was also brought up by the parents, but mainly by the mothers' group that was interviewed. The mothers talked about it in a different context. Their daughters sit around and do nothing other than be on their phones and use technology. One mother talked about how her younger children dance and play, but she cannot get her teenage daughter out of the corner and off her phone. The mothers agreed that it would be better to have children in sports because when they are not, they get into trouble. The fathers,

though they recognize the health benefits of physical activity, did not seem to feel that their daughters' lack of involvement was of concern. They felt it acceptable that their daughters play sports under certain conditions, but felt their daughters do not want to and they were fine with that.

The first athlete interviewed mentioned that she was always the only Somali player on her teams. Another athlete talked about how there were relatively few Somali athletes on her teams; highlighting the idea that there is a need for a concentrated effort to increase participation among this specific population group.

### Benefits of Participation

All interviewees saw benefits to being involved in sports. These benefits ranged from health benefits to social and developmental benefits. Certain interviewees also saw specific benefits to the immigrant student as well as the benefits to others that immigrant student participation can have.

### Health Benefits

This category looks at participants' responses to how sports help a person's physical health. All interviewees were asked in one way or another if they felt there are benefits to sports involvement. No question specifically asked what the health benefits are, just what benefits to sports involvement there are.

Echoing much of the research reviewed in chapter 2, all interviewees recognized that participation in sports has health benefits to the individual. Most interviewees just saw the general health benefits that physical activity gives to an individual in that it keeps the body healthy, helps with weight management and is good for the body to be active.



One of the two coaches was one of only two interviewees to mention that physical activity has health benefits that go beyond just physical wellness. This coach mentioned the mind-body connection. The mind and body work better together. Also, students often complain of fatigue and headaches as reported by this coach/teacher, but these lessened with physical activity. She reported that attendance among students who were involved in sports programs was better than among those not involved; with the after school program this coach ran, data was kept on attendance, and school attendance rates improved among students involved in the sports program. These findings corroborate the research of Sabo et al. (2004), attendance rates are better among athletes. Furthermore, the coach said that teachers told her that students' emotional health seemed to improve when involved with this sports program. The students seemed more positive about the day and confident. Several of the research reviewed in chapter 2 verify that sports involvement enhances emotional health.

One father interviewed echoed the mind and body connection. He said there is a saying in Somalia that says: "The active body has a smart brain inside." This father said: "You get healthy, you get active, you get smart."

Though all interviewees recognized the health benefits of physical activity, not all of them recognized social and developmental benefits of sports involvement.

#### Social and Developmental Benefits

This category looks at how participants' reacted to the category that athletic participation helps individuals develop in terms of social development and skills that lend themselves outside of sports. Like health benefits, there was no specific

question asked to probe for information on this category. Instead, interviewees were asked what they viewed as benefits of sports involvement.

Many interviewees recognized that sports involvement is good for children's social and developmental well-being. Coaches and the mothers saw this benefit the most. The benefit most frequently mentioned was in terms of life skills. Sports involvement, not just physical activity, but being involved in a team develops life skills. The coaches mentioned the life skills of learning how to work in groups, leadership skills, work dedication, working for a greater purpose, and accepting loss. Mothers echoed these life skills saying that children learn morals, sportsmanship and how to accept loss. Children need to learn they are not going to win every time. These echo Sabo & Veliz's (2008) findings, sports help develop teamwork skills and set goals.

One coach added that in addition to life skills, sports involvement leads to friendships beyond the usual ones. In addition, the coach reiterated the connection between sports involvement and school, mentioning better attendance and more homework completion. Lastly, sports involvement can lead to more activity individually. This connects back to the health benefits of physical activity that can lead to an active lifestyle.

One of the former athletes saw social benefits in a different light. She mentioned that being involved in sports made her popular and that it kept her involved; it gave her something to do.

### Specific Benefits for Immigrants

This category looks at how sports involvement specifically benefits an immigrant in the United States. The coaches were asked: How does athletic participation specifically benefit the immigrant adolescents? They were also asked if they felt sports helps students become more acculturated. Former athletes were asked how sports involvement helped them to interact with peers of other cultures. Parents were asked what the benefits of having their child involved in sports are.

The coaches were the only group of interviewees to recognize or mention this category. They talked about it in terms of relationships. Taylor and Doherty (2005) interviewed ESL students in their research and these students talked about sports involvement in a similar fashion. My interviewees, like Taylor and Doherty's, felt that sports involvement breaks barriers, creates relationships and helps students relate to other students. Mainly, sports involvement provides avenues to integration and can bridge the gap between cultures. One athlete, though she did not mention this as a benefit, did mention that she started playing sports here in America because she saw others playing soccer; since she had played soccer in Africa, she could relate to that.

One coach mentioned the specific need that Somalis have for sports involvement. Given the background of unrest and civil turmoil in Somalia, "there wasn't much opportunity for sports or physical fitness. So...there's a very special need for that for the communities that come from that background." This corroborates what Guerin et al. (2003) says about refugees needing to be involved in physical activity because of the challenges facing refugees in terms of health.

### Benefits to Others

The last category in the theme of benefits is one that recognizes that sports involvement is not just a benefit to oneself, but can affect people and society around them. There was no specific question asked of any interviewees relevant to this category, but it did come up a few times. One coach and one athlete mentioned this category. The coach mentioned that sports involvement helps non-immigrant students learn about and interact with the immigrant population. Also, at the school where this coach works, sports involvement has eased tensions between groups of students and has led to acceptance. Though the other coach did not specifically mention this category, she did bring up many examples of how sports helps the immigrants such as creating relationships with other students and helps native-born Americans accept students who don't speak English. This could be viewed as a benefit to not only the immigrant, but to others as well. One athlete also recognized that her involvement in sports helped change other people's viewpoints about her and her culture. These findings are similar to what Walseth and Fasting (2004) found in their research in Norway about Asian women's involvement in sports. As participation rates increased, the stereotype of Asian women as passive and the Asian culture as patriarchal has been challenged.

### Barriers

This theme looks at why Somali adolescent girls are not playing sports. As discussed above, most interviewees recognized or mentioned that there is a need for Somali girls to play sports and that few are playing. Interviewees recognized and mentioned that there are barriers that prevent Somali adolescent girls from

joining school athletics. These barriers were discussed through the categories of societal barriers, religious/cultural barriers, familial barriers and other priorities that act as barriers. All interviewees were asked questions to determine what barriers were preventing athletic involvement, but none of the questions specifically addressed these categories.

### Societal Barriers

This category addresses the issues that are in place in American society that hinder athletic involvement, not necessarily just for Somali girls, but also sometimes for all adolescents or for immigrant adolescents. This category also recognizes specific issues that low-income families may have as well as issues new immigrants have when coming to the United States.

All groups of interviewees cited societal barriers, though they talked about them in different ways. One of the coaches did not cite any societal barriers, but the other did. This coach talked about it mostly in terms of a financial need. Sports cost money to run. This coach talked about needing grants, donations and volunteers to run a program for the immigrant population that she served. Through the grants and donations, she was able to run a program that was free for the participants. Transportation was also provided for participants. Through her program, she was able to remove financial barriers. However, participants still lacked tennis shoes and equipment, which again, cost money. The mother interviewees also cited money as a barrier to participation but in no specific context, just that it might be a reason families do not participate. However, another mother pointed out that in the Somali culture, if a child wants something, a mother figures out how to pay for it.

The other mothers agreed. Much of the research in chapter two cited that the cost of sports is a financial barrier.

Another topic often brought up in terms of a societal barrier regards issues that newer immigrants face. The issue of language was brought up across interviewees. It's hard to understand what a teacher is talking about, an athlete said. Translations are needed for any documents so that parents understand, a coach said. Though the research I reviewed in chapter 2 did discuss unfamiliarity with sports and lack of knowledge about sports offerings, none of the research mentioned language as a barrier to sports participation, yet this seems like a logical barrier.

Being in a new culture was also discussed as a hardship. As the fathers discussed, there's overprotectiveness from the parents because they are new to the country, specifically an overprotectiveness of daughters. New immigrants worry about safety. Everything is new and unfamiliar and it takes time to get used to it, as one athlete discussed. Even if they do get involved, there can be further barriers. One mother gave an example about her son in a soccer program, who was uncomfortable because he was the only Somali boy playing. In fact, he was the only black boy, the others were mostly Latino. Even the coach was Latino. Again, the research reviewed did mention unfamiliarity as a barrier, but did not mention the overprotectiveness of parents or safety concerns as a specific barrier to sports participation. However, Sabo and Veliz (2008) state that immigrant parents do tend to be stricter with girls. Farid and McMahan (2004) indicate that Somali parents are worried about children losing their values as they become more acculturated.

The last way societal barriers were discussed has more to do with opportunities that society itself gives for sports involvement. Though it will be discussed further under the theme of solutions, the mothers talked a lot about how elementary schools should offer more sports-based after school activities. The mothers discussed how there are very few programs available. They admit there may be programs, but they are not aware of them. One mother said, Somali moms are not going to look in a book for programs. She said she knows that's what Americans do, but Somalis don't do that. So the issue of programs not being offered or not effectively advertised was an oft-cited example of a societal barrier.

Another issue was timing. One mother had her son in a park league soccer program, but the timing of the program created conflicts. Somali children have religious schooling on Saturdays, often when park program games are held. Then a family has to choose between religious schooling and sports.

These contexts were how societal barriers were discussed. Some could be seen as a barrier just for the Somali culture and Muslim religion, but they appear to be more societal barriers in terms of it is what is going on in the majority society that is preventing sports involvement than barriers due to the Somali culture and religion. Discussed next will be barriers more specific to one's own religion and culture.

### Religious and Cultural Barriers

Religious and cultural barriers in Somali society were the most mentioned barrier brought up by almost all interviewees. The mothers' group actually cited societal barriers more, followed by religious and cultural barriers. The context in

which it came up most was through the issue of clothing and girls being uncomfortable or “shy” in public. One coach, the two athletes and the fathers talked about religious barriers in this context. It is necessary that girls cover up in society. Different families and different women choose how to cover up. Some females choose to cover fully with the headscarf and full dress, while others just wear the headscarf and long sleeves and pants, sometimes pants under a skirt. One athlete did not cite clothing as a barrier for her personally; she always wore the hijab and long sleeves and pants. For the other athlete, clothing is a major barrier to sports involvement. She is unwilling to wear pants in public and her clothing is uncomfortable to play sports in. She participated in sports only in the presence of other females, it was acceptable to wear pants and a shirt. This reiterates the research findings of Benn and Pfister (2013) in which different parents held different attitudes about what was acceptable and not acceptable.

Being uncomfortable and shy in public without the traditional clothing was the other way this context was discussed. Though one athlete did not discuss clothing as a barrier, she said other females in her family didn't play sports because they are modest and shy. The other athlete would be very uncomfortable playing in front of others. One father told a story about how his daughter, at about seven years old, was playing in a park board soccer program. He told his daughter to take off her hijab because it was a warm humid day. In the Somali Muslim culture, girls do not need to cover up until they reach maturity. The daughter refused to take off her hijab because she was uncomfortable doing that. As another father said, this is how we raise our daughters, to be modest and shy in public.



Another religious concern had to do with the men. Kahan (2003) states that Somali girls do not play sports because of the contact with boys. Some of my research corroborates this, however, I found that for many of my interviewees there was no problem with this. Women in the Muslim culture are not supposed to be active in front of men and there is no touching allowed between genders. In regard to this, the coaches brought up the issue of male coaches. One of the coaches, being a male, has had Somali girls tell him they cannot play on his team because he is male. The other coach had male coaches and volunteers in her program; at first that was an issue for the Somali community, but they began to accept it as a level of trust grew. There was, however, emphatic emphasis that there could be no touching by the coaches, such as demonstrating a skill or fixing a stance or grip. The mothers, fathers and athletes all said male coaches were acceptable as long as there was no touching. One athlete said, though she was fine with a male coach, she would be uncomfortable playing sports if there were other males around, such as her peers.

Another way societal barriers were addressed was through the Somali society. One athlete discussed that though she still played, people gossiped about her in the Somali society. She heard comments about how she was a girl and she shouldn't be doing things like playing sports. She proclaimed that she needed to fight for everything she wanted. Even in the discussion with the fathers, one father implied that families who let their daughters wear pants, rather than the traditional skirt, were viewed as less religious. This father wasn't necessarily making a judgment; he stated it as a fact. When one of the mothers was asked what restrictions or accommodations she would like if her daughter played sports for

clothing, she laughed and said “Oh we’re not that much, there are people who want all the body covered, my kids wear pants, so she’ll be okay,” implying that she is not as conservative as some others. There seems to be a connection between how religious one’s family is and what they allow the daughters to do and wear. These statements and answers reflect the research of Kahan (2003) in which it is indicated that Muslim youth have to balance religion and expectations along with feelings of shame and guilt.

The other issue that came up was the idea that women playing sports is not part of the Somali culture. There isn’t encouragement for girls to play sports, as the mothers say, but they were unable to articulate why, as they all found the idea of their daughters playing sports acceptable. Brought up by mothers, a coach and an athlete, it seems that because girls mostly haven’t played sports in Somali culture, it will take some time getting used to that idea. Through many of the interviews I had with Somalis, Somali girls’ basketball teams were mentioned; I had the impression that they were important in Somalia and now here too. These teams were a source of pride for interviewees; a way to show off in a similar fashion that Americans take pride with their sports teams.

There were a few other examples that fall under this category, but these were infrequent or mentioned maybe by just one group, so they are outliers. One athlete mentioned that sports weren’t an issue when she was young. She didn’t worry about covering up because no one cares when you’re young, but once you reach maturity, fifteen, it becomes an issue. One coach mentioned Ramadan as an issue for

some athletes. Muslims do not eat or drink during the day, which makes it very difficult for the athletes to compete, though they still do.

The fathers discussed a different idea that no one else mentioned, but this was what the fathers talked about most. The older generation worries that children, now in America, will lose their cultural values and religion. Parents are reluctant to allow their children to be involved lest they lose their values. This corroborates the research of Farid and McMahan(2004). The mothers did not touch on this fact, but recognized that it is their own Somali culture that is inhibiting children. They declared that since the civil turmoil in Somalia there has been a new, stricter interpretation of the Quran and therefore children are being constrained; one mother said, "Let babies be babies."

As the fathers kept reiterating to me, each family is different. Each family decides how they want to be and raise their children. Though they were discussing in terms of religion, it is true that personal families create obstacles to sports involvement.

### Familial Barriers

This category was discussed in terms of what is happening in individual families that is placing obstacles to girls' sports involvement. This category came up most often as either children had family responsibilities that made them needed at home, or there was a lack of support by families in terms of sports involvement. The findings in this category are unique in terms that the research I reviewed in chapter two did not cite any of the following as barriers to sports participation.

The coaches mostly talked about how adolescents are needed at home, which prevented their participation in sports. Children may be the only one who speaks English, so they are needed. Athletes often tell the coaches they need to take care of younger siblings because the parents work, or they have chores to do at home. In some cases, the teens have jobs in order to help support the family. The mothers also cited that the parents' work schedules act as a barrier to sports involvement. However, they spoke of it more in terms for younger children because then parents are not available to take kids to sports programs. The mothers did talk about single-family households and large family sizes being a barrier to sports involvement.

One of the coaches and one of the athletes talked about the lack of support as a barrier. The coach talked about it in terms of absentee parents, when adolescents are on their own. Also, parents may be hard to reach and talk to about the sports program. Often, the parents don't understand the sports system in the United States and place demands on the child to be home, whereas the coach demands the adolescent be at practice; the athlete gets pulled in two directions.

The athlete, though she still played sports and said that her parents were fine with her playing sports, did not receive much encouragement and her parents never came to any games to support her. She said she doesn't know any Somali parents that would support their child at a sporting event. She said, "It's not part of their culture. "

The fathers' group talked about familial barriers in a different context than any of the other groups. They talked about it in terms of personal family choices and what is allowed. They brought up the idea, quite often, that parents are

different in how they raise their daughters and what is allowed is up to the family. Sometimes parents do not allow their daughters to play sports. The fathers also said that many girls choose not to play sports because of the way they were raised. They were raised in a way that the daughters themselves choose not to play, not that the parents do not allow it, but it's their choice and the daughters choose not to play. One of the athletes touched on this idea by saying she had friends who wouldn't dare to ask their parents to play and she had friends whose parents wouldn't allow the daughter to play.

Societal, religious and cultural, and familial barriers were the most cited examples of why Somali adolescent girls are not playing sports. Occasionally though, the theme of barriers was discussed through priorities. Parents and athletes sometimes have other priorities in their life that are more important than sports involvement.

### Priorities

Other priorities sometimes take precedence over sports involvement. This happens for all people in all cultures, but the way the athletes and the mothers talked about it, may be more uniquely a Somali Muslim priority.

One athlete talked about how her mother was fine with her daughter playing sports, but education is really what matters. This athlete talked about how her mother only celebrates "real achievements," life-changing events. She didn't come to any sporting events, but she would come to student of the month events and graduation from college. Her mother loved to talk about future career aspirations, but not sports. The mother interviewees echoed this context. Somali mothers

“focus on education because our parents didn’t have the education that is available here.” Sports are just for fun. My interviewees corroborate Leet and Otley (2012) and Benn and Pfister (2013) when they mention education being more important than sports.

The other athlete talked much about how her religion is number one in her life, her first priority. So she would like to play sports, but not enough to change her priorities. She will continue to dress modestly because she has made a commitment to her religion and will not sacrifice that for sports. The mothers echoed this statement as well by saying that as long as sports do not affect their religion, then it is okay to play sports.

The coaches see that priorities can interfere with sports involvement as well, but they see it more as general for all students. Programs at schools often conflict with each other, therefore making it so students have to choose what program they want to be in. Sometimes, sports programs are sacrificed. None of the research I reviewed cited program conflicts as a barrier.

### Solutions

This is the last theme that came up in the interviews. Though there seem to be many obstacles for Somali female adolescents to play sports, many interviewees suggested possible ways to remove obstacles and shared methods that have worked to help Somali females play sports. Most of the suggestions and methods that were discussed had to do with what families and females could do themselves while others had to do with how society can help make their programs known. There was very little suggestion that programs themselves need to change in order to

accommodate Somali females. The interviewees suggested solutions are broken down into: accommodations, societal solutions, and what has worked.

### Accommodations

This category has less to do with a program making changes to accommodate Somali females and more to do with what a female in the Somali culture can do in order to be able to play. This category was the one most spoken about when looking at the theme of solutions. All interviewees talked about clothing accommodations for girls, though one father did say that nothing can be done to make it acceptable to play. However, he contradicted himself and said it would be acceptable if his daughter could dress “appropriately” while playing.

As mentioned, all interviewees discussed clothing alternatives that would be acceptable for the Somali culture and make it acceptable to play. One of the athletes, coaches and the mothers discussed how athletes could wear pants and long sleeve compression shirts under their uniforms and that would make it just fine to play. Only one athlete said she could not or would not wear pants. She is okay playing if there are only females present and then she was willing to change into more athletic clothing. They all said it was acceptable to wear the long clothing and the hijab or headscarf. The coach that led a Somali tennis program had several girls that would wear their skirts or dresses with their hijab and they could still play. The fathers echoed that as long as the girls covered, they could still play. It is unclear whether the fathers meant dresses or if long sleeves and pants were acceptable. The mother interviewees seemed to be the most open to other clothing options. They were the ones who brought up that you can buy acceptable clothing all over. They talked

about how special swimsuits that cover the body are sold for Muslim women at the YMCA. The mothers said that in most families, mothers would be okay with long tights or leggings under the uniform and long sleeve shirts with a headscarf. My findings corroborate Dagkas et al. (2011) research in which modified clothing and allowing full covering up is mentioned.

Other accommodations that were spoken about only by one interviewee, a coach, and have to do with all the steps she took in order to get an after school tennis program started at a Somali charter high school. This coach approached the principal of the school and met with the elders often in order to get approval for the program by Somali elders. She said that getting approval made a big difference in making the program successful. None of the research I reviewed mentioned elder approval. Elder approval is one accommodation that may make it easier to recruit Somali females. In order to get this approval, the coach had an *imaan* (a religious leader) visit the site of the program in order to make sure it was *halal* (religiously approved). The elders, able to see the program and how it has been run in the past (at other schools) found the program acceptable. This echoes the research of Dagkas et al. (2003) in which he suggests that parents should be involved in setting up the program to meet Islamic religious standards. Separation of genders was one possibility that the coach in my research was willing to offer to meet Islamic standards, but the elders and the adolescents were fine with genders being able to see each other. However, one of the athletes I interviewed would only be comfortable playing sports in the presence of females.



The coach met with her volunteers and other coaches in order to train them in how to teach Somali adolescents, many of whom did not speak much English. In the trainings, no touching to demonstrate skills was emphasized.

The biggest accommodation that can be made seems to be clothing for the girls. That is a personal choice by the families and females themselves. All but one interviewee, a Somali female former athlete, seemed to be fine with long clothing underneath the uniform along with a head covering. Though there were other accommodations that one coach made in order to have a sports program at a Somali charter high school, most interviewees seemed to find sports involvement acceptable as long as there was covering of some sort.

### Societal Solutions

This category looks at how societal situations can affect involvement in sports and in some cases what society can do to help increase involvement. This category was talked about mainly in one way by all interviewees. Almost all interviewees discussed that the longer the people are here in the United States, the more likely they will change and sports involvement will increase. As the level of acculturation increases, involvement will increase. All of the interviewees except for the mothers and one athlete said that the longer a family has been in the country, the more acculturated they are and the more likely a girl will play sports. As the fathers said, the longer you have been in the country, the more you understand. One father said, we'd see the second generation of immigrants playing sports. So giving the culture time is one solution. This possible solution adds to the reviewed research, as the research I reviewed did not mention this possibility.

The mothers did not talk about this aspect at all. Instead they said that parents need to be educated, schools need to offer programs and programs need to involve parents and get involved in the community. The advice from these mothers matches what Sabo and Veliz (2008) say about partnering family, schools and sports programs and involving children when they are young. Dagkas et al. (2011 and Clark (2008) also suggest involving families in sports. The solutions the mothers in my research suggested really would benefit all programs in getting people of all cultures to play sports. The mothers suggest that Somali parents do not know the benefits of sports, therefore, if we gathered them and let them know, most would want their children involved. The mothers talked a lot about how the local school district does not offer much in the way of after school sports programs at the elementary level. If sports were offered at the elementary level, then kids would grow up playing sports and would continue in middle and high school. If we try to get kids involved once they reach adolescent age, it's too late. What with the barriers in place for families, having elementary programs would really help.

Lastly, if parents are to know about programs available in the neighborhood, program facilitators need to get involved in the community. If facilitators are involved, parents will be aware, and if the parents are involved in the program, that will help involvement rates as well. This reflects Cooky's (2009) research; that when coaches take an active role in the community, participation rates increase.

There were no other solutions suggested that society or programs themselves could do in order to increase involvement by adolescent girls. The interviewees mostly suggested what the Somali culture could do themselves to

increase involvement, along with what programs could do just to increase awareness, with few specific accommodations for Somali participants.

### What has Worked

This category looks at what makes Somali teenage girls start sports in the first place and what coaches have done to recruit or keep Somali girls involved in their sports. This category did not have one aspect stand out as why people join sports, instead, there seemed to be a lot of different methods and factors that played into girls playing sports.

If there was any one theme that stood out, it would have to be friends. This corroborates Cooky (2009) in which the research says girls play for enjoyment, connection and to compete with someone. Both the athletes in my research said they joined because they had friends playing on a team and they wanted to as well. One of the athletes said she continued, even without friends, because she discovered she enjoyed it, it was fun and it brought her excitement. The mothers and one of the coaches echoed that they see girls join sports because they have friends on the team.

The fathers did not mention friends as a reason, but gave an example of a Somali basketball team in the neighborhood that girls joined because the coach was a Somali female and acted as a role model. One of the coaches also could back this sentiment up as she could tell that when her students learned about a famous Somali female tennis player, students' interests were piqued. These examples corroborate the suggestions in the research that role models may increase participation rates (Dagkas, 2011; Fleck et al., 2009; Kahan, 2003; Sabo & Veliz, 2008). Along with role models, Somali females are more likely to join a sport if it is

a part of their culture, as one athlete and coach discussed. Since soccer is such a huge sport in the Somali culture, that seems to be the first sport that Somali girls try as evidenced by both athletes for whom it was their first sport. This echoes the research by Dagkas et al. (2011) and Sabo and Veliz (2008) when they indicate that Somali females would participate in sports more if there were Muslim women role models and coaches.

One of the coaches found other ways that helped recruit Somali girls into playing. The mothers suggested that involving families could be a societal solution. This coach did involve families in her program and she seems to feel that that helped. Though the other coach says he has tried to involve families, he can't seem to get them involved. This same coach of the tennis program has also found that translating forms, advertising programs well and first involving girls as managers are ways that have worked for her.

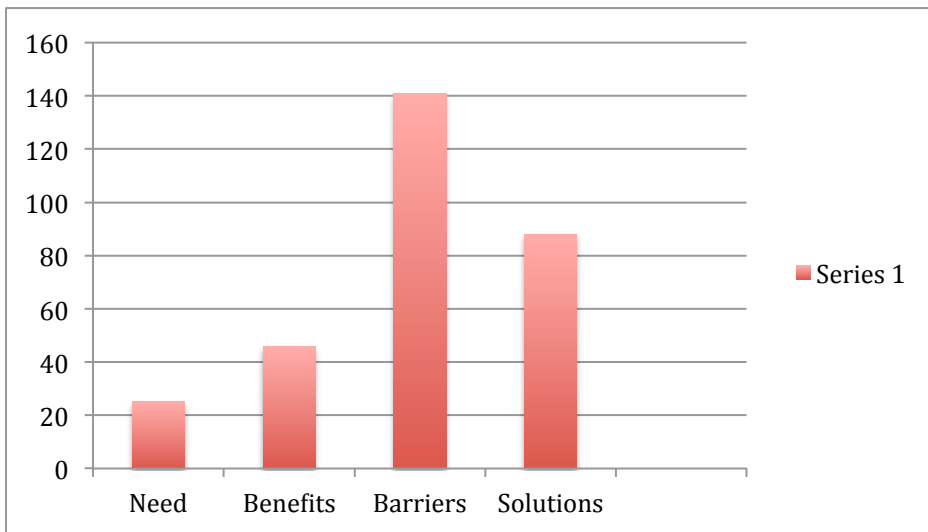
These are the solutions and methods that the interviewees suggest would be ways to overcome some of the barriers to sports participation. My research seems to add to the research I reviewed in chapter two about possible solutions.

In this section, the need, benefits of participation, barriers to participation, and solutions to increase participation have been described. In the next section, these themes and categories will be compared in terms of number of times they came up and by the different interviewees.

### Comparisons

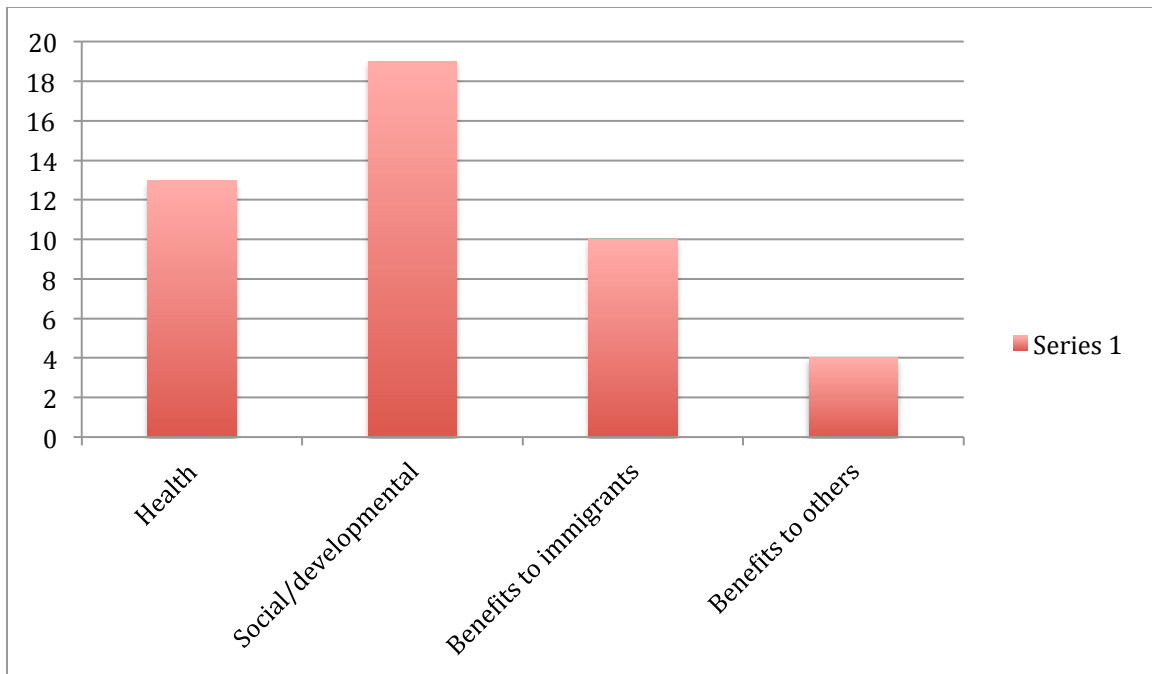
In this section, the different themes and categories will be compared in terms of how many times they came up across different interviewees. The data will be

broken down to how many times the themes and categories came up as a whole, and then how many times they came up by different groups of interviewees.



*Figure 1.* Discussion of themes by topic

Figure 1 shows the number of times each theme was brought up. The themes were discussed in different ways; however, barriers that prevent Somali female adolescents from playing sports were discussed the most by interviewees, it was brought up 141 times. Solutions followed, being discussed eighty-eight times across interviewees.



*Figure 2. Benefit categories*

The theme of benefits was broken down into four categories. Interviewees saw the biggest benefit to sports involvement as being social benefits and developmental benefits. This category was brought up nineteen times by interviewees. Health benefits closely followed with it being discussed thirteen times. However, different interviewees talked about benefits in different ways and different groups of interviewees saw different benefits, as shown in figure 3.

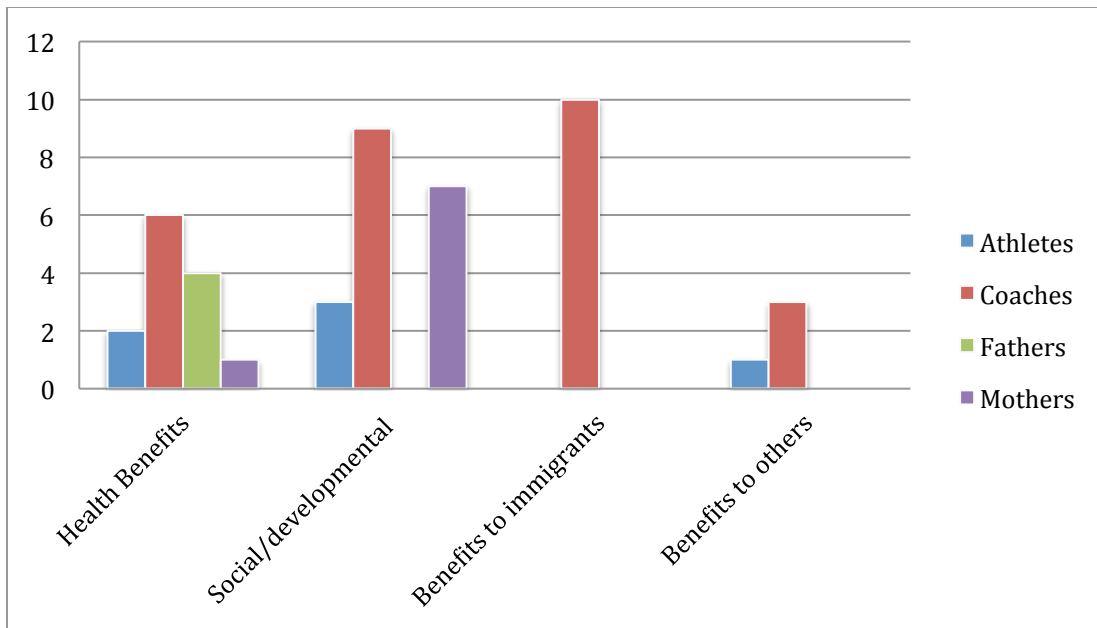


Figure 3. Benefit categories as discussed by interviewees

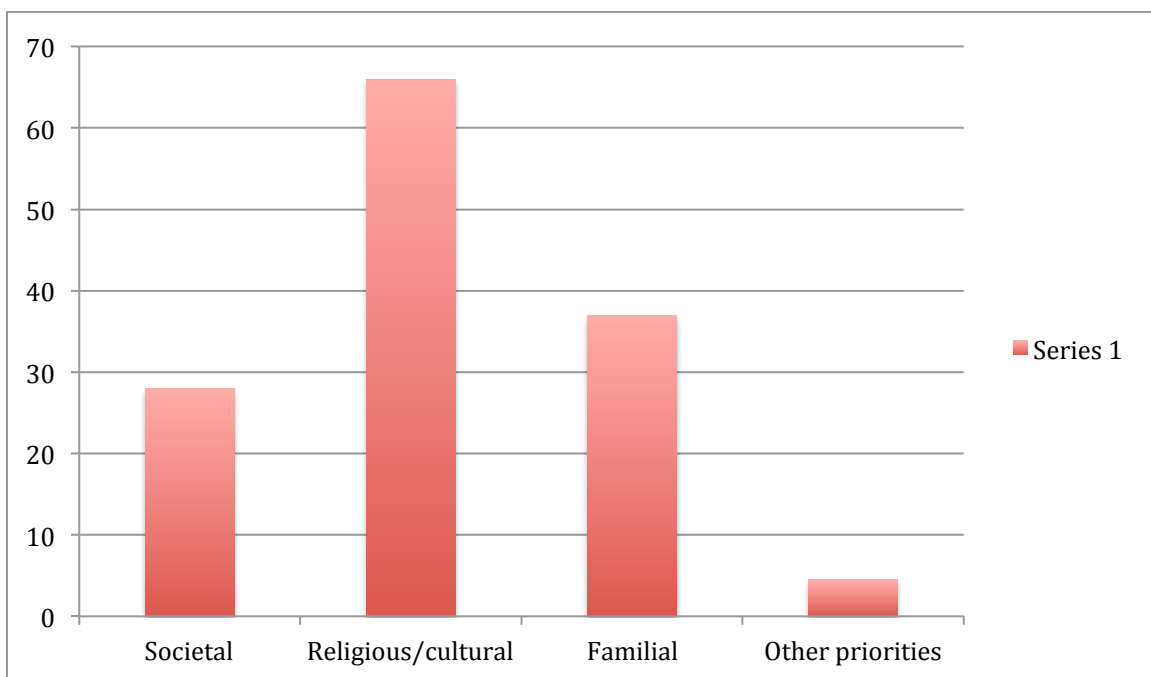


Figure 4. Barrier categories

Barriers was the theme that was most discussed by interviewees. When barriers are broken down into different categories, as perceived by the interviewees, religion and culture were talked about as the biggest barrier to sports

participation. In figure 5 the categories were talked about by most interviewees, unlike the benefit categories in which only some interviewees talked about certain kinds of benefits.

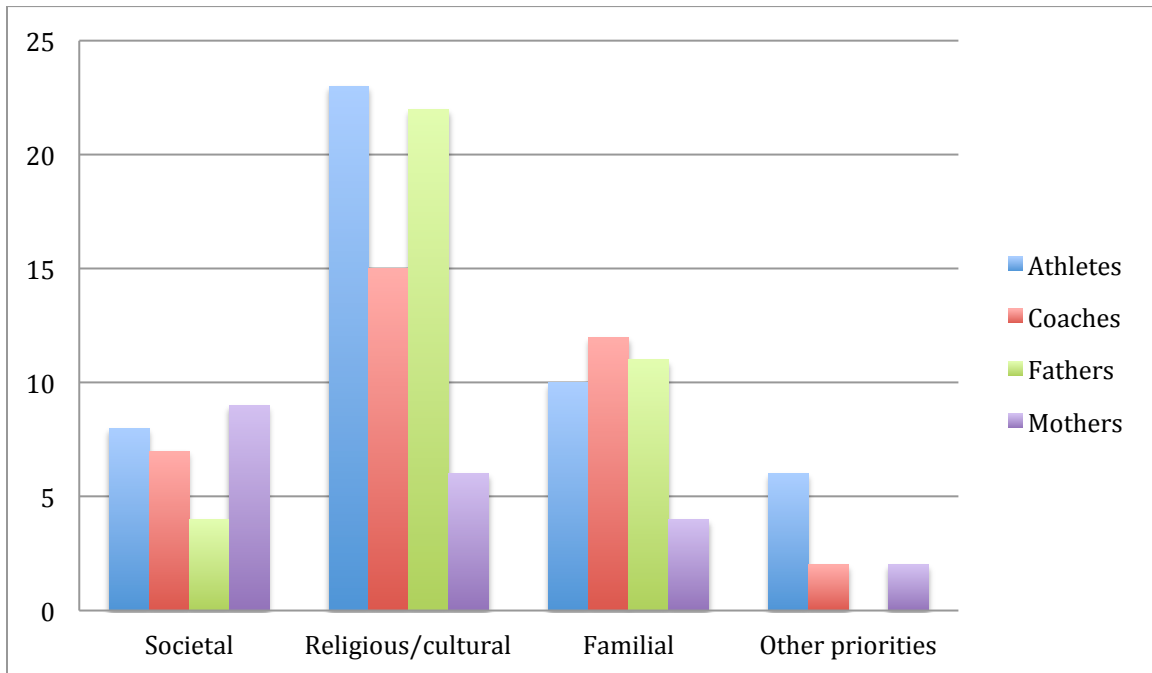


Figure 5. Barrier categories as discussed by interviewees

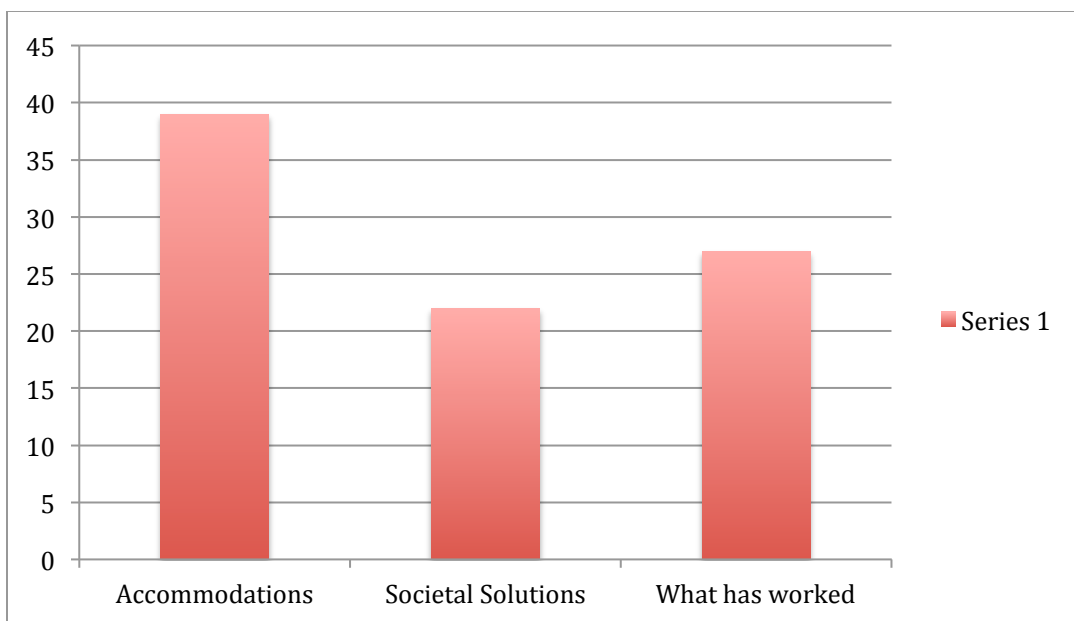
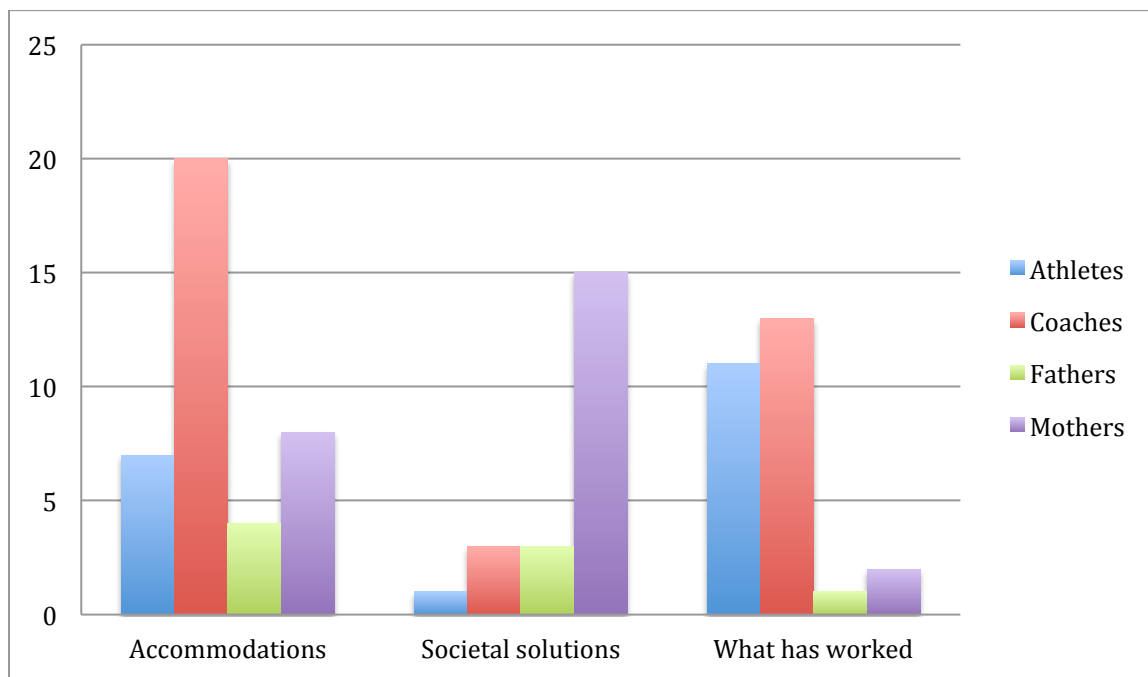


Figure 6. Solution categories



Solutions is the last theme that emerged from the data. Solutions was broken down into three categories. Most interviewees saw accommodations to clothing and programming as the biggest solutions to overcoming the barriers preventing Somali female adolescents from playing sports. In figure 7, you can see how the different groups of interviewees discussed the theme and categories of solutions.



*Figure 7.* Solution categories as discussed by interviewees

So in comparing the data, all the themes were discussed by all interviewees; however the interviewees discussed the themes in different ways, with some interviewees discussing the themes in a very specific context. Though all the themes were discussed by all interviewees, certain categories under each theme were not discussed by all interviewees. Different interviewees saw the benefits to sports, the barriers and solutions in different lights as will be discussed in the next section.

## Relationships Among the Data

### Benefits

Figure 3 shows that the different groups of interviewees varied on how they saw the benefits to sports involvement. It was for this theme that I decided to keep the mother and father interviewees as separate groups rather than have a parent group of interviewees. The parents saw things so differently from each other. The only category in which all interviewees seemed to agree was health benefits. All interviewees acknowledge that sports involvement is healthy for one's body, though the mothers did not focus on this category, only mentioning it one time. Instead, the mothers and coaches focused more on social and developmental benefits, whereas the athletes barely recognized this category and the fathers did not recognize this category. The coaches were split evenly between all four categories. They took a more well-rounded look at the benefits of sports. The coaches saw the specific benefit that sports involvement has for immigrants and how sports can help others. One athlete also saw the benefit to others in sports.

So in benefits, there are clearly health benefits when involved in sports as seen by all interviewees. Most feel that sports also has benefits that go beyond health and helps children develop socially and developmentally. It seems that those who are involved in sports and have been for a long period of time also see the benefits sports involvement can have for a specific individual and how it helps society.

## Barriers

The data in figure 5 show that all interviewees saw barriers and they generally recognized the same barriers. Religious and cultural barriers were cited as the biggest barriers by the fathers and athletes, all Somali interviewees, and also by the coaches. The mothers, though Somali themselves and though they did recognize that religion and culture could act as a barrier, saw other issues as barriers to sports involvement, including societal barriers in terms of financial issues, timing of programs, unawareness of program offerings, or programs not offered and the uncomfortable factor of being possibly the only Somali in a sports program. Though all interviewees recognized societal barriers, athletes, coaches and fathers saw individual familial barriers as the second biggest barrier. The mothers were more evenly split between barriers in terms of societal, religion, familial and other priorities. The athletes themselves also were more evenly split among the four categories and recognized the different reasons they could not play sports or Somali peers of theirs did not play sports.

There are barriers to sports involvement that all interviewees recognized. The interviewees themselves recognized that there are multiple barriers to sports involvement by Somali adolescent girls; there is no single obstacle. However, as the interviewees discussed, there are several different solutions to overcoming these obstacles.

## Solutions

All interviewees had different suggestions on how to overcome barriers, but although interviewees recognized three different categories, they tended to focus

more on one category. Coaches used their experiences to discuss accommodations that their athletes have made or accommodations they have made to their program in order to make it work for Somali girls. Furthermore, they discussed methods that have worked for them in the past in order to recruit players. Athletes, like coaches, also focused on accommodations they have made and what worked for them to play. The fathers had very little to suggest in solutions to the barriers. They mentioned solutions only eight times in their interview, compared to barriers being mentioned thirty-seven times. The mothers saw a lot of steps society could take in increasing involvement by Somali girls, but they also felt that clothing accommodations by the Somali girls was an acceptable solution as well.

The theme of solutions was seen differently by different interviewees. No one solution stood out. Instead, different interviewees tended to focus on one or two different categories, but even then these were spoken about in different contexts. Though one coach discussed the accommodations she made to her program in order to run a successful Somali tennis program, most of the other accommodations interviewees discussed were ones that an individual female could choose for herself, such as how she wished to cover up. Mothers focused more on societal solutions, such as facilitators involving themselves in the community and educating parents as well as offering sports at the elementary schools to capture the attention of kids early on. The other interviewees discussed societal solutions as well, but they focused much more on giving it time. The longer the people are here, the more acculturated they will be and the more likely they will be to join sports.

Taking all the possible solutions as seen by the interviewees, there seems to be a variety of methods to overcome the barriers as discussed by the interviewees in the previous section.

### Conclusion

Based on different interviewees' personal experiences and different situations, the themes of benefits, barriers and solutions were discussed differently. About the only theme that was heavily agreed on and talked about in a similar context was that there are not many Somali girls playing sports.

Though similar categories emerged under each theme, they were addressed differently and viewed differently by the participants. Some saw accommodations that programs could make, whereas others focused on what people in the Somali culture could do themselves in order to increase participation.

Looking at the data, interviewees recognize there are benefits to sports involvement, though the different interviewees saw different benefits. Though there are many barriers to sports involvement as recognized by all the interviewees, most interviewees saw several possible solutions to overcoming these barriers.

In this chapter I presented the results of my data collection. In chapter five, I will discuss my major findings, their implications, and suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

In this study I attempted to answer the questions:

- What are the current barriers in high schools in a large mid-western city that prevent Somali girls from joining high school sports?
  - What are the roles of family in preventing Somali girls from participating in high school sports?
  - What are the roles of Somali cultural values in preventing Somali girls from participating in high school sports?
- Which local programs have been successful in recruiting Somali girls and how has this been accomplished?
- What are some solutions to overcoming the obstacles that are preventing involvement?

In this chapter I will address these questions and discuss my major findings. I will address the limitations of this study, implications for my target audience of coaches and athletic directors, and my suggestions for further research.

### Major Findings

Through this study I was able to address my original questions plus gain a deeper understanding of the need for Somali female adolescents to play sports and a deeper understanding of the culture and why girls are not playing. I was able to

hear a variety of perspectives on the issue and then draw conclusions based on the data. In this section, I will address each of my research questions in turn and give my interpretations of the data.

- What are the current barriers in high schools in a large mid-western city that prevent Somali girls from joining high school sports?
  - What are the roles of family in preventing Somali girls from participating in high school sports?
  - What are the roles of Somali cultural values in preventing Somali girls from participating in high school sports?

Barriers were the most discussed topic among the interviewees. From the data, it is clear that the Muslim religion and Somali culture place the largest obstacle to Somali girls playing sports, followed by personal family barriers. As I heard many times throughout the interviews, families are different in what they view as acceptable. Often, it depends on how long a family has been in the U.S. The longer a family has been here, the less conservative their views tend to be. As Leet-Otley (2012) suggests, immigrants tend to become less conservative the longer they are in the United States; as my research suggests the same conditions seem to apply to Somali Americans.

It seems that religious, cultural and familial barriers may be barriers for some Somali girls, but not others, depending on the individual. For some, as in the case of one of the athletes, modifying clothing and playing in front of men is unacceptable to her. However, the rest of the Somali interviewees, including the other athlete, the mothers and even the fathers felt that accommodations to the

clothing were acceptable. There also did not seem to be a problem with playing in front of men. This is contradictory towards the research by Kahan (2003) in which it is suggested that contact with males is a major barrier. Most parents in my research didn't think it would be a problem. The problem lies in how the girls are raised. As the mothers, fathers and athletes said, sports are not a part of their culture for girls. Girls are not encouraged to do it, they are raised to be shy, and education is the focus for families. So the major barrier seems to be in the cultural norm, and it hasn't occurred to many that girls could play sports. When I was interviewing the mothers, their attitude was positive towards sports involvement for their daughters, but it was as if the idea hadn't occurred to them.

The bigger barrier seems to lie in the Somali culture, however. As one athlete said, she had to fight for everything she wanted and she was gossiped about in her Somali community when she played sports. As the fathers mentioned, families are viewed as less religious when a daughter is allowed to wear pants, which seems to be a social stigma.

Through carrying out this research, I have come to the conclusion that it is less society that is placing barriers for Somali females and more often personal barriers. There are societal barriers, but the ones mentioned affect immigrant adolescents as a whole. Lack of money for programs, language barriers, unfamiliarity with culture and sports are barriers for most immigrant populations. But religious, cultural and familial barriers are causing the low number of Somali female adolescents in high school sports.



- Which local programs have been successful in recruiting Somali girls and how has this been accomplished?

From the two coaches I interviewed, only one has had true success in recruiting Somali teenage girls in sports. The other coach has had a few Somali athletes over the years, but Somali girls were underrepresented compared to girls of other cultures. However, this same coach has seen more and more Somali girls on other teams that his team plays outside of his school district. He feels there has been an increase in Somali girls playing compared to when he first started.

When discussing possible solutions to overcome the barriers, the mothers suggested a unique idea that the research I reviewed did not seem to address. The mothers in my research suggested that the elementary schools have sports programs after school so that children's attention is grabbed when they are young. Children will be more likely to continue with it when they are teens. The mothers discussed how their school district doesn't offer after school sports programs, but other districts do offer sports programs. Taking this into consideration, and listening to what the coach says, I wonder if other school districts have more Somali females on their teams because they have after school sports programs at their elementary schools. I wonder if having elementary after school sports programs in our district would help increase the number of Somali females on the high school teams. This solution could work to help increase numbers overall on high school sports teams in this district.

The other coach, who was successful in recruiting Somali girls, worked at a Somali charter school and worked with the principal and elders to create an

acceptable program. Reaching out to the Somali community and parents at the district's schools could help increase the number of Somali females on high school sports teams.

- What are some solutions to overcoming the obstacles that are preventing involvement?

Creating sports programs at the elementary level and reaching out to parents and the Somali community by opening up lines of communication are two major steps one could take to help increase involvement. Another solution that kept coming up is one that nobody can really do anything about. Give the culture time. As one father said, it's a natural process. This has been true of most immigrant populations that come here. They don't jump right in and get involved. Immigrants face a lot of hardships when they first come to America, and sports and involving oneself in the community is a much lower priority.

However, there are a few solutions coming from my research that one could take steps towards, that again, may help increase numbers not just by Somali females, but by all.

- Taking time to translate documents.
- Fundraising, seeking grants and getting donations so that individuals don't have to pay the ever-increasing fees to play sports.
- Engaging one out-going individual in a group to join a team and then her friends decide to join.
- Start involving girls at a casual level.

- Organizing open play of a sport where all are invited just to play may pique interests.
- Involving girls as managers of the teams can lead to involvement as well.
- Lastly, allow covering of their body with long pants and shirts underneath their uniforms and wear a headscarf, most in the culture will find that acceptable.

My research focus was to find suggestions that a coach can put in place in order to increase girls' involvement on their sports teams. Not all girls will join, but that's true of most endeavors. I feel that these solutions are simple solutions that one can take to help girls gain the idea that they can play.

#### Limitations

Through this study, I was able to learn a lot about the Somali culture and the limitations it presents to sports involvement, as well as some possible solutions to overcome these obstacles. Though I was able to gain many new insights, my research did not go exactly as I planned. My plan was to interview two coaches of athletic programs, two Somali females that were former athletes, and two groups of parents, consisting of three mothers and three fathers. In each of my group interviews with the parents, I was only able to get two mothers in one and two fathers in the other. With the fathers, timing and scheduling placed limits. The two fathers work in the same building and could meet together after work hours. However, trying to schedule these two fathers together was a challenge, in that one father forgot the first time and then could do it later that day. A third father was never identified that could make those times work. Originally I planned to schedule

that interview with the two fathers, and then find a father through my contacts that could join our group. However, the interview ended up being last minute. With the mothers, I had three mothers scheduled to meet one morning. However, when that morning came, one mother didn't show up. She called that morning while the other mothers and I were waiting for her and had to cancel due to outside circumstances. At this point, I'd already scheduled twice with the other two mothers and we decided to go ahead with the interview. I felt this was acceptable, especially since I ended up interviewing only two fathers, so in this way, the interviews were even. Lastly, I was able to interview two former athletes. However, my goal was to interview two Somali females that played on sports teams in a mainstream high school. I ended up having trouble finding a second athlete that fit these criteria. Instead I was connected with a Somali female that attended a Somali charter high school; she played in an after school sports program. She did give me insights and a different perspective than the other athlete.

The second limitation on my study had to do with timing. It would have been ideal to do a pilot study in order to refine my interview questions, practice interviewing and seeing what kind of results I should anticipate. Also, after the interviews I had, I could spend more time finding more interviewees, Somali athletes and more parents. There is a new university time limit, so my goal was to conclude my research before the deadline.

Lastly, as the fathers suggested, I should interview newer arrivals to the country to gain their input. However, this would be challenging in that I do not

speak Somali and I would need translators. Then the data would need to be translated for me. Given the other limitations, this was not feasible.

Given the limitations in this study, I feel that the research I was able to do is strong enough that I was able to come to many conclusions and gain new insights. There has not been research done specifically in this area in this way, so I feel that this is a positive start in exploring this issue. Given that, following is my list of recommendations on how to start to resolve this issue.

### Recommendations

This study was designed for coaches and athletic directors that work in a large urban Midwestern school district. I have worked and coached in this district for ten years and have seen a need for action to be taken in order to increase their overall numbers on the high school sports teams. This district tends to struggle to fill their sports rosters. Though my research looked specifically at an underrepresented population, Somali female adolescents, the solutions I drew from this research could help increase the numbers on the high school sports team by all populations. Following are my recommendations to coaches and athletic directors to help recruit more Somali females onto their teams. Most of these solutions are not an overnight fix, but instead, a shift in how programming is run. In the long run, these solutions should help increase communication in the community, make a program more visible in the community and make an overall stronger and more successful sports program.

1. Offer after school sports programs at the elementary school.

This is not something that one coach or athletic director can do. Instead, athletic directors should work with leaders at the district in order to have these offerings. The after school sports programs could be something the district offers at the elementary schools, or it is something that the district could work with the local parks in order to coordinate programs at the schools. If parents don't have to try to find separate times for programs and make it work in their schedule, children will be more apt to participate. If children grow up with sports, they will be more likely to continue as an adolescent.

## 2. Reach out to the Somali community

As several interviewees suggested, the Somali community needs to be educated on how sports involvement can benefit their children, not just health benefits, but social benefits, developmental benefits, and benefits to the Somali immigrants themselves. It would be even better to reach out to Somali community leaders to help reach out to the community. If you have support from Somali elders and leaders, many others in the community will follow along. If Somali parents know the benefits and also know that the district is making an effort to make a program acceptable, they will be more likely to join. From what I heard, sports programs do not need to change; instead, families just need to be informed that it is permissive for their daughters to cover and still play sports.

## 3. Translate documents

Advertise your programs. Let your programs be known. Pass out flyers at Somali community centers, hang them at the local Y, which I learned, many Somali

families go to for activity. But most importantly, translate this so parents can read it.

#### 4. Make participation in sports affordable

Sports are expensive. Anything that can be done to ease the financial burden on families will help increase involvement.

#### 5. Involve girls in other ways

Girls may be hesitant to join right away, especially if they are unfamiliar with the sports. However, that doesn't mean they don't want to be involved. Girls can be managers of teams and they may be more comfortable playing after school in casual sports programs rather than the high school sports teams. This could lead to involvement later.

These are recommendations that I believe should help increase the number of participants on high school sports teams. They do require extra work on the part of coaches and athletic directors. However, they should create a stronger and more inclusive sports program.

### Further Research and Dissemination

When I first proposed my research to a department chair at my university, I was asked if I would like to explore this issue and then try it out in the real world. Given that I was expecting and that the university gives a one-year deadline to complete the capstone, I knew this would not be feasible. However, that would be a next step. The recommendations I give in the previous section should be tested out in the district. Then data could be charted on the success. Some of this research could take years since some of the suggestions have to do with starting when

children are young. There would be no way to see the effects of this in one year, but a longer project could present an opportunity for larger- and longer-scale research.

Another avenue for further research would be to interview Somali females in middle school and high school. I did not propose to interview minors, as the district I work in does not allow this. However, current students could provide additional insights on why they are not playing and what accommodations they would need in order to play.

Lastly, more recent Somali immigrants could be interviewed in order to gain their perspectives. As was suggested in my research, newer families tend to be more conservative and more protective. My research suggests ways to include more Somali girls on sports teams, however these suggestions may have a limited effect on newer Somali immigrants to the United States; more research on ways to include recent arrivals to the United States may be needed.

I plan to prepare a short guide to be disseminated to coaches and athletic directors.

### Conclusion

I conducted this study because I wanted to find out why there does not seem to be many Somali females on our high school sports teams. As an ESL teacher I feel it is my job to help my students and other immigrants to the United States acculturate. As a high school coach, it is my job to create a strong successful team. In order to create a stronger team, it would be best to have high numbers of players so they gain experience before they play on the varsity team. After reading research



and articles about sports involvement and immigrants, I designed a study in order to explore this issue more deeply among the Somali population.

Through my data collection and analysis, I found several barriers in place preventing high school sports involvement among Somali female adolescents. I also found several possibilities to attempt to remedy this issue.

These findings may be beneficial to myself as I coach and to other coaches and athletic directors in order to create stronger and more successful sports programs that involve more of the female population at the high schools.

APPENDIX A  
Interview Question Guide

## Interview Question Guide

### Coaches

What kind of athletic program do you/have you run?

How long have you been doing that?

Could you describe the typical participant in your program – age, ethnicity, gender?

Approximately, how many Somali females have you had participate over your years as a coach? How does this number compare to females of other ethnicities: Asian, African American, white? How does this compare to Somali males?

Why do you feel sports are beneficial for adolescents – why should kids/teens be involved in sports?

How does athletic participation or participation on a sports team specifically benefit the immigrant adolescent?

Do you feel sports help students become more acculturated – in terms of helping students retain their own culture, but also adopting American culture? How?

What sort of issues do athletes have in playing for your team? What are reasons why people you recruit don't participate?

Do immigrant students have more or different issues when it comes to participating? Specifically Somali athletes?

What have you done as a coach and as a team to help athletes overcome these issues/problems?

What are some of your successes as a coach or successes you've had with your team in terms of your immigrant students?

## Interview Question Guide

### Former athletes

What kind of sports programs have you been involved in?

How long have you played sports? When did you get started? What made you start?

Do you feel it is beneficial to be involved in sports? Why? (or what did you get from it)?

How did sports help you in ways of interacting with peers of other cultures and also help you keep your culture?

What sort of problems did you have in being an athlete? Did anyone object to your participating? How did you overcome that?

## Interview Question Guide

### Group interview

How many have children involved in sports programs?

How many have daughters involved in sports programs (how many have daughters)?

Do you believe that being involved in sports is important for your children? Why or why not? Do you see any benefits?

What are reasons that your daughter isn't involved in sports?

How many would like to have their daughter involved in sports if it met all their requirements?

Why would you like your daughter involved in sports (or why not)?

Has anyone tried to get their child in sports and hasn't been able to? Why not?

If your daughter wanted to participate, how would you feel? How would you find out how to sign them up?

What are other reasons why a girl could not participate in sports?

What ways would make it easier to get information about sport programs? To sign up?

What could our district do to make it easier for Somali girls to join sports?

APPENDIX B

Consent Letter

November 16, 2014

Dear Participant,

I am completing a master's degree in ESL at Hamline University. As part of my research, I plan to conduct interviews from December 2014-January 2015. The purpose of my letter is to ask for your permission for you to take part in my research. The final product will be a printed, bound capstone (thesis) that will be shelved in Hamline's Bush Library. I may also publish or use my findings in scholarly pursuits in the future and/or share my results with interested parties.

My research will be based on the responses I receive in interviews. I want to find out why Somali girls are not participating in sports in area high schools (or are participating at a low rate), and ideas on how to help this particular group of students participate in high school sports. I hope that the benefit to this group of students is that they will be able to find ways to be active, better immerse themselves in their high school and learn life skills through sports involvement that is seen as acceptable to the family. I hope the schools will then also benefit in being able to include and accommodate all their students.

I will not interview children under eighteen. I am seeking the time and willingness of participants to answer my questions. I hope based on conversations to help myself gather and make recommendations to coaches and high school athletic directors on how best to help this group participate in my research.

If you are willing to participate, I will make your identity protected and anonymous. I will not use real names or identify you in any way other than as a coach, a parent, or an athlete. I will be typing all responses, so no handwriting or voices will be recognized. If you allow me to record our session, I will again type out any response so that voices will not be recognized. This eliminates all risk from your participation. Also, you can choose not to participate at any time without any consequence.

I have received permission from Hamline University and from Minneapolis Public schools to conduct this research.

Please sign and return the permission form on the second page. If you have any questions now or later, please do not hesitate to ask me. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,  
Ms. Mandy Franz  
Teacher at Pillsbury Elementary School  
Email: coachmandy01@gmail.com  
Supervisor:  
Dr. Michal Moskow

Michal.Moskow@metrostate.edu

December 2014

Dear Ms. Franz,

I have received and read (or had translated to me) your letter about conducting interviews about Somali girls and playing sports. I understand your goal is to help Somali girls be involved in high school sports teams.

I give my permission to participate in the research project that is part of your graduate degree program. I understand that the results will be confidential and that I can stop taking part at any time.

I give my permission to be recorded      Yes      No      Initial\_\_\_\_\_

Signed,

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_



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