

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA



**UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA**

**EXPLORING HOW WOMEN BASKETBALL PLAYERS EXPERIENCE THEIR
GENDERED STATUS WITHIN THE SPORT: AN AUTO-PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDY**

By

Alika Kirsten Meyerkort

21500755

A dissertation in fulfilment of the requirements of

Master of Arts in Psychology

In the Department of Psychology at the

University of Pretoria

Faculty of Humanities

Supervisor:

Dr. Jarred H. Martin

11 March 2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to start by thanking Dr. Jarred Martin, my supervisor. Thank you for your feedback and guidance, sharing your knowledge and most of all your patience as I navigated my way through this journey.

Thank you to my basketball community who took part in this study, you are the very reason I am so passionate about this topic.

To N.R, you were always willing and ready to provide me with advice and guidance whenever I knocked on your door. You constantly held space for me. Thank you.

To L.B.T, your patience, presence, and support, was invaluable to me and this dissertation. I hope you know that. Thank you.

To S.F.K, your optimism, encouragement, and faith you have in me has been unwavering. Thank you so much for your generosity of spirit.

To my twin, my other half, thank you for inspiring me, not to just dream big, but to actually go out and do it. This is as much yours as it is mine.

Lastly, to my mama, your continued love and support has made the long journey to this point possible. This is not something I could ever have imagined, let alone accomplished, without you. Thank you.

DECLARATION

I, **Alika Kirsten Meyerkort**, student number **21500755**, hereby declare that his dissertation (**Exploring how women basketball players experience their gendered status within the sport: an auto-photographic study**) is my own work except where I used or quoted another source, which has been acknowledged and referenced. I further declare that the work that I am submitting has not previously been submitted for another degree or to any other university or tertiary institution for examination.



Alika Kirsten Meyerkort

11 March 2024

ETHICS STATEMENT

I, **Alika Kirsten Meyerkort**, student number **21500755**, have obtained the applicable research ethics approval for the research titled **Exploring how women basketball players experience their gendered status within the sport: an auto-photographic study** on the 18 October 2021 (reference number: **HUM057/0821**), from the Postgraduate Research Ethics Committee in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria.

ABSTRACT

Gender inequality in sports is a pervasive issue that transcends geographical, cultural, and socioeconomic boundaries. It is perhaps most pronounced in competitive sporting disciplines that have been historically dominated by men and where women seeking to enter, participate, and succeed in these sports have faced both explicit and implicit barriers, discrimination, and prejudice because they are women. This study explores how women basketball players experience gender disparities in the competitive sport of South African basketball, a sporting community traditionally dominated by men.

Guided by a social constructionist theory of gender this study considers how women basketball players experience their gendered status as women within the sport of basketball. In doing so, the study aims to specifically examine how women's gendered status in basketball informs their experience of (1) gendered marginalisation as well as (2) empowerment. Employing a qualitative research methodology and in effort to centre the voices and experience of women, thirteen women who play and coach competitive basketball in South Africa were voluntarily recruited to participate in individual semi-structured interviews followed by an opportunity to generate their own photographs (auto-photography) and participate in a photo-elicitation interview focused on their experiences of marginalisation and empowerment.

A thematic analysis was then applied across the field of data to render an analysis which integrated the interviews with the auto-photographic data. Under the main theme of gendered marginalisation, the sub-themes of (1) gender inequality in the sport and (2) women's under-representation were found. Under the main theme of gendered empowerment, the sub-themes of (1) inspiration to 'play ball' and (2) the benefits of playing basketball were found.

The findings of this study highlight that there are direct and indirect forms of gendered marginalisation which underpin competitive inequalities for women basketball players. These marginalisations limit their competitive opportunities to succeed in the sport, relative to the men who play basketball, and sustain their under-representation at various levels of

administration and competition of the sport. Despite these experiences, women basketball players nonetheless derive positive experiences from their participation in basketball and their perseverance against the patriarchal dividends of the sport. These experiences not only hold positive implications for their personal sense of well-being and overall life orientation but, also, play a significant role in forging meaningful solidarities amongst the women of this competitive community of sport.

Key terms: auto-photography, gender, gender inequality, qualitative, social constructionism, women in sport, women in basketball

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
DECLARATION	3
ETHICS STATEMENT	4
ABSTRACT	5
TABLE OF CONTENTS	7
LIST OF ACRONYMS	11
LIST OF TABLES	12
LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS	13
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Overview	14
1.2 Gender and sport: the context and importance of gender equality within sport	14
1.2.1 Women in sport, and South Africa's history	21
1.3 Research problem, aim and objectives	25
1.4 An introduction to the theoretical framework	25
1.4.1 Social constructionist theory of gender	26
1.5 Methodology	27
1.6 Rationale	28
1.7 Overview of the chapters	28
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 Overview	30
2.2 Gender disparities in sport	31
2.3 Women in sport	35
2.3.1 Mentorship in sport	36
2.3.2 Women in leadership	36
2.3.3 Women in the leadership of sport in Africa	39
2.3.4 Leadership styles and team performance	40

2.4	Women in basketball	44
2.5	Conclusion	47
CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE		
3.1	Overview	49
3.2	Social constructionism	
3.2.1	Definition of social constructionism	49
3.2.2	Core tenets of social constructionism	51
3.2.3	The social constructionist theory of gender	53
3.3	Feminist theory	
3.3.1	Definition of feminist theory	54
3.3.2	Liberal feminism	56
3.3.3	Feminist sport studies	57
3.4	Conclusion	58
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY		
4.1	Overview	61
4.2	Aim and objectives of the study	61
4.3	Research questions and sub-questions	62
4.3.1	Main research question	
4.3.2	Sub-questions	
4.4	Research approach and design	62
4.5	Sampling	
4.5.1	Sampling method	63
4.5.2	Sampling criteria	64
4.5.3	Sampling limitations	65
4.6	Data collection	
4.6.1	Semi-structured interview	67
4.6.2	Auto-photography	68

4.6.3 Photo elicitation	69
4.7 Advantages and disadvantages of auto-photography	70
4.8 Quality of the research	71
4.9 Ethical considerations	72
4.9.1 Participant autonomy	73
4.9.2 Participant anonymity and data confidentiality	73
4.9.3 Informed consent	74
4.9.4 Protection from harm	74
4.9.5 Ethical clearance	74
4.10 Data analysis	
4.10.1 Thematic analysis six phase approach	75
4.10.1.1 Step 1: Familiarity with the data	76
4.10.1.2 Step 2: Generating codes	77
4.10.1.3 Step 3: Constructing themes	78
4.10.1.4 Step 4: Reviewing	81
4.10.1.5 Step 5: Defining themes	82
4.10.1.6 Step 6: Producing the report	85
4.11 Reflexivity	85
4.12 Conclusion	88
CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	
5.1 Overview	89
5.2 Themes and discussion	90
5.2.1 Gendered empowerment	91
5.2.1.1 Inspiration to play ball	92
5.2.1.2 Benefits of playing	97
5.2.1.2 A) <i>Development</i>	97
5.2.1.2 B) <i>Mental skills</i>	98

5.2.1.2 C) <i>Self-care, self-esteem, and self-efficacy</i>	99
5.2.2 Gendered marginalisation	101
5.2.2.1 Gender inequality in the sport	101
5.2.2.1 A) <i>Junior basketball</i>	101
5.2.2.1 B) <i>Senior basketball</i>	103
5.2.2.2 Women's representation	108
5.2.2.2 A) <i>In the media</i>	108
5.2.2.2 B) <i>Safe spaces and role models</i>	110
5.4 Conclusion	114
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS	
6.1 Overview	116
6.2 Summary of key findings	116
6.2.1 Gendered empowerment	115
6.2.2 Gendered marginalisation	119
6.3 Limitations	121
6.4 Recommendations	122
6.4.1 Recommendations for the sporting industry	122
6.4.2 Recommendations for future research	123
References	125
Appendix A: Advert	140
Appendix B: Information sheet	141
Appendix C: Consent form	144
Appendix D: Demographics sheet	146
Appendix E: Interview questions	147
Appendix F: Auto-photography themes	148
Appendix G: Ethical Approval	149

LIST OF ACRONYMS

BNL = Basketball National League

BSA = Basketball South Africa

GAD = Gender and Development

NBA = National Basketball League

NCAA = National Collegiate Athletic Association

NSRP = National Sport and Recreation Plan

PMG = Parliamentary Monitoring Group

SDP-IWG = Sport for Development and Peace - International Working Group

SRSA = Sport and Recreation South Africa

UN = United Nations

USSA = University Sports South Africa

WID = Women and Development

WNBA = Women's National Basketball Association

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Background information about participants	64
Table 2: Codes, subthemes, and themes generated from the data	90

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo 1: My dad and I	93
Photo 2: Sisterhood	95
Photo 3: Building relationships	96
Photo 4: Pink bibs for the girls	101
Photo 5: Blazers for the boys	102
Photo 6: Men only	104
Photo 7: Overlooked yet again	105
Photo 8: Restricted opportunities	106
Photo 9: Behind the scenes	108
Photo 10: Representation matters	110
Photo 11: Safe spaces	112

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This research study is a qualitative exploration of the experiences of women basketball players in the basketball community of South Africa. It explores their experiences of their gendered status within the sport. The study aims to explore their perceptions of gendered marginalisation, as well as their experiences of gendered empowerment, through auto photography. This chapter introduces the context of the research as well as an outline of the theoretical and methodological points of departure for the research project.

1.2 Gender and Sport: The context and importance of gender equality within sport

Even though sport has been widely used for nation building and social cohesion, sustained exclusions along gender and race is often kept silent (Engh & Potgieter, 2018). While sport has the potential to perpetuate gender stereotypes and limit access to power and resources, it also offers a platform to confront and mitigate gender inequality (Ogunniyi, 2015). Since the 1990's, sport has highlighted a unified and diverse South Africa while playing a central role in social transformation that has been taking place since the end of apartheid (Engh & Potgieter, 2018). The transformation that takes place through sport promotes collaboration and understanding across social divides, while the success of national teams and athletes promotes national pride and unity. However, despite the vast individual and communal benefits that sport provides, it was and still is traditionally associated with masculinity due to the majority of positions in sport belonging to men, men still dominating the lion's share of marketing and endorsement deals, and men as well as men's teams still enjoying higher pay than women across the majority of sporting codes (Sobal & Milgrim, 2019; Vyas-Doorgapersad & Surujlal, 2018).

The institutionalisation of gender has various dimensions, ranging from cultural norms that assign males to the majority of leadership roles in government and business to personal relationships where men have more power over women than women do over men (Lorber &

Martin, 2011). Another common pattern is that historically and culturally masculinised characteristics such as toughness, dominance, and independence (at least in the Global West) are, for the most part, considered superior to feminised characteristics, thus justifying men's social dominance. Lorber and Martin (2011) further note that social constructions of men's power contribute to gender stratification in the workplace and in society at large. Sport is one such social and economic institution in which gendered and gendering power differentials in broader society become mapped on to and reproduced.

Krane (2001) provides the necessary foundation for understanding the social construction of women in sport. The concept of heterosexuality as an organising principle in women's sport provides the underlying structuring that women who appear heteronormatively feminine are privileged over women who are perceived as 'masculine' (Krane, 2001) – demonstrating how sex, gender, and gender expression become mutually implicated and reproduced within and through sport. Those that do not conform to hegemonically feminine forms of appearance and behaviour in sport or participate in sport not perceived as feminine or designated for (biological) 'women', often suffer consequences that include sexist discrimination, negative treatment by administrators and coaches, verbal harassment, lack of media attention and endorsement, and, more recently, transphobia. This helps create the view of athleticism and femininity being contradictory and thus pressuring women to go out of their way to balance being both athletic and socially acceptable gendered beings, as if the two are at odds with one another or mutually exclusive. Therefore, in order to avoid prejudicial treatment sportswomen are, in both explicit and implicit ways, forced to emphasise and perform culturally endorsed 'feminine' characteristics when participating in sport, especially sporting disciplines which have been traditionally gendered as male or masculine.

Some traits that are often associated with men are necessary for success in sports (e.g., physical strength, aggressiveness, and competitiveness), but women are disparaged for exhibiting these traits (Festle, 1996). For female athletes to be viewed as feminine, they must exhibit an often-shifting standard of 'elegance', 'grace', and 'beauty' in addition to their

athleticism – with standards of beauty often being centred on White, Eurocentric, cisgendered, and able-bodied imaginaries of feminine beauty. To comply with the heterosexist standards of society women are expected to have a culturally compliant figure and appearance that, in the same breath, has brand and consumer power within the increasingly commodified and commercial marketplace of contemporary sport. However, sportswomen who are then perceived as too feminine are then sexualised and trivialised (Krane, 2001), while women who resist these standards are often vilified in derogatory and sexist ways. Even though there are many new images of women in sports such as boxing, ice hockey and basketball, there is still a degree of constraint by these traditional notions of femininity.

The lack of gender equality within a sporting setting has not only disadvantaged women but has also done a disservice to society (United Nations, 2007). Sporting codes and participation in sport not only helps with mental and physical health but also increases socio-economic upliftment and opportunities in the education sector through, for example, scholarship opportunities (UN, 2007). However, there are historical obstacles where sport institutions remain dominated by men which reinforce standards of behaviour as acceptable leadership and participatory qualities required in particular fields of sport (Senne, 2016). This may seem beneficial for the male counterpart but also makes it evident how this not only supports social exclusion (Schailée et al., 2019), but also keeps women and girls from a range of health benefits and other social opportunities provided through sport (UN, 2007). Not only can women's participation in sport be a vehicle to promote gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, but it will also make a significant contribution to public life and community development through increased representation, social upliftment, and the importance of modelling (for both young boys and girls) the success of women (UN, 2007).

In addition, research has shown that feelings of being trapped by gendered norms and ideas start as early as adolescence, which recreates rigid notions of what is appropriate behaviour for young men and women (Metcalf, 2018). These socially acceptable behaviours are identified for young men and women and are regulated by school structures (Metcalf,

2018). This affects sport participation and physical activity, especially in the formative scholastic context, and limits opportunities that come along with it. These restrictive social norms normalise the role of sport for successful male identities whilst simultaneously undermining the presence of athletic women and girls (Metcalf, 2018).

Gender equality is a multi-faceted phenomenon within contemporary South Africa, as racial and socio-economic factors are still incredibly prominent. Tackling gender inequality and various dimensions of diversity, including those present in the realm of sports, might reveal interconnected effects or similar systemic issues observed in the wider societal context (Burnett, 2018). Examining and addressing gender inequality and diverse forms of representation, particularly within sport, can provide valuable insights into broader societal challenges. Dynamics present in sport often reflect systemic issues that extend beyond the athletic arena. By delving into the specific manifestations of gender inequality in sport, researchers and advocates can uncover underlying social norms, biases, and structural barriers that are indicative of larger societal patterns. Efforts to promote inclusivity and diversity in sport may, in turn, contribute to addressing these systemic challenges at a broader level. Understanding the interconnections between gender dynamics in sport and broader societal issues is crucial for fostering comprehensive and effective strategies for positive change.

While gender inequality primarily disadvantages women, and this should be enough reason to have instigated change a long time ago, it may be important to note that gender equality benefits men as well. In an analysis encompassing more than four hundred publications in “psychology, sociology, leadership, gender, finance, management, law, corporate governance, and entrepreneurship domains” (Terjesen et al., p. 320) Adriaanse (2015) discovered that a diverse range of board processes and individual interactions yielded positive outcomes. When women occupy a minimum of 30% of board positions, firm performance increases (Adriaanse, 2015). If the essential threshold of representation isn't attained, gender diversity may diminish or have an adverse impact on firm performance

(Adriaanse, 2015). This strongly underscores the business rationale for promoting gender diversity on boards. The moral justification is indisputable. The insufficient representation of women in sport management and leadership positions in the sport industry is not the responsibility of women alone. The responsibility to encourage, promote and support women in this sector falls equally on male counterparts (Vyas-Doorgapersad & Surujlal, 2018).

Chinurum et al. (2014) explain that sport is a key terrain when researching gender. Sport offers a unique perspective on how society shapes the social bodies of men and women and how we attribute femininity and masculinity to those bodies. In the sporting world particularly, the majority of sporting codes are either sex-segregated, such as athletics or swimming, or assumed to be a male/men's only, with women participation designated with a gendered qualifier, such as soccer (for men) and women's soccer (for women). Sport offers a distinctive lens through which we can comprehend how society shapes the social identities of men and women engaged in athletic activities, elucidating the processes by which masculinity and femininity are attributed to these bodies. Since around 1980, gender research has concentrated on the intricate dynamics of sport as a predominantly male-dominated system, consistently moulding hegemonic masculinity through symbolic representation (Chinurum et al., 2014). The sporting arena serves as a unique terrain for unravelling the complexities of societal gender constructions and their impact on individuals participating in sport. Sport often serves as an institutional system which supports men's dominance, however, these gender stereotypes are being "challenged and confronted by many women and feminists" (Chinurum et al., 2014, p. 26).

Women continue to encounter scrutiny and stereotyping due to prevailing social norms that portray them as delicate, less capable, and passive. Sport, traditionally perceived as a masculine domain, contributes to the perception that women are encroaching upon traditionally male spheres, reinforcing these gendered stereotypes. Many sporting codes are shown to be gendered institutions and operate with this hegemonic masculine norm (Senne, 2016). This may seem beneficial for the male counterpart, but it only reinforces masculine

behaviour as acceptable leadership qualities required in sport. This in itself shows that gender inequality has become an institutionalised practice within sport organisations. The patriarchal ideology hegemonic practices “continue to contribute to barriers women and girls face to participate in traditionally male sports and for gaining access to leadership positions” (Burnett, 2018, p. 1).

Women in professional-level staff positions provide “alternative norms, values, attitudes, knowledge, capabilities and experiences” (UN, 2007, p. 3). Their presence offers alternative perspectives and approaches that enrich the collective dynamics of the workplace. Through their diverse backgrounds, skills, and experiences, women bring fresh insights, innovative solutions, and enhanced problem-solving abilities to the table. Additionally, they may introduce different communication styles, leadership approaches, and collaborative methods that broaden the organisational culture and foster creativity and inclusivity. Overall, the inclusion of women in professional roles not only promotes gender diversity but also enhances the overall effectiveness and adaptability of the workforce. Men and women both bring different perspectives and experiences and because of that alone should a sporting code have diverse leadership roles to create maximum benefits for all parties involved. Women's contributions, especially in leadership roles, can introduce diversity and different perspectives, thereby broadening the talent pool in fields like management, coaching, and sports journalism (UN, 2007).

Due to the lack of sponsors and national support, the perception exists that South African athletes, both sportsmen and sportswomen, are unmotivated to persevere (Steenkamp, 2019). Thus it is of strategic importance that a strong participation base is generated by innovative opportunities as well as innovative implementation (Steenkamp, 2019). To challenge the vast amounts of gender stereotypes and discrimination this sporting code implements, there is a need for opportunities to allow for women participation. Not only will this be a vehicle to promote gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, it will make a significant contribution to public life and community development (UN, 2007).

Pompeu Fabra University shares a report from the European commission where “women form a minority in the vast majority of sports, and in all countries when it comes to decision-making position[s]. Women are excluded from 20 out of 52 sports federations and have less than 25% representation in 46 of them” (Moawad, 2019, p. 31). This obstacle of sport institutions being dominated by men is a culture that needs to change for the benefit of all athletes. For the greater understanding of sportswomen and sportsmen, a gender diverse board will improve the decision making which will lead to more favourable results (Moawad, 2019).

Sport, being “inherently spatial and political” (Pavlidis, 2018, p. 4), needs for its social and communal benefits to be taken into account. Gender equality in sport is the demand for gender inclusion in “coaching, selection of females athletes, equity in sports governance structures, access to training opportunities, and promotion to sports leadership positions, to suggest a few” (Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020, p. 185). The active involvement of women and girls in sport plays a pivotal role in challenging deeply ingrained gender stereotypes and combating discriminatory attitudes. By participating in sports, women break down barriers and demonstrate their capabilities, challenging preconceived notions of fragility or inferiority. This shift in perception promotes gender equality and empowers women and girls by fostering a sense of confidence, agency, and leadership. Beyond individual empowerment, the collective impact of women's engagement in sport extends to the broader community (Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020). It contributes to the development of a more inclusive and equitable society, where diverse perspectives and talents are recognised and valued. The positive influence of women's participation in sport ripples through public life, bringing about positive changes in attitudes, fostering community development, and creating opportunities for social cohesion and progress.

For years, women have strived to achieve gender equality alongside their male counterparts. Yet, enduring pressures such as maintaining work-life balance and the necessity to outperform male coaches have hindered women from advancing in their professional

endeavours. While these obstacles aren't exclusive to female coaches, those in coaching roles encounter more pronounced challenges compared to their male counterparts. This creates a lack of women in leadership positions and therefore leaves limited role models and mentors for women pursuing the same careers. This constant cycle of setting women up for failure is a challenge that is vastly different to their male counterparts (Carson et al., 2018). Previous research primarily focuses on identifying the barriers and challenges of women in sport leadership. There is a need for further research on the impact of those barriers to the underrepresentation of women in sport (Aman et al., 2019) and ultimately the effect it has on the gender inequality that it therefore creates.

1.2.1 Women in Sport, and South Africa's history

In Africa, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, patriarchal systems exert significant influence over individuals' lives, governance structures, and political systems (Goslin & Kluka, 2014). These systems shape the accessibility and opportunities for leadership positions, especially for women in the region. Despite the adoption of progressive constitutions in several sub-Saharan African nations, which have led to the implementation of policies and quotas promoting gender equality, biases against women in leadership roles persist. This disconnect between intention and execution perpetuates a gap in achieving true gender equality (Goslin & Kluka, 2014). Gender disparity in Africa is shaped and propelled by traditional cultural norms and patriarchal beliefs (Goslin & Kluka, 2014). The challenge lies in overcoming deeply rooted cultural and societal barriers that impede the full and equal participation of women in leadership positions. The patriarchal system, characterised by male dominance in decision-making, appears to be a significant obstacle. Traditional values, cultural norms, and societal attitudes toward the role of women persist in the African context. Consequently, many African women aiming for leadership roles in sports hesitate to break away from tradition and culture, fearing potential social alienation (Goslin & Kluka, 2014). Addressing these biases is crucial for bridging the divide between the progressive aspirations outlined in constitutional frameworks and the practical achievement of gender equality in leadership.

In some parts of the world, perceptions of gender ideology are not as modern as others. This influences the resources and availability of opportunities for both girls and women which continue the global calls for urgent gender equity (Adom-Aboagye & Burnett, 2019). The traditional gendered role of women being primarily caregivers often perpetuates discriminatory treatment in African cultures (Adom-Aboagye & Burnett, 2019). This is a deep rooted ideology in hegemonic practices as men continue to act as main decision makers and therefore control access to resources in various sectors, including the sport environment.

The reports and statistics of Sport and Recreation South Africa (SRSA) have been shown to support the stereotypical mindset of people and therefore normalising the gender inequality in these professional levels (Vyas-Doorgapersad & Surujlal, 2018). Local structures of gender inequality are typically experienced as natural, and therefore may seem unalterable in particular social settings. Even though the status of women in society is constantly changing, it remains at the core of conversations. The whole concept of women and their empowerment, gender mainstreaming, and gender equality are key drivers for promoting not only women's quality of life (Malhotra & Schuler, 2005) but also the communities' in which women are rooted and based.

South Africa is surrounded by strong traditions rooted in cultural, community, and family systems. While these traditions acknowledge the contributing roles of women in society, the patriarchal structure of these traditions often disadvantages women in many sectors of society (Adom-Aboagye & Burnett, 2019). Regardless of the many shared experiences and advocacy by African feminists through their teachings and writings, hegemonic and retrogressive forms of masculinity still continue.

The Western stakeholders of this country may not always fully assimilate both the ideological and sociological traditions that South Africa encompasses (Adom-Aboagye & Burnett, 2019). Women, girls, and the systematic challenges they face are therefore navigated and managed by donors with their own ideas. Dialogue, education and sport policy reviews of the country is needed to ensure South Africa's traditions are acknowledged in order to achieve

effective gender equality (Adom-Aboagye & Burnett, 2019). While South Africa is known for its potential in sport, the development of sport is hindered by issues of gender inequality. A sound sport culture needs both development and implementation. Sport development cannot function without a fundamental participation platform and the implementation of a sound sport culture may be lacking and therefore promoting underlying tensions of gender inequality in South African sports participation. The National Sport and Recreation Plan (NSRP) stated that “no country can expect to achieve and sustain success at an elite level without a strong participation base in the community as that is the beginning for every champion.” (NSRP, 2012, p. 19).

Theoretically, if South Africa has equal talent and opportunities, women athletes should not have such poor performance records and international rankings (Coakley & Burnett, 2014). While the domination of men in sport leadership may not be something new, the lack of access that women have in sport participation is not new either. Between, 2007 and 2018, only 25,4% of the national teams for major championships have consisted of women. Therefore, the performance as well as the development of women athletes is a proven statistical concern (Coakley & Burnett, 2014). This issue stems from a limited pool of participants, which is particularly noticeable at the university level. Research shows that the most prominent reasons for promising athletes leaving a program was the “lack of support, inadequate development and the weak motivation of athletics as a profession” (Steenkamp, 2019, p. 3). While women’s participation in sport has improved over the years, the coaching staff, administration, and decision-making positions have not seen great improvement with regards to equal gender opportunities (Coakley & Burnett, 2014). This leads to a lack of female mentors and role models which is a key reason why women athletes drop out of sport.

While female sport participation is hindered by poor policy implementation, one must not underestimate the impact of underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. Mentoring relationships have been recognised as a critical aspect in advancing women in leadership positions (Bower, 2009). In addition, a rather positive influence was identified when

the mentor was a woman as well. Bower's study (2019) reported an attraction to individuals the protégés perceived as being more like themselves. While the number of women in sport increases the benefits of mentoring relationships is particularly critical to women in such a male dominated field such as the sport industry (Bower, 2009).

In addition to underrepresentation, the trivialisation of women's sport may also play a role in a poor participation base. There is an evident contradiction between talented South African female athletes and their performance. When it comes to the local basketball leagues, there exists a domestic league but an insufficient women's professional level. The Basketball National League¹ (BNL) only responded because of a social media outcry for women's basketball activities when including the women's programme during the 2020 BNL season, eight years after the men's league began. However, despite women athletes having to face ongoing obstacles, they continue to participate because of both personal and societal factors which create both enjoyment and empowerment. Having said that, the lack of innovative implementation of a women's league in the BNL as well as the lack of opportunities that follow thus creates a poor participation base.

While there are also factors such as insufficient job opportunities for women in both coaching and administration positions, the requirements of motherhood as well as societal expectations that come with it are additional factors that contribute to inequality in sport participation. Women who have children are expected to put their families first and their career aspirations second. However, if women decide not to have children, they are often viewed as selfish and behaving too masculine (Leberman & Palmer, 2009). In other words, women are ridiculed by societal expectations regardless of their motherhood choices. The concern then becomes that women are directly and indirectly excluded from sport events on the basis of gender. In a more specific South African context, many African women aspiring to leadership positions in sport are reluctant to distance themselves from tradition and culture out of fear of social exclusion (Goslin & Kluka, 2014).

¹ The Basketball National League (BNL) is the professional basketball league in South Africa.

1.3 Research problem, aim and objectives

In light of the different contexts that have led to the unequal treatment, empowerment, and development of women in the sporting world, the primary aim of this study was to explore the ways in which women basketball players understand and experienced their gendered status as women in the competitive basketball community of South Africa. To accomplish this overarching aim, the research was guided by two research questions:

1. How do women basketball players experience gendered marginalisation in their sport?
2. How do personal experiences of gendered empowerment characterise women basketball players' participation in their sport?

1.4 An Introduction to the Theoretical Framework

In delving into the contextual aspects that impact gender marginalisation and empowerment within the basketball community, this study embraced a social constructionist theory of gender, with a specific focus on feminist theory. This approach aims to investigate not only the perpetuation of gender roles and inequalities but also to comprehend how socially constructed notions of gender influence individuals' perceptions and experiences regarding gendered bodies within the realm of basketball. Social constructionist theory emphasises that gender, rather than being inherent or biologically determined, is constructed through social processes, norms, and practices. Feminist theory, within this framework, scrutinises power dynamics and social structures that maintain gender inequalities, particularly those that disadvantage women. By employing these theoretical perspectives, the study seeks to explore how gendered norms and expectations manifest within the basketball community, impacting players, coaches, and other stakeholders. It aims to uncover how these constructed definitions of gender influence not only participation but also performance, recognition, and opportunities within the sport. Through this lens, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding gender dynamics in basketball and potentially inform efforts to promote gender equity and empowerment within the sport.

1.4.1 Social Constructionist Theory of Gender

The idea behind social constructionism is that “our knowledge of the world, including our understanding of human beings, is a product of human thought rather than grounded in an observable, external reality” (Burr, 2015, p. 222). While categorisation plays a foundational role in our daily interactions, these constructed categories provide a powerful tool when influencing one’s perception in the social world (Kang & Bodenhausen, 2015). Therefore, our social perception “is often guided by the stereotypes that are linked to social categories, and self-regulation is often guided by the group norms and standards that are linked to our self-categorisations” (Kang & Bodenhausen, 2015, para. 2).

Viewed through a social constructionist lens, gender is not merely an internalised aspect of personality but rather a social construct that we collectively uphold through our daily social interactions (Sprague, 2001). Gender functions as a perspective through which we observe and assess each other, shaping our perceptions. Instead of recognising individuals as generic, we categorise and evaluate them based on gender, each carrying distinct expectations and societal norms. There exists a collective accountability for adhering to culturally defined gender-appropriate behaviours, reinforcing the idea that gender is a socially constructed framework rather than an inherent, individual trait (Sprague, 2001). The social systems, institutional processes, and interpersonal practices that formed and shaped gender in the past, still promotes gender inequality and marginalisation through the same patriarchy and misogyny that is alive today. As much as it was seen as a traditional view, it seems to continue as the norm today and is thus a fitting theory for the proposed study.

A social constructionist theory of gender serves as a valuable framework for comprehending the dynamics of empowerment and marginalisation among women basketball players. This theoretical perspective emphasises that gender is not an inherent, fixed trait but rather a product of social interactions, cultural norms, and power structures. In the context of women in basketball, understanding the social construction of gender allows for an exploration of how societal expectations and norms influence their experiences within the sport.

Empowerment, in this context, can be analysed as the result of challenging and reshaping traditional gender norms, fostering a sense of agency, and promoting inclusivity within the basketball community. Conversely, marginalisation can be understood as the consequence of rigid gender stereotypes, unequal power dynamics, and the perpetuation of traditional roles that limit women's opportunities and recognition in basketball. By employing a social constructionist lens, researchers can uncover the underlying social processes that contribute to the empowerment or marginalisation of women basketball players, thereby informing interventions and strategies for fostering more equitable and inclusive sporting environments.

1.5 Methodology

Using a qualitative research approach, this study employs a research design which combines the data collection techniques of (1) auto-photography, through which participants will generate photographs, and (2) photo-elicitation, where participants will be interviewed about the photographs they have generated. The use of visual methods in interviews has gained increased attention in qualitative studies (Glaw et al., 2017). These kinds of methodologies aid in bringing into acute visual attention and representation the taken for granted aspects of life experience and places, especially where systems of thinking and behaving as well as marginalisation that are not always palpably obvious. Due to the years of gender inequality that has imbedded itself in the sports organisations, visual methodologies prove helpful in highlighting real life instances of marginalisation that so many observers are oblivious to. The potential of these visual methods for accessing covert and overt sensory, as well as emotional experiences is suitable for this particular research as women's experiences as a whole are often disregarded in the basketball community.

1.6 Rationale

With a dearth of research on the topic of gender inequality in basketball in South Africa, international findings provided a useful source of evidence which suggested that competitive sport has traditionally been seen as a masculinised institution and, therefore, women are

perceived as intruding on men's spaces as well as men's power and dominance within sport (Senne, 2016). Although research suggests that gender inequality is a significant issue in the sports industry worldwide, minimal research exists on the basketball community within this context. For gender equality to be effectively managed, the contextual factors that hinder and those that promote successful gender equality must be identified.

1.7 Overview of the chapters

In the opening chapter of this study, I have outlined the background and rationale for the research, the overarching aim of the study and the theoretical as well as methodological points of departures.

Chapter 2 discusses various bodies of literature that hold significance to Gender and Sport, Women in Sport, and Women in Basketball. Also outlined are main concepts and theories that may explain gender inequality in the international sporting world before placing focus on the local sporting community.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the theoretical framework of the study. This includes an overview of social constructionism and social constructionist theories of gender. These discussions inform the underpinning of this research and methodology.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodology in detail. This includes a discussion on how the research was executed. It provides a description of the data used as well as the collection thereof. It then explains how the data was analysed using thematic analysis. There is also a discussion regarding the necessary steps taken to ensure the credibility and rigor of the research. Finally, there is a personal account of the reflexive considerations relating to this study, as well as an outline of the ethical considerations.

Chapter 5 details the findings of the study, including the themes, subthemes, and codes. This chapter provides an integrated discussion around the findings and the identified literature and theory within which the study was situated. As such, the overarching discussion

explores how the findings of the research contribute to, confirm, and differ from the theory and extant literature.

Chapter 6 concludes the study by providing a summative integration and conclusion of the research process which includes the literature that was reviewed, the methodology that was used and the findings of the research study. It then further discusses these findings, thereafter, concluding the research by addressing limitations and future recommendations. Lastly, a summary of the research study is provided.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to review the bodies of literature pertinent to gender inequality in the sporting industry, particularly in the basketball sporting code. It is important to note that the review provided here is not entirely exhaustive of the literature on gender inequality in the sporting world, as that would exceed the scope and delimitation of the focus of this dissertation. The literature selected for review and included here is guided by the aims and objectives of this study, which is aimed at exploring how women basketball players experience their gendered status within the sport.

As such this review will follow a three-part structure aimed at providing the reader an accessible and coherent overview of the literature that contextualises the research problem for this study. Firstly, this chapter begins by identifying the gender disparities in the sporting industry, the sporting policies that were created to help dismantle gender inequality, as well as the lack of strategic plans that would stipulate how these objectives would be achieved. This is followed by the exploration of women in sport and the challenges they face both on the sporting field as well as in leadership positions and how that affects women's sport participation. While in theory there is nothing which prevents women from climbing the hierarchical ladder in an organisation, the experiences that come along with being a woman in the sporting industry does hinder this process. Additionally, one of the most critical aspects of advancing women in leadership positions within sport is the mentoring relationship. While the mentoring relationship is important in career development for both genders, it is particularly critical for women, especially those in male dominated professions such as the sports industry. Bower (2004) reported that the mentor and protégé were drawn to individuals they perceived as being more like themselves. Therefore, a lack of women in leadership may greatly affect a player's experience of both marginalisation and empowerment.

This chapter concludes with a discussion on women in basketball, both globally as well as in South Africa. It is worth noting that the recent literature on basketball in South Africa is limited. Therefore, most of the literature reviewed here mainly emanates from other countries, such as the United States of America and various European countries, where gender inequality in sports has received greater academic attention.

2.2 Gender disparities in sport

There has been a significant shift in the relations and dynamics of gender and sport in recent years, by shifting the advocacy from “gender equity in sport towards using sport for gender equity and personal development” (Chinurum et al., 2014, p. 28). Chinurum et al. (2014) further explain that the culture of sport is an essential sector when researching gender and understanding how society constructs externally presented social bodies of men and women.

In South Africa, most sport-related policies were amended for gender equity and women empowerment, between the years 2012 and 2015 (Adom-Aboagye & Burnett, 2019). However, they were proposed without guidelines for implementation on how gender equity and empowerment of women of all ages could be achieved in and through the sector of sport (Adom-Aboagye & Burnett, 2019). It is evident from the available gender sport policies in South Africa that attempts were made to use Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) frameworks to create policies and strategic plans to implement the amended policies (Adom-Aboagye & Burnett, 2019). This is observable from policy documents and strategic plans that acknowledge and highlight the inequalities and disadvantages that women have faced in the country due to the unequal dispersion of power and distribution of resources at all levels of sport as well as the presentation of a way forward to rectify the situation (Razavi & Miller, 1995). However, none of the policy documents that are currently available provide precise instructions or action plans outlining how goals are to be met to guarantee gender equity, empowerment, and inclusion (Adom-Aboagye & Burnett, 2019). The existing policy guidelines lack specific, actionable instructions on how to guarantee and uphold gender equity. This ambiguity suggests that, when it comes to gender inequality,

empowerment, and inclusion in communities and on the ground, policy officials may not have properly recognised, acknowledged, or interpreted the policy issues themselves (Bacchi, 2009; Bacchi & Eveline, 2010).

In the sporting world in particular, the labelling of masculinity and femininity is constantly assigned. Since the 1980's, the focus of gender research has been on the ways in which sport is reproduced through, and represented of, different forms of hegemonic masculinity. However, despite the strategic plans and proposals that were brought forward during this time, the expected effects did not materialise since women continued to face many forms of discrimination based on their gender. By 2010, the Code of Sport Ethics was adopted, with the goal of advocating for the expansion of opportunities for equal and fair participation in sport across all genders (Dodo et al., 2020). The 2012 Olympic Games in London marked a pivotal turning point in the movement for gender equality in athletic competition. The Olympic Games saw participation from almost equal numbers of male and female athletes for the first time in history, with 44% of women and 56% of men taking part in the competition (Chappell, 2012).

In the last two decades, particularly on the African continent, sport has been hailed as a useful tool in the quest for nation building and social cohesion (Engh & Potgieter, 2018). A popular claim is that sport has a powerful role to play in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. What often remains silenced in assertions about the benefits and potentials of sport are the ways in which sport also produces and sustains exclusion, frequently along gender and racial lines (Engh & Potgieter, 2018). Sport has social and cultural significance precisely because it provides an avenue for the reproduction of normative forms of (abled) embodiment, (cis) gender, and (hetero) sexuality as well as a platform for the development of leadership and social engagement regarding conflict resolution. Since the 1990s sport has occupied a central role in imaginaries of social cohesion and social transformation in South Africa; sport is celebrated as a vehicle for building, and a symbol of the existence of a unified and diverse South Africa (Engh & Potgieter, 2018). The argument

that sport fosters unity and transformation “rests on two main assumptions; firstly, that direct participation in sport and physical activity promotes sustained communication, collaboration and understanding across social divides, and secondly, that the success of national teams and athletes promotes national pride and unity” (Engh & Potgieter, 2018, p. 35).

Policies are in place for gender inclusion in sport. However, social exclusion and other various forms of marginalisation are still evident despite these policies (Schailleé et al., 2019). Without the implementation of these policies, women of all ages may continue to miss out on a range of health and social benefits. The health benefits of women’s participation in sports are not just physical but also mental. It promotes psychological well-being, builds self-esteem, and reduces stress and anxiety amongst other benefits (UN, 2007).

As the rates of depression, in both developed and developing countries are close to double among women than for men, sporting codes that promote life skills are particularly important within the context of mental and social health and wellbeing (UN, 2007). As these do not only help with mental and physical health but may also increase opportunities in the educational sector, through scholarship opportunities (UN, 2007). Sport in the communities is often approached as more than just the sport itself; “it aims to address social, political and cultural dimensions of inequality” (Schailleé et al., 2019, para. 2). Gender in/equality is a multi-faceted phenomenon within contemporary South Africa, as racial and socio-economic factors are still incredibly prominent. These parallel systemic challenges within society are a demonstration of a spillover effect on the challenges in previously mentioned sport sectors (Burnett, 2018).

The painfully evident consequences of gender inequality being an institutionalised practice within sport organisations hinder women from the benefits that participation in basketball creates for athletes. Having said this, sport organisations are not the only marginalised sectors that help perpetuate this stereotypical notion. While more opportunities are created for women in sport, little is being done to reduce the stereotypical portrayal of women in sport. Stereotypical notions of women in sport persist, often portraying female

athletes as less competitive, less physically capable, or less driven than their male counterparts. These stereotypes can limit opportunities and deter girls and women from pursuing sport, hindering their potential for success. Breaking free from these stereotypes is crucial to promoting a more inclusive and empowering sporting culture, where female athletes can thrive without being confined by outdated preconceptions about their abilities and roles in the world of sport.

Furthermore, research shows that the patriarchal values instilled in sport are reinforced by the media (Trolan, 2013). Even though the World Cup Final in women's soccer was watched by 250 million people where 60% of them were men, women athletes are still underreported. The lack of coverage of their events, due to the media's engagement, helps preserve the power of men in an ongoing gender exclusive organisation (Trolan, 2013). As mentioned before, gender inequality has far more consequences than limited media exposure. In *The Sport Journal* Senne (2018) reported that "participants had minimal experience with women's sports and only watched women's sports if that is what was on television" (p. 3). Given that the media lacks coverage on women's sport, naturally there would be minimal viewings. Seeing that basketball is deemed more masculine than other sports due to its contact nature, reports show that less than 2% of sport in the masculine category get media exposure (Scheidler & Wagstaff, 2018). The media creates demand as much as they meet it.

Sport in general is considered to be the bearer of the male norm; traditionally considered "male sports" are prioritised before "female sports," male athletes are prioritised before female athletes and men's sport performance is considered better than women's. The sporting world will continue to be an unequal part of society so long as it continues to subscribe to systems which sustain men's dominance. Despite the efforts made to diminish the marginalisation of women, women still do not appear to be judged on their performance but rather on the fact that they are not men (Gilenstam & Henriksson-Larsen, 2008).

According to Belzer (2015), while some progress has been made over the past two decades, the glass ceiling for women may be lower in sports than in any other industry. A

strong participation base for women's sport, which evidently is of strategic importance, can be generated by more innovative opportunities, government support, legislation supporting equality in sports, emphasis on women's rights, promotion of the health and fitness evolution, and more publicity and media exposure (Coakley & Burnett, 2014). Sportswomen continue to lose out on sporting benefits due to the unequal balance of power and distribution of resources at all levels of the sporting industry. The gender disparities in sport will persist if specific guidelines and actionable directives are not put in place and prioritised.

2.3 Women in sport

Despite the progress that has been made toward creating gender equality among athletes on the field, women are still vastly underrepresented in positions of sport governance off the field (Adriaanse, 2015). Many sporting codes are shown to be a gendered institution and operate with a hegemonic masculine norm (Senne, 2016) which highlights the pervasive presence of traditional, male-centric ideals within sport. In such environments, qualities associated with stereotypical masculinity often take precedence, leading to the undervaluing of feminine traits and hindering female athletes' progress. This may seem beneficial for the male counterpart, but it only reinforces masculine behaviour as the only acceptable leadership qualities required in sport. This shows that gender inequality has become an institutionalised practice within sport organisations. The patriarchal ideology hegemonic practices "continue to contribute to barriers women and girls face to participate in traditionally male sports and for gaining access to leadership positions" (Burnett, 2018, p. 1). To challenge the vast amounts of gender stereotypes and discrimination sport implements, there is a need for opportunities to allow for women participation. Not only will this be a vehicle to promote gender equality and empowerment of women across all sporting levels, it will make a significant contribution to public life and community development (UN, 2007).

2.3.1 Mentorship in sport

Additionally, one of the most critical aspects of advancing women in leadership positions within sport is the mentoring relationship. As the number of women entering sport increases, a growing number of professionals recognise the inherent benefits and challenges between the mentor and the protégé (Bower, 2009). While the mentoring relationship is important in career development for both genders, it is particularly critical for women, especially those in male dominated professions such as the sport industry. Of the United States work population, 70 million women were employed in 2006; and in terms of leadership positions, females comprised of only 38% of the management positions (Bower, 2009). Not disregarding how far female representation has improved throughout history, women are still underrepresented in leadership positions within male-dominated occupations. Often the road to leadership roles in the sport industry is difficult because of barriers such as the need for women to prove themselves, lack of support, balancing work and family life, lack of training and career development, lack of familial support as well as hostility and sexism in the workplace (Weaver & Chelladuri, 2002). Mentors have the potential to shield female managers from both explicit and implicit discrimination and can assist their female mentees in navigating organisational barriers stemming from structural, social, and cultural factors. Bower (2004) identified characteristics which positively influenced a mentor's and protégé's decision to develop a mentoring relationship with women in campus recreation. The study reported the mentor and protégé were attracted to individuals they perceived as being similar to themselves.

2.3.2 Women in leadership

Women occupying professional-level staff positions provide "alternative norms, values, attitudes, knowledge, capabilities and experiences" (UN, 2007, p. 3), alongside the additional benefits for women and girls themselves such as financial means and creating a sense of equality. Men and women both bring different perspectives and experiences, and sporting

codes should have diverse leadership roles to create maximum benefits for all parties involved. The talent base can bring diverse and alternative approaches to management, coaching and sport journalism (UN, 2007).

An audit of the gender ratio on boards of National Sport Organisations with 1600 participants was conducted in 45 countries. Data were collected through the Sydney Scoreboard, an interactive website that tracks women's presence on sporting boards internationally. Findings show that women remain underrepresented on three key indicators: as board directors (global mean 19.7%), board chairs (10.8%) and chief executives (16.3%) (Adriaanse, 2015). Central to the argument for fostering women's representation in governance is the fact that women represent stakeholders who should be included and that their inclusion increases the pool of talent available for selection into leadership positions (Adriaanse, 2015).

In addition, although there are currently more women sport coaches than ever before, these numbers are still starkly under-represented in sport organisations (Surujlal & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2015). While the number of female athletes has increased substantially the number of women in high coaching positions still appear to be relatively low. Research suggests that men have developed institutionalised control over the most senior levels of sport administration which prevents the advancement of women to high level positions (Surujlal & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2015). While in theory there is nothing which prevents women climbing the hierarchical ladder in an organisation, a 'glass ceiling' may represent the invisible, but very prevalent, forces which prevent them moving to higher positions in an organisation (Surujlal & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2015).

A comprehensive review based on more than four hundred publications over the past thirty years of research on women directors on corporate boards, found that gender diversity had a positive impact through a variety of board processes and individual interactions (Adriaanse, 2015). However, women need to occupy a minimum of thirty percent of board positions to enhance firm performance. If the critical weighting is not reached, gender diversity

can nullify or negatively affect firm performance. In the above-mentioned study, only four of the forty-five countries reached the critical weighting of the bare minimum of 30% (Adriaanse, 2015). Whilst gender diversity on boards is an ethical issue in terms of adequate representation of all stakeholders, it also impacts on the organisation's performance. The main finding of the present study, that gender balance and a critical weighting of women's representation in sport governance have only been achieved in few countries globally, can be explained as the result of complex gender dynamics.

Although there are many aspects to gender inequality in sport, the most fundamental aspect of where the biggest change could emanate from, are the cultural obstacles. Moawad (2019, p. 31) shared a report from the European commission where "women form a minority in the vast majority of sports, and in all countries when it comes to decision-making positions. Women are excluded from 20 out of 52 sports federations and have less than 25% representation in 46 of them." This structural obstacle of sport institutions being dominated by men is a culture that needs to change for the benefit of all athletes. For the greater understanding and betterment of sportswomen as well as sportsmen, a gender diverse board will improve the decision making which will lead to more favourable results (Moawad, 2019).

National Sport Associations, National and International Sport Federations and even the International Olympic Committee continue to struggle with meeting the 20% representation quota of women on executive boards (Aman et al., 2019). Although women's representation as athletes, coaches and officials has increased in national and international sport competitions, this does not hold true in leadership, particularly in top positions. In sport leadership in particular, research shows that women have gained access into the leadership pipeline, but still lack representation on executive boards and other vital leadership positions (Aman et al., 2018). The pipeline theory (Turkel, 2004) posits that few women ever reach the top level of leadership because there have been few women in the lower level. This standpoint assumes that the reason for underrepresentation of women in a traditionally male dominated field is the lack of women preparing to enter those fields. This is also attributed to a variety of

causes, including women's traditional family roles and inherited tendencies for females to display fewer of the traits and motivations that are necessary to attain and achieve success in these top-level positions as it is not associated to, or acceptable for, the female gender in society (Aman et al., 2018). Due to the scarcity of women at the lower-level leadership positions, the promotion into higher positions of leadership become more difficult.

With the lack of women in both higher and lower-level leadership positions there are limited role models for women pursuing the same positions within organisations. Women in leadership therefore face unique challenges, which can be significantly different to their male counterparts (Carson et al., 2018). For women, the overcoming of traditional gender ideologies is required throughout their careers due to the male hegemonic policing of sport and the sport workplace, particularly upon entrance to the workplace.

2.3.3 Women in the leadership of sport in Africa

Although several sub-Saharan African countries have adopted progressive constitutions resulting in policies and quotas regarding gender equality, prejudice against women in leadership positions persist, causing a gap between intention and implementation (Goslin & Kluka, 2014). It is evident in industry and scholars agree that gender inequality in Africa is defined and driven by traditional cultures and patriarchal ideology (Goslin & Kluka, 2014). This reality is also observed in sport leadership as an area of public life. The patriarchal system, where decision-making power resides in the hands of males, seems to be a fundamental constraint to the advancement of gender equality. Traditional beliefs, cultural expectations, and attitudes regarding the position of women in society, especially leadership positions, are still prevalent in the African context. Many African women aspiring to leadership positions in sport are reluctant to distance themselves from tradition and culture out of fear of social exclusion and ostracization. In general, the traditional roles of women are seen as homemakers and domestic caretakers while men are often seen as the breadwinners (Goslin & Kluka, 2014). Consequently, the barriers women face include personal limitations such as self-limiting behaviours and balance of work-life conflict. Due to the lack of leadership

positions available to women there is a hostile competitiveness. Other barriers are socio-cultural factors consisting of traditional practices and society's perceptions, organisational factors comprising of all-men's networks, as well as gender discrimination (Aman et al, 2019).

As more women participate in sport and learn the leadership skills to succeed in business and industry. Not only will their participation rates increase but correspondingly so will their influence, greatly enhanced by the acquisition of leadership positions, and these women will create momentum for the next generation of female sport leaders. Sport also plays a crucial role in contemporary forms of nation building by transcending social divisions, such as race and gender, and affirming political loyalties to the nation as a whole (Riordan, 1986) which was evident during the 2010 World Cup in South Africa (Klenke, 2017). Team sports are vehicles for cultivating and displaying community, cultural values, and national identities. Through team sports, athletes come to value cooperation, consensus building, negotiation, and conflict resolution, which are all valuable in political and business contexts as well (Klenke, 2017).

2.3.4 Leadership styles and team performance

Studies outside of the sport context has investigated varying personality traits that are considered essential to successful leadership and have determined that both men and women maintain traits that are necessary for success in leadership roles (Eagly et al., 2003). These same studies also indicated that women report higher levels of empathy and emotional intelligence, which may enhance their overall leadership abilities, especially due to the team nature of most sports (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

The hiring processes within the sports industry lack recognition or comprehension of personality traits that could be advantageous for women in leadership positions (Darvin et al., 2018). Despite the potential for women to possess traits that are beneficial for success in these roles, such as empathy, collaboration, and emotional intelligence, the current practices in hiring do not reflect an acknowledgment of these factors (Darvin et al., 2018). Further research should be directed towards examining the existing hiring practices to ascertain whether the

significant presence of male leaders is attributed to their actual performance or to entrenched stereotypes about leadership capabilities. This investigation is crucial for understanding whether the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles in the sports industry stems from genuine merit-based selection criteria or from biased perceptions of leadership abilities based on gender stereotypes.

There are benefits to both sport and society from having gender balanced governing boards. However, these debates and statistical representations that are captured throughout sport leagues do not do the complexities associated with gender inequality in real world circumstances any justice (Burnett, 2018). Industries predominantly led by men, like sports, tend to harbour biased and subjective beliefs about what makes an effective leader (Darvin et al., 2018). These biases are often rooted in gender stereotypes and are particularly pronounced in leadership positions, notably the head coach role, within the sports industry. At both professional and amateur levels, men overwhelmingly occupy these head coach positions, indicating a clear gender disparity. These hiring practices often reflect and perpetuate traditional gender norms and expectations about leadership capabilities. The prevalent belief in the sports industry is that men are better suited for leadership roles, which can lead to the exclusion of women from opportunities for advancement (Darvin et al., 2018). These stereotypes not only limit the representation of women in leadership but also reinforce the idea that certain qualities associated with leadership are inherently masculine.

A study focusing on the WNBA and NCAA examined a notion that male coaches are more productive. This was accomplished by assessing whether the gender of a head coach influenced coaching effectiveness using objective metrics of individual player performance (Darvin et al., 2018). The findings of the study suggest that the gender of the head coach does not have a significant effect on the individual performance of players in either the WNBA or the NCAA (Darvin et al., 2018). This outcome provides empirical evidence that contradicts the prevalent gender stereotypes within the sports industry, particularly regarding coaching roles (Darvin et al., 2018). In other words, the study's results challenge the commonly held belief

that male coaches are inherently more effective than female coaches. By demonstrating that there is no substantial difference in player performance based on the gender of their coach, the study provides objective evidence that undermines these traditional stereotypes. These findings have implications for promoting gender equity within the sports industry by debunking the notion that certain leadership roles are inherently gender-specific. They highlight the importance of evaluating coaches based on their skills, qualifications, and coaching ability rather than their gender. Ultimately, this research contributes to the ongoing efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable environment within sports, where individuals are judged on their merits rather than stereotypes.

Certain observers have proposed that arrogance and ostentation are ingrained within the essence of sports (Smittick et al., 2019). Nevertheless, findings indicated that leadership displaying incivility led to decreased team unity, diminished psychological security, and lower objective team achievements (Smittick et al., 2019). In teams where collaboration is essential, such as sports teams, cohesion is believed to affect both collective aspects (such as communication and coordination) and individual motivations (like persistence and intensity), ultimately influencing the team's overall performance. Indeed, meta-analytic research confirms that team cohesion is a predictor of team performance (Smittick et al., 2019). For example, in a meta-analysis comprising 46 studies within the realm of sports, it was discovered that cohesion had a notable predictive value for performance (Carron et al., 2002). Significant impacts were notably evident in the realm of women's sports teams, the primary focus of this study. Findings indicated that teams demonstrating strong cohesion, both socially and in terms of task-related elements, tended to achieve better outcomes compared to those lacking such cohesion (Smittick et al., 2019).

Although researchers have not thoroughly investigated the precise relationships between incivility, cohesion, and team performance, prior studies have suggested that cohesion serves as a mediator in the link between interpersonal mistreatment and outcomes. For example, Raver and Gelfand (2005) discovered that team cohesion acted as an

intermediary in the relationship between pervasive mistreatment within the team environment and team performance. Specifically, teams reporting elevated levels of sexual harassment within the team tended to exhibit reduced cohesion, resulting in diminished financial performance. Al-Yaaribi and Kavussanu (2017) discovered that antisocial behaviours among teammates were linked to decreased task cohesiveness, which in turn predicted athlete burnout in a study of team sport participants. As previously indicated, women often exhibit characteristics like communality, which would support task cohesiveness if they held leadership roles to bring about such a transformation. These results highlight the function that team cohesion plays as a mediator in the relationship between abuse and performance, as well as the impact of cohesiveness on team performance. A crucial component of players' and teams' growth is psychological safety. Additionally, findings showed that leader gender had an impact on the association between incivility and team psychological safety, despite the fact that it had no influence on the relationships between incivility and cohesiveness or incivility and performance. Teams led by men reported higher levels of leader incivility and a decreased sense of psychological safety (Smittick et al., 2019). Thus, when coaches engage in rude, discourteous behaviours that violate norms of conduct i.e., incivility (Pearson & Porath, 2009) their actions are likely to erode the sense of psychological safety. As a result, team members may be less likely to question strategies and assumptions, engage in innovative decision making, or express their differences and this may lead to decreased performance. In summary, the study demonstrated the importance of both incivility and psychological safety in team performance furthermore confirming the need for women in leadership positions due to their perceived trustworthiness and likeability.

Gendered sport leadership processes have shaped the sport industry and often discouraged women from aspiring toward leadership roles. The assignment of stereotypical traits contributes to the challenges women face in obtaining leadership roles and performing well in them due to the social pressures and expectations of co-workers as well as players (Koenig et al. 2011). Processes such as these reinforce the subconscious formation of

leadership stereotypes and serve to perpetuate sport as a gendered space. These stereotypes often exist despite a lack of evidence and objective measurements regarding coaching performance (Darvin et al., 2018).

Proper evaluations of leadership outcomes aimed at challenging traditional gender stereotypes and the subsequent gendered nature of sport are lacking. Gender stereotypes not only have led to a lack of opportunities in coaching for women but have restricted women in gaining the necessary skill sets to obtain positions as head coaches for men's or women's programs (Darvin et al., 2018). Therefore, objective measures of leadership outcomes are necessary to combat the subjective and stereotypical notions of successful leadership traits. Given that women may possess traits more conducive to success in these roles, additional research should aim to investigate the current hiring landscape and determine whether the disproportionate number of male leaders is due to performance or stereotypical notions of leadership ability and societal acceptance. While sport is a context where leadership incivility is common, it has shown to lead to lower team cohesion and lower objective team performance. In sport teams, like basketball, cohesion is thought to influence both group and individual motivation factors which determines team performance and therefore affects the experiences of basketball players. Once men and women are evaluated in terms of production and performance, perhaps the emphasis placed on stereotypical abilities will begin to diminish as the stereotypes of women in leadership can be disproven on a factual basis.

2.4 Women in basketball

Basketball used to be one of the fastest growing sports in South Africa, but reports share that "maladministration of the sport since the 2000s has left South Africa lagging behind the rest of the continent" (Nxumalo, 2021, para. 2). A meeting was held between the Portfolio Committee on Sports, Arts and Culture and Basketball South Africa (BSA) in March of 2021 as well as in November of the same year, where members shared their concern on the lack of diversity on the BSA board (Dlulane, 2021). The board of the BSA has consisted primarily of

men over the years despite research showing that women can assist in, and uniquely contribute to management, coaching and sport journalism by providing alternative knowledge, capabilities and experiences (UN, 2007).

This gross marginalisation is not seen as prominently by outside observers. However, its impact is felt by participants at all levels of competition, starting from an underrepresentation and recognition of sportswomen, as well as the difference in salary between female and male sport teams, a marginalised female coaching staff and reaching to where the inequality is most evident - in high level leadership positions. Ms Dlulane, the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee, identified that there was no indication of women and youth development in the report that BSA shared in the meeting (Dlulane, 2021). It is the responsibility of BSA to govern basketball participation across age groups and genders within the Republic of South Africa. Mr Mthiyane, the President of BSA, mentioned that the constitution commission was dealing with the diversity of the executive (Dlulane, 2021) on two separate occasions namely, in the March and the November meeting of the previous year. However, despite recognising their shortcomings, the BSA board is still led primarily by men, which the organisation confirms on their public website. Sports studies show that a balanced male and female board in governance leads to a “better work environment” (Senne, 2016, p. 2). However, despite the rapid decline in administration in the sport over the past few years, the governance in the South African basketball industry has yet to diversify their board. Additional research should aim to investigate the current hiring landscape in BSA and determine whether the disproportionate number of men leaders is due to performance or stereotypical notions of leadership ability.

Male dominated industries, such as sport, contain stereotypical and subjective notions of leadership ability (Darvin et al., 2018). These gender stereotypes often manifest themselves within varying levels of leadership, but specific to the sport industry, they are the most visible within the head coach role (Darvin et al., 2018). Research has shown that head coach gender does not appear to impact individual player performance in the WNBA (Women’s National

Basketball Association) or in the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) thereby providing objective evidence to challenge the traditional gender stereotypes found within the sport industry (Darvin et al., 2018).

The lack of women holding professional-level staff positions are not only an issue in South Africa, but globally. The leading women's basketball league in the world, the WNBA has experienced a decrease in women holding professional-level staff positions in the league office "for the fourth consecutive year from 50 percent in 2018 to 48.9 percent in 2019" (Lapchick, 2019, para. 7). Even though this is much higher than any men's professional sports league, the women's league is being run by those who do not experience the same stigmas, social constraints, or gender-specific treatment including sexism as well as harassment and pay inequality.

Gender stereotypes often dictate the roles to which men and women are assigned within the sport industry with little regard for productivity measurements (Burton 2015). Recent research has confirmed the perception of gender bias in the hiring of coaches in the NCAA and noted that male coaches face fewer obstacles in their career progression and compensation (Sabo et al. 2016). Therefore, these stereotypes often give way to damaging outcomes for women in their ability to obtain leadership roles, with little regard for distinct measurements of performance; the stereotypes are not based off any factual information. Overall, and due largely to these traditional gender stereotypes, women are not only granted restricted access to roles as leaders in sport organisations, but they are not treated with the same amount of respect as their male counterparts when they reach these top levels of leadership (Darvin et al., 2018).

Forms of discrimination suggest that the 'old boys' network', or exclusive networks in general, prevent certain individuals (i.e., women) from entering the field (Burton 2015). These networks have also been found to impact the specific jobs that are accessible to women. For example, men are given access to head coaching positions for both men's and women's teams, whereas women are for the most part only given the opportunity to lead women's teams

(Darvin et al., 2018). This gendered role assignment is especially evident when considering professional sports because both the WNBA and the NBA (National Basketball Association) are comprised of a majority, if not solely, head coaches who are men. According to Sagas et al. (2006), not only are women obtaining leadership roles at a lower rate than their men counterparts are, but women coaches also scored lower than men regarding their intentions and attitudes toward obtaining a head-coaching role in the future.

Previous research has focused primarily on the identification of the barriers and challenges of women in sport leadership. The current study aims to explore the experiences as well as the impact of the underrepresentation of women in the basketball community.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has served to highlight the relevant bodies of literature pertinent to gender inequality in sport, as well as women in sport, and more specifically women in basketball. This chapter followed a three-part structure firstly identifying the gender disparities in sport by referring to policy documents and strategic plans, the unequal balance of power, and the unequal distribution of resources at all levels of the sporting industry. Secondly, the discussion then explored and contextualised women in sport by reviewing literature pertaining to mentorships in sports, women in leadership, and leadership styles and team performance. Thirdly, the chapter examined and reviewed literature on women in basketball both nationally and globally. As such, this chapter served to situate and contextualise the nature and aim of this research problem amidst the greater body of literature and theories. In doing so, this chapter examined some of the pertinent literature relevant to gender inequality within the sporting industry. The reviewed literature pertaining to athletes and how they experience their gendered status within the sport revealed a comparative dearth of qualitative data relevant to women and basketball specifically. This study therefore positions itself amidst the identified paucity of qualitative data regarding women basketball players and their experience of their gendered status as women within the sport through an auto photographic study. In the chapter

which follows, I will outline the theoretical framework which specially orients how this study conceptualises the social constructionist theory of gender and its relation to sport.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Overview

In exploring the contextual factors that influence gender marginalisation and empowerment in the basketball community, this study adopts a social constructionist theory of gender, broadly, and the feminist theory in particular, to examine the maintenance of gender roles and inequalities, as well as attempt to understand how socially created definitions of gender shape the way people see and experience gendered bodies in basketball. The approaches and methods of this study are rooted in a theoretical framework that critically considers the complexities of gender, bodies, and gendered bodies. In other words, gender, broadly, and gender(ed) differences, in particular, are theorised through the lens of social constructionism and hegemonic femininity, thus conceptualising these phenomena as socially constructed phenomena. Broader social systems, institutional processes, and interpersonal practices form and shape gender and, with this, gendered inequalities and marginalisation through patriarchy and misogyny, as opposed to a biological given. The central tenets of the approaches and methods of the proposed research will be grounded in a social constructionist theory of gender and hegemonic femininity which will be discussed in this chapter.

3.2 Social constructionism

3.2.1 Definition of social constructionism

Social constructionism emerged as a distinct break from positivism, representing a paradigm shift in epistemological positions. Positivism, rooted in a belief in objective reality and the possibility of discovering universal truths through empirical observation and scientific methods, tends to prioritise objectivity and detachment from subjective influences (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). In contrast, social constructionism challenges these notions, asserting that reality is socially constructed and shaped by cultural, historical, and contextual factors. Social constructionism emphasises the subjective nature of knowledge, highlighting the role

of language and social interactions in shaping our understanding of reality (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). The advantages of social constructionism over positivism lie in its recognition of the multiplicity of perspectives, the influence of power dynamics in knowledge production, and its ability to capture the complexities and nuances of lived experiences that may be overlooked by a more rigid positivist framework (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). Social constructionism provides a more inclusive and contextual understanding of knowledge, embracing diversity and acknowledging the inherent subjectivity in human experiences and interpretations.

The central standpoint of social constructionist thought is that “our knowledge of the world, including our understanding of human beings, is a product of human thought rather than grounded in an observable, external reality” (Burr, 2015, p. 222). Categorisation plays a foundational role in our daily interactions and these constructed categories provide a powerful tool in influencing one’s perception of the social world (Kang & Bodenhausen, 2015). In society, there is both an objective and subjective reality. An objective reality is presupposed habitual actions which become meaningful and thus institutionalised. This meaning system produces the idea that our individual behaviour is a consequence of largely internal traits or motivations that are either inherited or learned (Burr, 2015), also referred to as determinism.

These meanings are typified by means of roles with symbolic boundaries that exclude outsiders (Segre, 2016). These social roles are also integrated into the symbolic universe which is self-maintaining as long as it does not become problematic. This occurs when it is challenged by those that affirm different conceptions of the social order (Segre, 2016). Social constructionists are interested in why certain properties of the world and individuals assume importance and are then used as the basis for social or scientific evaluation (Social et al., 2017). For example, a relevant contemporary ‘property’ that has influenced how people act and evaluate themselves and others is gender. Gender is a dominant measure of equality where power relations are referred to how the position is occupied by people in society (Social et al., 2017). Other traits alongside gender include class and race where some groups have

more authority than other (Social et al., 2017). From a social constructionist perspective, girls and boys are not blank slates that are written on or 'socialised'; rather, they are active participants - along with the world around them - in the construction of their worlds and the meaning making which suffuses it (Courtenay, 2000).

While power relations are never fixed or invariable, those occupying more authoritative positions are able to set the standards and the norms to which the rest of us are expected to conform (Social et al., 2017). Peers provide boys and girls with important information about the responses they can expect for demonstrating behaviours considered appropriate or inappropriate for their gender. Girls and boys punish peers whose behaviour crosses gender stereotypic boundaries (Courtenay, 2000). Not surprisingly, how girls and boys think their peers will act and respond to them greatly influences their gender-related preferences (Courtenay, 2000).

3.2.2 Core tenets of social constructionism

Social constructionism is a theoretical framework that suggests that many aspects of the world, including knowledge, reality, and identity, are not inherent or objective but are instead constructed through social interactions and language. Social constructionism is a theory about the knowledge of sociology and communication which examines the development of a mutually constructed understanding of the world (Corey, 2013). Burr (2015), a prominent figure in the field of social constructionism, proposed four key assumptions that underlie this theoretical framework. These assumptions provide a foundation for understanding how social constructionism views the nature of reality and knowledge.

The first assumption pertains to the nature of reality. This ontological assumption posits that there is no single, objective reality independent of human interpretation. Instead, reality is socially constructed and subject to multiple interpretations. Different individuals and groups can have varying perceptions of what is considered real, and these perceptions are shaped by social and cultural contexts. Furthermore, it highlights that if people understand themselves

and others to be constructions instead of objective descriptions, then socialised categories such as race, could be considered human constructions which occur naturally (Burr, 2015).

The second assumption, an epistemological assumption, relates to the nature of knowledge. Burr suggests that knowledge is not a fixed, absolute truth but rather a product of human interpretation and language. Knowledge is constructed through social interactions, discourse, and shared understandings. It is context-dependent and can vary across different cultural and historical settings. Thus, these categorisations are believed to be socially constructed and not an accurate reflection of reality (Burr, 2015).

The methodological assumption is the third core tenet, and this assumption concerns the research process. Burr argues that research should focus on understanding the ways in which individuals and societies construct their realities and knowledge. To do this, researchers should engage in qualitative methods that explore subjective experiences, language, and social interactions, rather than seeking to uncover objective truths. It is concerned with the nature of knowledge and how it is constructed through shared assumptions in a social context where through interaction, meaning is created (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

The fourth assumption, the ethical-political assumption, acknowledges that social constructionism has ethical and political implications. It emphasises the importance of recognising the power dynamics and social hierarchies that influence the construction of reality and knowledge. By understanding the role of power, researchers and individuals can work towards more inclusive and equitable social constructions and challenge dominant narratives that may perpetuate inequality and discrimination. An integration of the existing literature on social constructionism (Gergen, 1985) emphasises that there are many fundamental principles highlighted in social constructionism such as the fact that realities are socially constructed, constituted through language, and knowledge is sustained by social processes.

This theory highlights the influence of power dynamics in shaping constructions of reality and acknowledges individual and collective agency in challenging existing norms. Applied to gender inequality in basketball, social constructionism elucidates how traditional

gender stereotypes dictate roles within the sport, leading to the underrepresentation of women in coaching and leadership positions. It also reveals how institutional structures and societal norms perpetuate these inequalities, emphasising the importance of understanding and challenging these constructs to promote gender equity within basketball and broader society.

3.2.3 The social constructionist theory of gender

Social constructionist theory of gender, rooted in the broader field of social constructionism, asserts that gender is not an inherent, biological, or fixed trait but is instead a social and cultural construct that is shaped by societal norms, expectations, and practices. It posits that gender identity and roles are not determined by one's biology but are developed through interactions with society, language, and cultural beliefs. Our social perception "is often guided by the stereotypes that are linked to social categories, and self-regulation is often guided by the group norms and standards that are linked to our self-categorisations" (Kang & Bodenhausen, 2015, para. 2). These social categories, such as gender, are used to perceive and evaluate each other. By doing this, we do not see each other as generic individuals but rather by our categorised gender, men and women, and thus have gender-specific expectations for what people should be like (Sprague, 2001). This social constructionist theory of gender offers a framework that challenges the notion of masculinity and femininity as biologically determined traits, asserting instead that they are socially constructed concepts shaped by cultural, historical, and institutional factors. This perspective recognises the variability of gender norms across different societies and throughout history, emphasising the role of socialisation processes in shaping individuals' gender identities and behaviours. Furthermore, it highlights the power dynamics inherent in the construction and enforcement of gender roles, underscoring how certain behaviours or traits associated with masculinity are privileged over those associated with femininity. By viewing gender as fluid and contingent social construct, social constructionism encourages critical interrogation of societal norms and structures, ultimately fostering more inclusive and equitable understanding of gender identity and expression. Gender is viewed as a product of psycho-social processes and cultural norms,

rather than a fixed aspect of an individual's identity. It is something that people "do" rather than something they "are" (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Drawing from Judith Butler's (2004) poststructuralist work, social constructionism highlights the idea of gender performativity. This means that individuals "perform" their gendered subjectivities and embodiments through their actions, embodiments, behaviours, and expressions, and these performances are influenced by societal expectations. The theory recognises that gender identities and roles are not uniform and that they can vary across cultures, time periods, and social contexts. Gender is seen as fluid and changeable rather than rigid. Social constructionism emphasises that individuals learn about gender through socialisation processes, including interactions with family, peers, media, and institutions. These processes influence how people come to understand and express their gender (Butler, 2004). In the past, men did not carry as much of a burden and were not held accountable as much as women were for behaving in gender-appropriate ways in a society that advantaged a more masculine performance which ultimately put women in a double-bind (Sprague, 2001).

In summary, the social constructionist theory of gender highlights the role of society, culture, and language in shaping our understanding of gender. It challenges the idea of a fixed, binary gender system and promotes a more flexible, inclusive, and socially informed perspective on gender identity and roles. Employing the social constructionist view of gender proves integral in scrutinising gender inequality within the basketball community. This framework facilitates a thorough examination of how cultural norms, societal expectations, and power dynamics contribute to the construction of gender roles in sports. By acknowledging the fluid and evolving nature of gender, this perspective offers insights into the dynamic interplay of factors shaping the unequal representation, treatment, and opportunities for individuals within the basketball realm. Understanding the subjective experiences of women in basketball through a social constructionist lens provides a holistic comprehension of how individuals actively engage in and negotiate their roles within the prevailing gender expectations.

3.3 Feminist theory

Social constructionism and feminist theory share a profound connection through their shared critiques of essentialism, their focus on power dynamics and social contexts, and their emphasis on the constructed nature of social reality, particularly regarding gender. Both frameworks challenge the notion of an objective reality, instead highlighting how societal norms and power structures shape individuals' experiences and understanding of gender. They also intersect in their examination of language and discourse as tools that construct and reinforce social hierarchies. Together, they provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and challenging gender-based oppression, advocating for social change, and promoting more equitable and inclusive societies.

3.3.1 Definition of feminist theory

Feminist theory is a comprehensive intellectual framework that seeks to understand and analyse the ways in which gender shapes and influences social, political, economic, and cultural structures (Arinder, 2020). Rooted in the broader field of feminism, this theoretical perspective critically examines the unequal power dynamics between men and women, aiming to dismantle patriarchal systems that perpetuate gender-based oppression and discrimination (Arinder, 2020).

At its core, feminist theory challenges traditional notions of gender roles and advocates for the recognition of women's rights, opportunities, and experiences as equal to those of men. It is not a monolithic ideology but rather a diverse and evolving set of perspectives that have emerged over time, reflecting the intersections of gender with other social categories such as race, class, sexuality, and ability (Crossman, 2020).

One of the fundamental principles of feminist theory is the acknowledgment of the systemic nature of gender inequality. It recognises that oppression is not merely an individual or isolated issue but is deeply embedded in societal structures and institutions. Feminist theorists critically engage with various disciplines, including sociology, psychology, literature,

and political science to explore how gender norms and expectations influence our understanding of identity, power, and social relations (Crossman, 2020).

Feminist theory encompasses a range of perspectives, including liberal feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism, and postmodern feminism, each offering distinct analyses and prescriptions for addressing gender-based inequalities (Tong, 2001). Liberal feminists, for example, focus on legal and policy changes to ensure equal opportunities for men and women. Radical feminists critique the very foundations of patriarchy and advocate for revolutionary changes in societal structures (Tong, 2001). Socialist feminists examine the intersection of gender and class, emphasising economic factors in the analysis of women's oppression. Postmodern feminists challenge fixed categories of gender and question the stability of truth and knowledge (Tong, 2001)

In addition to academic discourse, feminist theory has played a crucial role in shaping activism and social movements (Arinder, 2020). It has been instrumental in advocating for women's rights, reproductive justice, workplace equality, and other social issues. By deconstructing and challenging gender norms, feminist theory aims to contribute to the creation of a more just and equitable society where all individuals, regardless of gender, can thrive and fulfil their potential.

Feminist Theory serves as the overarching framework, offering a comprehensive understanding of how gender permeates various facets of society. This theoretical perspective delves into the intricate intersections of gender with social, political, economic, and cultural structures. With a commitment to dismantling patriarchal systems, feminist theory highlights the systemic nature of gender inequality, influencing academic discourse and contributing to the foundation of social movements advocating for women's rights.

3.3.2 Liberal feminism

Liberal feminism is a prominent strand of feminist theory that emerged during the late 18th century, focusing on achieving gender equality through legal and political reforms within existing societal structures (Oxley, 2011). At its core, liberal feminism contends that women

should have the same rights and opportunities as men, advocating for changes in laws and policies to eliminate discriminatory practices and ensure equal treatment in areas such as education, employment, and political participation.

One of the key tenets of liberal feminism is the belief in the inherent equality of men and women, asserting that any differences in their societal roles are the result of historical and cultural biases rather than inherent disparities (Baehr, 2021). Liberal feminists emphasise the importance of individual rights and autonomy, arguing that women should be free to make choices about their lives, careers, and bodies without facing discrimination or constraints (Baehr, 2021). Legal reforms are central to the liberal feminist agenda. Advocates of this perspective work towards dismantling discriminatory laws and practices, such as unequal pay, restricted access to education, and limitations on reproductive rights (Oxley, 2011). The push for legal equality is grounded in the belief that by addressing these institutional barriers, women can attain equal standing in society.

Liberal feminists also emphasise the significance of education as a means of empowerment (Priyadharshini, 2021). They argue that by providing women with equal access to educational opportunities, societal attitudes and expectations regarding gender roles can be challenged and changed (Priyadharshini, 2021). Education, in this context, is seen as a tool for fostering greater awareness and dismantling traditional gender stereotypes.

Moreover, liberal feminists have been instrumental in advancing the cause of women's political participation. They advocate for women's representation in government and leadership roles, asserting that diverse perspectives contribute to more effective and equitable decision-making processes.

While liberal feminism has made significant strides in promoting legal and policy changes, critics argue that it sometimes falls short in addressing deeper structural issues. Some contend that focusing on legal reforms alone may not be sufficient to dismantle the underlying cultural and societal norms that perpetuate gender inequality (Oxley, 2011).

Liberal feminism is a branch of feminist theory that seeks to achieve gender equality by advocating for legal and policy reforms. It places a strong emphasis on individual rights, equal opportunities, and education as key elements in the pursuit of a more equitable society where women and men can participate fully and freely in all aspects of life (Oxley, 2011).

3.3.3 Feminist sport studies

Feminist Sport Studies is a multidisciplinary field of inquiry that critically examines the intersection of gender, sport, and physical activity (Markula, 2005). Rooted in feminist theory, this academic discipline challenges and explores the ways in which sport reflects and perpetuates gender norms, hierarchies, and power dynamics (Markula, 2005). The field emerged as a response to the recognition that traditional approaches to sport studies often neglected or marginalised the experiences and contributions of women in sport. At its core, feminist sport studies seek to understand the complex relationship between gender and sport by investigating various aspects, including participation, representation, access, and the cultural meanings attached to sport activities. Scholars in this field engage with a wide range of disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, cultural studies, and history to illuminate the ways in which sports both reflect and shape broader societal attitudes towards gender.

One central focus of feminist sport studies is the examination of the historical and contemporary challenges women face in sport (Scraton & Flintoff, 2013). This includes issues such as unequal opportunities, limited access to resources, gender-based stereotypes, and the marginalisation of female athletes (Markula, 2005). Scholars critically analyse sport policies, media representations, and organisational structures to uncover and challenge systemic inequalities within the realm of sport.

Moreover, feminist sport studies often explore the concept of embodiment, questioning how gender identity is constructed and performed through bodily practices in sport. This analysis extends beyond the binary understanding of gender, considering how various

intersecting factors such as race, class, sexuality, and ability shape individuals' experiences within the sporting context.

Media representation is another crucial area of investigation within feminist sport studies (Scruton & Flintoff, 2013). Scholars examine how portrayals of male and female athletes in the media contribute to the reinforcement or subversion of gender norms. They critique the objectification of female athletes, the underrepresentation of women's sport, and the perpetuation of gendered stereotypes within sport reporting.

Feminist sport studies also contribute to the understanding of the broader social implications of sport, including its impact on constructions of femininity and masculinity, body image, and notions of competitiveness (Birrell, 2000). The field advocates for inclusivity, diversity, and the recognition of a broad spectrum of gender identities and expressions within the sporting community. Feminist sport studies is a dynamic and evolving field that employs feminist theories to critically examine the multifaceted relationship between gender and sports. By challenging traditional assumptions and advocating for equality, scholars in this field contribute to the broader goal of creating a more inclusive, equitable, and socially just sports environment for all individuals, regardless of gender.

3.4 Conclusion

In the realm of sport, the constructionist theory of gender, within the framework of social constructionism, offers a critical lens to examine how societal beliefs and expectations shape our understanding of masculinity and femininity within athletic contexts. This perspective challenges the notion that certain sports are inherently more suitable for individuals based on their biological sex and questions the traditional binary categorisation of sports as either "men's" or "women's" sport. Instead, it highlights how these categories are socially constructed, influencing the opportunities, expectations, and perceptions associated with athletes of different genders. The constructionist theory of gender in sport emphasises the fluidity of gender roles, encouraging a more inclusive and equitable approach that recognises diverse expressions of athleticism, challenges stereotypes, and confronts the

biases embedded in sporting culture. By acknowledging the social construction of gender in sport, this perspective contributes to ongoing conversations about breaking down barriers, promoting inclusivity, and creating a more equitable playing field for athletes of all genders.

Additionally, the three feminist perspectives collectively contribute to a nuanced understanding of gender dynamics and advocate for transformative change in the sporting industry. While feminist theory provides a comprehensive foundation for analysis, liberal feminism and feminist sport studies offer specific strategies and applications, demonstrating the adaptability of feminist thought across the sporting discipline. Together, these theories underscore the ongoing commitment to challenging and dismantling structures that perpetuate gender-based inequalities, with the ultimate goal of fostering a more just and inclusive society for all.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Overview

The research methodology chapter provides a detailed outline of the methodological approach and work of the present study. For this study the strategy of enquiry was qualitative, with the personal views and opinions of women basketball players and coaches in the South African basketball community forming primary sources of data in this study. To begin this chapter, the aim and objectives are outlined. This is followed by an overview of the research questions and research design. The specific research design and associated methods, including sampling methods, data collection techniques and analytical methods, are discussed. This includes the recruitment and selection of participants, an outline of how data was collected, analysed, and interpreted. The chapter concludes with a further examination of the ethical considerations of the study and a reflexive account of my position as the researcher was briefly considered.

4.2 Aim and objectives of the study

The lack of gender equality within a sporting setting has not only disadvantaged women but has also done a disservice to society (UN, 2007). Sporting codes not only help with mental and physical health but also increase opportunities in the educational sector, through scholarship opportunities (UN, 2007). However, there is a cultural obstacle where sport institutions, often dominated by men, reinforce masculine behaviour as acceptable leadership and participatory qualities required in sport (Senne, 2016). This may seem beneficial for athletes sexed and gendered as males/men but makes evident how gender operates within sporting codes, inactions cultures, and practices to exclude or marginalise (Schailée et al., 2019) women, girls, and even gender non-conforming and/or trans and intersex athletes within sporting disciplines (UN, 2007). Not only will women's participation be a vehicle to promote gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, but it will also make a significant contribution to public life and community development (UN, 2007). This

research project undertakes to explore how a sample of South African women basketball players understand and experience their gendered status within the sport.

4.3 Research questions

In light of the different contexts that have led to the unequal treatment, empowerment, and development of women in the sporting world, generally, and different sporting codes, more specifically, the primary aim of this study is to explore the ways in which women basketball players understand and experience their gendered status in the competitive basketball community of South Africa. To accomplish this overarching aim, the research will be guided by two research sub-questions guiding method-analytical work of the study:

1. How do women basketball players experience gendered marginalisation in their sport?
2. How do personal experiences of gendered empowerment characterise women basketball players' participation in their sport?

4.4 Research approach and design

Using a qualitative research approach, this study employed a phenomenological research design which combined the data collection techniques of (1) auto-photography, through which participants generated photographs, and (2) photo-elicitation, where participants were interviewed about the photographs they had generated. A phenomenological research design is an approach that seeks to explore and understand the lived experiences of individuals within a particular phenomenon or context. It emphasises a deep, holistic examination of subjective experiences, focusing on how people make sense of their world. Researchers employing this design conduct in-depth interviews or engage in extensive observations to uncover the essence of these experiences, often disregarding preconceived notions or hypotheses. By delving into the unique perspectives and interpretations of participants, phenomenological research allows for a rich and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, shedding light on the intricacies of human perception and

consciousness. “The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce the experiences of persons with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (Creswell et al., 2007, p. 252).

Furthermore, the use of visual methods in interviews has gained increased attention in qualitative studies (Glaw et al., 2017). Photo-elicitation, where the researcher uses photographs in the interview process, is used to not necessarily generate more information from participants but to rather “evoke different kinds of information” (Orr & Phoenix, 2015, p. 3). Due to the years of gender inequality that has imbedded itself in sport organisations, it is of paramount importance that different methodologies are used to show real life instances of the inadequate treatment that so many observers are oblivious to. Auto-photography will be used, not only to explore the senses of the participants in the photo-elicitation process, but to evoke emotions of those that are not part of the study, those that are not affected by the daily inequality that is hindering girls and women from opportunities that could benefit the entire basketball community. The potential of these visual methods for accessing covert and overt sensory, as well as emotional experiences is suitable for this particular research as women’s experiences as a whole are disregarded in the basketball community.

4.5 Sampling

4.5.1 Sampling method

This study used the purposive sampling technique by identifying and selecting information-rich participants who were able to assist this research best (Etikan, 2016). This technique is defined by Etikan (2016) as “the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses” (p. 2) by having the relevant knowledge and experience. Once ethical clearance for this study was granted, a purposive sampling approach was used to invite participants into the study. Non-probability purposive sampling is a method where the researcher approaches the most accessible participants (Davies & Mosdell, 2006). This qualitative research method brings about more opportunities to engage with marginalised groups with which we will be working with (Woodley & Lockard, 2016). This is done to enable

the creation of “a theoretical and methodological space for traditionally silenced and marginalised groups to critique social institutions that perpetuate inequality” (Pratt-Clarke, 2012, p. 84). An advertisement (Appendix A) was sent to six local basketball clubs and one national social media group ensuring that it reached those women basketball players that met the inclusion criteria. This advertisement informed prospective participants about what the study entailed and how to contact the researcher should they be interested to participate. The information sheet (Appendix B) outlining greater detail about what participation in the study would entail was shared with potential participants who indicated interest in participating in the study. Thereafter, willing individuals who met the inclusion criteria were recruited as participants.

4.5.2 Sampling criteria

Participants were recruited based on the following inclusion criteria: participants needed to self-identify as a woman, needed to be 18 years old or above, must have played/coached basketball at a provincial or national level for South Africa for at least one season, must be actively competitive, and must be fluent in English. The participants were recruited from the women’s basketball community in South Africa. The sample size for the study included thirteen cisgendered women who volunteered to participate and met the inclusion criteria of this study. Two participants were from Cape Town, one participant was from the North-West, one participant was from Kwa-Zulu Natal, and nine participants were from the Gauteng province. The ages of participants ranged from 18 to 34 years old. All participants had at least 5 years of experience in the South African basketball community, either as a player or/and as a coach. Table 1 below summarises the demographic information about the study’s sample.

Table 1: Demographic information about the sample

Participant (Pseudonym)	Age (in years)	Province	Race	Basketball involvement (in years)	Highest level of competition	Photographs received
Breanna	21	Gauteng	Black	5	National	0
Alyssa	24	KZN	Black	8	National	10
Aja	18	Gauteng	Mixed race	5	International	0
Napheesa	21	Gauteng	Black	14	National	0
Satou	19	KZN	Black	7	International	0
Nneka	22	Gauteng	Black	7	National	8
Chelsea	22	Gauteng	Black	9	National	2
Jewell	22	Gauteng	Mixed race	5	Provincial	0
Jackie	34	Gauteng	Black	24	International	4
Arike	20	Gauteng	Black	5	National	6
Aliyah	20	North-West	Black	6	National	5
Sabrina	22	Cape Town	Black	12	National	13
Courtney	26	Cape Town	White	12	National	2

4.5.3 Unexpected Challenges with Auto-photography

Auto-photography, where participants take photographs to represent aspects of their lives or experiences, can be a valuable qualitative research method, providing visual and personal insights. However, like any research approach, it comes with its set of unexpected challenges.

Ethical considerations

Participants captured images that unintentionally disclose sensitive or private information about themselves or others. Ethical guidelines needed to be considered carefully and participants were made aware of the potential implications of the images they produced. Participants were asked to gain consent from those included in the photograph, and where this was not possible, a blurred feature was edited onto their faces.

Interpretation and Subjectivity

The interpretation of photographs is subjective, and analysing images in a way that accurately reflects participants' intended meanings was at times challenging. However, the use of photo-elicitation interviews alleviated this challenge.

Limited Context

Photographs provide a snapshot of a moment, but they may lack the broader context necessary for a comprehensive understanding. One might face difficulties in comprehending the full story behind an image without additional context from participants. Therefore, it was important for elicitation interviews to accompany the auto-photography method.

Participant Engagement

Maintaining participant engagement throughout the duration of the project was very challenging. Participants lost interest, forgot to capture images, or found the process burdensome. Though regular reminders were sent to participants, the response rate decreased heavily over time.

Representation and Bias

There is a risk of bias in the images participants choose to capture, potentially presenting an idealised or biased representation of their lives. It was necessary to consider how participants' choices may influence the findings and address potential biases in the interpretation. This was done during the elicitation interviews.

Mitigating these challenges requires careful planning, clear communication with participants, methodological flexibility, and a reflective approach to the limitations and potential biases introduced using auto-photography in the research process.

4.6 Data collection

4.6.1 Semi-structured interview

The first phase consisted of a 60-minute semi-structured interviews after the consent form (Appendix C) and the demographic form (Appendix D) were discussed. The demographic form helped the researcher to understand some of the contextual factors that may influence the study such as the participants' age, their geographical location during their basketball career, the provincial and/or national team they have played for and their current views on the basketball community. The interview continued with a few guided questions (Appendix E) which acted as prompts and allowed the participants to share their gender inequality stories. The aim of this was to allow the researcher to gain insight on the representations of the participants' experiences of gender inequality by encouraging a two-way conversation between the researcher and the participant. The use of open-ended questions guided the interview yet still provided an opportunity for the participants to freely express themselves in their own unique ways whilst allowing for the topic at hand to be better understood (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The interviews were recorded, and notes were taken after each interview, so that the researcher was not distracted by the note taking process and could instead be fully present in each interview. The interviews were then transcribed and integrated in the discussion of the dissertation. After each interview, participants were asked to reflect on how they felt about the interview. After the interview had taken place, the researcher explained to each participant what auto-photography is and what it would entail for the participants themselves. No extra cameras were needed for this exercise, as all participants had access to a smart phone and could take photographs on their cellular devices with greater convenience. Participants were given three weeks to take a minimum of 10 photographs.

4.6.2 Auto-photography

Auto-photography, a research method in which participants use their own photographs to document experiences, offers a unique lens into the subjective and visual aspects of research. It empowers participants to become co-creators of knowledge, making it especially valuable in subjective or cross-cultural studies, as well as in contexts where visual elements are central. Auto-photography enriches the research process by bridging language barriers, encouraging engagement and dialogue, and providing a universal visual language that complements other data sources, ultimately offering a holistic and nuanced understanding of the researched phenomenon. In accordance with this method, participants were invited to capture images with their smart phones, as it is the most readily available and well-acquainted photographic device participants had access to. Each participant was requested to submit a minimum of one photograph per theme but were encouraged to submit more. One photograph was to be focused on the experiences of their gendered marginalisation, and one photograph was to be focused on their experiences of gendered empowerment (see Appendix F), which was later used in the photo-elicitation interviews.

4.6.3 Photo-elicitation interview

While the second phase was the act of taking the relevant photographs, the third phase included the use of those photographs to conduct individual interviews. Those participants who submitted photographs were asked to participate in a virtual interview, via WhatsApp video call, where they were given the opportunity to describe their photographs. Participants were asked to elaborate on how gendered marginalisation and/or gendered empowerment were depicted in each of their photographs. This was a semi-structured interview with the intention of understanding their photographic themes and engaging in a concluding dialogue of their experience in the study. Only the photographs that the participant submitted were discussed with them.

The use of visual research methods is not a recent research approach, there has been growing interest in the use of visual methodologies over the years due to their “applicability and appropriateness within and beyond the Social Sciences” (Leonard & McKnight, 2015, p. 529). Photo-elicitation deepens the understanding of complex and sensitive topics, engages participants more effectively, and provides valuable visual context that complements verbal data. It enables researchers to access the subjective perspectives of participants and bridge cross-cultural differences, making it a versatile method for gaining comprehensive insight. Additionally, it empowers participants to take an active role in shaping the research process, fostering a sense of ownership of their experiences and enriching the narratives they share. To create a research project that encourages a more collaborative research process, this third phase of data collection may help the researcher capture those experiences by the participants that are not otherwise easily portrayed via a different method of data collection (Leonard & McKnight, 2015).

4.7 Advantages and disadvantages of auto-photography

While auto-photography can be a valuable research method, it is not without its disadvantages and limitations. Some of the drawbacks of using auto-photography as a research method include subjectivity and interpretation. Auto-photographs can be highly subjective and open to interpretation. Researchers may have difficulty understanding the context and meaning behind the images, and this subjectivity can lead to misinterpretation. However, with the use of photo-elicitation, the misinterpretations are minimalised. In addition, images alone may not provide sufficient context or depth for understanding complex issues. Researchers may need to supplement auto-photographs with interviews or other qualitative data to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

Second, researchers have limited control over the images captured by participants. This can make it challenging to ensure that the photos effectively capture the intended aspects of the research topic. Participants may intentionally or unintentionally present images that

align with their own biases or desired narratives. This can introduce bias into the data and limit the objectivity of the research. Furthermore, the interpretation of images can vary across cultures, which may lead to misunderstandings or misrepresentations if researchers and participants have different cultural contexts.

Third, auto-photography may be time and resource intensive. The analysis of auto-photographs can be time-consuming and resource-intensive, as researchers need to review and interpret a substantial number of images. This can be a practical limitation, particularly in larger studies.

However, in this study, the advantages of auto-photography far outweighed the disadvantages. Auto-photography adds a visual dimension to research, allowing participants to capture and convey their experiences, surroundings, and emotions in a way that words alone may not fully convey. Photographs have the potential to communicate when words either fail us or are misunderstood, and by using this method, the participants are offered more control over what and how their personal experiences are being interpreted (Bijoux & Myers, 2006). This visual richness can provide a deeper understanding of the research topic. Additionally, auto-photography empowers participants to take an active role in the research process. It gives them the agency to document their own experiences and perspectives, fostering a sense of ownership over their contributions. Visual methods can provide specific information about our social world, increasing the enthusiasm for this qualitative research method (Phoenix, 2010). Data that is generated by respondents promotes methods such as auto-photography which encourages greater cooperation from the participants and thus creates more useful data (Phoenix, 2010). Auto-photography assists in developing society's understanding of women in the sporting world by viewing the South African basketball community through the participant's eyes. Auto-photographs offer a unique window into participants' subjective insights, allowing researchers to see the world through their eyes and gain insights into their individual interpretations and experiences. To gain insight from the lives

of marginalised groups, such as women in the sporting world, this method is fitting for the present research.

The process of taking photos can engage participants in reflection on their experiences, encouraging deeper insights and self-awareness. Auto-photography permits readers direct (visual) access to the participants' photographs and personal experiences rather than encountering it through the viewpoint of the researcher (Glaw et al., 2017). Last, auto-photography allows for real-time documentation of experiences and events, making it suitable for capturing evolving or dynamic research subjects.

In summary, auto-photography as a research method offers unique advantages, including visual richness, participant empowerment, and the ability to capture subjective insights and contextual understanding. When used thoughtfully, it can enhance the depth and breadth of qualitative research and provide valuable insights into a wide range of research topics.

4.8 Quality of the research

The trustworthiness of the research findings will be ensured by adhering to quality, authenticity, and truthfulness. In the framework of Lincoln and Guba, trustworthiness is the main parameter for their criteria which includes "credibility, dependability, confirmability, authenticity, and transferability" (Kyngäs et al., 2020, p. 42). Smith et al. (2015) explain that, using a relativist approach as a guide means that the "criteria for judging the quality of qualitative research are not applied in a universal manner, but rather are drawn from an ongoing list of characterising traits" (p. 306).

Credibility refers to the degree of congruence between participants' experiences and the researcher's description or interpretation (Padgett, 2008). In the current study, credibility was shown through a detailed research process by indicating how each phase is conducted, as well as adding a discussion of both the strengths and limitations of the study into the research report (Kyngäs et al., 2020).

When it comes to the *dependability* of the study, it will be crucial for other researchers to be able to follow the decision trail used by the initial researcher (Kyngäs et al., 2020). This study enhanced dependability by a dense description of each concept, data collection method, data analysis method, and a thick interpretation of the findings.

Confirmability will be managed by the researcher by being aware of their personal biases, perceptions, and expectations to ensure that the research will remain objective and unbiased (Kyngäs et al., 2020). This enhanced the confirmability of the study through reflexivity.

Authenticity will be reached through various and relevant citations, while *transferability* will be made clear by rigorous descriptions of sampling techniques and inclusion criteria's (Kyngäs et al., 2020). In addition, participants were allowed to review the analysis before the dissertation was drafted as it is of utmost importance for transparent reporting to take place to keep the research trustworthy and accurate.

4.9 Ethical considerations

This research study complies with the guidelines provided by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Pretoria. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria before the collection of data. The information sheet given to the participants stated the purpose and nature of the study, benefits and possible risks of participating in the study, the participant's involvement in the study, the guarantee of confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy, how the data will be stored and protected and how the results of the study will be disseminated.

4.9.1 Participant autonomy

Participants were presented with a participant information sheet to communicate the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of it, and the right to withdraw at any time during the study. After the interview, participants were given another information sheet that included

the themes for the auto-photography stage of the research. Participants had complete autonomy in interpreting the themes and in selecting which photographs to submit. During the photo-elicitation process, only the participants' own photographs were discussed.

4.9.2 Participant anonymity and data confidentiality

Confidentiality and anonymity were upheld with no names or identities revealed during data collection and the data analysis process. The interview recordings and photographs taken by the participants were stored on password-protected computers and only the researcher had access to them. However, even though the auto-photography task made this difficult, strict measures were put into place to protect participants' identities as much as possible. Participants were asked to gain consent from those included in the photograph, and where this was not possible, a blurred feature was edited onto their faces. In a research study such as this, which relies on participant-generated photographic material, Harrison (2002) has noted that the ethical procedures in safeguarding participant anonymity must be seriously considered because "visual materials can make much more information (including identities) available to a public gaze (from either covert or overt investigation), raising questions about anonymity, confidentiality and invasions of privacy" (p. 860). In keeping the quality of this study to a high standard, participants were made aware of the anonymity issues that could arise, and options such as using a concealing marker to blur faces were discussed in depth. In cases where photographs included individuals who did not consent to forming part of the study, underwent facial blurring. The University of Pretoria's ethical guidelines were used to ensure that ethical considerations were all met according to standard.

4.9.3 Informed consent

Informed consent forms were supplied to participants. Only participants who had returned their forms and signed to confirm their participation and understanding participated in the study.

4.9.4 Protection from harm

There are no anticipated risks for this research. However, in the case that participants experience distress or discomfort, the interview session will be halted as the researcher addresses the issues brought forward.

4.9.5 Ethical clearance

Prior to data collection the study was respectively vetted and approved by the University of Pretoria Human Research Ethics Committee.

4.10 Data analysis

The proposed study calls for sharing and co-construction of narratives of the experiences that women basketball players face in their sporting community. Though this research is comprised of both textual and visual data, “it is unnecessary to separate the interpretation of narratives and photographs” (Noland, 2006, p. 8). Considering this, the data of the study, which comprises of transcribed interviews and photographs, was analysed through a thematic analysis by means of a six-phase process developed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

As photo interpretation is a rarely utilised method in many disciplines of study and since there aren't always agreed upon approaches to this method in other research domains, caution must be exercised when approaching this task (Noland, 2006). Harper favours the method of photo-elicitation because it “provides a way in which the interview can move from the concrete (a cataloguing of the objects in the photograph) to the socially abstract (what the objects in the photograph mean to the interviewee)” (Harper, 1986, p. 25).

The objective of thematic analysis is to determine themes or patterns in the data, and it involves identifying, analysing, and reporting those themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is regarded as an easily accessible and flexible method for analysing qualitative data because it allows for the interpretation of numerous aspects of the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic content analysis can be used in an essentialist, realist, or a constructionist method

(Braun & Clarke, 2006). An essentialist or realistic method reports on the meanings of the experiences and reality of participants, while a constructionist method examines how events, realities, meanings, and experiences are constructed by discourses operating within a society (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It can also be a contextualist method that harmonises essentialist and constructionist methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Contextualism acknowledges how individuals give meaning to their experiences and how the larger social context impacts those meanings while maintaining focus on the material and other limits of reality (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, thematic analysis can be a method that reflects reality and unravels beyond its surface (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This six-phase approach emphasises the iterative and integrative nature of thematic analysis, ensuring that the analysis captures the depth and complexity of participants' experiences across both auto-photographs and semi-structured interviews. Regularly revisiting the data, engaging in constant comparison, and maintaining reflexivity contribute to the rigor and credibility of the analysis.

4.10.1 Thematic analysis six phase approach

According to Braun and Clarke (2006) the six-phase approach includes: (1) familiarising oneself with the data; (2) generating codes; (3) constructing themes; (4) reviewing; (5) defining themes; and (6) producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This approach for thematic analysis with a focus on integrating semi-structured interviews and auto-photography is outlined below.

4.10.1.1 Step 1: Familiarity with the data

The data familiarisation phase serves as a foundation for subsequent stages in thematic analysis, providing researchers with a solid grounding in the raw material and an initial sense of the themes or patterns that may be explored. It is an iterative process that involves returning to the data multiple times throughout the analysis, ensuring a nuanced and holistic understanding of participants' experiences. This phase began throughout the data

collection stage of the research project which resulted in a collaborative interaction between the participant and researcher. It involved engaging with and gaining insight into the wide variety of data which set the tone for the quality of thematic analysis that remained (Glaw et al., 2017).

Exploring interview transcripts

I carefully read through the semi-structured interview transcripts by paying attention to participants' narratives, responses, and any recurring topics or themes that emerged. I began initial notetaking to capture key quotes, participants responses, and notable moments from the interviews.

Reviewing auto-photographs

I spent time thoroughly examining each photograph by taking note of visual elements, settings, and any notable details captured in the images. I documented my initial impressions and reactions to the photographs. I also considered the emotions, themes, or stories that the images may have conveyed.

Cross-data initial comparison

I started to explore potential connections between the photographs and interview transcripts. I noted instances where visual and textual data may have either complemented or diverged from each other. I looked for commonalities or patterns that may have emerged when considering both types of data simultaneously.

Identifying patterns and anomalies

I identified recurring patterns, themes, or concepts that seemed to emerge consistently across the photographs and transcripts. This included participants' experiences, emotions, and perspectives. I also took note of any unexpected elements that may challenge assumptions or preconceived notions.

Initial notetaking

I then documented my observations, preliminary codes and any initial ideas I had about potential themes. This included documenting my own biases, assumptions, and preconceptions as they may influence the data familiarisation process.

Mapping the data landscape

I proceeded to create visual representations, such as mind maps and concept diagrams, to map out potential relationships between different elements in the data. I also developed an overview that captured the essence of the entire dataset, which emphasised key characteristics and elements.

4.10.1.2 Step 2: Generating codes

Patterns and similarities will start to emerge and so will the second phase of generating codes. Observational notes will now progress into meaningful labels which will be attached to “specific segments of the dataset” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 26). The openness to emergent patterns, continuous comparison, and reflexivity contribute to the rigor and depth of the coding process.

Open coding

I started by breaking down the data into meaningful segments, such as phrases, sentences, or paragraphs. These segments are the units of analysis. I approached the data with an open mind which allowed for the emergence of codes based on the content rather than preconceived categories. Each segment was assigned descriptive codes that captured the essence of the content. These codes were concise and represented the content’s core meaning.

Combining visual and textual data

Due to the involvement of auto-photography and semi-structured interviews, I ensured that codes were generated for both visual and textual data. Codes should be applicable to both types of data thus facilitating integration.

Reflexivity in coding

Throughout the coding process, I would reflect on my own perspectives, biases, and potential influences on the coding decisions. By documenting reflexivity, it enhanced transparency and awareness on my impact on the coding process. When I recognised that coding is an iterative process, I revisited codes as I progressed through the analysis. This led to necessary adjustments as my understanding of the data deepened.

Hierarchical coding structure

I organised codes hierarchically when certain codes could be grouped under broader themes. This type of structure facilitated the development of higher-level themes in the later stages.

Continuous comparison

I engaged in constant comparison by comparing newly generated codes with previously coded segments. This process helped ensure consistency and helped identify variations and patterns across the dataset. I paid specific attention to deviant cases or instances that challenged the emerging codes. These cases either revealed unique perspectives or outliers in the data.

Regular reflection and iteration

I regularly reflected on the coding process by examining the evolving patterns and themes. I used reflective notes to document insights, questions, and areas for further exploration.

4.10.1.3 Step 3: Constructing themes

The third stage, constructing themes, is where the relevant data segments are sifted out to start constructing a piece of writing. This process involves synthesising the coded data to identify meaningful and coherent narratives. Each piece of data will be placed into a category or a theme where counting and comparisons will take place (Glaw et al., 2017). Initial

labels were sorted into potential themes, and the relationship between labels were considered to form overarching themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) assert that a theme entails something important about the data related to a study's research question(s) and represents patterned meaning within a qualitative data set. Similar labels and overlapping were brought into the main themes to reflect meaningful patterns in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Reviewing codes

I thoroughly reviewed the generated codes, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the coded data. I identified recurring patterns, similarities, and connections among codes that suggest potential themes.

Data reduction

The aim was to create concise and coherent themes that captured the essence of the data. During this phase I tried to condense information without losing the richness of participants' experiences. It was important to avoid redundant themes and prioritise those that contributed unique and meaningful insights.

Refining and defining themes

I then refined and defined each theme. I ensured that each theme is distinct and captured a specific aspect of the data. I clearly articulated the connection between each theme and the codes it encompassed. It was important for the connection to be evident in the coded data.

Considering visual and textual integration

I ensured that themes were constructed from the integration of both auto-photography and semi-structured interview data. Themes had to encapsulate insights from both the visual and textual data. I cross-referenced codes from both data sources to create cohesive and integrated themes.

Thematic mapping

I followed this with a visual thematic map that illustrated the relationships between themes. This helped me to visualise the overall structure of the analysis. I included the hierarchy of themes to demonstrate the relationships between broader categories and more specific sub-themes.

Checking consistency

It was important to ensure consistency within and across themes by confirming that codes grouped under a particular theme shared a logical connection and contributed to a cohesive narrative.

Thematic definition

I clearly defined each theme with precise and meaningful descriptors. I articulated the core concept encapsulated by each theme. I used descriptive and evocative labels for themes that resonated with the content of the data.

Member checking

I applied member checking by sharing the preliminary themes with participants. Seeking their input to validate the accuracy and relevance of the themes was explored in the photo elicitation interviews and proved to be a productive step.

Finalising themes

I ensured that the preliminary themes created a cohesive and comprehensive narrative that captured the depth and complexity of participants' experiences. I structured the themes in a way that allowed for a logical and meaningful flow, enhancing the overall coherence of the analysis.

Documentation

I maintained comprehensive documentation of each theme, including definitions, supporting codes, and any relevant participant quotes. This documentation served as a reference for the analysis process.

4.10.1.4 Step 4: Reviewing

Due to the flexibility in the draft version in the previous phase, the fourth phase of reviewing acts as a quality control phase where the themes of the photographs are now shaped, clarified and/or rejected (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By rigorously reviewing and defining themes, it is ensured that their thematic analysis is grounded in the data, capturing the complexity and depth of participants' experiences. This stage contributes to the development of a cohesive and meaningful narrative that aligns with the research objectives.

Thematic review

I started with conducting a comprehensive review of the identified preliminary themes. I examined each theme in relation to the coded data and the overall dataset. I verified the consistency of each theme, ensuring that the codes grouped under a particular theme aligned with them theme's central concept. I also looked for any redundancy or overlap between themes. I ensured that each themes captured a unique aspect of the data.

Iterative refinement

The process of refining themes is iterative, so I proceeded to go back and forth between the themes and the data, making adjustments as needed. I ensured that the refinement process considered the entire dataset. It was important to avoid making decisions based on isolated segments and to look for patterns across the entire dataset.

Themes definition

I clearly defined each theme with precise and meaningful descriptors. It was important to establish clear boundaries for each theme to avoid ambiguity. I ensured that each theme is distinct from others and captures a specific aspect of the data. Additionally, I refined themes

to avoid being overly broad. Themes had to be specific enough to provide meaningful insights without losing the richness of the data.

Alignment with data

I then verified that each theme aligned with the data it represented. It was important that themes accurately reflected the participants' experiences and responses. I ensured that the themes effectively represented the diversity of perspectives within the dataset. I tried to avoid overgeneralising or oversimplifying complex data.

Exemplar selection

I selected photographic examples and quotes from the data to exemplify each theme. These examples served as evidence of the existence and significance of the theme.

Reflexivity

I focused on maintaining reflexivity during the theme review process. I reflected on my own role in shaping the themes and considered how my perspectives may influence the interpretations. I documented my reflections on the refinement and definition of themes. I acknowledged any biases or assumptions and considered their impact on the analysis.

Iterative adjustments

I had to be open to making iterative adjustments to themes as the analysis progressed. Themes evolved in response to deeper insights gained during the thematic review.

4.10.1.5 Step 5: Defining themes

By the fifth phase, the researcher would be defining themes by working towards an interpretative orientation from the summative position that has been used up until now via codes and collated data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Structuring and organising themes is a crucial step in thematic analysis that involves arranging the identified themes in a coherent and meaningful manner. This process helps to create a clear and logical narrative that

communicates the patterns and insights derived from the data. A detailed examination of each theme and sub-theme was conducted to identify its essence, capturing from the data and its relationship to the study's research question.

Theme organisation

I started by arranging themes in a logical sequence that tells a coherent story. I considered the flow of the narrative and how themes related to each other. I explored whether a chronological or sequential order made sense for the presenting themes.

Hierarchy of themes

I organised themes hierarchically, with the main themes encompassing more specific sub-themes. I visualised relationships between broader and narrower themes, highlighting the connections and dependencies.

Narrative development

I then developed a narrative that weaved together the identified themes. The narratives provided context, explored relationships between themes, and offered a comprehensive understanding of the data. I ensured a logical progression from one theme to another, maintaining a smooth transition that enhances the flow of the analysis.

Integration of visual and textual data

Once again, I ensured that themes seamlessly integrated both visual and textual data. It was important that visual and textual themes complemented each other in creating a comprehensive analysis. I cross-referenced codes and examples between visual and textual themes to strengthen the integration.

Consideration of significance

I prioritised themes based on their significance to the research aim and objectives of the study. I considered which themes carried the most weight in contributing to the overall

understanding of the phenomenon. I also emphasised key findings within each theme to draw attention to the most salient aspects of the data.

Consistency across themes

I ensured consistency in the treatment of themes across the analysis. Themes were defined and applied consistently to maintain coherence. I was sure to be mindful of potential repetition in themes and remained focused on themes contributing unique and valuable insights.

Reflective considerations

It was important to engage in a reflective practice regarding the structural choices made in organising themes. I had to carefully consider how the chosen structure enhanced the clarity and depth of the analysis.

Cross-theme synthesis

I then synthesised insights from different themes to provide a holistic understanding of the research phenomenon. I explored how themes intersected and contributed to a comprehensive narrative. I emphasised the interconnectedness of themes, demonstrating how they collectively contribute to answering the research question.

Regular review and adjustment

I regularly reviewed and adjusted the structure of themes as needed. The organisation evolved with a deepening understanding of the data and the emerging narrative. I remained flexible in adapting the structure based on new insights or shifts in focus during the analysis.

Transitions and linkages

I ensured smooth transitions between themes by providing clear linkages that guide the reader through the analysis without causing confusion. I used transition sentences or paragraphs to signal shifts between themes, helping readers follow the logical flow.

By thoughtfully structuring and organising themes, one can effectively communicate the richness of their findings, providing readers with a clear and engaging narrative grounded in the patterns observed in the data. This stage contributes to the overall coherence and impact of the thematic analysis.

4.10.1.6 Step 6: Producing the report

Lastly, the familiarisation of notes, codes, theme definitions, and a broad range of other writing that has been collected thus far all helped in the development of producing the report. The report in thematic analysis was crafted to unfold a cohesive narrative, revealing the intricacies within the qualitative data. The introduction contextualised the research, while the methodology section described the steps taken during data analysis. Themes were systematically presented with clear definitions, supporting codes, and illustrative examples. A coherent narrative was developed to establish a logical flow throughout the analysis. Comparative analysis and discussion sections were employed to explore relationships between themes and interpret their implications. Study limitations were acknowledged, and a reflective commentary on the research process was provided. The conclusion summarised key findings, offered recommendations, and suggested avenues for future research. The report prioritised clarity, readability, and ethical considerations, and feedback was sought to refine the presentation of thematic analysis results for maximum impact. This phase is kept separate (Chapter 5) to highlight the distinction between the analytical process and coming back to the overall project at hand.

4.11 Reflexivity

The purpose of a reflexive section in qualitative methodology is primarily concerned with acknowledging the role of the researcher's personal values, assumptions, personal subjectivities (including race, age, and gender) and experiences throughout the research process which may shape and form the trajectory of the research (Alase, 2017). It requires an awareness of the researcher's contribution to how meanings are constructed throughout the

research process (Dowling, 2008). According to Parker (2014), reflexivity is an important aspect of research because the researcher perceives and describes the world from their perspective and through their lens. Though this process challenges the researcher's values, judgements, and beliefs, it also enhances the quality of the research. It also provides an opportunity for the researcher to reflect on how the research has shaped them.

It was therefore important for me to reflect on my own views and opinions of sportswomen in the basketball community. As a woman basketball player and coach myself, I was cognisant of the gender inequality that occurs in the community. At times I felt emotional and overwhelmed by the triggering information that was shared during the interviews which sometimes led to discussions to find immediate solutions to the issue. As a result, I had to reflexively remind myself that my role was not that of a sports counsellor, but researcher. Since reflexivity involves keeping an introspective and critical account the dialogue that occurs throughout the research process, it was important for me to do some reflection before and after every interview.

My reasons for choosing this topic were motivated by my involvement in basketball for over thirteen years and the constant reminder of the gender inequality, whether I was playing, coaching, or officiating. I chose this topic because it would allow me to pursue my academic interest as well as contribute to a sporting community that has done so much for me. My personal journey allowed me to have better access to the participants that would be relevant to the research topic. Because I was familiar with the participants' sporting interest, it was easier to build rapport with the participants. However, I had to continuously reflect on my role as a researcher and be cautious not to impose personal views on the participant's as well as be careful not to create a negative image of the organisation that basketball is a part of. At times this proved very challenging because, occasionally, there would be temptation to correct misconceptions that participants had about the gender inequality that occurs in the sporting world. This made the data collection and analysis challenging yet very rewarding.

Even though I had very passionate opinions and views, I attempted to not let them affect the interview process or photography analysis. There were instances in the interviewing process where participants would not be able to recognise that certain experiences they had were in fact gender discrimination and it was during these instances that I would find myself performing self-introspection the most. During some sessions, participants would want to hear my personal view on their experiences, even though my perceptions had no credibility. I had to remind them that none of their views were wrong and that their experiences would contribute to the success of the study regardless of my opinion. With each interview I was able to reflect more successfully and appreciate the journey a little more while appreciating the increased motivation behind conducting the study.

Culture played a significant role during the research study. From my experiences in the basketball culture, the basketball community ascribes to the masculine culture where men are seen (and treated) as superior to women. Most participants were of a South African culture where hegemonic beliefs are common. This impacted the lack of gender discrimination experiences that participants recognised. Even though I am of a western cultural background, I was born and raised in South Africa and in the basketball community which predominantly consists of people of colour. I took it as my responsibility to ensure I navigated the interviews with cultural sensitivity and differences in mind. I found the use of open-ended questions a very useful approach in ensuring I receive the best results. To probe different views, I would give examples of gender inequality in the sporting world and ask whether a similar experience had occurred to them. This would open discussions of how culture influenced their views and opinions.

The research process has helped me grow and understand my own influences in the mental health industry. I have been able to explore and evaluate my own input during the interview sessions with participants. I have become more aware of the cultural effects, and this has developed both my counselling and research skills.

4.12 Conclusion

In this chapter, the methodological, analytical, and ethical practices that were entailed in this study, were discussed. From here the research process was detailed with reference to the sampling process including the selection of participants, the method of data gathering as well as the steps undertaken in analysing the data using thematic analysis. Given that auto-photography underpins much of the methodological work of this study, the strengths and weakness were discussed. For this study, auto-photography has proven to be a useful method of research due to the access to the subjective understanding of the participants and their experiences. Furthermore, this chapter demonstrated the principles of upholding a high standard of quality of the qualitative research by integrating five broad principles of *credibility*, *dependability*, *confirmability*, as well as *authenticity and transparency*. Finally, this chapter concluded with the ethical considerations that were accounted for and controlled whilst conducting this research study. As such this chapter aimed to clarify and outline the overall methodology and method that was followed in completing this research study. Having outlined the methodology, the next chapter discusses the findings regarding the experiences of women basketball players and their gendered status within the sport.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Overview

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study collected from the semi-structured interviews, auto-photography and photo-elicitation interviews conducted with the recruited participants. Considering the different contexts that have led to the unequal treatment, empowerment, and development of women in the sporting world, the primary aim of this study was to explore the ways in which women basketball players understood and experienced their gendered status as women in the competitive basketball community of South Africa. To best address the research question during the interviews I began with the demographic form which helped me understand some of the contextual factors that may influence the study such as: the participants' age, how long they have been involved with the sport, what teams or clubs they have played for or coached at, whether they are involved in any local basketball organisations, and whether they have experienced gender inequality in the basketball community. The interview continued with a few guided questions which acted as prompts and allowed the participants to share their experiences in depth. Following the interviews, participants were asked to take photographs that capture these experiences they mentioned in the interviews. For the photographs to stay relevant to the research, participants were given guided themes. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an illustration and understanding of each participant's experiences of gendered marginalisation as well as gendered empowerment within the sport. With the assistance of auto-photography, the understanding of women in the sporting world will be developed by gaining insight through the eyes of the marginalised. Participants were encouraged to add a short text with each of their photographs to permit readers direct access to the participants' personal experiences. Interviews were audio recorded, having received each participant's written and verbal consent. Once the data was collected, data analysis was done following guidelines provided by Braun and Clarke (2006). During the data analysis process, four sub-themes were revealed with particular reference to personal views and perceptions as influenced by the participants'

gender. Drawing from feminist perspectives allowed for a nuanced exploration of power dynamics, stereotypes, and structural barriers within the basketball domain. The application of feminist frameworks provided a lens through which to critically examine disparities in opportunities, representation, and the lived experiences of individuals within the community. By embracing feminist perspectives, the findings chapter not only highlights the prevalence of gender inequality but also offers insights into the complexities of the issues at hand. This approach contributes to a more holistic and socially conscious interpretation of the data, emphasising the importance of dismantling gender-based inequities in the basketball community. Additionally, data is linked to existing literature to extend existing knowledge as well as confirm or disconfirm the presented findings. Finally, this chapter concludes by providing a brief summative overview of the findings and summarise the identified main themes and sub-themes.

5.2 Emerging themes and discussion

In this section an analysis and discussion of the four primary themes alongside the subthemes is explored. A tabulated representation depicting a summary of the themes is illustrated. Table 2 represents the themes as they will be discussed. Each of the four themes represents the participant's views of experiencing their gendered status in the competitive basketball community of South Africa. The data analysis generated four primary themes to represent participant's individual views: (1) *inspiration and affective connections to play basketball*; (2) *benefits of playing*; (3) *gender inequality in the sport*; (4) *women's representation*. Subthemes emerged from primary themes and were mentioned by participants at least once during the interviews. Below is a tabulated presentation of the themes in no particular order from the responses.

Table 2: Codes, subthemes and themes generated from the data

Research Focus	Main theme:	Subthemes:
Experiences of empowerment	1. Inspiration and affective connections to play basketball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Friends, family, and love of the game
	2. Benefits of playing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development ▪ Mental skills ▪ Self-care, self-esteem, and self-efficacy
Experiences of marginalisation	3. Gender inequality in the sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Junior basketball ▪ Senior basketball
	4. Women's representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In the media ▪ Safe spaces and role models

The data was collected using semi-structured one-on-one in-depth interviews. This part of the data presentation shows the responses of the participants alongside themes that were generated during the analysis of the data collected. Only recurring ideas and themes are presented. The four major themes generated during the data analysis and subthemes will be explored. Each of these themes are presented below.

5.2.1 Gendered empowerment

Sport and physical exercise are now recognised as incredibly effective ways to support both mental and physical well-being (Sport for Development and Peace, International Working Group, 2008). The Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group (SDP-IWG), for example, has suggested that 'sport participation leads to increased self-esteem, self-confidence, and enhanced sense of control over one's body' (Sport for Development and

Peace, International Working Group, 2008, p.10). Furthermore, it has been suggested that physical activity and sport have very particular benefits for women and girls, and the SDP-IWG argues that:

“Sport programs can enhance the empowerment process by challenging gender norms, reducing restrictions and offering girls and women greater mobility, access to public spaces, and more opportunities for their physical, intellectual and social development” (SDP-IWG, 2008, p.131). McDermott (2000) endorses this viewpoint, asserting that a notable means by which physical activity can empower women is by offering them opportunities to engage in physical work and experience their bodies firsthand. Acquiring and honing new skills not only brings a feeling of accomplishment and empowerment (Garrett, 2004) but engaging in physical activity also provides an arena where the engagement of the physical body can emancipate women from the conventional body aesthetics and discourses associated with hegemonic femininity (McDermott, 2000). McDermott adds that the potentially empowering consequence of physical activity “is to broaden their [women’s] understanding of the multiple ways, beyond appearance, in which they can physically experience themselves” (McDermott, 2000, p. 356).

Empowerment of women is a socio-political ideal envisioned in relation to the wider framework of human rights and gender equality. “Empowerment is demonstrated by the quality of people’s participation in the decisions and processes affecting their lives” (Dharamkar, 2021, p. 99). It is a process that leads women to realise their full potential, their rights to have access to opportunities, resources, and choices with the freedom of decision making both on and off the basketball court. Empowerment would be achieved only when advancement in the conditions of women is accompanied by their ability to influence the direction of social change gained through equal opportunities in economic, social, and political spheres of life (Dharamkar, 2021).

5.2.1.1 Inspiration and affective connections to play basketball

There are various motives for why athletes become involved in sport. Decathlon (2022) asserts that basketball, apart from its physical and mental health benefits, is a sport that is

exciting and fun to play and is achievable at a low cost. Additionally, playing basketball can be a source of inspiration and foster affective connections. Membership in a sport community can result in a range of affective outcomes, encompassing emotions, attitudes, and psychological experiences that influence an individual's well-being and sense of belonging.

The study findings reveal that most of the participants were inspired to start playing basketball because their friends and/or family played the game. Participants were able to identify with the sport through their peers which provided a sense of belonging. Through this, a significant affective dynamic of the emotional connection to the team and the sport was established. In one such example, Chelsea shared that:

"...my friends decided to join basketball and naturally at that age I followed the crowd and then I followed them to basketball."

Sabrina shared a similar experience:

"...my childhood best friend played there. One day I accompanied her to practice, and it looked so fun..."

Affective connections were also evident in the familial connection and relations emerging from participation in basketball for the participating women. Satou shared that:

"I have always been surrounded by basketball since I was a toddler, mainly because both of my parent's played basketball so it was a no brainer that I would eventually play basketball when I got older."

Family is considered the most important environment in shaping the physical activity of children (Kracht & Sisson, 2018; Timperio et al., 2013). Significant factors that impact this include parents' physical activity that they model through physical activity or sport participation and co-participation with their children in sporting activities (Timperio et al., 2013). Siblings are also considered an important factor in physical activity, particularly through co-participation and social support (Allbaugh et al., 2016; Kracht & Sisson, 2018). Modelling can also occur

with regards to physical activity, where children choose to participate in the same sporting activities as their siblings (Allbaugh et al., 2016).

Highlighting this point, Aliyah submitted the following photograph and shared that:

“...the main reason why I got into the sport is because of my dad...”



Photo 1: ‘My dad and I’

The initial sense of belonging and emotional connection emerged as the primary factors driving participants' interest in basketball. This sense of connection was intricately tied to personally meaningful experiences characterised by excitement, joy, and passion during playing and competing, giving rise to strong emotions like enthusiasm, exhilaration, and fulfilment. For basketball players, these emotionally charged moments not only contribute to their deep connection with the sport but also serve as powerful sources of empowerment, fostering a profound sense of accomplishment, self-worth and identity within the basketball community.

Research shows that an enjoyable sporting experience is linked to increased participation, commitment, and effort as well as improved performance (Al-Yaaribi & Kavussanu, 2018). Illustrating this point, Chelsea further shared that:

“Most of them quit soon after and I was the only one from my friend group that stayed but I enjoyed it so much that I didn’t mind...”

Napheesa expressed her view by stating that:

“I fell in love with the concept of basketball...”

Similarly, Jackie said that:

“...and I just fell in love with the sport.”

While Nneka shared:

“I played every other sport in high school; however, I enjoyed basketball more...”

It was evident across the interviews with the participants that being a member of a team boosted their confidence and self-esteem. The build-up to games, the desire to perform well, and the prospect of a challenging competition can be emotionally stimulating and fulfilling. Additionally, participants shared how achieving personal and team goals, such as winning a game or mastering a new skill, can bring a sense of gratification and satisfaction.

Adults are said to be more likely to withdraw from a physical activity if the level of enjoyment decreases or they have a negative experience while participating (Fontana et al., 2017). According to Stopher (2020), over 25 million people play basketball globally and this suggests that the sport is popular among professional and casual players. Basketball is a game that, at its core, is easy to learn and play, which has been a contributing factor to its popularity (Duncan, 2021; Stopher, 2020). The large rate of participation across the globe supports the idea that it is an enjoyable game. Despite the joy that this sport creates, women still seem to stay away. The insights gathered from interviews indicate the presence of institutional barriers within sports organisations, characterised by male dominance. This dominance reinforces the notion that masculine behaviour is deemed acceptable and necessary for active participation in the sport. Despite the general perception of sport as a stress reliever and a temporary escape from life's pressures, it becomes evident that, for women, engagement in sport can sometimes become an additional source of stress. This suggests that the prevailing dynamics within sport institutions contribute to an environment

where women may experience added challenges and stressors rather than finding the expected relief. Being a part of a sport community can evoke a wide range of outcomes, however, for women it may not always seem to be an effective one.

From the findings of the study, it is clear that building and nurturing relationships is central to what the participants enjoy about the game of basketball. This speaks to the importance of belonging and acceptance within the environment. This is consistent with literature that has been reviewed and speaks of the basketball environment as being a social community that provides a comforting experience of belonging and bonding (Brooks, 2004; McLaughlin, 2004). Alyssa illustrates this point by sharing the photograph below and adding:

“For me, basketball has always been about sisterhood.”



Photo 2: ‘Sisterhood’

Positive relationships between the players further contribute to team success and individual performance and commitment. This highlights the importance of the study in exploring the acceptance of basketball players within the environment. It questions whether the experiences of players who do not subscribe to the dominant masculinity are able to derive the full array of benefits that are associated with the sport.

5.2.1.2 Benefits of playing

Sport participation has been linked to better physical and mental health and personal development. There is a wide array of benefits including enhanced emotional health and

promoting social relationships, fostering resilience, and building self-esteem (Khan et al., 2022; Vella et al., 2022). This was also evident in how the participants of this study reported experiencing not only physical health benefits but also a heightened sense of emotional well-being, strengthened social connections, increased resilience in facing life's challenges, and a notable boost in self-esteem through their engagement in sport.

5.2.1.2 A) Development

One of the benefits highlighted by the participants is the way basketball helps to create relationships and opportunities to network within the community. Socially, participation in sport provides opportunities for social interactions (Khan et al., 2020). As Breanna attested:

“I opened up a lot more, I am a very shy person, so basketball has helped me interact with other people other than my close family and friends.”

Similarly, Napheesa shared that:

“I also usually shy away from social interactions, but basketball has helped me become more bubbly and build my personality.”



Photo 3: ‘Building relationships’

Basketball requires the formation of teams and to win, team members need to know each other at a deeper level. This requires increasing social interactions and improving communication skills (Shrestha, 2021). Relationships are an important part of the sporting experience and have the ability to impact winning. Previous studies have shown that prosocial behaviours among teammates is positively correlated to effort, performance and commitment (Al-Yaaribi & Kavussanu, 2018). Furthermore, athletes can learn from how their teammates cope with adversity as a means of learning how to combat difficult situations themselves (Crozier et al., 2019). From my personal experience working with both junior and senior basketball teams, those teams that have close bonds off the court appear to have greater cohesion and performance on the court.

5.2.1.2 B) Mental skills and life lessons

The health benefits of women's participation in sports are not just physical but also mental. It promotes psychological well-being, builds self-esteem, and reduces stress and anxiety amongst other benefits (UN, 2007). In this regard, Breanna noted:

"I would say basketball has just helped me find a mental balance in life. It gives you a chance to compete and have fun while breaking a sweat."

Basketball also gives pragmatic life lessons to those who play it. These lessons include a good work ethic, overcoming challenges and staying mentally healthy despite being at a disadvantage or in a position of weakness. While taking part in sports, athletes often encounter failures, emotional difficulties, and setbacks (Crozier et al., 2019). As a result, effective coping strategies are vital to helping them navigate these obstacles in an adaptive way (Crozier et al., 2019). According to Shrestha (2021), basketball teaches perseverance and determination for overcoming problems or challenges and that success can be achieved through hard work and continuous improvement, which can only be accomplished through taking responsibility and learning from failures. Some participants indicated similar reasons for playing the sport:

“It has not only made me physically strong, but it has also strengthened me mentally.”

(Napheesa)

“It has given me discipline, it has given me effective coping strategies for handling failure, it has given me the drive to become successful in whatever I am able to pursue.”

(Jackie)

A key factor to developing good coping strategies is self-compassion. It has been found that athletes have a greater level of self-compassion than non-athletes (Crozier et al., 2019). Furthermore, those athletes with greater self-compassion are less likely to experience depression and are said to have more positive attitudes towards seeking help (Crozier et al., 2019). The literature review outlines how basketball teaches its participants a wide array of lessons including specific ways of thinking and decision-making (McLaughlin, 2004). The participants of the study confirmed that they have learnt lessons from the game, which have translated into other areas in their lives. They relayed how they have been able to extract these lessons that they have applied to their lives beyond the basketball court.

5.2.1.2 C) Self-esteem, self-efficacy, and well-being

Participants highlighted how basketball can be therapeutic and used to ‘let off steam’ and, overall, act as a self-care practice that contributed their general sense of well-being. Certain theorists posit that, surpassing the pursuit of meeting basic physiological requirements, the quest for self-esteem stands out as a potent driving force in human motivation (Fox, 2000). This implies that our persistent efforts to portray ourselves positively, both internally and externally, play a substantial role in shaping a significant portion of our behaviour. Clearly, it is important to estimate the power of exercise in promoting (and harming) such an all-encompassing mental characteristic.

“When I am in between those four lines [the basketball court], nothing else seems to matter.” (Satou)

“...basically helps me healthily “blow off some steam”, after a long day at work or school is a very good mood booster...” (Sabrina)

The physical self-self-occupies a unique position in the self-esteem because the body, through its appearance, attributes and abilities provides the substantive interface between the individual and the world. It provides the major vehicle for social communication and is used to express status and takes on critical significance in overall self-rating (Fox, 2000).

Research has revealed that the intense physical activity in basketball helps the brain to release levels of serotonin, endorphin hormones and noradrenaline, which are associated with lower levels of depressive symptoms, relieve pain and improve moods, which in turn reduces the stress that the basketball players are experiencing (Khan et al., 2022 ; Shrestha, 2021). The underlying positive impact of participation in sport on depressive symptoms is further attributed to improved body image, self-esteem, and self-confidence, which are a result of greater self-efficacy from having overcome physical challenges and improved bodily awareness (Kahn et al., 2022).

Studies of (Bisschop et al., 2004; Kuijer & Ridder, 2003) found that high self-efficacy is related to positive well-being, high self-esteem, better adaptation, and stress regulation. Furthermore, high self-efficacy can be the reason for young adult's high activity level and happiness (Cakar, 2012), as well as increase their belief in their capability in controlling events in their environment which may increase their psychological well-being. People with low self-efficacy show more symptoms of anxiety and depression (Faure & Loxton, 2003; Kashdan & Roberts, 2004), as well as to lower levels of psychological well-being (Barlow et al., 2002; Bandura et al. , 2003; Ersöz, 2017; Rasool & Zubair, 2019).

In much the same way, playing basketball for the women participating in this study was a way to relieve pressure and escape from the problems that life may bring and helps players maintain their self-esteem, self-efficacy, and their overall well-being.

5.2.2 Gendered marginalisation

South African women and girls, with and without disabilities in sport and recreation, face multiple barriers that negatively affect their participation, promotion and access to decision making power and transformation in sport. Cultural influences and patriarchal ideology remain main undermining influences as it plays out in sport and society in different ways (Burnett, 2021). Barriers include socio-cultural values stemming from entrenched patriarchal ideology (including gender-role expectations), biased and lack of media coverage and advertising, gender-based violence, the lack of role models, and gender stereotyping. At all levels, the lack of access to resources include; funding and sponsorships or equitable remuneration, opportunities for participation in different sports at schools and in communities, inclusive of the priority scheduling of male participation and inadequate programmes for talent identification and development, as well as opportunities for professional participation; inadequate facilities and equipment; and the underrepresentation of females in leadership positions all reflect the realities of women and girls in South African sport.

Patriarchal ideology informs the dominance of men over women at household, institutional and community levels (Adom-Aboagye & Burnett, 2019; Burnett, 2018). Girls from a young age are socialised in a particular subservient gender role and due to an average superiority of male physicality, women are pigeonholed into feminine types of sport. This presents stereotypes that creates obstacles for many to enter sport regarded as a bastion of male domination evidenced in sports like football, rugby, cricket, and boxing (Engh & Potgieter, 2015; Pelak, 2005, 2010).

5.2.2.1 Gender inequality in the sport

5.2.2.1 A) Junior basketball

The consequences of gender inequality being an institutionalised practice within sport organisations hinder women from the benefits that participation of basketball creates for athletes. When participants were asked about their experiences as a sportswoman, those who attended co-ed high schools shared that:

“The boys were also acknowledged by the school by receiving rewards when we would have assembly but nothing about the girls.” (Arike)

Chelsea shared both visual and textual data that reiterated this point:

“In terms of high school basketball, the boys all had their own individual kits, and the girls would only get bibs. So even the schools show that the boys’ side is deemed more important.”



Photo 4: ‘Pink bibs for the girls’

A pattern started to emerge. Not only did 100% of participants state that they currently encounter gender inequality in the basketball community, but all participants who attended a co-ed high school also encountered gender inequality in their junior years.

Jackie further highlighted that:

“The 2015 Boy’s u16 National team received their national blazers in a televised ceremony at Wembley stadium. The Girl’s team watched on and were told the same day that they would not be going to their continental championships as previously stated.”



Photo 5: ‘Blazers for the boys’

Women in basketball continue to lose out on sporting benefits due to the unequal balance of power and distribution of resources at all levels of the sporting industry. The gender disparities in sport will persist if specific guidelines and actionable directives are not put in place, prioritised, implemented and monitored.

5.2.2.1 B) Restricted opportunities for development and growth in the sport

The realm of basketball, despite its widespread popularity, continues to present restricted opportunities for the development and growth of women within the sport. Gender disparities persist, manifesting as limited avenues for women to advance in their basketball careers. Whether in terms of coaching positions, leadership roles, or opportunities for professional play, women often encounter barriers that hinder their progress. The underrepresentation of women in key decision-making positions within basketball institutions perpetuates a cycle of limited mentorship and role-model exposure for aspiring female athletes. This dearth of opportunities not only hampers the individual growth of women in basketball but also contributes to the broader issue of gender inequality within the sport

industry. Addressing these systemic challenges is essential to creating an inclusive and equitable environment where women can flourish and contribute significantly to the growth and success of basketball at all levels.

Participants were asked whether there was a difference in opportunities between their junior years and their senior years on the court. Nneka shared her experience:

“There has always been a difference [between women’s and men’s teams] from the development level until now. The men’s team are always given more opportunities while the women’s teams are expected to accept and appreciate the few opportunities we are given.”

Sabrina shared a similar experience:

“Both teams [women’s and men’s] fall under one head coach and our games were at the same time... our head coach can only coach one and he decided to coach the men’s game... to some this may seem like a reach but this act of prioritising the men’s team over ours is not new. There have been countless times where the men’s team has gotten first preference...we struggled to feel valued, prioritised.”

The lack of prioritisation of women's teams in sport remains a pervasive issue, reflecting broader gender disparities within the sporting landscape. Despite remarkable strides in promoting gender equality, women's teams often face challenges in terms of resource allocation, media coverage, and overall recognition. The insufficient investment in women's sport, both at the professional and amateur levels, hampers the development and visibility of women athletes. This disparity not only affects the quality of training, facilities, and opportunities available to female athletes but also perpetuates a narrative that places less value on women's sporting achievements. The under prioritisation of women's teams contributes to a cycle of limited sponsorship, fewer broadcasting deals, and decreased fan engagement, further impeding the overall growth and success of women's sports. To foster

true gender equality in the sporting realm there is a pressing need for a concerted effort to prioritise and invest in women's teams, providing them with the support and recognition they rightfully deserve.

Photo 6: 'Men only'



Varsity Cup is an annual South African tournament involving the country's top sporting universities. Varsity Cup Basketball was established in 2018, however, unsurprisingly, there was only a men's division. Jackie elaborated on this by saying:

"Like most things in basketball, Varsity Basketball started as just a male competition and the women were not prioritised until later. Even when women were included it began as them being given fewer participating teams than the men."

The image below captures the University Sports South Africa (USSA) National Men's Team during the 2023 training camp ahead of the World Student Games.

Photo 7: ‘Overlooked yet again’



“...it is disheartening to observe that the women’s team was overlooked yet again...”

(Aliyah)

In the April 2023 Women and Sport Policy promulgated by the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture in South Africa, it explained that the lack of funding dedicated to women in sport limits their chances to travel internationally for competitions as lucrative endorsement deals are often presented to male athletes and national teams represent the ‘male version’ of a sport. According to several participants at the road shows from different provinces, sponsors favour male sports and teams which also attracts a high level of media exposure.

In a study about girls’ interest in sport, Cooky (2009) found that there is a commonly held belief that girls’ absence from sport is caused by their lack of interest. Her study showed however, that girls were interested in taking part in sports but that their interest was reliant on whether the adult organisers enabled or constrained their opportunities. While we have seen the gender inequality present in the junior and varsity levels, this continues throughout national and international stages.

Despite the establishment of Basketball South Africa (BSA) in 1953 (Radovic, 2010), poor leadership, an ineffective financial model, lack of facilities and resources have continued to hamper the growth of the sport (PMG, 2013). Therefore, there have been no

national team selections or participation, on either the men's side or the women's side, to comment on in this study.

The Basketball National League (BNL) is the current League in South Africa, and while it was established in 2013, the women's league was only established in 2021. In other words, the only semi-professional basketball league in the country had a league running for 9 years before including the women's division. Additionally, whilst adding the women's division to the fixtures, only 4 teams were given the opportunity to enter the first women's BNL season while 9 teams participated in the men's division.

Similarly with the Basketball Africa League (BAL), a professional league featuring 12 teams from across Africa, was established in 2019 with a men's division only. Thus far there has been little in the way of development towards a women's division.

Photo 8: 'Restricted opportunities'



“Though the league is receiving millions of dollars in investment, there is nothing remotely comparable going into the women's game. There has been an attempt to include women however the overarching narrative is there being a few seats at the table for women. It has become one of the biggest representations of the lack of investment into women's basketball on the continent.” (Jackie)

Considering the photographic findings, patterns of marginalisation are apparent within how the women participating in this study experience the basketball community and their

opportunities for further development and growth within the sport, especially when compared to the opportunities provided to their male counterparts. Several of the auto-photographs generated under this sub-theme featured and centred male basketball players and men's basketball teams. What is particularly telling about how women basketball players experience marginalisation and their subordinate status to men and men's teams is their recurring absence from their own auto-photographs.

5.2.2.2 Women's representation

5.2.2.2 A) In the media

South African media are biased towards publishing and broadcasting international and national male dominated and highly commercialised sports such as football, rugby and cricket that maintain and support masculine domination (Potgieter & Engh, 2018). Women receive relatively less media exposure and coverage as they are often portrayed to project a feminine ideal and gender role confirmation (Cooky et al., 2013). Sabrina added:

"...we felt as though internally there was a lot more talk created about the men's games...the amount of coverage given about each game was different."

During the interviews it was discovered that social media is a marketing tool that basketball teams are using more frequently to create sport awareness, reach bigger audiences, and share their sporting journey. However, multiple participants agreed that their team's social media pages primarily post updates from their men's team. Sabrina highlights this further:

"The men's team had way more snippets of their games featured in the basketball club's Instagram stories... by the time the men are warming up, there are about 5 different cameras following their warmups..."

Though the sport itself instils patriarchal values, media helps to reinforce it. One of the many complaints during the course of data collection was the lack of presence from the

women's team on the social media platforms as well as the lack of supporters at games. This led to an open discussion on the connection between media and representation. Questioning the inequality further, Napheesa added:

“How can we grow the women's game if we are constantly left behind? We aren't asking for more, we are just asking for the same opportunities.”

Photo 9: 'Behind the scenes'



Elaborating on the above photograph, Sabrina shares:

“DSTV came to our basketball practice to do some interview and take footage of our work... we were all encouraged to make an effort to attend practice on this day... DSTV interviewed three male players and our head coach... I was extremely disappointed to see what was unfolding and I just felt very unseen and unheard... amongst me were amazing women in our club that have many accolades and experience that could've said something valuable.”

Several provincial stakeholder representatives agreed that this is also the case in the South African media and that women's sport is not well marketed, women are not portrayed as athletes or that women's sporting achievements were downplayed in favour of feminising

and sexualising women in sport (Villalon & Weiler-Abels, 2018). For example, Sabrina highlighted:

“...this is the subtle misogynistic culture of basketball [and] sports in South Africa. We are very comfortable with the absence of women in such spaces.”

As a woman, living in a misogynistic world desensitises one to the misogynistic encounters in the sporting industry. The normality of masculine domination makes it difficult even for women to detect gender inequality in certain spaces. When asked about the resilient strategies the participants used when confronted with hegemonic masculinity in the sporting space, many of them could not point them out. There were no conscious strategies in place, participants were either so accustomed to that way of life that they were not able to detect or chose to actively ignore those situations to keep the peace or remain unproblematic.

5.2.2.2 B) Safe spaces and role models

History and socio-cultural associations between sport and masculinity contribute to the persisting male dominance in being considered as role models for athletes, coaches, and decision-makers in many parts of the world (Picariello & Waller, 2016). Patriarchal ideology perpetuates the culture of men being preferred leaders and role models in the sport fraternity and public media. This was confirmed during the discussions with the participants, where it was stated that there is a dire need of female role models. Sabrina further highlights this by adding:

“This is one of the major reasons little girls who play basketball in South Africa struggle to feel represented. They do not know that their role models exist. Perhaps from the same cultural, financial background perhaps even the same name.”

The over-representation of male reporters and presenters, in addition to editorial preferences contribute to the under-representation, marginalisation and biased representation of female sports and athletes on radio and television broadcastings. The gender-bias is also

present in social media portrayals and communication (Adá Lameiras & Rodríguez-Castro, 2020).

The domination of men in journalism and the sport medial space does not only reflect patterns of marginalisation but has an influence of promoting male role models and mediate the ideal characteristics of athletes and leaders to be admired and copied (Geertsema-Sligh, 2018). This situation is also evident in the lack of female sport anchors that does little to address issues around the objectification of the female body and celebrate heterosexual framing of women as mothers, wives, and girlfriends.

Much activism and resistance against such stereotypical framing of female athletes and potential role models are emerging (Ogunniyi, 2015). The public debates, awareness campaigns and vocal activists increasingly act in a quest for radical change in terms of acknowledging and accepting alternative ways of portraying gender and promoting female role models (Potgieter & Engh, 2018).

When asked about their experiences of gendered empowerment in the basketball community, Aliyah shared that one of her highlights was when two women were selected to be a part of the SuperSport commentating team. Aliyah further shared that:

“This picture represents a significant milestone in the basketball community, showcasing the progress made towards addressing gender inequality. Women have always been overlooked when it comes to broadcasting men’s games, and this shows how there’s hope for women in this department.”

Photo 10: ‘Representation matters’



The provision of role models is particularly important for girls and other underrepresented youth in sport, acting as a powerful force to help youth see individuals like themselves in and around the game who directly understand their unique experiences and challenges that they face in sport. These role models become someone they can aspire to be (Zarrett et al., 2019). During the interviews, one of the issues which emerged was whether participants would benefit from seeing women in leadership positions. Most answers were very similar in that all participants shared positive remarks; however, Napheesa further shared that:

“There are just a lot of male coaches, and I often don’t feel comfortable, there are things you can’t talk to your male coach about than how you would to a female coach/manager, this includes advice on both personal and physical matters. This is also due to the rise of player harassment; the inclusion of a female coach or manager would benefit both the players and a male head coach.”

The creation of safe spaces for women of all ages, affords them a space of their own. This connects with the idea of sport being a masculine/masculinised/male-dominated site, where not only do women have to overcome barriers, but where their actions in the space can potentially disrupt social and gender norms. Martha Brady is credited with introducing the concept of ‘safe space’ into gender and sport for development and incorporated several

considerations into this concept: the notion of non-physical violence, a metaphorical space for emotional expression and the relational negotiations due to internal and external factors (Schlenker, 2018). This safe space suggests women and girls need a specific opportunity to be able to practice sport for development. Jackie emphasises this point by sharing:

“Having men making basic decisions for women without understanding women’s issues or having a female voice to interject and bring up women’s issues is really difficult. It would make a difference in a women’s experience if another woman was able to weigh in on how that experience is curated.”

Experts underscore the importance of a secure environment as a crucial prerequisite for successful gender-based sport development interventions. This safe space is deemed essential not only for the personal development of participants but also for fostering the inclusion of female coaches and sporting role models (Schlenker, 2018). In her research on female sporting role models, Meier (2016) has been at the forefront of the gender and sport for development field. She contends that these role models play a crucial role not only in serving as examples for female participants but also as bearers of vital information that is beneficial for the participants. Beyond imparting knowledge, role models have the capacity to instil life skills, potentially resulting in a diverse range of outcomes. The achievement of ambitious objectives associated with role models, as Meier (2016) posits, hinges on the accessibility and visibility of these role models.

Sabrina shared her experience on being a role model and creating a safe space for fellow basketball players:

“What I found so empowering were the little moments we got to experience with the little girls... creating that bond with them... and having the opportunity to provide them with representation is probably one of the things I hold closest to my heart.”

Photo 11: 'Safe spaces'



Alyssa shared her experience by adding:

“I think the world always tries to encourage women to be everything else but athletes. We are always looked down upon, pushed away, and constantly told that we will never measure up to men. But I no longer subscribe to that because when you are surrounded by women who live and breathe basketball, you really have no choice but to believe that women also belong on the court.”

The positive impact of women role models and the safe spaces they foster extends beyond their supporters, revealing notable benefits for the role models themselves. As women assume influential roles and become sources of inspiration, they often experience personal growth and empowerment through their roles as mentors or leaders. Serving as role models provides an opportunity for self-reflection, as these women navigate their own journeys and share valuable insights with others. Additionally, the sense of community and empowerment cultivated within safe spaces contributes to the well-being and fulfilment of the role models. This reciprocal relationship underscores the dynamic nature of mentorship and the multifaceted advantages that emanate from creating supportive environments for women.

5.4 Conclusion

This exploration of women's experiences in basketball has unearthed several key themes and subthemes that collectively contribute to a nuanced understanding of their engagement in the sport. The profound impact of inspiration and affective connections emerged prominently, underscoring the emotional and motivational dimensions that drive women to actively participate in basketball. Moreover, the benefits derived from playing basketball extend beyond the physical realm, encompassing emotional, social, and personal development aspects. However, the shadow of gender inequality looms large, revealing persistent challenges and barriers that women grapple with in the sporting arena. The theme of women's representation has been a focal point, shedding light on the disparities and the need for increased visibility and recognition. In essence, these themes collectively emphasise the complex interplay between individual experiences, societal structures, and the broader landscape of women's involvement in basketball. Addressing gender inequalities and enhancing women's representation in the sport are essential steps towards fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment for women in basketball, ensuring that the benefits and inspirations associated with the game are accessible to all.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Overview

In this study the aim was to explore women's gendered experiences in the basketball community. In conclusion, this chapter provides a consolidated review of how the study answered the research question and addressed the aims of the study. Finally, limitations of the study are discussed and subsequently recommendations of the study are highlighted.

6.2 Summary of the key findings

The current study's aim was to explore the experiences of gendered marginalisation as well as gendered empowerment in the basketball community through the use of one-on-one in-depth interviews with thirteen women basketball players. To examine the maintenance of gender roles and inequalities, as well as how socially constructed definitions of gender shape how people see and experience gendered bodies in the sport, this qualitative study adopted a social constructionist and feminist stance to examine the contextual factors that influence gender marginalisation and gender empowerment in the basketball community. Due to my personal involvement in the basketball community, it was not a challenging task when acquiring participants to be part of the study. However, it became challenging during the data collection process. Due to the time-consuming nature of responses required from participants, receiving the feedback was more difficult than I had anticipated. Furthermore, to ensure that the study was trustworthy, measures were taken to guarantee credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the study. Having obtained all the requisite permissions, the researcher was able to carry out the research study.

The research study was guided by two primary objectives including: (1) exploring how women basketball players experience gender marginalisation in their sport, (2) understanding how the personal experiences of gendered empowerment characterise women basketball players' participation in their sport.

6.2.1 Gendered empowerment

The data analysis generated two primary themes to represent participant's individual views on gendered empowerment in basketball: (1) *inspiration and affective connections to play basketball*; (2) *benefits of playing*.

According to the study's findings, most of the participants were motivated to start playing basketball by their friends' and/or families' participation in the sport. Through their peers, participants were able to relate to the sport, which gave them a sense of community. The emotional attachment to the team and the sport was found to have a substantial affective result. Participants were initially drawn in primarily for reasons of emotional connection and a sense of belonging. However, playing and competing brought up powerful emotions of zeal, exhilaration, and fulfilment because of the thrill, joy, and passion involved. According to research, a positive sporting experience is associated with higher engagement, commitment, and effort as well as better results.

Furthermore, based on the study's findings, developing, and maintaining relationships is essential to why participants enjoy playing basketball. This emphasises the value of acceptance and belonging in one's surroundings. This is in line with the literature that has been read, which describes the basketball environment as a social community that gives a satisfying sense of belonging. Additionally, it was found that positive interactions within the environment also boost individual and team dedication and performance. This emphasises how crucial it is to investigate how well-liked basketball players are in society. The concerns raised were whether players who do not identify as members of the hegemonic masculinity are able to enjoy the entire range of advantages that come with the sport.

When it came to the benefits of playing the game of basketball, three prominent patterns were discovered in this study. These are the improvement of personal development, mental skills, as well as self-efficacy. One of the advantages mentioned by the participants is how it fosters connections and networking opportunities within communities. The increased social interactions and improved communication skills helped participants both on and off the

court. Additionally, participants also received insight into how their teammates handle hardship to improve their own ability to handle challenging circumstances.

The lessons that were established through the participation of basketball included having a strong work ethic, overcoming obstacles, and maintaining a positive outlook despite being at a disadvantage or in a vulnerable situation. While these athletes frequently experience disappointments, emotional struggles, and setbacks while competing in sport, effective coping mechanisms are therefore essential to in overcoming these challenges in an appropriate manner. It was learned that basketball instills perseverance and tenacity for conquering obstacles, as well as the notion that success can only be attained through consistent effort and growth, which in turn is fostered by accepting accountability and learning from mistakes. The study's participants acknowledged that they had taken lessons from the game and applied them to other facets of their lives. They described how they were able to draw these lessons from their experiences and apply them to their lives off the basketball court.

Furthermore, it was discovered that the desire for self-esteem is the strongest human motivational force, surpassing the need to satiate basic physiological demands, and our ongoing quest for a positive public image explains a lot of our behaviour (Mihaela, 2022). It is crucial to consider how much exercise can help (or hurt) one's ability to have such a broad-based mental quality. It was found that basketball alleviates stress, is linked to fewer depressive symptoms, reduces levels of pain, and improves moods. Improved body image, self-esteem, and self-confidence -which occur via increased self-efficacy from overcoming physical challenges and higher physiological awareness – are also indicated as benefits resulting from participation in the sport. Basketball can thus be a means for players to keep up their self-esteem, self-efficacy, and general well-being while also relieving stress and providing an escape from potential life challenges.

6.2.2 Gendered marginalisation

To understand the gender disparities in the South African basketball community, understanding existing knowledge on the gender disparities in sport was important as can be seen in chapter two of this study. Identifying the gender disparities in the sporting industry was discussed, as well as the sporting policies that were created to help dismantle gender inequality, including the lack of strategic plans that would stipulate how these objectives would be achieved. This was followed by the exploration of women in sport and the challenges they face both on the sporting field as well as in leadership positions and how that affects women's sports participation. While in theory there is nothing which prevents women climbing the hierarchical ladder in an organisation, the experiences that come along with it does hinder this process. This led to one of the most critical aspects of advancing women in leadership positions within sport, which is the mentoring relationship. While the mentoring relationship is important in career development for both genders, it is particularly critical for women, especially those in male dominated professions such as the sport industry. This body of work drew attention to the lack of women in leadership greatly affecting a players' experience of both marginalisation and empowerment. Additionally, the participant's own experiences with gender inequality in the basketball community were key resources in my study discovering the influence of hegemonic masculinity in the sporting industry.

The data analysis generated two primary themes to represent participant's individual views on gendered marginalisation in basketball: (1) *gender inequality in the sport*; (2) *women's representation*.

The most prominent topic discussed was the gender inequality that participants experienced in the sport. It was highlighted that women are prevented from enjoying the advantages of basketball due to the obvious effects of gender discrimination being an institutionalised practice inside sport organisations. It was discovered that one hundred percent of participants who went to a co-ed high school had experienced gender inequality in

the sport, which continued through their senior years at both their club level and the national level.

A major cause for concern was the blatant gender inequality captured in the photographs by the participants throughout this theme. Girls are significantly more likely to stop participating in sports than boys are, which came to no surprise when evaluating the gender inequality captured in this study. Patterns of marginalisation are particularly clear when seen in the light of the photographic findings. Men were portrayed in a sizable percentage of the auto photos; as a result of the responses, the presence of women was further diminished by men being centered and so heavily portrayed.

Furthermore, the study revealed that sports that are dominated by men and are heavily commercialized, both nationally and internationally, are disproportionately covered and televised by South African media. Women are frequently portrayed to promote a feminine ideal and to confirm gender roles, and thus receive relatively less media exposure and coverage. Additionally, even if the sport itself promotes patriarchal ideals, the media also contributes to this. The women's team's absence from social media platforms and the paucity of fans during games were two of the numerous issues raised during the data collection process. The relationship between media and representation was then openly discussed as a result.

Moreover, it was discovered that the persistence of male dominance in being viewed as role models for athletes, coaches, and decision-makers around the world is a result of history and sociocultural linkages between sport and masculinity. The culture of men being preferred as leaders and role models, as shown in the sporting community and the media, is perpetuated by patriarchal ideology. This was reinforced during the participant-led conversations, when it was claimed that the lack of female role models is an urgent problem. In addition to serving as role models for the female participants, female role models are crucial as sources of knowledge for the participants. Role models can impart life skills in addition to information, which can have a variety of effects. Ambitious goals connected to role models depend on the role model's accessibility and exposure. This research has shown that the

advantages of having female role models and the safe spaces they foster, not only help the people whom they support, but also the role models themselves.

6.3 Limitations

As described by Price and Murnan (2004), limitations in a study refer to the systemic bias that the researcher could not control which could consequently negatively affect the results of the study or effect the researcher's ability to generalise the findings. The first limitation in this study relates to sample size. This study utilised a small sample size of thirteen participants. Although data from thirteen women basketball players can explain the influence of masculinity/ies on the gender inequality in the sport, this sample size is insufficient to draw definitive conclusions. Therefore, the findings and conclusions reached by this study are not generalisable, making the experiences case-specific and subjectively interpreted.

A second limitation is that I could not fully control how the research participants would secure consent from other people appearing in their auto-photographic work. While the participants were briefed to ensure that they requested consent from all people who appear in their photographs, this could not always be completely accounted for. To counter this effect, I set about ensuring that all people appearing in the photographic material of this dissertation had their faces blurred to ensure anonymity.

In addition, this study elicited the views, perceptions, and perspectives of women basketball players without taking their gender identity and sexual orientation into account, hence the study participants were not asked about these intersections. A limitation of this study is that it does not fully consider woman/female-presenting basketball players who identify as queer, trans, gender non-conforming, or who may be lesbian may further experience different layers of marginalisation or empowerment in basketball based on those statuses.

A further limitation of this study lies in its exploration of ethnic and racial identity, particularly concerning the intersectionality with class. The research acknowledges that ethnicity and race are complex and multifaceted aspects of identity, and their intersection with socioeconomic class introduces additional layers of complexity. The study might not capture

the full diversity of experiences within different ethnic and racial groups, potentially overlooking nuances shaped by class dynamics. This limitation underscores the need for a more in-depth examination of the intricate interplay between ethnicity, race, and class to provide a comprehensive understanding of the social dynamics influencing the phenomenon under investigation. Future research endeavours should strive for a more nuanced exploration of these intersecting identities to illuminate the diverse perspectives that contribute to the broader context of the study.

6.4 Recommendations

6.4.1 Recommendations for the sporting industry

The results of this study demonstrate the importance addressing gender inequality and in particular, women's experience of their gendered status in male-dominated sports. Raising awareness about the issue and providing education on the benefits of a diverse and inclusive sporting environment is crucial. By challenging biases and fostering understanding, the industry can work towards a more inclusive future.

Secondly, representation and leadership must be a focal point. Encouraging and supporting women to take up leadership roles within sport organisations is essential, particularly in Basketball South Africa. Diverse leadership helps in making more inclusive decisions that reflect a broad spectrum of perspectives and experiences.

Eliminating discrimination and bias is paramount. Strict anti-discrimination policies must not only be implemented but also enforced within sporting organisations, fostering an environment where everyone is treated fairly and respectfully, irrespective of gender. Providing equal opportunities for participation is a fundamental step towards gender equality. Ensuring both genders have equal access to sports at all levels and eradicating gender-based participation restrictions will promote a more balanced and diverse sporting landscape.

Additionally, accurate data collection and analysis are essential for informed decision-making. Comprehensive research on gender disparities will highlight specific areas that need improvement and help tailor strategies to reduce gender inequality effectively.

Lastly, mentorship and networking opportunities can be transformative. Establishing mentorship programs and creating spaces for networking among women in the sporting industry will provide invaluable support and guidance to aspiring female professionals. Achieving gender equality in the sporting industry requires a multifaceted approach involving proactive efforts at policy, societal, and individual levels. By implementing these recommendations, we can build a more inclusive, equal, and diverse sporting landscape that empowers all athletes and professionals, regardless of gender.

6.4.2 Recommendations for future research

The first recommendation for future research involves expanding the sample size in the qualitative study. The current study, while providing valuable insights, is limited by its relatively small sample size, potentially restricting the generalizability of findings. Increasing the participant pool would allow for a more diverse representation of perspectives and experiences, enhancing the richness and depth of the qualitative data. A larger sample size can capture a broader range of voices, ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Additionally, it is recommended for researchers to incorporate considerations of participants' gender identity and sexual orientation. Understanding the diverse and nuanced ways in which individuals experience the world necessitates a more inclusive approach to data collection and analysis. By explicitly capturing participants' gender identities and sexual orientations, researchers can shed light on the intersectionality of these aspects with other lived experiences. This inclusion not only contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic but also ensures that findings are representative and relevant to diverse populations. As society continues to evolve in recognising the spectrum of identities, future

researchers must embrace an inclusive lens to uncover the intricacies and unique perspectives associated with gender and sexual orientation.

A further recommendation would be for researchers to conscientiously incorporate and explore participants' ethnic and racial identities. Recognising the rich diversity within communities and acknowledging the unique experiences shaped by ethnicity and race is crucial for promoting inclusivity and cultural sensitivity. By explicitly considering these identities in research, scholars can uncover nuanced insights that contribute to a more holistic understanding of the complexities inherent in various social phenomena. Such an inclusive approach not only enhances the validity and applicability of findings but also fosters a research environment that respects and embraces diversity. As society continues to grapple with issues of equity and representation, future researchers must prioritize and integrate the exploration of ethnic and racial identities and, in turn, how these link to multiple layers of multifaceted dimensions of marginalisation to ensure research outcomes that resonate with the varied experiences of individuals across diverse backgrounds.

REFERENCES

- Adá Lameiras, A., & Rodríguez-Castro, Y. (2020). The presence of female athletes and nonathletes on sports media twitter. *Feminist Media Studies*, 21(6), 941–958. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2020.1732439>
- Adom-Aboagye, N. A. A., & Burnett, C. (2019). Society and gender equity in sport: analysis from a South African perspective. *African Journal for Physical Activity and Health Sciences*, 25(3), 296- 312. <https://doi.org/10.37597/ajphes.2020.26.1>
- Adriaanse, J. (2015). Gender diversity in the governance of sport associations: the Sydney scoreboard global index of participation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 137(1), 149–160. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2550-3>
- Alase, A. (2017). The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA): A guide to a good qualitative research approach. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 5(2), 9-19. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.5n.2p.9>
- Allbaugh, C. N., Bolter, N. D., & Shimon, J. M. (2016). Sibling influence on physical activity and sport participation: considerations for coaches. *Strategies: A Journal for Physical and Sport Educators*, 29(4), 24-28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08924562.2016.1181593>
- Alvesson, M., & Skoldberg, K. (2009). Positivism, social constructionism, critical realism: three reference points in the philosophy of science. *Reflexive Methodology: New vistas for qualitative research*, 15-52. Sage publications.
- Al-Yaaribi, A., & Kavussanu, M. (2017). Teammate prosocial and antisocial behaviors predict task cohesion and burnout: The mediating role of affect. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 39(3), 199–208. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.2016-0336>
- Al-Yaaribi, A., & Kavussanu, M. (2018). Consequences of prosocial and antisocial behaviors in adolescent male soccer players: the moderating role of motivational climate. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 37, 91–99. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2018.04.005>

- Aman, M. P., Yusof, A., Ismail, M., & Mohamed Razali, A. B. (2018). Pipeline problem: factors influencing the underrepresentation of women in the top leadership positions of sport organisations. *Malaysian Journal of Movement, Health & Exercise*, 7(2), 151-166. <https://doi.org/10.15282/mohe.v7i2.186>
- Aman, M. P., Hanapi, S., Yusof, A., Razali, A. B., & Dev, R. D. O. (2019). Women in sport leadership positions in Malaysia: issues and challenges. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 9(11), 1506–1519. <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v9-i11/6715>
- National Sport and Recreation Plan. (2012). https://www.westerncape.gov.za/assets/departments/cultural-affairs-sport/nsrp_final_august_2012.pdf
- Arinder, J. (2020). Feminist theory - theoretical models for teaching and research. Retrieved from Wsu. edu website: <https://opentext.wsu.edu/theoreticalmodelsforteachingandresearch/chapter/feminist-theory>.
- Bacchi, C. (2009). *Analysing policy: what's the problem presented to be?* Melbourne, Australia: Pearson Australia Higher Education.
- Bacchi, C. & Eveline, J. (Eds.) (2010). *Mainstreaming politics: gendering practices and feminist theory*. University of Adelaide Press.
- Baehr, A. (2021). Liberal feminism. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/feminism-liberal/>
- Bandura, A., Caprara, G. V., Barbaranelli, C., Gerbino, M. & Pastorelli, C. (2003). Role of affective self-regulatory efficacy in diverse spheres of psychosocial functioning. *Child Development*, 74(3), 769-782. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00567>
- Barlow, J., Wright, C. & Cullen, L. (2002). A job-seeking self-efficacy scale for people with physical disabilities: Preliminary development and psychometric testing. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 30(1), 37-53. <https://doi.org/10.1080/030698880220106500>

- Belzer, J. (2015). The most powerful women in sports. *Forbes Media*.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jasonbelzer/2015/12/02/the-most-powerful-women-in-sports/?sh=5a618b693a5f>
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality*. Anchor.
- Bijoux, D., & Myers, J. (2006). Interviews, solicited diaries and photography: 'new' ways of accessing everyday experiences of place. *Graduate Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies*, 4(1), 44-64.
- Birrell, S. (2000). Feminist theories for sport. *Handbook of sports studies*, 61-76.
- Bisschop, M. I., Kriegsman, D. M., Beekman, A. T. & Deeg, D. J. (2004). Chronic diseases and depression: the modifying role of psychosocial resources. *Social science & medicine*, 59(4), 721-733. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socimed.2003.11.038>
- Bower, G. (2004). Factors influencing the willingness to mentor female campus recreation professionals. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, (UMI No. 3134174). University of Louisville, Louisville, KY. <https://doi.org/10.18297/etd/134>
- Bower, G. (2009). Effective mentoring relationships with women in sport: results of a meta-ethnography. *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*, 29(3).
http://www.advancingwomen.com/awl/Vol29_2009/Dr_Glena_Bower.pdf
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). Teaching thematic analysis: overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. *The Psychologist*, 26(2), 120-123.
Doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Brooks, S. (2004). 'Putting the blessings on him': vouching and basketball status work. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 595, 80-90.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716204266593>
- Burnett, C. (2018). Politics of gender (in)equality relating to sport and development within a Sub-Saharan context of poverty. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 1-15.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2018.00027>

- Burnett, C. (2021). Framing a 21st century case for the social value of sport in South Africa. *Sport in Society*, 24(3), 340-355. doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2019.1672153
- Burton, L. (2015). Underrepresentation of women in sport leadership: A review of research. *Sport Management Review*, 18(2), 155-165. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2014.02.004
- Burr, V. (2015). Social constructionism introduction: the origins of social constructionism. *International Encyclopedia of Social & Behavioral Sciences*.
- Butler, J. (2004). 'Performative acts and gender constitution: an essay in phenomenology and feminist theory', in Bial, H. (ed.) *The performance studies reader*. New York: Routledge, 154-167.
- Carron, A., Colman, M., Wheeler, J., & Stevens, D. (2002). Cohesion and performance in sport: A meta analysis. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 24 (2), 168-188. https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.24.2.168
- Carson, F., McCormack, C., Walsh, J., & History, A. (2018). Women in sport coaching: challenges, stress and wellbeing. *Journal of Physical Education, Sport, Health and Recreation*, 7(2), 63–67. https://doi.org/10.15294/active.v7i2.22100
- Chappell, B. (2012). Year of the woman at the London games? for Americans, it's true. *The Torch: NPR's Olympics Coverage*. https://www.npr.org/sections/thetorch/2012/08/10/158570021/year-of-the-woman-at-the-london-games-for-americans-its-true
- Chinurum, J. ., Ogunjimi, L. O., & O'Neill, C. B. (2014). Gender and sports in contemporary society. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*. https://doi.org/10.5901/jesr.2014.v4n7p25
- Coakley, J. & Burnett, C. (2014). Sports in society. Van Schaik.
- Cohen, D., & Crabtree, B. (2006). Semi-structured interviews. Qualitative Research Guidelines Project. http://www.qualres.org/HomeSemi-3629.html
- Cooky, C. (2009). "Girls just aren't interested": the social construction of interest in girls' sport. *Sociological Perspectives*, 52(2). https://doi.org/10.1525/sop.2009.52.2.259

- Cooky, C., Messner, M. A., & Hextrum, R. H. (2013). Women play sport, but not on TV: A longitudinal study of televised news media. *Communication & Sport*, 1(3), 203-230. doi.org/10.1177/2167479513476947
- Corey, G. (2013). Theory and practice of counselling psychotherapy. Cengage Learning.
- Courtenay, W. H. (2000). Engendering health: a social constructionist examination of men's health beliefs and behaviors. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, 1(1), 4-15. https://doi.org/10.1037/1524-9220.1.1.4
- Creswell, J., & Hanson, W., Plano Clark, V., & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative research designs: selection and implementation. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 35(2), 236-264. DOI: 10.1177/0011000006287390
- Crossman, A. (2020). Feminist theory in sociology. *ThoughtCo*. https://www.thoughtco.com/feminist-theory-3026624
- Crozier, A. J., Mosewich, A. D., & Ferguson, L. J. (2019). The company we keep: Exploring the relationship between perceived teammate self-compassion and athlete self-compassion. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise*, 40, 152-155. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2018.10.005
- Darvin, L., Pegoraro, A., & Berri, D. (2018). Are men better leaders? An investigation of head coaches' gender and individual players' performance in amateur and professional women's basketball. *Sex Roles*, 78, 455-466. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0815-2
- Davies, M., & Mosdell, N. (2006). Sampling. In *Practical research methods for media and cultural studies*. Edinburgh University Press. Doi:10.1515/9780748627189
- Decathlon. (2022). 5 reasons why you should start playing basketball: https://sportsadvice.decathlon.sg/5-reasons-why-you-should-start-playing-basketball
- Dharamkar, K. (2021). *Textbook on gender and women empowerment*. Daya Publishing House. https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=2631510.

- Dlulane, B. (2021). Basketball SA performance; with Deputy Minister. <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/32408/>
- Dlulane, B. (2021). Basketball South Africa on financial and governance matters, as well as preparations for AGM. <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/33807/>
- Dodo, O., Van Niekerk, R., & Lyoka, P.A. (2020). Transformational-infrastructure keys to equality and inclusivity in sports: policy trajectory in post-apartheid South African sports. *South African Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation*, 42(3), 91-110. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-sport-v42-n3-a7>
- Dowling, M. (2008). Reflexivity. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. Sage Publications.
- Duncan, S. (2021). The real reasons people like basketball – Explained. Ball Are Life. <https://ballarelife.com/the-real-reasons-people-like-basketball-explained/>
- Eagly, A., & Carli, L. (2007). Through the labyrinth: The truth about how women become leaders (Vol.11). Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press. <https://doi.org/10.1108/gm.2009.05324aae.001>
- Eagly, A., Johannesen-Schmidt, M., & van Engen, M. (2003). Transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles: a meta-analysis comparing women and men. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(4), 569-591. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.129.4.569>
- Engh, M. H., & Potgieter, C. (2015). Social cohesion, sexuality, homophobia and women's sport in South Africa. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 15(3), 37-60. hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC182464.
- Engh, M. H., & Potgieter, C. (2018). Hetero-sexing the athlete: public and popular discourses on sexuality and women's sport in South Africa. *Acta Academica*, 50(2), 34–51. <https://doi.org/10.18820/24150479/AA50I2.2>
- Ersöz, G. (2017). The role of university students' general self-efficacy, depression and psychological well-being in predicting their exercise behavior. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 5(3), 110-117. <https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v5i3.2209>

- Etikan, I. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11>
- Faure, S. & Loxton, H. (2003). Anxiety, depression and self-efficacy levels of women undergoing first trimester abortion. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 33(1), 28-38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/008124630303300104>
- Festle, M.J. (1996). *Playing nice: Politics and apologies in women's sports*. New York: Columbia Press.
- Fontana, M. S., Fry, M. D., & Cramer, E. (2017). Exploring the relationship between athletes' perceptions of the motivational climate to their compassion, self-compassion, shame, and pride in adult recreational sport. *Measurement in Physical Education and Exercise Science*, 21(2), 101–111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1091367X.2017.1278698>
- Garret, P. (2004). Negotiating a physical identity: girls, bodies and physical Education. *Sport, Education and Society*, 9(2). Doi: 10.1080/1357332042000233958
- Geertsema-Sligh, M. (2018). Gender issues in news coverage. *The International Encyclopedia of Journalism Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118841570.iejs0162>.
- Gergen, K.J. (1985). Theory of the self: impasse and evolution. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.). *Advances in experimental social psychology*. Academic Press.
- Gilenstam, K., Karp, S., & Henriksson-Larsén, K. (2008). Gender in ice hockey: women in a male territory. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sports*, 18(2). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0838.2007.00665.x>
- Glaw, X., Inder, K., Kable, A., & Hazelton, M. (2017). Visual methodologies in qualitative research: autophotography and photo elicitation applied to mental health research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917748215>
- Goslin, A., & Kluka, D. (2014). Women and sport leadership: perceptions of Malawi women

- educated in sport business leadership. *South African Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation*, 36(3), 93–108.
- Harper, D. (1986). Meaning and work: a study in photo elicitation. *Current Sociology*, 34(3), 24-45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001139286034003006>
- Harrison, B. (2002). Seeing health and illness worlds - using visual methodologies in a sociology of health and illness: A methodological review. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 24(6), 856-872. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.00322>
- Kang, S. K., & Bodenhausen, G. V. (2015). Multiple identities in social perception and interaction: challenges and opportunities. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 66. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010814-015025>
- Kashdan, T. B. & Roberts, J. E. (2004). Trait and state curiosity in the genesis of intimacy: differentiation from related constructs. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23(6), 792-816. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.23.6.792.54800>
- Khan, A., Ahmed, K. R., Hidajat, T., & Edwards, E. J. (2022). Examining the association between sports participation and mental health of adolescents. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(24). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192417078>
- Klenke, K. (2017). Women in leadership. *Contextual Dynamics and Boundaries*, 2; 251-301. <https://doi.org/10.1108/9781787430631>
- Koenig, A., Eagly, A., Mitchel, A., & Ristikari, T. (2011). Are leader stereotypes masculine? A meta analysis of three research paradigms. *Psychological Bulletin*, 137(4), 616-642. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a00235>
- Kracht, C. L., & Sisson, S. B. (2018). Sibling influence on children's objectively measured physical activity: a meta-analysis and systematic review. *BMJ Open Sport & Exercise Medicine*, 4(1), 000405. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjsem-2018-000405>
- Krane, V. (2001). We can be athletic and feminine, but do we want to? Challenging hegemonic femininity in women's sport. *Quest*, 53(1), 115–133.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2001.10491733>

Kuijer, R. G. & De Ridder, D. T. (2003). Discrepancy in illness-related goals and quality of life in chronically ill patients: the role of self-efficacy. *Psychology and Health*, 18(3), 313-330. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0887044031000146815>

Kyngäs, H., Mikkonen, K., & Käärjäinen, M. (Ed.) (2020). The application of content analysis in nursing science research. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-30199-6>

Lapchick, R. (2019). The WNBA racial and gender report card. https://africa.espn.com/wnba/story/_/id/27855045/the-wnba-racial-gender-report-card

Leberman, S., & Palmer, F. (2009). Motherhood, sport leadership, and domain theory: Experiences from New Zealand. *Journal of Sport Management*, 23(3), 305–334. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.23.3.305>

Leonard, M., & McKnight, M. (2015). Look and tell: using photo-elicitation methods with teenagers. *Children's Geographies*, 13(6). <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2014.887812>

Lorber, J., & Martin, P. Y. (2016). The socially constructed body: insights from feminist theory. *Illuminating Social Life: Classical and Contemporary Theory Revisited*, 249–274. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506335483.n11>

Malhotra, A., & Schuler, S. R. (2005). Women's empowerment as a variable in international development. *World Bank.Org*, 71–88. <http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=BzXyApyTGOYC&pgis=1>

Markula, P. (2005). Development of feminist sport studies. *Feminist sport studies: sharing experiences of joy and pain*. Suny Press.

McDermott, L. (2000). A qualitative assessment of the significance of body perception to women's physical activity experiences: revisiting discussions of physicalities. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 17. Doi: 10.1123/ssj.17.4.331

- McLaughlin, T. (2004). 'Man to man' basketball, movement, and the practice of masculinity. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 103(1), 169–191. Doi: 10.1215/00382876-103-1-169
- Meier, M. (2016). Theorizing role models in sport for development and peace. In Hayhurst, L. M. C., Kay, T., & Chawansky, M. (Eds.), *Beyond sport for development and peace: Transnational perspectives on theory, policy and practice*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315751559>
- Metcalf, S. (2018). Adolescent constructions of gendered identities: the role of sport and (physical) education. *Sport, Education and Society*, 23(7), 681–693. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2018.1493574>
- Mihaela, R., Luminita, S. M., Gabriela, C. C., & Elena, E. B. (2022). The relationship between self-esteem and the employees' motivation in work of state organizations. *Technium Soc. Sci. J.*, 32, 502.
- Moawad, J. (2019). Gender inequality in sports. *FairPlay, Revista de Filosofía, Ética y Derecho Del Deporte*, 0(13). <https://raco.cat/index.php/FairPlay/article/view/348717/439947>
- Noland, M. (2006). Auto-photography as research practice: identity and self-esteem research. *Journal of Research Practice*, 2(1), 1-19. <http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/19/65>
- Nxumalo, L. (2021) Mismanagement crippled SA basketball. *New Frame*. <https://www.newframe.com/long-read-mismanagement-crippled-sa-basketball/>
- Ogunniyi, C. (2015). The effects of sport participation on gender relations: case studies of female footballers in Johannesburg and Cape Town, South Africa. *South African Review of Sociology*, 46(1), 25–46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21528586.2014.989783>
- Orr, N., & Phoenix, C. (2015). Photographing physical activity: using visual methods to 'grasp at' the sensual experiences of the ageing body. *Qualitative Research*, 15(4), 454–472. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794114543401>
- Oxley, J. (2011). Liberal feminism. Just the arguments: *100 of the most important arguments in Western Philosophy*, 258 - 262.

- Padgett, D. K. (2008). *Qualitative methods in social research* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Parker, I. (2014). *Discourse dynamics (psychology revivals): critical analysis for social and individual psychology*. Routledge
- Pavlidis, A. (2018). Making “space” for women and girls in sport: an agenda for Australian geography. *Geographical Research*, 56(4). <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-5871.12302>
- Pearson, C., & Porath, C. (2009). *The cost of bad behaviour: How incivility is damaging your business and what to do about it*. New York: Penguin Group. <https://doi.org/10.1108/hrmid.2010.04418fae.002>
- Pelak, C. F. (2005). Negotiating gender/race/class constraints in the new South Africa: A case study of women’s soccer. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 40(1), 53-70. doi.org/10.1177/1012690205052165
- Pelak, C. F. (2010). Women and gender in South African soccer: a brief history. *Soccer & Society*, 11(1-2), 63-78. doi.org/10.1080/14660970903331342
- Phoenix, C. (2010). Seeing the world of physical culture: the potential of visual methods for qualitative research in sport and exercise. *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise*, 2(2), 93–108. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19398441.2010.488017>
- Picariello, M., & Waller, S. N. (2016). The importance of role modeling in mentoring women: Lessons from Pat Summitt legacy. *Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research*, 71(1), 5-13. Doi: 10.1515/pcssr-2016-0017
- PMG (Parliamentary Monitoring Group) (2013). Challenges facing basketball South Africa: briefing. PMG. <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/16064/>
- Potgieter, C., & Engh, M.H. (2018). Hetero-sexing the athlete: public and popular discourses on sexuality and women’s sport in South Africa. *Acta Academia*, 50(2), 34-51. <https://doi.org/10.18820/24150479/aa50i2.2>
- Pratt-Clarke, M. (2012). A black woman’s search for the transdisciplinary applied social justice model: encounters with critical race feminism, black feminism, and Africana studies. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, 5(1).

<https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/bitstream/handle/10919/79493/PrattClarkeABlackWomansSearch2012.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Priyadharshini, P., Mohan, S., Hariharasudan, A., & Sangeetha, J. (2021). Authenticity of liberal feminism in Namita Gokhale's Texts. *Linguistic and Culture Review*, 5(S1), 46-59. <https://doi.org/10.37028/lingcure.v5nS1.1312>

Radovic, Z. (2010). FIBA report on basketball in South Africa. My Basketball. Mybasketball.co.za/2010/05/fiba-report-on-basketball-in-south-africa

Rasool, I., Zubair, A. & Anwar, M. (2019). Role of perceived self-efficacy and spousal support in psychological well-being of female entrepreneurs. *Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research*, 34(4). <https://doi.org/10.33824/pjpr.2019.34.4.48>

Raver, J., & Gelfand, M. (2005) Beyond the individual victim: Linking sexual harassment, team processes, and team performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 48(3), 387-400. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2005.17407904>

Riordan, J. (1986). State and sport in developing societies. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 21(4), 287-303. <https://doi.org/10.1177/101269028602100403>

Sabo, D., Veliz, P., & Staurowsky, E. (2016). Beyond X's & O's: gender bias and coaches of women's college sports. *The Women's Sport Foundation*. <https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/research/article-and-report/beyond-xs-and-os/beyond-xs-os-report/>.

Sagas, M., Cunningham, G., & Pastore, D. (2006). Predicting head coaching intentions of male and female assistant coaches: an application of the theory of planned behaviour. *Sex Roles*, 54(9-10), 695-705. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-006-9035-x>

Schaillée, H., Haudenhuyse, R., & Bradt, L. (2019). Community sport and social inclusion: international perspectives. *Sport in Society*, 22(6). <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2019.1565380>

Scheidler, T., & Wagstaff, A. (2018). Exposure to women's sports: changing attitudes toward female athletes. *The Sport Journal*, 20(11).

- Schlenker, M. (2018). The face of gender, sport for development. In Reid, I. A., & Dennehy, J (Eds.), *Seven Faces of Women's Sport*, 1, 101-121. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Scraton, S., & Flintoff, A. (2013). Gender, feminist theory, and sport. *A Companion to Sport*, 96-111. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118325261.ch5>
- Segre, S. (2016). Social constructionism as a sociological approach. *Human Studies*, 39(1), 93–99. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-016-9393-5>
- Senne, J. (2016). Examination of gender equity and female participation in sport. *The Sport Journal.Org*, 1. <https://thesportjournal.org/article/examination-of-gender-equity-and-female-participation-in-sport/>
- Shrestha, S. (2021). 13 notable benefits of playing basketball. Honest Pros and Cons. https://honestproscons.com/benefits-of-playingbasketball/#9_Enhances_Communication_Skills
- Smith, B., Tomasone, J. R., Latimer-Cheung, A. E., & Martin Ginis, K. A. (2015). Narrative as a knowledge translation tool for facilitating impact: Translating physical activity knowledge to disabled people and health professionals. *Health Psychology*, 34(4), 303– 313. <https://doi.org/10.1037/hea0000113>
- Smittick, A., Miner, K., & Cunningham, G. (2019). The “I” in team: Coach incivility, coach gender, and team performance in women’s basketball teams. *Sport Management Review*, 22, 419-433. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2018.06.002>
- Sport for Development and Peace, International Working Group. (2008). Harnessing the power of sport for development and peace: recommendations to governments. *Right To Play*. <https://www.sport-for-development.com/imglib/downloads/sdpiwg2008-harnessing-the-power-of-sport-for-development-and-peace-summary.pdf>
- Stopher, D. (2020). 6 reasons why people love to play basketball. *Northeast Connected*. <https://neconnected.co.uk/6-reasons-why-people-love-to-play-basketball/>
- Sprague, J. (2001). Gender and feminist studies in sociology. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/b0-08-043076-7/03960-7>
- Steenkamp, R. (2019). An exploration of the factors contributing to gender inequality in

athletics participation and leadership. April.

<https://repository.up.ac.za/handle/2263/72692>

Surujlal, J. & Vyas-Doorgapersad, S. (2015). The glass ceiling in sport coaching: perceived challenges of female coaches. *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance*, 1, 80-94. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC183680>

Timperio, A., van Stralen, M.M., Brug, J., Bere, E., Chinapaw, M., de Bourdeaudhuij, I., Jan, N., Maes, L., Manios, Y., Moreno, L.A., Salmon, J., & te Velde, S.J. (2013). Direct and indirect associations between the family physical activity environment and sports participation among 10–12-year-old European children: testing the EnRG framework in the ENERGY project. *The International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical*. 10(1), 15. [10.1186/1479-5868-10-15](https://doi.org/10.1186/1479-5868-10-15).

Tong, R. (2001). Feminist theory. *International Encyclopaedia of the Social & Behavioural Sciences*, 5484 - 5491. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B0-08-043076-7/03945-0>.

Trolan, E. J. (2013). The impact of the media on gender inequality within sport. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 91. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.08.420>

Turkel, A. (2004). The hand that rocks the cradle rocks the boat: the empowerment of women. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis*, 32(1), 41-54. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jaap.32.1.41.28337>

UN. (2007). Women, gender equality and sport. *Women2000 and Beyond, December*. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/Women%20and%20Sport.pdf>

Vella, S. A., Schweickle, M. J., Sutcliffe, J., Liddelow, C., & Swann, C. (2022). A Systems Theory of Mental Health in Recreational Sport. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 34(2). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192114244>

Villalon, C., & Weiller-Abels, K. (2018). NBC's televised media portrayal of female athletes in the 2016 Rio Summer Olympic Games: A critical feminist view. *Sport in Society*, 21(8), 1-21. doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2018.1442206.

Vyas-Doorgapersad, P. S. (2020). Gender equality in the sport sector: the case of selected

Southern African countries. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies*, 12(1), 175–191. Retrieved from: <https://hdl.handle.net/10210/424788>

Vyas-Doorgapersad, S., & Surujlal, J. (2018). Assessing gender equality in the South African sports sector. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies*, 10(1), 294–311. Retrieved from: <https://hdl.handle.net/10210/289620>

Weaver, M.A., & Chelladurai, P. (2002). Mentoring in intercollegiate athletic administration. *Journal of Sport Management*, 16, 96-116. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.16.2.96>

West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & society*, 1(2), 125-151.

Zarrett, N., Cooky, C., & Veliz, P. T. (2019). Coaching through a gender lens: maximizing girls' play and potential. *Women's Sports Foundation*, 29-31. [10.13140/RG.2.2.22172.74885](https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.22172.74885).

Appendix A: Advert

Participate in women basketball players' research on gender inequality in the basketball community



UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Department of Psychology

Do you identify as a woman and play basketball and/or coach basketball? Are you 18 years old and above? Have you been involved in the South African basketball community? We are looking for you to participate in our study on:

How women basketball players experience their gendered status within the sport: An auto-photographic study

WHAT THE STUDY ENTAILS: Women basketball players will be interviewed about their experiences of gender inequality as well as asked to participate in a photo-compilation study that will consist of you taking images that represent gender inequality to you in the basketball community. The researcher will gather the photographs and hold a final focus-group session where participants and the interviewer discuss the photographs together.

BENEFITS: You are given an opportunity to share your views and experiences and your information will contribute to the larger purpose of understand of gender inequality in the basketball community.

PARTICIPATE: If you wish to participate in the study or have any questions, concerns or complaints about the study, please contact **Alika Meyerkort (Researcher):** alika.meyerkort@gmail.com or 072 760 3013

Appendix B: Information Sheet



How women basketball players experience their gendered status within the sport: An auto-photographic study

Hello, my name is Alika Meyerkort and I am currently a Psychology Masters student at the University of Pretoria. I would like to invite you to take part in my research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take some time to read the following information carefully, which will explain the details of this research project. Please feel free to ask any questions if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

Purpose of the study

The lack of gender equality within a sporting setting has not only disadvantaged women but has also done a disservice to society. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of women basketball players in regard to their gendered status within the sport.

Criteria for participation

Those interested in becoming part of this project need to meet the following requirements: identify as a woman, be 18 years old or above, must have played or coached basketball at a provincial or national level for South Africa and lastly be in possession of a camera or a camera phone.

Nature of participation

For the purpose of this study, participants will each be asked take ten photographs they believe capture their experience in the basketball community as a woman. The images will be submitted to the researcher before the commencement of a final individual interview where the images will be discussed.

Right to withdraw

If at any point of the interviews you feel anxious or distressed, you can choose to withdraw from the study at any point without any negative consequences

Benefits

You are given an opportunity to share your views and experiences and your information will contribute to the larger purpose of understand of gender inequality in the basketball community.

Risks

There are no anticipated risks. However, in the case that participants experience distress or discomfort, the interview session will be halted as the researcher addresses the issues brought forward. The interviews will be conducted at a convenient meeting place or via an online platform. The most convenient time for you and the researcher will be arranged.

Confidentiality

The researcher will take strict precautions to safeguard your personal information throughout the study. Your information will be kept in a locked file cabinet without your name and other personal identifiers. Once the study is complete, your tape-recorded information will be stored for a further 5 years and after this period it will be destroyed. While this research will be used for educational purposes, there is a chance that this work might be published in an academic journal. In this case, your identity will still be kept confidential. The organisation will receive a report with summarised details of your opinions and experiences; however, there will be no identifiable details on the forms and in the report, which can be linked back to you individually. Interviews will be conducted in a private room to ensure confidentiality.

Collected data

The researcher will make use of the member checking strategy that involves sending transcripts alongside findings, interpretations and recommendations for the research to the participants, providing an opportunity for them to affirm the findings as representative of the data obtained during the collection process. Once the research process has been concluded the participants will receive electronic copies of the dissertation.

Remuneration

There is no remuneration for your participation in the study, however, if transport becomes a factor then that can be discussed.

Your participation will be greatly appreciated. If you are interested in taking part of this study, please get in contact with the researcher.

Researcher: Alika Meyerkort,
072 760 3013
alika.meyerkort@gmail.com

Appendix C: Consent Form



Title

How women basketball players experience their gendered status within the sport: An auto-photographic study

{**ETHICAL APPROVAL NUMBER**} (If available)

WRITTEN CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

STATEMENT	AGREE	DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without any consequences or penalties.			
I understand that information collected during the study will not be linked to my identity and I give permission to the researchers of this study to access the information.			
I understand that this study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance from Research Ethics Committee in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria.			
I understand who will have access to personal information and how the information will be stored with a clear understanding that I will not be linked to the information in any way.			

I understand how this study will be written up and published.			
I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.			
I consent to being audio recorded.			
I consent to be video recorded.			
I consent to having my photo taken.			
I consent to have my audio recordings /videos / photos be used in research outputs such as publication of articles, thesis and conferences as long as my identity is protected.			
I permit to be quoted directly in the research publication whilst remaining anonymous.			
I have sufficient opportunity to ask questions and I agree to take part in the above study.			

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of person taking consent

Date

Signature

Appendix D: Demographics Sheet for Women Basketball Players



How women basketball players experience their gendered status within the sport: An auto-photographic study

1. What is your name and surname?
2. How old are you?
3. How long have you been involved with basketball?
4. What teams and/or clubs have you played and/or coached basketball for?
5. Are you on the board for BSA or SAWBA?
6. Have you experience gender inequality in this sport?

Appendix E: Interview Questions



How women basketball players experience their gendered status within the sport: An auto-photographic study

Interview questions:

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself? Probing question: Tell me about what got you to start playing basketball and your journey from there?
2. Have you ever felt a difference between the male and the female teams? In other words, did you feel both teams were treated equally and were given the same opportunities?
 - a. If no, when do you think this started?
 - b. If yes, what makes you say this?
3. Have you had women coach you in your basketball career?
4. Have you had women team managers in your basketball career?
5. In your time as a basketball athlete, have you seen or heard about any female board members in the BSA organisation?
6. How would you personally benefit from seeing women in leadership positions? This includes coaching jobs, staff positions and manager positions.
7. Do you think both girls and boys would benefit from it?
8. Do you think the media portrays women's basketball accurately or do you think it plays a role in the stereotypical notions?
9. Has basketball and/or other sports helped you in any way? Physically, mentally and socially?

Appendix F: Auto-photography Themes



How women basketball players experience their gendered status within the sport: An auto-photographic study

Guiding themes for participants

- Experiences of gendered marginalisation in the basketball community
 - Instances where you feel women are not given the same opportunity as their male counterparts due to their gender
 - Instances where you feel men were given more opportunities due to their gender
 - Unequal treatment or rights that affected women basketball players/coaches negatively
- Experiences of gendered empowerment in the basketball community
 - Instances that made you feel proud in the basketball community
 - Opportunities that made you feel empowered
 - Decisions or rulings that made you feel empowered

Please note

- There are no particular photographs that I am looking for; it is all about how these photographs make you, the participant, feel.
- Try to be as honest and raw as possible
- Your contributions will be anonymous
- You will have three weeks to collect as many photographs as possible
- Please do try and collect a minimum of 10 photographs
- If you have any questions at all, do not hesitate to contact the researcher.

Appendix G: Ethical Approval



Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotheo



18 October 2021

Dear Miss AK Meyerkort

Project Title: Exploring how South African women basketball players experience their gendered status within the sport: An auto-photographic study
Researcher: Miss AK Meyerkort
Supervisor(s): Dr JH Martin
Department: Psychology
Reference number: 21500755 (HUM057/0821)
Degree: Masters

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was **approved** by the Research Ethics Committee on 30 September 2021. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely,

Prof Karen Harris
Chair: Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: tracey.andrew@up.ac.za

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof KL Harris (Chair); Mr A Bizos; Dr A-M de Beer; Dr A dos Santos; Dr P Gutura; Ms KT Govinder Andrew; Dr E Johnson; Dr D Krige; Prof D Maree; Mr A Mohamed; Dr I Noomé; Dr J Okeke; Dr C Puttergill; Prof D Reyburn; Prof M Soer; Prof E Taljard; Ms D Mokalapa

Room 7-27, Humanities Building, University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20, Hatfield 0028, South Africa
Tel +27 (0)12 420 4853 | Fax +27 (0)12 420 4501 | Email pghumanities@up.ac.za | www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities