

THE GRADUATE COLLEGE OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

ANNOUNCES THE FINAL EXAMINATION OF

ANGELA DEE RAMEY

FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE
GRADUATE COLLEGE



DEPARTMENT OF NURSING

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Personal Factors Influencing Physical Activity Participation of Suburban Midlife Women

COMMITTEE IN CHARGE: Carol Rogers, PhD, RN, Co-Chair,
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ABSTRACT: More midlife women are choosing to live in suburban communities which may involve expansive structures that restrict participation in physical activity (PA) and promote a sedentary lifestyle. Although midlife women describe personal factors that influence their participation in regular PA including behavioral determinants, female social role expectations, hormone-related symptoms at menopause, social support, and spirituality, there are no known reports of the influence of these factors on PA participation among suburban midlife women. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore how midlife women living in a suburban community in Oklahoma describe their experience with menopause and PA in an effort to increase PA and reduce the risk for obesity and cardiovascular disease.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposeful sample of 25 midlife women, age 46 to 64 years recruited from a suburban community in Oklahoma. All had a prior history of moderate-intensity PA, and were currently physically capable of participating in PA. NVivo 11 was used to assist with content and thematic analyses of data from the semi-structured interviews. Additional data were collected and analyzed using SPSS in order to describe the sample including demographic data, and measures of both current PA level (*Stanford Brief Activity Survey*) and menopausal symptoms (*Greene Climacteric Scale*).

Content and thematic analyses revealed four major themes: (1) *Continually Pulled in Different Directions*; (2) *It's a Balance*; (3) *Patterns in Transition*; and (4) *Return to Focusing*. Within these themes, suburban midlife women described personal factors related to their experience with PA that were most often viewed as a perceived barrier or benefit/outcome expectation. Despite environmental constraints, midlife suburban women described seeking out opportunities for PA both within and outside of the community. Midlife women placed a high priority on PA with family. When designing interventions to increase PA, it is important to consider the influence of specific menopausal symptoms, midlife women's description of a shift in their pattern of PA participation across the lifespan, and strategies the women have devised for overcoming PA barriers. Key Words: women, midlife, menopause, physical activity.