

“ARE THERE ANY ACTIVITIES?” BLACK MOTHERS’ PERCEPTIONS AND CHOICES  
PERTAINING TO RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR THEIR CHILDREN

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Recreation, Sport and Tourism  
with a minor in College Teaching  
in the Graduate College of the  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2016

Urbana, Illinois

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to understand how Black mothers' beliefs and values guided their choices in out-of-school activities for their children. The study is based on interviews with several Black mothers, which attempted to uncover how Black mothers' lived experience played a role in choosing recreational activities for their children out-of-school free time. This results of this present study provides more context as to why certain activities are deemed by Black mothers more suitable recreational choices than others. Specifically, the findings suggest that there is a shift from what has previously been discussed in the literature about the Black community and what Black mothers stated in this study as to the influences on their recreation choices for their children. The interviews with Black mothers revealed several benefits they perceived to result from recreational activities for their children, as well as a number of influences that impacted their choices for activities, none of which is discussed directly in the previous literature. From this study, we have learned about what factors influence Black mothers' choices in out-of-school recreational activities for their children, the role of race within those choices, and the types of messages that Black mothers communicate to their sons and daughters.

For this study, 11 Black mothers with a child/ren between the ages of 7-15 years of age were interviewed about their beliefs and values using an interpretative descriptive design. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted anywhere between 30 minutes to 1 hour. Black mothers were recruited until conceptual density was achieved in their responses. This study makes significant contributions to the leisure literature, because it is the first study that employs an interpretative descriptive approach in ascertaining Black mothers' beliefs about choosing out-of-school activities with the intention of developing practical application of these findings. By adopting this approach, this study was able to explain some of the beliefs and values that Black

mothers hold in choosing out-of-school recreational activities for their children. Furthermore, by providing various perspectives of Black mothers' ideal recreational choices for their children, what they currently enroll their child in, and what beliefs and values guide those choices, we are better able to understand the Black community's out-of-school free time participation in recreation activities and what influences those choices.

The results of this study also reveal that there exists significant cross-cultural miscommunication between recreational professionals and the minority communities that they are serving. This study, thus, highlights the importance of a cultural competency model in approaching recreation planning, marketing, staff training, etc. in efforts to bridge the gap between the expectations of the minority communities and the actual programs provided by recreation agencies. I argue that by adopting a cultural competency model, and keeping in mind the changing demographic influences in mind, recreation agencies will be able to better serve minority communities as they create and implement new programs. This approach, compared to solely focusing on diversity training, over time will contribute to stronger, more confident minority communities, and to a healthier, more integrated society as a whole.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

The Aspen Project Play Coalition (“Facts: Sports Activity and Children,” 2015) reported that youth in the United States on average spend 40% of their week participating in some form of out-of-school recreation activity, with sport and regular physical activity being the most popular. In 2013, they estimated that 5.5 million youth were participating in basketball, 5 million in soccer, 731,000 in track & field, 4.5 million in baseball, 1.3 million in football, and 862,000 in softball. While lower than for youth participation in past years, these figures still show that sport is a popular out-of-school activity for children and youth in the United States.

Recreation professionals are charged with providing recreational experiences to the clients they serve. I’ve often wondered what processes go into determining what programs or activities would be offered to their community. It was not until I became a full-time professional that I understood how directors in the recreation field approach this process of choosing activities to offer in their program listings. Armed with this knowledge, I began to understand how the interests of the community residents that they serve impact the activity offerings of recreation agencies. This created more questions for me about why certain activities were popular and why other activities were not offered.

My first thought was to reflect on why certain activities were chosen over others, which brought to mind the idea that stereotypical beliefs might impact the selection of offerings to communities. Stereotypes are usually created from observed behaviors in cultural groups. Generally, they are an exaggerated representation of cultural norms and cannot sufficiently explain the popularity of certain activities over others. Stereotypes imposed by society have the power to influence or effect change in program offerings because of stigmas attached to certain types of programs (Schmalz, Kerstetter, & Anderson, 2004). Most stigmas are negative in nature

due to the cause of their inception and may unjustly provide individuals with preconceived notions about others' preferences. In addition, stereotypes and stigmas do not adequately explain why racial groups choose to participate in specific activities and not others. Since stereotypes and stigmas did not provide answers as to why certain recreation activities are chosen, I decided to reflect on the influence of parental choices on leisure participation.

As I researched the benefits that recreational activities provide community residents, I realized that parental beliefs that there will be a positive outcome for their children likely determine, at least in part, what activities they choose to emphasize. Parents typically enroll their child in sport or some form of recreational activity for the benefits they believe participation will provide their child. These could range from improving cognitive skills that will help with academic learning and memory, social benefits such as developing friendships or learning to be in a group, or for various psychological benefits such as developing a positive self-identity or building character. Before I could fully engage in studying parental beliefs, I had to compartmentalize the influence of race on parental choices. Since most scholarship has targeted and produced results on parental perceptions of activities without considering the influence of race, this has resulted in generalized conclusions about parental beliefs and values held about out-of-school recreation participation. These findings have been primarily derived from studies on White parents and their children, and they have virtually ignored the perceptions and participation of other racial groups such as the Black community. For this reason, this study was undertaken to explore and understand how racial beliefs could shape Black mothers' ideas about out-of-school recreation activities for their children and how they might differ from those of the prevailing majority White community. The research presented here was guided by the belief that race has a significant impact on the choices that people make and on the behaviors they exhibit,

particularly those of a minority culture. The parental beliefs of Black mothers were explored in-depth in this study to understand how and why certain out-of-school recreation activities were emphasized with the hope of facilitating positive outcomes for their children.

### **Parental Beliefs Concerning Out-of-School Activities for Children**

Literature suggests that there are certain beliefs about child rearing that Black mothers hold that influence their choice of recreational activities in seeking to facilitate positive youth development in their children. This process is not specific to the Black community, all ethnic communities have a form of positive youth development that they attempt to facilitate through various forms and types of activities. What is unique is how positive youth development may be realized in the Black community through mothers' beliefs and perceptions about emphasizing certain recreation activities over others. The impact of Black mothers' beliefs and practices that is seen through their choices for out-of-school recreation activities for their children, and how this might encourage their positive youth development, needed to be more fully understood. Literature has pointed to such positive youth development results via academic achievement (Frabutt, Walker, & MacKinnon-Lewis, 2002; Hughes & Chen, 1998; Lesane-Brown, 2006), but the assertion that similar positive outcomes could be obtained through recreation participation was an area in need of scholarly attention.

Research has shown that Black mothers may have intentional or unintentional motives underlying the choices that they make for their children's lives (Frabutt, Walker, & MacKinnon-Lewis, 2002; Hughes & Chen, 1998; Lesane-Brown, 2006). They hold certain beliefs and values that they want to pass on to their children, and it has been suggested that recreation participation has been used as a vehicle to transmit this information from Black mother to child. In this case, recreation agencies may have a larger impact on different racial groups than has

been previously understood, requiring these agencies to reflect on their mission and obtain a better sense of how they are impacting their communities. Regardless of the intention of recreation agencies, if racial groups perceive certain activities to be more oriented towards specific groups other than their own, they may elect to withdraw or not participate at all in such recreation programs. Being aware of this could help agencies to structure their programs to fully address the needs of everyone in their community, especially Black mothers who are wanting their children to gain positive social and personal characteristics.

For Black mothers, the central focus of their beliefs in choosing certain recreational activities may not explicitly focus on positive youth development, but rather on ways to achieve a desired effect about how sons and daughters should behave and grow. Research has shown that Black mothers have a tendency to enroll their children in certain recreational activities for the potential physical, cognitive and social characteristics that could be developed through participation ( Basch, 2011; White & Gager, 2007). One popular form of out-of-school recreation activity within the Black community is sport (Beamon, 2009; Beamon & Bell, 2006; Pitter & Andrews, 1997). Black mothers have been known to emphasize sport participation as a vehicle for promoting academic and physical/athletic success, and personal growth within their children. This is not to suggest that there aren't other activities that could facilitate positive youth development characteristics in Black children, just that not many activities have been an area of concentration within recreation scholarship at the level of sport participation.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to examine whether and how low-income Black mothers' beliefs influence their choice of out-of-school activities for their children. To address this, I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What role do Black mothers' perceptions and parental beliefs play in the choice of their children's out-of-school recreation activities?
2. To what extent is positive youth development facilitated through Black mothers' choices for their children's participation in out-of-school recreation activities?
3. What role does gender play in the extent to which Black mothers' perceptions differentially influence their choices for their children's out-of-school recreation activities?

By addressing the above research questions I hoped to gain an in-depth understanding of the reasons that Black mothers have for choosing certain out-of-school activities in which to enroll their sons and daughters. I aspired to contribute to the literature by examining the parental beliefs of Black mothers and the role they have in their out-of-school recreation activity choices for their children.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

There are various reasons that have been suggested for why youth participate in out-of-school recreation activities. These reasons include having fun, for academic benefits, to develop social skills, for exercise and health, to learn a specific skill, and for those of younger ages, as an inexpensive childcare option. Parents are a central facilitator of youth's out-of-school recreation activity participation, as they are typically the ones who make the choice, complete enrollment, provide access and transportation, take care of affiliated costs, equipment, uniforms, and much more. It is thus crucial to better understand parents' beliefs and decisions in choosing out-of-school recreation activities and why, how, and what factors guide parental choices.

There have been some popular ideas proposed as to what factors influence parents in choosing recreational activities for their children. The most popular is their belief that their child will learn something important and that there would be beneficial outcomes associated with their participation. For example, learning how to be a team player, becoming physically fit, exercising their brain to perform better academically, and polishing their social skills to have more and better friends, represent the most common ones. For all of the beliefs that are associated with children participation in out-of-school recreation activities, scholarship has struggled to provide consistent support for these beliefs in relation to the youth development literature.

Bocarro, Greenwood & Henderson (2008) conducted an integrative review of recreation journals to ascertain scholars' interests related to research on youth development. Examining 1,913 articles published in four recreation journals from 1985-2005, they found that 9.5% discussed children, youth, and /or adolescence as a focal point; 84% discussed boys and girls, but when studies limited their sample to one gender, most studies focused on boys. Neither race nor ethnicity was examined in detail and the majority of the studies had not even reported the racial

or ethnic characteristics of their sample. In addition, 74% of the articles discussed community programs as the primary setting for studies focused on youth, while home or family settings comprised 36% of the studies. These statistics suggested that while there has been significant attention given to youth and recreation, there were still gaps in the literature. Specifically, they advocate that increasing the exploration of the intersection between recreation and race in home/family settings, and presenting a heightened interest in girls, could contribute to a more in-depth and inclusive understanding of youth development. This chapter reviews literature that seeks to understand how out-of-school recreational activities are chosen for Black youth and what concepts of youth development might be facilitated through these choices. The conceptual framework that most closely focuses on the benefits that Black youth gain through their recreation participation is positive youth development.

### **Youth Development**

Increases in juvenile crime and concerns about troubled youth led to the beginning of major federal funding initiatives to address these issues in the 1950s (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and Hawkins, 2004). As societal trends increased in the 1960s, there were simultaneous increases in the national rates of poverty, divorce, out-of-wedlock births, family mobility, and single parenthood. Catalano et al. (2004) described the socialization forces that had historically nurtured the development of children as requiring reconceptualization in order to support the family in raising successful children.

Initially, interventions were designed to support families and children through this crisis. The focus of interventions was on reducing juvenile crime, or transforming poor character in youth. Originally, there were some successes achieved through an intervention approach, but critics began to suggest that this approach was not adequately preventing juvenile crime because

the problem behaviors were already present in the youth. Thus, a new prevention approach began to emerge with an emphasis on supporting youth earlier on before problem behaviors occurred. As researchers and practitioners in the profession sought to address the circumstances of children's lives (family, school, community, and peer group influences), their approach only focused on the prevention of a single problem behavior.

Most of the early prevention programs were not based on theory and research on child development. As research was conducted and knowledge grew, prevention strategies changed accordingly. This second generation of prevention efforts sought to use this research to better understand the predictors of negative behaviors, in order to interrupt the processes leading to specific problem behaviors. Theories about how people make decisions were the guiding principles in the implementation of second-generation prevention efforts. Still, these new prevention efforts began to be criticized due to their focus on a single problem behavior. Thus began the shift from a prevention framework to a positive youth development approach, where the co-occurrence of problem behaviors within a single child and common predictors of multiple problem behaviors could be considered and appropriately addressed in programming.

Batavick (1997) conducted a study focused on a theory called "Youth Development," which was grounded in the philosophy of positive youth development, seeking to integrate community supports, strengthen family functioning, and empower individuals to shape their own plans and the programming that affects them. The authors described this theory as focusing on avoiding labels about what is wrong in the individual, family, or within a community but rather understanding that only the individuals, families, and communities themselves held the power to claim ownership of their own strengths, their problems, and their own change. This shift in direction now meant that the focus instead should be placed on identifying the strengths of an



individual or community. It is known that an individual's environment often has many stressors, it is also filled with many resources that contribute to one's quality of life. The implications for agencies serving youth were that staff should be trained to listen to an individual's wants, acknowledge the individual's or community's strength, and identify resources and opportunities. As research and scholarship, evolved and produced new knowledge on youth development, the youth development approach became part of a larger, broader concept labeled "positive youth development".

### **Positive Youth Development**

Catalano et al. (2004) described the theory of Positive Youth Development in the United States as beginning in the 1990s, attributable to practitioners, policy makers, and research scientists adopting a broader focus on addressing youth issues. From the authors' historical account described earlier, there were flaws with the intervention and prevention approach to youth development due to their narrow focus on problem behaviors. The flaws in the other approaches caused a philosophical shift where the focus turned to developmental precursors of both positive and negative youth development. This in turn pushed practitioners, policy makers, and prevention scientists to encourage the expansion of social programs beyond the one-dimensional behavioral focus and to consider programs that had a wider effect on positive and problem behaviors. The authors stated that empirical evidence has demonstrated that increasing positive youth development outcomes would likely lead to the prevent of problem behaviors due to the fact that the same risk and protective factors that have been shown to predict problems, were also important in predicting positive outcomes. This etiological base suggested that decreasing risk and increasing protection was likely to affect both problematic and positive outcomes.

Batavick (1997) used the term “positive youth development” to refer to a theoretical framework in which all youths needed to be provided with opportunities and supports throughout their adolescent and early adult years. “Positive Youth Development” has more recently been defined by Witt & Crompton (2003), which served as the perspective adopted in the present study:

“...a process which prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent. Positive Youth Development addresses the broader developmental needs of youth, in contrast to deficit-based models that focus solely on youth problems.”

(p. 5)

Catalano et al. (2004) expanded on our understanding of positive youth development and suggested that positive youth development should seek to achieve one or more objective.

These positive youth development constructs are further described below.

### ***Promoting Bonding***

Bonding is the emotional attachment and commitment a child makes to social relationships in his or her family, peer group, school, community, or culture (Catalano et al., 2004). It has been suggested that positive bonding with an adult is crucial to the development of a capacity for adaptive responses to change and for growth into a healthy and fully functioning adult (Batavick, 1997; Catalano et al., 2004; Fuller, Percy, Bruening & Cotrufo, 2013). Healthy bonding establishes the child’s trust in himself and in others (Catalano et al., 2004; Fuller et al., 2013). Inadequate bonding establishes patterns of insecurity and self-doubt and a fundamental mistrust of self and others (Catalano et al., 2004), and could lead to the child or adolescent seeking to feel secure in other ways, possibly through drugs, alcohol, unhealthy relationships, antisocial behaviors or other behavioral problems (Batavick, 1997; Fuller et al., 2013).

### ***Fostering Resilience***

Resilience is an individual's capacity for adapting to change and stressful events in healthy, productive and flexible ways (Catalano et al., 2004). Resilience has been identified in research as a characteristic of youth who, when exposed to multiple risk factors, show successful responses to challenges and use this learning to achieve successful outcomes (Brown & Tylka, 2010; Brown, 2008; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Miller & Macintosh, 1999). Non-resilient youth when faced with adversity are ill-prepared and would adopt problem behaviors as a way of coping. This could be through the manifestation of emotional, social, and behavioral adjustment problems, including avoidance of the conflict, not developing healthy friendships and relationships, and being emotionally insecure. Youth that have fostered resilience capacity would be better suited to handle adversity and develop more positive characteristics, as having secure peer relationships, being emotionally stable and able to persevere during difficult situations.

### ***Promoting Social Competence***

Social competence encompasses the range of interpersonal skills that help youth integrate their feelings, thinking, and actions to achieve specific social and interpersonal goals (Batavick, 1997; Catalano et al., 2004; Fuller et al., 2013). Social competence skills include encoding and decoding relevant social cues, accurately interpreting those social cues, generating effective solutions to interpersonal problems, realistically anticipating consequences and potential obstacles to one's actions, and translating social decisions into effective behavior (Catalano et al., 2004; Fuller et al., 2013). Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin (2003) described how most youth activities can help to develop teamwork and social skills, which in turn fosters social competencies, teamwork, and leadership skills. The authors suggested that the most facilitative

recreation activities could help promote interpersonal relationships, extend peer networks, and develop a deeper connection with adults. Youths who exhibit deficits in social competence may have difficulty establishing strong interpersonal relationships, creating and maintaining a wide peer network, and developing a secure connection with adults.

### ***Promoting Emotional Competence***

Emotional competence is the ability to identify and respond to feelings and emotional reactions in oneself and others (Catalano et al., 2004). This includes identifying and labeling feelings, expressing feelings, assessing the intensity of feelings, managing feelings, delaying gratification, controlling impulses, and reducing stress (Catalano et al., 2004). When an individual is ineffective in managing emotional competence, he/she may attempt to avoid thoughts and feelings related to the problems they are experiencing. In such a case, he/she may fail to identify their emotions and thus be less able to resolve emotional problems in a positive way and less likely to accept his/her own feelings. In the case of developing youth, they experience various emotions as they age and if they are ineffective in managing their emotions this could lead to lower self-esteem and more prone to seeking emotional fulfillment through unhealthy behaviors such as drug addictions, alcoholism, and abusive relationship.

### ***Promoting Cognitive Competence***

Cognitive competence includes two overlapping but distinct sub-constructs. The first construct is the ability to develop and apply the cognitive skills of self-talk, the reading and interpretation of social cues, using steps for problem-solving and decision-making, understanding the perspective of others, understanding behavioral norms, having a positive attitude toward life, and self-awareness (Catalano et al., 2004). The second construct is related to academic and intellectual achievement, where the emphasis is more focused on the

development of core capacities including the ability to use logic, analytic thinking, and abstract reasoning (Catalano et al., 2004). In education, developing critical thinking skills is key to mastering learning goals and processing information, as well as predicting youths' academic performance. Apart from the positive effects cognitive competence provides in education, having developed this construct helps youths be more pragmatic about health and media messages, and thus less likely to internalize distorted messages regarding health and stereotypical images. The belief is that if critical and creative thinking skills are not fully developed, than youth will not be able to be independent life-long learners but rather individuals dependent on information communicated from others.

### ***Promoting Behavioral Competence***

Behavioral competence refers to effective action separated into three dimensions: nonverbal communication (facial expression, tone of voice, style of dress, gesture or eye contact), verbal communication (making clear requests, responding effectively to criticism, expressing feelings clearly), and taking action (helping others, walking away from negative situations, participating in positive activities) (Catalano et al., 2004). Promoting behavioral competence will educate youth on adapting to situations with the purpose of displaying socially appropriate behavior. For instance, there are times facial expression and tone of voice may be at odds with a youth walking away from a negative situation indicating that they are not pleased with that decision. Teaching youth how nonverbal communication is important to human interactions and preparing them to have their nonverbal and verbal behavior, and actions mirror each other helps to express the importance of clear communication. When behaviors are not complimentary to each other this indicates conflicting messages, typically a sign of dishonest intentions. More research needs to be conducted to fully understand the influence of behavioral

competence in positive youth development and how behavioral knowledge could be transferred to youth, as there is currently no consistent research that provides details of how to facilitate this type of learning.

### ***Promoting Moral Competence***

Moral competence is a youth's ability to assess and respond to the ethical, affective, or social-justice dimensions of a situation (Catalano et al., 2004). Moral development is a multilevel process where children acquire society's standards of right and wrong, with the focus on the choices that are made when facing moral dilemmas (Catalano et al., 2004). Typically, this knowledge is passed from parents to children based on how parents judge moral events and attribute legitimacy to their response. This is not to suggest that parents are the only place where youth gain moral knowledge, but parents are the most common educators. Behind parents, peer interactions are as useful and important for the development of morality, empathy, and sympathy in youth (Catalano et al., 2004).

In both cases, youth are informed about moral competence through their experiences making it critical to surround them in environments that would be conducive to their development. For example, children who are exposed to a corrupt environments comprised of lying, deceit, theft, violence, crime, and so on may be more susceptible to believing that this type of behavior is morally correct. Positive youth development suggests that if youth are nurtured in a positive moral environment than it would foster moral children who know the difference between societal right and wrong actions and behaviors. There is still more research that needs to be conducted in this competence to understand practically how this knowledge could be communicated effectively to youth.

### ***Fosters Self-determination***

Self-determination is the ability to think for oneself and to take action consistent with those thoughts (Catalano et al., 2004). Much of the literature on self-determination has emerged from work with disabled youth and from cultural–identity work with ethnic and minority populations (Catalano et al., 2004; Wehmeyer and Garner, 2003). Wehmeyer and Garner (2003) defined self-determination as:

“...volitional actions that enable one to act as the primary causal agent in one’s life and to maintain or improve one’s quality of life”. Self-determination is defined as skills, knowledge, and beliefs, which facilitate goal-directed, self-regulated, and autonomous behaviour.”

(p. 257)

It is believed that self-determination in young people is fostered through positive youth development programs that promote autonomy, independent thinking, self-advocacy, empowerment of youth, and their ability to live according to values and standards of society (Wehmeyer and Garner, 2003). This approach is consistent with the emergence of positive youth development theory, which emphasizes fostering human strengths (Batavick, 1997; Catalano et al., 2004; Wehmeyer and Garner, 2003; Witt & Crompton, 2003). Typically, people who are self-determined are self-initiated, self-directed, and make things happen in their lives. For instance, academic achievement is strongly associated with autonomous motivation. Youth who are autonomous and intrinsically motivated experience more positive educational outcomes at school than children who are not.

Literature suggests that there are various factors to youth’s development of self-determination, which include parents, teachers, and cultural influences (Wehmeyer et al., 2003). Parenting styles that are responsive and supportive to their children help to engage their youth in self-initiated and self-regulated behavior (Batavick, 1997; Fuller et al., 2013). When parents are

not as supportive and responsive to their children, they may have difficulty being self-determined and motivated in their behavior without their parents' guidance. Teachers who also employ an autonomous yet supportive teaching style assist youths in achieving their maximum learning potential by giving them the freedom to learn on their own with the understanding that they could get help when needed (Wehmeyer et al., 2003). Learning that is forced or regimented prevent youth from making mistakes and learning from them, which is a necessary skill for positive growth and development. In some cultures, children are not allowed to be autonomous and parents are not supportive of the needs of their children (Batavick, 1997; Fuller et al., 2013; Wehmeyer et al., 2003). In certain cultures, it is imperative that children learn this crucial survival technique to navigate the harsh environment that they live in (e.g., Black and Latino/a communities), while in other cultures this is contrary to established social customs (e.g., Asian and Muslim communities). The negative development factors that youth may experience later in life include difficulty making decisions and critical thinking capacities not being fully developed. Thus, promoting self-determination in positive youth development programs for children is key to preparing youth to be more autonomous and more adept in making decisions as they age.

### ***Fostering Spirituality***

Spirituality is defined as relating to, consisting of, or having the nature of, spirit; it is concerned with or affecting the soul; to being of, from, or relating to God; or, of or belonging to a church or religion (Catalano et al., 2004). The construct of spirituality has been associated in some research with the development of a youth's moral reasoning, moral commitment, or belief in the moral order (Catalano et al., 2004), specifically, focusing on the quality of life in youth (understanding the meaning of life and having hope for a brighter future). The perceived outcomes of having spirituality are primarily that spirituality is a cause and concomitant of the



quality of life for youth, especially for those facing adversity (Batavick, 1997; Catalano et al., 2004; Fuller et al., 2013). When adversity occurs, youths are able to better maintain psychological well-being and exhibit less problem behaviors. Children who have not developed their spiritual identity could be susceptible to adversity and find other negative outlets to deal with environmental pressures, such as alcohol, drug use, and other risky behaviors. Unfortunately, research on spirituality has not been as robust as other constructs in relation to positive youth development and is worth exploring further.

### ***Fostering Self-efficacy***

Self-efficacy is the perception that the individual can achieve his or her desired goals through their own actions (Catalano et al., 2004). Strategies associated with self-efficacy include personal goal-setting and is directed at preventing, controlling, and coping with potential difficulties that might be encountered. It is believed that the stronger the perceived self-efficacy is, the higher the goals people set for themselves and the stronger their commitment to those goals will be (Catalano et al., 2004; Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007). The literature on self-efficacy is rich, but in relation to positive youth development the focus has been on how exposing youth to positive programming could help children promote goal setting and better cope with difficulties that may arise from trying to achieve those goals (Batavick, 1997; Fuller et al., 2013). When youth's self-efficacy is not promoted this could lead to a lack of goal setting and difficulty moving past adversities that they may experience in reaching their goal.

### ***Fostering Clear and Positive Identity***

This construct focuses on the development of a coherent sense of self through identity development (Catalano et al., 2004). Identity is viewed within this construct as a "self-structure," an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of abilities, beliefs, and individual

history, which is shaped by a child's navigation of normal life crises or challenges at each level of development (Catalano et al., 2004). Healthy identity formation relates to having a firm understanding of who they are as individuals, from their likes, dislikes, and heritage. Once a healthy identity formation occurs it creates a secure foundation for who that individual is and it could mitigate any negative messages that are contrary. If an adolescent or young adult does not achieve a healthy identity, role confusion could be the resulting effect (Catalano et al., 2004; Fuller et al., 2013). Role confusion is when there is not a secure understanding of who the individual is and thus they are driven to attempt to learn who they are through experimentation. This lack of established identity could lead to youth questioning who they are and being susceptible to problematic behaviors in order to find a fit. Through positive youth development, children who have a clear and positive identity are able to be secure in who they are and are able to perform better academically, successfully mitigate the influence of negative media messages, and develop positive relationships with adults. Youths who do not establish a clear and positive identity will be more susceptible to problem behaviors consistent with them trying different identities to be accepted within society, including drug use and other risky behaviors.

### ***Fostering Belief in the Future***

Belief in the future refers to the internalization of hope and optimism about possible outcomes (Batavick, 1997; Catalano et al., 2004; Fuller et al., 2013). This construct is linked to studies on long-range goal setting, belief in higher education, and beliefs that support employment or work values (Catalano et al., 2004). Research says that hope and the optimism that future outcomes will occur for youth help to mitigate the adverse situations that youths may currently experience in their daily lives (Batavick, 1997; Fuller et al., 2013). Positive youth development focuses on the positive aspects of what the future holds for youth, such as finding a

job and going to college, rather than the negative aspects related to not achieving their goals. Research has demonstrated that positive future expectations predict better social and emotional adjustment in school and a stronger internal locus of control (Catalano et al., 2004), while acting as a protective factor in reducing the negative effects of high levels of stress on self-rated competence (Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007). If there is no hope for a brighter future for youth, they may become discouraged and not attempt to motivate themselves to do better or set goals to pursue and achieve.

### ***Provides Recognition for Positive Behavior***

Recognition for positive involvement is the affirmative response of those in the social environment to desired behaviors exhibited by youths (Catalano et al., 2004). According to social learning theory, behavior is in large part a consequence of the reinforcement or lack of reinforcement that follows an individual's actions (Catalano et al., 2004). Behavior is strengthened through reward (positive reinforcement) and avoidance of punishment (negative reinforcement) or weakened by aversive stimuli (positive punishment) and loss of reward (negative punishment). Through programming that emphasizes positive youth development, an approach to learning may use consequences as a way to educate youth about the potential outcomes of their choices. Instead of focusing on the negative outcomes of negative behavior, the focus would be on the positive outcomes to positive behavior. This moves attention away from describing inappropriate behavior, and focuses instead on appropriate behavior and the rewards that they would elicit. Concentrating on what is wrong is not a prudent way of correcting the problematic behavior or issue because it is already present and instead highlights the problem.

### ***Providing Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement***

The provision of opportunities for prosocial involvement relates to the presentation of events and activities across different social environments that encourage youth to participate in prosocial actions (Catalano et al., 2004). Providing prosocial opportunities in the non-school hours has been the focus of much discussion and study (Catalano et al., 2004). Literature states that acting to benefit others is a significant and important element of healthy development for youth, which allows them to positively give back to their community and help others (Fuller et al., 2013; Rozier-Battle, 2002). Outcomes associated with prosocial involvement include high social skills, low emotionally negative tendencies, fostering of positive well-being and autonomy, and mitigation of negative problem behavior. For a child to acquire key interpersonal skills in early development, opportunities for positive interaction and participation must be available (Catalano et al., 2004). Programs that are conducted through a positive youth development lens facilitate opportunities for youth to give back to their community. Youths not afforded this opportunity may not develop the positive characteristics associated with volunteering or positively influencing other individuals or their communities.

### ***Fosters Prosocial Norms***

Programs that foster prosocial norms seek to encourage youth to adopt healthy beliefs and clear standards for behavior through a range of approaches (Catalano et al., 2004). These techniques may include providing youth with data about the small number of people their age who use illegal drugs so that they realize that they do not need to use drugs to be “normal”, encouraging youth to make explicit commitments in the presence of peers or mentors not to use drugs or avoid school, involving older youth in communicating healthy standards for behavior to those of younger ages, or encouraging youth to identify personal goals and set standards for

themselves that will help them achieve their goals (Catalano et al., 2004). If youth do not foster this competence they may believe that socially deviant behavior is the norm, and they would have difficulty adjusting to mainstream society that might operate based on a different set of social norms. Providing youth with positive programming focuses attention on like-minded positive activities that they could be involved in, rather than emphasizing negative activities. This change in the focus centers on the strengths of social norms rather than on what is socially unacceptable.

### ***Outcomes of the Positive Youth Development Approach***

An effective positive youth development approach should work towards mitigating negative behaviors (e.g., deviant behavior, drug use, gang-activity), while at the same time enabling youth to develop their social, healthy (emotional and physical), vocational and civic competencies needed to be contributors to society (Bocarro et al., 2008; Hershberg, DeSouza, Warren, Lerner & Lerner, 2013; Kenyon & Hanson, 2012; Witt & Crompton, 2003).

Positive youth development scholarship has primarily focused on the needs of all youth, but could be more fully developed to understand the perceived benefits for minority communities. Most of the positive youth development research has utilized samples drawn from the general population, and hence results cannot be generalized to the Black community (Batavick, 1997; Fuller et al., 2013; Rozie-Battle, 2002). This approach to positive youth development is beneficial when addressing the needs of most youth, but recent literature has suggested that positive youth development in minority youth may require a different focus to help mitigate negative behaviors and enable Black and other minority youth to develop needed competencies (Fuller et al., 2013; Rozie-Battle, 2002).

Rozie-Battle (2002) stated that positive youth development can be considered successful when it creates a plethora of young people not using drugs, not dropping out of school, not breaking the law, not getting pregnant, and not being illiterate. Often, the media highlights the crime and violence committed by a small percentage of youth, which creates a negative perception of poor, inner city, and unruly Black youth. Seldom are youth who exhibit successful characteristics featured in the evening news or in the newspaper headlines. Furthermore, most current research focuses on Black youth from a negative lens (as opposed to a positive one) (Rozie-Battle, 2002, p. 18), suggesting that it is critical to examine and conceptualize positive youth development in specific minority groups, in this case the Black community, so that youth can feel a sense of belonging and pride in their communities. Since the focus of positive youth development is on enhancing and promoting the strengths of youth, considering the unique influence of positive youth development on Black children is imperative and should be independent in the general positive youth development scholarship.

### **Recreation and Positive Youth Development for Black Youth**

Fuller et al. (2013) argued that positive youth development in minority groups occurs through the creation of meaningful relationships. Such relationships help to promote healthy personal growth in minority children (p. 470). Positive youth development is not simply an undertaking for a quick fix or a short-term solution targeted at negative behaviors. The developmental benefits that minority youth could gain through positive youth development activities would help to encourage their growth and social skill development, facilitate them finding gainful employment, and being highly educated and positively involved in the community as a role model. This could be achievable not only in high achieving, college bound youth but it can be inclusive of all Black youth (e.g. non-college bound, youths who have “fallen

through the cracks in the past”). Literature on positive youth development suggests that in Black youth it is facilitated through the development of meaningful relationships (positive bonding) with an adult role model (Batavick, 1997; Fuller et al., 2013; Rozie-Battle, 2002). A clear presentation and discussion about the various activities and resources that would help to create meaningful relationships for Black children is needed. Scholars need to better understand the intersection of recreational activities and positive youth development in Black youth as a tool to facilitate personal growth. The two most common recreational pastimes for Black children are physical activities and sports.

### ***Physical Activities***

It is a widely accepted belief among researchers studying youth that being physically active helps mitigate youth’s disaffection and disengagement by encouraging moral and social responsibility, pro-social behaviors, and respect for others (Armour, Sandford, & Duncombe, 2013). There has been strong support in the literature for the potential of physical activity to facilitate positive youth development (Casey, Mooney, Eime, Harvey, Smyth, Telford, & Payne, 2013; Felton, Dowda, Ward, Dishman, Trost, Saunders, & Pate, 2002; Gortmaker, Lee, Craddock, Sobol, Duncan, & Wang, 2012; Pharr & Lough, 2014), although historically there has been a lack of reliable, empirical data to support claims about its effectiveness. More recently, studies have attempted to provide evidence as to the benefit of physical activities within the positive youth development scholarship.

White & Gager (2007) provided a clear picture of how youth involvement in extracurricular activities, specifically physically active and aerobic fitness, could be beneficial to minority youth. Basch (2011) investigated whether the beneficial effects of these types of recreational activities were the same for White and Black youths in urban communities. These

authors found that physical activities provided beneficial effects for Black youth in a multitude of ways. Besides the direct benefits on physical health, an additional benefit was through the development of social competencies that could help to shape and cultivate better relationships between youths and adults, with the effect of decreasing absenteeism from school, and diminishing their likelihood of dropping out. Another benefit was through increased cognitive competence, fostering the ability to use logic, analytic thinking, and abstract reasoning that could also help improve a youth's learning of academic and intellectual concepts, and improved memory. Both studies suggest that there are known benefits to physical activities, and suggested that structural barriers (e.g., lack of school support, unsafe neighborhoods) may be preventing minority youth from more fully participating in physical activities and exercise. These findings imply the possibility that negotiations may be required to negotiate barriers even when Black youths and parents appreciate the benefit of fully participating in recreational physical activity.

Research has also determined that there is a link between physical activity and athletic training (Casey et al., 2013; Felton et al., 2002; Gortmaker et al., 2014), although studies have found that the levels of participation in physical activities from minorities (specifically Black youth) has been lower compared to their White peers. The authors stated that research showing physical activity is lacking in the Black community may not be accurate in that aerobic exercise and athletic training are considered the same type of activity in the Black community (Pharr & Lough, 2014), but are typically not categorized that way in research. It has been suggested that Black youth may be participating in athletic training as a primary form of exercise compared to their White peers who tend to emphasize and promote aerobic exercise and physical education to a greater degree. The authors inferred that athletic training had a considerable influence within the Black community, which should be furthered explored. Still, attempts to suggest that



physical activity could help facilitate positive youth development for Black youth have yet to provide reliable data from which to judge its effectiveness.

### *Sports*

Scholarship has discussed at length the positive contributions of sport in the Black community (Beamon & Bell, 2006; Beamon, 2009; Goldsmith, 2003; Holt, Tamminen, Black, Mandigo, & Fox, 2009; Kanters, Bocarro, Edwards, Casper, & Floyd, 2012; Pharr & Lough, 2014; Shakib & Veliz, 2012; Shakib, Veliz, Dunbar, & Sabo, 2011). The positive contributions of sport have been found to include staying healthy by being physically active, developing and practicing social skills related to teamwork, and having the opportunity to participate in activities with current and potentially new friends. Pitter & Andrews (1997) explained how sport not only had been considered a game in United States society but it had been a system to emphasize physical education, promote social, emotional, cognitive, behavioral and moral competencies, and to act as a deterrent to deviant leisure by giving youth a positive outlet in which to have fun and expend energy. For these reasons, scholars have suggested that sport is an important tool for facilitating positive youth development, although evidence for this conclusion has been inconsistent and sparse.

There has been a plethora of scholarship on sport and how it is perceived and realized in the Black community. In the Black community, sport is perceived to be a positive influence on youth because of its ability to encourage a healthy lifestyle in youth, as a way to help youth develop skills important for academic success, and as a context to increase children's social networks and foster prosocial norms. For all of the potential good that sport could provide in the Black community, sometimes sport participation has been shown to yield a negative outcome. The negative reactions that are frequently seen could likely be due to the overemphasis of the

Black community on sport as a vehicle for social mobility. As the consumption of sport as being another mechanism for facilitating positive youth development with children has been discussed, researchers need to be conscientious in lauding the benefits of sport without additional evidence because of the negative perceptions of sport and the lack of understanding of how sport actually facilitates positive youth development in the Black community.

Other scholars have suggested that the goal of sport participation in the Black community is to prepare Black children to be successful academically and athletically (depending on what the parent felt would best serve their child) (Beamon & Bell, 2006). Beamon & Bell (2006) found that White parents encouraged their children to focus on schoolwork, visit museums, and valued attending parent-teacher conferences and sporting events more often than Black parents. Their study found that Black youth had a higher rate of academic failure than their White peers. This led the authors to speculate that Black parents were only focusing on academics for their child in the hope of keeping them eligible to play sports and competitive for a scholarship. Ultimately, the authors could not corroborate the idea that Black parents' focus on academics was solely based on the potential that Black children could earn a scholarship for college. What was suggested was that sport seemed to be a prominent recreational activity for Black youth compared to other racial groups (Inoue, Wegner, Jordan, and Funk, 2015; Shakib & Veliz, 2012; Shakib, Veliz, Dunbar, & Sabo, 2011), but there is still a lack of clear understanding as to why sport is so revered. In these studies, Black mothers' beliefs were not fully understood and no connections to positive youth development were made.

### **Influences and Facilitators of Recreation Participation for Black Youth**

Along with sport, it would be beneficial to examine other influences and barriers that may inform Black mothers' beliefs as reflected in their choices of out-of-school recreational

activities for their children. As mentioned previously, there are several benefits to youth participation in recreational activities. Hansen et al. (2003) discussed these positive outcomes as typically falling within three general domains: facilitating identity development, developing initiative in youth, and developing basic emotional, cognitive, and physical skills. There has been a lot of attention paid to the cognitive and physical skills of youth as a major goal of developmental activities (e.g. sport and music). For example, Pitter & Andrews (1997) focused on the social consumption of sport and how it was present in society today. The authors discussed the benefits of sport, and also described how too much of an emphasis on sport could lead to industry problems, especially in certain neighborhoods and communities. In comparison, there has been little attention focused on the other areas of development besides cognitive and physical maturation. It was suggested that when attention is focused on the other areas, a deeper understanding of the three domains could be achieved.

### *Schools*

Goldsmith (2003) compared the rate of Black and White youth's participation in sport to and what the social class influence of race (Black and White) might be as a factor in sport participation. Concentrating on the resources of school sport programs and the variety of sports those schools provided their students, the study argued that school gatekeepers facilitated access and participation in sport programs for students. Ultimately, the author concluded that although racial differences clearly influenced sport participation, the exact way in which they shaped participation was quite complex and would need to be further explored.

Research focused on the benefits of parent's involvement in the school system and how this contributed to their children's development, has shown positive outcomes as well as reasons why there could be a lack of participation (Eccles & Harold, 1993). They suggested that an

important population to explore these relationships was when families were living in economically disadvantaged communities, which in the leisure literature has been considered a constraint on Black youth to recreation participation (Barnett, 2008; Bennett et al., 2012; Broh, 2002; Fogle & Mendez, 2006; Schmalz et al., 2004). Eccles & Harold's (1993) findings suggested families who lived in high-risk, low-resource neighborhoods relied more on in-home management strategies that helped their child develop talents and skills, which also protected their child from neighborhood dangers. In contrast, families in less risky neighborhoods focused more on helping their children develop specific talents using neighborhood resources to accomplish that goal. It was thus concluded that parental involvement with the school would be an ideal venue for parents to help their children develop positive social abilities.

### ***Neighborhoods***

Neighborhoods have been shown to have a significant influence on the recreation of youth, especially in those where there's concentrated poverty. Snell, Castells, Duncan, Gennetian, Magnuson, & Morris (2012) explained that poor children maturing in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods face potential risks from growing up in a low-income family, in neighborhoods that offer few job prospects for teens or young adults, and in neighborhoods with lower quality schools and higher rates of crime. The authors found that boys were particularly vulnerable in impoverished neighborhoods due to their proximity to gangs, drugs, and violence and the increased likelihood that boys would engage in delinquent or violent behaviors compared to girls.

Several studies discuss parental strategies used to mitigate any negative influences of neighborhood and socio-economic factors on children (Holt, Tamminen, Black, Mandigo, & Fox, 2009). For instance, Jarrett, Bahar, & Taylor (2011) discussed how parents could respond

to the neighborhood social context to protect their children while still allowing adequate physical activity, especially in inner-city neighborhoods. Previous research has documented lower levels of physical activity for African American children and youth growing up in inner-city neighborhoods, which is mostly due to barriers present in the Black community (e.g. parents wanting to protect their children, low levels of supervision). Jarrett, Bahar, & Taylor (2011) argued that parents respond to negative neighborhood social contexts and limited resources that potentially undermine a child's physical activities by employing the following strategies that help to protect their children while promoting physical activity:

- 1) Environmental appraisal: Assessing locations, times, or behaviors that signaled neighborhood safety or danger and their conduciveness to child physical activity.
- 2) Boundary enforcement: Oversaw the geographic space that children could cross safely for physical activities and ensured that children stayed within these boundaries.
- 3) Chaperonage: Accompanying their children to physical activity locations away from home.
- 4) Kin-based playgroups: A practice of children playing with other related children.
- 5) Collective monitoring: Parents, along with kin, were the primary supervisors of children's physical activities.
- 6) Local resource brokering: Despite the scarcity of local institutional resources for children, caregivers identified and utilized those that existed.
- 7) Extralocal resource brokering: Some caregivers (who were older and more educated) used resources outside of their community, which may be due to them possessing knowledge about other child resources not in their current neighborhood.

(p. 829–832)

The above strategies provides deeper insight into how Black mothers could be mitigating the impact of negative neighborhood influences while fostering resiliency in their children. Black

mothers understand how crucial it is for their children to participate in recreation activities and they adopt their parenting strategies in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in order to give their child the opportunity to be physically active. This physical activity is key in helping Black children obtain the resources and benefits they will need later in their life in order to be considered productive citizens in society.

### **Intrapersonal Barriers, Facilitators of Recreation, and Positive Youth Development**

Along with the structural barriers, there are intrapersonal barriers that influence positive youth development within Black youth.

#### ***Internal Influences on Choices for Black Youth***

Hershberg et. al. (2013) found that youths' responses to questions about what is most meaningful to them in their leisure activities fell into nine categories: academic competence, connection, contribution, athletics, work, personal mantra, character attributes, creative hobbies, and/or religion. Of the nine areas, the authors found that relationships with family and friends (connection) were the most meaningful/important part of their lives. The next most frequently cited category was contribution, which involved youth giving to their community, usually their time, and being helpful to others overall. Both family connection and community volunteerism have been considered crucial in positive youth development, especially in the case of the Black community, because of the focus on meaningful relationship building with adults.

When examining the research on what youth value in their development, there are several perceived benefits and outcomes from their participation. Hershberg et al. (2013) sought to provide added description to understanding what youths want in their development. The authors criticized the bulk of the youth development literature, stating that most of the studies lacked a qualitative perspective and failed to approach the subject from a youth-centered perspective.

Using youth from a 4-H program, they were able to gain a better understanding of what meaning was attached to certain developmental programs. The main emphasis for youths were connectedness and meaningful relationships, which the authors suggest is a changing interest among youth. This lack of understanding shows that there still is not a firm grasp of what beliefs go into choosing out-of-school recreational activities and how positive youth development in Black youth can be facilitated.

### *Race*

Wimer, Bouffard, Caronongan, Dearing, Simpkins, Little & Weiss (2006) explored demographic differences in youth in order to understand the activities and factors that influenced their involvement in those activities. Their results helped to spark questions as to why particular out-of-school activities were emphasized and the role that recreational professionals could have in societal trends. Similarly, DeRicco & Sciarra (2005) pointed out that racism could be both overt and covert in nature, arguing that this belief needed to be understood and confronted in order to address any preconceived biases that may be present in how and what decisions are made. Exploring and addressing racially motivated biases and their influence on behavior and decisions is particularly important in a field such as recreation where a predominately White workforce provides services in ethnic communities. It is therefore essential to require staff to have more exposure (cultural competency) to different cultures in order to understand their needs and ensure that, as professionals, they are meeting those needs especially in the face of an ever-changing demographic composition in the United States.

### *Gender*

Snell et al. (2012) argued that boys and girls who reside in the same neighborhood may experience their neighborhood differently. Boys typically were described as spending more time outdoors in their community playing with friends and in casual and organized activities. In

contrast, girls were usually asked to take on greater familial responsibilities such as caring for siblings and doing household chores. Gender differences may mediate the youth's exposure to neighborhood conditions, but parents may still have to function as a buffer to the negative effects of impoverished neighborhoods on their children, and may approach this task differently depending on the gender of their child. Few studies have focused on how exactly parents achieve this balance of restricting their child's exposure to danger while allowing them to explore skills, friendships, and identities. Examining the interpersonal barriers that could influence positive youth development in Black youth may provide a better understanding of how a balance can be achieved.

## **Interpersonal Barriers, Facilitators of Recreation, and Black Positive Youth Development**

### ***External Influences on Black Youth***

Lee, Borden, Serido & Perkins (2009) examined the perceived benefits of recreation participation on ethnic minorities' social and psychological development, which included feelings of safety, relationship building between adults and youth, and learning social skills. Jarrett, Sullivan and Watkins (2005) described how Black youth received resources and benefits from their participation in organized leisure programming as being social capital, which helped youth connect to and eventually make the transition into the adult world. Literature has suggested that youth recreation program participation is a good vehicle to facilitate Black youth's development and needs to be more of a focus in the recreation scholarship.

### ***Media***

Shakib & Veliz (2013) described how sport and entertainment were the only arenas in mainstream U. S. society where Blacks were allowed to excel historically, which contributed to unrealistic expectations of sport participation and the promising route it would provide to social mobility. The authors argued that due to the high visibility of Black role models in sport, youth



might develop the perception that participation in sport was the best way to facilitate social mobility. Understanding the intersection of media and positive youth development for Black youth will help to realize the extent to which perceptions of Black mothers may be guided by what they observe in the Black community.

### *Family*

While previous scholarship has focused on the general influence of low-income neighborhoods on boys and girls, Jarrett & Burton (1999) centered the discussion on low-income African-American families to see what emergent themes arose to provide a context for examining Black families in low-income neighborhoods. They observed that in the past two decades there has been a dramatic increase in the number of economically disadvantaged households that were headed by females, which has renewed scholarly interest in the relationship between persistent poverty and family structure. Focused on identifying and exploring dimensions of family structure in the lives of economically disadvantaged families helped to advance scholarship on Black families and the family dynamics. In addition, knowing the concerns and disadvantages that Black families and communities could be facing in providing a safe and conducive environment for their children's out-of-school recreation participation could provide insight into the factors that influence parents' recreation decisions for their children.

### **Recreation Participation and Socio-economic Status**

Parents, families, and communities often dictate the kinds of peer contact activities in which their children might engage, either by purposeful decision-making or unplanned choice of activities (Jordan & Nettles, 2000). The recreation activities that Black mothers choose can impact their child's racial identity formation. Those choices are often influenced by the pervasive beliefs that Black mothers hold towards specific activities and the anticipation their children's participation in them will bring them certain benefits. These benefits could relate, for example,

to developing better social skills, understanding the concept of group collaborations and cohesion, learning the value of setting and working towards a goal, and many others. Regardless of the ultimate goals that Black mothers have in mind, it is critical to understand their beliefs about recreation activities and the impact on the choices they make for their children.

Black school-aged children's access to adequate resources (e.g., income, neighborhood, safe spaces) also determines mothers' choices for their children's recreational participation. The United States has developed an income/resource allocation system where resource heavy areas are rewarded with continued funding while other areas struggle to secure even minimal funding (Omi, 1994). Resource allocation is impacted not only by racial characteristics, but also by gender, social class, and political power. A number of Black communities do not have access to the same community resources that are available in non-Black neighborhoods, or in those areas with higher income levels (Jordan & Nettles, 2000). It is important to understand how Black low-income mothers, who do not have access to a lot of discretionary income/resources, help prepare their children to navigate the racial climate in the United States through their participation in out-of-school recreation activities. With the financial constraints that lower-income Blacks have, it is also important to understand what messages parents communicate, how they communicate them, and whether they are different than those transmitted by other racial or income groups. Currently, most recreational agencies focus their programming on areas that are centered on what is popular in mainstream society. The result is that for low-income Black mothers, there are limited options in activities to choose for their child since they are not a part of mainstream society. Thus, Black mothers will have to be creative or adapt to what recreational resources are available to them in providing opportunities for their child.

Covay & Carbonaro (2010) discussed the class differences present in out-of-school recreation activities that have created unequal experiences for adolescents. Their study focused on structured out-of-school activities for lower-class adolescents since previous studies had found lower- and working- class students primarily participated in unstructured activities (Covay & Carbonaro, 2010). They wanted to understand the interaction between the quality of out-of-school activities and adolescents' access to these programs. Their results revealed that while all groups showed high levels of out-of-school activity participation, adolescents in the lower socioeconomic status (SES) group participated less in out-of-school recreation activities than other SES groups. This is consistent with literature that has suggested out-of-school participation for lower income school-aged children has been constrained due to insufficient income and resources to participate (J. Brown, Lewin-Bizan, Lerner, & Urban, 2009; Coulton & Irwin, 2009; Davies, Davis, Cook, & Waters, 2008; Epps, Huston, & Bobbitt, 2013; McCray & Mora, 2011; Voss, Hosking, Metcalf, Jeffery, & Wilkin, 2008). Quite often choices are constrained by the restricted financial and community resources that are available to lower income Black mothers (Jordan & Nettles, 2000).

Along with neighborhood constraints, there exists a long-standing SES system that benefits upper income American families, leaving those of lower SES to compete amongst themselves to try and move up in this hierarchy. This raises the conundrum of how Black mothers with lower disposable income can afford to choose out-of-school recreation activities for their children, hoping that involvement in these activities will expand their peer relationships, social capital, and ability to navigate within a racially-charged world. Since most out-of-school activities cost money, it is important to understand what decision-making processes parents employ to determine which activities are worth investing their money in for their child to achieve

the best return on their investment. The literature has predominantly focused on the constraints that need to be considered when Black mothers choose recreational activities for their child.

Constraints such as the focus on the accessible, financial, geographical neighborhood, and prior experience, lead to certain outcomes for Black mothers and their children.

### **Factors Influencing Children's Recreation Participation**

Many studies discussed the outcomes that school-aged children receive from their participation in recreational activities (Bruyn & Cillessen, 2008; Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Fletcher et al., 2003; Fredricks & Eccles, 2008; Guest & Schneider, 2003; Holloway & Rambaud, 1995; Huntsinger, Jose, Shutay, & Boelcke, 1997; Jordan & Nettles, 2000; Mahoney, Cairns & Farmer, 2003; Outley, Bocarro & Boleman, 2011; Posner & Vandell, 1999). This scholarship stream revealed various influences that lead to certain beneficial outcomes for Black children, especially in relation to academic achievement. In comparison, literature that has focused on non-academic outcomes and the various influences that contribute to Black mothers' choices and the potential outcomes those choices could yield for children has been sparse.

When examining Black mothers' choices of recreation activities for their children, it is also useful to consider their own preferences. Studies have shown that adults in the Black community have a preference for participating in religious activities and shopping (Floyd & Shinew, 1999; Shinew, 1996; 2004) while they have significantly less interest in participating in outdoor recreation (Bringolf-Isler, Grize, Mäder, Ruch, Sennhauser, & Braun-Fahrländer, 2010; Washburne, 1978; West, 1989) compared to their White counterparts. Literature suggests that forms of knowledge transmission occur outside of the classroom through various recreational activities and they may be as beneficial as what children learn in school (Broh, 2002; Guest & Schneider, 2003; Jordan & Nettles, 2000; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; O'Bryan, Braddock, &

Dawkins, 2006; Otto, 1975), however, there are no studies addressing how the racial climate of out-of-school activities can be navigated. Out-of-school activities have been described as being a supplement to the classroom learning experience in the acquisition of social and academic knowledge, which is useful in peer and societal interactions (Eccles et al., 2003; Fletcher, Nickerson, & Wright, 2003; Jordan & Nettles, 2000; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; Mahoney et al., 2003; Otto, 1975; Pinckney, 2009; Posner & Vandell, 1999), although there has been an abundance of research about race as a possible moderating variable in these interactions. Concentrating on out-of-school recreation activities as a learning tool for Black mothers to teach and prepare their children for the racial tensions they will likely experience is thus an important area in need of further investigation.

Stamps and Stamps (1985) and West (1989) suggested that race was more important than social class or any other factor in influencing recreational preference, and that Blacks preferred to participate in activities that are engaged in by persons of the same race. There is a body of literature that suggests that certain types of out-of-school programs (e.g. arts, crafts, ballet, and singing) are unattractive options for Black school-aged children and there is a call for programs to be more culturally relevant by taking into account the interests of this particular demographic group (Bennett, Lutz & Jayaram, 2012; Brown, Linver & DeGennaro, 2009; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Fogle & Mendez, 2006; Holt, Kingsley & Scherer, 2011). Since the Black lower income community assigns high value to sport participation and frequently consumes sport through various media outlets, this type of activity should be emphasized in out-of-school programs.

Gender plays another influential role in Black mothers' choices for out-of-school activities for their sons and daughters. While the literature on gender differences is vast, one study specifically discusses the interaction of socialization and gender. Witt (1997) discussed

how children at a young age learn gender-based normative expectations in American society through their participation in recreational activities, as well as by others' overt behaviors, covert suggestions, parental guidance, and role socialization. He argued that as children age, they are bombarded with messages showing gender differences through media and other environmental stimuli. These messages (e.g., toys, clothing colors, play behaviors) communicate to boys and girls how to adhere to their gender designation, and, in the Black communities, are often supported by Black mothers' beliefs about differences between boys and girls. The child's gender-identity and self-esteem are impacted by parents rewarding heteronormative gendered behavior via their conditional support and approval. Parents, particularly mothers, reinforce these messages that their children receive through the activities they seek to enroll their children in and their approval or disapproval of certain behaviors and activities that occur within their children's recreation participation. While the literature has discussed the impact of gender differences on out-of-school recreation choices and participation within the Black community (Brown et. al, 2009; Dressel, 1988; Henderson, 1990, 1994, 1996; Hughes et. al, 2009; Mandara, et. al 2012; Scottham et. al, 2009), there is a dearth of research that focuses specifically on Black mothers' beliefs about racially socializing their children and the influence those beliefs have on their choices for either their sons' or daughters' recreation participation.

An additional influence that will be discussed is the impact of recreational spaces on Black adolescents' recreation use. Scholarship that has focused on the spaces that marginalized populations occupy for recreation participation has been steadily increasing over the past decade and provides insight into the impact these spaces have on out-of-school recreational choices. Literature has discussed the dearth of adequate recreational spaces for Black youths where they could feel comfortable and safe, and that are accessible (either financially or in proximity to their

neighborhood) (Bringolf-Isler, 2010; Dwyer & Hutchinson, 1990; Henderson & King, 1999; Hutchison, 1987; Outley & Floyd, 2002; Outley et al., 2011; Pryor & Outley, 2014; Ries, Yan & Voorhees, 2011). For example, Dwyer and Hutchinson (1990) reported that Blacks preferred urban, developed recreation sites, whereas current recreational spaces are tailored to be an outdoor experience for visitors. While all would be encouraged to visit, Black mothers would be less inclined to use these facilities. Pryor & Outley (2014) discussed the importance of these facilities and how marginalized populations in the United States have used recreational centers as a space to enhance their cultural identity and awareness. Not having these welcoming spaces impedes the positive youth development process of Black children because they may not visit these spaces and use the programs offered within them. Fuller, Percy, Bruening and Cotrufo (2013) pointed to the need for providing a safe space for low-income, marginalized Black youths. This particular demographic needs a space where participants will feel that the environment is open and welcoming to their particular needs. These safe spaces would allow Black youth, particularly males, to engage in positive and constructive interactions with their peers. While this research addresses several reasons for Black youth choosing types of out-of-school recreational participation, it does not provide an in-depth understanding of the racial context in choosing activities and the magnitude of this influence.

While these studies are important, it's crucial to expand our understanding further especially related to marginalized Black youth and the influence Black mothers have on their recreational activity choices and participation. Fuller et al. (2013) criticized the existing body of research, arguing that it has specifically ignored marginalized Black boys in low-income neighborhoods. Researchers have discussed the benefits of developmental out-of-school programs for children, yet there is little evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of these

programs with marginalized Black boys from low-income neighborhoods. Coulton & Irwin (2009) examined the neighborhood context that impacts children's social and cultural capital. Their main focus was on the safety of children within their own neighborhood and the distance that they could transverse. While they did not suggest that all out-of-school recreation activities should be located in their neighborhood, they imply that the lack of safety in the surrounding area could create difficulty in gaining access to activities. Neighborhood conditions (immediate neighborhood or areas in which travel would need to occur) may deter participation in out-of-school activities. Coulton & Irwin suggested that how active the parents are in their community might be a mitigating force in addressing neighborhood safety, which could increase the participation of adolescents in out-of-school recreation activities. When parents have a strong awareness of their neighborhood context, they are better able to prepare their children for navigating that neighborhood safely (Coulton & Irwin, 2009; Persson, Kerr, and Stattin, 2007; Ramey, Keltner, and Lanzi, 2006).

While progress has been made in understanding why certain out-of-school activities are chosen, more attention needs to be given to the role of racial considerations on Black mothers' perceptions and choices. There are several areas where additional scholarship would provide an in-depth understanding of the lower income Black community's out-of-school recreation participation. Black mothers' beliefs about recreation have been underexplored within the literature. Several scholars have sought to understand why this has occurred. Floyd, McGuire, Noe, & Shinew (1996) and Woodard (1988) described much of the empirical work conducted on the relationship between race and recreation participation as concentrating on differences between racial groups (Blacks vs. Whites), while literature examining intragroup factors has been scarce. Shinew, Floyd, & Parry (2004) postulated that another contributing factor to the



dearth of literature on Black recreational behavior is the emotions that are elicited from historical conflicts centered on race. Shinew (1995) and Floyd (1999) believed that in the Black community it is important for Blacks to emulate certain levels of social status as a form of upward mobility, which could help to understand their preference for specific recreational activities. Lower income Black mothers may choose activities that mirror those of middle or upper class Blacks, who are able to be socially mobile, in the hope of securing a positive future for their child. It is therefore important to explore the recreation choices that Black mothers make for their children at various developmental stages, preferences for specific activities over others, and the influence of race and gender on the spaces for these recreational choices. All of these factors are influenced by Black mothers' beliefs and guide their motivation for choosing certain activities for their children.

### **Black Mothers' Experiences and Recreation Activities for Their Children**

A comprehensive understanding of Black mothers' motives in choosing out of school activities can be facilitated through an awareness of Black women's lived experiences and how those experiences shape their beliefs as a Black mother. Literature has described women's recreation as providing them with feelings of freedom, empowerment, and self-expression through their participation in recreational activities (Arnold & Shinew, 1998; Dressel, 1988; Henderson, 1990; 1994; Shaw, 1985, 1994; Shinew, Floyd, McGuire, & Noe, 1995). Shinew et al. (1995) discussed the intersection of gender, race, and social class and their influence on recreational behavior and preferences. They note that much of this research has been grounded in a conceptual framework examining gender relation within a patriarchal system (Shaw, 1994; Shinew et al., 1995). In addition, scholars using this framework have produced research that concentrated on gender barriers and the constraints that these barriers place on women's

recreational participation (Kay, 1996; Searle, & Jackson, 1985; Shaw, 1985; Shinew et al., 1995; Smith, 1987; Thorne, 1993). Understanding the barriers women experience in their own recreation helps to explain the discrepancy between male and female participation, but it doesn't explain why the results that have been found were different for Black women compared to their White counterparts.

Shinew et al. (1995) conducted a study that examined these barriers specifically in Black women's recreation participation. They sought to develop a better understanding of what might limit or constrain Black women's recreation participation, thus filling a gap in the literature regarding Black women's perceptions of constraints placed on them. Their findings suggested that race and income differences influenced Black women's recreation participation, but concluded that more research was still needed to understand their full impact. Kay (1996) provided one explanation for why Black women may have different recreation preferences than White women. She theorized that lower-class Black women are more likely to assume more non-traditional female roles and have the bulk of family responsibilities, which thus limits their recreation participation. Arnold & Shinew (1998) considered the lack of equality for Blacks, women, and the poor as the underlying reason for constraints on their recreation participation. They argued that recreation participation requires money, and most times Black women do not have sufficient discretionary income to allow them to participate. They found that Black women may be able to empower themselves by not focusing on their constraints, but instead seeing opportunities and adapting to the lack of resources available for their recreational participation. These differences in Black women's participation in recreational activities suggest that their beliefs may have been focused on navigating the structural discrimination that lower income Black women might experience on a daily basis. This could direct their attention to providing

certain recreation opportunities for their children in racially socializing them which they would perceive as very beneficial for them presently as well as in their future years once they became parents.

### **Differences between White and Black Mothers**

As mentioned earlier, Black mothers have to make certain decisions when it comes to their children's recreational involvement, similar to that of mothers of other racial and ethnic groups. Literature has discussed White mothers' approach to this process, yet there have not been many studies that have made comparisons between Black mothers and White mothers concerning their choices and decision process. Determining if Black and White mothers undertake the same socialization process will help to understand more clearly the impact of racial differences. This could help researchers understand if the beliefs and values of Black mothers consciously employ influence their choices. Literature has examined White mothers' choices for out-of-school activities for their children, but their reasons have not been analyzed through a racial lens or compared specifically to those of Black mothers. This is due to previous researchers operating within a limited theoretical framework focused on concepts of marginal or ethnic influences impacting recreation behavior.

Floyd and Shinenew (1999) described the past two decades of recreation research as focusing on factors and social forces that have contributed to differences in Blacks' and Whites' recreation preferences. Washburne's (1978) study is one of the earliest to focus on the marginality (e.g., income, social class, access) and ethnicity (e.g., subcultural values, language, and traditions) theoretical frameworks, which have dominated most of the discussions explaining racial differences within recreational participation behavior. Researchers since then have recognized the limitations of marginality and ethnicity theories within recreation scholarship.

Scholars now have been calling for alternate conceptualizations that would lead to a deeper understanding of the processes, mechanisms, and impact of historical and racial discrimination in contributing to Blacks' variations in recreational behavior (Floyd, 1996, 1998; Floyd & Shineew, 1999; Floyd et al., 1994; West, 1989). They tried to address this gap by examining the importance of children's participation in certain activities through the perspective of a parent or future parent. Philipp (1999) investigated differences between middle-class Black and White adults in their perceptions of how Blacks were perceived in twenty recreation activities and the importance of children participating in these activities. Respondents were asked to imagine that they were mothers and were asked how they would feel about enrolling their children in certain recreational activities.

The findings showed that most recreation activities have embedded racial information associated with them in some way. The surprising result was that racial information appeared to be readily known and understood by participants in the study. He found that middle-class Blacks and middle-class Whites strongly agreed on where Blacks were most likely to participate in recreational activities and where they were not, and that middle-class Blacks would feel less interested in most recreational activities than their White counterparts. Finally, middle-class Blacks and Whites, when asked to imagine themselves as mothers, believed many of the same recreation activities were important for their children. However, this research did not investigate the perceptions and beliefs of Blacks mothers that influenced their choices for the recreational participation of their children.

Barnett and Weber (2008) and Barnett (2013) point out that few studies have examined parental beliefs when it comes to their child's development and the influence of their beliefs about play in this process. Research has shown that it is the mother's values and beliefs that

carry the most weight, and that mothers have primary (if not sole) responsibility for enrolling their children in recreation programs (Barnett, 2013; Barnett & Weber, 2008). Barnett and Weber (2008) examined the perceptions that White mothers held towards various types of recreational activities (academic, community, individual sports, out-of-school activities, performing, religious, and team sports). Their focus on the benefits that mothers believed that their children would receive from participating provided insight into understanding how mothers' perceptions influenced their choices of recreational activities for their children. They found that mothers anticipated and perceived a number of beneficial outcomes from their child's recreation participation, including the development of their character (inner and outer), creativity, social skills, religious knowledge, physical development, and cognitive growth. Barnett's (2013) study looked at school-aged children and used independent measures to assess mothers' attitudes about appropriate play behaviors for their children based on their beliefs about child-rearing. Several findings in her study contributed to the literature in understanding mother's perceptions and the impact they have on their choices for their children. She found that mothers' beliefs about play influence how they interact with their children and what behaviors they reward or discourage, which has an impact on their child's developmental outcomes (Barnett, 2013). Both of her studies stressed that further research is needed to develop a better understanding of how mothers' perceptions guide their children's participation in recreation activities, and how this could be different between White and Black mothers.

### **Summary**

The literature review presented in this chapter suggests that while recent years saw a rise of recreation-related scholarship focusing on Black community, there is room for further advancing the research on Black mothers' choices in out-of-school recreational activities for

their children. Specifically, there is a lack of literature concentrating on Black mothers' perceptions of their children's out-of-school activities and how participating in certain activities might benefit their child. It is crucial to gain more insight into what Black mothers think about recreation activities because, as society becomes more diverse, not understanding how communities could potentially view recreation programming may be counterproductive to reaching ethnic minorities, specifically Black children. There is currently a lack of understanding about the beliefs Black mothers hold and how this impacts their choices for their sons or daughters. The present study adds to the literature on recreation, race and social class by adding more in-depth context not previously explored as to why Black mothers enroll their children in out-of-school recreation. It thus contributes to a better understanding of the influence Black mothers' beliefs and values have on the choices that Black mothers make regarding their child's recreation participation.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHOD**

The goals of this study are to develop a better understanding of how Black mothers' beliefs influence their choice of recreation activities for their child, how these beliefs may be realized through their child's recreational participation, and the role that gender plays in Black mothers' beliefs and recreational choices for their children. There are no studies examining the relationship between Black mothers' beliefs and their choices for their children's recreational participation, or the extent to which this relationship may differ for sons and daughters. Black mothers' beliefs about recreational participation can be studied in different ways, including the use of quantitative and qualitative methods. An interpretative descriptive approach, exploring the interrelationship between mothers' beliefs and children's recreational choices offered a unique opportunity for an in-depth study.

### **Research Approach**

Stake (2010) described the nature of social science research as "Humans being the researchers, humans are being studied; humans are the interpreters, among them the readers of our reports" (p. 36). Many studies utilize quantitative measures to examine the influence of perceptions on choices, however for this study, qualitative measures were deemed to be more effective since the focus was on ascertaining the beliefs that Black mothers have in choosing out-of-school recreation activities for their children. Since Black mothers' beliefs are partly created through their lived experiences, a focus on the description of their beliefs is required. Based on the research questions in the study, a qualitative approach was regarded as the most appropriate method to explore the influence of perceptions and beliefs of Black mothers and how they might have shaped their choices for recreational activities for their child.

Researchers typically conceptualize qualitative research as interpretive because it occurs as a result of efforts to make sense of human nature and behaviors. Schwandt (2007) defined interpretation as:

The act of clarifying, explicating, or explaining the meaning of some phenomenon. The claims of both the natural and the human or social sciences are interpretation in this sense. The terms interpretivism, interpretive (or interpretative) social science, and the interpretive turn, however, carry a somewhat narrower or more specific meaning. These terms all signal fundamental difference between the two sciences: The natural sciences explain the behavior of natural phenomena in terms of causes, and the human sciences interpret or understand the meaning of social action.

(p. 133)

Greene (2007) believed that a method is always implemented from a particular assumptive framework. Research methodologists believe that paradigms, context, and theory all guide practical decisions, and paradigms should be based on dialogue (Greene, 2007). If a researcher has a deep understanding of his paradigm, he is able to control for philosophical biases in the research design. This study used an interpretative descriptive approach to address the research questions about the beliefs that Black mothers have concerning the recreation of their children and the extent to which these beliefs are a consideration in their choice of out-of-school recreational activities for their sons and daughters.

### ***Interpretative Description***

The research design of the study was developed with the intention of using an interpretive descriptive approach to collect data relevant to the research questions. Framing this study from an interpretive descriptive methodological stance provides a rich understanding of Black mothers' beliefs about children's out-of-school free time and their influence on the activity choices made for their children. The research questions require an examination of Black



mothers' beliefs about their children's recreational activities, and require a specific qualitative methodological framework to conceptualize and address them.

Thorne (2008) defined interpretive description as a “qualitative research approach that requires an integrity of purpose deriving from two sources: (a) an actual practice goal, and (b) an understanding of what we do and don't know on the basis of the available empirical evidence (from all sources)” (p. 35). Thorne's (2008) emphasis on “the practical application of research inquiry makes interpretative description useful to communicate best practices to practitioners with respect to the social nature of practical work and action” (George, 2010, p. 1626). Holstein and Gubrium (2005) described the social and reciprocal nature of working interpretatively:

Interpretive description engages both the *hows* and the *whats* of the social reality; it is centered in both how people methodically construct their experience and their worlds, and in the configurations of meaning and institutional life that inform and shape their reality-constituting activity.

(p. 484)

Thorne (2008) discussed the conversations occurring in academia about the integration of research and practice while making it clear that action needs to occur in pushing this agenda rather than just talking about advancing this philosophy (George, 2010). Thorne (2008) and George (2010) believed that descriptive approaches extend beyond description into a domain of the “so what” that drives applied disciplines. Applied and interpretive inquiries function jointly because “judgmental artistry in professional practice can be better studied through an interpretative lens compared to an empirical lens” (Paterson & Higgs, 2005, p. 342). The research questions about how mothers perceive recreation opportunities for their children and what activities they choose for their children to incorporate their beliefs can best be answered using an interpretative descriptive approach. Practical implications from the findings of the

study can impact how children's recreation opportunities are provided and marketed, and initiate discussion about the role of child-rearing beliefs of Black mothers in making these choices.

### **Sample Characteristics and Strategy**

The sample consisted of Black mothers who identified as residing in a low-income neighborhood, and with a child aged 7-15 years. This population was chosen for several reasons. The marital status of Black mothers is important since single mothers have different resources and perspectives than married mothers (with an active father in the home), such as the support (e.g. financial, emotional), and amount of responsibility and decision-making dual parents provide to each other in raising their children. Income is important because some Black mothers may choose not to enroll their children in certain activities due to financial constraints. This study focused on mothers of children in the middle to late childhood stage because at this developmental time experiences impact their growing awareness of their identity (Barnett, 2013; Eccles et al., 2003; Fletcher et al., 2003; Guest & Schneider, 2003; Posner & Vandell, 1999). Black mothers prepare their children for successful navigation of society-related experiences through advance preparation and parent-child discussions. Once children are in high school, there may be other factors in addition to Black mothers' influence (e.g., peer pressure) that may be more significant. Limiting the sample to low-income, single Black mothers with a middle to late school aged child allowed the responses of the participants and the interpretations given to their comments to emerge more clearly.

As Black mothers were being recruited, it was important to consider the gender of their child when trying to achieve conceptual density. As literature has shown, Black mothers treat boys and girls differently (Arnold & Shiner, 1998; Dressel, 1988; Henderson, 1990; 1994; Shaw, 1985, 1994; Shiner, Floyd, McGuire, & Noe, 1995). Due to the experiences they likely

will face as they get older, Black mothers would likely make choices differently depending on the gender of their child. It has been suggested that Black mothers would choose activities (e.g. STEM club, sports, and theater) that would encourage and empower their Black daughters to be confident in themselves and counteract the negative perception of Black women that is portrayed in today's social media outlets. On the other side, it has been suggested that Black mothers would choose activities for their Black sons with the intended purpose of them staying out of trouble (e.g. sports and attending community centers).

The goal was to recruit enough Black mothers to capture the conceptual density of the influences that impact Black mothers' choices and descriptively convey the beliefs they have in relation to out-of-school recreation activities as a means of preparing their child to develop positive characteristics that are valued in society. Conceptual density (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) in this study focused on the beliefs that Black mothers held about their children's participation in recreation activities. The primary focus was not on individual cases, but rather on the processes that showed the influences on Black mothers' choices for out-of-school recreation activities for their children. Active recruitment of Black mothers for interviews occurred until consistent response patterns about reasons for choosing recreational activities for children (be they male or female) was achieved.

### ***Brief Description of Sample Members***

#### *LaToya*

LaToya is a Black mother, never married, and raising two Black children, a son aged 15 and a daughter aged 11 years. At the time of the interview, she was working full-time in the accounting department of a research institution as an office support associate. LaToya indicated that she was in the lower socioeconomic class within her community.

*Katie*

Katie is a Black mother, never married, raising three children of whom two were part of the study, a daughter aged 13 years and a son aged 10 years. At the time of the interview, she was new to this community due to the oldest of her children attending a local university as a senior. Katie never disclosed what she does for a living, but said only that she was working full-time and that she was in the lower socioeconomic class due to her limited disposable income.

*Angel*

Angel is a younger Black single mother, never married, with two children, a son aged 12 years and a daughter aged 7 years at the time of the study. She works part-time running programs at a local community center with teens. Angel described her socioeconomic status as being lower class.

*Sylvia*

Sylvia is a recently married Black mother and has been raising her son, aged 9 years, by herself. Currently she is employed in the community full-time at an undisclosed company. Sylvia did not indicate what she does for a living, reporting only that she worked full-time. She described herself as being in the lower socioeconomic class both before and after her marriage.

*Kass*

Kass is a recently married Black mother and has a daughter aged 14 years. She was a former athlete in high school in volleyball and softball. She has a bachelor's degree and works full-time; she did not disclose what she does for a living. Kass could be described as being in the lower socioeconomic class before and after her marriage.

*Shea*

Shea is a single Black mother, never married, and raising three children, a daughter aged 15 years, and two sons aged 9 years and 7 years. She is currently working full-time on a doctoral degree in education while working part-time as a research assistant at a local research institution. Her eventual goal is to work in academia as a faculty member. Shea is in the lower socioeconomic class.

#### *Lauren*

Lauren is a single Black mother, never married, and working full-time as an office manager at a local research institution. She has one child, a daughter aged 11 years. Lauren has a bachelor's degree and has been working at her current employment for several years. Based on her description, Lauren would fall on the lower end of the socioeconomic range.

#### *Savannah*

Savannah is a single Black mother, never married, and has one child, a son aged 8 years. Currently she is employed at a local elementary school as a full-time teacher. Savannah's access to resources and income would place her between the lower and middle socioeconomic classes.

#### *Patricia*

Patricia is a married Black mother and has two daughters although only the oldest - aged 11 years - was discussed during the interview. She is a graduate student hoping to complete a master's degree, and her husband is also currently a graduate student at the same institution. Patricia did not disclose how long she has been married, but she did talk about the fact that being a full-time student and working full-time has influenced the amount of free time that their family can enjoy. Patricia would be described as being in the lower socioeconomic class, even though she is married, due to the fact that she and her husband are both students.

#### *Eboni*

Eboni is a single Black mother, never married, raising one daughter aged 9 years. She works full-time in the community, but did not disclose where she was working. Eboni described herself as being in the lower socioeconomic class.

### *Allie*

Allie is a divorced Black mother raising two Black children, a son aged 11 years and a daughter aged 13 years. At the time of the interview, she was working full-time in a research institution as a project manager. Allie indicated that with her job and resources, she considered herself to be part of the middle socioeconomic class in her community.

### ***Sampling Strategy***

The sample was identified by a combination of snowball sampling and criterion purposive sampling to approach Black mothers and request their participation in an interview. Black mothers were recruited from a recreational organization located in a mid-sized city in the midwestern United States. A local recreation organization was selected, hereafter referred to as the Recreation Club, that has a rich history in the community, especially in its relationship with the lower income Black community. The Recreation Club is a non-profit organization that was incorporated in 1968 as a United Way affiliate, and is a member of a larger national organization. The Recreation Club has provided the community with more than 40 years of service to area youth. Their goal is to ensure that every young person has a bright future and they are committed to raising awareness about the critical issues placing children at risk. Their targeted population is youth, with the intended purpose of producing outcomes centered on academic success, character/citizenship development, and healthy lifestyles. This organization was chosen because they are focused on serving marginalized Black youth, and they provide ongoing recreational opportunities in the community. Their membership statistics suggest that a large

number of Black youth use their services (77%), in addition to White youth (11%) and those of other racial/ethnic groups (12%). The Recreation Club's dedication to serving low-income families is evident by their offer of free activities to members.

A purposive sampling strategy to solicit Black mothers to participate in the study was chosen since this population would be difficult to access using more general community sampling approaches, primarily due to their family commitments and time constraints. At the Recreation Club mothers are typically not present (even when children are being picked up), so recruiting them for the study required a purposive sampling strategy. More specifically, snowball and criterion purposive sampling approaches were used in order that the combination of these two strategies would result in the identification of Black mothers to constitute a sample. Contacting Black mothers who are active at the Recreation club and asking for the name of other low-income Black mothers with similarly aged children constituted the snowball sampling approach. This process was facilitated through the rapport established with the mothers, as well as with key staff personnel at the Recreation Club and their suggestions for potential participants. A criterion purposive strategy was also employed by advertising for Black mothers to participate in the study through fliers distributed at the Recreation Club and given to youth to take home to their mothers. The fliers consisted of contact information, a description of the study (e.g., target population, general purpose of the study, procedures that were to be used, time commitment, remuneration amount), and detachable contact cards for mothers. To help with recruiting low-income Black mothers, a remuneration of \$20.00 was used to compensate mothers who agree to be interviewed for their time.

## **Procedure**

The study was conducted over a two month time period, with data collection continuing until redundancy in interview responses had been reached (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). All participants were given two copies of the consent form (see Appendix A) for participation in the study: one copy for them to read, sign and return to the researcher and the other for them to keep. Permission was requested to have the interview voice-recorded in order to ensure accuracy, completeness, and maintain a record of participants' responses. If any mother declined to have the interview recorded, the interview proceeded and the observer captured the mother's interview responses in as much detail as possible in written notes.

## **Data Collection**

The study used a semi-structured interview as the primary method of data collection. There are several benefits to conducting semi-structured interviews: they enable the deep exploration of experiences, participants have freedom in their responses but the interviewer retains control, and they allow variability in the sequencing and wording of questions as a result of the participant's responses (Drever, 1997; Robson, 2002). This type of interview was deemed to be the most effective method to elicit Black mothers' responses concerning their perceptions and beliefs underlying the process they employ in making choices for their child's recreational participation (Creswell, 2007). The interview utilized questions designed for the purpose of this study and was guided by the Parental Belief Inventory (PBI) to elicit a thick interpretive description of Black mothers' perceptions and the influence they have on the recreational choices made for their children.

In its original form, the PBI is an instrument for assessing the manifest content of Black mothers' beliefs about child-rearing and socialization (Holliday & Curbeam, 1983). Holliday



and Curbeam (1983) argued that the PBI was developed as a procedure both for inductively deriving socially and culturally embedded systems of beliefs, and for assessing variations in beliefs. Their intent was that the PBI would serve to advance knowledge of both the varying content of Black mothers' beliefs and the differential functions of beliefs and related socialization practices in response to Black mothers' perceptions of social reality.

A modified version of the Parental Belief Inventory was used to frame questions that uncovered the beliefs that Black mothers hold towards the recreational opportunities available for their children. As no other instruments have been previously developed that examined parental beliefs related to recreational choices, an instrument had to be developed for this study. Using the PBI and Holliday & Curbeam's work as guides for developing the semi-structured interview questions, items that specifically addressed the interaction between perceptions and recreational choices were drafted. The questions guiding the interview (see Appendix B) determined the extent to which Black mothers believed their children gained certain outcomes from their recreational participation, and the role that Black mothers' perceptions played in choosing out-of-school recreational activities for their children. Interviews lasted between thirty minutes to one hour to complete, and were held at various locations of the mothers' choosing (e.g. library, office, Recreation Club).

A pilot study was conducted using this protocol by conducting interviews with two lower income Black mothers of a similar-aged child who did not attend the Recreation Club, identified through personal contacts. This process helped to ensure the accuracy and applicability of the protocol in achieving its intended purpose, determined the time frame for conducting the interview, and allowed the interviewer practice in note-taking and the analytical process. Since the protocol was developed specifically for this study, there was no literature to suggest its

effectiveness in answering the research questions. When changes were needed, the interview protocol was modified, and two new mothers that conformed to the sample characteristics were recruited to test the interview protocol. This continued until the protocol was fully developed and ready for implementation with the actual research sample.

### ***Researcher Role/Biases***

A major influence that could impact the study focused on the researcher as an individual. This potential influence had to be taken into account and minimized to ensure that it would be unlikely to impact the data that was acquired. Having a paradigmatic lens as a Black, single, well-educated male was important to consider because of the impact it could have had on the interviews and findings. There are particular worldviews and approaches that work best when males are interacting with other males but not necessarily when males are interacting with females. The perceived educational difference could also create an uncomfortable atmosphere for lower income Black mothers to divulge personal information that they might believe could leave them in an emotionally vulnerable position. Based on the literature, the most likely scenario in the lower income Black community is that the father is not active in their child's life thereby leaving the Black mother to assume both parental roles, and perhaps creating distrust or resentment towards Black males.

When conducting a study on Black mothers and asking them to reflect on their racial beliefs, a certain level of trust had to be established. Therefore, when conducting the interviews, the researcher was especially conscious of his influence on the interviewee to make sure there was no perceived discomfort that Black mothers experienced during the interview process and that the data collected was not negatively influenced by the different gender of the

interviewer. While biases were not completely eliminated, it is believed they were decreased due to the trust that the interviewer was able to establish.

### **Interviewer Comments and Observations**

Within 24 hours of conducting each interview, field notes were typed into a previously created template using note headers as a way to focus thoughts and possible themes. This form of “data logging” was crucial to the analysis as it recorded the interview process and the conditions present during the interview” (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 67). Creswell (2007) discussed this process as starting with the data being organized into files that could later be used for text in future analyses, which he termed “data management”. Note headers consisted of sections labeled “Observation Notes” and “Observer Comments”. Utilization of this template helped to ensure consistency in field note format and efficiency in maintaining field note organization and commentary.

Note headers were used to organize thoughts and observations from field notes and proved useful in the analysis phase to adequately and efficiently present the data. Thoughts and observations were partitioned into sections to maintain the focus on organizing the data while the data collection phase was in process. Combining all of the sections provided a structured understanding to Black mothers’ perceptions, beliefs, and practices about choosing recreation activities and the extent to which they impacted their choices of out-of-school recreational activities for their child.

### ***Observation Notes***

Observation notes provided the bulk of the field notes. This section recounted what was observed during the interviews and included participants’ non-verbal gestures, behaviors, and body language. Literature suggests that this component of field notes should be detailed enough

so that someone who was not present would be able to visually picture mothers' reactions during the interview through descriptions in the observation notes (Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Descriptions of nonverbal communication were used to supplement the verbal comments of the Black mothers to provide a complete picture of their beliefs and practices concerning choosing recreational activities for their child. A secondary goal was to provide information to supplement verbal responses based on observations of Black mothers' body language. Lofland and Lofland (1995) suggested that all information gathered during an interview is important to give the reader a detailed sense of not only the data but also the context in which the data was gathered. Failure to describe the details would be a missed opportunity to gain an insightful understanding into mothers' beliefs and practices when answering questions.

### ***Observer Comments***

Observer comments provided a reflection of the opinions and thoughts of the observer while the interview was being conducted. Since literature indicates that interviewers are not completely unobtrusive in the data collection process, it is important that reflections on the impact of the interviewer are collected (Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Being able to reflect on the interviewer's role in the research process provided an outlet to discuss any personal biases that were introduced. The previous field note section focused on observed behaviors of the interviewee, while this section concentrated on the interviewer, and allowed for reflection on his interaction with the participant. Reflexivity is considered to occur when the observations or actions of the researcher in the interview affect the very situation that is being researched (Creswell, 2007). These notes

regarding the interviewer biases played an important role in articulating limitations of the study (Hunt, 2009).

### **Data Reduction and Analysis**

There were several steps undertaken in the analysis of interpretative descriptive data once interviews were transcribed verbatim. Huberman & Miles (1994) presented the steps that should be undertaken in the analysis of this type of data as follows: (1) write margin notes in field notes; (2) write reflective passages in notes; (3) draft a summary sheet on field notes; (4) write codes, memos; (5) note patterns and themes; (6) count frequency of codes; (7) note relations among variables; (8) build a logical chain of evidence; and (9) make contrasts and comparisons.

Once field notes were typed, field notes and interview transcripts were coded. The researcher immersed himself in the data, which involved making marginal notes on the transcribed interviews and field note sections. These notes were then summarized and emergent themes amongst the data were noted and categorized (Creswell, 2007). Codes were then summarized, and copies of these summarized codes were provided to Black mothers interviewed. Mothers were asked if their interpreted summarized codes represented what they intended to state during the interview. This allowed them to reflect and elaborate on any concepts, as well as to correct any misinterpretation.

Coding in qualitative research is defined as marking segments of data with symbols, descriptive words, or categorical names (Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The coding process consisted of reading the transcribed data and organizing it into topical sections reflecting recurring themes in activity choices that were relevant to the research questions of the study.

Themes focusing on mothers' choices, perceptions, and beliefs about out-of-school activities for their children were the focus of the next stage. After the interview transcript and field notes were initially coded, new codes were added to a master codebook with their corresponding definition and the date that the code was entered. The codebook was the source for describing the process that occurred with Black mothers' perceptions and their impact on choices of out-of-school activities for their child. The topics contained in the codebook then led to partitioning the data into themes centered on Black mothers' choices. Lofland & Lofland (1995) described this process as "a particular appearance of a regularly recurring cycle of change" (p. 131). This stage of coding was more focused in that the concentration was on which codes were used more frequently (Lofland & Lofland, 1995).

Once the previous stage of coding was completed, the next process was the creation of memos. Lofland & Lofland (1995) described memos as written elaborations of the coding categories, which in this case were the emerging themes from Black mothers' beliefs and recreational choices for their children. Once memos were created, they were sorted into an accumulated list to identify the interaction between Black mothers' perceptions and their choices of out-of-school activities for their child. The frequency of appearance of these themes and the pattern of their appearance were noted. The next step was to note apparent relationships between themes of Black mothers' beliefs and out-of-school recreational choices based on these statements. Finally, the researcher moved to the final process where the data was packaged into tabular form to help present propositions about the relationship between perceptions and practices of Black children's out-of-school activity choices and participation and gender differences.

Each interview transcript went through this coding process shortly after the interview had been conducted. This procedure was repeated until data had reached conceptual density (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This process, termed “interim analysis”, has been described as a cyclical process of collecting and analyzing data (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Once density was reached, all field notes and transcripts were re-evaluated to ensure that all codes and themes had been identified.

### **Trustworthiness of the Study**

To build confidence in the study results, Lincoln and Guba (1985) discussed steps that researchers should take during qualitative inquiry that would increase the probability that a judgment of trustworthiness was achieved. The steps included in this process involve establishing Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Conformability.

#### ***Credibility***

Credibility addresses the concern that researchers conduct their study in a way that enhances the probability that the findings are credible. The credibility of the results was established utilizing peer debriefing. Peer debriefing is primarily assessed by the researcher reflecting on the data with a peer by studying application of the conceptual framework, how the research questions were being addressed, the interpretative descriptive approach used in the study, and identification of the coding, themes and conclusions that emerged from the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Debriefing occurred with a peer whose work with low-income Black mothers qualified her as an expert in this content area. Discussions with this qualified peer helped to determine that the data led to a logical conclusion about perceptions and their impact on Black mothers’ recreational choices for their children. If conclusions between the researcher

and peer were found to be dissimilar during this debriefing, this was reported and it was considered to lower the credibility of the data.

### ***Transferability***

Transferability was established in this study through the richness in the data descriptions provided about Black mothers' perceptions influencing their child's recreation participation. This description was in such detail that when others in related contexts read the results they are able to draw similar conclusions and decide if the data is applicable to them (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The qualitative literature doesn't suggest that it is the responsibility of the researcher to have a specific form of thick description, but rather it is the responsibility of the researcher to provide data that would allow others to make transferability judgments (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study provided information related to Black mothers' beliefs and practices and how they influence out-of-school recreational choices, which could help inform other researchers who are conducting similar research. This included descriptions of the mothers interviewed (family dynamics, physical characteristics, demeanor), spaces where interviews were conducted, and any other context deemed important to connect with the lives of these mothers.

### ***Dependability***

Dependability relates to demonstrating that the findings are consistent and repeatable. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested a number of ways to establish this, and for this study an inquiry audit was used. The audit occurred through an auditor verifying the consistency of agreement among data, research method, interpretation, conclusions, and practical applications. The audit occurred with a peer who was not involved in the peer debriefing process. Her primary role was to evaluate the summarized interpretations, appropriateness of



using interpretative description, and provide feedback about whether the reported findings on Black mothers' beliefs and practices realized through recreational choices were supported by the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was to ensure that researcher biases were not distorting interpretation of the participants' responses and thereby impacting the study's findings. Thus, the researcher's assumptions about Black mothers' beliefs and practices, and their out-of-school recreation choices, was minimized. The information acquired from this study was evaluated by acknowledging the interviewer's and researcher's biases and the possible impact they may have on the study. The inquiry audit assessed dependability by allowing an external auditor to determine if the conclusions were appropriate and consistent.

### ***Conformability***

Conformability is the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not by the researcher's bias, motivation, or interests (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The technique used to ensure the conformability of the study was an audit trail. Maintaining a record of the sampling process and research design provided the reader of the research report with the ability to examine the data to confirm the results and interpretations. Conformability was assessed through assigned data codes and field notes, especially the Observer Comments section of the field notes. Thorough record keeping and preservation of the data for potential inspection were crucial to this strategy. Codes and notes helped to determine if findings were consistent with what the data suggested.

### **Issues and Challenges**

#### ***Comfort of Mothers with the Interview Process***

Each encounter with a Black mother in this study was unique and provided a rich story of the journey to the interview. The researcher understood that he would need to make the meeting

less formal so that Black mothers would feel comfortable chatting and disclosing their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in the interviews. When each Black mother was asked to meet, the researcher encouraged her to choose where and when she would feel most comfortable to meet. Interviews were conducted at a variety of locations (e.g. libraries, at work, neighborhood community center), and all were at familiar locations where Black mothers would feel comfortable talking.

In most situations, this was the first time that the researcher and participant had met, and to convey professionalism, the researcher arrived early to ensure the settings was available, safe, private, and available. Equipment checks were performed to ensure their operation and printed consent forms were available for mothers to complete. The researcher was positioned in a visible area to ensure that he could greet each mother when she arrived and escorted her to the area designated for the interview. In preliminary conversations, the researcher would ask how their day had been going, if they needed a beverage, or find out if they had any time constraints on the interview.

After arriving at the meeting place, the interviewer read the consent form aloud, with each mother followed along on her copy. After some time to consider what the consent form said, mothers they were asked to sign it without any pressure to do so. The voice recorder was not in sight until mothers agreed to allow the recording after which time two audio-recorders (one primary, the other a backup) were introduced. Once each device was ready and recording, mothers were again reminded of the purpose of the study and the option to end the interview at any time.

As questions were asked, the interviewer allowed ample time for mothers to respond and express their perceptions, opinions, and experiences. Due to the verbosity and consistency of

each mother's responses, the researcher had the impression that mothers were relaxed and were willing to convey their beliefs and thoughts. This was later confirmed after interviews ended, as most mothers offered the researcher a hug, or initiated conversation about the dissertation progress, and/or commented on recognition in the community when they might see each other. While the interviewer can never be fully aware of his influence on the Black mothers who participated in this study, there seemed to be several indicators that the goal of making them feel comfortable was achieved.

### ***Recruitment***

There were some issues and challenges that needed to be navigated in the study. The first challenge was that the researcher needed to build relationships with Black mothers at the Recreation Club in order to recruit their participation in the study and gain their trust so that Black mothers would be candid and comfortable answering interview questions. In previous experiences with the Recreation Club, it had been noted that the organization was built on the fact that relationships are the key currency to obtaining access. This issue was addressed by the researcher volunteering at the Recreation Club months before commencing the research study and recruiting participants. This allowed an ample amount of time for the researcher to develop a positive rapport with Black mothers and with gatekeepers (e.g., Recreation Club Director & program assistants) who could assist with recruitment.

### ***Access***

An additional challenge that needed to be addressed was access to Black mothers. When Black mothers came in to pick up their child, typically they entered the lobby area, signed their child out at the front desk, and went back outside to wait for their child. This process made it difficult to have access to Black mothers and develop rapport with them so that they would be

inclined to accept an invitation to participate in an interview. To address this, the researcher personally gave mothers a flyer so that they could see that the researcher was from the university, that the study procedures had undergone scrutiny and been approved by the University's Institutional Review Board, and to afford them the opportunity to ask questions about the researcher, study procedures, or what their participation would entail.

### ***University Affiliation***

While identification of the study and researcher as affiliated with the University provided benefits of legitimacy and careful review, it also posed some problems. The relationship between this community and the university has a deep-rooted history that has led to resentment among the Black residents. Prior experiences with the University have been perceived by the Black community as largely using and abusing this population for research, which had created a distrustful climate. As a researcher from the University seeking access to this segment of the community to conduct research, a way to circumvent the mistrustful nature of the Black community was used. Key gatekeepers (Recreation Club Director and program assistants) were crucial in providing access to Black mothers while reassuring the Black community that the researcher's purpose was not to reinforce the previously held negative perceptions of the university. Through volunteer work at the Recreation Center and getting to know these gatekeepers and establishing trust, this concern was ameliorated and access to potential study participants was facilitated.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

### **Children's Recreational Participation**

Research has attempted to identify the characteristics of Black families' out-of-school activity participation for years. However, as yet there is limited knowledge about the complexity of the process of how and why Black mothers choose recreation activities for their children. From accounts of Black mothers' beliefs about out-of-school activities and the factors that influence their choices, it became possible to recognize the intricate nature of recreation activities itself and out-of-school choices and time. Black mothers' beliefs were explored in detail to more fully understand their influence on the choices they make for their children's out-of-school recreation activities.

### **Current Out-of-School Activities**

When Black mothers expressed what activities their children were currently involved in, there were a number of consistencies. Popular activities for children in free time during the week were sports and homework activities, compared to the weekend, when there was a greater variety of activities and choices for Black children (e.g. sport, educational/learning, family time, unplanned free time, etc.). These out-of-school children's activities during weekdays and on weekends as desired by their mothers are presented separately.

#### ***Activities During Weekdays***

##### ***Sport***

Sport was a popular area for after school activities and it was also a frequent discussion topic among Black mothers. There were various reasons why Black mothers discussed sporting activities as a focal point of their child's recreational activities (e.g. child's interest, developmental characteristics, and social media). Allie enrolled her

children in sport activities because of her children's interest in participating in school sport programs. Kass and Lauren viewed sport as instilling time management skills into their daughters as a developmental tool. Allowing their daughters to maintain their scheduled free time gave them practice in setting a daily routine:

*He is very active, he's in sports, so school sports, if there are any sports that day, rather than practice or games than he is trying to be outside...She enjoys sports, she's not on a team with the school as of yet...So she wants to be in more sports and actually she will be starting some sports outside of school within the next couple of weeks.*

(Allie, son 13, daughter 13 years)

*Every day after school she works to complete homework before leaving for cheerleading practice or private tumbling lessons. This has been her schedule for the past 4 years. Prior to this her after school activity was softball. Practice for this sport was at least three times a week.*

(Kass, daughter 14 years)

*Well, right now, she's playing travel basketball, so after school she goes home on the bus, then she eats a snack, she does homework for about two hours, and then I normally pick her up and take her over to wherever location they're havin' practice at, which is normally in the Champaign Urbana area, sometimes Philo, for about two hours, then she comes home and I check her homework, we do homework together, and dinner, and then she showers and she goes to bed.*

(Lauren, daughter 11 years)

As these excerpts illustrate, having their children participate in sport was highly valued by Black mothers in the community. In most cases, this was a conversational point that immediately came to Black mothers' minds when asked by the interviewer about their child's out-of-school free time usage.

### *Homework*

Homework was pronounced in Black mother's rhetoric about their children's out-of-school recreational free time. Patricia described her daughter's routine as requiring homework to be completed as a part of her nightly routine of chores in preparation for the

next day. Eboni's daughter completed homework before she was allowed to participate in any other recreation activity at home:

*And then she just does any chores she needs to catch up on or finish homework, and pretty much, get ready for the next school day...*

(Patricia, daughter 11 years)

*Right now, she comes home after school, does homework, and then she may watch TV or play some type of games, or educational stuff, or read a book on the tablet.*

(Eboni, daughter 9 years)

Black mothers portrayed homework as a large part of their child's daily routine. Community centers were popular venues for Black mothers to promote homework completion in their child's daily routine. Black mothers regarded the community center as a haven for their children where children could have structured time and receive support to complete their homework.

*Ok, their normal activities for...his normal activities is to stay at his school til about 5:30 and then he either chooses to do an after-school activity such as go to a basketball game or whatever the school may be holding or he comes to the Recreation Club around 5:30, 6 pm....she comes directly from her school, by catching the bus and then coming to the Recreation Club...After school, they both go to the Recreation Club...That was our schedule in Louisiana, to go to the Recreation Club after school."*

(Latoya, son 15, daughter 11 years)

*So she typically...gets on the bus and comes here to the Recreation Club...So that's in terms of her being at the Recreation Club and then after the Recreation Club, you know, we get home and the expectation's for her to have her homework done already.*

(Patricia, daughter 11 years)

*Yep. So, he, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, he goes to the Recreation Club. Uh, Tuesdays and Thursdays, he goes to an afterschool program that is geared towards homework, homework club at his school.*

(Savannah, son 8 years)

Portraying the recreation center as a resource for homework showed the value that Black mothers associated with neighborhood community centers. Perceptions of community centers historically have focused on the role they serve as a "day care" facility, but Black families viewed this neighborhood resource differently. They saw community centers as assisting with giving their

children structure and support to complete homework, as well as being an affordable and accessible resource for those of lower income. Envisioning community centers in this way showed the benefit that these facilities provided to young constituents and community residents. Just as sport was the first thing that came to mind for out-of-school activities, homework was similarly prevalent during conversations about time after school on weekdays.

### ***Weekend Activities***

Children's weekend activities showed only a few differences in recreational opportunities compared to their weekday activities. Black mothers described participation in sports, family activities, and having unstructured free time as popular weekend activities. Due to the weekend being designated as a time when families can relax and "catch up with each other," Black mothers used this time in a way that helped them connect with their children. Activities were categorized into clusters reflecting sport, education/learning, family time and bonding, and unplanned free time activities.

### ***Sports***

As with weekdays, sports were popular weekend activities for most children and their families. Kass, Savannah, and Lauren described their weekend as revolving around their children's sporting events (tournaments and games), while Shea expressed that her children mainly participated in unorganized sports in their neighborhood:

*Weekends are full of cheer competitions and softball tournaments. We travel upstate Illinois to attend various cheer qualifying events and across St. Louis metro area for softball tournaments.*

(Kass, daughter 14 years)

*If it's the weather permits, they'll go outside and they'll play, 'cause they'll have those balls - so they have baseballs, and footballs, and soccer balls and stuff. And, they'll go outside and play those games...*

(Shea, son 9, son 7 years)



*So, for the past year or so, we've always had, well, he's been in sports, so we usually have a game on Saturday mornings...I make it my point every time he has a game, any time anything special's happening in his life, to invite the entire family, so that he always has that support system - if I can't be there, someone else can be there. For instance, my mom picked him up from school today. She took him to his practice Monday. Last weekend, my younger brother came to his game. When he shot his two three's last game, he called all his uncles. Every one of 'em. Didn't call his dad but he called all of his uncles, because that's important to him and he knows that they will support him when he's doing what he's supposed to do, and they will redirect him when he's not...*

(Savannah, son 8 years)

*...Depends on if she has a game. Like this past weekend, we went to West Lafayette near Purdue and she had games all day on Saturday.*

(Lauren, daughter 11 years)

As discussed previously, sport has been a focal point for children's weekly and weekend routines. This is a strong indication of how popular sport is within the Black community. The voices represented in the previous quotes helps to better illustrate how sport was present in Black children's weekend routine, suggesting that when Black children are enrolled in sport activities during the weekend, mothers' time commitment changes to accommodate the need of the sport program.

### *Education/Learning*

Education and learning activities were popular weekend activities for most Black children and their families as well. Sylvia's focus was very broad, as she just wanted her son to learn something, while Allie concentrated on her children practicing multiplication and reading. Shea used computer games as an educational tool for her oldest son to assist him with mastering information more efficiently:

*I do like to take a little educational time during the summer, just to, we sit down and we'll do multiplication tables or I have them read or something.*

(Allie, son 13, daughter 13 years)

*Learning something.*

(Sylvia, son 9 years)

*Or, if my oldest son likes to play computer games, and I let him do that probably more than I let my smaller son because it helps with his autism. He has a reading comprehension time, cause, like it takes him longer to comprehend somethin' he read. So that kind of helps with that.*

(Shea, son 9, son 7 years)

### *Family Time and Bonding*

During the week all mothers emphasized that their children completed their homework and educated themselves during their out-of-school time, after which their time was free for family activities and bonding. Family time was important to the extent that all mothers talked at great length about having quality time together. Mothers described family time as beneficial and reported that it served to bring the family together by doing shared activities. Katie, Lauren and Savannah discussed family time and bonding as opportunities where the family engaged in recreational activities (e.g. movie nights, going to church, going out to eat) as a family to develop closeness:

*I try to let her sleep a little late and we cook or try to go to the movies (either we will go and get movies or we are staying in to watch movies), or if there is something worth seeing at the movie theater, or go out to get something to eat. At least one of those days, either Friday night if we are not too tired or Saturday the matinee, we would try and go and catch a movie...So try to get some family activity in there...Because there is not a whole lot here, I mean there just isn't. So try to get some family activity in there and then Sunday if we are lucky, the remainder of the weekend hasn't been busy before, Sunday we just sit down and try to take it slow and that is the prep day for the week to come....Oh yea, "what do you all want to do today?" (towards kids). We need to go do something; we should go do something that we haven't done in a while...our goal is to actually come here to the library...and just have fun with that.*

(Katie, daughter 13, son 10 years)

*And then that Sunday we, she goes to church and then we normally do somethin' at the house. Either we go to a movie, like we went to see that movie, I think it's called (inaudible) or somethin'. And, or we do somethin' at the house together. Or, we go to the gym again. So, it just depends on what we, what energy level we have after the weekend starts.*

(Lauren, daughter 11 years)

*...Depending on the weekend, he may spend some time with his uncles, maybe not. He usually will do, if it's warm, I send him outside to play. We usually have*

*lunch, then he usually, he watches TV for a couple hours after that, and if we don't go somewhere, meaning like we don't go to Jupiter's or he doesn't go to his grandma's, he usually will...But, for the most part, we spend a lot of time at home.*  
(Savannah, son 8 years)

### *Unplanned Free Time*

Unplanned activities were also an essential activity that Black mothers emphasized. Allie indicated that since her family engaged in numerous church activities during the week and on Sundays, the remainder of the week was devoted to free time. Patricia conveyed that unless they had an activity in which they wanted to participate, her family would be resting:

*...just Sunday, usually Sundays, yea....not too much. We don't...do well we just don't have time for a whole lot of extra church events during the week outside or during the week outside of Wednesdays. We always...usually have church on Wednesdays and then Sundays, like our church doesn't have a whole lot of extra stuff during the weekend outside of Sunday. So, but yea, if I mean we can find something then we do. So... typical weekends would be....just a lot of free time I would say.*

(Allie, son 13, daughter 13 years)

*We do go to church, when I do get up early enough to go (whispered), but when we do I try to do an activity, like do something because we are already out we might as well do something.*

(Patricia, daughter 11 years)

Black mothers provided a snapshot of the variety of activities their families engaged in during their weekend free time. The primary purpose that they expressed for their weekend activities was for relaxation and maintaining/strengthening family bonds. This reinforces the literature about the importance of family bonds to the Black community. Relationship building has been described as a central need for the Black mothers in this study, be it through watching their child participate in sport, educational activities, or relaxing. Family bonds were promoted and modified for the activities the family was involved in, and Black mothers implied that they were intentional with their choices.

### **Ideal Out-of-School Activities**

Several Black mothers conveyed their conceptions of their ideal out-of-school activities for their children during the interviews. Through their accounts it is possible to see what Black mothers value about their children's out-of-school recreational participation. The most popular activities revolved around three recurring patterns: sports participation, educational opportunities, and family time.

### *Sports*

As Black mothers expressed their ideal scenario for their child's participation in out-of-school recreation activities, sport was a consistent arena that was presented. Mothers had their own reasons for wanting their child to participate in sports. Kass and Eboni stated that their children were interested in sports, which facilitated their own involvement. Shea, Lauren, and Savannah believed that their children should be involved in sports as a way to exert energy and be physically active:

*In a perfect situation she would continue to do the activities that she enjoys. I would love to provide private lessons for the cheerleading stunts and tumbling that she performs.*

(Kass, daughter 14 years)

*I would like for them to be involved in sports, but the way my schedule works and I'm their only source of transportation, like for example, if one of them were playin' sports now, they would miss Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday practice...So if it was up to me, they would be involved in afterschool sports. My daughter tried out for a dance team on her campus, on her school, and she didn't make it...My daughter has kind of free reign, if she wanted to participate in sports, she could, but she's involved in afterschool clubs. They said they wouldn't mind playin' baseball but I think that the reason they're interested in football, basketball, and soccer is because those come on TV a lot and my dad likes those sports, and of course, they're little boys, they want to emulate their big, strong, grand-dad.*

(Shea, daughter 15, son 9, son 7 years)

*I think I would like it to be mixed between types of sports related things, physical activities and mental activities. I would prefer to do whatever it is that she needs developmentally. So, when I'm participating in the sports aspect, when it's goin' in, then that's what I prefer to be.*

(Lauren, daughter 11 years)

*Again, have that playtime for him, whether it would be going out to play basketball or to play soccer, whatever. Have that free playtime for him.*

(Savannah, son 8 years)

*I used to play softball. She wants to play but, of course, the weather is not right for that right now.*

(Eboni, daughter 9 years)

Each mother had their own ideas about why they felt sport was well-suited for their child. Kass stated how pleased she was with her daughter's participation in cheerleading and tumbling and that she would be more than willing to financially support her participation. Other mothers also expressed similar sentiments about wanting their children to be involved in some type of sport. The reasons varied, but ultimately Black mothers felt that their children's sports participation would be beneficial and therefore offered their support for their child's involvement.

### ***Educational/Learning Activities***

Along with sports, Black mothers also talked extensively about educational opportunities as another out-of-school activity they would like for their children. An overwhelming majority focused on education as an important focus for their children's out-of-school free time. Eboni directly reported that her main focus was on education in order to keep her daughter's mind stimulated and engaged in learning. Allie, Patricia, Savannah, and Sylvia's focus on education was more implied through wanting their children to read, finish homework, and go to programs that had a curriculum which included some kind of learning activity:

*I, personally, am very grounded on doin' somethin' educational instead of doin' somethin' that's just playful all the time...Just to keep the mind stimulated...She loves to learn, she loves to read, so try to mix it up and do whatever's gonna make her happy with stuff that helps her learn as well.*

(Eboni, daughter 9 years)

*Reading a book instead of watching television hahaha...my perfect world would be that they come home from school. They eat a snack, rest for maybe 30 minutes, and get right into, you know learning time.*

(Allie, son 13, daughter 13 years)

*In a perfect situation, I would like for her to do her homework, all of it, and to do it independently and not necessarily have to someone hold her accountable for it. And then also I would like for her to, not stop in just doing her homework, but to engage with knowledge.*

(Patricia, daughter 11 years)

*For me, the sports programs, the after school programs, any educational programs that are offered, like that museum they have, like they have this thing called brain day, when he was younger, where he went and participated and they kind of showed you different parts of the brain over at the museum. So, I think those are the ones that are most important to me.*

(Savannah, son 8 years)

*Learning something...I don't want to tell him what to think of...I just want to teach you how to think, learn something. It doesn't matter what it is ....honestly if it catches your interest and you want to go learning about lights that is fine, you can sit and teach me about it. If you want to look up presidents, like he is really into weather, so I have a lot of books and experiments and stuff, so learn something... I just found this out that he wanted to be a lawyer...But something upon those levels, just anything that catches his interest that would give him the desire to learn and master it.*

(Sylvia, son 9 years)

Eboni discussed wanting to have her child enrolled in other recreational activities, but only after obtaining a certain level of academic proficiency. Eboni's understanding of the benefits of out-of-school activities was a common belief among all parents in wanting their child to be involved in more academic-related activities. Black mothers consistently felt that encouraging academic preparation early in their child's life would benefit them as they grew older.

Sylvia's interest in her son's learning wasn't focused on academics as much as on becoming generally knowledgeable, which she believed would help to inform any decisions he would make in his life. Eboni's academic focus has been described numerous times in Black family scholarship, but Sylvia's learning focus is just as important. Black mothers expressed at length their wish for their children to concentrate not only on homework but also on additional learning. The focus on homework and learning is consistent with previous literature on the high valuation that Black families typically place on the academic success of their children. Black

mothers revealed that their children's continued learning was important to them, along with their desire for their children to be knowledgeable outside of their immediate community. This difference in formalized education contrasted with everyday learning is the same debate that occurs in the Black community between "school knowledge" and "street smarts." Both types of knowledge are seen as useful but in certain neighborhoods "street smarts" are seen as preferable over academic knowledge. Black mothers discussed the need for both types of knowledge and the importance of instilling them both in their children through their out-of-school activities.

Black mothers insisted that their children's ability to obtain knowledge was a way for them to successfully navigate societal expectations and prepare them to be successful in their future endeavors. In addition, Black mothers maintained that continued learning was gratifying for their children. While they encouraged their children to become more knowledgeable, they did not view their children as passive recipients. Their children's passion for learning was complementary to the influence of Black mothers' beliefs about prioritizing education. They described their children as loving to learn, so their approach was to promote a stimulating environment for their continued learning.

### ***Family Time***

Family time was another theme discussed by Black mothers at length when asked how they ideally wanted their children to spend their out-of-school time. Black mothers revealed that having time to spend with their children, either by doing family activities or just relaxing together, was important to them. Following are some of the mothers' comments that reflected this sentiment:

*I also think that our family time in the evening is extremely important to me...but our family time for me includes homework, you know for spending time doing homework that is great.*

(Allie, son 13, daughter 13 years)

*Well in a perfect world, actually we still get our time. We get home and we have the family game night, we play board games...we will do karaoke, we would play cards, we play board games, we tried to do something that is interactive...I don't want them to be in the house or stuck up under me, especially if they are getting older. But I don't want them to be away all of the time, either. I like seeing my children, I like spending time with them, I miss them when I'm gone and it's like, "I better start finding something to do with myself before all of them are completely gone, because I'll miss them.*

(Katie, son 10 years)

*Ideal day though is... one day get off work and one day he doesn't have a basketball game and go home, get in the shower, and go to bed, but that never happens. So, a perfect day. Dinner, movie, bed. That's a perfect day...*

(Angel, son 12 years)

*As far as activities that we do together or I mean it doesn't have to be anything like "we need to go biking" or something like that. But first, cleaning would be in a perfect world and then the activity time together, and then after that I want them to enjoy themselves and explore... I would like them (her children) to be around me. I don't know if this because they are older now and I'm facing the fact that in 3 years my child will be gone. So it is getting closer to being an empty nest. So I like, to kind of we went bowling and stuff like that...so I don't want them under me under me all the time...but at least when I do have them on my weekends that we're are doing something for an hour. To enjoy each other's time, keep the memories, and then after that you have your friends ummm...do whatever activities, like they like going to the mall and so in a perfect world I guess I would say just an hour of quality time.*

(Latoya, son 15, daughter 11 years)

*If it's not in then we go and do whatever it is we prefer to do, whether it be the movies, the travel, or whatever it is. I'm comfortable with that. So, I don't have a different preference than what it is I'm supposed to be doin' to make sure she's well-rounded.*

(Lauren, daughter 11 years)

*I mean like I'm spending time with them, but doing something fun. In an ideal world, I would you know, in an ideal situation I would do something with them every weekend, or even coordinate more so. That is something I've tried to do more, coordinate with their friends and stuff, to try and have them have something to do on the weekends.*

(Patricia, daughter 11 years)

*As long as I get a real good time to relax, I love spendin' time with my kids, so anything that can help her or make her feel better then I try to spend some type, some type of time with them on the weekend and during the week.*

(Ebony, daughter 9 years)



Black mothers placed high value on their family time with their children. They participated in a variety of activities with their children, from watching movies to going out to eat a meal. This quality time was essential to them in maintaining a positive relationship with their children as well as strengthening the family bond.

Black mothers expressed their understanding that their weekdays are busy and don't allow much time for them to bond with their children. Hence, they focused their attention on protecting their weekend time for their family. There are times when activities decreased the amount of family time, but most mothers talked about their feeling that they just "want a little time with their children." As long as they were able to have that relaxing recreational time with their children, they preferred staying busy on weekdays so that weekends could be filled with family bonding time and activities.

### **Choosing Out-of-School Activities**

When selecting out-of-school activities, there were some families in which these decisions were made primarily by the mother, while in other families these decisions were made by the child. Black mothers described why they chose particular activities for their child, which adds to our understanding of not only the benefits they perceive in these activities, but also what values they associate with particular out-of-school recreation activities. This is crucial to understanding their perspective on out-of-school free time and it can better inform professional practice. When mothers made the decision for their child's out-of-school recreation participation, the following beliefs were expressed: cost, child's interest, character development, diverse opportunities, something to do, therapeutic, being safe and convenient, homework, education, and sport participation:

*For the truth in the matter...being that the after-school programs at their schools were way more expensive based upon my income level. We decided to try the*

*Recreation Club. We knew a friend of the family that was going to be working there, so I felt more trustworthy of it and from there that is how we kind of got involved...*

(Latoya, son 15, daughter 11 years)

*I knew, I needed somewhere for him to go that I could afford. So that started, that's it...I was a Recreation club kid...he's had, I can say both because I know financially still needed it, but I never made him, he's never had ill-will towards it...*

(Sylvia, son 9 years)

*I decided to get my oldest child involved so that he could have something to do after school... my youngest son, he plays basketball with one of the coaches that came from the Recreation club. He has a few AAU teams, so he plays basketball on that. He has had stem club, which takes up his Saturdays. With my oldest son playing football, we did the whole Illini football training camp. It was free and he wanted to do it, so we did that.*

(Katie, son 10 years)

*Yeah, kindergarten, they offered a free one day class and when he went, it opened him up a lot because he was very very quiet and reserved so I wanted to attempt to use it as a means so he can get loud and proud. So I took him to the class and I saw how he interacted with other students and he really really enjoyed it so I'm like OK, I'm gonna put him in it...*

(Angel, daughter 7, son 12 years)

*And, I want him to have an opportunity to play....to learn sportsmanship. He's an only child, so he has a lot of me-me-me, I-I-I. I want him to be able to function in a world where it's not gonna be me-me-me, I-I-I.*

(Savannah, son 8 years)

*...You know, I didn't, I never, I always have them try things that I never got the chance to try. I encouraged my son, "Why don't you try playing soccer or baseball or other sports like chess." Or just some activities I didn't try because when I was younger, we didn't do kung-fu. We played basketball and that was pretty much it. So, I played basketball from probably fourth grade through high school and I had my son, but I didn't get the other opportunities to try this or try that so, I let him try it first and they let me know, I like this or I don't like this or we'll find something else. So, it's more like I'm opening doors to other opportunities because you won't know if you're good at it unless you try it."*

(Angel, daughter 7, son 12 years)

*If there something that he can do or want to do, if I can't afford then he can't go...Because I know his time is idle on the weekend and I don't want him to just. I just don't like kids to just sit around and do nothing. That is just me, and he doesn't like to do it. Doing something and sticking with something is better than doing nothing.*

(Sylvia, son 9 years)

*The Recreation Club - we just happened to stop by. My brothers went there as young kids, and I heard that they had, you know, a good afterschool program. So, and it was really inexpensive, and at the time inexpensive worked really well. But, they gave him a lot of structure. They did a lot of things that he needed...Basketball - he just needs the physical activity. He's been diagnosed with ADHD...So, he needs to be able to play...He's eight. I, I'm a big component of we don't get to play enough, you know? Kids don't play enough...*

(Savannah, son 8 years)

*So, undergrad and now graduate level, so it was a necessity (out of necessity) needed to make sure she had a safe place to go after dismissal at school and not only safe but also convenience for everyone involved, including her.*

(Patricia, daughter 11 years)

*And then, it needed to, we needed to make sure the after school program supported her needs and our needs. Because reality is that, if you are working and going to school, the last thing you want to do is help your kid with homework.*

(Patricia, daughter 11 years)

*I, personally, am very grounded on doin' somethin' educational instead of doin' somethin' that's just playful all the time.*

(Ebony, daughter 9 years)

*I'm thinking its sports, honestly...People are really involved with sports...which influence the kids, because 'ok I want to be an athlete too....'*

*Yea so, I think it has a lot to do with that. But I don't really hear of....a lot of the children here doing much other than sports.*

(Katie, daughter 13, son 10 years)

*I feel like its sports - basketball, I would say would be probably first, or maybe its football. Football would be first and then basketball, I feel like, is next....*

*I think that's because that's American culture. That's America...Sports is American culture, I feel like...in terms of what people, what I see publicized, I'm thinkin' popular like what the media is promoting...they promote sports.*

(Lauren, daughter 11 years)

As Black mothers expressed, their choices were based mainly on what they perceived to be in the best interest of their child. Several mothers mentioned that there may be more popular activities available in their community, but neither their children nor friends or colleagues talked about these “other activities.” This highlights the need to understand parental values and beliefs more

intricately and the influence they have on mothers' choices for their children's out-of-school recreational activities.

When children were allowed to make their own decision about their out-of-school activities, it was simply a matter of their interests and preferences. Some mothers (Allie and Savannah) did not have to provide much encouragement for their children to participate in out-of-school recreational activities, their children communicated to them that they wanted to be active. Other mothers (Angel and Kass) used their children's peers or their own participation in certain out-of-school recreational activities as a catalyst to encourage involvement from their child:

*...just want, he always wanted to be, he just always been interested, and I mean I never pushed because I was never athletic. I didn't push it at all, he just, it was natural...I don't know her interest is volleyball and it just like came up out of nowhere because I didn't play volleyball or basketball or anything. Sooo....I'm not real sure whether it just kind of, she said one day this is what I want to play and so I just tried to make it available to her.*

(Allie, son 13, daughter 13 years)

*Oh, I started, well, my son started taking kung-fu and then I took it with him and then when my daughter saw us, it was something she was interested in.*

(Angel, daughter 7, son 12 years)

*...always agreed to continue the softball after it was initially introduced or once the time came to sign up for the next season. The kids would also talk amongst themselves to decide who would play next year, who they wanted on their team, etc.*

(Kass, daughter 14 years)

*I don't know her interest is volleyball and it just like came up out of nowhere because I didn't play volleyball or basketball or anything. Sooo....I'm not real sure, she said one day this is what I want to play and so I just tried to make it available to her.*

(Allie, daughter 13 years)

*....And so, parents push their kids to be the next LeBron James, hey, be the next Michael Jordan and chances are that's not gonna happen. So, that's why I... I mean I'm very competitive and I don't like to lose, but I don't force my son to play sports. I let him do it because he likes it. It's like a way of self-expression.*

(Angel, daughter 7, son 12 years)

*I'd probably say basketball...Basketball games are usually the hottest. I don't know how our team ranks, I mean, I don't know anything about basketball, but I know because of what my son says, that it's something he's really into. So, I try to keep an ear for those things. So, there could, it could be that soccer's more popular but I guess I go by what he is interested in.*

(Savannah, son 8 years)

The responses from Black mothers in this study suggested that children's recreational choices were determined based on what they had been exposed to and what they preferred. This perspective is intriguing because Black mothers expressed that they can only teach their children so much, and for this reason they encouraged their children to be knowledgeable and try new things. If this belief of Black mothers is true, recreation activities were selected with minimal exposure to other opportunities, thus creating a perpetual cycle of narrow out-of-school recreational choices focused on historically popular activities. This revealed the need to better understand the need to acquaint Black children with new out-of-school recreational activities and to examine the perceptions that Black mothers have towards community recreation programs and activities.

### **Benefits of Recreation Activities for Children**

Black mothers' perceptions of the benefits their children derived from participating in recreation activities were reported in the interviews. The main benefits that Black mothers emphasized were character building, exploration, and having programs which were accessible. Some of these reasons were consistent with previous research, and some new insights were provided as well. An important expression came from Sylvia when she mentioned that she doesn't want her child to be one-dimensional, especially when it came to the discussion of Black mothers wanting their children to explore new activities.

### ***Building Character***

*They all serve their own purpose like, when they done their kung fu, it served its purpose, self-protection and self-discipline. Sports, teamwork, you know, communication. So they all serve their different... they work together. So, I think that everything is pretty good as far as doing what they're supposed to do.*

(Angel, daughter 7, son 12 years)

*If he is not going in, knowing we are going to self-control or team building, but you incorporate it in and learning by doing, that's the stuff that kind of sets with you.*

(Sylvia, son 9 years)

*I think one that builds a positive, I guess a positive self-identity, a notion of self, self-awareness, self-related to the environment, the community, and those types of things. And, I think they can come in many shapes and forms depending on the program... Yeah, I think as a little black girl it is. I think that sometimes when you, even as a black woman, you run into these things where you really need to have a positive foundation in who you are as a person, and what your moral ground is, what, how you treat people - that starts, I think, a little bit young every decade or every century. So, I think that knowing who you is how you navigate the world and how you, not necessarily become successful because who can measure that, but lead a positive existence or, and make a positive impact dependin' on where you are in this particular space, so.... I liked that they were building her confidence in certain areas. So, I look for things to build confidence and self-awareness.*

(Lauren, daughter 11 years)

*...all the credit for her bein' as confident and as kind of well put together as she is 'cause she went there after school for years, participated in activities, like a step team - just different things that kind of gave her one location access to a whole bunch of different things.*

(Shea, daughter 15, son 9, son 7 years)

*But also too, again a place where she can engage in like meaningful activities so like not only doing her homework and stuff, but also participating in other activities that's fun to her. And that helps build her self-esteem and help her just learn how to have like successful social encounters. Because that's something she struggled with when she was a little bit younger. In terms of her confidence and how to pick up on social cues and certain things like...I don't want to say*

(Patricia, daughter 11 years)

*She's pretty shy so, I mean, anything to help her kind of break out of her shell, find herself, find somethin' that she actually likes to do and enjoys doin', makes her feel better about herself.*

(Ebony, daughter 9 years)

*It's majority Black kids so what I do is I try to bring them in so we can all work together. I teach them how to work together as a group because that's the*

*problem. Black people like crabs and bucket, wanna pull each other down instead of working together to get something done. So, whenever I work with Teams in Action I make them play something together so all together as a group, working together. And then I will let them go off and... cause all they expecting is to play basketball and jump rope. And I'm like "Oh, that's fine. You can do that, but after we do something together.*

(Angel, daughter 7, son 12 years)

*And, as far as my boys, I would like, in a perfect world for me, as it relates to my boys or my children in general, I would like if there was almost like, you see it with language schools, for people of other cultures, there'll be like an afterschool school for culture. I would like that for my children. At this point, I provide it but I would like it if there was somewhere they could go for that.*

(Shea, daughter 15, son 9, son, 7 years)

### **Exploration**

*I think any actually...it is just allowing them to explore. You can do arts and crafts and find an architect, an artist, a fashion designer, an engineer. You can have, pet the animals or whatever they call it, petting zoo come over to the Douglas Center, or whatever. So I think anything that will allow them to explore more than their minimum.*

(Latoya, son 15, daughter 11 years)

*...the activities that he does participate in is one-dimension, and I know at some point you going to have to be participating in things that isn't one dimensional, so the more practice you have in it, especially when it is not the focus...*

(Sylvia, son 9 years)

*He gets social skills, which is a big thing for him, physical activity, social interaction, cognitive play, you know, like all these different things he now gets to see, and learn, and talk about, and do. Exposure...*

(Savannah, son 8 years)

*I like the, I wanted her to do the Big Sister, Little Sister/Big Sister program but, I don't know, I didn't really like them (inaudible). But, I think that the, I would say the chemistry program she did over the summer, it put a positive spin on science, so they were makin' ice cream out of liquid nitrogen and things like that that you wouldn't think you could do, but just showin' 'em that science doesn't need to be so serious at this age group. Just gettin' them exposed, I think, showin' 'em that you can't really knock things 'til you try it because some students were probably, "Oh, chemistry's hard," and you're like, "Have you had a chemistry course?" And, they're like, "No."*

(Lauren, daughter 11 years)

*Well I would like for her to....she's...I mean this in a good but in a funny sense. She is a very dramatic person. But I mean dramatic in the sense that like she can*

*act. She could probably act. So, I would like for her to participate in things like that to kind of see if that's her niche. Basically, I'm trying to figure out what's her niche. I feel like, once I could that figure out than she could like it and like really just shine. And that's what's I really look for when I'm look for her getting involved in things. I feel like I don't want to waste my time having her do stuff, if she is not going to be really interested in it. But, like acting, you know she likes to do that.*

(Patricia, daughter 11 years)

### **Accessibility**

*It would be nice if some of the programs that already exist cost less. Or, if there was a way to find these things out...daycare is expensive everywhere, so that's priced out. But, after school, there are programs that talked about kind of like arts and crafts kind of things, but again - those always come home with those flyers from school and they're all pretty expensive, that I've been in contact with...And then if transportation to these things went as far as my house. I seem to live right at the point where nobody wants to come. If they were gonna do transportation. So, I think maybe easier access would be beneficial...*

(Shea, daughter 15, son 9, son, 7 years)

*...like what's been useful is the fact that you know it's low cost, it's a place she can go for the entire time we need her to after school.*

(Patricia, daughter 11 years)

As these statements show, Black mothers had a variety of beliefs about the benefits of recreation activities for their children. This reinforces the idea that Black mothers believed that different benefits would accrue to their children through their recreation participation. The addition of “exploration” as a perspective to consider is significant because it is not discussed much in the current literature. Black mothers valued and pushed their children to explore and go outside of their “community bubble,” to become aware of and understand the world around them. Black mothers felt exploring and trying new perspectives would help their children understand who they are and be exposed to new things previously unavailable to their parents. As Black mothers described activities they felt would be helpful to their child, there were some activities that they felt could be helpful but that were not available in their community.

### **Activities Desired but not Available in the Community**



Black mothers provided a list of activities they wished were more readily available to their children in their community. The following were a number of types of out-of-school activities and programs they desired but also indicated were not generally available. The main themes that were desired included mentally stimulating activities (e.g. creative activities, debate teams), other specific education topics (e.g. STEM club, foreign language classes), mentorship opportunities, and other community resources (e.g. golf opportunities, clearing house of community programs). Black mothers suggested that participating in the described activities would give their children a versatile array of skills:

### ***Mentally Stimulating Activities***

*But they should have something, that allows them to exercise their creativity that allows them to exercise and expand on their intellect, and a lot of it is, is that if they don't make available. If somebody doesn't suggest it, if it is not a club that is together an activity that's been talked about "well we want to put this together." Well they don't even mention it to the kids, they don't honestly. The STEM club after school program at my little boys' school is awesome, and he was you know extremely excited about that. But that just, that just a little and you have to be in a lottery in order to get picked for that. So that's...that's not enough.*

(Katie, daughter 13, son 10 years)

*If I don't have transportation, I don't have the time. I don't have the resources, I got to go to work and that's just what it is. But, if there was like a community program that took these kids in shifts and hubs, and took 'em around, you know, let's go walk on the quad, let's go look at the engineering building, let's go look at the science building, let's go look at the education building, and kind of, you know, just take them on those things so they have a more worldly view, even though it's Champaign, it's still opening some of their eyes. Not everyone is gonna want to do that but there's a group, there's groups of kids who do.*

(Savannah, son 8 years)

*I feel like there needs to be a stronger educational like development program that may not be expensive. I think that they have tutoring options, some of these things, but for example, back when she was, when Faith was starting third grade, I wanted her to develop over her grade level, she already was but I felt like I needed more, and I think that sometimes tutoring gets a stereotype that that means you need assistance, and it really is to maintain and surpass where you already are, to me.*

(Lauren, daughter 11 years)

*I would love some type of debate team or somethin' for younger children 'cause she likes to debate...or somethin' that's, somethin' that's a little bit more educational. The fun stuff is fine but somethin' else besides just all of the actual recreational stuff that they have.*

(Eboni, daughter 9 years)

*Or you don't see nothing about "Let's take a trip to the planetarium." We do planetarium a lot to, that's cause I love outer space... you don't .... You'll see a poster that say, "Come join mini hoops." O you'll see one that say, "Come join a sports camp" or you'll see one that say, "Football." But you want see one that say "let's go gardening, let's go bike riding, let's go read a book." The library, they don't even put theirs out there as strong as the community puts out sports even.*

(Angel, daughter 7, son 12 years)

### **Specific Educational Topics**

*My daughter, my son up for foreign languages cause they don't teach it at the school, but it's nice to have. I know they have foreign language. I think they have everything that they need. They just don't endorse it like they do sports. You don't see a lot of flyers about, "Come learn a second language...like my daughter now. She has this cooking craze thing. I was hoping there would be some cooking classes around for you, you know, but you don't find too many of those. But she loves to cook. She watches videos on youtube about cooking all the time.*

(Angel, daughter 7, son 12 years)

*...our children aren't educated enough on our environment. So I would love to do a class on just, you know, this is how we take care of our food, our shelter, this is how we get our food or shelter, or supplies, so forth and so on. I just haven't figured out how that could be a class that would be interesting to use...so I would love something like that, I think I just think nature, more nature stuff and there may be some more already out here and I just haven't stumbled upon it yet.*

(Allie, son 13, daughter 13 years)

*Or, plug some of the gaps in the system. For example, they don't teach language arts like that anymore. Like when I was younger, they taught us what a noun and a verb was - circle this, underline that. Not so much. But then they expect the students to know how to make a comprehensive paragraph. What's a paragraph if you never define a paragraph? So, I had to work really specifically with my daughter as she began to write,...*

(Lauren, daughter 11 years)

*...acting and singing lessons or something, they're in the community, but the problem with that is getting her is getting her involved is pricey. That's something that, like some of these activities that I would want her to get in...they can be pricey. That is another reason why I don't necessarily have her participate in them because they could be pricey.*

(Patricia, daughter 11 years)

*Community theatre. She was involved with this in previous years but the distance and cost became an issue along with the scheduling conflicts.*

(Kass, daughter 14)

*I would like for her to do more like, sciency things like...I would like for her to participate in lab experiments and stuff. But that stuff isn't in the community like I try to get her involved in this stuff when she is here in the summer and if it is offered through the University or something like that.*

(Patricia, daughter 11 years)

*Honestly, I would like...I mean I know that most of the campus is gone during the summer time...But our campus to open up more towards, gearing them to want to come to the University of Illinois. We are a Big 10 University, and you wouldn't be able to tell outside of the university people. Like we have a strong engineering program and yes I get that you need to cater to people that are on their way to the university like the seniors or transfer students. But, if you started embracing the middle school and high school students, then you would have more of the localization of coming to the University of Illinois. I mean we have been to the engineering open house and the vet. Med. Open house, it is never that, one day of having the kids feel like "ohh this is something that I may want to explore.*

(Latoya, son 15, daughter 11 years)

### **Mentorship**

*"This is the point, our teens get the bare minimum. This is the drop-off. We give to the kids, don't get me wrong, the kids deserve these snacks but teens deserve things too because they are close to having a future. I will stop because I don't want to get off on a tangent."*

(Latoya, son 15 years)

*"There are not programs for teen parents because that's something they need also. I need to put that down there. They need stuff for teen parents cause I was a teen parent so therefore I believe that if I had had somebody there to explain to me beforehand about... I had Sex-Ed, but it wasn't the same thing. They was just teaching me what this is, what that do when I got a grade for it."*

(Angel, daughter 7 years)

### **Other Community Resources**

*Ok, but if they advertised more golf, track that's more affordable, or other activities, that would probably be something of interest?*

(Sylvia, son 9 years)

*...And, it would be nice if there was some kind of, might even be some kind of central clearing house for information on these programs, if it was weekend based, or at least had some things on the weekend...*

(Shea, daughter 15, son 9, son, 7 years)

As these statements indicate, there are a large number of activities that Black mothers feel are not available for their children in their community. Cost was a factor mentioned when it came to some activities, but this dealt more with the price point of the activity and Black mothers' feeling that the benefits didn't match the financial investment. There were times when mothers commented that the activities seemed to be priced higher than what they would expect. When price was not a factor, the perception was that either the activity was not in the community or that it was necessary to have a certain amount of social capital to access a program. This added another component for Black mothers to consider when evaluating the cost-analysis of programs and arriving at a decision about whether or not to enroll their child.

### **Concerns about Children's Activity Participation**

As some desired activities were not present in Black mothers' communities, there were some activities available in the community in which mothers felt they did not want their child to be a participant. This added to the dialogue that there may not be differences between parenting concerns, just compounding factors that further added to Black mothers' concerns, such as race, gender and social class. Black mothers focused on two thematic areas: safety and the perception that an activity would have a negative impact on their child. The majority of the mothers described safety concerns or they perceived certain behaviors and rhetoric in their community to be contrary to their beliefs, and they had ways to prevent this influence from impacting their children.

#### ***Safety***

*The city that we previously came from had an overnight skate at the skating rink and my daughter and at the time was 11 and/or 12 (because they had a couple of them) and I wouldn't allow that. I don't think a child under 16 at least, and I don't think I will let her do that at 16. I just would not allow an overnight activity like that, I just don't, and it doesn't seem like anything good...if there was a lock-in at church and the kids were going to be doing different activities, of course chaperone at church, I would allow that. I think the atmosphere is different, I think it would be more controlled...so that is more positive to me.*

(Allie, son 13, daughter 13 years)

*My daughter is not allowed to be in late night activities, as far, unless it's like with the church or you know adults that I trust are going to be around. Ummm....my son he's pretty much getting more openness because he is at the driving age. He has friends that drive and stuff, so he's more open. So he is more open to get to the mall by himself. But my daughter, she has more limitations.*

(Latoya, son 15, daughter 11 years)

*...is not allowed to partake in social network activities nor activities where parents are not present. I do not let her do social networks because there is so much bullying and inappropriate content.*

(Kass, daughter 14)

*Yea...she wouldn't be able to...any place where there's no supervision....no adult supervision...Also, she wouldn't be able to participate in any activities with an adult that I don't trust. Any activities or an environment where there may be drugs or alcohol, and I say I'm serious about the....there's family members that she is forbidden to even be around like, "no you can't hang around so and so because they smoke." So any of those scenarios where that will happen is a no. So any activity that's going to put that, "I know" will put her life in danger.*

(Patricia, daughter 11 years)

*I wouldn't let them participate in something where I feel like they have a high chance of gettin' hurt. I despise the game of dodge ball. Like I played it - that's just an example. I played it as a kid. It was brutal. So, I probably wouldn't let 'em do that.*

(Shea, daughter 15, son 9, son, 7 years)

*Oooh, that is a really good question. Anything that was unsafe is kind of my thing. Anything that's gonna be driven to harm him physically, mentally, emotionally, I would not put him in any of those.*

(Savannah, son 8 years)

*If there was like a devil worshipping camp, they couldn't go...other than that, I don't see nothing I wouldn't let them be involved in.*

(Angel, daughter 7, son 12 years)

### **Negative Impact on Child**

*That's not something my parents would've allowed and so that's not something I would've allowed and my child mainly my daughter because she just at that stage where she wants to do more stuff because she is older. Ummm....but I tell you, I couldn't do that...that was just how I was raised and I think we what we know and so that's how I was raised and so I use those same characteristics to raise my children.*

(Allie, son 13, daughter 13 years)

*Anywhere where I feel like she's going to be put in an environment where she's going to be exposed to something that she is not mature enough to handle. And that could be a number of situations, like I'm not going to send...there was one time where I needed my niece (my niece is a college student), need my niece to watch her and my niece come to my house to do it, so then there was a possibility of going to her house and then my niece was like, "oh yea, she can come over here and like all my friends are going to be over." Umm...no she can't be over there with you and your friends, because I've heard some of things you claim you do, you may be on your best behavior with my kid around. But, still no, I don't need that so yea.*

(Patricia, daughter 11 years)

*I know what I want my kid to be a part of....I know what I want my kid to be a part of and I know what my kid can handle and what I feel is appropriate and not appropriate. So that influences my decision.*

(Patricia, daughter 11 years)

*Anything that's extremely aggressive.*

(Ebony, daughter 9 years)

*It turned me completely off. So, she cannot participate in that organization, and it might have been fine, but I don't allow them to participate in organizations that seem to ignore the parents...So, when I'm havin' somebody who's already shown me they're very disrespectful when it comes to parents, then I'm not quite so sure what you're gonna be tellin' my daughter...So, any kind of activity where you kind of think you don't have to explain to the parents what you're doin' with their children, I don't want them to be a part of...*

(Shea, daughter 15 years)

*I don't want them to participate in religious situations and it's not that I'm, I'm not an atheist...I believe in God. But, what I don't believe in is a lot of religious dogma that kind of just preaches badness, badness, badness, hell fire damnation, that kind of thing. I don't want that to be, especially for, specifically for my daughter, I don't want that to be how she comes up, that everything that makes her a woman is somehow somethin' horrible that needs to be saved by somebody else. So, I tend to shy away from religion based activities, and it doesn't even mean that it can't be 'cause there have been some churches who are able to have*

*events but there's no preachin' in the event, then that's fine. But, if there's gonna be like sermon's - no.*

(Shea, daughter 15, son 9, son, 7 years)

*Another thing I wouldn't want 'em to participate in is things where they'd kind of be tokenized or showpieces. So, I have some, when you talk about experience - my experience with organizations like that as a kid was I participated in after school program for black girls. It was run completely by white folk, white people.*

(Shea, daughter 15, son 9, son, 7 years)

*The stereotypical one and the discriminatory language - yes. Overnight, I'm not so, I wouldn't be, I would definitely have to make sure I knew who was goin' and what was goin' on, you know, how that was gonna be. I have to at least have spent some time with the people who are going. It wouldn't just be, "Okay, do you want to go? Okay, bye." You know, it would have to be somethin' like that. But definitely the discriminatory - yeah, those two. I can't think of anything else. I would guess like an activity that pushed any type of views that weren't similar to what I believed or thought.*

(Savannah, son 8 years)

*I mean anything that's discriminatory that I feel may shape her mind in a way that looks, reflects negatively on society and how you should do somethin' to somebody because of these factors versus living a life and lettin' it be organic because no person is the same and no group of people are all the same. So, somethin' that would be discriminatory, I would not let her participate in.*

(Lauren, daughter 11 years)

These responses showed that there were a variety of activities in which Black mothers did not want their child to participate. While numerous activities were mentioned, there were two primary concerns: the safety of the child and the negative influences that could be realized.

### **Concerns About Out-of-School Free Time**

In addition to perceptions about the activities and the messages that were communicated to their children, Black mothers continually expressed their concerns about their sons' and daughters' free time recreation activities, as well as about wanting to teach them how to be cautious. Communication was not directly related to recreation participation but was a considerable factor for Black mothers when making recreation activity choices for their children.

*As far as the skin color, Black and doing things in a positive manner are starting to fade...These kids don't have a trust level anymore. Because they've seen so*

*much more than when I came to their age. They've seen death, by murder, the negative effect of crime, is their norm. So for, mentors, coaches and all that, to get close to them, they have to learn how to get close and it is about trust. It is not about walking out of their lives. This is what they are use to. Yes, single parenting has been going on for so long, but the single parenting back when I was growing up was also a community. You could have my mom know so and so mom, that we didn't have to be friends, like close friends or maybe she didn't have a daughter, but she would look out for you if you were walking to the corner store or whatever. But now it is like, don't say anything to my kid, until that kid is in trouble. So the sense of community is a house next to a house, and this day and age, instead of a neighbor who, where you know your neighbor and we are helping to raise our kids to keep them safe.*

(Latoya, son 15, daughter 11 years)

*Be aware of the mindsets of others towards you because you are Black. Don't let that hold you back. Don't let that be some excuse or some crutch. That, 'oh well I couldn't do this, or I wasn't to do this because I'm black, or I can only do these things because I'm Black...' But as Black people I explain to them that the two younger children, "don't let people pigeon hole you that ok, because this is going on for you." If you are playing sports, that is not all who you are. That, doesn't define you because you happen to be Black, that doesn't determine the person that you are. So, that's the best that I could teach them.*

(Katie, son 10 years)

It thus appeared that Black mothers had strong opinions about how their children saw themselves within the community context, which had an effect on their out-of-school participation. The most popular out-of-school activity for males in most Black communities was basketball. However, Black mothers understood that their culture's affinity for basketball may not lead to the empowering, educating and motivating effect that their young black sons in particular needed to move forward. Mothers explained the need to encourage and protect their sons due to recent violence that had been reoccurring around the country. Understanding this context allowed mothers to seek viable options in order to protect their sons, including the opportunity to promote recreational programs and resources that could be beneficial to them.

A number of Black mothers' approaches were guided by the ways in which they were raised, the community of which they were a part, their concerns about their children's safety, and the popularity of specific activities within their community. Black mothers' perceptions



influenced their choice of activities so that they were sport-focused, adopted an educational focus, or promoted social and family time.

### **Gender Differences**

When discussing the influence of gender on Black mothers' choices, there were no clear discernible relationships found. All mothers repeated that they treat their sons and daughters similarly, but due to the harsh nature of society, there were some differences that they had to address:

*And to really just enjoy life because its going to be hard and the reality of it is....especially being a Black male...there are those racial factors and there are those judgments. I mean you can't be naive to those things, but you can't also let those things consume you either.*

(Sylvia, son 9 years)

*And for me, with me having sons, all sons....they should have really big goals and whatever your interest are... You have a good spirit and you have a bad spirit, just like you have a good kid and a bad kid. And to really just enjoy life because its going to be hard and the reality of it is....especially being a Black male...there are those racial factors and there are those judgments. I mean you can't be naive to those things, but you can't also let those things consume you either.*

(Sylvia, son 9 years)

*...teaching my children to be strong, and my daughter especially to be a strong black woman. And my son, in this case with all that has been going on in society right, its hard to raise a black son and I'm a single parent...but I think that it's even harder to raise a black son now in this society the way our black men are treated.*

(Allie, son 13, daughter 13 years)

*First and foremost, I teach her to be an asset to society. I explain to her the importance of doing so as a Black women because if the stereotypes. I have used historical references in addition to my personal experiences to demonstrate the how the stereotypes have developed. I teach her that it is important to be spiritually sound in order to deal with racial stereotypes.*

(Kass, daughter 14 years)

Most mothers described an aspect of their teaching as inspiring their daughters to feel empowered and encouraged. This was important because they felt society has many negative

images/ideas that their Black daughters are exposed to that could be discouraging to their development as a strong Black woman. For this reason they tried to communicate positive messages, especially through their out-of-school activity participation (e.g., participation in sports for developing self-confidence, self-esteem, teamwork, and how to work with others) to their daughters. Mothers felt their daughters needed this extra support to become productive citizens, as they got older.

Messages directed towards their sons generally focused on safety and concerns for their well-being, which are also consistent with the extant literature. There were no specific examples voiced about this concern, although there were several statements made about the overall racial atmosphere for Black children being negative. With the most recent issues in society dealing with Black males, a number of mothers expressed concerns for their own sons. This seemed to reinforce their overall effort to teach their male children to be survivors and engage in safe activities that would promote their development while simultaneously protecting them from threatening outside factors.

When it came to beliefs and their impact on choices for out-of-school activities for their children, there were some gender differences expressed by the mothers. Typically, gender differences were described in relation to a factor such as age/safety. There were different messages being communicated that focused on gender and mothers' concerns about the safety of their children in a number of situations. When examining the messages that Black mothers communicated to their sons and daughters, there were only a few in which some explicit messages were being communicated to daughters through their out-of-school participation.

*I don't like the fact that the assumption is as a race, the main way we are going to make it is gonna be through sports... But they should have something that allows them to exercise their creativity that allows them to exercise and expand on their intellect.*

(Katie, daughter 13 years)

These statements illustrate specific messages by Black mothers to teach their children how to behave in certain situations, as well as communicate societal expectations outside of the mothers' control that children would eventually have to address (e.g., bigotry, discrimination). For example, Katie's message was to counteract the stereotypical impression she felt from organizational structures and behaviors in sport. In this instance, the messages expressed to daughters were not only empowering but they de-emphasized any negative images that may have been transmitted from external sources.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, and IMPLICATIONS

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine whether and how low-income Black mothers' beliefs influence their choice of out-of-school activities for their children. The questions that shaped the focus of this research were:

1. What role does Black mothers' perceptions and parental beliefs play in the choice of their children's participation in out-of-school recreation activities?
2. To what extent how is positive youth development facilitated through Black mothers' choices for their children's participation in out-of-school recreation activities?
3. What role does gender play in the extent to which Black mothers' perceptions influence their choices for their children's out-of-school recreation activities?

### *The Impact of Black Mothers' Beliefs on Recreational Choices for their Children*

During the weekdays, Black mothers' choices for their children's out-of-school recreation participation emphasized sports and homework activities. The weekends not only consisted of sport activities, but also educational, family time, and unplanned free time recreational activities. The Black community's involvement in sport, educational, and family activities was presented in ways that these out-of-school recreational activities would be encouraging and helpful to Black children in order to be successful in the future.

Black mothers described sport as an activity that they felt would help develop physical, mental, and cognitive skills in their children, as well as teamwork and other beneficial skills for Black children to be successful in society. This is consistent with how the literature has described sport participation in the Black community (Collen, 2008; Eitle & Eitle, 2002; Larson, Pearce, Sullivan, & Jarrett, 2007). Black mothers in this study and in previous research (Barnett

& Weber, 2008; Schmalz, Kerstetter, & Anderson, 2004) believed that children who participate in sport activities during their out-of-school free time will learn how to work with others, stay out of trouble, and become physically fit. None of the Black mothers in this study explicitly stated that their child's current involvement in sport would be a precursor to their future involvement in professional sports, which has been discussed at length in previous scholarship about Black children's sport participation (Fuller et al., 2013). Instead, Black mothers described their support of their child's participation in sport as focusing on encouraging their child in the activity of their choice and in reaping benefits related to their own positive development.

Educational activities were expressed as a way for parents to enroll their children in out-of-school programs that were not only fun, but helpful for Black children to gain knowledge and become better educated. Educational activities have been discussed in numerous studies as the activities that parents view as valuable for their Black children (Broh, 2002; Bullock, Muschamp, Ridge, & Wikeley, 2010; Eitle & Eitle, 2002; Jordan & Nettles, 2000; Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003; O'Bryan et al., 2006; Otto, 1975). Black mothers in this study confirmed how valuable these out-of-school activities are, as well as how they can be considered recreational activities by the children. Most Black mothers did not describe these activities as a favorite pastime of their children, but emphasized that without an educational activity being completed during the week they would not allow participation in any other recreational activity on the weekend. Black mothers felt that if educational activities were not completed during the week, they would need to be completed over the weekend and disrupt other weekend obligations (e.g., family time, time for relaxation, visiting family). Black mothers wanted to make sure their children succeeded in school, but focused more on the functional reasons that homework needed to be done during the week.

Family activities were another type of activity that Black mothers believed were an important reason for their children's out-of-school recreation because they provided an opportunity for the family to reconnect after a busy week and spend time with each other. It was expected that these activities would be visible in the Black community based on previous scholarship (Henderson et al., 2001; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). As research has described, family is seen as important in the Black community and participating in family activities was a form of developing closer family bonds within this community (Brown, 2008; Lesane-Brown, 2006; Scottham & Smalls, 2009). Black mothers not only expressed similar beliefs in their interview, but they also described how their beliefs materialized into their choice of family activities. There was a variety of activities that several Black mothers described as being family-oriented (children's sporting events, visiting family, family nights). These activities were not the only type of family activities that Black mothers described. There were also spurts of unplanned free time activities, which Black mothers also valued and that were an additional consideration when choosing out-of-school activities for their children.

The addition of unplanned free time was equally important to consider when discussing Black mothers' choices for their children's out-of-school free time. In previous research, unplanned free time has been given a negative connotation as a type of recreation participation (Barnett, 2011). Scholarship has described unplanned free time as increasing the possibility that children will be involved in more reckless or detrimental recreation activities, compared to children who are in structured or planned activities (Fauth et al., 2007). Conversely, Black mothers indicated that unplanned free time was a way for the whole family to relax and recover from the stressors of the week. Several Black mothers talked at length about wanting to spend as much time with their child as possible, which shows the importance to them of family time,

whether planned or not. This study helps to show the value and need of planned and unplanned recreational out-of-school activities for Black mothers and could add to an understanding of how the Black community spends their free time. Some Black mothers described how they tried to have a good mixture of planned and unplanned activities for their family, especially on the weekends. A couple of Black mothers described how beneficial they felt it was to have both structured and unstructured activities, for the family unit as well as being restorative from the rigors of their work/school week.

### ***Perceived Benefits of Children's Recreation Participation***

Black mothers talked about several benefits they perceived to result from recreational activities for their children. Most of the benefits described by Black mothers have been discussed at length within the recreation literature (Barnett & Weber, 2008). This includes activities that build character, and those that provide cultural enrichment for Black children (Fuller et al., 2013; Hornberger, Zabriskie, & Freeman, 2010; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Murray & Nettles, 2013). This study found support for all of the previously described benefits of out-of-school recreational activities, particularly character development and exploring other recreational activities. Other studies have combined children of several racial groups (including Black children) in their sample (Brown & Zell, 2007; Gonzalez, 2006; Man & Umaña-Taylor, 2009; Riggs, Bohnert, Guzman, & Davidson, 2010), which promotes the misperception that the benefits apply equally to all children regardless of racial, ethnic, and SES groups. The agreement across previous studies and the results of this study show that there are considerable benefits that mothers (regardless of race) associate with recreational participation.

One Black mother expressed her desire for her child to explore new recreational opportunities because she felt it would assist her in becoming successful in future endeavors.

She believed that being exposed to a variety of out-of-school activities would help her child learn new things, which normally are not learned in her daily or weekly routine. For instance, volunteering at special events, participating in sports that are not basketball or football, participating in drama, and other activities that are outside of her family's normal routine. Most mothers described that they were not exposed to a variety of recreational activities outside traditional Black activities (e.g. basketball, football, babysitting) growing up and thus their perception is that their children needed to have more exposure to different activities to know what they really enjoy. This concept needs to be explored in more detail in the Black community to determine its significance on Black mothers' choices of out-of-school recreational activities for their children. Black mothers felt that since only certain activities are typically prevalent in the Black community, their child was not able to be as well-rounded as was desirable or beneficial.

Cultural enrichment was unique to Black mothers as a benefit of recreation participation, and has not been fully discussed in the recreation literature. A few Black mothers described cultural enrichment as providing an opportunity for their children to be exposed to other cultures outside of the Black community. One Black mother expressed that she felt that having her children be involved in a language school or in an afterschool program to enhance their understanding of different cultures would be very beneficial for them. Using out-of-school recreational activities as a medium for children to become more competent about cultures different from those they are used to interacting with, could help expand acceptance and dialogue across cultural groups and perhaps lessen these tensions.

Along with concerns about the positive influence of activities on their child's development, two Black mothers talked about learning how to evaluate emerging friendships and



being aware of biased behaviors as an important consideration for their recreation choices. These messages were explicitly communicated to their children through conversation so that their children would be able to identify positive friends and coaches during out-of-school recreation activities. The messages were similar to those that had been communicated to these two Black mothers when they were younger. The purpose of these messages about friendship and understanding biased behaviors would help their children be aware if they were being treated unfairly during out-of-school recreational activities when mothers were not present. Talking about friendships and how Black children should be treated helps prepare Black children to deal with the potential issues that could arise from individuals that attempt to mistreat, or deceive them during their out-of-school free time. There were a few Black mothers that expressed that they would only have this type of discussion with their children after a situation had occurred (Caughy et al., 2006; Nettles & Robinson, 1998; Caughy et al., 2011). These conversations illustrated differences in choices made by Black mothers who proactively talked to their children to prepare them, compared to those who would wait until an incident occurred. There were several benefits and disadvantages to being proactive just as there are to being more reactive. For instance, when Black mothers were proactive, they were able to help increase their child's self-esteem, and when they were reactive most times they did not have to address an issue because their child was not involved in a situation that needed to be explained. In the case of two Black mothers in this study, they felt it was better to be proactive in their messages in order to ensure their child would be comfortable participating in their recreational activities and stave off any incidents that might occur.

There has been some discussion indicating that Black mothers' choices may be guided by their belief that some activities could be therapeutic for their children. One Black mother

mentioned therapeutic benefits as a reason for choosing out-of-school recreation activities for her children. Current literature about out-of-school activities only addresses a small segment of the therapeutic benefits of recreation in detail. Recreation therapy is generally discussed within the context of adaptable out-of-school activities for children who have an illness or disabling condition (Holland, 2014). Some Black mothers felt that Black children (especially boys with disabling or additional challenges) needed recreation as a therapeutic medium to expend a lot of built up energy. With the rise in the population of children that have been diagnosed with various illnesses or disabling conditions, especially in the Black community (Holland, 2014), it would be beneficial to expand the discussion in the recreation literature to the benefits for expanding therapeutic services to Black communities.

In the at-risk literature, when organizations have devoted attention to therapeutic recreation in the Black community there have been positive results reported (Kumasi, 2012). The Black mothers in this study mainly referenced the ability to be very active and expend energy, but there are various therapeutic activities that could be used to help at-risk Black children. Paying attention to the benefits of therapeutic recreation, besides providing adaptable sport opportunities, could provide a useful tool to employ within the Black community. Being able to provide a safe environment for individuals at different levels of cognition, ability, and other factors could help to create a more welcoming inclusive atmosphere, especially in the recreation context, within the Black community.

As there were several activities (e.g. sports, educational activities, family activities) that some Black mothers wanted their children to participate in because of their anticipated benefits (e.g. character development, cultural enrichment, exposure to new activities), there were also some activities in which mothers did not want their children to participate. Some mothers

described their rationale for not wanting their children to participate in certain out-of-school recreation activities as due to concerns that they could have a negative impact. Literature has discussed concerns about the influence that some programs could have on their children as preventing some mothers from enrolling them in certain out-of-school recreational activities (Eccles et al., 2003; Fauth et al., 2007; Warnick, 2002). Black mothers' concerns are similar to those of other mothers when it comes to their children's participation in out-of-school recreational activities. Previous research confirms that when considering whether or not to enroll their children in out-of-school recreational activities, mothers' perceptions about the kinds of messages being communicated in the activity is an important factor influencing their decision. Scholarship states that mothers are protective of their children and what stimuli they are exposed to in their recreational participation (Brown et al., 2009; Cooper & McLoyd, 2011; Fauth et al., 2007; Hughes & Chen, 1998; Hughes, Hagelskamp, Way, & Foust, 2009; Hughes, Witherspoon, Rivas-Drake, & West-Bey, 2009; White-Johnson, 2010). If there is any feeling by mothers that the messages being communicated during an event are not in the best interest of their child, then mothers would not allow their child to be in that environment. Most of the Black mothers in this study mirrored similar sentiments to what is described in recreation literature about why they would not allow their children to participate in certain activities. The concerns of mothers are an important issue for recreation professionals to consider when providing programs in their community, because if parents feel that programs and facilities may have a bad influence on their child, they will not enroll their child in these programs.

### ***Influences on Recreation Decision-Making***

There were a number of influences that some Black mothers revealed impacted their choices for out-of-school activities for their child. Several have been significantly discussed in

the literature, such as the cost, a child's interest, character development, staying busy, and safety (Carver, Timperio, & Crawford, 2008; Popkin, Leventhal, & Weismann, 2010). Two Black mothers expressed that their decision to involve their child in out-of-school recreational activities had a particular purpose in mind, which has not been discussed significantly in previous research.

Neighborhood safety has been significantly talked about as making some Black mothers concerned about enrolling their child in some out-of-school activities due to distance from home or having to go through certain neighborhoods (Carver et al., 2008; Carver, Timperio, Hesketh, & Crawford, 2010; Gómez, Johnson, Selva, & Sallis, 2004; Popkin et al., 2010). Two Black mothers expressed that their child traversing certain areas in their community to participate in a recreation activity was a concern to them, due to their awareness of safety concerns in their neighborhood. Knowing this context, Black mothers stated that education about their concerns and being protective were helpful tools in keeping their children safe. In future studies, this context needs to be explored in further detail to develop potential solutions to ameliorate neighborhood concerns.

### ***Black Mothers' Desired Recreation Activities for Their Children***

Black mothers' ideal out-of-school activities for their children (sports, educational activities, and family time activities) were consistent with the current literature on the recreation choices for low income children in the Black community between the ages of 7 and 15 years (Holloway & Rambaud, 1995; Hughes et al., 2006; Hughes et al., 2009; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Murray & Nettles, 2013; Tandon, Zhou, & Christakis, 2012). Previous studies have discussed Black children enjoying sport activities (specifically football and basketball), educational activities (tutoring and homework), and family activities frequently, and this was

because Black mothers felt that children could benefit from participating in these activities. Most Black mothers stated that their ideal recreation choices for their child would include sports, educational/learning, or family activities. These results are not surprising since previous scholarship has reported that sports, educational/learning and family activities are highly valued in the Black community (Brown, 2008; Brown, Lewin-Bizan, Lerner, & Urban, 2009; Fuller, Percy, Bruening, & Cotrufo, 2013; Kahn et al., 2010; Kahn et al., 2001). This study not only confirms previous results but provides more context as to why sports, educational/learning, and family time activities are ideal out-of-school activity choices for Black mothers. Without being prompted during the interviews, all Black mothers consistently mentioned sports, educational/learning activities or family activities as activities in which they would want their child to be a participant. Sport was mentioned as an activity where Black children could develop physical, mental and social skills that would be helpful to them as they grow. Education was an activity that could be helpful because not only were they doing homework but gaining knowledge that would help them academically. Family time was described as consisting of activities for the whole family to get together and develop closer bonds with each other. The overall understanding from the choices of these activities is that there would be significant benefits that would accrue by encouraging sports, education, or family time.

Most of the activities mothers desired to be more widely available were not unique to the Black community. Research has shown that Black mothers want their children to be involved in activities similar to those of their peers (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005, 2008; Fuller et al., 2013). Activities such as mentally stimulating activities (e.g. STEM club, visits to university buildings, participation in developmental programs, etc.), mentorship programs, and sport activities, and other educational topics (e.g. foreign language) were suggested by Black mothers as being

strongly desired. The reasons expressed were because being exposed to these various activities would allow Black children to become better-rounded in their knowledge and experiences. Being familiar with a variety of activities seemed to be a benefit that Black mothers wanted their children to experience so that they could have a brighter future. This belief should be researched in greater detail to see how influential and beneficial this perspective is in the Black community.

One mother thought that visiting the neighboring university would help their child to see all of the potential resources that they could access if they chose to go to college. Another mother desired mentally stimulating programs (e.g. visiting the planetarium, activities to exercise their creativity, visiting science buildings) as a way to encourage learning outside of the classroom. A few Black mothers wanted to have their children participate in other specific educational topics, including learning a foreign language, learning about the environment, singing, or acting, because they would allow their child to continue to learn without the focus being solely academic. Mentorship was another activity that Black mothers suggested were not widely available in their community, but this was in reference to teens. These two Black mothers felt that teens needed more mentorship opportunities in the community from positive Black males and females to show them how to be positive and productive citizens. The impression from these Black mothers was that this was lacking in their community and it contributed to some of the issues currently present with teens. When Black mothers suggested sport activities, they were indicating that they felt that other non-popular sport activities should be offered in their community, such as golf, track, or more affordable sport activities.

Recreation literature has talked about some of the benefits of these non-traditional activities within all communities (mentorship, non-traditional sports, other specific educational

activities, activities that are mentally stimulating), from leadership to positive social development, encouraging youths to excel academically, and becoming comfortable talking with adults (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Henderson et al., 2001; Jordan & Nettles, 2000; Kumasi, 2012). In this study, Black mothers stated that these resources are currently missing in their community, which means that Black children would not likely be reaping these rewards. This perception of a lack of resources in the community could be the result of other factors, such as cost, convenience, preference, etc., but this is not what Black mothers focused on in their discussion, which could suggest that these constraints may be present but not actively influencing them.

Some Black mothers expressed that there were activities they desired in the Black community but were not available. A few Black mothers stated that they perceived that there was not enough variety of activities available in their community based on discussions they had with their children and their peers. They suggested that either there is a lack of information about these recreational activities in their communities or that they aren't any. One Black mother suggested that there may be several out-of-school recreational opportunities available in their community, ranging from learning a foreign language to playing golf, but this information was not being transmitted to her. This could be due to several reasons, from poor marketing of programs to prices being high, or Black mothers not valuing paying attention to promotional material, or others. The reasons for these misperceptions are crucial to understand because they could be indications of a disconnection between Black mothers' perceptions of what activities exist in their community and what are actually available, or indicative of a lack of communication about these neighborhood resources. The perception of two Black mothers was that there were not many activities in their community besides the "traditional" Black activities (as they described them) of basketball and football. This perception may be based on what

others saw advertised and discussed in the community amongst their peers. In contrast, two other mothers reported that there were other activities available (e.g. STEM club, Drama, Theater), but that most times these opportunities were not communicated extensively to the Black community. One mother stated that it was necessary to be very adept at finding information about certain recreation activities in the community, admitting that her access through her job provided the tools to achieve this and that other Black mothers probably would not have this capability. In any case, if the perception of these few Black mothers is that only a limited number of out-of-school recreational activities exist in their communities, then there needs to be attention from recreation professionals to assess the type of activities they have in their community and see if there are any potential opportunities to introduce other out-of-school activities. This would require recreational agencies to understand what their community wants and plan accordingly to institute these desired activities.

### ***Mothers' Beliefs About Out-of-School Activities for Children***

The interviews revealed that sports naturally entered the conversation of Black mothers when asked about their children's out-of-school free time. The assumption based on previous discussions in the literature was that sport would be the most popular activity for Black children's out-of-school free time (Barnett, 2008; Barnett & Weber, 2008; Bennett, Lutz, & Jayaram, 2012; Davalos et al., 1999; Eccles et al., 2003; Eitle & Eitle, 2002; Feldman & Matjasko, 2007; O'Bryan, Braddock, & Dawkins, 2006; Pinckney, 2009; Posner & Vandell, 1999). What the research has not been able to describe are the reasons that sport is so popular. Black mothers expressed why they felt sport was prevalent in the Black community, citing media representation, family and peer influences, social development, and its popularity.



Several Black mothers suggested that their perception of sport as a popular activity in the Black community was guided by what they'd been exposed to as a child and as a community member. This included their peers, what their children discussed at home, and the media portrayal of culturally relevant activities in which Black children should be participating (particularly basketball or football). Black mothers described several socially redeeming characteristics that participation in sport provided their children, including the ability to work as a team, self-discipline, increased self-confidence/self-esteem, and physical activity. This belief was guided by more than half of Black mothers' own experiences with sport or what they had heard from other mothers. There were also some instances where mothers felt that sport was not a positive activity for their children based on structural factors, the most significant one described by most Black mothers as being funneled into certain activities based on racial stereotypes. Four mothers explicitly spoke to this structural factor and a few others described similar instances. Some Black mothers indicated that they wanted their child to try new activities outside of sports, but in order to achieve this they would need to look for opportunities outside their neighboring community. Another Black mother talked about how coaches suggested that she enroll her adolescent son in football because he had the "body type of a player," but they never inquired into whether her son had other skills. There was also a belief among some Black mothers that while there are several benefits to sport participation, there are other out-of-school activities that have just as many benefits and are not as one-dimensional.

Black mothers discussed other activities that they would like for their children to participate in but not necessarily for the same benefits/outcomes as sport participation. When talking about these activities they described a combination of structural factors common to trying to participate in recreation activities, such as cost, not being informed, or exposure to the

activity. Previous research suggests that low-income families have several constraints that typically impact their out-of-school activities, which include access to disposable income and proximity to community resources (Barnett, 2008; Bennett et al., 2012; Broh, 2002; Fogle & Mendez, 2006; Schmalz et al., 2004). This study did find that there were constraints to recreation participation, but the reasons were due to the lack of resources in the community rather than their inability or unwillingness to pay for these types of programs. Reasons that some Black mothers felt this were the case was due to the difficulty in finding affordable and reasonable activities within their community. Four Black mothers described how they felt certain activities (e.g. hard sciences, cultural arts, performance arts, gymnastics) were either hard to find or the price point to access the activity was prohibitive. Compared to other activities in the community, Black mothers felt that there was a higher prevalence of sport activities available to Black youths that were reasonably priced compared to other recreational opportunities. This study helps to describe a sense of resiliency of Black mothers to try and enroll their child in other activities besides sport, yet the barrier to doing this is from the perceived lack of resources in the community. This study provides a rationale to explore community resources in more depth to determine what is really present in Black communities and where the disconnection between Black mothers and recreation professionals are in connection to neighborhood out-of-school recreational resources.

### ***The Role of Gender in Children's Out-of-School Activity Participation***

As previously stated, the results did not show considerable differences between how Black mothers' out-of-school recreational choices were different for their sons compared to their daughters. This was contrary to the findings in previous studies suggesting that Black mothers would make different activity choices for their sons compared to their daughters (Brown &

Tylka, 2010; Brown, Linver, Evans, & DeGennaro, 2009; Caughy et al., 2006; Cooper & McLoyd, 2011; Fatimilehin, 1999; Hughes et al., 2006; Mandara, Murray, Telesford, Varner, & Richman, 2012; Miller, 1999; White-Johnson, 2010). Previous research has shown considerable gender differences underlying Black mothers' choices in out-of-school recreational activity choices for their children (Brown & Tylka, 2010; Brown et al., 2009; Caughy et al., 2006; Cooper & McLoyd, 2011; Fatimilehin, 1999; Hughes et al., 2006; Mandara et al., 2012; Miller, 1999; White-Johnson, 2010). The literature found that Black mothers and fathers transmit different messages to their sons and daughters, focusing on survival messages for their sons and cultural heritage for their daughters. Caughy et al. (2011) also obtained similar results and found that there were differences in the patterns of what parents of boys versus parents of girls emphasized. The authors reported that the parents (both mothers and fathers) of girls were more likely to emphasize cultural socialization messages whereas boys were most likely to receive a combination of cultural socialization, coping skills for discrimination, and the promotion of mistrust.

However, in talking to Black mothers in the present study there were no specific gendered messages that were prominently expressed. It is not apparent why the results of this study were not consistent with previous research; it could be that Black mothers in this study were encouraging egalitarianism patterns within gendered behavior in order to not categorize their children into traditional gendered roles. This emerging pattern could be signaling a change in the Black family structure with less emphasis on gender roles and more acceptance of Black mother-headed households. Further research should explore the out-of-school choices for sons compared to daughters in more detail to obtain a clearer picture of the determinants of Black

children's recreational choices and how gender roles could be influencing those choices within the current societal climate.

## **Conclusions**

From this study, we have learned about what factors influence Black mothers' choices in out-of-school recreational activities for their children, how positive youth development could be facilitated within those choices, and the types of messages that Black mothers communicate to their sons and daughters. This study makes significant contributions to the leisure literature, because there have not been any studies that have attempted to employ an interpretative descriptive approach in ascertaining Black mothers' beliefs about choosing out-of-school activities or held the intention of developing practical application. This study was able to explain some of the beliefs and values that Black mothers hold in choosing out-of-school recreational activities for their children. By providing various perspectives of Black mothers' ideal recreational choices for their children, what they currently enroll their child in, and what beliefs and values guide those choices, we are better able to understand the Black community's out-of-school free time participation in recreation activities and what influence those choices. Black mothers expressed their perceived benefits from recreation participation, their desired community activities, and concerns that could influence Black children's participation, thus providing several important contributions to the extant research.

## **Implications**

The contribution of this research to practical application is that there seems to be a disconnect between what opportunities recreation professionals are providing and how they are perceived in this community by the populace. Two Black mothers perceived there to be an emphasis on sports in the Black community, yet not as much equal representation of other

recreational programs (e.g. non-traditional sports, chess, theater, drama). If this is the perception of some Black mothers that sports programs are the primary out-of-school activity available in their community, it is important that recreation professionals ask themselves why this is the case. There are a variety of other recreational activities that could be provided in Black communities or that may already be there but the impression of Black mothers is that they are not accessible. If other activities are indeed being offered, a different kind of problem arises relating more to how they are marketed, promoted, or advertised. Promoting a cultural competency model of training for recreation professionals would be a more effective means of achieving the goal of developing a deeper understanding with their constituents.

### ***Adoption of a Cultural Competency Model***

With the increasing change in the United States' demographics, communities are experiencing more diversity among their constituencies. With this change, recreation professionals will need to keep the changing demographic influences in mind as they create and implement new programs. The most effective way to approach this would be for staff to become more culturally competent and have better cross-cultural communication (Holland, 2014). As Black mothers expressed their perceptions, their voices give an impression that there is cross-cultural miscommunication occurring between recreational professionals and the minority communities that they are serving. This is where a cultural competency model in approaching recreation planning, marketing, staff training, etc. could be helpful in efforts to bridge this gap. Cultural competency can be thought of as a set of behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together and allow professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations (Holland, 2014, p. 17). The focus of a cultural competency model is to have a reasonable understanding of another person or their perspective (Holland, 2014, p. 17). Holland (2014) indicated that to

develop this deep understanding, professionals would need to have a deeper awareness of three crucial areas: “Diversity Knowledge (familiarity with a group’s cultural expression, language, religion, so on); Historical Cultural Awareness (understanding of a cultural group’s present and historical accomplishments or inequalities, while recognizing how these successes, failures, and so on influence their behavior); Cross-Cultural Skills (skills that promote positive interaction among and between cultures)” (p. 17). Being cognizant of competences in these areas would help recreation professionals initiate fruitful conversations with the communities that they serve in a way that would help create and provide programs that would best serve those communities.

This approach needs to be implemented in recreation agencies’ training programs compared to solely focusing on diversity training. Previous leisure scholarship has described current recreation programming by professionals to be inadequate in addressing the needs of marginalized populations (Holland, 2014). With better training for recreation staff in all facets of a recreation agency (planning, programs, marketing, etc.), professionals could more effectively address the shortfalls in their immediate communities by first truly understanding the needs of their constituents. This would also allow recreational agencies to be proactive in addressing the changing demographic needs of their various communities while staying relevant to their constituents.

### ***Recreation Programming***

Programmatic offerings are an area for developing a welcoming atmosphere. The rationale for providing specific types of programs include responding to community requests for certain programming, understanding demographic populations and tailoring programs to them, providing fun activities for the community, and showcasing the diversity of the community. These are important focal areas because programming normally is marketed and planned as an

inclusive activity for all so there is a belief that recreation agencies do not need targeted programs in communities. However, recreation agencies may not have a full appreciation of the unique challenges that marginalized populations in their communities may negotiate, and studies have found that adopting policies that assume everyone has equal opportunities and a “one size fits all” program model, may ignore the lived experiences of marginalized populations (Holland, 2014). An organization’s intentions may be to include everyone in recreation programs and thus not take into account the needs of specific groups which then may be undermining their goal of having a more inclusive representative agency for their constituents.

### ***Community Facilities***

Studies have demonstrated that perceptions about the appearance of an organization’s facilities, similar to programs, determine participants’ engagement with the organization (Bedimo-Rung, 2005; Davies, Davis, Cook, & Waters, 2008; Jarrett, Bahar, & Taylor, 2011; Kumasi, 2012; McCray & Mora, 2011; Wridt, 2004). Examples of this include how inviting the space feels and how comfortable others feel within its areas. As such, facilities are an area of opportunity for developing an inclusive atmosphere. Programs conducted in spaces believed to be comfortable for all participants are very important in marginalized communities. Some historically popular spaces in marginalized communities include recreation facilities, community centers, fitness centers, nature center facilities, school district facilities (e.g. gyms), partner service areas, and open spaces. Findings have determined that spaces that were accessible to all, that were located in established facilities familiar to participants, that have staff present to help welcome individuals new to the facility, and are satisfactory to the community are very appealing to marginalized communities (Bedimo-Rung, 2005; Davies et al., 2008; Jarrett et al., 2011; Kumasi, 2012; McCray & Mora, 2011; Wridt, 2004).

### ***Strategic Marketing***

Marketing focuses on the strategies organizations use to recognize their target population and provide them with appropriate information. Understanding these strategies helps others see the different resources that organizations are using to communicate what they deem to be relevant information to their residents. Being conscious of the organization's target audience and evaluating the effectiveness of the organization's promotional efforts to these specific audiences is essential. Currently, literature suggests that organizations are not adequately utilizing measures for comparing how different demographics utilize various resources (Holland, 2014). The development and utilization of such measures may be a key indicator for ensuring that all groups in a community are engaged with the organization's programs and facilities. The measures may also reveal how marketing strategies should be implemented in order to include marginalized populations who are not already fully engaged.

### ***Diverse Staffing***

Staffing practices are critical given that staff have a large influence on the perceived inclusiveness of an organization. While having staff members that are representative of community demographics would assist in creating perceptions of inclusiveness, a staff without minority members can also create a welcoming environment. Regardless of the racial composition of a staff, an understanding and appreciation of unique community needs and efforts to create programs that are meaningful to residents in facilities that are perceived as inclusive to all demographic groups will contribute substantially to perceptions of inclusiveness.

In current hiring, program staff are selected based on their perceived abilities or the agency's needs related to the position. Similar arguments have been used to support continued hiring practices that focus less on race and more on ability (Holland, 2014). Typically, there is



cultural training provided for staff, but it is either education-focused or concentrated on providing excellent customer service to all, which indicates that training is largely focused on serving a wide variety of individuals based on the “customer is always right mentality.” Instead, recreation organizations should consider implementing cultural awareness training for staff given that “one size fits all” customer diversity trainings do little to increase perceptions of inclusion among populations of color.

### ***Mentorship***

Three of the mothers in this study described the need for mentorship as a powerful out-of-school activity for children in their community. This was expressed as being particularly needed for teens, as this population is not typically the focus of many out-of-school programs. The resultant effect may be that teens seek alternative activities in which to participate, which may lead them to being labeled “delinquent” in conventional social circles.

One Black mother in this study, Latoya, was adamant about the need for mentorship, especially for teens. Latoya felt that a lack of sufficient investment in the Black teen population had led to a number of negative outcomes, such as vandalism, loitering, and labeling teens “problem children”. The negative perception of teens led to a lack of “safe spaces,” where teens could congregate and be themselves, which could then lead to negative identity formation. Having a mentor, someone who they could relate to and talk with, is essential for this group because they are at a point in their life where they are trying to figure out who they are and where they want to go in life. It has been suggested (Allison & Hibbler, 2004; Ogbu, 2004) that an effective mentorship program could utilize a tiered system where college students would mentor high school students, and then subsequently high school students mentor middle school students. The hope is that each tier would be close to the other so that they would effectively be

able to relate and communicate with their peers. Another benefit to this type of mentorship is that teens would have someone that they could look up to and guide their actions, while themselves serving as a role model to someone else. This system would prevent teens from becoming lost and disconnected during a time in their life where they need to be the most connected.

Research has discussed the troubles that teens, especially Black teens, have experienced in their communities (Bennett et al., 2012; Posner & Vandell, 1999; Shannon, 2006). However, most issues that teens experience could be addressed early in their development through adequate mentorship and support (Bennett et al., 2012; Posner & Vandell, 1999). Giving teens the support early in their development allows the younger generation to learn from the older one. Black mothers emphasized that while they have experienced certain events in their upbringing, there are new and different struggles that this generation is experiencing. Having effective mentorship programs could help Black children feel safe and forge a positive identity, which would protect and prepare them to contribute to society.

### **Limitations of this Study**

As with virtually all research there are some limitations inherent in this study. First, there was a wide range in the ages of the Black children whose mothers participated in the study. While it may not have been ideal to have such a large age gap between the youngest child (7 years) and the oldest (15 years), the common themes and patterns that arose from the interviews seemed to suggest that Black mothers' beliefs were not dependent on the age of the child. More so, age was combined with other characteristics that helped to instill certain beliefs in Black mothers (e.g. age and gender, age and race).

Another limitation of the study may be seen by some as the lack of generalizability of the results. The participants for the most part had similar backgrounds, but there a few mothers that deviated from the majority, for instance some Black mothers were recently married, divorced, or still in school. The purpose of this study was not to generalize the results, but rather to conduct an in-depth interpretative descriptive exploration of the extent to which race influenced Black mothers' choice of recreational activities for their children. The goal was to provide a picture of the Black community and listen to the stories of Black mothers about the beliefs and values that guide their choices. Even though the results of this study are not generalizable, if we were to look at similar communities like the one in this study we will probably see similar results and patterns in those areas. This helps to show the transferability of the results of this study to other studies that are studying a similar phenomenon.

A third limitation of this study is that the sample was collected through convenience sampling. Most Black communities are wary of being a part of research due to historical issues of under- and/or mis-representation. With this being the case, certain steps were needed to ensure that Black mothers could be recruited and felt comfortable being a part of the study. Community contacts and fliers were used to recruit participants, but not everyone that took a flier or I came in contact with participated in this study. This could give the impression that participants may have had an agenda for their participation. I do not believe that my sampling method had an impact of the conclusions raised in this study, but I recognize that it is a probable limitation of the study.

Finally, while I attempted to do my best to reconcile my biases in this study, it is still a limitation of this study that needs to be mentioned. To address this limitation, several steps were taken to ensure that the results achieved trustworthiness, including outside experts examining the

results and interpretations, as well as transparency in providing the interview guides. I know that my role as a researcher was not completely eliminated from the interview process, but observable body language, tone of speech, laughter during the interview, and the friendly conversations after the interviews suggest that my presence was probably not a strong influence on the Black mothers in the study. I accept that I was an active participant in the interviews and that could influence Black mothers full disclosure, but I feel that I appropriately accounted for my influence in the interview process.

### **Directions for Future Research**

The focus of this study was on Black mothers' choices for recreational opportunities for Black children. More specifically, I sought to determine what guided Black mothers' choices of out-of-school recreational activities for their children and if there were different choices and reasons made for sons compared to daughters. From this study, there are some future directions to suggest for researchers to take away and further advance scholarship in this area. There needs to be continuing investigation into the influence of Black mothers' beliefs of recreation activities on their choices for their children's out-of-school recreational participation. Most of the previous research (Barnett, 2011; Bruyn & Cillessen, 2008; Caughy et al., 2006; Floyd et al., 2009; Hughes & Chen, 1998) has concentrated on the preferences of marginalized groups, rather than on their perceptions, beliefs, or values. Concentrating on the process of how recreation activities are chosen in greater detail would lead to a better understanding about the influences on decision-making and choices, and would also enlighten efforts about how to better reach different communities.

More programming for teens is another area to consider for future research. A few Black mothers expressed that there are inadequate resources for Black teens in their communities. This

leads to Black teens getting involved in other deviant leisure that do not provide any beneficial outcomes to them. Recreation agencies should have more focused programs for pre-teens and teens, so that this population has positive programming. Researching this age group and the programming available in most recreation agencies for them, will give us a better sense of how Black teens development can be supported through recreation.

Another future direction is to evaluate cultural competency training and programming within recreation agencies. The results from this study suggest that more of an emphasis on cultural competency as a model for recreation professionals training could be useful. Being competent of the community needs and modifying policies, programs and services to accommodate the needs of their constituents will help recreation agencies to be more effective in their operation. Evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of this approach will determine if it would be feasible to apply this concept in more recreation agencies.

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## **APPENDIX A CONSENT FORM**

**I would like to read through this consent form carefully with you before you decide whether you want to participate.**

### **What is this study about?**

The purpose of this study is to learn how Black mothers may use out-of-school recreation activities as a way to racially socialize their children. We are particularly interested in the beliefs that Black mothers hold that inform their choice of specific out-of-school recreational activities for their children. Any Black mother that volunteers for the study will be asked to complete an interview with a Black female interviewer.

### **Who is conducting the research study?**

This project is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Lynn Barnett Morris, a Professor in the Department of Recreation, Sport, and Tourism at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I, Augustus Hallmon, am working with Dr. Barnett Morris on this project and will be taking notes during all interviews and conducting data analysis for my doctoral dissertation.

### **What will I be asked to do if I choose to participate?**

If you agree to be interviewed, a Black female interviewer and I will meet with you one time at your convenience within the next two months. The interview will last approximately one hour. You will be asked to share your views concerning out-of-school activities for your child and whether your efforts to racially socialize your child are involved. The interview will be tape recorded with your consent with no pictures or other identifying information. During the interview I will be present to write some notes. At the end of the study, I will type up your interview and give you a summarized copy. This will allow you to see if I have accurately interpreted your answers to the interview questions. After receiving your feedback about your interview, I will remove any and all identifying information and replace your name with a code name so no one will be able to identify you.

### **Are there any risks to being a part of this project?**

There is minimal risk for participating in the interview. Some questions may be uncomfortable to you but your participation is completely voluntary and you may decide to stop at any time or skip any question. The female interviewer and I have been trained to make a special effort to make you feel as comfortable as possible during the interview. You should feel free to ask questions at any time. Everything you say will be kept confidential. No one, except for myself and my advisor, will have access to your responses, nor will anyone have information that can identify you. You will not suffer any negative consequences for choosing not to participate or withdrawing from the study at any time.

### **What will happen to the information I share?**

All individual information you share will be kept confidential and will be viewed only by myself, my advisor, and an expert. Audiotapes, transcripts, field notes, and other information will be stored separately from your personal information in a secure location. After completing the interview, the information you provide will be summarized and shared in my dissertation. These summaries may then be given to local agencies in the hope they can be used to provide a wider range of recreational opportunities for Black children in the community. Short excerpts of what you say may be included in my dissertation and in written and oral presentations without any information identifying you. Also, project reports will not include any information that could identify you. Your name will not appear anywhere - a code name will be used instead to protect your identity. Your privacy will always be respected.

There is only one exception to this rule of confidentiality. As an educator I am also considered to be a mandated reporter, which means that, although unlikely, I am required to report any incident that I witness or am told about where a child or elderly person is in danger.

### **What will I receive if I choose to participate?**

For your participation in the interview, you will be given \$20.00. This is to thank you. If you stop during the session, you will still be paid based on the number of questions you answered. Within a few weeks after the interview, you will receive a summary copy of your interview to check and be sure I have interpreted your answers correctly and you will be asked to return it within one week in a stamped envelope I will give you. After we receive this back, you will receive your \$20.00 in cash from me. Using the information you give me, I will contact you to ask how you want to receive your cash. For example, I can meet you at the Recreation Club, bring the money to your home, or some other way of your choice.

### **Who do I contact if I have questions or concerns?**

If you have questions or concerns about the study, you can contact my advisor, Dr. Lynn Barnett-Morris at (217) 244-5645 or email at [lynnbm@illinois.edu](mailto:lynnbm@illinois.edu) or me, Augustus Hallmon, at (773) 510-8270 or email at [hallmon@illinois.edu](mailto:hallmon@illinois.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you can contact the Institutional Review Board at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign by telephone at (217) 333-2670 or email at [irb@uillinois.edu](mailto:irb@uillinois.edu). You can also contact them if you want to check that the project has been approved.

**Agreement:** The study has been explained to me by Augustus Hallmon and he has answered my questions. He has provided me with a copy of this consent form and I understand it. By signing my name below, I freely agree:

- **to be an interview participant as described.** \_\_\_\_\_ (initial if agree)
- **to allow audio recording of the interview as described.** \_\_\_\_\_ (initial if agree)
- **to receive \$20.00 for my complete participation in the study.** \_\_\_\_\_ (initial if agree)

**Participant (Print Full Name)** : \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant's Signature** : \_\_\_\_\_

**Hallmon Signature** : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Date



## **APPENDIX B INTERVIEW GUIDE**

- NOTE:**
- A = Mom's racial socialization & beliefs
  - B = Mom's racial socialization & practices
  - C = Mom's beliefs about out-of-school activities
  - D = Motivations for child doing recreation activities (purposes they serve)
  - E = Mom's choice of recreation activities & if relates to racial socialization
    - 1. Cultural Socialization
    - 2. Preparation for Bias
    - 3. Promotion of Mistrust
    - 4. Egalitarianism

- I. Introduction
- II. Interview questions
- III. Wrap-up/Conclusion

### **GETTING STARTED**

Thank you for taking the time out to speak with me today. I want to briefly explain what we'll do so that I can answer any questions or address any uneasiness you may have. The purpose of this interview is to learn about and understand the recreation choices you make for your child. I am particularly interested in understanding the thoughts you have when considering recreation opportunities for your child and whether your race is a factor.

Your participation in this interview is greatly appreciated and completely voluntary. The interview should take less than 1 hour to complete. Feel free to ask questions or decline to answer a question if it makes you feel uncomfortable. You can also decide to stop participating at any time. No one, except for myself, my advisor and an expert, will have access to your answers, nor will anyone have information that could identify you. I am going to assign a fake name to be used in place of your real name so that you cannot be identified. There is only one exception to this rule of confidentiality. As educators, we are also considered mandated reporters. This means that any incident that I witness or am told about where a child or elderly person is in danger would need to be reported. You will not suffer any negative consequences for choosing not to participate or withdrawing from the study. I will be offering you \$20 for answering all the interview questions

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**How are you doing today?**

**Before I start asking questions, let me go through the consent form with you.**

**If they agree to sign consent form:** Thank you for agreeing to participate. Let's get started by me asking you to tell me a little about your children and giving them a fake name:

Name	Code Name	Boy or Girl?	Age	Live now at home?

1. Can you describe how (code name) typically spends his/her day after school?
2. Can you describe how (code name) typically spends his/her day on the weekends?
3. If you didn't have to worry about money or transportation
  - a. How would you like (code name) to spend their free time after school?
  - b. How would you like (code name) to spend their free time on the weekend?
4. What out-of-school recreation activities have they done in the past 2 years? (B)

**For each activity:**

<p><b>5.</b> Did your child ask you if s/he could do this activity or did you decide they should do it? (D)</p> <p><b>If child decided,</b></p> <p>6. How did you feel about that choice?</p> <p>7. Do you think race had any influence on your child deciding to do this activity? (D)</p>	<p><b>5.</b> Did your child ask you if s/he could do this activity or did you decide they should do it? (D)</p> <p><b>If mom decided,</b></p> <p>6. How did you decide they would participate in this activity? What were the reasons? (B)</p> <p>7. Do you think race had an influence on you deciding that your child could do this activity? (D)</p>
---	---

8. Do you think that there are some recreational activities that are preferred in the Black community? (A)
  - a. If yes, which ones? (A)

- b. Please tell me why you think this. (A)
9. Are there any recreation activities you didn't want your child to participate in? Why not (for each)? (D)
10. What are some recreational activities where you feel (CHILD NAME) is likely to...
- Positively promote his/her Black Identity? Why or why not? (E: Cultural heritage)
  - Be treated differently than White kids by adults? Why or why not? (E: Preparation for bias)
  - Build relationships with other Black kids? Why or why not? (E: Mistrust of others)
  - Learn he/she is similar to whites/different than White kids? Why or why not? (E: Egalitarianism)
11. What are the most important things for your child to know about being Black in our society? (A)
- Why are these things so important? (A)
  - How do you teach them these things? (B)
12. How important is each of the following when you choose recreation activities for your child to do (circle one in each row)? (C)

How safe the activity is for my child to do.	Very Important	Fairly Important	A little Important	Not at all Important
How difficult it is to travel to the activity.	Very Important	Fairly Important	A little Important	Not at all Important
Opportunities to teach your child about race	Very Important	Fairly Important	A little Important	Not at all Important
The number of different activities that are available to do.	Very Important	Fairly Important	A little Important	Not at all Important
The cost of the activity.	Very Important	Fairly Important	A little Important	Not at all Important
Having his/her own friends also doing the activity.	Very Important	Fairly Important	A little Important	Not at all Important
How much physical activity he/she will get.	Very Important	Fairly Important	A little Important	Not at all Important
Opportunities for developing social skills.	Very Important	Fairly Important	A little Important	Not at all Important

The cleanliness and condition of the facility where the activity is held.	Very Important	Fairly Important	A little Important	Not at all Important
The staff who lead the activity.	Very Important	Fairly Important	A little Important	Not at all Important
Opportunities to increase academic skills.	Very Important	Fairly Important	A little Important	Not at all Important
Opportunities related to our religion.	Very Important	Fairly Important	A little Important	Not at all Important
An activity our family can do together.	Very Important	Fairly Important	A little Important	Not at all Important

***Closing Transition Statement:** All of your responses were very helpful. Please list on the card the best way to get in contact with you. This will help me arrange to pay you once we are finished with the study.*

**WRAP-UP/CONCLUSION**

If you think of any questions after we've left, you can ask them using the contact information on the consent form I gave you.

Thank you and have a great day!!!

**APPENDIX C  
PARTICIPANT CONTACT FORM**

**Name (First, Last):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Best contact number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email address (if applicable):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Best form of contact (circle):** Phone      Email      Face-to-Face

**Best time to contact (circle):** Morning      Afternoon      Evening      or      \_\_\_ AM / \_\_\_ PM

**Preferred payment option (check one):**

\_\_\_\_\_ Meet at Club

\_\_\_\_\_ Bring to home: Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Meet somewhere else: Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (please indicate): \_\_\_\_\_

-----

**Name (First, Last):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Best contact number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email address (if applicable):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Best form of contact (circle):** Phone      Email      Face-to-Face

**Best time to contact (circle):** Morning      Afternoon      Evening      or      \_\_\_ AM / \_\_\_ PM

**Preferred payment option (check one):**

\_\_\_\_\_ Meet at Club

\_\_\_\_\_ Bring to home: Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Meet somewhere else: Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (please indicate): \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX D: RACIAL SOCIALIZATION**

The literature on racial socialization was a central piece of the dissertation at its creation. However, as the dissertation data was collected, it was apparent that race and racial socialization were not central themes. This required that the purpose of the dissertation shift to focus more on positive youth development and a better understanding of the influences for Black mothers' choices of out-of-school recreational activities for their children. Even though the racial socialization literature was removed from the dissertation, it was important to retain this valuable information, so that it is now presented as an appendix and explored in depth.

### **The Meaning of Race in Society**

Race is a unique concept in the context of United States culture and has been since the colonization of America. In simplest terms, race has been used to distinguish individuals of European descent from everyone else. With this distinguishing feature, access to certain resources has been restricted to individuals perceived not to have the "correct" lineage. Starting with the Pilgrims that settled in the Americas and how they perceived the natives living on the land, race has been used to visibly separate people. The impact of this perception was connected to the individual rights of people where the concept of freedom was only accessible to White racial groups. Several years later, White slave owners used race as a tool to maintain slavery and decrease instances of runaway slaves. Because of the visible racial differences, it was easily distinguishable who were slaves and who were not, which made maintenance of this status quo efficient. While there are exceptions, the majority of the population has to this day maintained the same concept of race and segregation within our social structure, albeit in different ways.

For the purposes of this study, I use the definition of race as a socially constructed term, where the content and importance of racial categories is determined by social, economic, and

political forces (Omi, 1994). This racial perspective currently pervades United States society and extends from the shaping of individual racial identity to the structuring of collective political action (Omi, 1994). This view of race underlies this study. While this study does not explicitly examine this assumption, the research presented here is guided by the fact that race has a significant impact on the choices that people make and on the behaviors they exhibit, particularly those of a minority culture.

### **Racial Formation Theory**

Race has historically been ingrained in our society and by understanding its impact on culture it becomes more likely that steps towards cultivating positive racial dialogue can occur. Racial formation is defined as the socio-historical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed (Omi, 1994). Omi and Winant (1994) described thinking about this concept as a process of racial formation occurring through a linkage between structure and representation in society. This process that Omi and Winant described is referred to as “racial projects” that are simultaneously an interpretation, representation, and explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines. This conceptualization allows individuals to interpret the meaning of race through three unique lenses.

First is the interpretation of race as a social structure that has to be carefully navigated. According to this perspective, in the past and presently, people are treated differently according to their race. However, most governmental agencies (including city and state recreational agencies) seek to maintain a “color-blind” approach to their policies and procedures. This approach allows them to “notice race, but not act upon that awareness” (Omi, 1994, p. 57). Through this justification, government agencies do not allocate resources to specific racial

groups on the grounds that they aren't able to treat people differently based on their race. Agencies normally defend this position by stating that every individual has equal access to resources, so it would not be reasonable to treat specified racial groups better than others (Omi, 1994). The problem with this philosophy is that racial groups typically don't start out on a level playing field with access to similar resources.

The second lens is the interpretation of race in the spectrum of politics. Along the same lines as social structure, the political responsibility of elected officials is to uphold the concept that everyone is equal (i.e. egalitarianism). Policies are thus created with specific racial agendas in mind for maintaining equality. With the two primary political groups in the United States, there is a racial agenda present in relation to their political position/ideology. The "right wing" could be interpreted as having policies that favor the majority population (Whites), whereas "left wing" activists favor an egalitarian stance which says that differences are known but that everyone has access to the same resources as others (Omi, 1994). This creates a unique situation where racial issues are not being addressed from a political perspective for fear of bringing to light that differences do exist in social structures within the United States.

The third interpretation of race is found in individuals' everyday experiences. This can be seen in many ways, most often unconsciously, but typically one of the first things that is noticed about an individual is his/her race (as well as his/her sex) (Omi, 1994). While it is human nature to see differences when we interact with others, sometimes this leads us to make assumptions about the individual's place in society and reinforce the structure of race. The assumptions individuals make based on their experiences influence their behaviors and choices. This should be especially prevalent in the choices that Black mothers make concerning activities



for their children. The discussion of racial socialization in relation to out-of-school recreation participation will begin with Black mothers' held beliefs concerning out-of-school activities.

### **Parental Beliefs Concerning Out-of-School Activities**

When Black mothers teach their children about race and how to navigate a racially-oriented society means that they have to consider the importance of class, gender, and political influences that create a unique racial climate within society. To that end, literature suggests that there is a racial socialization process that needs to take place in order to facilitate positive impressions of Black children as a racial group. This process in turn helps to mitigate negative connotations of "being Black" by preparing Black children to appreciate their racial group. Literature has pointed to such results in education, but the idea that this same process occurs in a recreation context should also be explored, as out-of-school activities may have a strong impact and reflect Black mothers' racial socialization beliefs and practices.

Research has shown that Black mothers may have intentional or unintentional motives underlying the choices that they make for their children's lives (Frabutt, Walker, & MacKinnon-Lewis, 2002; Hughes & Chen, 1998; Lesane-Brown, 2006). They have certain beliefs about race that they want to pass on to their children. Historically, recreation participation has been used as a vehicle to transmit this information from Black mother to child. In this case, recreation agencies may have a larger impact on different racial groups than has been previously understood, which requires them to reflect on their mission and obtain a better sense of how they are impacting their communities. Regardless of the intention of recreation agencies, if racial groups perceive certain activities to be more oriented towards specific groups other than their own, they may elect to withdraw or not participate at all in such recreation programs. Being aware of this could help agencies to structure their programs to fully address the needs of

everyone in their community, especially Black mothers who are racially socializing their children.

For Black mothers, the central focus of their racial socialization messages may be different in order to achieve a desired effect in the way sons and daughters should behave and develop. Research has shown that Black mothers have a tendency to racially socialize their daughters to understand their racial heritage to insure that Black families always have someone familiar with the struggles they had to go through because of their race (Mandara, Murray, Telesford, Varner, & Richman, 2012; Varner & Mandara, 2012). Black mothers have been known to emphasize economic self-reliance and assertiveness for their daughters, while being more verbally aggressive with their sons (Mandara et al., 2012; Varner & Mandara, 2012). This is due to Black mothers' awareness that their children need a strong understanding of Black history and culture in order to survive and be successful in U.S. society (Brown, Linver, Evans, & DeGennaro, 2009). Most Black mothers intentionally provide historical and cultural messages to their daughters, so that they will have a better chance of positively navigating the racial climate in the United States and transmitting this racial information to future generations. Agencies typically understand that gender impacts what activities boys and girls will participate in, but the influence of the racial socialization process in the provision of programs and services has not been explored.

### **Defining Racial Socialization**

Racial socialization is best understood as a process of communicating messages and behaviors to children to bolster their sense of identity given the reality that their life experiences may include racially hostile encounters (Stevenson, 1995). Racial socialization involves various explicit and implicit messages that provide Black children with healthy methods for coping with

the realities of racism and the racial hostility they are likely to encounter (Brown & Tylka, 2010). The messages that Black mothers decide to relay to their children could make a difference in whether their children develop a positive or negative coping strategy to address the racial situations that they will experience. Wang & Huguley (2012) discussed the impact of racial socialization on Black parents' child-rearing practices:

African American parents have been shown to employ racial socialization practices in response to the racial contexts in which their children develop (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Hughes et al., 2006; Perry, 2003; Stevenson, Reed, Bodison, & Bishop, 1997; Ward, 1996). Such practices can generally be understood as the transmission of messages relating to how one perceives and interacts with his or her own and other racial groups (Brown & Krishnakumar, 2007).

(p. 1718)

These authors reinforced the concept that most Black mothers have a detailed idea about what beliefs they want to instill in their children. They believe that their racial socialization practices will help their children be prepared for the realities of living in the United States and the racial climate that is embedded within it. The probable content from the racial socialization process is that Black mothers transmit messages stressing White persons' callousness to the plight of Blacks' struggles, while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of possessing self-confidence and in-group solidarity (Lesane-Brown & Brown, 2005). These messages are consistently transmitted by Black parents to their children due to the potential for discriminatory actions that they are likely to encounter.

It is important to understand racial socialization for several reasons, as elaborated by Lesane-Brown (2006, p. 401):

First, race socialization links seemingly unrelated literatures such as family processes, socialization processes, life course development, and identity formation. Second, messages about race and racism can interact with the content of other socialization messages. For example, gender roles are often learned in the context of race roles. General cultural expectations are often shaped by racial

expectations. And political ideology is often shaped by racial ideology. Third, it implicates the development and stability of racial attitudes across the life course. Fourth, it focuses on a population that is often not the subject of scientific studies (i.e., Black families). Fifth, race socialization is increasingly regarded as crucial for the development of Black children's racial identity, self-esteem, and attitudes, values, and beliefs regarding race. Yet, despite the importance of and interest in the concept, there is considerable ambiguity concerning the exact meaning of the term and the optimum method of measuring the process.

Recreation, similarly, has been considered to be another important venue for development for Black children, and it impacts social relationships within and between racial groups.

Understanding the different ways that social structures could impact Black youth's participation in recreational programs is essential in order to create a protective structure for them through their participation in recreation activities and programs. Black children have various stressors impacting their lives on a daily basis, and racial socialization helps mitigate these.

### ***Dimensions of Racial Socialization***

Literature has pointed to several dimensions of racial socialization that have been instrumental in understanding the socialization process. Since American society is so race-focused, it is unavoidable that the next generation of youth will have to deal with racial encounters. Thus, understanding these dimensions of racial socialization is important. Stevenson (1995) examined the relationship between racial socialization attitudes and racial identity stages. He hypothesized that racial socialization was one key variable that linked previous literatures on childhood racial awareness and young adult's racial identity. The findings suggested that children's attitudes about racial socialization should take place within the family, and that they are related to and predictive of one's attitudes about Blackness. The racial socialization attitudes reflect the parents' own socialization experiences to a great extent, based on their experience with Black family child-rearing practices as they were growing up.

Stevenson (1995) conducted a study to compare measures of racial socialization and racial identity processes of inner city Black school children who participated in an urban community center-based jobs support program. The author found that specific factors of racial socialization differentially predicted all of the racial identity stages for females, and the pre-encounter and internalization identity stages for males. His findings also suggested that racial socialization was multi-dimensional, and implications for integrating it with revised multidimensional conceptualizations of racial identity were posited.

Throughout the literature there have been conceptual dimensions that have culminated in the development of different racial socialization perspectives. The majority of the literature has found the same recurring dimensions to be involved in the racial socialization process. The primary dimensions that have been the focus in the majority of this work on racial socialization dimensions are cultural socialization, preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust, and egalitarianism.

### ***Cultural Socialization***

Cultural socialization refers to parental practices that teach children about their racial or ethnic heritage and history in the hope that it will promote cultural customs and traditions and impact children's cultural, racial, and ethnic pride, either deliberately or implicitly (Hughes et al., 2006). Research suggests that cultural socialization is one of the most commonly transmitted racial socialization messages by Black mothers (Hughes et al., 2006; Scottham & Smalls, 2009; Wang & Huguley, 2012). Black mothers are very likely to teach their children about Black history, Black culture, and their racial heritage. This reflects their hope that by emphasizing this dimension their children will develop a positive image of being Black and having a rich history in the United States. In a society that has been described as thinking negatively about the Black

community, mothers have to protect their children so that they do not devalue their own racial group. Children's racial socialization has been positively associated with behavioral outcomes, and these associations were partially mediated by racial affirmation and self-esteem (Hughes, Witherspoon, Rivas-Drake, & West-Bey, 2009). If Black children are made to feel inferior to other racial groups due to their lack of knowledge about their own history, this could lead to identity, academic, and social problems (Cooper & McLoyd, 2011; Ogbu, 2004).

Black mothers who emphasize the cultural heritage dimension to their children are trying to ensure that their children are proud of their culture so that they have a place where they feel they belong. Several studies found that popularity, belonging, and cultural capital have an influence on recreational participation. Bruyn & Cillessen (2008) discussed school-aged children choosing certain activities based on perceived popularity within inter- and intra-personal relationships with peers. The argument was made that certain activities can be perceived as holding certain levels of power and prestige within social circles. Their study examined the recreation preferences of high status and low status adolescents within their peer groups. The findings suggested that adolescents could be categorized as popular and unpopular based on adherence to certain racial expectations. In the Black community being popular is important, and Black mothers make the decision to involve their children in activities that would help their children be considered popular, normal, or unpopular based on their beliefs. This sense of belonging and fitting in is an important issue in the Black community.

Faircloth & Hamm (2005) focused their research on belonging and how this impacts marginalized groups differently. Previous studies suggested that many factors converge to create a sense of belonging in out-of-school involvement. These factors included cultural expectations and parental influences, but more research is needed to advance the limited findings in this area.

Their results indicated that adolescents need to feel a sense of belonging in order to be motivated. This is reinforced through research that suggests that experiences relative to culture and parental socialization practices may inhibit formation of intimate relationships among school-aged children of certain racial groups.

Parents are key influences on maintaining children's participation in out-of-school activities and their adherence to racial expectations. Their influence primarily occurs through the negative responses that parents make to their children to ensure that they are not displaying inappropriate racial behaviors, and the positive responses to their children when they follow appropriate racial practices. This influence needs to be explored in more depth and extended to children's recreation participation to further understand the influence of Black mothers' racial socialization beliefs. If their perception is that only certain recreation activities are appropriate for Black children, then they may choose not to enroll their children in activities that would cause them to feel like they don't belong, or would result in them being labeled as unpopular.

### ***Preparation for Bias***

Research suggests that preparation for bias is another of the most commonly transmitted racial socialization messages by Black mothers (Hughes et al., 2006; Wang & Huguley, 2012). Preparation for bias among Black families may be part of a set of indigenous child-rearing strategies, transmitted inter-generationally, that emanates from shared knowledge regarding historical experiences of oppression (Hughes et al., 2006). This is part of a process that Black mothers will go through to prepare their children for potential encounters with racial discrimination and prejudice throughout their life. Black mothers' efforts to promote their children's awareness of discrimination and prepare them to cope have also been emphasized as a critical component of ethnic-racial socialization (Hughes et al., 2006). The Black community

has had an extensive history of being oppressed in American society, and, while there have been numerous positive strides to correct this, there is still a feeling of oppression among members. Black mothers are thus charged with the task of helping their children be prepared to deal with this societal discrimination.

### ***Promotion of Mistrust***

Promotion of mistrust occurs when Black mothers promote racial mistrust to their children. This is a task that mothers take upon themselves to protect their children from negative treatment by other racial groups. While this concept seems similar to “preparation for bias”, the difference is reflected through the trust aspect. Black mothers can teach their children to distance themselves or avoid getting close to individuals from certain racial groups in the hope that those individuals would not be able to hurt their children if they are not able to get close to them. An example of this practice would be making sure that certain conversations only take place between family members in the comfort of their own home. A multitude of Black families value their privacy when it comes to the information that they divulge to each other, preferring to communicate this private information within their Black community amongst trusted individuals.

### ***Egalitarianism***

Egalitarianism emphasizes interracial equality and promotes the idea that all people should live in harmony with each other. Egalitarian messages have been identified as the most frequently emphasized message transmitted among Black caregivers (Scottham & Smalls, 2009).

Black mothers emphasize this concept through a number of specific actions:

Many parents either explicitly encourage their children to value individual qualities over racial group membership or avoid any mention of race in discussions with their children (Spencer, 1983). Boykin and Toms (1985) coined the term mainstream socialization which refers to these sorts of strategies, because rather than orienting youth toward their native culture or toward their minority status, they orient youths toward developing skills and characteristics needed to



thrive in settings that are part of the mainstream, or dominant, culture. We refer to these types of racial socialization strategies as egalitarianism and silence about race, respectively, to distinguish them more clearly from one another.

(Hughes, 2006, p. 757)

Black mothers that de-emphasize racial differences and concentrate on the differences described above are focusing on the perceived concept of equality for all. While this could be a useful perspective to teach children, the researchers noted that these same youth may be involved in discriminatory actions that would need to be explained, especially if they have been raised to believe that they are equal, yet found that they are being discriminated against (Hughes et al., 2006; Scottham & Smalls, 2009).

### ***The “Other” Dimension***

A last type of dimension has been labeled as “other” due to the fact that this includes miscellaneous dimensions that have sporadically appeared in various racial socialization studies. There is not consistent support for these dimensions, yet they have appeared in various theoretical conceptualizations. These dimensions include: racial barriers, racism awareness, and spiritual/religious coping. Racial barriers is described as the awareness of racial inequities and strategies for coping with racism and discrimination (Lesane-Brown, 2006). The literature that has examined the receipt of messages emphasizing the existence of racism and racial barriers is mixed, suggesting a complex relationship between these types of messages and youth outcomes (Brown, 2008). The conflicting results on the impact of racial barriers may be a reason why this is not a recurring theme in the racial socialization literature. Racism awareness is when Black mothers promote caution and preparatory views regarding the presence of racism and the need to discuss racism openly among all family members (Lesane-Brown, 2006). The belief that racism (overt or covert) is not real has been found to be inaccurate. On the contrary, racism is real and continues to weigh heavily on the psychological and physical health adjustment of Whites,

Blacks, and other ethnic groups (Stevenson, 1994). This dimension has evolved due to the fact that its previous description was too broad and it needed to be more specific, and its conceptualization does provide a different perspective from which to consider racial socialization. The spiritual and religious coping dimension is where there is recognition of spirituality as one survives life's experiences (Lesane-Brown, 2006). Religion and spirituality have been a large part of the Black community, yet as the community has grown, these principles are not as prominent as they had been in the past. Each of these concepts has their own merit, but they do not appear consistently throughout the literature. Since this is the case, it was deemed best to combine these dimensions and present them under the "other" label.

### **Children's Development of Racial Identity**

As previously mentioned, racial socialization is a concept that describes the process of communicating messages and behaviors to children to bolster their sense of identity. Racial identity generally is defined as the development of positive (or negative) views of one's group, knowledge about its history and traditions, feelings of group attachment and belongingness, and participation in practices or settings that reflect group membership (Hughes, Hagelskamp, Way, & Foust, 2009). Racial identity formation and racial socialization are thus related. Hughes et al. (2009) described the interaction of racial socialization and racial identity in the following way:

Racial socialization and racial identity are also themselves intimately linked. That is, messages children receive from parents (and others) about how they should position themselves vis-à-vis their racial group and about the meaning of their race play a critical role in shaping youths' racial identity processes.

(p. 605)

Thus, according to Hughes, racial socialization and racial identity are interdependent in ultimately achieving racial identity formation. While there are certain actions that can take place separately from each other during these processes, at some point the concepts of racial identity

and racial socialization connect to form one's racial identity. Literature points to specific examples of this in Black children, especially when it comes to socially acceptable actions and gender. Children of various racial groups receive unique messages that are communicated to them in the hope that they will behave in a certain way during their interactions with others in their racial group. This is especially seen when it comes to gender differences in Black children which show that they are given disparate messages about their racial membership (Hughes et al., 2009).

There are several ways in which racial identity is formed in children, with two being through their peer interactions and the activities that they are involved in during their out-of-school free time. Investigators have focused on the links between Black children's peer group formation, identity formation, and activity involvement (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003). Peer relationships are an important identity tool because the company that children keep generally is a representation of their current interests, maturity, and the choices they make. If Black children haven't been taught how to have positive racial peer relationships, or their friends do not have the same racial values and/or interests that they do, this could be an indication that they are still trying to establish their racial identity or are confused about what it is. Peers have a strong influence on the play and activity choices that Black children make and the cliques that they want to be a part of, especially as they approach adolescence. Another strong influence is the gender socializing practices and experiences that Black children are exposed to.

### ***Gender Differences***

Black mothers most often are especially equipped to provide socialization and support to their children due to their own racial socialization as a child. Black mothers historically have been known to socialize their daughters in order to prepare them to be the keepers of their racial

heritage. Black mothers, especially single mothers, are assigned the task of providing for and raising children with the included responsibility of raising physically and emotionally healthy Black children in a society in which being Black has negative connotations (Brown, 2008; Miller & Macintosh, 1999).

Hughes (2009) summarized significant differences in the racial socialization approach between boys and girls:

Compared with girls, boys are more likely to be viewed by others as threatening (Sampson and Laub 1993; Stevenson et al. 2002) and, indeed, they report more discrimination (Fischer and Shaw 1999; Rivas-Drake et al. 2008). Girls, on the other hand, are more likely to be viewed as the future carriers of culture (Phinney 1990; Gonzalez et al. 2006). Thus, to the extent that parents anticipate discrimination experiences more so for boys than for girls, and view cultural socialization as more relevant to the future roles of girls as compared to boys, they may differentially emphasize cultural socialization and preparation for bias messages in their childrearing. Indeed, where gender differences in racial socialization have been found, they indicate that boys are more likely to report messages regarding racial barriers, whereas girls are more likely to report messages regarding racial pride.

(p. 608)

This excerpt further reinforces the concept that Black mothers have certain beliefs in mind when they are guiding their children. Hughes (2009) is arguing that in addition to race, gender differences also play a role in the way that Black mothers socialize their sons and daughters.

### **Racial Socialization and Socialization in General**

The numerous studies that have been recently conducted on racial socialization are part of the larger body of research on socialization in general. By itself, socialization impacts behavioral adjustment, and is also likely to account for part of the association between recreation activity participation and antisocial behavior (Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003). In highly differentiated societies such as the United States, most socialization processes are accomplished through the intersection of multiple agencies. The three agents that appear to have the greatest

impact on the development of the child are the family, the school, and the peer group, in order of their greatest impact (Otto, 1975). This general concept of the socialization process is very broad and does not account for the differences that could be present due to gender, sexual orientation, or race, among other characteristics. Without this focus on the societal issues that children and youth will face, the broad socialization process can only relate to people developing certain behaviors in a more general non-realistic sense. Studies should more specifically examine behaviors that are racially motivated and specifically created during children's developmental growth to facilitate positive social interactions and successful navigation of the United States' racial climate.

Because of this need to understand the influence that social structures have on the socialization process, researchers began examining specific segments of it. Specifically, literature on the effect of race on the socialization process concluded that focusing on the self-esteem and affirmation of various racial groups helps to instill in children a sense of pride in their own cultural heritage and to address the negative connotations that race has in United States society. The racial socialization construct dictates that race is an important subject for Black mothers to effectively communicate to their children in the hope that it will guide their children to display positive social tendencies and prepare them for future success. Racial socialization and racial identity are presented in the literature as protective factors for urban Black children (Miller, 1999). In United States society, race is a major differentiating factor, and, therefore, to examine socialization without considering the racial component would only address part of the environment that children typically encounter daily.

Lesane-Brown's (2006) comprehensive review of the racial socialization literature emphasizes a variety of different conceptualizations and dimensions of racial socialization. It

highlights a central theme to the messages that children receive, and points out that an emphasis on certain dimensions might impact their racial identity formation. Examining the most central recurring themes of racial socialization and how out-of-school recreation activities might influence the racial socialization process contributes to the literature regarding the impact of Black mothers' racial socialization beliefs on recreational choices for their children.

### ***Parental Messages/Strategies***

Constantine & Blackmon (2002) described Black racial socialization as messages and strategies used by Black mothers to teach their children about Black American culture, while preparing them for potential experiences with racism, prejudice, and mistrust by non-Blacks. Their study explored the relationship between parental racial socialization messages and specific self-esteem messages (within home, school, peers) among Black children. Constantine & Blackmon (2002) believed that racial socialization messages may be linked to Black children's cultural pride at a global level, while also being related to children's cultural pride in specific areas of their lives. The authors believed that the explanation for varied performance among Black American children was related to how they processed achievement experiences at school and in other parts of their life (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002). Their findings revealed that parents' racial socialization messages reflecting pride and knowledge about Black American culture were positively associated with Black children's pride in their cultural heritage. They suggested that racial values and practices that were taught by Black mothers or caregivers were expressed and validated by Black children within their peer groups. By contrast, racial socialization messages about the relative importance of majority White cultural institutions and the cultural values and benefits associated with being involved with these institutions were negatively associated with Black children's performance in school. The authors concluded that

some Black mothers may choose to place their children in predominantly Black or Afrocentric school environments in order to: “(a) expose them to certain aspects of their culture in the context of educational settings, (b) affirm and reinforce some race-related practices and competencies with which they entered school, and/or (c) insulate them from racism until they have developed their own effective coping mechanisms” (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002, p. 331).

It is also possible that these findings may be related, in part, to the ways that cultural heritage generally develops among Black American children in schools and in other institutions that may mirror racial values associated with the dominant racial group in the United States. For example, Black Americans' pride in their cultural heritage may be protected by directing blame away from themselves and assigning it to structural barriers such as racism and discrimination, and by devaluing domains and areas in which some members of their racial group do not perform well historically (e.g., academics). Thus, Black American students who embrace mainstream Eurocentric values and behaviors regardless of their socioeconomic status or neighborhood setting may display lower school pride in their cultural heritage because they are unable or unwilling to consider the possibility that racism or discrimination could be contributing to their lower performance in some environments (e.g., school). Constantine & Blackmon (2002) noted that several researchers believed racial socialization messages could protect urban Black children against some of the harmful effects of a discriminatory environment and promote positive adjustment (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002; Cooper & McLoyd, 2011; Fatimilehin, 1999; Miller, 1999; Miller & MacIntosh, 1999; Scottham & Smalls, 2009; Stevenson, 1995; Wang & Huguley, 2012). This could be accomplished by empowering Black children through their

cultural heritage to encourage them to persevere (e.g., in education, by role modeling and motivation) and not be affected by mainstream negative rhetoric.

While all types of parents are involved in a similar process to help their children navigate the social climate of the United States, the difference is that Black mothers have to prepare their children to address the negative perceptions of being Black. If children were not properly prepared to address this stigma, it would be difficult for Black children to respond with a positive mindset to discriminatory actions directed towards them. Thornton (1990) cautioned that previous studies have overlooked the fact that children are not merely passive recipients of information but that there is an active interpretation of the messages that they receive, especially in relation to race. Conceptualizations of racial socialization need to be cognizant of the continuous interaction between parental messages and how they are being communicated to their children so that Black mothers are aware of the impact their messages have

Other researchers have described racial socialization as including specific messages and practices that are relevant to Blacks and provide information concerning the nature of racial status as it relates to personal and group identity, inter-group and inter-individual relationships, and position in the social hierarchy (Frabutt et al., 2002; Thornton et al., 1990). This conceptualization focuses on the nature of race and the messages needed to understand the racial climate of the United States. It also means that children would have to be prepared to address the impact of race from their own perspective while understanding there may be a disconnect when discussing this perception with other racial groups. This suggests that the racial socialization process needs to start once Black children begin to realize that people are different, especially in skin color, so that they can come to understand the racial climate in the United States as they get older. Black children start to observe and comment on differences between others due to skin



color during early childhood, so the process of racial socialization could occur in children as young as three years of age (Stevenson, 1995). Thus, Black mothers may not choose to wait to initiate discussion about racial differences with their children.

Brown (2008) described racial socialization as a set of behaviors, communications, and interactions between Black mothers and their children that address how they ought to feel about their cultural heritage and how they should respond to the racial hostility or confusion in American society. Brown conducted a study to examine the importance of racial socialization and social support when it comes to Black mothers' resiliency, specifically the impact of the messages that children receive and how they influenced their psychosocial development. The component of Black mothers' resiliency was important in this research due to the fact that Blacks, in comparison to their White counterparts, were more likely to face poverty, live in violent neighborhoods, have less financial resources, and show a higher mortality rate from diseases (Brown, 2008). The investigator also examined the effects of extended family networks and churches (due to their historical impact on the Black community) on resiliency in the Black community. Support networks have typically been contributing agents in the Black community for the psycho-educational development of Black children and have provided role models for communities (Brown, 2008). In the study of Black university students, Brown found that social support accounted for the largest portion of the variance in students' self-reported resiliency. This study differed from previous research by empirically demonstrating that cultural factors (i.e., racial socialization and social support) can have a significant impact on the level of resiliency reported by participants. Receiving support from individuals who were not immediate family members played an essential role in Black university students' degree of resiliency.

Results also supported the findings of previous studies that messages promoting cultural pride and the teaching of racial heritage contributed to positive outcomes.

### ***Racial Status***

Thornton et al. (1990) described forms of racial socialization as including specific verbal behaviors (i.e., direct statements regarding race), modeling of behaviors, and exposure to specific objects, contexts, and environments (e.g., artifacts and settings). The focus of their study was on the content and practice of racial socialization of 18 – 65 year old Black mothers by examining self-reports of their verbal and physical behaviors. Participants were specifically asked in interviews whether or not they racially socialized their children and if they did, what they were teaching. Mothers were asked to complete a questionnaire comprised of items addressing the areas of social support, help-seeking, employment/unemployment, and group/personal identity, as well as providing demographic information. The findings revealed that Black mothers perceived racial socialization as involving several components, which included their experience as a minority group member, themes that emphasized an individual's goals and character, and information about Black cultural heritage. While both parents were involved in the socialization process, mothers generally had more responsibility in intellectual and emotional aspects of this process and were instrumental in educating their children about the concept of race (Thornton, 1990). Marital status was also found to be related to their practice, as Black mothers who were never married were less likely to socialize their offspring to racial mandates (Thornton, 1990). While the reasons are unclear as to why this occurred, it is believed to be due to a lack of time for single Black mothers to devote towards this process in their childrens' lives.

Frabutt, Walker and MacKinnon-Lewis (2002) expanded on Thornton's definition of racial socialization. Their study looked at racial socialization messages in two-parent Black families

with a child in early adolescence. They examined the link between Black mothers' racial socialization messages and components of the socialization process (communication, warmth, negativity, child monitoring, and involvement). The study took into account Black mothers' demographic information and assessed their proactive responses to discrimination. The mother/child relationship was examined using observational data derived from the mother/child dyadic interaction on tasks. The findings for measures of family processes (positivity, negativity, monitoring, and involvement) demonstrated a fairly consistent pattern, indicating that mothers in the racial socialization group exhibited the most positivity (highly communicative with a high degree of warmth), were the most involved with their children, monitored their child's activities the most, and displayed the lowest levels of negative family relationships. Children of these mothers exhibited "more positivity and less negativity as opposed to the control group" (Frabutt et al., 2002, p. 211-213). The authors' findings lent support to the notion that the relationship between racial socialization messages and Black mothers' processes is not linear. The provision of too few or too many racial socialization messages might be detrimental to the parent/child relationship.

### ***Ethnic Socialization***

While most of the literature has focused on the concept of racial socialization, some literature has discussed ethnic socialization. The meaning individuals make of their ethnicity can be referred to as their cultural orientation, including the degree to which individuals adhere to the specific values and behaviors of mainstream culture (e.g., acculturation), adherence to the values and behaviors of the native culture (e.g., enculturation), and their exploration and definition of identity based on native culture (e.g., ethnic identity) (Brown, Linver, Evans, & DeGennaro, 2009; Man & Umaña-Taylor, 2009). In the United States, the terms "culture", "race", and

“ethnicity” have been used synonymously in that the concept of ethnic socialization has been taken to be the same as racial socialization. The terms “racial socialization” and “ethnic socialization” have each been used broadly to refer to the transmission from adults to children of information regarding race and/or ethnicity (Hughes et al., 2006). Ethnic socialization has been described as, “the process where children acquire behaviors, perceptions, values, and attitudes of an ethnic group and come to see themselves as members of the group” (Man & Umaña-Taylor, 2009, p. 48). While the conceptualization of ethnic socialization does not emphasize the protective barriers that racial socialization does, Hughes et al. (2006) described how they are both similar and distinct:

Research on racial socialization emanated from scholars’ efforts to understand how African American parents maintain children’s high self-esteem and prepare them to understand racial barriers, given the systems of racial stratification in the United States. Research on ethnic socialization originated in the experiences of immigrant Latino, Asian, and (less often) African and Caribbean groups in the United States, having focused largely on children’s cultural retention, identity achievement, and in-group affiliation in the face of competing pressures to assimilate to the dominant society. Currently, however, the two concepts overlap considerably.

(p. 747-748)

There are certain heritage values and attitudes that Black mothers will want their children to retain about their own culture. While the terminology may be different, the concepts are comparable, and ethnic socialization should be considered when trying to apply socialization concepts to various racial groups outside of the Black population. It is useful to remember this perspective, in contrast to the bulk of the literature on racial socialization, which tends to emphasize Black families.

The process of children developing a racial identity is multi-faceted, and needs to take into account the racial undertone in the child’s culture. This is an important process that needs to be facilitated in order to help children not only understand themselves but also their own cultural

background. Umana-Taylor (2006) described racial (ethnic) identity as, “the degree in which individuals have explored their ethnicity, are clear about what their ethnic group membership means to them, and identify with their ethnic group” (p. 390). Thus, ethnic identity plays a prominent role in helping individuals understand not only their own ethnic group but also their racial membership. As children’s ethnic identity becomes more defined, they will understand their position in society more clearly and what they need to do in order to achieve the goals they have set for themselves. Ethnic identity has proven to be an important aspect of children’s developmental experiences, as it has been shown to relate to their psychological well-being, academic achievement, and ability to cope with discrimination and racism in a variety of situations (Umana-Taylor, 2006). However, we know little about the factors that influence the development of children’s ethnic identity. Part of children’s’ identity formation includes the socialization process that Black mothers undertake when children are very young.

### **Messages from Parent to Child**

Black mothers play a pivotal role in educating their children about the structural and psychological implications of race in society. They aim to raise physically and emotionally healthy children by buffering the information that they receive (Lesane-Brown, 2006). Black mothers’ role in the racial socialization process is important due to the fact that racial discrimination is embedded in virtually every structure of American society (e.g., social, economical, political, psychological, cultural, and institutional), can result in many detrimental consequences for Black children (Brown & Tylka, 2010), and the mother is viewed by her children as a primary source of mitigation. Mothers, especially Black mothers, typically understand the potential factors that could impact the academic achievement and psychological well-being of their children, and race is a major issue that they consider.

Research has produced a strong argument for the importance of understanding the messages that Black mothers communicate to their children. Lesane-Brown (2006) conducted a review of the racial socialization literature and suggested a more comprehensive definition of racial socialization as, “specific verbal and non-verbal messages that are transmitted to younger generations for the development of values, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs regarding the meaning and significance of race and racial stratification, intergroup and intragroup interactions, and personal and group identity” (Lesane-Brown, 2006, 403). Through this conceptualization she described ways that racial socialization messages are communicated to Black children. There are “expression” messages where racial socialization messages are transmitted either verbally or non-verbally. In addition, there is the “intent” of the messages, which is the state of mind in which the racial socialization messages are transmitted. In addition, the intent of parental messages could either be deliberate or inadvertent.

Lesane-Brown (2006) described verbal messages as messages communicated through direct conversations between Black mothers and their children and through indirect parental conversations that children observe. This is the easiest form of communication to observe since verbal communications are generally focused and specific. Non-verbal messages are more difficult to observe due to the fact that these messages could be communicated in a variety of ways that are not explicit, including modeling of racial behaviors (i.e., preparation of traditional food, cultural interactions), structuring of the home environment, especially children’s areas (i.e., displaying of racial art, music, books, or living in a predominately Black or multi-cultural neighborhood), or reinforcing certain behaviors in children (e.g., buying racial clothing, attending certain race-related activities). Her comprehensive review offered the observation that cultural beliefs and racial pride messages are often transmitted through non-verbal messages.

Lesane-Brown's (2006) approach to understanding deliberate and inadvertent messages also examined the intent of the messages. Deliberate messages were described as being purposely transmitted to children, while inadvertent messages were described as subtle messages that were not directly communicated to children but still transmitted information about their parents' attitudes, values, or beliefs about race. Black mothers would transmit deliberate messages to their children to help them prepare for the unavoidable reality of race in the United States and the incidents of racism that could occur. With this being the reality facing their children, Black mothers want to prepare them with the knowledge and skills needed to handle this racial climate. The messages that Black mothers communicate are based on their own beliefs and experiences growing up in the United States' racial climate. The same would be the case with the inadvertent messages that children receive. The difference is that while inadvertent messages are not communicated directly to their children, overhearing certain attitudes from their parents or viewing their parents' interactions with others functions as a socialization process that could carry as much impact as deliberate messages.

## **Research Findings**

### ***The Influence of Racial Socialization on Recreation Activity Choices for Children***

During the interviews conducted for the study, Black mothers opined about how they viewed race as influencing their efforts at socializing their children, but they generally did not consider it prominently in determining their out-of-school recreational choices for their children. When mothers explained their beliefs about the intended outcomes of recreation participation for their children, race was not a central talking point. However, there were several racial socialization dimensions present within their stories about their children's out-of-school activity

participation. In this section I will present all of the dimensions and utilize the mothers' voices to illustrate how they were present in Black mothers' stories.

### *Egalitarianism*

Messages of mistrust were discussed numerous times by mothers, but the majority of the messages centered on Egalitarianism. Egalitarianism emphasizes interracial equality and promotes the idea that all people should live in harmony with each other. Most Black mothers de-emphasized racial differences and more often concentrated on perceived equality for all. Mothers talked at length about equality for their children in their out-of-school activity participation, their ability to do anything that others could do, and the only differences between their children and other children being the pigmentation of their skin. They viewed out-of-school activities as an arena where everyone has the same ability, with differences focused on performance rather than on skin color. The following two excerpts from their responses illustrate this attitude:

*No. I don't think that that matters. No. I have my oldest child play AAU basketball from 8<sup>th</sup> grade all the way to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. That coach was not of the same race at all whatsoever and that child's 23 but his biggest fan is that coach. That AAU basketball coach of a different race, his biggest cheerleader and he was on a football scholarship. So, that was the basketball coach who makes highlight reels of his football games, here at the University. The race doesn't, not one bit. One of the best basketball teams during church league basketball this past summer that went undefeated, was coached by a female of little boys. They didn't care. They didn't mind at all, they were more focused on being able to play basketball.*

(Katie, daughter 13, son 10 years)

*Just if she has a belief, if she feels strongly about it, don't let anybody try to change it for you. If it's something you believe in, stand up for it in her choices....I try to let her, I mean, I let her know that, well, and she knows that, yeah, our skin color might be different but we are still the same. We can do anything that we put our minds to that we want to do. This includes participating in sports, debate club, or other science programs.*

(Ebony, daughter 9 years)



Eboni's statement is concise yet powerful because she wants to ensure that her daughter is standing up for what she believes in and not letting anyone change that. Later Eboni mentioned that whatever her daughter puts her mind to, it was important that she should feel encouraged that she will be able to achieve the goal. These stories express not only how Black mothers feel about differences between people, but also their approach to teaching their children that everyone is equal. On the surface, Black mothers did not relate these feelings to their child's recreation participation - they were more concerned with their children feeling that they can do anything they want as people. This is consistent with previous conceptualizations of egalitarianism, whether it be in recreation participation or in everyday life. Some mothers reported that they stayed in constant contact with their children in order to mitigate issues that could potentially arise, while others described that they discussed these topics when an issue occurred. In either case, Black mothers primarily communicated that the differences between their children and their peers were only superficial and that they can do anything that they put their minds towards.

### ***Cultural Socialization***

Cultural socialization refers to parental practices that teach children about their racial heritage and history in the hope that it will promote cultural customs and traditions and impact children's cultural and racial pride, either deliberately or implicitly. Literature has shown that Black mothers are very likely to teach their children about Black history, Black culture, and their racial heritage. This reflects their hope that by emphasizing their cultural background, their children will develop a positive image of being Black and having a rich history in the United States. All mothers, directly or indirectly, expressed pride in their Black culture and sought to instill cultural values in their children through their child's out-of school activity participation.

In the words of Sylvia, her own mother had a large influence on the out-of-school activities in which she engaged as a child, which, in turn influenced what activities she could enroll her son in:

*...when I was growing up, my mom put me in Swahili classes, drummed to learn about my culture, than it would...I wouldn't want like a white....I wouldn't even say I wouldn't want a white person to teach me something about that. I would challenge what they're teaching me, I definitely do my own homework...*

*There may not have educated themselves and wake up and feel black and proud...and I'm Black and proud to, but that doesn't mean I know everything about my culture.*

(Sylvia, son 9 years)

Sylvia further described that she perceives her racial heritage and her willingness to be informed by different perspectives as a benefit in fully understanding Black culture. Sylvia admitted that she doesn't know everything about Black culture, but she knows that she is Black, proud, and willing to continue and learn and grow, which she subsequently communicated to her son. This is crucial to helping us understand her approach to choosing recreational activities for her child. Learning Swahili and other components of Black heritage would be an activity that could teach her son a new language but also more significantly exemplify the strength of being Black.

Katie also expressed similar sentiments:

*To understand...don't let anybody tell you that you are not beautiful or that you are not handsome because your skin is darker or to have a sense of the good thing about being Black.*

(Katie, daughter 13 years)

Katie's perception of the world suggests that reminding her daughter that she is beautiful ensures that her needs of feeling safe and empowered during out-of-school activities would be met. Thus, seeking out recreational activities that would reinforce this positive image to her daughter was important. For instance, playing male-dominated sports or being physically fit has typically held negative connotations in the Black community, especially with young girls. From Katie's

own past experience, a focus on instilling a strong Black identity centered on cultural pride in her daughter by reminding her that she is beautiful is important. With this emphasis, it will translate to her daughter questioning stereotypical representations of Black girls/women as being “ugly,” and instead instill the belief that Black women can do anything that they put their mind towards. In particular, any recreational activity that she would want to participate in, than she would have positive Black images to encourage her participation in these activities.

### ***Preparation for Bias***

Preparation for bias is part of a process that Black mothers undertake to prepare their children for potential encounters with racial discrimination and prejudice. Mothers did not prominently communicate messages to prepare their children for bias in choosing their recreation activities. This could be due to a number of reasons, such as messages being more indirect or the available recreational opportunities not being good mediums through which to communicate this message. Black mothers described the need to protect their children and to invite constant communication to help prepare Black youth to deal with racial issues they might face on a daily basis.

*So, I'm going to do that, I'm going to protect them as long as they're under my roof, to you know, before they get out like college. I can't protect them once they leave for college. I'm not in that, I can't protect them the way I have the ability to do it now.*

(Allie, son 13, daughter 13 years)

*Now that he's getting older, I try to push reality to him and to me that is the difference. I don't tell him how to or what he should think, I try to use his own brain. Like, you know you are going to have those challenges and I always just tell him...*

(Sylvia, son 9 years)

Other mothers focused on the ability of their children to choose their friends, and on traits to which they should pay particular attention to ensure they are not discriminated against. Black mothers did not overtly discuss recreation participation but rather life preparation skills that they

are passing on to their children. This in turn may help their child be better prepared for the racialized climate (e.g. choosing friends, making choices), which is consistent with previous conceptualizations of this dimension.

*As far as how they pick friends, I kind of just guide them to make sure that they are respectful and see the things that they participate in. See what they, what they don't like and just make sure that they are not being used.*

(Latoya, son 15, daughter 11 years)

*Because you are that model student, you are helpful, you're respectful, you come in, you are prepared, and you do your work, so they like that...I tell him "you can't listen to that, as long as you know that you are doing the right thing then you hold to that, you can't worry about what other people are saying..."*

(Katie, son 10 years)

Whether it is how to choose friends, being treated with respect, or being able to think for themselves, these messages are delivered to help Black children prepare themselves to handle the racialized climate in the United States. Black mothers believed these experiences would be useful for Black children to prepare for discriminatory behavior directed towards them by improving their discernment. As well, these messages will help develop confidence in Black youths so that they could deal with the racial realities that are present in Black communities. Black mothers realized that their children have an increased chance of experiencing negative behaviors from their peers; this is likely why they emphasized recognizing "good" behaviors.

### ***Mistrust of Others***

As with the other dimensions, Black mothers may elect to promote racial mistrust in their children through the overt and covert messages they provide. This is a task that mothers take upon themselves to protect their children from negative treatment by other racial groups. Compared to Cultural Heritage and Preparation for Bias, there were more messages communicated to children concerning Mistrust of Others and Egalitarianism based on Black mothers' beliefs. Mothers described their mistrust of other individuals as not as racially

motivated as previously thought it was more about knowing who would be interacting with their children and being cautious until they've had the chance to get to know the others better.

When asked about the teams that Latoya's son had played on and if it was okay if they were of a different race, her response was:

*He has had both...they have been on teams where they have like coaches, all Black coaches, as long as they don't cause harm or disrespect my child or me, we are good.*

(Latoya, son 15 years)

We see that Latoya de-emphasized the mistrust factor unless there was an instance of maltreatment towards her child. If there was an instance where Latoya felt that her children had been mistreated, she reported that trust would be lost in those coaches. Another mother described an "interview process" that she conducts with adults who would be interacting with her children:

*I call it my interview process, you know, I mean. I just I think it's, today, sigh I don't know if today's world is any different from when I was younger. Maybe, I was just sheltered enough that I didn't see some of the things that happens now but I tell my children all the time. I have so many years to protect them, and then they're out of you know my home area, where I can really protect them.*

(Allie, son 13, daughter 13 years)

Ultimately Black mothers are protecting their children from negative forces, including but not limited to, racially motivated ones. Race was not the focal point specifically mentioned by most mothers but later in the interview, each expressed concerns with the way that media has portrayed Black children, which gives the indication that race could be an issue integrated into perceptions of mistrust.

### **Discussion of these Findings**

The results from this study would appear to suggest that racial socialization does not have significant influence on Black mothers' recreation choices for their children, yet Black mothers'

responses clearly suggest that it is present. The findings suggest that there is a shift from what has previously been discussed in the literature about the Black community (Collen, 2008; Eitle & Eitle, 2002; Larson, Pearce, Sullivan, & Jarrett, 2007) and what Black mothers stated in this study as to the influences on their recreation choices for their children. These patterns can be seen by adopting a methodological approach that differs from that used in previous literature and these traditional means of viewing racial socialization. Previous racial socialization research has “focused on the racial socialization practices in terms of their mean levels on a variety of measures intended to tap different types of racial socialization messages” (Caughy, Nettles, & Lima, 2011, p. 493). Following (Caughy et al., 2011, p. 493), this approach can be referred to as a “variable-based approach,” in contrast to a “person-oriented or pattern-based approach.” This emphasis on utilizing a variable approach has led to inconsistent results about the motivation for Black mothers’ choices for children’s recreation when attempting to understand the influence of the racial socialization process.

Caughy et al. (2011) suggested using a person-oriented or pattern-based approach, which focuses on understanding patterns of racial socialization practices and how they are related to healthy child development. Their rationale is that utilizing a person-oriented approach conceptualizes the racial socialization process through a paradigmatic lens that allows researchers to identify subgroups of individuals who share a certain pattern of characteristics (Caughy et al., 2011). This may provide a better understanding of how this process is actually present in Black mothers’ choices of recreation activities. Adapting the person-oriented framework to the present study focusing on Black mothers’ choices for their children’s out-of-school activity participation deviates from the bulk of the racial socialization literature where the focal point has been on whether a certain dimension was being emphasized or de-emphasized.

Instead of there being an emphasis or de-emphasis on racial socialization messages within their words, the person-oriented approach identifies patterns that either emphasize cultural socialization and coping strategies or a balanced approach.

A few Black mothers described how their upbringing impacted the decisions they make as a parent, while others were guided by their education, access to income, or listening to their child's recreational activity interests. Historically, in the Black community Black mothers' choices were based on their own beliefs which were communicated in an authoritarian style to their children (e.g. saying "do this because I said so", not allowing children a voice in the decision making process). Several Black mothers in their interview expressed a variety of influences, beliefs and values that would guide their own parental choices in choosing activities for their children, which were different from how their parents chose recreational activities for them. As well, several findings reinforced what previous literature has indicated is involved with the decision process of Black mothers' recreation choices for their children. There were a variety of reasons for Black mothers' beliefs and choices regarding their children's out-of-school free time activity participation (e.g. wanting child to have a choice in choosing an activity, exposure to different activities, academic development, and others).

Some insight was gained in explaining the disconnection between previous descriptions of how the racial socialization process would be seen in Black children's academic success and how it's presented in this study. The results from this study were not consistent with previous efforts as the literature would suggest that the racial socialization process would be an important consideration for Black mothers (Frabutt, Walker, & MacKinnon-Lewis, 2002; Hughes & Chen, 1998; Hughes et al., 2006; Lesane-Brown, 2006; Miller, 1999; Scottham & Smalls, 2009; Stevenson, 1995; Stevenson & Arrington, 2009). Except for the dimension of egalitarianism, the

reasons that most Black mothers gave for enrolling their children in out-of-school recreational activities were not consistent with the racial socialization dimensions previously presented in the literature (Caughy, Nettles, Campo, & Lohrfink, 2006; Frabutt, Walker, & MacKinnon-Lewis, 2002; Hughes & Chen, 1998; Hughes et al., 2006; Lesane-Brown, 2006; Miller, 1999; Scottham & Smalls, 2009; Stevenson, 1995; Stevenson & Arrington, 2009).

Based on these racial socialization patterns (silence about race, emphasis on cultural socialization, emphasis on cultural socialization and coping strategies, or a balanced approach) presented by Caughy et al. (2011), the results of this study revealed some of the patterns in Black mothers' decision making processes for choosing out-of-school activities for their child. Black mothers revealed numerous times either an emphasis on cultural socialization and coping strategies or a pattern of balanced approaches. As Black mothers discussed the influence of race on their out-of-school recreational choices for their children, there was a pattern in their focus that was revealed. Specifically, Black mothers' main focus was the safety and healthy development of their child, which depended on Black mothers preparing their child to be conscious about racial issues present in society. Black mothers' predominant belief was that raising their children's level of consciousness would help them be prepared and stay safe from racial conflicts in the future.

Previous literature (Caughy et al., 2011) would suggest that from a dimensional approach, Black mothers could be considered to be a mean variable (e.g. focused on preparing for bias, mistrusting others) about their reasons for choosing certain out-of-school activities for their children. The Black community has been plagued by a history of being perceived in research as one group and studied in this way (Omi, 1994), rather than examining this population on an individualistic basis and seeing the commonalities in their responses. The findings from



this study suggest that a few Black mothers were providing broad strategies and techniques in communicating how to address certain patterns of cultural socialization, coping strategies, silence about race, or a combination of all to help their child understand the influence of race in their daily lives. Even though it was not explicitly mentioned, Black mothers used recreation participation as one of many developmental activities for their children. They did not talk about race within their daily lives as such, but when asked about how they see being Black in their community, several mothers had strong opinions about race and how it should be emphasized to their children. Three Black mothers talked about instilling in their sons an element of safety because of media reports about some of Black males killed in different states. Two other Black mothers felt that Black daughters' primary messages about race were coming from shows they watched on television and these messages were not positive. The purpose of this study was to explore whether Black mothers chose recreational activities based on their racial beliefs, but judging from Black mothers' responses, they used every opportunity in life (including recreation) to teach their children about race. This was a consistent pattern shown among many of the Black mothers.

### ***The Role of Gender in Children's Out-of-School Activity Participation***

Previous studies have detected differences in the socialization process of Black sons compared to daughters, where the focus of daughters was carrying on the cultural heritage of that family while for sons it was preparation for bias and/or mistrust of others (Frabutt et al., 2002; Mandara et al., 2012; Varner & Mandara, 2012). With regard to recreational choices, there were inconsistencies within the literature in terms of the emphasis on gender and race ( Lesane-Brown, 2006; Lesane-Brown & Brown, 2005; Caughy et al., 2011). The results of the present study revealed that contextualizing Black mothers' responses as a pattern of racial socialization

messages to their children would be more beneficial than focusing on the emphasis of their messages.

There seemed to be certain patterns that Black mothers showed for daughters that focused on cultural socialization (e.g. how to be a strong Black woman) while messages to Black boys were on coping strategies for discrimination and the promotion of mistrust (e.g. safety, discussing police killings). A few Black mothers believed that the messages that they were communicating would be beneficial to their child in hopes of navigating the racialized climate of the United States, while keeping their children safe (e.g. discussions about the killing of Black males the previous summer). The findings here have not been discussed in previous research and should be further explored to understand their relevance to the scholarship on racial socialization and its influence on choosing recreation activities for Black children. Race relations have been changing since this study was conducted and could influence how the racial socialization process has been understood, emphasized, and communicated to Black children. During this study, race was not the explicit focus of Black mothers' responses to interview questions posed to them, but this may change in future research as racial issues become more of a focus in society.

## **Conclusions**

The contribution of this study to the racial socialization literature is significant. Previous research on racial socialization has described it as encompassing several dimensions that parental socialization behaviors would fall within. The focus of this study was not whether Black mothers' communication would fall into a certain dimension, but rather if there was a racial socialization process communicated through participation in recreation activities from Black mothers to their children. This study found that the messages that Black mothers were communicating to their children did not fall into a particular dimension of racial socialization.

There have been inconsistencies expressed in the racial socialization literature because the results researchers were obtaining did not fit within identified dimensions of racial socialization. When that has occurred, either a new dimension was proposed (e.g. spiritual/religious messages, protective messages, and other messages which are supposed to be all-inclusive of a variety of messages) or the measures used to collect data were called into question. The present results, if framed within the context of the previous racial socialization literature, would support egalitarianism, protective messages and cultural socialization messages, and would also reinforce the fact that scholarship on racial socialization has led to inconsistent findings with some authors questioning the extant research on the racial socialization process.

Interpreting the results from this study within Caughey et al.'s (2011) framework provides a deeper understanding of some patterns that were present in the rhetoric of the Black mothers in this study. Contextualizing racial socialization as having patterns of themes, rather than dimensions, allows more flexibility in understanding the messages Black mothers were expressing to their children. Most Black mothers talked about coping mechanisms or cultural socialization, or they were silent about race altogether. This is consistent with the person-oriented approach utilized by Caughey et al. (2011), which deviates from examining mean levels and looks instead at the patterns present in their messages. The results of the present study indicate that if racial socialization is conceptualized as patterns of behaviors, more consistent voices expressed by Black mothers during their interviews can be detected. Black mothers' overt messages were not race focused, but rather were designed to protect their children. By examining the racial socialization patterns, we can better understand how Black mothers' messages are socializing their children without explicitly stating that they are racially motivated.

Black mothers expressed that they were aware of the influence of race within society, but they did not suggest this influenced their recreational choices for their children.

### **Directions for Future Research**

This study also suggests that there is more to the racial socialization process than what has been previously described in scholarship. This finding started the discussion of conceptualizing patterns of racial socialization rather than dimensions of racial socialization. The findings from this study did not prominently express traditional dimensions of racial socialization, but they did show patterns in Black mothers' responses. Black mothers expressed significant messages about egalitarianism, but concordance with the other dimensions was not present. Their responses showed a pattern of cultural socialization and coping with issues that could arise in their children's lives. For this reason, racial socialization patterns should be furthered explored, and efforts to reconcile findings with the identified dimensions should be pursued.

There needs to be more qualitative or mixed-method studies conducted on racial socialization to determine the influence of race on choosing out-of-school recreational activities. As previously mentioned, research conducted on racial socialization has been focused on a quantitative approaches. This focus has led to inconsistent results, but in future studies triangulating the results with qualitative or mixed-method approaches will provide a stronger understanding of the racial socialization process. Using other methods to research racial socialization will ideally help to establish more consistent results and better understanding of this process in the Black community.