As of 2010, the National Golf Foundation (NGF) states that racial minorities in general, and specifically racial minority females, are underrepresented as recreational golfers (National Golf Foundation, 2010). The purpose of this paper is to analyze a grassroots golf program aimed at increasing the participation of one of golf’s most underrepresented groups (i.e., Black females). More specifically, we focus on one particular Black female (i.e., a golf instructor and former professional golfer) who has been successful at introducing other Black females to golf, and increasing their interest in the game at the recreational level via her “Ladies Night Out” golf clinics. In this regard, our proposed study could not only address the issue of racial minority female underrepresentation in a historically White male dominated sport (i.e., golf, see Apostolis & Giles, 2011), but also give voice to a racial and gender minority group that has historically been marginalized in sport as well as the sport management literature (see Bruening, 2005).

In light of the history of racial and gender oppression in American society in general (see Feagin, 2006), and in sport (especially golf) in particular, we will employ a critical race theory (CRT) framework, particularly focusing on the tenets of intersectionality (see Crenshaw, 1991) and storytelling/voice/experiential knowledge (see Ladson-Billings, 1998) to understand the perspectives and experiences of the Black females in our study. In addition, given that this case study represents an example of how sport can be used to build community among groups of people with common interests and experiences we will also draw from the sense of community literature (see Warner & Dixon, 2011; Warner, Kerwin, & Walker, 2013) to better understand important factors that contribute to these Black females engagement with the game of golf.

Our research will take the form of an intrinsic, qualitative case study design (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2005). Creswell (2007) describes an intrinsic case study as a study in which the focus of the research is on the case itself (e.g., a program or individual). Furthermore, according to Stake (2005), the purpose of an intrinsic case study is to allow researchers to understand the intricacies of a unique or distinct program, individual, and/or phenomenon. In this regard, we are interested in understanding the unique or distinct attributes of the “Ladies Night Out” golf program and its leader. This case fits the rationale for an intrinsic case study in that the primary participant is the only Black female golf instructor in her organization, and she is increasing participation in and among one of the most underrepresented groups in golf.

The primary research site will be a TopGolf (TG) facility (where the “Ladies Night Out” golf program is conducted on a weekly basis) in a large southern city in the U.S. What is intriguing about this particular organization is that it has found a way to get the “non-golfer” to hit golf balls. The concept of TG is best described as “a 240-yard outfield with dartboard-like targets in the ground. The closer to the center or bulls-eye you get and the farther out you hit the ball, the more points you receive” (TopGolf, 2013). Having visited several TG locations, the environment is like nothing we have ever experienced before. Our best description would be, “dart/ski-ball scoring with a golf club and golf ball with bowling lanes at your favorite sports bar”.

Purposeful sampling will be utilized to select the participants for this study. Criterion sampling is a form of purposeful sampling that predetermines criteria that the participants must meet in order to be included in the study (Patton, 1990). The participants for this study need to meet two criteria: (1) self-identifying Black females aged 18 and older, and (2) they must be a participant in at least one of the “Ladies Night Out” clinics.

The data for this project will come from several sources: observations and field notes, semi-structured interviews with the leader and her participants in the golf program, and artifacts (e.g., pictures from the leader’s website). The data will be analyzed using the guidelines of a multi-step inductive analysis (Thomas, 2006), in which the researcher conducts several in-depth readings of the textual data (i.e., interviews and fieldnotes), with notes being taken, so that general overarching themes can be created. Next, line by line coding will help to further analyze the specific details in
the data. As themes begin to emerge, overarching main-categories will be created, with sub-categories under each main-category (Boyatzis, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). This process will be continued until theoretical saturation occurs (i.e., no new themes are developed) (Creswell, 2007).

This project is a work in progress and data collection will begin in January of 2014. However, based on some preliminary, informal interactions the lead researcher has had with the leader of the “Ladies Night Out” community, we have observed that Black females involved in this community are being introduced to the game of golf, are developing basic skills (e.g., the golf swing) and confidence, and in turn, are introducing others in the Black community (e.g., their children and friends) to the game. Our formal research will dig and delve further into why and how this particular Black female leader is building community among Black females who are interested in engaging with the game of golf.

We will also discuss some practical implications our research has for golf industry practitioners, the Black community, and scholars interested in further studying and understanding the issue of diversity in the sport industry, particularly within the golf context.