

BETWEEN LOUD GIRLS AND FINER WOMANHOOD: ANALYZING BLACK GIRLS'
EXPERIENCES IN A SOCIAL CLUB

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive case study examines how participants in *LADY*, a social club for adolescent Black girls in the southeast, learn from their mothers and club advisors about Black womanhood. Findings revealed that Black girls in *LADY* were taught aspects of finer womanhood that informed their ideas about Black womanhood in three significant ways, specifically through finer womanhood, surveillance, and creating an “us” and “them” dichotomy. This study illustrated how advisors trained participants for finer womanhood through club activities and workshops. In addition to club advisors, mothers monitored girls’ interactions in an effort to guide them into Black womanhood. Also, this study highlighted the “us” and “them” dichotomy that *LADY* had through their exclusionary membership criteria. This empirical research has implications for both Girls’ Studies and Black Feminist Theory (BFT). It expands Girls’ Studies by including scholarship about Black girls’ lived experiences. It contributes to BFT by showcasing how age is a category of difference that needs to be incorporated into BFT in order to study Black girls’ lives. It also has implications for similar social clubs by highlighting adults’ and girls’ complex and multifaceted relationships that influence girls’ preparation for Black womanhood.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving grandparents who passed away during this process. For my Bigmama, Dorothy Jean (Coleman) Martin and my Granddaddy, Willie Morris Adams. I appreciate your love, guidance and presence in my life.

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	3
Purpose of the Research	4
Research Questions	5
Significance of the Study	5
Theoretical Framework	6
Research Design	6
Organization of Research	8
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	10
Black Community as Socialization Agent	10
Black Mothers and Daughters	14
Black Girls and School	18
Black Feminist Theory	24
Girls' Studies	30
Qualitative Research on Black Girls	37
III. METHODOLOGY	41
Reflections From the Pilot Study	42
Study Setting	44

	Research Method: Descriptive Case Study	45
	Access to Club	46
	Permission to Conduct the Study	47
	Participants	47
	Data Collection Methods	48
	Researcher Reflexivity Journal	53
	Methods of Analysis	54
	Validity/Trustworthiness	55
IV.	ADULTS	57
	Community Mothers	57
	<i>LADY</i> Club	60
	Mothers	70
V.	GIRLS	106
	<i>LADY</i> as a Crowd	110
	Cliques	117
	Mentoring	122
	Us and Them	124
VI.	DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	128
	Finer Womanhood Redefined	128
	Surveillance and Concerted Cultivation	132
	Us and Them Revisited	134
	Implications for Black Girls' Programs	136
	Implications for Girls' Studies	138

Implications for Black Feminist Theory	138
Recommendations for Further Research	140
Conclusion	140
REFERENCES	142
APPENDIX A: Pilot Study Observation Guide	155
APPENDIX B: Pilot Study Interview Protocol	156
APPENDIX C: Letter of Correspondence	157
APPENDIX D: Letter of Support	158
APPENDIX E: IRB Approval	159
APPENDIX F: Interview Protocol	160
APPENDIX G: Interview Protocol—Revised	161
APPENDIX H: Advisor Interview Protocol	162
APPENDIX I: Parent/Guardian Interview Protocol	163
APPENDIX J: Founding Member Interview	164
APPENDIX K: E-mail to Participants Regarding Transcript	165
APPENDIX L: Observation Guide	166
APPENDIX M: Mind Map—Example	167
APPENDIX N: Club Song.....	168
APPENDIX O: <i>Lift Every Voice and Sing</i>	169
APPENDIX P: Supervisor Prayer.....	170
APPENDIX Q: State Prayer	171

I

INTRODUCTION

In Black¹ communities, churches and national social clubs have served as a medium for Black people to organize efforts to collectively combat racial discrimination and improve their social conditions in the United States (Giddings, 1984; Higginbotham, 1993; Lee, 1913). Social clubs and churches often operated in similar ways in Black communities through providing Black people with unique opportunities of holding administrative office positions and offering a space for individuals to express their concerns. Differently from churches, Black social clubs provided a sphere for Black women to have access to and participate in multiple areas of organized American society (Brady, 1987; Giddings, 1984; Lerner, 1974).

Although Black churches provided Black people with an avenue to improve society, many of the individuals who held decision-making power and prestigious positions were Black men. Overshadowed by male domination in churches, Black women were relegated to domestic roles in homes and throughout Black communities where they were not encouraged to hold prominent roles (Giddings, 1984; Jones, 1982). Furthermore, Black women were not invited to participate in White women's social clubs nor did these clubs address concerns that Black women wanted to undertake in Black communities (Knupfer, 1997; Scott, 1990). However, in the late 19th century, Black women's clubs formally emerged and provided these women with a space to collectively improve societal conditions for Black women, men, and children.

¹ Throughout this document the terms "Black" and "African American" are used interchangeably. In most instances "Black" refers to people of African descent where African culture and language exists throughout the world. "African American" refers to Black people born in the United States (Brown, 2011; Philogène, 1999; Walker & Turner, 1993).

While many Black women's social clubs chiefly assembled to improve living conditions in Black communities, their clubs' agenda focused on combating racism and sexism against Black women and girls. For instance, The Phyllis Wheatley Club, named after the first Black woman poet, was organized in 1896 by Elizabeth Lindsay Davis. The Phyllis Wheatley Club founded the Wheatley Home, which provided housing for Black women and girls new to Chicago until they located suitable living accommodations (Dodge, 2001; Knupfer, 1997). In that same year, the National Association of Colored Women's Club (NACWC), formerly the known as the National Association of Colored Women (NACW²), formed after the merger of the National Federation of Afro-American Women and the National League of Colored Women (Brady, 1987; Giddings, 1984; Lerner, 1974).

In 1930, Sally Stewart, the current NACW president, created the National Association for Colored Girls (NACG) to transfer club women's values, morals and traditions to young Black girls in an effort to continually improve society for Black people (Brady, 1987). The NACWC has sponsored the formation of various Black women's clubs committed to enhancing various facets of Black girls' lives including their social, mental, and moral development. This study explored Black girls' experiences in one such social club—the **Leadership And Development for Youth Club**³ (*LADY*).

In 1946, the first and only *Community Mothers Club* was organized in Taylor Town, Alabama. *Community Mothers* is a federated Black women's club under the NACWC. In 1956, a

² NACW and NACWC are the same organization. The name National Association of Colored Women (NACW) was used from the group's inception until 1954, when their name changed to National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (NACWC).

³ Throughout this document pseudonyms have been substituted for organizations and/or clubs, participants' names, titles, schools, cities, and activities to protect participants' identities.

decade after its inception, *Community Mothers* organized *LADY* to promote the ideals of “finer womanhood” through fostering intellectual, spiritual, racial, and healthy well-being amongst Black girls. *LADY* was organized under the leadership of Jean May Habster, who also served as *LADY*’s inaugural advisor. During the time of the study, *LADY* had 34 members between the ages of 14-18. *LADY* sponsored community service activities including their annual Can-a-thon, sock drive, and an Easter Egg Hunt.

Statement of the Problem

Recent research exploring ways to improve Black students’ educational achievement and social experiences has typically focused on Black boys (Archer, Halsall, & Hollingsworth, 2007; Cuyjet, 2006; Dancy & Brown, 2008; Davis, 2003; Ferguson, 2000; Noguera, 2003; The Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2012; Wyatt, 2009). Educational research concerning Black boys has highlighted the phenomenon of the school-to-prison pipeline, which refers to policies and practices that support criminalization within schools and results in the incarceration of young people (Morris, 2012). Through this vein of inquiry, scholarship about Black boys has illuminated initiatives to curtail Black male dropout rates and enhance their educational and social experiences (Archer et al., 2007; Brown, 2011). On the other hand, limited studies have investigated Black girls’ experiences in diverse educational settings.

The 2007, National Women’s Law Center report entitled, *When Girls Don’t Graduate We All Fail: A Call to Improve High School Graduation Rate for Girls*, revealed that data gathered in 2004 concluded that 40% of Black girls did not graduate in 4 years. Although this statistic fared better than Black boys, African American girls’ lack of academic success can have ill effects on their quality of life (National Women’s Law Center, 2007). Black girls who drop out of high school have a greater likelihood for earning low income throughout their lifetime.

Moreover, Black women drop outs form the highest proportion of the population who rely on Medicaid and Medicare benefits (National Women’s Law Center, 2007).

Black girls reside at the intersection of race and gender and research has demonstrated that their non-conformity to gender stereotypes often results in harsh disciplinary measures (Brown, 2011; Fordham, 1993; Morris, 2012). In recent years Black girls’ placement in the justice system has increased. According to the American Bar Association and National Bar Association (2001) African American girls comprised almost 50% of all those in residential facilities in the United States. Black girls are placed in residential detention facilities three times more frequently than White girls. Black girls also are sent to adult prisons five times more often than their White counterparts (National Council on Crime and Delinquency Center for Girls and Young Women, 2009). As a result of many competing inequitable conditions in society, it is the intent of this study to explore how a social group targeting Black girls for membership supports and prepares its participants for womanhood.

Purpose of the Research

The goal of this study was to illuminate various experiences of adolescent Black girls who participate in a social club in a city in the southeast region of the United States. In this study, I discovered adolescent Black girls’ relationships among each other, between participants and adult leadership, and among participants and their mothers and other adult relationships. The goal of this research was to learn about interactions in the club that influenced adolescent Black girls’ acquisition of their raced and gendered identities. Furthermore, this study serves to expand Girls’ Studies by offering a more comprehensive understanding of girlhood by exploring categories of difference.

Research Questions

Based on these goals, the guiding research questions for this research were

1. How does participation in *LADY* help prepare participants for womanhood?
2. How do girls negotiate their raced and gendered identities in concert with and/or in opposition to *LADY*?

Significance of the Study

Girls' Studies scholars have generated criticism about the absence of girls of color from Girls' Studies scholarship (Harris, 2004a; Kearney, 2009; Mendes et al., 2009). According to Kearney (2009), a majority of the research in Girls' Studies has been about White, middle-class, heterosexual girls. Ruth Nicole Brown (2009) wrote, "In 'girls' studies,' an emerging subfield in gender and women's studies concerned with explaining representations of girls' lives and creating empirical evidence about girls' lived experiences, the girl norm is suspiciously White, middle-class, and heterosexual" (p. 34). Brown's critique illuminates the need to explore Black girls' embodied realities to provide a picture of the diversity that exists amongst Black girls and the larger girl community. In the context of Girls' Studies, this research can begin to address a gap in scholarship that has minimally explored Black girls' lived experiences. More importantly, this project aims to explore adolescent Black girls' experiences in a social club to gain an understanding of how Black girls are constructing their raced and gendered identities. Through this study, I gained an understanding of various roles that Black women served in socializing Black girls' for life in today's US society.

Theoretical Framework

This research drew theoretically from Girls' Studies and Black Feminist Theory as a way of exploring the interconnectedness between race and gender as it relates to adolescent Black girls' experiences in a social club for Black girls.

Girls' Studies

Girls' Studies operates at the intersection of youth studies, cultural studies, and Women's Studies, and is an interdisciplinary field of study that grew out of feminists' interests to explore phenomena amongst girls to investigate their differences from women. Since its inception, there has been research published across various disciplines including sociology, psychology, education, and history (Kearney, 2009). According to Mendes et al. (2009) Girls' Studies is an area of research that explores girls' experiences.

Black Feminist Theory

Black Feminist Theory (BFT) includes a large body of literature exploring the intersections of what it means to be both Black and female (Collins, 2000a, 2000b, 2004; The Combahee River Collective, 1995; hooks, 2000; King, 1988). BFT serves as a body of scholarship that validates the existence of interconnected oppressions that Black women experience. BFT provides Black women a theoretical framework that supports the use of lived experiences to construct meaning in their lives. Together, BFT and Girls' Studies encompass principles that are beneficial to investigating participants' embodied realities in order to learn their understandings of identity in the context of their social club.

Research Design

A descriptive case study was employed to explore Black girls' experiences in *LADY*. Case study is a type of inquiry that explores a case that represents a bounded system (Yin, 2003).

In this study, Black girls who participated in a social club were a case and served as the unit of analysis. Through a holistic multiple case study design, the researcher had the opportunity to explore relationships between participants in the club. Yin (2003) expressed that the purpose of case study inquiry is to investigate and represent an environment with the objective of gaining an understanding of the setting. In reference to comprehending interactions amongst participants, I adopted descriptive methodological approaches, which included ethnographic interviewing, observational fieldwork, document analysis, and researcher reflexivity journaling.

Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured interviews were administered to gain rich description about participants' experiences. The goal of the interviews was to gain a better understanding of the ways in which the club has contributed to the formation of participants' identity and socialization for adulthood. In addition to participants, parents and club leaders were invited to participate in interviews. Also, documents published by *LADY* including their handbook were analyzed. A reflexivity journal was used to provide the researcher with a space to critically examine self and culture throughout the research process. In an effort to attain a high degree of validity and trustworthiness, triangulation of data collection methods, peer review, and audit trail were administered. Data gathered through these research methods was organized through QSR NVivo 10. After information was organized, transcripts were read and analyzed through tenets of Girls' Studies and BFT in order to code data.

Researcher Positionality

I would be remiss if I did not discuss my adolescent experiences and my interest in this vein of inquiry. As a Black woman from Buffalo, New York, my adolescent experiences were similar to and different from participants in this study. During my adolescence, I attended a

small, predominantly Black, Catholic school and participated in school-sponsored co-curricular activities such as cheerleading, basketball, and track and field. My interest in these activities developed as my mother and I learned the importance of becoming a well-rounded student to be considered for scholarship opportunities. Coming from a working-class family, I knew that I had to depend on government or private financial assistance to attend college. So, similar to participants in this study, I sought cultural capital that would provide opportunities to further my academic career. However, I differed from participants because I did not have social networks that provided access to resources that would provide academic or career opportunities. Furthermore, programs I participated in did not train me to learn and employ aspects social etiquette.

I became interested in learning about how Black girls learn about Black womanhood through taking a Girls' Studies course and juxtaposing class readings to my teen experiences. In the course we mostly discussed White girls' experiences and I often became frustrated with the absence of Black girls' stories, especially since the narratives examined did not mirror or relate to my lived experiences. Through this study, I was awakened to the diversity that exists in Black girlhood and amongst all girls. Although the girls in this study were African American—just like me—we had divergent girlhood experiences. What is surprising is that their experiences mirrored readings and discussions I had in my Girls' Studies class. Through this study, I have learned that although as Black girls we are bound together by race and gender, there is also diversity in our stories.

Organization of Research

The next chapter will provide a review of literature addressing scholarship that relates to this research. Chapter III will reveal research methods used to collect data and the method for

analyzing data. Chapters IV and V will discuss the findings of the research study. The final chapter includes discussion, implications, and recommendations for further research.

II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This study aimed to contribute noteworthy scholarship that explores adolescent Black girls' socialization and identity formation in the context of a social club. This section of the dissertation will highlight ongoing scholarly conversations that have provided research to understanding Black girls' socialization and identity formation. First, I discuss the ways that Black communities have socialized their youth while paying specific attention to the socialization of Black girls. Next, I analyze scholarship pertaining to contemporary schooling that explores what happens to Black girls when they are thrust into White academic institutions. Following this section, I explore tenets of Black Feminist Theory and Girls' Studies that can be utilized for understanding the process of socialization of Black girls and women in the United States. Finally, I investigate how scholars have methodologically engaged research concerning Black girls' identity formation and explore the consequences of such choices.

Black Community as Socialization Agent

Common socialization agents consist of one's community, family, and school. In terms of Black life, Black communities and families worked together to foster a sense of hope and pride amongst each other. Throughout history, Black people came together to help each other face life in a White world where Blacks were subject to abject conditions. Therefore, Blacks had to learn to live in two worlds where they were nurtured at home and subjugated outside of their communities.

In the early 20th century, Blacks were considered second-class citizens in the US. During the Black nadir which spanned from the late 1800s to the early 1900s Blacks experienced heightened racial violence and Jim Crow laws which resulted in them being restricted from liberties such as voting, equal access to housing, and educational opportunities (Higginbotham, 1993). Higginbotham (1993) contended that during this time period, Black Baptist churches played a major role in equipping Blacks with opportunities to reach from within to elevate their local communities. Through efforts including publishing books, printing local newspapers, and building schools for their children Black people took care of their own. Additionally, for Black women, the Baptist church served as a platform for political activity and resistance against racism and sexism (Higginbotham, 1993). For instance, Higginbotham asserted that in the Black Baptist church, women developed church societies to care for fellow church members through raising money to support church programs, caring for the ill, and providing training for mothers. These aforementioned practices that Black women developed in church groups continued as they developed social secular organizations (Higginbotham, 1993).

Similar to church societies, Black women's clubs formed with religion and spirituality as a driving force behind their mission. In addition to encompassing an aspect of religion, Black social club women were dedicated to uplifting Black communities on a larger level. The National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) established in 1930 by Mary McLeod Bethune formed with a strong commitment to fight for Black women's rights and implement various initiatives to improve Black communities (Anderson, 2001). In 1949, under the leadership of Dorothy Boulding Ferebee, the second president of the organization, NCNW supported political involvement amongst Blacks by holding voter registration drives and lobbying for Blacks to hold government positions (Anderson, 2001). In addition to an unwavering obligation to improve

societal conditions for Blacks, many Black club women took an interest in enhancing youth's lives.

Historically Black communities have created strategies to prepare Black youth to function in a White world. Through formal and informal networks, Black elders trained Black youth to hold dual presence in dominant White society and their native Black community. Black historian and sociologist W. E. B. DuBois (2003) coined the term "double-consciousness" to explain the twofold awareness that Blacks must possess through knowing their inner selves and how they are viewed by others belonging to dominant groups in society. As a result of this need to prepare Black youth to develop a dual understanding of the world, there has always been this sense within the Black community of how do we socialize our children to be strong, confident, and not have their spirits broken. As a result of this belief in double-consciousness, Black parents collaborated to create ways to train their children for adulthood. For instance, Jack and Jill of America, Incorporated, a nationally-recognized organization created in 1938 by Black middle-class mothers, assembled to share effective ways to prepare their children to live in a segregated society (Barnes, 1979). Under the leadership of Marion Stubbs Thomas, a group of Black middle-class mothers in Philadelphia joined together for the purpose of developing ways to instill a sense of pride and self-empowerment amongst their children while the world sent contrary messages through the legalization of segregation.

Coexisting with the aforementioned ideology, groups targeting young Black women and girls have grown to socialize girls in various facets of their identity development. Black women members of social clubs exhibited their aspiration to empower youth and prepare them for adulthood through the development of local and national programming and initiatives. In terms of socializing Black girls, many national clubs and sororities created programs to teach young

Black girls about Black womanhood. The NACWC formed federated local clubs that sponsored groups for Black girls of all ages to provide social, intellectual, and ethical support.

Community Mothers, an NACWC affiliate comprised of Black women located in a small southern college town, was created in 1946 to provide service to their community. Through this mission, *Community Mothers* structured a commitment to adolescent Black girls through developing *LADY* in 1956. Embracing the motto, “lifting as we climb,” which was also the mantra of the Black women’s club movement, *Community Mothers* launched *LADY* to instill the ideals of finer womanhood, the importance of academic achievement, spiritual fitness, racial pride, and self-empowerment amongst adolescent Black girls. An emphasis was placed on the socialization of Black girls because mothers were thought to be the moral nucleus of Black families and girls the potential nuclei. They were charged with the duty of uplifting Black communities out of poverty (Brady, 1987; Giddings, 1984).

National Black sororities developed at the opening of the 20th century as a support system for Black collegial women. These sororities also used their intellect to collectively work to improve Black communities and focused on providing training for Black women and girls. Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, founded in 1908, and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, founded in 1913, are Black sororities created to provide service to communities and placed a high level of concern on academic enrichment amongst Black women and girls. Through programming, these organizations demonstrated their commitment to Black girls’ intellectual development. For example, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. recognizes *Emerging Young Leaders Initiative* as a signature program. The goal of this venture is to help girls foster leadership skills through civic engagement, self-improvement, and educational training (www.aka1908.com).

Similar to Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. hosts many initiatives targeting Black girls. Delta Academy, an initiative for girls aged 11-14 formed to prevent girls from developing broken futures (www.deltasigmatheta.org). The program encapsulates multifaceted goals including training participants for leadership roles and enhancing their academic abilities. Black communities consisted of Black families that prepared Black girls for life as Black women. In Black families, mothers served as their daughters' principal socialization agent.

Black Mothers and Daughters

Mothers have always been a primary individual who transmitted cultural codes to children. In many families, during children's formative years, mothers have served as a principal socialization intermediary. According to Reid (1982),

For most children, the mother is the primary agent of socialization during the first few years of growth. The mother's responsibilities include not only the child's feeding, cleaning, and toileting, but also the shaping and directing of sex-related activities and interests. The mother interprets societal values and expectations for the child. (p. 140)

The mother's large role in a child's socialization process is linked to the ideology of "the cult of true womanhood" (Collins, 1991, p.43) which consists of women who participated in full-time work in the home including taking sole responsibility of household chores and child-rearing. Also this belief required women to be financially dependent on men. However, in Black families mothers aimed to prepare their daughters to be successful while living in a culture ridden with sexism and racism (Collins, 1991). Due to their lived experiences Black mothers' instruction and modeling served as prime socialization methods for their daughters (Townsend, 2008).

"The cult of true womanhood" is typically associated with White motherhood (Collins, 1991; Reid, 1982). Although "the cult of true womanhood" has been available for Black women to espouse, Collins (1991) claims that "racial oppression has denied Black families sufficient

resources to support private, nuclear family households” (p. 43). In the past, Black women have had mothering expectations incongruous to “the cult of true womanhood” in part because they were forced to adopt contradictory roles. For example, traditionally, Black mothers shared economic duties or were sole financial providers for their household. Additionally, many Black mothers worked outside the home.

Because of Black women’s unique position in society and their motherly role not congealing with mainstream perspectives regarding femininity and motherhood, Black women have been charged with the responsibility of socializing young girls to live in a society wrought with sexism and racism. Due to this grim reality, Black mothers have had the obligation of conveying societal racial and sexual inequities to their daughters to train them for life as a Black woman. Moreover, mothers have had to prepare their daughters with a sense of how to respond to these harsh realities. Consequently, Black mothers have socialized their daughters in various facets of their identity including sex-roles and educational aspirations.

According to Reid (1982), sex-roles relate to values accepted by society that correlate to dominant masculine and feminine scripts. Sex-role socialization is important to one’s identity, especially amongst Black girls since they have had to learn to function in a society that devalues their blackness and femininity. Scholars suggest that Black women’s sex-roles differ from mainstream behaviors, which were traditionally linked to White womanhood. Reid suggested, “One basic difference is that the black female role is one of strength and resourcefulness as contrasted with the traditional white female role of passivity and dependence” (p.149). Collins (1991) illuminated Reid’s (1982) argument when sharing experiences of speaking to her Black female students about messages they received from their mothers. Overall students expressed that their mothers encouraged them to be self-sufficient and resourceful.

In addition to verbal communication with mothers, Black girls learn acceptable sex-roles through being reprimanded and praised for their behaviors (Collins, 1991). In *The Diary of Latoya Hunter: My First Year in Junior High*, Latoya shared her experiences of sneaking on the phone to talk to a boy although this would displease her mother. Hunter (1992) wrote, “My mother will have a fit if she knows there’s a boy calling me. I know she will soon, but I do not know how pissed off she’ll be. I do not want to find out” (pp. 58-59). Bell hooks, critical cultural theorist, also highlighted the tensions she experienced with her mother in *Bone Black* by expressing her mother’s desire to have her conform to conventional ideas of Black womanhood as it pertains to marriage. Hooks (1996) wrote,

They said she was too thin, lacking the hips, breasts, thighs that men were interested in. But more importantly she was too smart, men did not like smart women, men did not like a woman whose head was always in a book. And even more importantly men did not like a woman who talked back. She had been hit, whipped, punished again and again for talking back. They had said they were determined to break her—to silence her, to turn her into one of them. (pp. 98-99)

Both Hunter and hooks illustrated real-life examples of verbal and non-verbal messages they received from their mothers in an effort to socialize them for life as a Black woman. In addition to socialization of sex-roles, Black mothers play a part in fostering their daughters’ educational goals.

Often Black mothers have stressed the importance of their daughters developing academic aspirations that lead to a successful career. Scholarship suggests that mothers hold a significant role in supporting, shaping, managing, and providing opportunities for Black girls to discover and prepare for their academic goals (Battle & Coates, 2004; Kerpelman, Shoffner, & Ross-Griffin, 2002; Mirza, 1992). Kerpelman et al. (2002) studied Black mothers’ and daughters’ beliefs about daughters’ possible selves reaching their future goals and found that “[s]everal mothers expressed concern that their daughters pursue their educations and careers in

order to establish self-sufficiency prior to entering into marriage” (p. 294). In addition to encouragement, mothers positively influence Black girls’ educational aspirations through offering financial support and helping them search for resources such as college scholarships (Battle & Coates, 2004; Mirza, 1992).

Black mothers have also taught their daughters how to survive through socializing them to strive for academic excellence and take on an array of responsibilities in their home and community (Collins, 1991). Collins noted,

Black daughters are raised to expect work, to strive for an education so that they can support themselves, and to anticipate carrying heavy responsibilities in their families and communities because these skills are essential for their own survival as well as for the survival of those for whom they will eventually be responsible. (p. 53)

Therefore, Black girls’ academic success has been linked to upward mobility not only for themselves but for their family and community. Unlike academic socialization, Black girls’ sexual behaviors have not been a target area of identity development between mothers and daughters. However, research suggests that this relationship has the ability to promote healthy sexual behaviors.

Through using intersectionality and Patricia Hill Collins’ Black Feminist Thought, Townsend (2008) discussed ways that Black mothers and daughters have a unique relationship that has the potential to influence Black girls’ sexual behaviors since mothers’ lived experiences play a strong role in the way in which they train their daughters to protect themselves sexually and live in society. Black mothers raise their daughters according to their lived experiences and have tried to shield their daughters from harmful life events, which she called armoring. In addition to mothers’ lived experiences, Townsend found that daughters emulate their mother’s behavior, which the author refers to as modeling. In addition to education and sex-roles, Townsend argued that the mother-daughter sexual behavior socialization has the potential to

guard adolescent Black girls from sexually transmitted diseases and infections, specifically human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). In conjunction with Black mothers' profound impact on daughters and their need for influence in other areas of Black girls' socialization, older Black women consisting of family members, mother's peers, and community members, serve as "othermothers" to influence Black girls' identity development (Collins, 1991; Greene, 1990; Troester, 1991).

In addition to biological mothers, othermothers participate in socializing Black girls for adulthood. Children's relationship with othermothers may be stronger or weaker than ties with their birth mothers (Greene, 1990). These Black women support systems typically come together to create extended families to care for each other's children. In addition to child care, othermothers cared for local youth and spearheaded social activism in Black communities where women took responsibility for uplifting their community. The socialization of Black girls also served as a way to prepare them to function in White institution such as schools.

Black Girls and School

Literature has explored Black girls' experiences at home, in Black communities, and in schools. Research suggested that Black families, specifically mothers, and communities worked collectively to prepare Black girls for adulthood (Collins, 1991; Greene, 1990; Troester, 1991). Different from community and family, schools have served as institutions that did not focus on Black girls' self-worth but instead constructed them as the other in a predominantly White world.

Due to the tension between Black girls' subject position in society and the processes by which they are socialized with the ideals of dominant culture, scholars have engaged in research to study Black girls' experiences in school. To date, empirical inquiry that explores Black girls' embodied realities in school settings revealed various aspects of Black girls' experiences. One

dominant facet highlighted in scholarship exploring this topic suggests that Black girls are viewed as passive (Henry, 1998) and subject to varying dimensions of invisibility in schools.

Archer et al. (2007) studied Black girls' embodied realities and discovered that Black girls experience disengagement in school that often goes unrecognized, rendering their needs invisible. Some examples of how disengagement manifested itself amongst participants included excessive absence from school and privately listening to music during class instruction. Archer et al. noted that attention has been focused on the disengagement of Black boys in school while girls who suffered from this same problem have been ignored. The authors asserted that Black girls' subject position in society as young Black females limited their opportunities to promote identity value and worth in order to resist symbolic violence they experienced. To strengthen this claim, Brown (2011) echoed Archer et al.'s (2007) findings by engaging in ethnographic research to explore a Black girl's experiences in a majority male classroom.

The author found that the teacher, a Black female, often relinquished power to Black boys. Through one-on-one interviews with Brown (2011), the Black girl in class expressed that male classmates were favored and given more liberties. Throughout the study, Brown used references from Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, specifically interactions and conversations between Ruth and Walter, husband and wife, to discuss the racial and gender oppression within racialized communities. In this study, Brown interrogated a Black girl's experience in the midst of a Black boy crisis.

Scholars have also found that often Black girls experience invisibility in school in other forms including being nice or compliant and helping other students (Grant, 1984) or adopting suitable female behaviors in classrooms (Fordham, 1993; Henry, 1998). For example, Grant (1984) conducted research investigating Black girls' "place" in a desegregated classroom and

learned that Black female students assumed the role of “go-betweens” to help classmates and teachers. Grant wrote, “Their relative freedom from teacher monitoring, in comparison to black males, gave them both opportunity and motivation for playing the go-between role” (p.106). Although Black girls displayed favorable social skills, teacher-participants asserted perfunctory statements about Black girls’ academic achievement and rated them as average or below average. Furthermore, teachers expressed that they focused on evaluating Black girls based on their social skills because their parents influenced them to assume adult roles, which fostered their underachievement. In part, this type of superficial reasoning that the teacher-participant articulated supports an ideology of engrained underachievement amongst Black youth (Mirza, 1992).

Heidi Safia Mirza, a Black female sociologist, argued that there is a myth of underachievement when it comes to Black students. Mirza (1992) surveyed literature that explored race and education achievement in the United Kingdom and the United States and suggested publications such as the 1965 *Moynihan Report*, the 1966 *Coleman Report*, and the 1967 *Plowden Report* participated in shifting thinking about educational expectations and ultimately supported the myth of underachievement in Black communities. On the other hand, Mirza noticed that limited inquiry explored race, gender, and educational achievement. She noted that a constant theme that was discussed regarding Black females and education was the role of the matriarch in Black families. Mirza wrote, “When studies that actually considered the issue of black females in schools began to emerge they were characterized by a distinct underlying ideological premise. This premise was the central role of the black mother” (p. 15). Research suggested that Black mothers offered an overwhelming strength that was the foundation of the Black family (United States Department of Labor, 1965). From the focus on

Black motherhood, Mirza learned that there was a dearth of research that exclusively investigated Black girls' academic achievement. Through the presence of research that focused on race and education but not gender, this is another example of how Black female youth have been invisible in education. Another element of invisibility is discussed in "passing" which causes symbolic violence to girls. Both Fordham (1993) and Horvat and Antonio (1999) contributed qualitative inquiry to explore the ways that Black girls negotiate their identity through adopting "passing" as a way to survive in school. Fordham (1993) studied gender passing, which are preferred female characteristics commonly associated with White femaleness. The author asserted that schools are a space that do not recognize Black female cultural contributions to femaleness so Black girls were encouraged by teachers, parents, and peers to adopt gender passing to "make it."

Similar to gender passing, Horvat and Antonio (1999) investigated another facet of invisibility through exploring Black girls' reactions to school habitus at an elite school with a small population of Black girls. Participants believed that they needed to blend in with White elite students to move toward success. The authors adopted Bourdieu's concept of habitus which explains how we understand, evaluate, and act in various settings based on our subject position in society (Bourdieu, 1977, 1987; Horvat & Antonio, 1999). Horvat and Antonio conveyed habitus at the school they studied in the following excerpt:

Despite the fact that 30 percent of the students at the school come from a nonwhite background (15 percent Asian, 10 percent African American, 3 percent Latino, and 2 percent other or mixed), the dominant organizational habitus of the school can best be described as white, wealthy, and marked by a sense of "oblivious entitlement." (p. 326)

As a result of the school habitus, Horvat and Antonio proposed that participants took on chameleon transformations by changing their attitudes and behaviors depending upon who was in their presence, to gain social mobility and real-world experiences. The authors noted that

participants became socially invisible and were subject to racial insensitivity from peers and faculty. In addition to highlighting a different element of passing that was discussed in Fordham's (1993) work, Horvat and Antonio emphasized that conforming behaviors are damaging to Black girls because it causes them to suffer from symbolic violence.

Other forms of symbolic violence Black girls experience from peers are what Fordham and Ogbu (1986) called "camouflaging" that Horvat and Lewis (2003) suggested is a negative aspect of managing academic success. Fordham and Ogbu discussed this concept as a restraining or hiding their high academic achievement among some Black peers because it supports the burden of acting White. In addition to habitus causing Black female youth the symbolic violence from camouflaging, parents agreed that these practices were violent, but felt that their children needed to be exposed to these real-world experiences as Black females in America. Wortham's (2004) research expanded this idea by suggesting that Black girls in school have limited identity options and are often left to select two polar identities that either render them well-behaved and invisible or disobedient and hypervisible.

Wortham (2004) and Henry (1998) illuminated the pendulum of invisibility and hypervisibility in scholarship when exploring Black girls' identity in school. Through ethnographic inquiry, Wortham (2004) and Henry (1998) explored and documented the transformation of Black girls from "good student" to "social outcast" (Wortham, 2004) and silent to "womanish" (Henry, 1998). Wortham's (2004) documented the transformation of one Black girl by not meeting her teacher's academic and social expectations. Initially, because the student was female, which contributed to her position in the classroom, she was instantly believed to be a good student by her teacher. Also, in the beginning of the year, the participant, Tyisha, was viewed as smart and participatory in class. However, by the end of the year, although her

behavior did not change, teachers expressed that Tyisha did not meet their academic expectations so she was deemed a social outcast. Lim's (2008) work also illustrated how Black girls are or become invisible if they do not subscribe to teacher expectations. The author discovered that two Black girls of different social identities and math class tracks were not motivated to excel in math and deemed as having limited mathematic potential because they did not practice socially acceptable behaviors according to their teacher's expectations.

Henry (1998), on the other hand, found visibility within the invisible. In class, girls were quiet and passive, yet, boisterous and assertive outside of the classroom. The author chronicled that participants discussed topics that ranged from sexual harassment from boys to treatment in classes (Henry, 1998). Therefore, Henry suggested that outside the classroom participants were "womanish" because they talked actively about events in their lives and displayed resistance. Wortham's (2004) work countered previous scholarship that discussed invisibility among Black girls through illustrating a girl being visible in a positive and negative sense. Conversely, Henry's study highlighted ways that girls negotiated their identity in the classroom but outside the class banded together to develop resistance to their teachers' expectations and oppressive practices.

Throughout scholarship that explores how Black girls are dealt with in school there is an overwhelming sense of invisibility and visibility in negative aspects which differs from messages that Black girls received in Black communities. However, there is burgeoning literature that has revealed how Black girls' visibility is a positive aspect for them and allows them another way to exhibit resistance and foster collective empowerment amongst each other (Henry, 1998). Although there is a limited amount of scholarship exploring this dimension of Black girlhood,

BFT and Girls' Studies serve as theoretical perspectives that support research exploring Black girls' experiences in society.

Black Feminist Theory

Black Feminist Theory (BFT) also known as Black Feminist Criticism grew out of the exclusion of Black women's experiences that were not present in earlier feminist movements and the Black liberation movement (Weathers, 1995). BFT has been adopted by many Black women as a worldview to explore the intersection of their race, gender, and class. Moreover, BFT has theoretically supported research that explored Black women and girls' lived experiences.

BFT includes a large body of literature exploring the intersections of what it means to be both Black and female. According to Shani Jamilia (2004), hip-hop feminist,

At root, Black feminism is a struggle against the pervasive oppression that defines Western culture. Whether taking aim at gender equity, homophobia or images of women it functions to resist disempowering ideologies and devaluing institutions. It merges theory and action to affirm Black women's legitimacy as producers of intellectual work and reject assertions that attack our ability to contribute to these traditions. (p.557)

BFT serves as a body of scholarship that validates the existence of interconnected oppressions that Black women experience. BFT is a liberating and reflexive theory that uses Black women's narratives to illuminate the intersections and to foster collective empowerment amongst women to eradicate marginalization. BFT emerged through Black women expressing their lived experiences, which many BFT scholars argue were not present in conventional interpretations of feminism. Hooks (2000) made this point by arguing that White privileged feminist movements have not provided representation from diverse backgrounds and focused solely on gender. Therefore, this absence demonstrates an ignorance of the intersection of sex, race, and class oppression or a disinclination to take this matter as a true concern. Black feminists tend to agree that the mainstream feminist movements have focused on fighting against sexual oppression and

neglected to explore the material conditions of Black women (Collins, 2000a; The Combahee River Collective, 1995; hooks, 2000; Lorde, 1984).

A premier goal of BFT is to empower Black women to combat the social injustices they experience as a result of living at interlocking multiple oppressions (Collins, 2000a, 2000b; The Combahee River Collective, 1995; hooks, 2000; Morgan, 1999). Collins (2000a) noted that BFT is a theory that is also practical. BFT empowers women by adopting the epistemological approach based on the empirical realities of Black women as embodied subjects to acknowledge them as creators of knowledge.

Lived Experiences

BFT is an interpretive theory that holds the lived experiences of Black women at the center of its analysis. Interpretive theoretical approaches focus on the individual and calls for meaning to come from individuals (DeMarrais & LeCompte, 1990). Meaning is vital in interpretive theories because knowledge derives from one's life experiences. Black women's narratives demonstrate epistemology based on their lived experiences that are used to inform acts of agency.

Collins (2000a) wrote, "Living as a Black woman requires wisdom because knowledge about the dynamics of intersecting oppressions has been essential to U.S. Black women's survival. African-American women give such wisdom high credence in assessing knowledge" (p. 257). BFT's epistemological approach of capturing lived experiences works toward reflecting the diversity that exists amongst Black women. In addition to BFT holding the significance of one's lived experiences as a core tenet, simultaneously, this theory encompasses an element that illuminates Black women's shared experiences which brings strength to collective empowerment for Black women.

Standpoint

Standpoint theory suggests that group subjugation in hierarchical power relationships produces shared barriers for people in those groups. Additionally, mutual experiences have the ability to create common knowledge that forms group understanding or standpoint, which serves as an impetus for political movement (Collins, 2000a, 2000b). In other words, standpoint theory illuminates Black women's experiences.

In terms of BFT, standpoint theory reveals a collective consciousness amongst individuals whose lives operate at the interstices of interlocking oppressions. BFT's standpoint theory does not suggest that there is a monolithic viewpoint amongst Black women but rather various collective standpoints that represent the contours within Black Feminist Thought. Collins (2000a) wrote, "At the same time while common experiences may predispose Black women to develop a distinctive group consciousness, they guarantee neither that such a consciousness will develop among all women nor that it will be articulated as such by the group" (p. 25). This BFT concept also does not aim to eclipse diversity that exists amongst Black women. Conversely, standpoint theory complements multiplicity that exists amongst Black women.

Having this collective standpoint creates a place for Black women to develop a cooperative unit to combat injustices that continue to oppress them in society. Moreover, Black women create specific knowledge through collective standpoint that only Black women experience since they live it (Collins, 2000a, 2000). Standpoint perspective aims to develop collective empowerment among Black women to lay the foundation for liberating work that combats the multiple oppressions (King, 1988). Black women's intersecting oppressions draw them together through a common thread so they can band together to challenge oppressive

practices and move toward empowerment which fosters ownership and accountability in their lives.

Double Jeopardy to Multiple Jeopardy

Black feminist scholars adopted the term “double jeopardy” as a metaphor to convey Black women’s position in society. Double jeopardy espouses that, in addition to their race, Black women are subjugated because of their gender. Overtime, double jeopardy became a simplistic understanding of Black women’s location and scholars afterward implemented the term “multiple jeopardy.” Multiple jeopardy suggested that women are not solely marginalized because of their race and gender; there are other identity factors that constitute their oppression.

Frances Beal (2008), civil rights activist and author of the well-known essay on “Double Jeopardy,” illuminated Black women’s experiences with racism and sexism. Beal highlighted ways that women of color, specifically Black women, experience economic exploitation. She expressed that, similar to Black women, White women experience oppression in a capitalistic system; however, the White women’s movement differed from Black women’s because it built momentum from the middle-class. Beal contended that while White middle-class women earned wages outside of the home, Black women were called in as domestics to take on their home duties at a low wage with no possibility for promotion. Another way double jeopardy differs from White feminist movements is because White women’s feminist movements typically encapsulate a central tenet of being against men (Beal, 2008). Beal posited that Black women do not have an anti-male tone to their struggle against oppression since they aimed to combat racial discrimination and capitalism for all Black people.

Deborah King (1988) contended that although Black women experience racism and sexism, Beal’s (2008) ideology of double jeopardy is limiting because it fails to incorporate other

forms of discrimination that Black women encounter. Later, Black feminist scholars noted that sexual orientation and class were not acknowledged in double jeopardy and suggested the term “triple jeopardy”. King (1988) wrote,

Still others have suggested that heterosexism or homophobia represents another significant oppression and should be included as a third or perhaps fourth jeopardy. The triple jeopardy of racism, sexism, and classism is now widely accepted and used as the conceptualization of black women’s status. (p.46)

King critiqued the concept of triple jeopardy and contended that it offers an additive approach to multiple systems of oppression. She suggested that multiple forms of discrimination including classism, sexism, racism, and ableism are interlocking and operate interdependently. King coined the term “multiple jeopardy” as an enhanced representation of Black women’s position in society.

Intersectionality

Black women’s identity incorporates various factors that intersect. In addition to Black women possessing multiple elements of their identities, these aspects intersect to and have no clear line of division. Therefore, intersectionality aims to describe the ways Black women have various identity facets that work together to create their overall selves.

BFT includes more than just race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989; King, 1988; Pough, 2004). Kimberlè Crenshaw (1989), feminist and legal scholar, wrote,

I argue that Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender. These problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including Black women within an already established analytical structure. Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, and analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated. (p.140)

Intersectionality takes into account factors of Black women's identity including race, gender, class, and sexuality and acknowledges that these systems intersect and shape individuals' lived experiences (Collins, 2000a; King 1988; Lorde, 1984). Oftentimes because of Black women's unique positioning amongst interlocking oppressions, their concerns are not deemed credible or even heard. Paulette Caldwell (1991), an anti-discrimination lawyer, argued that legal reasoning does not acknowledge the intersection of race and gender on the grounds of discrimination because there are no legal theories that encompass intersectionality. Through this absence of recognition of intersectionality, Black women have been discriminated against because of both their race and gender. In terms of legal policy, Caldwell highlighted cases involving Black women plaintiffs who were discriminated against because of the disbelief in intersectionality in legal reasoning.

In *Rogers v. American Airlines* the plaintiff argued that American Airlines' policy prohibiting braided hairstyles discriminated against her as a Black woman. Rogers argued that she was being discriminated against since braids are a hairstyle that is often worn by Black women. Conversely, the court chose to ignore tenets of intersectionality and hold gender and race as two independent elements. From examples similar to this case, Caldwell concluded that Black women have had to either side with Black men or White women and could not exist as their own subgroup. Due to the absence of intersectionality in present legal theories, oppressed groups such as Black women continue to be victims of discrimination. Through adopting intersectionality, legal theorists have the ability to develop theories that draw on the lived experiences of Black women. Intersectionality has a real impact on the consequences of Black women's lives.

Girls' Studies

Girls' Studies, which operates at the intersection of youth studies, cultural studies, and Women's Studies provides a unique perspective to scholars interested in examining how girls negotiate the formal and informal spaces of schooling to produce subjectivities that both reproduce and challenge pervasive notions of normative femininity.

According to Girls' Studies scholar Anita Harris (2004a), "The field was borne out of the commonplace disregard for issues of gender without youth studies and age without women's studies" (p. xviii). Girls' Studies scholars come from interdisciplinary fields and have a shared purpose of exploring girls' experiences in different contexts to illuminate various dimensions of girlhood. Although there are a range of growing trends in Girls' Studies, many scholars who publish in this field discuss the experiences of girls in Western societies including the United Kingdom, United States, and Canada (Harris, 2004a; Jiwani, 2006; Kearney, 2009). Girls' Studies is bound together as a field and ideology through core tenets that undergird this field's conceptual framework. Girls' Studies focuses on feminist poststructuralism (FP), resistance, and girls' relationship to popular culture media.

Feminist Postructuralism

FP scholar, Chris Weedon (2006), defined FP as a theoretical perspective that operates under poststructuralism, specifically the elements of language, subjectivity, discourse, and institutions, to comprehend identity power relationships and to recognize areas and methods for transformation. FP is a theoretical concept that allows researchers to question dominant beliefs about womanhood and femininity (Atkinson, 2008). FP's central elements are concerned "with disrupting and displacing dominant (oppressive) knowledges" (Gavey, 1989, p. 463).

Typically, Girls' Studies scholarship adopts the FP's element of discourse to study girls' lives. Discourse pertains to beliefs in a specific discipline that are known as fact but adjust over time. Discourse formulates our worldview, creates knowledge and what is thought to be true about a subject. Girls' Studies scholars rely on the FP underpinning of discourse to analyze and critique mainstream discourses that have shaped girls' identities. Scholars in this field aim to deconstruct stereotypes and explore the multiplicity amongst representations of girls. For the most part, Girls' Studies scholars critique dominant discourses that aim to describe girls' identities and use this as a platform to explore girls' experiences to unveil diversity amongst girls.

Competing Discourses in Discussions About Girls

Competing discourses have framed discussions about girls in the late 20th and early 21st century including girls in crisis, Girl Power, and Reviving Ophelia. For many years, these competing discourses have complimented shifts in Girls' Studies scholarship. Reviving Ophelia is a part of a discourse that was derived from Mary Pipher's New York Times best-selling book, *Reviving Ophelia*, about her experiences as a psychologist working with adolescent girls.

Pipher (1994) espoused Ophelia from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as the representation of what she asserted is a crisis that adolescent girls experience. In the play, Ophelia commits suicide due to being unable to meet the needs of her father and Hamlet, her love interest. According to Pipher,

Wholeness is shattered by the chaos of adolescence. Girls become fragmented, their selves split into mysterious contradictions. They are sensitive and tenderhearted, mean and competitive, superficial and idealistic. They are confident in the morning and overwhelmed with anxiety by nightfall. They rush through their days with wild energy and then collapse with lethargy. They try on new roles every week—this week the good student, next week the delinquent and the next, the artist. And they expect their families to keep up with these changes. (p. 20)

Voicelessness, vulnerability, and lack of self-confidence are behaviors that coincided with this discourse. Ward and Benjamin (2004) asserted that this discourse supported the cottage industry of popular press books and other forms of media that depict girls as in trouble and at risk. Due to its popularity, which reflected mainstream belief in this discourse, Pipher's concept of Reviving Ophelia became a dominant discourse in Girls' Studies which emerged in the 1990s. Around the same time, Girl Power, which is considered a competing discourse surfaced (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2005).

Girl Power

Girl Power is a competing discourse to the aforementioned Reviving Ophelia. Aapola et al. (2005) noted that the Girl Power movement began with the Riot Grrrl Movement in Washington DC. The Riot Grrrls were mostly young, White, and middle-class women, who identified as queer. The Riot Grrrls were also known as "young feminist punks" (Aapola et al. 2005, p. 20) who held national conventions with workshops promoting Do-It-Yourself (DIY) culture as their political agenda. Riot Grrrls became known to many women throughout Australia, Europe, and the UK. From the Riot Grrrl Movement, Girl Power emerged as a discourse in Girls' Studies that was connected to agency, confidence, and motivation that countered the Reviving Ophelia discourse.

Ultimately, Girl Power became a movement that was started by others for girls to subscribe to. Girl Power aims to portray young women as energetic, determined, and independent. Due to this branding, Girl Power became commercialized as a slogan for girlhood. As a result of its commodification, Girl Power identified less with the Riot Grrrls and their feminist foremothers. Conversely, Girl Power transformed into an anti-feminist motto through its focus on individualism and commercialization (Taft, 2004). The Spice Girls, a British-based, all-

girl pop group who peaked in 1997 popularized Girl Power through their music and exhibited the “hyper-sexualized and highly stylized marketing” of Girl Power (Gonick, 2006). As a result, Girl Power was packaged through popular culture and accessible to all girls.

Postfeminism

Postfeminism refers to the idea that through earlier feminist movements women have made great accomplishments, so today there is no need to fight for gender equality. Some Girls’ Studies scholars suggest that girls in their research do not identify as feminists and consider it a movement of the past (McRobbie, 2004). Lipkin (2009) asserted that

Many girls now enjoy the result of what might seem like long-ago battles: the right to ownership of one’s body through birth control or abortion, having equal numbers of sports teams available to girls as there are for boys through the legislation Title IX, or admission to any college or graduate school of their choice, when at one time, many were closed to female students. (p. 39)

Similar to Lipkin, McRobbie (2004) suggested that, at times, Girls’ Studies does not acknowledge the gains of feminism and works to “undo feminism” (p. 7). Instead of collective female activism, neoliberalism has emphasized individualism and choice.

Girls do not acknowledge their feminist foremothers for the gains: their success in the classroom, in sports, or in the workplace. Today, girls operate under the ideology that success lies on their shoulders and occurs solely because of their intrinsic motivation. Girls’ Studies scholars note that this ideology is damaging because postfeminism invokes the idea that equality has been achieved and erases the gains of feminist movement (McRobbie, 2004; Taft, 2004). The contemporary girl movement has a focus on neoliberalism which supports a belief in meritocracy which encapsulates the idea that no matter who you are, if you work hard and do well, you will be rewarded in life (McRobbie, 2004; Mirza, 1992; Taft, 2004). Gonick (2006) asserted that neoliberal discourse recognizes girls as individual agents who believe their successes and

shortcomings result solely from their actions. This limited view of self-identity construction dismisses girls' subjectivities in a society where gender and race, amongst other intersecting categories of difference, are significant. Though neoliberalism permits girls to view themselves as independent agents, girls are youth-sanctioned by parent/guardian control. Parents/guardians' experiences influence youth's life direction (Townsend, 2008). Therefore, neoliberal discourse fails to take family history and social position into account. Subject position in society influences the opportunities one is afforded.

Resistance and Agency

In Girls' Studies literature, scholars have tended to focus on exploring the ways in which girls exhibit resistance. Resistance relates to girls' ability to challenge the status quo. This concept relates to agency because it is concerned with girls' power to not only resist, but transform, society.

Raby (2006) contended that resistance is not easily identifiable and takes on different forms. "Resistance," Raby (2006) argued,

can include subtle and often covert acts as well as larger more pronounced oppositional actions against structural forces. Among girls, acts of resistance tend to be confined to the day to day interactions with peers and those in positions of authority. (p. xvi)

In her exploratory work, Raby illuminated covert forms of resistance that have micro- and macro-level influence. The author provided an example of covert resistance in which a student obeys her teacher, although she does not like the teacher, in order to advance to the next grade level. Resistance is also connected to agency, which is a form of empowerment. Agency has the power to bring about social change. Girls often utilize forms of media to exhibit agency regarding various topics and concerns. For example, through *The Black Girl Project* by Aiesha Turman, women and girls shared their lived experiences in a film as a way to dispel stereotypes

and empower Black women and girls. In many Girls' Studies scholarship, media and popular culture have a large presence.

Media and Popular Culture

Because of the increasingly digitized social lives of young people, electronic media has emerged as an important contextual site for understanding various aspects of girls' lived experiences. Within the field of Girls' Studies, particular emphasis has been placed on how internet spaces can be contexts for agency, activism, and resistance. Exploring a cross-section of websites, blogs, and ezines that centralize girls' experiences provides an understanding of their use of media as a form of expression.

Harris (2004b) contended that discursive spaces where girls communicate through borders is empowering because they have the opportunity to share information globally to work toward the politics of empowerment. There are various examples of ways in which girls have transcended borders to create mediums of communication including zines, blogs, artwork, and writing to form a collective participation and activism against the multiple oppressions they experience. An example of media's large focus in Girls' Studies is illustrated in a website created by young women and girls called Fed Up Honeys.

The goal of this website is to educate girls of color and others about stereotypes. The creators of this website are girls of color who range in age from 16-22 and were fed up with stereotypes that tried to define their identity. This site is a space where girls collectively respond to controlling images and work to empower each other. Girls or young womyn (term used on the website) of color are encouraged to express their feelings regarding stereotypes in the "rant" section of this webpage. Also, girls are encouraged to submit poetry for publication on the site.

The authors also conducted a study to empower young womyn to dismantle controlling images since they aim to foster heterogeneous identities for young womyn.

Normative Girl Culture and the Exclusion of Girls of Color

A plethora of research has been produced within the last 20 years about the “crisis” of early adolescence for girls and, more recently, the supposed “empowerment” of girls. However, this research has often been criticized for its exclusion of the experiences of girls of color and poor girls (Brown, 2009; Harris, 2004b; Kearney, 2009; Mendes et al., 2009). Girls’ Studies has primarily produced scholarship that portrays experiences in girlhood through a monolithic lens by illuminating the embodied realities of certain types of girls.

A large amount of literature discussed in Girls’ Studies focuses on the lived experiences of White, middle-class, heterosexual girls who are victims of and vulnerable to marketers’ schemes (Mendes et al., 2009). Girls’ Studies scholars and those who produce scholarship under this interdisciplinary field have expressed the need for empirical research that illuminates various experiences amongst girls to chronicle the lived experiences of girls representing diverse backgrounds in various contexts (Leadbeater & Way, 1996; Mendes et al., 2009).

Harris (2004a) suggested that,

The category of “girl” itself has proved to be slippery and problematic. It has been shaped by norms about race, class and ability that have prioritized the white, middle class and non-disabled, and pathologized and/or criminalized the majority outside this category of privilege. (p. xx)

Girls’ Studies scholars have advocated for further ethnographic research to explore diversity amongst girls’ experiences. Although research that reflects normative girl culture has been dominant in Girls’ Studies, there is burgeoning scholarship that ventures into new areas of studying girls’ lives including girls’ racialized identity and experiences (Jiwani, 2006; Lee, 2006) and exploring girls’ experiences of contemporary girlhood (Aapola et al., 2005; Chesney-Lind &

Irwin, 2004; Griffin, 2004; McRobbie, 2004). Due to expanding areas of inquiry in Girls' Studies, this literature review serves as justification as to why studies seeking adolescent Black girls' experiences are important in Girls' Studies.

Qualitative Research on Black Girls

In Girls' Studies, there is a dearth of scholarship reflecting the lived experiences of Black girlhood. Due to limited scholarship in Girls' Studies investigating Black girls' embodied realities, a survey of research from various fields was administered to develop an understanding of literature involving Black girls' experiences. Empirical research studying Black girls' lives has explored their experiences in different contexts including Black mothers' influences on Black girls, Black girls' experiences in school, and in their communities and sex-roles. A majority of literature utilized ethnographic research methods to learn the culture of schools in which Black girls interact in order to gain a rich understanding of their experiences. Through using ethnography as a research design, authors had an interest in gaining in-depth perspectives of Black girls' lives.

Ethnographic Inquiry and Black Girls

Many researchers who have studied Black girls' lives chose ethnographic inquiry to learn about their experiences in a specific context. Coincidentally, Girls' Studies scholars have expressed the need for scholarship that uses ethnographic research methods since it supports learning about girls' lives and populations that have been minimally explored in Girls' Studies including girls of color (Brown, 2009; Henry, 1998; Mendes et al., 2009; Wortham, 2004). A primary method of ethnographic work is continued observation through participation in the culture being researched (Ellis, 2004).

The intent of ethnographic inquiry is to examine a group's culture. Therefore, ethnography is a qualitative approach that permits researchers to explain and interpret shared and learned patterns of values, activities, and language of the population being studied (Creswell, 2007). Scholars who have studied Black girls' lives, although not proclaimed as Girls' Studies scholars, have found ethnography provides a way to learn about Black girls' embodied realities (Fordham, 1993; Grant, 1984). Ethnography also aligns with many of the authors' theoretical frameworks to drive the ways in which they collect data for their research.

Data collection methods that align with ethnography include observations, journaling, focus groups, and interviews. Scholars exploring phenomena relating to Black girls utilize these methods of data collection to learn about participants' culture and environment. For example, Henry (1998) utilized journaling observations, interviews, and focus groups to learn about respondents' experiences. Also, these data collection techniques allow for the collection of information that contributes to rich description of the population and culture involved in a study.

BFT is a theoretical framework that supports ethnographic inquiry. A primary epistemological approach used in BFT allows researchers to learn Black women's lived experiences. The BFT epistemological approach to learning about Black women's lived experiences coincides with common ethnographic research methods expressed in current research with adolescent Black girls (Townsend, 2008). For example, through using BFT, Townsend (2008) discussed relationships between Black mothers and daughters by adopting a theoretical framework that called for the use of data collection methods that would capture the lived experiences of participants. Therefore, ethnographic research suited Townsend's research question and theory. In addition to ethnography, autoethnography and autobiographical tenets

have been adopted by scholars who study Black girls' educational and social experiences (Brown, 2009).

Autoethnography

Autoethnography research allows researchers to use the core tenets of ethnography while combining self into the research project. Autoethnography incorporates perspectives of the researcher's relationship to the culture sharing group. Autoethnography differs from ethnography because the researcher develops cultural connections with participants.

In addition to being a participant observer, with autoethnography, researchers are participating in the creation of the culture that is being studied. Michelle Fine (1994), professor of psychology, expressed a goal of qualitative inquiry for the researcher is "working the hyphen" by revealing characteristics and providing insight into ways they interact in the culture they are exploring. Brown (2009), who grounded her research in hip-feminist pedagogy, illustrated researcher involvement in her book. The author produced an autoethnographic study through critically analyzing her participation in SOLHOT. She participated in all SOLHOT exercises and reflected on her individual experiences as well as her role as an adult in a girls' and women's group. Brown expressed that autoethnography was the research approach of choice because it allowed her to document and critique her experiences along with those of the program participants. For example, Brown examined the appropriateness of Kiara, a SOLHOT participant, performing a sensual choreographed chair dance during a SOLHOT show and spoke with a colleague about whether or not to converse with Kiara about the implications of her performance. In addition to autoethnography, authors have also combined the tenets of case study and ethnography to produce scholarship investigating Black girls' experiences.

Case Study Research

Case study is a type of inquiry that explores a case which represents a bounded system (Yin, 2003). Primary methods for case study research include interviews, observations, and journaling to learn about cases. Cases are units of analysis that are determined by the researcher. Rebecca Carroll (1997) provided a great model of case study research with what seems to include ethnographic inquiry in her book, *Sugar in the Raw: Voices of Young Black Girls in America*. Carroll moved to debunk stereotypes about Black girls by interviewing girls around the country about their lived experiences. The author did not include all stories from girls met with during the study, but the stories revealed in the text illustrated the multiple perspectives of Black girls. Carroll took an interdisciplinary approach in writing this work by making it accessible to individuals from various disciplines. This interdisciplinary approach used in this book is effective because Black girls' stories included in this text cover many topics including racial identity, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, and career aspirations. This book illuminated how autobiographical case study methods are used to illustrate the diversity that exists amongst Black girls.

Literature exploring Black girls' experiences in their families, communities and schools along with exploring theoretical perspectives that have the potential to engage Black girls experiences served as a conceptual framework for this study. All of the aforementioned areas have helped to identify a gap in scholarship concerning the socialization of adolescent Black girls in the context of a social club. In addition, analyzing qualitative research designs and methods provides an understanding of the research design and methods that are best suited for this type of inquiry. In the following section, I will thoroughly discuss the research design and methods I intend to use in this study.

III

METHODOLOGY

This research is intended to contribute scholarship to concepts discussed in the previous chapter which aim to address a limited, but growing field of scholarship in Girls' Studies that explores girls' identity formation across categories of difference, specifically in relation to their race, gender, and class. Kearney (2009) wrote

The third major trend in Girls' Studies development is a movement away from gender-specific research—which tended to naturalize all female youth as white, Western, middle-class, heterosexual, and able-bodied—to studies that pay close attention to girls' intersectional identities and global diversity. This development is primarily the result of the expansion of critical race, postcolonial, and queer theory, as well as the emergence of disability studies, over the past decade. That said, the primary components of identity Girls' Studies scholars have focused on to date are gender and race, with far less attention paid to class, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and, as noted above, age. Moreover, despite the growth of girl-centered research internationally, non-white, non-Western girls remain vastly understudied as result of such research being conducted primarily in Canada, Australia, Great Britain, Northern Europe, and the United States. Hopefully, researchers' increased diversity will bring greater attention to socially marginal girls and their multiple components of identity. (p. 19)

Although further research is needed in a variety of areas to illuminate diversity amongst girlhood, it was the scope of this project to investigate adolescent Black girls' understandings of their gender, race, and class in the context of *LADY*. In order to ascertain Black girls' experiences in a social club, the following overarching research questions guided the methodological procedures adopted in this study:

1. How does participation in *LADY* help prepare participants for womanhood?
2. How do girls negotiate their raced and gendered identities in concert with and/or in opposition to *LADY*?

Learning the ways adolescent Black girls in *LADY* think about themselves through interactions with fellow members, and relationships with club advisors and their mothers provided insight about how participants view their race, gender, and class. In the next section, I will discuss findings from a preliminary research project which provides background about how I arrived at this research topic. Therefore, the subsequent pilot study served as a launching pad for my current research.

Reflections From the Pilot Study

From Spring 2011 to Summer 2011, I conducted an exploratory case study entitled *Exploring Black Girls' Experiences in Social Clubs: A Qualitative Case Study* to explore how membership in *LADY* contributed to girls' educational achievements and preparation for college. During this project, there were 34 club members; however, club advisors, participants, and parents informed me that 20 to 25 girls commonly showed up to meetings and events.

To learn about the context of *LADY*, I observed monthly meetings and three club-sponsored events. I generated a guide (see Appendix A) to identify concepts of club culture that were salient amongst club members to determine club practices that influenced and supported girls' academic performance. While at meetings and events I generated jottings and transformed them into field notes. Additionally, I conducted three one-on-one semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B). Convenience and purposeful sampling were used to identify study participants. I collaborated with the clubs' lead advisor to identify prospective participants. Following interviews, audio was transcribed which initiated the data analysis process.

Once I collected data, I used qualitative data analysis software, QSR NVivo 8, to organize transcripts and field notes and begin coding. I developed categories by creating three levels of codes which first consisted of open coding, where I searched for reoccurring themes

amongst interviews and observations. Second, I administered axial coding where I collapsed analogous codes. Last, I employed selective coding to produce themes which encompassed the essence of participants' responses (Creswell, 2007). Also, I compared observations to interviews and codes to enhance my understanding of girls' responses in relation to the club. Moreover, field notes contributed to my knowledge about the broad context of *LADY*. The results of the study suggested that *LADY* supported girls' educational aspirations through providing opportunities for girls to build and enhance skills girls need to be successful in high school and college. Often, girls expressed that they joined *LADY* to demonstrate their leadership qualities, partake in community service activities, and improve their social skills (e.g., public speaking). For example, during an interview, I asked Lisette Wilson, a 3rd-year club member, whether *LADY* programs and events influenced her in school life. She stated,

They have a been a great effect on me because I'm the type of person when it comes to speaking in front of crowds that's something I'm not very good at so it kinda helped me, like be more open and outspoken to people.

Lisette also added that her club sisters and advisors frequently nominated her for office presentations at club and youth association events.

Participants also expressed that they valued the sisterhood they formed with girls through attending monthly meetings, participating in the annual pageant, and participating in community service events. Although many interview questions directly inquired about school achievement and experiences in *LADY*, members shared that they benefitted from the ways the club enhanced dimensions of their social life, preparation for higher education, and career development.

A strong thread amongst participants was their desire to learn moral and social aspects of Black womanhood. "Finer womanhood" is a term that club members used that encompassed the

club's approach to training girls to become Black women. After soliciting an explanation about "finer womanhood" one participant responded,

When I think finer womanhood, I think you know just becoming a successful African American woman and I mean not just being someone who's out on the street or you know something like that. I just think finer womanhood would be considered as a successful young lady or woman so to speak, I mean you're growing up to become that, so.

LADY aims to promote a sense of "finer womanhood" amongst girls. The *LADY* handbook stated, "The Objective: To instill in all members the ideals of finer womanhood" (p. 11). Though this study, I arrived at the realization that participants sought membership in *LADY* to obtain knowledge about facets of Black girls' social identity development to prepare for Black womanhood. This dissertation research will advance findings from the initial study through the investigation and analysis of how adolescent Black girls in *LADY* read their social identity in terms of their race, gender, and class. Furthermore, the overarching research questions delved into participant's experiences in the club as they transition to womanhood.

Study Setting

LADY is a social club for Black girls in grades 9 through 12. Also, *LADY* is a federated junior girls' club under the NACWC. The NACWC has a component of their mission that focuses on Black girls' development (Hornsby, 2001). Hornsby wrote, "The NACW sought to elevate black women in the interest of racial advancement, tried to instill African American girls the virtues and values of it predominantly middle-class membership" (p. 388). In 1930, the NACW created the National Association of Colored Girls (NACG) to promote the ideals of finer womanhood through fostering intellectual, spiritual, racial, and healthy well-being for teenage Black girls.

Community Mothers was founded in 1946. *LADY* was founded in 1956 under its sponsoring organization, *Community Mothers*, to promote the four-pronged goals of the NACG

which include mind, body, soul, and race. The NACG symbol that accompanies the four-part motto is a four leaf clover. During an interview in the pilot study, one participant explained the four areas of mind, body, soul, and race:

Well mind basically is just having the correct mentality to face anything and face any type of obstacle. Body that's more of I don't want to say keeping yourself you know together, but just making sure that you don't do anything inappropriate and you're always sophisticated and you have class and things like that. Soul, that's just making sure you have a good character and good personality and spirit. And then race is of course remembering your heritage and being an African American of course since most of our groups are African American.

LADY is the only junior federated youth club under *Community Mothers* that targets membership solely for high school-aged Black girls. These goals are accomplished through participants' involvement in monthly meetings, scheduled community events, and working with adult Black women, specifically, *LADY* members and participant's mothers. Over the past year, *LADY*'s membership has grown from 34 to 46 members. Adolescent Black girls' membership in local clubs is part of a long history of how the Black community sought to prepare Black girls for womanhood.

Research Method: Descriptive Case Study

Qualitative research is an interpretive approach to studying a phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Case study is a type of inquiry that explores a bounded system. The purpose of case study inquiry is to investigate and represent a setting with the objective of gaining an understanding of the setting (Yin, 2003). In this study, *LADY* was the case and the participants served as the unit of analysis. Individuals conduct research to understand the social world (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Mason, 1996). Therefore, I chose to engage in qualitative research to interpret and describe how adolescent Black girls learn about Black womanhood in *LADY*. Qualitative research encompasses various data collection methods and does not have a uniform

model or approach. For this project, I selected a case study method to answer the research questions that drive this study.

Case study is a type of inquiry that explores a bounded system. The purpose of case study inquiry is to investigate and represent a setting with the objective of gaining an understanding of a phenomenon (Yin, 2003). Case study methodology is a complex approach that takes many forms. In this descriptive case study, girls, parents, and club advisors were the unit of analysis. I explored how participants interacted in *LADY* to explain their social identity development in terms of their race, gender, and class.

Access to Club

The club was selected through an existing relationship I had with an administrator, Dr. Jennifer Hopkins, who had various ties with the local community. While working with Dr. Hopkins, I sought local groups that assisted teens with preparation for higher education. Jennifer then introduced me to her supervisor, Dr. Amahd Harris, who also had many local ties in Taylor Town and he connected me with Jessica Harris, *LADY*'s assistant advisor. During initial conversations with Mrs. Harris and fellow advisors, I mentioned my interest in learning how African American teen organizations influence members' academic achievements. I expressed interest in attending club functions to become familiar with *LADY* and eventually focus on *LADY* for my dissertation research. Coincidentally, Mrs. Harris also conveyed interest in me working with *LADY* for my research project and requested a copy of the dissertation for their archival records housed at a local historically Black college.

After I received verbal approval from the head advisor to work with the club, I crafted a letter of correspondence to share with club advisors (see Appendix C). I attended a club meeting and introduced myself to the girls, *Community Mothers*, and parents. Then I engaged in informal

conversations and exchanged pleasantries to begin to build relationships with the girls. Following the first club meeting, I invited the advisors to lunch to share the purpose of my research and approval forms from Institutional Review Board. During the review process, I acquired a letter of support (see Appendix D) from *LADY* advisors to submit with my protocol.

Permission to Conduct the Study

Following my proposal defense, I submitted a research protocol to the University's Institutional Review Board for permission to conduct my dissertation research. I received approval from the board (see Appendix E) and reviewed each form with the club advisors prior to data collection.

Participants

Convenience sampling was used to select the club and participants to interview for this study. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) convenience sampling consists of a group of individuals who are chosen because they are available and accessible. Convenience sampling was implemented in this study because *LADY* is a group that was referred to me by an institutional administrator.

I invited all members to participate in one-on-one, semi-structured interviews (see Appendices F and G) and I set out to gain knowledge of the experiences of girls from diverse grade levels, living arrangements, schools, and years in *LADY*. Nine girls participated in a one-time one-on-one semi-structured interview. In addition to participants, I interviewed the three club advisors (see Appendix H) and six mothers (see Appendix I) in one-on-one semi-structured interviews. In order to learn more about participants' contexts, adults who interacted with participants in *LADY* were interviewed. Fordham (1993) mentioned that she observed and interviewed key informants which included parents/guardians, teachers, and other school

officials. In that same tradition, I observed adults who interacted with the club to learn about *LADY*'s culture and participants' experiences. I had a telephone conversation with the previous long-standing supervisor who held this role with the club for 20 years. She directed me to the founding member of *LADY* who resides 3 hours away. The founder and I conducted a one-on-one informal phone interview (see Appendix J).

Data Collection Methods

From January 2012 to June 2012, I regularly observed *LADY* monthly meetings and events. I conducted 18 one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with 9 club participants (see Appendices F and G), 6 girls' mothers (see Appendix I), and the 3 club advisors (see Appendix H). I also administered three informal interviews: one telephone conversation with Mrs. Jean May Habster, *LADY*'s founder; one face-to-face conversation with Mrs. Nora James, a previous assistant advisor and current *Community Mother's* member; and two discussions, one face-to-face and one in person, with Mrs. Eva Thorn, *Community Mother's* eldest member and *LADY*'s longest-standing advisor. In sum, I spoke with 21 individuals to learn about *LADY*. I followed up with interviewees to gather additional data and/or clarify vague information. After transcribing interviews, I emailed individuals a copy of their transcript with a note advising participants to contact me if they had questions, suggestions, or additional feedback (see Appendix K). I received one response from a parent participant notifying me that she received her transcript and that it was accurate. Also, Tiarra Sherry, a 3rd-year *LADY* member sent a reply about her experience as a contestant in the 2012 *LADY* pageant.

Document Analysis

According to David Altheide (1996), a media researcher, "Document analysis refers to an integrated and conceptually informed method, procedure, and technique for locating, identifying,

retrieving, and analyzing documents for their relevance, significance, and meaning” (p. 2). Primary documents from *LADY* were analyzed in this study. Items that were reviewed and analyzed included the *LADY* binder, 6 scrapbooks, 2 *Community Mothers* club books, 7 pageant booklets, 10 meeting agendas, the 2011 induction ceremony program, and itineraries from various events. Analyzing *LADY* written materials allowed me to research the origins of the club as well as their development over time.

Altheide (1996) proposed, “It is because documents provide another way to focus on yet another consideration of social life—emergence—that they are helpful in understanding and interpretation” (p. 10). Document analysis provided another dimension for exploring *LADY*, a culture in which participants operate and gain messages about their raced, gendered, and classed identities. I analyzed documents through taking photographs and making copies of all materials and perusing through them for information about the club setting. I compared various historical documents to present-day club materials. For example, the *LADY* club book used to be a small booklet with 20 pages. Today, *LADY* members are supplied with a binder which contains all club members’ contact information and their hobbies. However, the small booklet showcased in the scrapbooks listed meeting dates, times and themes.

Interviews

All participants were invited to participate in a one-time interview at a site of their choosing. Many girls chose to schedule their interview at a local library. I also met with girls at church, their mother’s job, or at their home. Interviews with supervisors and mothers were conducted in the following places: a local University meeting room, their home, and the workplace. Interviews and phone conversations were held from February 9, 2012 to May 10, 2012. Interviews ranged from 9 minutes and 59 seconds to 1 hour and 28 minutes. Before each

interview, I reviewed the approved consent and assent forms with potential interviewees and invited them to ask questions about the interview process or any other area of concern.

Furthermore, participants had the option of selecting their own pseudonym.

In order to learn about the organization and girls' embodied realities in that context, semi-structured interviews were adopted in this study. According to Sharan Merriam (1998), qualitative researcher semi-structured interviews contain a "mix of more-and less-structured questions" (p. 73) that provide the opportunity to react to respondent's emerging ideas.

Interpretive questions were administered to corroborate understanding of participants' responses plus allow me to probe for further explanation of concepts and ideas. Merriam suggested that "Interpretive questions provide a check on what you think you are understanding, as well as provide an opportunity for yet more information, opinions, and feelings to be revealed" (p. 78). While recording interviews, I took notes to identify additional questions I needed to ask about their answers. I also memoed myself about protocol revisions (see Appendix H), significant points, emergent information, and participant's body language.

This study relied heavily on Spradley's (1979) concept of ethnographic interviewing which includes descriptive, structural, and contrast questions to learn about a culture. According to James Spradley, anthropological ethnographer, the premier goal of ethnographic research is to learn about culture through the meaning that is constructed by those who create and live in the culture. He wrote, "The essential core of ethnography is this concern with the meaning of actions and events to people we seek to understand" (p. 5).

Descriptive questions serve as a way for researchers to gain an introduction to elements of the culture that is being studied. Sample descriptive questions included "Could you tell me about your role in the club?" or "Could you describe your club and what they do?" Structural

questions permitted the researcher to investigate information about fundamental knowledge concerning *LADY*. Spradley (1979) wrote, “They allow us to find out *how* informants have organized their knowledge” (p. 60). Sample questions included “What are some of the events your club hosts?” and “What is the process for getting into your club?” Contrast questions aim to learn distinct characteristics between elements in the culture being studied. Examples include “What is the difference between a first vice president and a second vice president in your club?”. Due to the mixture of ethnographic questioning, prolonged observation, and the exploration of a single case, the research design took on the form of a descriptive case study.

Field Observations

From January 2012 to July 2012, I observed *LADY*'s monthly meetings and events. Every month, club members hosted meetings that were held at members' home church or parents' employment. All meetings I attended lasted no longer than 90 minutes. In addition to monthly meetings, I attended many of the club's annual events including the can-a-thon, Easter Egg Hunt, Pageant, and workshops. While learning about the culture of the group, I constantly monitored group dynamics during observations. Although I was told no club activities were held in August, *LADY* held their inaugural orientation swimming party that month.

I served as a moderate participant observer during monthly meetings and events. Moderate participant observation allowed me to record and interpret aspects of the club culture. According to Spradley (1980), “Moderate participation occurs when the ethnographer seeks to maintain a balance between being an insider and an outsider, between participation and observation” (p. 60). The moderate participant observer role suited this study because it permitted me to communicate with participants to explore *LADY*'s culture. During the annual pageant, I was invited backstage to witness what happened behind the scenes. While backstage, I

observed club members, advisors, and parents speak with each other. Also, I spoke with club members and assisted contestants as they came on and off stage. Through these interactions, I built a rapport with girls and spoke with them about policies and rules relating to the pageant and the club. For instance, the winner of the pageant told me that *Miss LADY* has to represent the club at the state and national conference.

During observations, I took jottings and converted them into field notes to produce a written account of what was seen, heard, and experienced in the program (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Taking notes in the form of jottings consisted of key words and phrases to be translated into field notes (Emerson et al., 1995). Jottings served the purpose of writing what was going on in the program to record observations. Immediately after meetings and activities, jottings were transposed into field notes in narrative first-person form.

Observations complemented interviews and club documents as a medium to learn about the club's context, structure, and members. Julie Bettie (2003), sociologist and ethnographic researcher, wrote, "Over my nine months of participant observation and interviewing, I came to know the clique structure or informal peer hierarchy among students at the school; this was the primary way students understood class and racial/ethnic differences among themselves" (p. 11). Following Bettie's observational methods, I collected data for a pilot study from February 2011 to January 2012 and continued with dissertation research from January 2012 to July 2012 to gain a strong grasp of the club context and relationships amongst members. During continuous observation, I also revised interview questions as I learned more about *LADY* (see Appendix G). An observation guide (see Appendix L) was derived from the study's research questions.

Researcher Reflexivity Journal

I also used my reflexive journal to grapple with concepts and ideas that were revealed during interviews, observations, and while reviewing archival records. The journal served as a space for me to recursively critically examine myself and the culture throughout the research process (Bettie, 2003; Etherington, 2007; Gall et al., 2007; Goss, 2011). During this process, I reviewed ethical considerations throughout this project (Etherington, 2007). For example, often prospective participants over 19 years old often asked me if the interview could be conducted during the meeting or event and I declined because this action had the potential to violate their privacy. In my reflexivity journal, I thought about the pros of conducting interviews during events, which would benefit me, the researcher, but it would breach the agreement that I held with the Institutional Review Board and fail to protect the participant's identity which was a prime concern for me.

In addition to concerns regarding participant privacy, I used the reflexive journal to wrestle with my role as a researcher as well as the friendly rapport that I built with some of participants. Before, during, and after many of the interviews I spoke with participants about various aspects of their life and I shared information about myself as well. As a researcher, I engaged in conversations about contemporary issues in the Black community and listened to their thoughts and perspectives. Furthermore, at times we shared common ideas. This reflexive journal served a threefold purpose: first, it provided a record of how themes were developed during research; second, the journal held personal experiences as a moderate participant observer; and third, the reflexivity journal was a space to express thoughts regarding relationships with participants, leadership, and parents. Themes generated from observations and field notes were used mold the questions for semi-structured interviews.

Methods of Analysis

An audit trail was implemented to the data analysis process (Gall et al., 2007). At the onset of this project, I implemented an audit trail to document the steps taken during data analysis to strengthen external validity. This data analysis process was intended to prevent inaccuracies regarding recalling all the steps that were taken during the analysis process. In order for the study to be replicated with a similar population, the audit was a tool that provided insight into the research design, methodology, and data analysis process. Data gathered during interviews were analyzed through tertiary coding consisting of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Creswell, 2007).

I transcribed each interview verbatim before reading the transcript for codes. Open codes were produced from repetition of concepts throughout data and information pertaining to the study's research questions. Each code was entered into cell in Microsoft Excel accompanied by notes that provided pertinent information regarding its corresponding code. After reading the transcript, I colored coded terms and phrases that pertained to race, gender and class, grouped them and transferred them to their own respective column.

Next, mind mapping was administered as a type of brainstorming to identify related codes and eventually obtain a clearer vision of themes. This process is also called axial coding, which is the development of descriptive codes that group concepts in order to narrow codes to build themes (Creswell, 2007). As a visual learner, I used a password-protected free online service at <https://bubbl.us/> to complete this process. After reading through codes, I produced words and terms that captured the essence of codes from interviews and assigned a parent code which connected all of the child bubbles in the mind map (see Appendix M).

For example, from parent interviews, I constructed the following titles for parent bubbles: community, mentoring, mother-adult association, and relationship with daughter, and child bubbles were linked to parent concepts. Through developing mind maps, the linkages between participants' responses and my research question, theoretical framework, and literature emerged. Following this process, similar codes were merged to create axial codes which are similar or like concepts that can be grouped together to identify selective codes. Selective coding is a result of grouping similar axial codes. This process allowed me to create themes. Data analysis was an iterative process that required me to constantly refer to the overarching research questions and all data collected to construct themes.

Although I was very familiar with transcripts from interviewing individuals and transcribing all responses, when mind mapping I often referred to transcripts to make sure that I was using codes in the correct context when connecting children and parent bubbles.

Validity/Trustworthiness

In an effort to attain a high degree of validity and trustworthiness, methods triangulation and audit trail were administered. Methods triangulation addresses internal validity through using various data collection techniques to validate findings (Gall et al., 2007). Methods triangulation contributed to internal validity because it allowed me compare data retrieved from various information collection activities to support themes generated and research findings.

The implementation of the four data collection methods of a reflexive journal, interviews, document analysis, and observations accompanied by field notes account for methods triangulation because various strategies were utilized to collect data (Hollander, 2004). Methods triangulation reduces the likelihood for misinterpretation through using different methods techniques to collect data (Stake, 1994). In addition to methods triangulation, a section reflecting

the researcher's positionality was included in the study. Data gathered via the reflexive journal supported my positionality. Another purpose of the positionality section is to illustrate to readers the researcher's investment in a particular line of research (Rosaldo, 1993). More importantly, to make sure that I grasped what each participant said, I emailed them a copy of their transcript and asked them if I captured their words accurately and if they had questions or points of clarification. Participants had transcripts 7 months prior to the completion of the study to give them time to review their transcript and contact me for questions. After I interviewed members, parents, and advisors I continued to attend meetings to ask follow-up questions of girls, advisors, and parents to learn more about the nuances of *LADY*.

During each meeting I engaged in conversations with individuals about follow-up questions and new happenings in the club. For example, during the first 2012-2013 club year meeting one of the assistant advisors informed me that the club did not fly to their national convention in Des Moines, Iowa since other clubs did not have the money to attend. Also, through continuing to attend monthly meetings and events, I learned about historical practices in the club and ways the club has evolved over the years.

The research design and methods intended for this study were chosen because they were best suited to answer the overarching research questions. Using a case study research design allowed for exploration of the participants' individual experiences. Furthermore, the selected qualitative inquiry methods worked well with case study because they offered a system of collecting Black girls' experiences. In the next chapter, I discuss my results in relation to the study's research questions.

IV

ADULTS

For the purpose of this discussion, findings have been divided into two groups—adults and *LADY* club members. I have separated study participants into adults and members since adults shared ideas about how girls needed to be socialized for Black womanhood and this often stood in stark contrast to how girls understood the socialization process. In the next chapter, I discuss the findings from the interviews and observations of the girls. Before discussing the findings from the adults involved in *LADY*, I first provide in-depth descriptions of *LADY* practices and affiliated adults in order to contextualize the study and its findings.

Community Mothers

In 1946, eight young women in a southeastern city gathered to organize and create *Community Mothers*. Together, the founders developed an organization with the purpose of making charitable donations to help those who are less fortunate. *Community Mothers* is a federated club under the NACWC which is the oldest national organization for African American women. The NACWC formed in 1896 as a result of the union of the National Federation of Afro-American Women (NFAAW) and the Colored Women's League (NLCW). Both groups, comprised largely of middle- and upper-middle class women, organized in 1895 to combat racial discrimination and uplift the African American community (Williams, 2001).

In 1896, the NFAAW and the NLCW held their annual conference in Washington, DC, and attended a combined meeting to explore the potential of their enterprises merging. As a result of the joint session, the NFAAW and the NLCW united to create the NACWC. The newly

formed African American women's organization adopted the motto, "Lifting as We Climb" to connote their commitment to serving and advancing African American communities. Lillian S. Williams (2001), African American Studies scholar and community activist, noted that, "The creation of the NACWC represented the culmination of their organizational activities and was a manifestation of the reform efforts occurring among African Americans and in the nation at the turn of the century" (p. 392).

At the beginning of the 20th century, along with *Community Mothers*, there were 300 clubs belonging to the NACWC. Its height of activity was in the 1920s and 1930s, after which its membership began to dwindle as a result of the Great Depression. During this time, the NACWC continued to bolster a self-help mantra though individuals who were in great need of economic assistance (Nadasen, 2006; Wormser, 2002). Presently, the NACWC has 2,578 members which hold membership in 245 clubs in 31 states (E. Rising, personal communication, April 23, 2012). In addition to being federated through the NACWC, *Community Mothers* belongs to both state and city associations that support programs for women and youth (J. Harris, personal communication, February, 22, 2012).

Community Mothers is governed by their constitution and bylaws. The club's policies and procedures operate in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order (RRO). Thus, members have executive board roles with assigned responsibilities and duties. *Community Mother's* elected officers include president, vice-president, historian, chaplain, and recording secretary. Individuals are also appointed to leadership positions such as parliamentarian and committee chairpersons. Prospective members are extended an invitation to apply from current *Community Mothers*. Applicants must submit a letter explaining their interest in the club. Since its inception, *Community Mothers* enrollment peaked at 20 participants. Mrs. Nora James, an over 40-year

member of *Community Mothers*, expressed that current membership has declined due to the emergence of local chapters of national historically Black voluntary organizations and social clubs. Presently, the organization is comprised of nine active members. Different from the club's founders, current members of the club are middle-age to senior women who range in age from 40 to 80.

Throughout its existence, *Community Mothers* structured a commitment to adolescent Black girls through creating and endorsing *LADY*. In 1956, a *Community Mother* member employed with 4H, a national youth development program, spearheaded the development of their daughter club (J. Habster, personal communication, June 2, 2012; *LADY Scrapbook, 1956-1979*). *Community Mothers* constructed *LADY* as a club that trained teenage Black girls for womanhood. *LADY* was modeled after *Community Mothers* as a group committed to community service. As presented in the *LADY* handbook, the objective, purpose, and motto of the club are provided below:

Objective—Instill in all members the ideals of finer womanhood.

Purpose—Foster moral, intellectual, cultural and inspirational training for all members of the organization. To promote an appreciation and great tradition of our founders. To preserve the health and beauty of the body. To inspire the love for home and all mankind.

Motto—Know thyself, learn more, climb higher. (p. 11)

In *LADY's 1956-1979 scrapbook*, 11 names are listed alongside a black and white photograph that displays the club's inaugural cohort. Since the club's formation, *LADY* has had constant membership that ranged from 10 to 56 members. Over the past 66 years, 10 *Community Mother* members have served as advisors for *LADY*. Since *LADY* is sponsored by *Community Mothers*, youth club advisors must hold membership with the parent organization. According to

Community Mother's constitution and bylaws, the youth advisor(s) must perform the following duties.

- a) She shall consult with and inform the Mother Club [of] matters pertaining to the youth club's programs, plans, financial and other projects.
- b) She shall make a periodic financial written report of money received for dues, projects, etc.
- c) She shall provide a written copy to President, Recording Secretary, and Financial Secretary of **LADY Club**
- d) She shall inform the senior club of all major problems that occur in the club so the senior club can be supportive and knowledgeable.
- e) At the beginning of each club year the junior sponsor shall present a list of names of each youth member and parent of **LADY Club**.

Senior club members have also supported *LADY* in various capacities which include financial contributions, conducting club workshops, and serving as assistant club advisors.

LADY Club

In 1956, *LADY* was created in a southeastern college town. Presently, *LADY* is comprised of 48 African American girls in grades 9-12. Current club members attend seven area high schools, which include one private institution and six public schools. Girls in the club come from diverse socioeconomic statuses and living arrangements. However, several participants belong to middle-class backgrounds and reside in two parent homes. Girls who come from single-parent homes often live with their mother as their primary caregiver. A large number of parents work full-time, are college graduates, and are involved in church activities and local organizations. Some parents also hold executive offices in local sorority chapters, community organizations, and social clubs. In order to be considered for membership, participants must be in good academic standing and actively take part in various co-curricular activities. Numerous girls in *LADY* are involved with church activities, engage in a competitive and/or club sports, and participate in volunteer activities sponsored by their school.

This past spring, *LADY* received 30 applications from girls seeking membership into the club. Every spring, *LADY* welcomes application packets from potential members. Current members of *LADY*, *Community Mothers*, and *LADY* alumnae recruit girls to apply for admission to the club. The application process and timeline are shared with prospective participants and their parents via word-of-mouth. Although girls primarily adopt verbal communication as their method of recruitment, today, members also use social media networks including Facebook and Twitter to encourage girls to apply to the club. Throughout *LADY*'s history, materials required for application have always included a letter of interest, and three letters of recommendation with one reference from a school official. Both advisors and club members collect application packets and bring them to an assigned monthly meeting. Every June after high school seniors graduate from *LADY*, remaining members meet to review applications and vote in new girls.

LADY conducts their selection process during a monthly meeting. After club business is completed, the advisors initiate the voting process. Before initiating voting, advisors update the club roster and speak with girls about who is returning to the club next year. During the 2011-2012 club year, an assistant advisor announced that there were 25 continuing members. Following this discussion, voting commenced and each member was given a sheet of paper including applicants' names followed by a "yes" or "no" checkbox. Before voting began, advisors informed the girls that they were invited to raise their hands and offer "positive" statements in support of applicants. Members are told that if they know something negative or unfavorable about an applicant's character that would not make them a good "fit" for the club to notify advisors outside of the meeting.

Advisors begin the voting process by announcing each applicant's name and reading her letter of interest aloud to the group. The advisor then reads the applicant's recommenders and

provides time for them to check “yes” or “no” beside the applicants name on their ballot sheet. At the close of the meeting, voting sheets are collected and advisors meet to decide who will be extended membership to *LADY*. In addition to taking participants’ recommendation regarding prospective members’ personalities, advisors use their networks with school personnel to inquire about applicants’ character. Ultimately, the advisors have the final say and collectively determine who will be accepted as a member of the organization. Aside from communicating with friends who shared information about their recent acceptance, participants learn who has gained membership when they attend the first meeting of the following club year. A few weeks after selections, club advisors send letters of acceptance to new girls and their parents. As a result of club members’ votes and advisor approval, 23 girls were accepted into the club for the 2011-2012 year making 48 members the total enrollment for the year. According to club advisors, 30 to 35 girls regularly come to meetings and club activities. While attending meetings and events, the largest meeting had 37 girls and the minimum participation at an event reached eight.

To orient new members to *LADY*, the club hosts an informational meeting for accepted members and their parents/guardians. This year, past club members proposed to have a pool party as a better way for new girls and continuing members to mingle. One club member expressed that during previous orientation meetings she often noticed seasoned members, which advisors and club members often refer to as “older girls,” talking to each other while the new inductees also known as the “new girls” stayed to themselves. When suggesting this idea, she expressed that holding a pool party would provide a comfortable atmosphere for “older girls” and “new girls” to socialize.

During orientation advisors speak with incoming club members and parents/guardians about club financial expenses, attendance policy, goals of the organization, field trips, and the

club year calendar. Annual dues for participation in *LADY* are \$100. From this money, participants pay for club insurance, national membership dues, a local club building shared with other federated youth clubs, their national building in Washington, DC, and a *LADY* t-shirt. Additional financial obligations include their annual pageant, club jackets, travel to meetings, the Christmas Ball, and other events they decide to hold throughout the year. Moreover, yearly, club members are required to raise \$500 to support their pageant. High school juniors must compete in the pageant to maintain membership in the club. Girls who do not raise \$500 are expected to pay their remaining balance out-of-pocket. Participants who meet this monetary requirement are exempt from paying for registration and transportation fees to National Association of Youth Clubs national and regional conventions. *LADY* members travel to national, state, and regional meetings to participate in contests. Often *LADY* has a girl who represents the club in an oratorical, scrapbook, or fashion competition. Also, members hold positions at the state, national, or local levels and have to go to these conferences to facilitate business meetings.

New members receive *LADY* binders and continuing members reuse their binders from the previous year and get new inserts with club information. The binders provide history of *LADY* including their founding date, the club motto, club officers, committees, scheduled activities, club rules, member directory, and hostesses for monthly meetings. One of the assisting advisors shared that the binders have all the information members need to know about the club. In addition to receiving the club binders, new members are formally inducted into the club to acknowledge their acceptance into *LADY*. Along with *LADY*, all local NACWC federated clubs partake in the induction ceremony.

Annually, on the third Sunday of October, new member induction for all youth clubs is held. This past year's induction was held in one of the advisor's church basement. Members,

parent/guardians, family members, and friends are audience members at the service. Returning members for all clubs also sit in the audience and witness the induction of new members. Each incoming *LADY* club member is introduced and walks down an aisle in all white clothing while holding a candle. In the front of the room there is a table with a large lit candle and all the members kneel to it and light their candle. After lighting their candle, *LADY* inductees are pinned with a clover representing the National Association of Colored Girls Clubs (NACG) and then line up with fellow new associated club members. During induction, family members and friends take pictures to commemorate the ceremony. In addition to the new member induction, returning youth club members are recognized for their state, regional, and national executive board roles, honors, and awards.

Members of *LADY* collaborate to host a meeting. Through the early years of the club, one member was responsible for holding a club meeting at her home. As time passed and club membership grew, two or more girls worked together with their parents to organize a monthly meeting. Arranging a meeting consists of purchasing refreshments, decorations, finding a venue, and communicating with advisors about a meeting date and location. Presently, since *LADY* consists of over 40 members, monthly 4 to 5 members are responsible for teaming up to host a monthly meeting.

Monthly club meetings usually last no more than 90 minutes. Club members are required to wear business casual attire. The advisors create the meeting agenda which adheres to a protocol that is included in the club binder. After the president or one of the vice presidents calls the meeting to order, girls begin with their devotion which incorporates a prayer, club pledge, club song (Appendix N), pledge allegiance to me (see below), and *Lift Every Voice and Sing* (Appendix O) which is commonly referred to as the Black national anthem. The prayer, club

pledge, and pledge allegiance to me are provided below. Although the club song is supposed to be sung at every meeting, club members usually skip it since they have to sing it in a high voice register. During conventions, club participants state the supervisor prayer (Appendix P) and the state prayer (Appendix Q).

Club Prayer

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, we thank Thee for the life, health, and for parents and leaders who have worked and prayed diligently over the years to make life easier for our generation today. Let us be forever aware of this great heritage. And Dear God, help us to remain spiritually and morally clean so that our lives will be an example for our peers and youth everywhere.

As we strive for finer womanhood, teach us to be humble, and Practice tenderhearted mercy and kindness to others.

Give us the knowledge

“...To accept the things that we cannot change and the wisdom to know that it is the little things in life that count!’ Help us to live in a way that we will never be ashamed of our past or afraid to face tomorrow.

In Jesus name we pray...Amen

Club Pledge

(To be Recited at Each Meeting)

On my honor, I pledge:

To do unto others as I would have them do unto me;
To face life squarely; to have a definite plan and Purpose in life; to strive to seek the highest ideals For myself and to live up to them; to always be Dependable; to learn the secret of teamwork;
To have faith in God, faith in others and faith in Myself;

To cultivate thrift honesty, truthfulness and reliance;
To realize that persistent good will break down Barriers; to be honest to myself and true to my country;
To be ready to “Lift as I climb.”

Pledge of Allegiance to Me

I can be my best
By doing my best

In everything I do.
And taking pride in who I am
My faith will see me through.

I must have respect
And confidence, if I am to be
A healthy body and productive mind
And a wise human being.

So, I can be my best
By doing my best
In everything I do.
And taking pride in who I am
My faith will see me through.

At the beginning of the club year, club nominations are held for members to serve on the club's executive board. Club members in their senior year are required to run for club president. An election via paper ballot is held to vote for candidates. Presidential nominees must prepare a speech to demonstrate their vision and goals as the club president. The remaining presidential candidates serve as first vice presidents for the club. This year there were four first vice presidents for the club. In the absence of the president, the vice presidents supervise club meetings. In addition to president and first vice presidents, club officers include a parliamentarian, treasurer, statistician, chaplain, corresponding secretary, and recording secretary. The aforementioned roles also have assistant positions that serve in the person's absence. In addition to club officers, there are currently nine committees, which consist of standing committees and ad-hoc committees.

Standing committees include the following: jackets, t-shirts, Christmas Ball, pageant, phone, scrapbook, and hospitality. Members sign up for committee at the start of the year and are expected to meet to plan for events or activities related to their committee. Depending upon club events and activities, ad-hoc committees are formed to plan or schedule initiatives. This year,

one of the assistant supervisors approached the club about an international service activity and a committee formed: Cell Phones for Sylvia Isle.

Club Advisors

Amongst adults associated with *LADY*, advisors and mothers held a strong presence in the organization. Within the two adult populations, advisors played an instrumental role in charting the direction of the organization. Presently, *LADY* has three club advisors to accommodate their large membership. All of the advisors are college-educated African American women in their mid-40s and early 50s. Also, their daughters are alumni of *LADY*. After their daughters graduated from *LADY*, they were recruited by members of *Community Mothers* to join the parent club so they could serve as advisors. The head advisor, Mrs. Mary Hutt, is married and has two adult children. Mary works full-time as a city administrator and is the first African American in the city to hold this position. Also, she is a member of a national Black sorority, serves on a local city board, and is active in the community and her church. She expressed that she was drawn to become the head advisor of the *LADY* because of its obligation of giving back to the community. Mrs. Mary Hutt has served as *LADY's* head advisor for 7 years. Unlike other advisors, Mrs. Hutt did not serve as an assistant advisor and transitioned from being a parent to the club's lead advisor. During our conversation, she expressed that she received on-the-job training and was supported by an assistant advisor and the state advisor over city-wide youth clubs.

Mrs. Jessica Harris serves alongside Mrs. Hutt as an assistant advisor. Of all the supervisors, Mrs. Harris has had the longest tenure as an assistant advisor with *LADY*. In the course of her daughter's senior year in high school, she joined *Community Mothers* and the following year she became an assistant supervisor. Mrs. Harris is married and has two adult

children. She is a former teacher who now works in an administrative role for a school supported by a local university. Jessica is Mrs. Hutt's sorority sister, so in addition to *LADY* and *Community Mothers*, they know each other in that capacity. Mrs. Harris is also a member of the LS, Inc., one of the oldest national volunteer societies that targets African American women for membership. Although Mrs. Harris was an assistant supervisor before pursuing a leadership role with *LADY*, Mrs. Hutt assumed the role of head advisor since Mrs. Harris expressed that she had other community responsibilities and would only best serve *LADY* if she remained as assistant advisor.

Last year Mrs. Denise Alverton became a member of *Community Mothers* to serve as an assistant advisor for *LADY*. Denise Alverton is married with two adult children and one who is a college student. Denise Alverton does not have full-time employment but is a technology contract employee in her county. Mrs. Alverton resides 40 miles southwest of the city where *LADY* meetings and functions are held. For the past 19 years, Denise's children have commuted to (the city) to attend school and events. Mrs. Alverton accompanies Mrs. Harris as a fellow member of the LS. Mrs. Alverton learned about *LADY* from Mrs. Harris. Before joining *Community Mothers*, Mrs. Alverton coordinated *LADY*'s annual pageant. Prior to organizing the pageant she was an involved parent who assisted the club with various activities.

Mothers

When completing my pilot study, parental involvement was not on my radar. However, at the first meeting I observed girls' mothers actively participating in the meeting while sitting in chairs alongside the rectangular-shaped table where *LADY* members were seated. At one particular meeting, current members' parents asked advisors about the *LADY* membership application and the intake process. When girls apply for participation with *LADY*, current

members and advisors consider parental involvement and finances as a factor that determines a prospective participant's membership.

Last year, I observed *LADY's* voting process and listened as the assistant advisor informed current members to think about each girl's parents and if they would have time and money to support *LADY*. The advisors also communicated that money is an issue when selecting girls since they have to be able to pay to join. Throughout the voting process, an advisor repeated that parents are a vital component to the club since they support *LADY* events. While voting, current members who made positive statements about prospective members spoke about applicants' character and academic abilities and included constructive comments about the applicant's parents. Jane, an 11th grader at the time, expressed that she went to school with an applicant and indicated that she knew her parents and that her mother would be willing to assist with *LADY* programming. She also noted that she felt her parents were able to handle the financial responsibilities of participation in *LADY*. From these experiences, I decided to include parent interviews and observations to gain a broader contextual understanding of *LADY*.

Although many girls live with both parents, mothers usually visit *LADY* meetings and events. Mothers are responsible for assisting girls with hosting meetings amongst a variety of other tasks. During a discussion with Mrs. Maria Johns, the mother of a 9th grader, she mentioned, "When you're hosting it you're just basically providing the place and the food." Moreover, parents at meetings are often asked to assist with various initiatives and projects. Earlier this year, the girls were interested in practicing their struts, which is a synchronized dance in a line representing a club (it is similar to what sororities and fraternities call strolling), and advisors asked for parents to volunteer to supervise this activity. A parent expressed that she owned a local building where *LADY* could hold strut practice and she also agreed to supervise

their rehearsals. In addition to the aforementioned responsibilities, parents are required to assist with preparation for the pageant. Mothers are in charge of setting up decorations, advertising, gathering programs to distribute to contributing patrons, and other tasks club advisors request.

Although *LADY* targets Black girls for membership, mothers act as advisors to make sure girls are fulfilling their commitments to *LADY*. For example, Constantine, the parent of a 9th grade participant, mentioned that initially she made sure that her daughter was prepared for monthly meetings. She said, “But then once she went to the meeting, ‘cause you know usually you gotta drag. C’mon you’re gonna be late, you gotta get ready for *LADY*.” In addition to assisting with events, mothers monitor their daughters’ behavior to make sure they are adhering to guidelines and rules set forth by club advisors. For instance, Mrs. Diva Lypu, also the parent of a 9th grader, expressed that she made sure that her daughter and friends donated non-perishable items to *LADY*’s annual canned food drive. Diva made the following remarks:

I’ve always just been supportive of the organization, whatever they have, the service parts—whatever they have. For instance, they just had a can drive where each member had to bring in 100 canned goods. So I made sure my daughter and her friend, they’re both members of *LADY*, had their 100 cans. So, and I just do things like that and whatever they need, money-wise or however I can get them there and whatever. Whatever I can do I always try to be supportive of *LADY*.

Mothers support their daughters and fellow members since many parents are associated through sororities, employment, churches, community organizations, and their children are or have been schoolmates.

Mothers

Mother participation has been built into the fabric of the club since its inception and emboldened during its foundational years. Annually, in scrapbooks dating from 1956-1985, *LADY* designed the *Parent-Daughter Banquet* or *Mother-Daughter Banquet* (the program often alternated between the two aforementioned titles) to display appreciation for parents and award

members' mothers' commitment to *LADY*. The *Parent/Mother-Daughter Banquet* hosted a guest speaker, showcased artistic performances by *LADY* members including poetry and instruments, and concluded with announcing the mother of the year. The mother of the year received a certificate and/or a plaque or trophy, a page of acknowledgement in the *LADY* scrapbook, and announced the next year's honoree.

Mrs. Harris mentioned that mothers who participated in the club and often assisted with events were selected by *LADY* as mother of the year. Mrs. Harris also pointed out that she was honored as mother of the year of a male federated club as a result of her participatory work with the organization. According to archival documents, *LADY* held this celebration from 1974-1993 and the program's content evolved during its tenure. For example, during the 1989-1990 club year, *LADY* selected a family of the year in addition to recognizing a mother of the year. Also, in 1983, the organization began recognizing a club member as girl of the year. Today, the club continues to extend the latter accolade to individuals who raise the most money for *LADY*'s annual pageant. Although mothers are still engrained in the infrastructure of the club, this banquet no longer takes place. When I inquired of the head advisor, Mrs. Hutt, about the discontinuance of the banquet, she looked at me quizzically and expressed that she did not know why the club no longer has the banquet. Throughout this study, mothers served as an integral part of the *LADY*.

Six mothers were interviewed for this study and two participants were club alumnae. Three are members of a local chapter of the first historically Black sorority. Additionally, two mothers are members of *Jen and Tom* (a historically middle class Black organization targeting youth and their parents for membership). Participants' ages ranged from early 30s to late 40s. At the time of the study, all mothers were employed full-time and participants' spanned diverse

occupational industries including higher education, primary school, banking, technology services, law enforcement, and sales. All interviewees attended at least one meeting or event during the 2011-2012 club year. Of the six participants, four had children who were also interviewed for this research project.

Through observations, interviews, archival documents, and informal conversations I learned about the roles and responsibilities of mothers in relation to *LADY* and reasons why they partook in club activities. With this information, I examined ways members learned about womanhood through *LADY* and ways mothers reinforced, rejected, and negotiated training their daughters received from the organization. *LADY* events, meetings, and other activities served as a method of socializing girls in various dimensions of their lives. In the following section, I will discuss dominant themes that emerged during the analysis of parent interviews, observations, and archival research. Association with social networks was a primary component that connected parents to *LADY* and afforded their children the opportunity of having access to the club.

Social Networking

Social networks are homogeneous organizations that hold common interests and possess social capital as a feature of their organization (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2001). According to Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, anthropologist, and philosopher, social capital is the accrual of material or prospective goods connected to membership in a formal or informal group (1986). Social capital affords benefits or privileges to group members through the idea of mutual reciprocity (Bourdieu, 1986). The presence of social capital is latent throughout *LADY*. Adults and teens alike have affiliations with various local clubs, churches, and social assemblies that have served as a pathway for participants to come in contact with *LADY*.

In this study, association with *Sophisticated Ladies* (*SL*), a Black Greek Letter Organization (BGLO), was the leading medium for mothers to access *LADY*. Mrs. Hutt and Mrs. Harris are members of *SL* and Mrs. Harris has served as the local *SL* chapter president during her time with *LADY*. Through interviews and observations I learned that many mothers were introduced to the club through this sorority. In the following conversation, Mrs. Wilma Phillips, mother of a 3rd-year participant and current *SL* chapter president, shared that she became familiar with *LADY* through her affiliation with *SL*.

Interviewer: Ok, So how did you first get to know about *LADY*?

Mrs. Phillips: I was introduced to it by the two advisors, Mary Hutt and Jessica Harris who are members of my sorority and I was introduced to it probably 5 or 6 years ago.

Interviewer: So did your daughter know about it before she was seeking application?

Mrs. Phillips: She did know a little about it as members are part of each high school. So when she got to high school and before she got to high school she actually knew a few girls who were apart of *LADY* and she got a little more information on it after she got to high school and was able to become a part of the organization.

During an interview with Mrs. Constantine Wilkes, a fellow parent of a 1st-year participant, she also mentioned that she found out about *LADY* through her affiliation with *SL*. Below is an excerpt from our interview when she explained how she came in contact with *LADY*.

Interviewer: So, when you came to Taylor Town did you know about *LADY*?

Mrs. Wilkes: Probably not as an undergraduate.

Interviewer: OK.

Mrs. Wilkes: I probably didn't.

Interviewer: And you didn't know about the Senior Club?

Mrs. Wilkes: I don't recall. 'Cause everything, I mean, I knew about sorority but I'm not sure that I knew anything about, I can't say that I knew about the Senior Club.

Interviewer: OK. So, when did you begin to notice stuff? Like hearing stuff? Or was it just through your daughter that you heard about it?

Mrs. Wilkes: Well, actually, no. Mrs. Harris, Jessica and I are very good friends, so I knew of her affiliation with the Senior Club and then with the Junior Club. So I've known Jessica, Mary, and Denise.

Interviewer: OK.

Mrs. Wilkes: And I've known Jessica the longest. And then of course I know Mary from the sorority and then I know Denise because Denise's daughter actually went to Mother Mary High School, too.

Interviewer: Oh, that's where your daughter goes?

Mrs. Wilkes: Uh huh.

Interviewer: OK.

Mrs. Wilkes: So I didn't, everything probably I know about *LADY* I learned through Jessica just her affiliation, yes.

After learning about *LADY* through an *LS* sister, she shared information about *LADY* with others at her daughter's school which resulted in an avenue to recruit additional members.

Maria Johns expressed that she learned about the club as well as other activities for her children through a fellow mom who participated with her daughter in a local chapter of a national youth club. Below is a passage from our conversation.

Interviewer: So how did she become interested, like how did she learn about it [*LADY*]?

Mrs. Johns: Actually through another organization that we belong to. One of the moms in that organization, basically we met her when we first moved here and we were in private school with her daughter and she has been instrumental in introducing us to various activities and clubs and things in town. And so *LADY* came up and she brought it up, and also my daughter was invited last year when she was in the 8th grade to become part of the organization but you have to be in 9th grade, by another young lady that was in another organization that we're in.

Interviewer: So, were you a part of a club like *LADY* at home?

Mrs. Johns: I had never heard of *LADY*, never heard of a lot of the social organizations other than I pledged a sorority when I was in college. That's it. (Laughter) So it's very new to me.

Mrs. Johns later added that because her friend's daughter would be involved in *LADY*, there was a greater likelihood that her daughter would participate in the club. During the interview, I discovered that Mrs. Johns and Mrs. Wilkes were also *SL* sorority sisters.

Mothers who were members of *SL* wielded their social relationships to gain entry into *LADY*. Berkowitz and Padavic (1999) found that Black sorority members sustained active membership throughout the span of their life, as opposed to White women who commonly participated in their sorority activities only during their collegiate years. The authors determined that African American women often joined sororities to serve the community, maximize on career networking opportunities, and belong to a lifelong community of support. In this study, *SL*

members exercised their sorority status as a source of capital through employing their sisterhood connections to offer opportunities for their children. Participating in *LADY* exposed youth to aspects of cultural capital that were intended to promote advancement in girls' lives.

Cultural capital is the possession of knowledge and resources that result in educational, career, and/or social opportunities for one's social mobility (Bourdieu, 1986; Hardaway & McLoyd, 2008; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Cultural capital is comprised of one's tastes, attitudes, preferences, and styles (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu (1986) asserted that there are three types of cultural capital which include the embodied state, the objectified state, and the institutionalized state. *LADY* participants exercised all of forms of cultural capital in the club. The embodied state of cultural capital comes from one's family or upbringing and is exhibited through one's behaviors. Mothers in this study transmitted embodied cultural capital to their child through providing them with the cultural assets to become a member of *LADY*. For instance, participants have to rely on their parents to meet financial commitments to the club. This is something that they possess through their family membership.

Once admitted to *LADY* via social networks, girls receive training and practice behaviors to help them possess and/or activate their cultural capital (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). *LADY* prompts members to utilize their objectified cultural capital which are material possessions (i.e., attire) to participate in events such as the annual pageant and the ball. Moreover, girls purchased jackets to signify and solidify their *LADY* membership. Mothers place great emphasis on the institutionalized state of cultural capital that youth earn from *LADY*. The institutionalized state of cultural capital focused on affiliation with institutions that offer qualifications, experiences, education, training, and/or rewards that aim to enhance an individual's economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Through participating in *LADY*, mothers mentioned how girls could use their

experiences in the club as a community service activity or extracurricular activity to improve their chances of getting into college or finding a job. During an informal conversation with Mrs. Phillips, she articulated that participation in *LADY* served as an asset to her child's resume and future college application. Below is an excerpt from my conversation with Mrs. Wilma Phillips, an active *LADY* parent, who articulated the ways her daughter could leverage her involvement with *LADY*:

Interviewer: So, the question before, well the answer to it, you said, you both had a shared interest in your daughter being involved in the club, well why?

Mrs. Phillips: I thought it would be a great community outreach and another opportunity for her to provide community service and also it's kind of a resume building aspect for scholarships 'cause that's one of the ways you build your resume for scholarships and along that line. And like I said, I wanted to have her visibly in the community and to be able to provide service to others.

Mothers viewed *LADY* as a mechanism for girls to gain access to experiences with potential to enhance their professional and academic life.

Finer Womanhood

Mothers often expressed qualities of "finer womanhood" as a prime benefit for their children, which coincidentally is also the club's motto. In *LADY*, cultural capital is encapsulated in the greater ideal of "finer womanhood." Below is an excerpt from an interview with an adult who declared "finer womanhood" as a central tenant of *LADY* membership. Mrs. Theresa Meyer is the mother of a 3rd-year participant and a *LADY* alumna.

Interviewer: So how would you describe *LADY*, like just to someone who doesn't know about it?

Mrs. Meyer: It's an excellent opportunity for young women to develop into finer younger womanhood; I would use that term, finer young womanhood because like I said, it's leadership but it's also just teaching you how to be an upstanding, aware, productive young woman. It's an opportunity where young girls get a chance to develop social skills from things like learning how to speak, how to handle yourself at a five-course meal, learning your place settings, things like that, that if you're going somewhere and if you're gonna be doing something those are things that you need to know. But then it's also an opportunity like I said to develop social skills because the girls are there and they have to

work together and you've got girls from different schools and that kind of thing that may not have a relationship together before coming into *LADY* that would be their common bond in developing relationships. So that's a really big part of it I think as well.

Parents reiterated Mrs. Meyer ideas about "finer womanhood" when they shared favorable behaviors and activities that they wanted their children to learn through affiliation with the club. In the following selection, Mrs. Diva Lypu, the mother of a 1st-year participant, expressed her appreciation for the training her daughter undergoes via *LADY*.

Interviewer: Could you tell me about what types of program or in what types of ways that they get the socialization and manners? Like, is it through certain program or just . . .

Mrs. Diva Lypu: Well they have different speakers to come, they have teachers, they have people from the University, just all around. Anybody who's, who they know, for instance we had at the, not the last one but the program before this meeting, the last meeting that we had, we had a teacher to come from Bryant and she talked to the girls about having etiquette, table etiquette. And it was so nice. And I learned a few things too (Laughter). She gave us a, and she left them with sheets you know with notes and they could take it and pass it along. It was really nice. And she had the table mat, the place mat laid out there with the forks, the salad forks, the spoons, and she told them how to eat; start eating you know from your left, you know it was nice, it was really nice. It told them about the salad plates, she told them about the goblets, the water goblets and the tea. It was really nice. Things that, and you could tell they were interested, "Oh, I didn't know that." You know, it was really nice. So, they have all kinda, they have it's so much it's so many things that they get and they try to educate the girls with. It's just really nice but I did, that etiquette that manners just really stuck with me because that's what they really need to learn. But they have all kinds of different programs and speakers to help the girls with the various issues. So that's really nice, I really liked that (Laughter).

Many parents expressed appreciation for *LADY* providing "finer womanhood" training since it was thought to enhance girls' identity, therefore positively influencing participants' social status, educational opportunities, and career outlook.

During the early 20th century, the term "finer womanhood" was often used to describe African American women who were educated, Christian, moral, hard workers, and community servants (Higginbotham, 1993; Neumann, 2008; Taylor, 2002; Willis et al., 2005). In 1909, Nannie Helen Burroughs, second president of the Woman's Convention, an auxiliary of the National Baptist Convention, created the National Training School (NTS) for Women and Girls

to train adolescent girls and young women to become upstanding, moral individuals who were able to compete in the workforce and manage their homes (Higginbotham, 1993; Library of Congress, 2010; The National Baptist Convention, n.d.; Taylor, 2002). “Burroughs nicknamed her institution ‘The School of the Three B’s’—the Bible, the bathtub, and the broom. These three words represented Burroughs’ standards for spiritual and physical cleanliness and industry. The students performed charitable and social service work” (Taylor, 2002, p. 395). Burroughs witnessed that both parents had to work outside the home and urged them to focus on educating their daughters because she believed women were left with responsibility of uplifting the African American race.

In 1920, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Incorporated, a BGLO, adopted “finer womanhood” as a facet of their quaternary mission which encompasses scholarship, service, sisterly love, and finer womanhood. Zeta Phi Beta professed that their main goal was to serve the community and escape the elitism that went along with current-day BGLO sororities. The BGLO integrated “finer womanhood” as a foundational element of their sorority to assert that they were the archetype of positive Black womanhood. Zeta Phi Beta promoted interest in potential members who demonstrated academic excellence, civic engagement, and social and moral responsibility. According to Zeta Phi Beta’s international website guidelines, “Finer Womanhood defined: Distinguishing characteristics of a woman, one superior in kind, quality, or appearance; marked by or affecting elegance or refinement.” Caryn Neumann, professor and historian, expressed that all historically Black sororities aimed to uphold the ideals and characteristics of finer womanhood. Akin to Burroughs ideas about Black women, sorority members were considered the educated Black folk who “bore the responsibility for betterment of the race” (Nuemann, 2008, p. 172).

Mothers of *LADY* participants suggested that the goals of the club mirrored the notion of “finer womanhood” espoused by Burroughs and Black sororities since *LADY* focused on character development. In this study, mothers used terminology related to “finer womanhood” when they espoused teachings and practices girls learned through *LADY*. For example, after asking parents to describe or explain *LADY*, most participants emphasized community service as a selling point of the group. Below are segments of my conversation with three interviewees who highlighted community service when explaining the advantages of the club. Mrs. Samantha Lyles is a *LADY* alumna and aspiring member of *Community Mothers*, Mrs. Phillips is an active mother-participant, and this is Mrs. Lypu’s first year in the club.

Mrs. Lyles: I would tell them that it is a club where if your daughter was to join it promotes you know self-awareness of how the young women should be brought up today, how they should act. It teaches like I said the community service, helping others. It kinda like brings you out into womanhood. It helps you as we say, your mind, body, and soul. You know it teaches them how to act as young ladies and like I said they serve as role models. I’ve always thought the federated clubs served as role models, both the females and the males that are in the federation. You know to other students. Like I said, you look to those students and they you know they’re doing the good grades and they’re an example to their peers. And I say it would be a good thing for a daughter to join because they do the togetherness things and you know, the togetherness and the sisterly bond that they share, it’s a good thing.

Mrs. Phillips: I think it’s a good social outlet for young girls from grades 9-12. It gives them the opportunity to become a part of social organizations that promote various community programs and providing service to the community. And it’s based on their character and academics and so forth.

Mrs. Lypu: *LADY* is social, social service club, social and service club and I’m trying to remember the ages of the girls. They’re 9th grade, they start when they’re in 9th grade so they would be what, 13 14 years old until they graduate. And they do a lot of community service, community services.

Although the above respondents stressed ongoing community service as a perk of the club, girls in *LADY* possess qualities of community servitude prior to *LADY* membership. Dissimilar to “finer womanhood” foremothers, girls are selected for membership in *LADY* because they

exhibited aspects of finer womanhood that were learned at home and in school. During interviews, advisors emphasized that they sought participants from families who possessed the economic capital to fund both direct and indirect costs required for participation in the club, parents who were willing to attend activities, girls with good grades, and well-behaved individuals.

“Finer womanhood” is also a tenet of the politics of respectability (Higginbotham, 1993). Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, an African American historian, proffered the politics of respectability as the discourse Black Baptist women enacted to combat racism from Whites and inspire African Americans to transform destructive behaviors and attitudes (Higginbotham, 1993). Black Baptist women practiced the politics of respectability through developing programs and services to promote manners, morals, and self-esteem amongst African Americans (Higginbotham, 1993). In conjunction with Black Baptist women, Black club women also encouraged poor Black women to employ preferences and actions practice “bourgeois customs” (White, 2001, p. 35).

Similar to the members of Woman’s Convention, *LADY* mothers imparted aspects of the politics of respectability through wanting their children to learn aspects of mainstream culture. Throughout the year, members engaged in activities and practices that exposed girls to dominant forms of cultural capital. For instance, at monthly meetings guest speakers conducted workshops to teach girls various skills. During a meeting, a guest speaker who was a member of *SL* orchestrated a session on RRO. RRO was introduced in 1876 and entitled, *Pocket Manual of Rules of Order for Deliberative Assemblies*. This text was used as a guide to run meetings (Robert et al., 2011). During this session, the guest speaker explained the purpose of RRO and administered an activity where girls experienced hands-on practice with RRO concepts and

procedures introduced throughout the workshop. Mrs. Wilkes expressed that learning RRO would benefit her daughter in her life because it would help her learn to respect others' positions.

She stated,

So I just have. I don't really want her to be me but I want her to learn that she's going to have to be dealing with all kinds of people out there, all kinds of you know situations that she's gonna encounter but you're gonna have to learn how to deal with you. 'Cause you not gonna really have power over how other people behave but you're gonna need power over you, you know. And then she, *LADY*, I want her to learn how to run a meeting, to know parliamentary procedure. I want her to know how to articulate her thoughts and her opinions. I want her to you know learn how to have fun and appreciate that everybody's experience is not the same as yours. And that doesn't make it good, better, you know bad, it just makes it different.

The above quote was Mrs. Wilkes's partial statement in response to a question I asked her about clarifying her statement about *LADY* being a positive asset for her daughter in the future. In the aforementioned quote, Mrs. Wilkes explained why it was important for her daughter to disagree with others in a respectful manner. She also added that through *LADY* meetings her daughter has had chances to practice these skills in a setting amongst her African American peers. In addition to RRO, girls learned to adopt other aspects of dominant culture including dining etiquette and netiquette.

Frances White, a Black Studies historian, pointed out that the Black church and club women have a disregard of focusing on deconstructing the beliefs that underlie the "good woman/bad woman dichotomy" (2001, p. 35) Audre Lorde, an African American poet, writer, and activist, has a well-known quote that illustrates White's point regarding Black middle-class women's concern with judging themselves according to the White gaze. Lorde claimed, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde, 1984, p. 110). Through this comment, Lorde articulated how it is erroneous to eradicate forms of oppression through copying

the oppressor's behaviors. This is also the point that White made regarding Black women who adopted behaviors of Whites to seek approval and social acceptance.

On the other hand, although the politics of respectability appeared to focus on mimicking Whites, Black women demonstrated various acts of resistance to improve conditions for African Americans. Members of the Woman's Convention actively resisted negative stereotypes of African Americans (Higginbotham, 1993). Virginia Broughton, an African American missionary, composed a series of columns in the *National Baptist Union* called "Christian Culture Courses" (they were also known as the "Christian Educational Training Course"). On December 13, 1902, Broughton authored a piece entitled, *Need of Distinctive Literature* where she encouraged readers to contest pathological discourse and stereotypical images dispelled through mainstream society (Broughton, 2010). Broughton encouraged Black authors to write texts that documented Black history, perspectives, and lived experiences. Also, in 1914 the Convention instituted the Negro Doll Clubs to promote racial pride amongst young girls (Higginbotham, 1993). Like the National Woman's Convention, *LADY* mothers encouraged their daughters to gain dominant forms of cultural capital and resist unfair practices in a respectable manner.

For example, during an annual holiday celebration, parents, members, and advisors experienced discrimination against members at a venue they rented for this gathering. Mrs. Lyles expressed that site staff directed girls, their guests, and anyone affiliated with their organization to enter through a back entryway. Mrs. Lyles expressed that this was inappropriate and indicated that *LADY* received this treatment because their race. She also noted that, next door to their party was a White group of adolescents and adults having a dance, and speculated that this was the reason *LADY* was instructed to go through this inconvenient entrance. However, they were

unsure if the neighboring party complained about *LADY* or if this was something initiated by facility personnel. I attended the next monthly meeting and when it was time to review the party girls shared fun times they had at the celebration. Near the end of the announcements, Mrs. Harris mentioned that she crafted and sent a letter on *LADY*'s behalf to the facility's management to request a partial refund in exchange for the site's poor customer service. In responding to this concern, Mrs. Harris illustrated aspects of the politics of respectability through sending a written complaint. Instead of immediately speaking to staff and addressing their behavior, Mrs. Harris thought about an acceptable response. Mrs. Harris exhibited a non-demonstrative form of resistance to racism that was in line with the notion of the politics of respectability.

Surveillance

Parents encouraged daughter's participation in activities to enhance opportunities for social mobility. Membership in social networks provide youth with the opportunity to earn dominant forms of cultural capital, which are lauded in mainstream society to help them gain upward mobility (Bourdieu, 1986; Carter, 2003; Horvat & Antonio, 1999; Lareau, 2002; Hardaway & McLoyd, 2008). Dominant forms of cultural capital are often based on the practices and preferences of the prevailing social class (Carter, 2003). From mothers' presence in *LADY*, interviews, and observations, I learned that many *LADY* mothers employed "concerted cultivation" when directing, encouraging, or supporting their child's involvement in social activities. Anette Lareau, a sociologist, developed the phrase "concerted cultivation" to describe middle-class parents who "made a deliberate and sustained effort to stimulate children's development and to cultivate their cognitive and social skills" (2002, p. 773). *LADY* moms enacted "concerted cultivation" in the dimensions of social connections and the organization of

their daughters' daily life. Often, girls were involved in multiple adult-coordinated activities consisting of children in their age group.

During my conversation with the parent of a 1st- year participant, she expressed how she was involved in some capacity with her daughter's activities. Below is a part of our conversations when she described aspects of *LADY*.

Interviewer: So how would you describe *LADY*?

Mrs. Wilkes: I think *LADY* is mostly social. I think the service aspects are, and I think that in terms of just being in a setting where you have really other, you know other girls and you kinda have, you know the commonality of you know the Black female and we're all, you know. It's a mini sorority. Laughter. That's kinda how I you know see it. It kinda trains you, you know. It kinda like you know how. Now I know with this group they really have a lot of parental and you know advise, supervisor influence. But I think for Reese at least I think you know it's good to just be around other girls that presumably kind of have the same you know value system. I don't know if they're very exclusive in how they select but I know there is some selection process. And so I think you know, I don't know just in terms of developing leadership and all that. Cause we're also in *Jen and Tom*. So it's kind of the same thing but a different, a little bit different structure. But I think it seems like it's less parents than *Jen and Tom* so they like it. Kids like the less parents the better. So and *Jen and Tom* is more of a mom-dominated kind of organization. And with *LADY* and you know we've been in *Jen and Tom* since she was four.

This quote illustrates an example of how mothers in this club provided surveillance over their daughters. Several *LADY* parents participated in *LADY* and other programs that welcomed parent input as well as their presence. Mom's frequently monitored *LADY* events and activities.

Although girls signed up to host monthly meetings this is something that could not be accomplished without mothers' participation. Four or five girls were responsible for collaborating to find a venue, provide food, and correspond with advisors regarding meeting dates and times. Advisors regularly asked girls if they had spoken to their parents about a date and place to hold a meeting. At times, if the parents' schedule did not fit with *LADY*'s calendar that month, girls were assigned a later meeting to host. Through these responsibilities and activities, mothers partnered with *LADY* advisors to socialize members for womanhood.

While part of the infrastructure of *LADY* hinged on parental involvement, at times this participation served as an area of dissention. At meetings, parents were greeted by advisors and girls alike, and primarily conversed with fellow club mothers and/or advisors about club happenings. Many mothers knew each other through church, other clubs, and/or the schools their children attended together. Though parents, advisors, and participants maintained respectful relationships with each other in meetings, when disagreements emerged, mothers felt comfortable making comments and offering opinions.

For example, at a club meeting, jackets, a reoccurring topic in the club, were being discussed and, Felicia Boyd, a 4th-year participant and executive board member, provided an update on the status of ordering club jackets. After the end of her report, Mrs. Janet Phelps, a parent of a 1st-year member, expressed her dismay with the time it was taking to receive jackets. She proposed that since Felicia was young, the vendor may not be taking her seriously. Felicia then explained that the seamstress was a family friend who made materials for the club in the past and that her father accompanied her to correspond with the vendor. Mrs. Phelps then pointed out that half of the club year was over and she inquired about expediting jacket orders for her daughter and other girls who did not have a jacket, especially since this was their 1st-year in *LADY*. Following this statement, one of the advisors interjected and explained that ordering jackets took a while since many individuals did not turn in their money on time, plus girls were consumed with continually changing jacket colors. Felicia then expressed that she was not able to hand in everyone's money as they gave it to her since the seamstress wanted to do a bulk order.

This conversation illustrated a mom's disagreement with club practices and parental involvement through her verbal responses. From instances similar to these, I discovered that

moms did not just put their daughters in these organizations and have a hands-off approach, they took an active role in charting its course. Lareau (2002) found that middle-class parents in her study interceded on their child's behalf when it came to criticizing practices in an institution and this was a way children learned to stick up for themselves when it came to institutions. This is something that goes on in *LADY* often. For example at a meeting, one parent of a 2nd-year member encouraged her daughter to find out about the club's financial status. During the meeting, the advisors were speaking with the club about members not raising the required amount of funds for their annual pageant. Many girls inquired about the purpose of the fundraising and the uses of the money. Mrs. Delia Samdy spoke up and echoed participants' concerns and added that she did not urge her daughter to meet her fundraising obligation since it was not clear how the money would be used.

On the other hand, there were times when advisors reprimanded club members and parents reinforced advisors' teachings. Throughout this study, advisors spoke with girls about having private events or gatherings and misrepresenting them as *LADY*-sponsored events. In the past, the advisors have caught girls having an unauthorized and unsupervised strut practice at a local park. Advisors expressed that if they wanted to hold practices in the future to please notify them to be sure they would have an adult present. Mrs. Harris and Mrs. Alverton vehemently stated that holding secret practices were not safe or something that *LADY* condoned. As advisors were speaking, parents nodded their heads in agreement and chimed in to tell girls that their actions were not safe. Additionally, they pointed out that older members often participated in these secret endeavors since they were more autonomous and had access to a vehicle. The advisors and parents expressed that they wanted to have events for all girls to participate in an innocuous and supervised environment.

During interviews, observations, and informal conversations, adults and girls expressed a high concern with the chasm between younger and older girls. Below is an excerpt from a discussion with Mrs. Johns, the mother of a freshman participant.

Interviewer: You mentioned something that they talked about, Mrs. Alverton brought it up at one of the last meetings and um 9th grade you said it might be a little too young. And she was saying it's a huge difference between you know the 9th graders and the 12th graders. I just think that's interesting 'cause we always like lump high schoolers together and we never think about the difference between 9th and 12th grade so could you just talk more a little bit about in the context of the club? What's the differences for you from 9th and 12th grade?

Mrs. Johns: The, oh. Ok so 9th graders don't have a driver's license. Ninth graders whose parents care about where their children are, are not letting their children just jump up and go to anything just because someone sends a text and says, "hey the *Little Stars* are having a party, let's go"; no, not for 9th graders. And I'm not even sure if my daughter was in the 10th grade she would still be able to go. So, therefore, you have that disconnect with the older girls who can drive and maybe their parents allow them to go to all these other functions but when you don't know who's gonna be there and you still need supervision and after a certain age in Taylor Town you are not supposed to be out without someone over 18. There's a lot of factors and the older girls don't realize that and so they have their little secret thing where they wanna text, "oh the *Little Stars* are having a party", no you're not going. You're not going, because to me if it's not sanctioned by their advisors then my child's not participating. Because I just don't, it's too much going on in the world now to just let your child just go anywhere just because somebody says there's a party going on. No. Unh uh. So, there's that disconnect with the older girls and the younger girls. And then the older girls, especially the seniors, they're getting ready to graduate so they got all those activities they're dealing with. What I would like to see them do is, like take a younger girls, each one of them take a younger girl and kinda mentor her and I think that would help to bridge that gap, you know between the older ones and the younger ones.

The above topic was mentioned at various meetings. Advisors encouraged girls to connect through icebreakers and activities. I gathered that girls' safety and members connecting with each other are qualities of the club mothers appreciated.

Similar to mothers' networks, members of *LADY* knew each other through previously held familial, school, or community relationships. Moreover, through membership in *LADY*, mothers expect girls to interact with each other and form bonds with fellow teenage Black girls. African American girls in *LADY* were primarily socialized by their parents and school and urged

to form friendships with individuals who were in their family's social circle, schoolmates, or fellow members of extracurricular activities. Mothers in this study shared their experiences monitoring their daughter's peer relationships. In the quote below, Mrs. Wilkes discussed how she fostered her daughter's interactions with other youth.

Mrs. Wilkes: But *LADY* like I said, my biggest thing was that I want her to know that you know your Black friends those are the ones, cause those are the people used to tell me this all the time, "Do you know such and such's mother?" "I'm like, no we don't socialize." "Well I want you to." I was like, you know, that's not my social circle these are the people I know. So I feel more comfortable when she's friends with people that I you know, kids of parents that I know and that we can socialize with. Because you go off with these other people and I don't have anything in common with these people. I ain't hanging out with them. Laughter. So you really need to be friends with people that I'm comfortable letting you go stay over. Or you know people that I'm comfortable with letting you go off on the weekend with cause you friends at this point you know you're 14, you know. Really your friend needs to be my friend. I mean if you wanna be able to do stuff with them and all that, I mean, I just, you know. And that's for *LADY*, I know a lot of the moms and the families. I'm comfortable with this and as long as I'm in charge of you I need to be comfortable.

In this quote, Mrs. Wilkes expressed the need for her daughter to develop friendships with African Americans and individuals with whom she is comfortable. Due to Mrs. Wilkes' lived experiences, she expressed that friendships with her African American peers were her most cherished relationships. Because of her childhood memories, she encouraged her daughter to develop and foster strong connections with African American youth. For many Black youth, racial identity development is attained chiefly through social interactions in Black spaces (Lacy, 2004; Tatum, 2003). Although Mrs. Wilkes proffered that her daughter would greatly benefit from friendships with African Americans, she indicated that there may be some differences between her and her child's youth experiences.

Mrs. Wilkes expressed that she attended an "integrated high school" and though she had cordial relationships with Whites, they were not her friends. During her interview, she expressed

concerns about fairness when it came to her children attending school in a predominantly White environment. She lamented,

Again this might come out wrong, but you know, them White people they can be tricky, you know what I'm saying?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mrs. Wilkes: They're not bad, but they can be a little bit tricky if when you really don't have necessarily the knowledge to negotiate that. And so I didn't want to be the person always like, "You know are they gonna be fair?" "Are they gonna embrace my little girl?" "Are they gonna you know do this?" Now like I said, Catherine's experiences have been different because the people that she has embraced as her friends are really cool. And so, I have not had that issue. But for my younger one, I was a little bit more concerned.

Mrs. Wilkes and her daughter have had contrasting socio-historical contexts as they pertained to their schooling experiences. For instance, Mrs. Wilkes used the word "integrated" to refer to the population of her high school. Also, she expressed that Catherine developed friendships with her White peers. Guiding her daughter to develop friendships with Black girls served as a way for Mrs. Wilkes to "armor" (Townsend, 2008) or protect her child from precarious racial experiences that she may have encountered during her upbringing. Furthermore, Mrs. Wilkes encouraged Catherine to join *LADY* as a way of training her to adopt Mrs. Wilkes' friendships patterns to support Catherine's racial and gender identity development. During our conversation, Mrs. Wilkes explained that Black women have bonds due to their shared lived experiences. Mrs. Wilkes stated,

And so I wanted to always make sure that she had a connection 'cause see, you know my feeling is that you know we're gonna have more in common than me and my partner across the hall, you know what I'm saying. Now we work together, we socialize, but in the end we're gonna be able to relate to each other better. And she, Catherine, doesn't see that now, and maybe it's changing, maybe I'm just being a stick in the mud.

Mrs. Wilkes' ideas about Black women's shared experiences stem from standpoint concept, which is a central principle within BFT. Through standpoint theory, Black women build a collective consciousness about intersecting oppressions they experience and create political

action in order to liberate themselves from subjugated positions in society (Collins, 2000a, 2000b; King, 1995). Mrs. Wilkes' connection to standpoint theory aligns with the collective portion of the theory but departs from ideas about diversity and political action that are also enmeshed within this principle.

Adults associated with *LADY* supported Mrs. Wilkes' ideas about the importance of cultivating social relationships with Black girl peers. Mrs. Alverton shared that she sought out *LADY* as a medium for her daughter to connect with African American girls because she felt it was important for her daughter to interact with Black women outside of her family, especially since she, too, attended a primarily White school. However, this is a paradox because while mothers aimed to cultivate Black girl relationships for their children to make sure they are exposed to others like them, some girls attended dominantly White educational institutions that did not support their racial and gender identity development. Mrs. Alverton expressed that she wanted her child to attend a school that provided a good education; therefore, she sent her children to a private coeducational institution nearly 40 miles from their home. The difference between school and social settings is something that many Black students are advised to negotiate to attain success and thrive in society (Horvat & Antonio, 1999). Often, students who attend rigorously academic schools are directed to excel in environments that fail to value their culture, race, and gender (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Horvat & Antonio, 1999; Horvat & Lewis, 2003). Aside from forging alliances with Black girls, *LADY* members build relationships with Black women.

Othermothers

All *LADY* advisors expressed that they had previous relationships with members and knew girls' family members, attended their church, and/or through affiliation with a community

organization. Advisors served as othermothers to many club members. In African American communities, othermothers are fictive kin who care for youth and share responsibility with their blood mothers in supporting their children's growth and development (Case, 1997; Collins, 2000a). Othermothers are also extended support systems that simulate intimate and kindred mother-child relationships that guide their interactions with children (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). African American women teachers have served as othermothers to African American youth through incorporating an ethic of care in their pedagogical practices (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). Marva Collins, an award winning Chicago teacher, exhibited her steadfast commitment to caring for students through embracing a maternal role in their life. Collins and Tamarkin (1982) wrote, "As a parent I tended to be protective, and I always felt that same driving concern as a teacher" (p. 73). Analogous to Marva Collins' role as an othermother in the classroom, *LADY* advisors serve as othermothers to club members.

LADY parents appreciated advisors' role as othermothers to assist with the childrearing process. Mrs. Diva Lypu, the mother of a 1st-year member stated,

So, it's really, it's comforting to know and it's encouraging to know that there are organizations out there that's helping you to raise your children because it takes a village. So, when they're not with me then they're with other caring adults, and I like that.

Advisors served as othermothers to numerous members and indicated this was a fixed duty within their leadership role. Mrs. Hutt said, "Everything, we're responsible for everything! And as I always tell the girls I feel responsible for whatever activity they are engaged, their safety."

LADY advisors were closer with girls who had been in the club for a few years and with those who traveled to club conferences. In the following quote, Mrs. Harris provides a reflection on the connections she had with club members:

Mrs. Harris: Well, we have relationships, positive relationships with all the club members. We really build on those relationships when we attend our conferences because

that gives you an opportunity to spend more time with the young ladies and really you're in a relaxed environment where you really get to know the girls. Because often when you have a lot a new members they feel like well I don't really know my club sisters. But it's harder to get to know them when you're meeting once a month and you're in a structured setting. So, usually about the end of that first program year and when you've traveled to your regional or national conference they really feel like they have relationships with the supervisors as well as the girls because that is how you get to know them. And you, of course you have strong relationships with those young ladies that have been in the organization for over a year because you've had an opportunity to travel with 'em, you've had an opportunity to spend more time with 'em. They get to learn your personality, you learn their personalities, you know they call they talk to you. I mean we end up you know spending time together when we go out to eat you know after we did the walk with the *Empowered Sisters* you know we all went to breakfast and we had an opportunity to spend some time together. So, like any relationship you, it's one that is formed by spending time together, learning to trust each other.

Mrs. Harris suggested that the time spent with girls outside of monthly club meetings had been an avenue to become acquainted with participants. During club meetings I noticed many 12th graders engaged in on-on-one conversations with advisors after the club meetings. Seasoned participants would regularly congregate around their advisor of choice to exchange pleasantries, discuss club events, and provide updates about their lives. For example, Felicia, a 4-year member, had a close relationship with Mrs. Hutt and they often conversed after meetings. The club meeting after her senior prom, Felicia shared pictures on her phone with Mrs. Hutt. Throughout their chat, Mrs. Hutt interrogated Felicia about her prom escort who was also her boyfriend. She inquired about his grade level, career goals, personality, and the duration of their courtship. While laughing, Felicia answered all of Mrs. Hutt's inquiries and then moved on to share her photos with nearby neighbors who overheard her conversation with Mrs. Hutt.

Sometimes youth are closer to othermothers than their biological mothers (Greene, 1990) and at times this was the case between advisors and girls. According to Dierdre Glenn Paul (2003), an education professor and author, young girls might disclose feelings or experiences to

caring adults outside of their family and at times, advisors are girls' confidants. Below Mrs. Hutt discussed the close relationships she shared with *LADY* members.

Interviewer: OK, so what type of relationships do you think that you as you as a supervisor or all the supervisors have with the girls? Do you think y'all are close with some of 'em, it depends on their age? Like what types of relationships do you have with the girls or is it just all different?

Mrs. Hutt: I think it's different; the older girls I think they are closer. Some of the new girls, if they know us personally then they are close you know they will come to us and say things to all the supervisors. And the other ones, they just treat you like the teacher or the parent, just not say anything. And like when we went last year to the state region or we went to the region, I had about 10 to come in and just share things that I thought they should share with their parents, especially their mother. But and I told them, I said, "now if you don't want me to I will not." Oh no, Mrs. Hutt we're talking to you because you just so open you so. And I said, "that's me, I'm just gonna tell you." And I guess I treat them as my daughters and I was just telling them all the pitfalls and you know what they dislike and boys. So you know they just open up and say, "well did you know so and so." And some stuff you wanna say, I don't wanna hear it, I don't wanna hear it. But just sit there and listen. And I don't, I haven't said anything and I told them I said, "you can always call me no matter what time of day or night." I said, "If I don't call back keep calling me and put that 911 in there." I said, "If you feel that you're in a spot that you can't get out of." I said, "but always remember just try not to put yourself in that situation." So, it's some kinda like you just take 'em up under your wings as your children and just try to lead and just listen because that's what some of 'em want. "I just wish my mother would listen to me like you are listening." I said, "Well my daughter probably said the same thing." I said, "But I always try to you know to keep that open relationship with her." I said, "It might be stuff I don't wanna hear, but you just bring it on and we'll deal with it." Bring it on!

In the above statement, Mrs. Hutt revealed her closeness to members and the types of interactions she had with participants. Mrs. Hutt also acknowledged that she provided advice to girls and felt their experiences are common amongst adolescent girls. During a lunch meeting with Mrs. Alverton and Mrs. Harris, they both expressed that if their daughters spoke to other women about their life concerns *LADY* was a space where their children had contact with women they trusted to provide guidance pertaining to their daughters.

In previous studies, scholars examined African American female principals as othermothers in urban school environments (Case, 1997; Dillard, 1995; Loder, 2005). In school

settings, othermothers felt a responsibility to guide, teach, and mentor African American youth. Coinciding with the same ethic of care, African American women affiliated with *LADY* also imparted knowledge to participants to nurture their growth and prepare them for womanhood. However, different from principals, advisors were not financially compensated for their work with *LADY*. In fact, they used some of their personal resources for the club. Mrs. Alverton expressed that annually she donated club binders and inserts with all club information. Moreover, advisors used their personal and social connections to provide training for girls. Advisors exposed girls to Black women in Taylor Town who exhibited the qualities of finer womanhood. Mrs. Alverton expressed that she and her fellow advisors intentionally sought African American females to conduct workshops so girls could see positive representations of Black women. I also noticed *LADY* frequently participated in community projects with local social and/or community African American women's groups.

Advisors also disciplined members and addressed them taking responsibility for happenings in *LADY*. For example, Latrice Potter, an outspoken 3rd-year member, asked to speak at a *LADY* meeting and expressed her discontent with the organization. Latrice mentioned her feeling of unfamiliarity with many members, who are supposed to be her sisters, participants joining *LADY* to get a club jacket, and the lack of follow-through with projects. All attendees listened to Latrice's reservations and Mrs. Harris offered a rebuttal in an effort to encourage Latrice to take responsibility for her happiness as a member of the group.

Mrs. Harris told Latrice there had been many times in her life when she was a part of an organization and individuals joined for the wrong reasons, but the actions of others did not prevent her from being an engaged member. Mrs. Harris addressed all of Latrice's concerns and added that when members came to them with ideas they were urged to follow up with detailed

information to spearhead an initiative; however, individuals rarely returned to advisors to discuss their ideas. During her interview, Mrs. Hutt reiterated Mrs. Harris' words she shared with Latrice and added that although girls signed up for committees at the beginning of the year, committees lose momentum after the annual Christmas Ball. Mrs. Hutt expressed that they are "trying to teach them to be responsible and carry through with the plan that they bring." In addition to providing support as othermothers, advisors also disagreed with girls to incite them to take responsibility in various avenues of their life.

In addition to correcting girls' behavior, girls were comfortable enough with advisors to tell them about internal club disputes. Mrs. Alverton spoke with me about bullying within the club. She said,

So, I like that relationship with them because I want them to be able to come to me if you, if you can't say something or something's bothering you or you can't say it to your parent, hey, ask me, tell me what's wrong, you know. I've had one child was what do you call it, cyberbullying; she was being cyberbullied.

Mrs. Alverton mentioned that she addressed the matter in a way that did not call attention to the members involved. Girls were comfortable with advisors since they trusted each other.

Girls believed that advisors, like their biological parents, wanted the best for them. Unless there was a schedule conflict, all advisors attended meetings and activities. In addition they arrived to meetings and events before members and always came with meeting agendas. When I arrived at one of the last year's May meeting Mrs. Harris was standing outside to make sure girls found the meeting place and knew where to park. Through always being there for girls and being readily accessible advisors constantly demonstrated their commitment to *LADY*.

Socializing Girls for Womanhood

Over the course of interviews with advisors, they all stressed the significance of mentoring within *LADY*. Although mentoring is usually referenced in educational relationships,

mentoring also exists within community settings (Collins, 1990; Paul, 2003). Advisors and members emulate mentor-mentee relationships individuals have in youth-community mentoring programs. Community associations offer African American girls safety, supervised events, opportunities to socialize, “and time during which to explore their burgeoning identities and enhance self-esteem” (Paul, 2003, p. 71). There are various practices built into the infrastructure of *LADY* that are aimed at increasing girls’ self-esteem.

Annually, *LADY* hosts a pageant as their major fundraiser. Contestants anticipate participating in the pageant to earn the Miss *LADY* title. Miss *LADY* maintains her title for a year and represents *LADY* at that year’s regional or national conference to compete against other federated youth members for the Ms. National Youth Club award. Eleventh grade members are required to participate in the *LADY* pageant to maintain their membership in the club. Also, it is mandatory for members to assist with subsidizing the pageant through raising at least \$500. The *LADY* members who raise the most money are recognized as “Girl of the Year”. For the 2012 *LADY* pageant, 12 girls participated in the program and 4 individuals were recognized as “Girl of the Year.”

Similar to pageantry tradition, the *LADY* pageant judges evaluated club members under specific criteria and standards (Riverol, 1992) established by *LADY*. Though I was not privy to this information, I noted that there were four judges who collaborated to assess contestants in each category. Pageant participants were judged in five areas; four elements onstage and one offstage. The four onstage portions included casual wear, talent, formal wear, and question and answer. For the offstage section, contestants submitted a photo album for judges to view their portraits. Mrs. Alverton quipped that although judges are supposed to solely evaluate contestants’ pictures in the album; judges often granted girls high marks for implementing

artistically creative elements to their photo album. She mentioned that some contestants created intricate scrapbooks. Traditionally pageants have served as a space for critiquing female beauty (Riverol, 1992). Though components of *LADY* pageant resemble beauty pageants such as the well-known Miss America pageant, there are differences that *LADY* has implemented and maintained to enrich members' self-esteem and confidence.

I was invited backstage to view what goes on behind the scenes and, for the most part, observed an environment of encouragement and friendliness. I spoke with contestants, club members, advisors, and adult helpers who I witnessed encouraging each contestant throughout the program. I conversed with a few girls before they went on stage who expressed their nervousness and wanted their time on stage to be over. One contestant, Taylor Hamm, shared that she did not participate in the talent portion of the program because she was too anxious. Although she opted out of competing in this section of the pageant, she sat behind stage with contestants and held conversations with girls before they showcased their talent. Throughout the formal session, contenders spoke with each other backstage and griped about how long they spent walking on the stage as the announcer slowly read aloud their biographical information. As Daisha, a contestant who participated in the study, exited stage left she gasped to a fellow member expressing that the mistress of ceremony took too long to read, which extended her time on stage. While complaining to her peer, she used her hands to reenact the cycle of her walk on stage while her friend smiled and agreed with her critique of the emcee.

Throughout the pageant, I observed senior girls supporting contestants in various ways. Older girls assisted backstage with helping girls pin their dresses, corresponding with advisors, and gathering contestants in a line for them to enter stage right. Before the formal segment, I witnessed a conversation between Lisette, a graduating senior, and Tiarra, a contestant, about

Tiarra's dress option. Although Lisette had told Tiarra that the dress she selected was pretty, Tiarra was still uneasy about her decision. Lisette reassured Tiarra that she looked pretty and said that she would not lie to her, and that if she did not think she looked nice she would tell her.

In addition to these positive messages shared amongst contestants and from senior club members, advisors offered hugs and encouraging messages to members as they exited the stage. As Mrs. Alverton was coordinating the pageant, Mrs. Harris and Mrs. Hutt were stage left offering positive remarks as girls came in their direction. For example, as girls came on stage during the casual wear portion, advisors made constructive comments on their outfits to each other and joked with the girls about borrowing their clothing. Similarly, during the talent section of the pageant, the same two advisors smiled at girls while they were on stage and greeted them with affirmative statements. Daisha performed a cheerleading routine and Mrs. Harris expressed her concern for Daisha since she was doing backflips and difficult movements. When Daisha completed her talent, Mrs. Harris expressed that she did a great job and noted her talent. Briefly, I left backstage area to speak with some girls and upon my return Mrs. Harris informed me that I missed Tiarra's phenomenal singing performance.

Advisors placed significance on the pageant since members presented themselves to the audience and community as young ladies entering womanhood. Mrs. Alverton stated,

And so, you know 'cause you just have to make sure that they're doing it right. And when we say we're raising young ladies, a short dress, no, you know. And they know to have formals but then we have to say no plunging neck. So, we're teaching them how to compete in a pageant and be graceful and look elegant, you know, like a lady. We're teaching them, you know how to carry themselves. Then when on the day that we practice we show them how they should walk out there, you know and how to turn.

Contestants were presented in a manner similar to debutante programs for African American girls. Debutante programs are commonly orchestrated by alumnae chapters of historically Black sororities or community organizations. Similar to debutante programs, *LADY* contestants wear

white gowns, showcase their talent, and answer a question relating to societal conditions.

Conversely, in debutante programs girls have to commit to participating in the program for a few months (Jeneration, 2011). In addition to representing girls' transition to womanhood, girls have expressed that the pageant served as a medium to enhance girls' self-esteem and strengthened bonds amongst club sisters. Daisha, a pageant participant stated,

The pageant, well I guess I won't see the reward of it for real for real 'til after I do it. I can see it as a purpose of it is to have fun and also still get another bonding out of it. It's to also help with self-confidence and maybe finding you may not know you have a talent so you may find a talent or whatever. But yeah so basically find, to me it's a whole confidence, self-confidence.

Alexis McBride, a senior who competed in the previous pageant, comments about the pageant paralleled Daisha's expectations of the pageant. She said,

I don't really know how the pageant came about. I think it's just something fun for the girls to do and it showcases, like if you do *LADY* the right way which is start your 9th grade year or 10th grade year, the pageant gives you a chance to show others what you're capable of doing. Like, for example, talent, you may have a talent of acting and a lot of people don't know that, but if you do the pageant it kinda gives you a showcase you know and it tells you who are the next upcoming seniors of the club, too.

Girls gained positive experiences from the pageant that informed their thoughts, perceptions, and behaviors about Black womanhood.

In 1968, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) protested the 1968 Miss America pageant though hosting the inaugural Miss Black America pageant to demonstrate objection against the prohibition of Black women from the Miss America title (Craig, 2002). Rules and regulations in the 1948 Miss America pageant contestant contract forbid African Americans from participation in the pageant. Rule seven reads, "Contestant must be in good health and of the white race" (PBS, 1999). Although Black women were barred from entering the Miss America pageant, 22 years later Cheryl Browne, Miss Iowa, was the first African American woman to compete in the Miss America pageant and in 1984, Vanessa

Williams, Miss New York, was the first African American woman to win the crown (Watson & Martin, 2000). Before, during, and after the famous Miss America pageant, Black women have competed in pageants to exhibit Black beauty and dispel pathological images of African American women (Craig, 2002).

Scholars have argued that Black bodies have overwhelmingly been derogatively represented through a White racist gaze (Craig, 2002; Hutchinson, 1997). Maxine Leeds Craig, a sociology scholar, noted that in popular culture and academic literature African Americans “have been described as having propensity for violence, a reluctance to work, and inability to achieve” (Bogle, 2001; Ferguson, 2000; Jewell, 1993; United States Department of Labor, 1965). Through the institution of Black pageants African Americans have contested conventions of dominant culture to help them build a positive racial identity (Craig, 2002). Pageants throughout Black communities supported the idiom “Black is beautiful” which began in the 1960s and became the theme of the Black Power movement. *LADY*’s pageant is an illustration of racial pride. During the pageant, family and audience members doted over contestants while girls were expected to bask in the ambiance of love, appreciation, and approval. Members’ participation in *LADY* rests at the intersection of race, gender, and class since traditionally pageants have been an avenue of protest or political action for middle-class African Americans and therefore have reflected their preferences and values. *LADY* has placed high social value on the term, “lady.” to combat the vast negative portrayals of African American women.

When questioned about the significance of the NACWC federated Girls’ Club emblem, the four leaf clover which stands for mind, body, soul and race, Mrs. Harris highlighted the significance of *body* and its relationship to self-esteem. Mrs. Harris said, “And with your body, you know that promotes your self-esteem, you know how you carry yourself as a young lady

how you take care of your body, how you respect your body.” Throughout *LADY* programs and workshops, advisors instructed members about behaviors associated with being a lady. Mrs.

Alverton mentioned that they run the gamut in terms of training members to “carry themselves like a lady.” For monthly meetings, also referred to as business meetings, girls and advisors wear business casual attire to teach girls the importance of business attire. Alexis, an executive board member and senior expressed,

‘Cause our meetings are like business meetings. We may not talk about much but it’s you know they’re teaching you for when you do get a job that allows you that where your dress code is to put on a suit every day, or to put on Sunday’s best clothes every day. Like for a lawyer or you’re working in some kind of office. It’s helping you be in a routine of, OK, I always dress up for business meetings, well this is my job so now I really have to dress up and it won’t be anything new to you ‘cause you’ll already be used to it.

In addition to apparel, advisors constantly told girls to hold themselves like a lady. So much so that executive board members who presided over meetings address the girls as “ladies, please quiet down” in order to cease the chatter amongst the general body.

The girls also had etiquette workshops to learn about acceptable and ladylike behaviors in various social settings. Their last etiquette session was hosted by Mrs. Adrienne Hoyt, a former high school teacher and member of *SL* who had previous relationships with advisors and some members. Mrs. Hoyt spoke with girls about a range of topics including covering tattoos in workplace environments and the appropriate way to cross their legs. She ended her lesson by speaking with members about speaking loudly with friends in public. The speaker dissuaded girls from speaking and laughing boisterously since these behaviors drew negative attention to them and were not ladylike.

Advisors mentioned that preparation for and participation in the pageant trained girls to be ladies which in turn bolstered their self-esteem. Before adding her responsibility as assistant

advisor, Mrs. Alverton served solely as the pageant coordinator. Below, Mrs. Alverton explains the teachings she provided to girls to prepare for the pageant.

And so, you know 'cause you just have to make sure that they're doing it right. And when we say we're raising young ladies, a short dress, no, you know. And they know to have formals but then we have to say no plunging neck. So, we're teaching them how to compete in a pageant and be graceful and look elegant, you know, like a lady. We're teaching them, you know how to carry themselves.

From interviews with advisors and observing their actions in the club, I derived that healthy self-esteem is linked to being a lady.

For advisors, training girls to be a lady revolved heavily around training girls to exhibit socially acceptable behaviors for girls and young women. Researchers illustrated that oftentimes Black girls are socialized to adopt standards accepted by dominant society to assimilate and achieve a positive identity (Fordham, 1993; Wallace, 1990). Michele Wallace, a Black feminist author, asserted that after slavery women were delegated to two dominant representations which were the Black Lady and the Amazon.

The privilege woman who had either been free before the war or maintained a special position in the white household, sometimes as the mistress of the white master; and the woman who as bigger, stronger, tougher, more rebellious, and usually poor. The first category we will call the Black Lady, the second the Amazon. The great majority of women were somewhere in between. That is, they desired the ease, comfort, and respectability in the eyes of the white world that being a Black Lady to some extent provided; at the same time they realized the immediate necessity of their Amazonian qualities. (Wallace, 1990, pp. 154-155)

Club women consisted of middle-class and lower-middle class women—the daughters of Black Ladies, who aimed to achieve White women living standards (Wallace, 1990). In order to do this, Black women focused on being cleaner and more proper than White women to earn acknowledgment as a lady (Wallace, 1990).

Historically, Black women struggled to be recognized as ladies. For example, in Sojourner Truth's famed 1851 speech, "Woman's Rights," Truth argued to be recognized as a

woman and repeats, “a’n’t I a woman?” to advocate for rights. Advisors aligned club teachings with training members to be ladies since Black women have fought to be included in this designation. Having a positive attitude was a character trait that advisors wanted girls to possess since they would come across adversities in their lives. Although all advisors wanted girls to have a positive attitude, Mrs. Hutt frequently encouraged members to adopt a positive outlook on life. When I spoke with her outside of meetings, she was optimistic. For example, a few months into the study I called her to schedule an interview and she left a voicemail indicating that she had been in a car accident. When I returned her call she was calm, expressed that she was happy no one was hurt, and that she needed to get her automobile repaired. She referred to her faith in God and then asked me how I was doing. I extended assistance if she needed anything and she expressed that she was OK and that we would speak soon about setting up a time to meet. During Mrs. Hutt’s interview, she noted that she wanted girls to learn to have a positive outlook in life through being in *LADY*. Mrs. Hutt shared that it was the club’s responsibility to teach members to be positive in life. She said, “And try to have activities as I said, to train them for higher education and that’s what I believe in that you know to move forward and also to be positive and don’t always dwell on the negative.” Engrained in Mrs. Hutt’s commitment to positivity resided a focus on community service.

When I asked study participants to describe the club, many individuals offered a reply including community service as a core tenet as the organization. Advisors encouraged girls to think about different ways they could serve the community to enhance other’s lives. To achieve this goal, advisors urged girls to invite prospective members who engaged in service activities. After being asked to describe *LADY*, Mrs. Hutt articulated her stance on service as it pertained to the club. She stated, “And also you are responsible for giving back to your community. Service,

service, service, service.” Though advisors emphasized the importance on service, I gleaned from scrapbooks and archival data that previous club members were more active in community service initiatives than today’s girls.

In *LADY* scrapbooks there is record of involvement with various service activities. *LADY* has participated in more standard service opportunities than social cause service ventures. In social cause service, youth work with individuals who are in need or have social concerns like being poor. In standard service, people do not interact with people in need; however, volunteers help peers or work for groups (Metz, McLellan, & Youniss, 2003). During this study, *LADY* assisted with five service activities. Two activities, the Can-a-thon and the Easter Egg Hunt, were projects when members interacted with different populations. During the Can-a-thon *LADY* performed their strut and step routines for elders in the audience. However, when they were not performing they socialized with their peers and engaged in limited conversations with senior citizens. During the Easter Egg Hunt, girls entertained and assisted members’ family members and developmentally disabled youth color and search for eggs. Although many participants mentioned service as a prime characteristic of the club, the majority of volunteer activities focused on limited participation with people in the community.

The aforementioned community service activities are staple programs in *LADY*’s calendar. The club has established longstanding relationships with the senior group who attended the Can-a-Thon and has an existing bond with people who go to the Easter Egg Hunt. Most of the attendees at the Hunt were *LADY*’s family members and friends. Also, a youth group who came to the Easter Egg Hunt was from Mrs. Harris’ job. Vidal, Nye, Walker, Manjarrez, and Romanik (2002) expressed that a significant element of community partnerships was “winning initial interest and credibility in the community” (p. 4-7). *LADY* has established a new alliance

with the local chapter of *Black Women United*; however, two advisors and a few parents of members are involved in the organization. Consequently, new partnerships emerged from social networks.

Club advisors spearheaded the direction of the club and worked with parents to train girls for womanhood. In *LADY*, preparation for womanhood is heavily focused on becoming a lady. *LADY* assisted parents with raising their children through advisors establishing relationships with girls, enhancing their self-esteem and confidence through encouraging girls to have a positive outlook on life. On the other hand, community service, the crux of the club, requires more attention specifically with determining the purpose of their service endeavors and how they connect to *LADY*'s mission set forth by *Community Mothers* and NACWC. An assessment is needed to identify the ways community involvement has benefited girls and the community at large.

In the following chapter, I share and analyze findings pertaining to nine club members who participated in this study. Dominant themes relating to their race, gender, and class in the context of the club will be discussed in detail and examined to comprehend how they related to the overarching research questions.

V

GIRLS

This chapter reveals findings about *LADY* club members and provides a critical examination of their experiences in the club; specifically, their interactions with each other and their relationships with club advisors and their mothers. In order to fully understand the meanings that the girls give to their participation in *LADY*, it is important to understand the selection and admissions process for this highly selective social organization. Not every girl is invited to be a part of *LADY*. In fact, the selection process is not advertised. Girls are asked to join *LADY* through word of mouth.

Girls are accepted into *LADY* during their high school career. In conversations with advisors, I learned that they prefer 1st-year applicants to be freshmen and sophomores since that gives them time to work with the girls. Mrs. Harris stated the following:

We accept all years but it's highly encouraged the 9th and 10th grade year. We have some that come in during the 11th grade year. But you receive very few applications in their senior year of high school 'cause usually they've been so busy in high school they really have not had time to be a part of the organization. So, majority of applicants will be 8th graders, those that are you know moving or transitioning to the 9th grade and you'll have 10th graders as well. Because you know you have to participate in the pageant to be, to continue as a member of the organization, so. We encourage 9th, 10th, and, you know, of course 11th graders.

Presently, *LADY*'s grade level distribution is 9 freshmen; 12 sophomores; 19 juniors; and 8 seniors. Although advisors prefer to accept members in their earlier years of high school, current members were accepted into *LADY* at different grade levels.

In the *LADY* binder, information for each girl is listed including her contact numbers, high school, and extracurricular activities. In addition to holding membership in *LADY*, all girls are involved in a number of community- and school-sanctioned organizations, including Latin

Club, Girl Scouts, basketball, marching band, church choir, and cheerleading. Members hold leadership positions in other clubs as well. Members consider involvement in various co-curricular activities including *LADY* as a form of networking, a resume builder, and an opportunity to exhibit their leadership qualities. Tatum, a 14-year-old 1st-year participant, described *LADY* as follows:

I would say it is like an organization for young ladies to become, to get ready for the real world when they're becoming adults and showing you how to be a leader in the community and basically helping you for when you go to college. This would probably be good to put on a resume and something and get you scholarships and something like that. So, it's like a really good eye-opener to the world, becoming a leader and becoming a respectable young lady.

In addition to gaining skills to train them for success in college life and the workforce, Tatum expressed that membership in *LADY* also prepared girls for womanhood. In each interview, girls were asked to describe *LADY*. Select responses to this question are provided below.

Tiarra Meyer, a 3rd-year member stated,

I would say it's an organization for young girls. It's actually a sisterhood and they really focus on trying to develop us as young women and we're involved in community service and bonding and just helping out the community. We have balls, parties, pageants, all that kind of stuff. So I would say it's mainly, we're helping out the community but it's a bond while doing it.

Daisha Thompson, a member of the executive board expressed:

It's a group of young women, basically it's a preparation for life like bigger life. It helps with leadership skills and all that type of stuff. But we're pretty much involved in the community and it's just a good group to help you learn how to take care of yourself and represent yourself like a lady.

Tyra Motts said the following:

I think it's a group for girls who try and better themselves and to get more involved in the community and just surrounded by other girls who want the same goals and stuff.

In each response above, members referenced that the club played an active role in their growth to womanhood. Specifically, they discussed behaviors and practices that characterized

them as a “good woman” such as providing service to the community, which scholars have analyzed as a facet of respectable Black womanhood (Higginbotham, 1993)

All the girls I spoke with during interviews, informal conversations, and in the course of observations were college bound. For them it was not a question of whether or not to attend school, but which school they would like to attend and deciding on an intended major. Since the first meeting, *LADY* advisors encouraged girls to attend and graduate from college. On various occasions advisors gave pep talks to *LADY* about the importance of not getting consumed with extracurricular social activities so they do well in school and graduate. Mrs. Harris often told students that it was fine for them to partake in sororities but that should not be their main focus. Adults often shared stories about individuals who attended college with a mindset to concentrate on partying and flunked out of college. In addition to having open conversations with girls about academics, *LADY* held scholarship workshops and organized a graduation to congratulate seniors on their success and encourage them to do well in college.

Several upperclassmen in the club are enrolled in advanced placement courses to earn college credit. Recently, one of the assistant advisors informed me that many members were absent from a meeting because they were attending an advanced placement course at the local college. In addition to earning college credit, members are searching and applying for funding opportunities to fund their educational endeavors. Members of *LADY* have a long tradition of participating in a Historically Black University local alumni chapter’s Debutante program. Individuals selected to join the program are called “Debs.” The 6-month debutante program provides high school aged African American girls with the opportunity to build friendships with others, engage in volunteer work, and compete for a chance to earn college scholarships. Similar to *LADY*, the debutante program hosts a pageant which determines the winner of a full

scholarship to the Debutante programs' sponsoring institution. In the past, there have been many girls from *LADY* who won the top prize from the Debutante program. This year, Alexis, a senior, won the pageant and earned the grand prize, a full-tuition scholarship.

Amongst members, there is a chasm between "new girls" and "older girls." Often, many 1st-year participants congregate during meetings and events. Meanwhile, veteran members frequently mingle with each other. Many, if not all of the older girls, drive to meetings alone or carpool with fellow members. Alexis, a 17-year-old senior, expressed that she and another 12th-grade member attend the same school and carpool together daily. Some seasoned members and new inductees interact with each other due to relationships outside of *LADY* including sporting team affiliations, church membership, and social clubs involvement. Although semblances of these bonds trickle through in *LADY* meetings, girls who are driving age often congregate with each other outside of club meetings.

Parents, supervisors, and new members express that "older girls" have more autonomy to get to know each other outside of club gatherings. For example, seasoned club members have the independence and driver's licenses to attend local youth club outings and parties that are not supervised by parents and/or adults. On the other hand, younger girls depend on their parents for transportation and are unable to receive parental permission to attend a non-*LADY* sanctioned, unsupervised get-together. Tatum Johns, a freshman and 1st-year member expressed her inability to attend these outside soirees and said,

Well, we do different things like we'll go to the bowling alley sometimes, have fun over there. And then sometimes we'll go to, like *Little Stars* (another federated organization), which is another club, they have parties and we'll go out to those. I haven't gotten to go to one of those but we went to The Wing Spot after the induction ceremony.

During the interview, Tatum lowered her voice when saying that she was unable to attend a *Little Star* party because she didn't want her mother, who sat next to her during her interview to hear her remarks.

“Older girls” serve on *LADY*'s executive board and often communicate with club advisors. Currently, the 21 club officer positions consist predominantly of 11th and 12th graders. Younger participants are welcomed to serve on committees but often do not take on many commitments their 1st year. After interviewing 1st-year participants, they expressed that they were not interested in leadership positions and wanted to take this time to learn about the inner workings of *LADY*. Committees are seen as a stepping stone to executive board positions. Holding leadership positions in the club also provides an avenue for members to be involved with federated clubs at the regional, statewide, and national levels. Currently, two members of *LADY* serve on the state executive board for the National Association of Youth Clubs.

In this chapter, findings reported will concentrate on girls' interactions amongst each other in *LADY*. Similar to advisors knowing girls prior to their *LADY* membership, many girls knew each other through family friendships, church, school, and/or co-curricular activities. There are minimal degrees of separation amongst girls since prospective members must know a club participant, past member, or advisor in order to be recruited into the organization. In adolescent youth organizations such as *LADY*, peers can have an impact on club enrollment and retention (Loder & Hirsch, 2003).

***LADY* as a Crowd**

LADY is a youth crowd who viewed themselves as smart, classy, and community-oriented young ladies. Below are respondent's descriptions of *LADY*'s girls' characteristics.

Aryanna, a sophomore, shared the following in her interview.

Interviewer: OK. So you've been in *LADY* for about the past 2 years what would you say are some common characteristics amongst *LADY* members if there are any?

Aryanna: There are a lot of common factors. Like everyone is very outspoken and outgoing like if you have something on your mind they're not afraid to like say it. And then everyone is really classy and upbeat like really fun people to be around.

Interviewer: Oh wow. So since you've been in it for 3 years now what would you say are some common characteristics amongst *LADY* members and if there are any?

Daisha, a 3rd-year member shared the following during our conversation.

Daisha: I would definitely say, "classy", like that was there before I was in it, my mother said it was even still there then. Yeah that's definitely the first thing you hear.

Interviewer: You said, "classy"?

Daisha: Yes.

Interviewer: I thought you said "classic".

Daisha: Oh no, classy. Laughter. It probably definitely would be like smart, involved in all that type of stuff.

Mrs. Alverton, assistant advisor mentioned the following about girls:

Interviewer: Uh huh. OK. So what are some common characteristics amongst *LADY* members, if there are any?

Mrs. Alverton: Goal-oriented, they're usually young ladies that are leaders in the school or potential leaders within the school. They're the young ladies that like to be engaged and provide service to the community. So those are the types of members that we like to attract and that's kind of the brand that we're looking for in *LADY* members.

During interviews many girls, parents, and advisors agreed with the above representations of girls. Being classy aligns with *LADY*'s concept of finer womanhood. However, some individuals articulated girls' diversity within the group. When I met with Felicia, a senior in the club, she expressed that she did not notice common characteristics amongst members. Below is a fragment of our conversation.

Interviewer: I was thinking about your answer to the previous question about common characteristics and you were like, "hmmmm, I really don't see any". So how do you see your other group members? You know what I mean? I don't know, cause I . . .

Felicia: Honestly, you know like I was telling you earlier, I don't. Outside of the clubs, many of the girls I don't necessarily spend time with them. There's a few I do, don't get me wrong, there are a few girls that I do spend time with outside the club. But most of 'em I don't just because being that I know I wouldn't put myself around those people how they are outside the club. It's you know, [you] get that vibe from people and

you know, they're messy so to speak, and you know stuff like that. So, I just don't hang around them that much so.

Felicia frequently interacted with Mrs. Hutt and had friendships with girls in her grade level.

When girls questioned or disagreed with advisor's decisions, Felicia often understood the advisor's point of view. In the meeting when Latrice vented about her time in *LADY*, during Mrs. Harris rebuttal I witnessed Felicia constantly nodding her head to agree with the assistant supervisor's advice. Furthermore, before and after meetings I usually saw Felicia speaking with advisors about jackets since she had been in charge of ordering them for the past couple years.

In Felicia's interview, we spoke about jackets and I gathered that through this leadership role she gained a glimpse of the business side of the club. Felicia expressed that solely managing the jacket initiative was stressful because members constantly bombarded her with inquiries about the order. She also expressed that designing the jackets was a lengthy process since those absent from meetings had discrepancies with colors which caused them to constantly revisit the design. In February, girls received jackets and advisors distributed them in a local grocery store parking lot. Mrs. Harris informed me that members wanted to immediately pick up their jackets since they planned to attend a high school basketball game wearing their jackets and enter the audience as a group. *LADY* jackets displayed girls' solidarity and club membership. Linda Arthur, who examined the history and psychosocial aspects of dress, suggested that attire in selective societies, such as *LADY*, serve as a symbol for "organizational belonging" (Arthur, 1998, p. 85).

According to *LADY* alumnae who participated in this study, jackets were a fairly recent phenomenon among club members. The intricately designed pink and green jackets were a common topic discussed at many meetings. Each girl selected a name and number to appear across the back of their jacket. Since the 1960s, neophytes, recently initiated BLGO members,

began sporting paraphernalia that displayed nicknames and numbers given by their prophytes, which are older BGLO members (Parks, Ray, Jones, & Hughey, 2012). Although *LADY* members copied this practice from BGLOs, *LADY* members selected their own numbers and names for jackets. During an interview with Tyra Motts, a 1st-year respondent, she expressed the following during our conversation about the name and number on her jacket.

Interviewer: Um, OK, now on your jacket, what's your line name?
Tyra: Um, aw man, Grover.
Interviewer: Grover, what's that, what did you chose that one for?
Tyra: Um, I was born in NC and like we say downtown, and they don't say downtown they say the grove, so.
Interviewer: So you was born in the grove.
Tyra: Laughter.
Interviewer: That's cool. Are you military?
Tyra: No.
Interviewer: What's your number?
Tyra: 001
Interviewer: Is that Jordan or something else?
Tyra: Yeah, part of it.
Interviewer: Oh, yeah, NC. Ok alright, I get it, I get it, it makes sense now. It all ties together.

Girls wore jackets during *LADY* functions, to school, and at local events. For instance, Catherine Wilkes expressed that she wore her jacket to school and took it off before first period since students at Mary Mother were not allowed to wear outerwear throughout the school day. According to Mrs. Hutt, girls utilized jackets as salient signifiers of their social identity—being a *LADY* participant.

Members and adults articulated that some girls' joined *LADY* to sport a club jacket around Taylor Town. I inquired as to why they thought girls would wear *LADY* jackets if they were not actively involved or no longer affiliated with *LADY* and informants told me about members who posed as club members through wearing jackets. Below is Mrs. Hutt's response to my inquiry about the significance of club jackets amongst members.

Interviewer: So the jacket. I've never, I don't go into the schools. So are the jackets a big deal in the community? In the schools, like what is the big deal?

Mrs. Hutt: In the schools because you have your federated clubs and then you have your non-federated clubs, so everybody wearing a jacket or a t-shirt. And so you're known by your jacket.

Interviewer: But I'm just thinking if they join the club and get the jacket and leave, you can't say you're in the club anymore.

Mrs. Hutt: Oh, they do. Oh, they do. Because we hear that some of them, that's the only "I got" in here. Because if they have the jacket on you don't know whether they are active member or not, only thing you see is that *LADY* jacket. And they might not even be active.

During meetings and interviews I frequently heard members speak negatively about girls who they believed joined the club for a jacket. When I asked interviewees about qualities in prospective club members, Felicia mentioned prospective girls whose sole purpose in joining the club was to get a *LADY* jacket. Part of her statement included, "You don't want the bad people or the people who's gonna be troublemakers in the club or people who would have plenty years, or the girls that get in for just the jacket and then they get out." Part of the constant bickering over jackets came from *LADY*'s presence in schools. Mrs. Alverton noted that the organization was a popular club in the community and adolescents wanted to be a member. Below is an excerpt from our conversation about the jackets.

Interviewer: So, what is, why all the fuss over the jackets and the t-shirts?

Mrs. Alverton: OK, OK.

Interviewer: They came up in my pilot study, they came up in every interview. Three interviews, everybody talked about the jackets and t-shirts. They just said they have 'em, they didn't say what the fuss was about.

Mrs. Alverton: That's, that's part of belonging. You're with this group. Hey, they will not meet for certain things, but if I say, "Hey I have the t-shirts meet me at Bruno's parking lot" they gon' all be there, you know. Because they wanna put that on because they're with this group and it's belonging. Because if you're in *LADY*, you all that, you know. And that's the way. And then the jackets, oh, jackets are just. They can't decide the colors and then we'll decide and then they'll change, such and such has it. It's just a whole lot of back and forth about the jackets but when they get 'em, oh. Like they got together and they all put their jackets on and they walked out in a line you know. Like it's, *LADY* is the club you wanna be in.

Interviewer: OK.

Mrs. Alverton: You know, it's just, it's almost like, you in *LADY*, prestige, you know.

Jackets also served as a recruitment tool, according to Mrs. Harris. Below is a passage from Mrs. Harris' interview.

Mrs. Harris: And the jackets. Laughter. The young ladies love those jackets so that's a recruitment a process by itself although it should not be but young ladies want to be a part of an organization, they want to be affiliated with an organization and when they see these young ladies wearing the jackets and they are young ladies that carry themselves as young ladies and they're leaders in the school and they want to become a part of that process. So you really don't need any other type of recruitment process because when they put those jackets on and they wear their t shirts, they are the *LADY* club. And when they go out in the community, when they go to the schools, we explain to them that you're a young lady at all times and you are representing *LADY*. And we expect certain behaviors from young ladies that are members of the organization. And they really take pride in doing a good job and being leaders and recruiting other young ladies that are like them.

Members adopted the jacket as part of the "idealized image" (Arthur, 1998) of a *LADY* member.

Idealized images are visual norms that hold power in a subculture or group (Arthur, 1998).

B. Bradford Brown, an educational psychologist who analyzes adolescent peer relations, asserted that "crowds are essentially categories of individuals based on intentions and personality dispositions as well as on typical activity patterns" according to peers (1990, p. 180). Brown argued that adolescents aim to locate their position amid peers that is their own while fitting into the greater landscape of peer social world. Adolescents do not possess the autonomy to select and try on different crowds since peers drive them into one according to their character, likes or dislikes, and background (Brown, 1990). As teens transition to high school, they encounter new faces, and crowds serve as a way for youth to easily identify peers (Brown, 1990). In high schools, *LADY* jackets denote membership in a federated club which has significant meaning amongst the Taylor Town adolescent peer culture. Federated youth clubs have a legacy in the community and have been restricted to Taylor Town's African American elite.

During an informal conversation with Mrs. Nora James, a senior club member and past assistant advisor, she shared that *LADY* was limited to girls from well-to-do African American

families in the Taylor Town area. Mrs. Lyles, 1994 Miss *LADY*, substantiated Mrs. James' statement and expressed that during her time in *LADY* it was one of two popular federated girl organizations in the city. *LADY* members had a strong family foundation, were "brought up the right way" to earn good grades, and possessed a commitment to community service. However, with the transition in adult leadership, there was a shift in membership and girls from different backgrounds were recruited to *LADY*. Mrs. James lamented that the club was no longer solely for girls from the upper crust of Taylor Town.

Mrs. Estine Mason, the advisor emeritus, was responsible for *LADY*'s growth and diversity in membership. Mrs. James shared that Mrs. Mason urged the senior club to consider accepting girls from various backgrounds to provide them with mentorship and guidance. Socially, there was a need for area youth to engage in positive activities and *LADY* began accepting girls who did not fit their earlier unstated preferences. However, it remained that prospective *LADY* participants had to be associated with past or present club members and/or adult leadership. Mrs. Hutt described Mrs. Mason's influence on the club in her description of the organization.

Made up of 9th-12th grade girls some of them are from single-parent homes which I think most of the purpose as Mrs. Mason told me was to reach out to all girls, not just what you, excuse, quote unquote, your well to do girls. But girls that are from single-parent homes that are trying, that wanna be in a positive role and be with positive young ladies to learn how to be a woman and how to give back to the community. And like I said that's what she always stressed, that this organization was a service organization. It wasn't all about you, it was all about lifting as we climb and as stated, when you go up, reach back and bring someone else up. And that's what really touched my heart is that it was that type of organization that wanted to bring everybody into the fold. Because when I was growing up, I didn't do that. And it was only if you was on the right side of the track that you got into the organization. But Mrs. Mason always stressed that anybody that wanna be a part of this organization, she wanted to reach out to them because you know you don't know where people are coming from. And so if you can help somebody along the way that you have done your job. And so you know with the purpose of that, lifting as we climb for *LADY*, that's what really touched me about *LADY* and then I said trying to enlighten the girls on all aspects of life.

Though *LADY* represented individuals from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds, the club promoted Black middle-class values throughout their values and programming. In Louis Alvarez and Andrew Kolker's documentary, *People Like Us: Social Class in America*, producers explored the various dimensions of class in different contexts. The video showcased how class is a performance that can be learned through adopting specific preferences and dispositions of dominant social groups. In the film, an image consultant trained a working-class woman to practice middle-class cultural codes. Similar to the trainer in the film, in *LADY* members learned to employ dominant cultural capital.

Cliques

Since Ms. Lyles' time in the club, membership has more than doubled and two additional advisors assist with *LADY*. Over the past 3 years, the organization has grown from 34 to 52 members on roll. Due to *LADY*'s rapid increase in membership, girls have had limited opportunities to form strong relationships with each other. Mrs. Lyles said during her time, "we exhibited togetherness, you know, you walk around school and you have girls that want to become a *LADY* participant, so it was kinda of a good thing to be in." Mrs. Lyles compared her bonding experiences to those of current members and stated, "They still try to keep that bond, doing things and trying to relate to each other. It might not always [work] but you know they still try." Within the club, girls are fragmented into cliques.

Cliques are "small groups that are interaction-based entities, comprising a limited number of adolescents identified as a group because they "hang around" together and develop close relationships" (Brown, 1990, p. 177). During data collection, I noted that girls often socialized in groups according to their school and/or grade level. Brown (1990) indicated that adolescents entered into cliques in high school to locate their place within a new social system. Over the

course of interviews, participants supported my observations and expressed that cliques primarily formed according to grade level. Although there was a gap between upper classmen and freshmen, older members made attempts to become familiar with younger girls. During Alexis' interview, she discussed her experiences hanging with girls who attended her school and efforts she had made to become closer with "babies" as she affectionately referred to freshmen members. Below is an excerpt from our conversation:

Alexis: But I don't believe in being a club and not being at least face-familiar with every person. You might not know every name or you might not know that person like close but you know if you're in a girl club and you meet every month you should at least know everybody in your club. You don't have to know everybody by personality but you need to know everybody by face and by name.

Interviewer: So do you interact with them?

Alexis: I try to. I make sure you know I try not to stick to that circle that I'm always with in *LADY* when I'm at meetings. I try to sit around and talk to new girls, talk to younger girls you know. And you know if you are like a lot of girls at Boyler School that are in *LADY* are always together. Like me and Lisette, we're always together.

Interviewer: Y'all in the same year, too, right?

Alexis: Uh huh. So when we go to meetings, like me, Lisette and Nikki and Makeena, we're always together so when we go to meetings I try to separate myself from them and talk to girls that go to Mother Mary High School or not just talk to one girl, talk to a whole bunch of 9th graders, you know. Try to get to know them, you know. Not be with the same people I'm always with.

Interviewer: Do you find that a lot of people stick with individuals they go to school with who are in the same grade?

Alexis: A lot of the girls, just personally, the girls at Boyler School are always together.

Interviewer: How many of, how many y'all are there?

Alexis: I think it's, it's at least 10 of us, I know. And we are always together.

Interviewer: And y'all not all seniors?

Alexis: Uh unh. Well, we are always together going to class, always together going to school. Me and Lisette ride to school every day together, you know. And we're always like in-between classes and in the courtyard talking; we're always together. So it's like when *LADY* is all together, like all 47 of us I try to separate myself from them and go talk to Harper School people or go to the babies, the 9th graders, you know. Don't always be with the same people.

Interviewer: How is that going for you? Is this being effective, does it seem like people wanna get to know you or does it seem like they don't?

Alexis: Yeah, you know. You wanna, they wanna talk to you and you wanna talk to them so you know you just go over there and start to talk about stuff. Even if it's school stuff you still talk about it. And it's not bad you know. But you're in a girl group and

that's the practice of being in a girl group is to know everybody and form those bonds. Even if you don't form the bonds still talk to those people, you 'know, cause there you're sisters so you still wanna know who they are. You don't wanna be complete strangers to them.

Interviewer: OK. Have you had the chance to get to know anyone that you weren't hanging with you know that's at your school in *LADY* but outside of it like maybe you asked them to go somewhere with you or something like that?

Alexis: And, um, there are a couple of us in *LADY* that work at the same place.

Interviewer: Oh wow, that's cool.

Alexis: So, yeah, that's funny. So it's like when we try to make our schedules we try to always work together.

In addition to hanging with her friends in *LADY* and at school, Alexis felt a duty to become acquainted with her younger club sisters. During meetings I often noticed Alexis interacting with senior members and individuals on the executive board since she served as a vice president. Alexis was not present at many of the meetings I attended due to her senior year commitments and participation in a debutante program. Therefore, I was not able to corroborate her efforts to socialize with younger members.

First-year *LADY* members interviewed in this study mentioned that older club members attempted to socially interact with them to make them feel welcome to *LADY*. RaMona Vice, a 1st-year member, expressed her experiences socializing with various members in *LADY*. Below is a selection from her interview.

Interviewer: So what types of relationships do you have with other girls in *LADY*?

RaMona: Um, like I have a lot of friendships. Like, I don't wanna say best friends but you know friends, friendships, you know. Like I talk to a lot of 'em, like, you know. Like some of the older girls, like I talk to them a lot. And they're really nice so, yeah. Since there's like two RaMonas in our club she's just like, oh well this RaMona, and this RaMona and this. I've kinda got brought in by the way I was like.

RaMona often sat with girls in her grade level that she knew from her previous school, Mary Mother. Presently, she was the only *LADY* member at her present school, Hill High. Although she frequently remained with her freshmen friends during meetings and events, I observed RaMona intermingle with individuals in different grade levels. RaMona had a gregarious

personality and offered suggestions in meetings and volunteered to assist with club projects. As RaMona indicated in her quote above, she and an older member had the same name and initials which was a way that individuals became familiar with her. Advisors and executive board members often had difficulty differentiating between the “RaMonas” during attendance or their organizational duties. This confusion was a topic of humor within the club. Mrs. Alverton also asked RaMona to perform at *LADY* programs since she played an instrument.

RaMona built rapport with older girls through attending outings outside of *LADY* meetings. After our interview, RaMona was headed to strut practice with *LADY* members to prepare a routine for a step show sponsored by *Boys 2 Men Club*, a local NPHC fraternity sponsored male mentoring organization. RaMona also participated in non-sanctioned *LADY* gatherings such as skating. What follows is our conversation about hanging with *LADY* members.

RaMona: We do spend time with each other, like we just haven't in a while because everybody's so busy with graduation and so. But yeah, we've done stuff. Like we've went skating, we do stuff like that.

Interviewer: Really?

RaMona: Uh huh.

Interviewer: How many of y'all got to go?

RaMona: It wasn't a lot of us but. And then we went.

Interviewer: So who plans, 'cause you were saying some girls are saying we don't do anything but who plans those excursions 'cause someone's planning to do that, skating and strutting; who's doing that?

RaMona: Just, I mean just like, hey y'all wanna go? It's just like different people. Like we're basically all like a sisterhood. Just call us up and be like, you wanna come to the mall with me, or something like that? I mean, it's not a specific person or plans. We're kinda like, hey y'all wanna go to the park or something like that? And it's, usually do it by forward message.

Interviewer: Ok. So someone emails somebody and y'all all like get it together?

RaMona: Uh huh.

Through our conversation, I gathered that senior members spearheaded out-of-club gatherings since it slowed as graduation drew near. Though RaMona had multiple interactions with older girls, during meetings she remained in constant contact with her freshmen friends.

Tatum and Catherine's, both 1st-year participants, experiences differed from RaMona's since they did not attend non-*LADY* hosted activities. In both of their interviews, Tatum and Catherine expressed that *LADY* participants networked with each other and local high school-aged youth by attending parties. Both respondents mentioned Alpha Alpha Kappa (AAK) parties as the "thing to do" in town. During interviews Catherine lamented the following:

Interviewer: So you said AAK parties, so do like all of you go? I'm just trying to get a sense of it or is it just AAK and *LADY* or like?

Catherine: It's like the *LADY* Ball, you have to get a ticket.

Interviewer: OK.

Catherine: So in order to get into an AAK party you need to know an AAK. And if you're kinda like a wallflower like me, you don't really know any AAK's. So I've never gone to one. I've never been to one, so. Just cause I don't really know any AAKs. Personally that could, I could just like search on Facebook and be like, hey you have a ticket.

Interviewer: So how do you hear about 'em? Like do they come and talk about 'em or something?

Catherine: Yes, the sophomore girls in *LADY*, they'll take their friends in the sophomore class that aren't in *LADY* and they'll take them and they'll go. And then sometimes they'll talk about it and they'll be like hey you know why didn't you go to the AAK party? And I'm like I don't know any AAKs.

Tatum echoed Catherine's disengagement with AAK parties in the following statements.

Interviewer: So you said fun; what are some types of ways y'all have fun like what do y'all do?

Tatum: Well we do do different things like we'll go to the bowling alley sometimes, have fun over there and then sometimes we'll go to, like *Little Stars* has, which is another club, they have parties and we'll go out to those. Haven't gotten to go to one (Whispers because her mother has not granted her permission to attend a party) but go out to those and we went to Johnathan's Eatery after the induction ceremony. It was pretty fun, got to know my brothers and my sisters. (Mother tells her, "the ball".) Huh, yeah, the ball that was fun. It's my first dress up type thing and the pageant. Girls, I actually got to know girls even more at the pageant cause I got there early and I'm just kinda out there and I was just talking to 'em and stuff and everybody was just so happy about all the girls competing and stuff who won and so it was like everybody was happy and we were all

just talking to each other and getting to know each other so we were all just having fun while the time lasted.

Though Tatum and Catherine had limited involvement with *LADY* participants outside of the club functions, they saw value in attending social engagements to interact with other teens in Taylor Town and their *LADY* sisters.

In *LADY* there are ensembles of “friendship cliques” which are groups of individuals who members choose (Brown, 1990). In the club I noticed that many cliques also formed amongst girls who knew and met up with each other outside of *LADY* activities. Clique membership continually transforms as individuals get to know each other. Initially, in *LADY* cliques form according to grade level but as younger members transition to being seasoned members, clique structures change. For example, RaMona was a member of her freshmen clique but also interacted with older girls. Cliques differ in size; however, they are typically small so members can have regular interaction with each other. Also cliques vary in closeness and receptiveness to outsiders (Brown, 1990). Individuals in cliques frequently correspond with individuals in the circle rather than others in their same age bracket. With cliques, there peripheral individuals also known as “hangers-on” or “wannabe’s” who have the ability to gain clique membership and enter into a different clique (Brown, 1990).

Mentoring

Despite the absence of a formal mentoring component, older girls supported younger members’ academic and social development. Girls mentored each other through club initiatives. For example, girls coordinated a semi-structured homework assistance program at the main public library. On Thursdays, members assisted younger girls with school assignments. Alexis provides a description of the homework assistance program below.

It's kinda like the older girls helping the younger girls. We'll say OK, on Thursday at 5 we're gonna meet at the library; bring homework or if you gotta test the next day bring notes to study, it's kinda like tutoring. It's like the older girls trying to help the younger girls you know study for a test they got in two days. Or you have those hard math problems that you can't do but if somebody else older than you has already been through that math class they can kinda help you and guide you. And that's what a study session is; it's having fun but being about business and school work at the same time.

Due to *LADY*'s semi-structured nature and participants' demanding schedules, the assistance program concluded mid-school year each spring for the past 2 years.

In addition to supporting members academically, *LADY* sisters provided informal mentorship to girls in social settings. Mrs. Diva Lypu observed her daughter receiving assistance from an older girl when she had difficulty grasping the movements of a strut routine. She said,

But anyway then the older members, especially my daughter and she's not the older member she's one of the new members and her friend, they (the older members) came over to them and said, "well let me show you." And they took up a lot, they had a lot of patience, took up a lotta time to work with them and pull them off them off to the side. And I was really, I was really proud of that cause others they were going on then they wanted to make sure that they were getting the steps. And I said, "oh that's good, I'm really impressed by this." Laughter. So anyway that's . . .

At times, seasoned participants engaged in informal peer mentorship with younger members. During business meetings, older girls assisted newer executive board members with their new roles. For example, Felicia, an active senior, often guided Daisha, the newly elected secretary, through meeting protocol and explained areas of confusion to help her get used to the new leadership position. Though there were unofficial mentoring relationships amongst members, advisors and parents wanted to enhance this facet of the club. Mrs. Johns expressed that the club needed a stronger mentoring component since *LADY* was a large organization. She stated, "What I would like to see them do is, like take a younger girls, each one of them take a younger girl and kinda mentor her and I think that would help to bridge that gap, you know between the older ones and the younger ones."

Similar to club members, advisors noticed the distance between the two groups and often urged girls to interact with each other. Moreover, they began implementing exercises in meetings to foster group interaction. In February 2012, Mrs. Harris constructed an exercise to make girls from different cliques work together to answer questions local Black history facts. Girls counted up to five to form teams according to their number. While in teams, I overheard girls speaking with each other about possible answers. After some time, girls began speaking with advisors and communication was opened to the floor. At this time, girls were playful and spoke with each and began going back to their original seats to interact with their friends. Similar to the Black history program, advisors administered other ice breakers for girls to get to know each other and learn members' names. These attempts to unite older and younger members were short-lived since the majority of business meetings were filled with agenda items pertaining to upcoming events. Though there was time for girls to converse and get to know each other after meetings, many did not use this time to form new relationships. After meetings, members ate, spoke with advisors about club events, and convened with their cliques to discuss current social events in teen life.

Us and Them

Though cliques existed in *LADY*, advisors' and girls' accounts of members were similar to what Anita Harris, Girls' Studies scholar, coined as the "Can-Do" girl (2004b). When I asked members about qualities they sought in prospective members, participants offered the following responses.

Tiarra, 2012 Miss *LADY* stated,

Well. this time I looked for if they were willing to do things to make the club better and if they were compassionate, if they were thoughtful, if they you know could be potential leaders and that's mainly what I looked for when I was voting.

Tyra, a 1st-year member expressed the following:

Interviewer: Um, so now this is your turn to, you're gonna participate in voting for next year for *LADY*. So what are some things you're interested in? What are you gonna be looking for when you vote for girls, like what type of girls are you gonna be looking for?

Tyra: Role models.

Interviewer: Role models?

Tyra: People I can learn from.

Interviewer: Ok. So you said role models. What are some role model qualities in a girl that you might look for like when they're reading? I don't know like when you're looking at her application packet.

Tyra: Being a leader and being smart and know what she's doing.

Aryanna Chep, a 2nd-year *LADY* member said,

We look for people who have a good head on their shoulders, someone who's classy and who'll just be an asset to the club. Like they really want to be in it for the right reasons and everything and you . . . just basically a good asset to the club.

Harris (2004b) described the "Can-Do" girl as an individual with a myriad of admirable qualities such as being self-made, self-driven, and successful. In addition to the aforementioned traits, "Can-Do" girls actively participated in popular culture consumption and set their sights on attaining a career before entering motherhood (Harris, 2004b). *LADY* members credited their skills, talents, and abilities for their achievements and accolades. Similar to the "Can-Do" girl, *LADY* members authored their own "choice biographies" (Beck, 1992). When asked to describe finer womanhood, Alexis McBride, a *LADY* vice president, attributed many characteristics of this term to academic accomplishments. She stated,

Finer womanhood to me is being more than average. Like you wanna, everybody wants to be successful but you have to go that extra mile to be successful you know. You can't just do the everyday basics. You get a job, you pay your bills and hope that you got some money left over to buy a new car. You gotta take that extra step you know and it starts with college. Really, no it starts in high school putting everything, don't just go to school and go sit in class. Go to school learn, study, go home and study some more you know, take that extra jump, that extra leap so when you get outta high school you can go to college and you can be in those classes that are gonna get you somewhere you know. Don't go to college and party, go to college and learn so that when you get to the real world you'll come out of college with a good degree you know. Do programs in college that'll help you get a job. Like, I wanna be a pediatric nurse when I get out of college. So you know I wanna do programs that are gonna give me those benefits of being a nurse.

Like do work study but work, don't work at McDonalds, work at a hospital somewhere that's gon' get you knowledge so when you get to your field you'll already know the background work, the little details that you need to know if something goes wrong you know. And to me finer womanhood is going above and beyond the basic needs and structures of life to get where you need to be.

In the aforementioned excerpt, Alexis articulated her belief that finer women engage in opportunities that align with their career goals. In her discussion, she did not mention class standing or networks that have the potential to provide educational and career opportunities. "Choice biographies" paint life as an accumulation of happenings orchestrated by oneself.

Characteristics of "Can-Do" girls' starkly contrasted to Harris' (2004b) portrait of the "At-Risk" Girl. The latter population's pathological representation was constructed through a gaze of delinquency, pessimism, teen pregnancy, and apathy. Furthermore, Harris (2004b) noted that "At-Risk" girls had a propensity to be ethnic minorities and were "unlikely to be middle class" (p. 25). Conversely, *LADY* was a group of African American middle-class "Can-Do" girls. Though *LADY* members portrayed themselves in a positive manner, I observed participants practice exclusionary practices toward girls who exhibited "At-Risk" girl dispositions.

When asked about what they looked for in future members, many participants offered qualities that were similar to their personalities. Without prompting, respondents also answered this question by describing personalities and behaviors they did not want in *LADY*. RaMona, a 1st-year participant, expressed that she knew girls who she would not recommend for the club.

Interviewer: So what are you looking for when you're looking for people to like pass out applications to or encourage them to apply?

RaMona: People that you know wanna be a part of something. Like people that are presentable like, not so loud and you know just girls that you know, know how to act like young ladies.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

RaMona: And have fun at the same time. Not so uptight but ya know just to have fun you know, stuff like that. Like I'm not fina give you an application and you, you know act like you're ratchet. I'm not fina do that.

Interviewer: You said, rashing?

RaMona: Ratchet. Laughter.

Interviewer: Ratchet, what is ratchet?

RaMona: Hood.

Interviewer: Hood. OK. That's the new word for it, ratchet?

RaMona: Uh huh. Somebody who don't, like if you sound your words and you talk properly, you know. I'm not fina give you an application if you talk like you from the west side, I'm not fina give you one. But I would encourage you, girls that wanna be a part of something great to be a part of *LADY*. And you know.

In addition to girls commenting on the caliber of prospective members, advisors also spoke to girls about the kinds of guests they invited to *LADY* events. During a meeting observation, Mrs. Hutt spoke to girls about the upcoming Christmas Ball and told them to be selective about whom they invited. She went on to say that it was not a Waffle House scene. As they laughed, she said they knew what she meant. As a native upstate New Yorker, there were no Waffle House franchises where I grew so I was unfamiliar with individuals who frequented this establishment. Over the course of the study, I gathered that Mrs. Hutt was referring to troublemakers. Mrs. Hutt added that inappropriate dancing was not allowed at the event. As she made this announcement to members, she placed her hands on her thighs and comically imitated the dance style. Again, this made the girls laugh. She ended with reassuring the girls that they were not the ones performing negative behaviors. Mrs. Hutt stated, "I know it's not you, it's your guests."

Though *LADY* espoused a staunch commitment to "lifting as they climb," this message was not demonstrated with those who failed to exemplify the organization's values. Greg Dimitriadis, a sociological foundations of education professor, postulated that adolescents have a complex relationship with popular culture since they are often demonized and represented as monolithic populations who embody a predisposition to harm others (2001). *LADY* members and leadership critiqued some outsiders according to racist and classist assumptions (Waldron, 2011). As a result, individuals who mirrored the "At-Risk" Girl typology were viewed as the antithesis of the *LADY* "Can-Do" girl.

VI

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Below is an excerpt from a conversation with Alexis, a 17-year-old *LADY* member, who juxtaposes her experiences in *LADY* alongside those in *Girls' Club*, a club that she has held membership in for 15 years. Alexis stated,

But you get, I more out of *Girls' Club* than I do *LADY* because *Girls' Club* is a mixture, it's a melting pot, you know. There's more than just all the Black girls partying and dancing and stuff like that. You know, with *Girls' Club* you get the true definition of like figuring what else is out there besides what you know, you know. Black stick to the same thing, they don't really do like a lot of, like with *Girls' Club* I've done camping, I've gone to Europe you know, I've did like, White stuff that Black people won't do, like white water rafting all that Black people stuff like White people do you know. And that kinda helps get out there and figure out what else is out there as of some Black people tend to stick to what they know, just staying in their own little shell and their own little surrounding and not trying to figure out what else is out there and what else is available.

Alexis's poignant description of the differences between *LADY* and *Girls' Club* highlighted the competing discourses operating within *LADY* and *Girls' Club*. Each organization serves a different purpose in Alexis' life and she articulates that they both prepare her for Black womanhood. Embedded in her sophisticated analysis of the different roles and purposes each organization fulfills are the three major themes of this study: finer womanhood, surveillance, and us and them.

Finer Womanhood Redefined

Finer womanhood is a facet of the politics of respectability (Higginbotham, 1993). Historically, Black club women adhered to the politics of respectability by adopting behaviors and norms of White women in order to gain the respect of Whites, other Blacks, and those aspiring to be middle class (Nuemann, 2008; Taylor, 2002; Wallace, 1990). Black women believed that projecting finer womanhood would eradicate the erroneous belief that Black

women were abject and immoral people. Almost 60 years after the founding of *LADY*, the club's mission rests on the concept of finer womanhood and members are taught to exude behaviors associated with this social construction of a particular form of womanhood in order to develop into a successful Black woman. The adults in *LADY* spent a considerable amount of time managing the appearance of participants so that they could present them to the public as an image of finer womanhood. For example, during an etiquette workshop girls learned the importance of hiding their tattoos when they sought employment. Also, the guest speaker instructed members to avoid speaking and laughing loudly in public.

Girls involved in *LADY* hold ideals about finer womanhood that challenge adults' ideas about finer womanhood. For example, in the quote above, Alexis expressed that she gets more out of *Girls' Club* than she does *LADY* because it is a "melting pot" and they do different types of community service activities. She also asserts that Blacks stick to the same things and she highlighted that *LADY* was not a flexible atmosphere that entertained different ideas. In these statements, Alexis brings voice to the idea that *LADY*'s finer womanhood is an antiquated concept that is not relevant in her life. Throughout this study, girls pushed for a finer womanhood that combated adults' ideas about finer womanhood. For example, on many occasions girls expressed an interest in hosting parties to make money and fit into the teen social world of Taylor Town. Girls' images of finer womanhood differed from advisors and their mothers because they were interested in having parties and carwashes to make money which were two activities that advisors fervently opposed. One parent who was a *LADY* alumna expressed that she remembered Mrs. Thorn, her advisor, stating that "ladies do not wash cars" since this was physical labor. Also, Mrs. Alverton expressed that in order for her to consider the idea of hosting a car wash, participant's fathers were required to attend the event to protect girls

from danger and to wash cars. There is a chasm between the adults' and girls' ideas about activities and Alexis highlighted this when she mentioned her interest in camping and going to Europe to learn new things, not social etiquette training.

LADY sticking solely to their ideas of finer womanhood as the social construction of Black womanhood can be problematic because their interactions are limited to individuals who value this worldview. Alexis expressed that *Girls' Club* provides a true definition of what life is like since *Girls' Club* allowed her to interact with individuals from various ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Girls in *LADY* experience what life is like as an emerging finer woman. Therefore, so, what happens when *LADY* members encounter individuals who do not treat them like a lady? *LADY* having an open discussion about topics outside of finer womanhood would be a great opportunity for girls and advisors to discuss how to respond to adversities and discrimination in life. Presently, *LADY* focuses on finer womanhood which hinges on the idea that if I act like a lady, I will receive equal treatment.

LADY should adopt principles of BFT as a way to create a space to have frank discussions about the realities of living as a Black female in a society that continues to discriminate against Black women. BFT examines the intersection of what it means to be Black and female and gives life to Black women's lives through authenticating their lived experiences (Collins, 2000a, 2000b, 2004; The Combahee River Collective, 1995; hooks, 2000; King, 1988). BFT provides Black women with a theoretical paradigm that acknowledges the use of embodied realities to create meaning in their lives. By incorporating a theoretical framework that supports their narratives and lived experiences, *LADY* could build places in their curriculum for various representations of Black womanhood.

One of the central tenets of Girls' Studies is that adults must listen to the voices of girls and affirm their experiences in the here and now. Since the Black women's club movement, many clubs have been phased out and this could be a reality for *LADY*. It may be helpful for adult leaders and mothers of *LADY* participants to view girls' actions and take their words into consideration as the club prepares for its future. This club has great potential to give girls a voice.

During interviews, some girls said that although they have a large membership, some girls seldom attend meetings or functions for a myriad of reasons. Alexis lamented that Black people stick to the same thing and it could be that she wants to experience different facets of Black girlhood that are not present in *LADY* but girls would like to see incorporated into the organization such as planning and carrying out various projects. Alexis mentioned that through *Girls' Club* she spearheaded a community service initiative to provide single mothers and their babies with Pampers and formula. This is something girls in *LADY* could do to expand their service projects.

There are various advantages to *LADY* as well. Black girls get to mingle with each other in a safe and supervised environment where they are taught cultural capital that will aid them in their careers and lives. Moreover, girls have access to and build relationships with adult Black women outside of their family. There are also areas of improvement in *LADY*. For example, "lifting as we climb," is part of Black American history but girls do not have a grasp of how their club, *Community Mothers*, or the NACWC is situated within that history. *LADY* leadership has the opportunity to educate mothers and their children about the significance of *LADY* as a social club for girls in the South situating its history within the larger history of civil rights for African Americans in the South. For example, meetings and discussions can be centered on questions

that aim to discover the impetus for the organization's founding and ways the NACWC empowered African American women to work for social change. Providing this historical context may help girls understand the significance of the organization which may lead to redefining its purpose from developing finer womanhood with its focus on social etiquette training to a more contemporary focus that meets the needs of today's African American woman.

Although social etiquette has been an important facet of the program, the focus on social etiquette is problematic because it re-inscribes gender and racial stereotypes. In the first chapter, I mentioned how Black girls are sent to detention centers at a higher rate than White girls. This is not a Black girl problem but a macro level problem. Through teaching girls that it is important to adhere to gender stereotypes by avoiding trouble, girls are being taught to suppress their diversity because they are African American girls. Furthermore, this act does not create change for Black girls, but it re-inscribes their subjugated position in society. Similarly Fordham (1993) found that Black girls at Capital High who longed for academic success were instructed to suppress gender diversity, be silent, and/or mimic the male dominant "other." This is the same thing that is happening in *LADY*.

Surveillance and Concerted Cultivation

Lareau (2011) discussed concerted cultivation as something middle-class parents adopt to make sure their children have access to cultural capital in an effort to ensure their academic success. *LADY* is an extracurricular activity that mothers urge their daughters to participate in to learn practices associated with becoming a member of the Black middle class. Parents and advisors organize events. *LADY* has events they have been offering for years which have become a staple in *LADY's* calendar year. However, this study shows how girls attempted to create change through resistance to the dominant lessons of *LADY*.

Advisors and parents often griped about the division between new girls and older members so, Jane, a 3rd-year club member, saw this as an opportunity to request a different type of orientation program. She suggested that a swimming party would foster interaction amongst girls and ignite cohesiveness at the onset of the club year. Advisors considered and accepted Jane's request and for the past 2 years *LADY* has hosted swimming orientation sessions for continuing and new members. Although this act exhibited resistance, it was within the confines of what was acceptable in the club and, therefore, it was controlled resistance. Having a swimming party contributed to *LADY's* reputation of finer womanhood and aligned with middle-class behaviors and preferences. So, although girls enacted resistance in the club to make changes, requests that fit into the concept of finer womanhood were accepted and carried out. For example, members repeatedly expressed interest in hosting parties and advisors staunchly opposed this idea. When I juxtaposed the swim orientation and party alongside each other, neither generated income for the club; however, the swimming orientation did not threaten the club's image of finer womanhood.

In addition to exhibiting concerted cultivation, advisors and mothers consciously constructed a middle-class presence within the organization. Club practices and activities could only be supported by individuals whose family possessed the economic means to support their membership. As I discussed in previous chapters, members were responsible for annual dues, participating in a pageant, hosting monthly meetings, and other scheduled events. Girls were recruited with the knowledge that their parents were expected to meet their financial responsibilities. Although parents were assumed to be able to support their children's financial obligations, there was the belief that girls could easily meet all their financial obligations by raising the money to support their dues and participate in the pageant. However, if money was

not raised, participants were expected to pick up the tab. Although this practice is supposed to relieve girls and their families of the financial pressures of paying \$500 out of pocket, most individuals who could not afford club expenses may not have relationships with individuals who can afford to donate money to extracurricular activities. The club's financial expectation automatically and by design keeps out many girls, specifically the type of girls that the adults would probably not consider examples of "finer womanhood."

In her interview, Alexis mentioned that *Girls' Club* raised money to travel to Europe and they did not have to pay for anything out of pocket. *Girls' Club* had members from diverse social economic backgrounds. Many of the girls griped about paying for the pageant since they were not successful with raising money. It may have been helpful for *LADY* to have supports in their program for girls to collectively raise money for their activities and events. In *LADY*, fundraising is an individual effort that girls pursue so they do not have to sponsor their participation in the annual pageant. Having girls collectively raise money would provide various opportunities for girls to work together and discuss financial literacy. Also, this would allow girls from diverse financial backgrounds to be involved in *LADY*. Moreover, fundraising would not rely on what parents could bring to the club and focus on girls' contributions.

Us and Them Revisited

Findings from this study also illuminate the exclusivity of *LADY*. Girls gain membership to this club through their social relationships. As a result of *LADY*'s exclusionary practices, the club creates an "us"—the *LADYs*, and "them"—those Black girls who do not fit into the social construction of finer womanhood typology. In recent years, *LADY* has increased their enrollment, yet they do not accept individuals who are not connected to *LADY* or those who have lower grades. Through involvement in *LADY*, girls who are excluded would have access to a

group of peers who are academically inclined. Also, they would gain social support and access to dominant forms of cultural capital which could prepare them for success in school, the workforce, and their adult life.

Minority and/or low income children sometimes do not have the required knowledge to negotiate facets of the hidden curriculum which influence their life's trajectory. Lareau (2011) asserted that "schools are a critical sorting agent for the competitive workforce" (p. 263). Schools are institutions that reflect the interest of dominant groups, and as a result reproduce inequalities in our economic, social, and political systems (Ferguson, 2000). Certainly many institutions have criteria or admission guidelines, but the larger question is how do these criteria operate to exclude rather than include? What happens to the girls who do not meet *LADY*'s criteria? For generations, Black women were excluded from aspects of White society and relegated to life as second-class citizens in America. The admission criteria that *LADY* has adopted mirrors the way Black women were treated by White men and women. Black women's exclusion from social groups in society also served as an impetus for Black women to create social organizations such as the NACWC that aimed to improve lives for Black women and uplift the greater Black community.

Is there still a need to uplift the Black community? *LADY* participants and adults often described the organization as a community-service-based organization. However, scrapbooks and observations showed that participation in community service activities has dwindled since the club's earlier years. Moreover, attendance at service activities was spotty and rarely had the majority of the club show up. It is ironic that the same individuals *LADY* is supposed to uplift are the ones who are not afforded membership to the organization, not because they are denied admission to the club, but because they are not socially linked to the organization.

The girls in the study often expressed that they sought prospective members who displayed qualities of finer womanhood. Because of exclusive practices like this, it would be valuable for *LADY* to keep the historical underpinnings of their organization at the forefront of their organization to remind girls about the NACWC's purpose and impetus for its creation. Currently, *LADY* falls short of teaching members their history, but it could easily change its focus a bit and be used as a tool to change the course of their organization and revise their curriculum to be grounded in social justice.

LADY does not only exclude those who they are supposedly trying to uplift, but their practices do not leave room for diverse representations of Black girlhood. For example, *LADY* does not encompass all middle-class girls, and middle-class girls who do not espouse values of finer womanhood, including lesbians and teen moms, are excluded from the organization. Through focusing on finer womanhood as a construction of womanhood, *LADY* is missing out on those who have different world views but also want a space to interact with other adolescent Black girls.

Implications for Black Girls' Programs

In Alexis' introductory quote she expressed her value for *Girls' Club* in a specific way. She valued the club because it provides her access to individuals outside of her race and provides access to different lived experiences that broaden her horizons. In the opening quote, she valued *Girls' Club* over *LADY* because she feels it gives her a "true representation" of life. However, during interviews and observations Alexis communicated *LADY*'s worth in her life. She mentioned that *LADY* offered a place for Black girls to interact with each other and share their cultural values. Alexis has a familial kinship with girls and advisors in *LADY* which speaks to her lived experiences as an African American girl.

Alexis expressed there are ways to enhance *LADY* through incorporating aspects of *Girls' Club*. Both organizations provide Alexis with meaning in different types of ways. This study revealed that Black girls' clubs or programs similar to *LADY* could encompass qualities of both *LADY* and *Girls' Club*. In order for *LADY* to last, being open to new ideas and experiences is something that leadership has to take into consideration. This need for change highlights a generational gap in lived experiences between adults and girls.

One way *LADY* could be changed is to provide girls with leadership opportunities to collaborate on projects. Often times, girls serve on committees to carry out various assignments, but advisors end up planning and doing all tasks to bring activities to fruition. Giving girls the opportunity to plan events may help them bond with each other and provide them with a sense of autonomy. Event management will also give girls the opportunity to exercise their critical thinking skills in a different context. Paul (2003) postulated that programs for Black girls should have opportunities for members to exercise critical thinking skills and team work.

Another way *LADY* can change is to provide financial literacy skills and technology training. These lessons can educate girls about the importance of financial responsibility. Also, girls can play an integral role in this training through expressing what they want to know about finances. In regard to technology training, the club hosted a training session on Facebook etiquette, but they could go further to discuss various types of technology available to create blogs or other forms social networking. Moreover, girls can learn about technological advances such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) where free classes are offered to explore prospective majors and possible career paths.

Implications for Girls' Studies

Findings from this study reveal the importance of Black girls' voices in a club like *LADY*. Girls' Studies started as a field that was interested in giving voice to girls' experiences since previously girls were viewed as having the same concerns and experiences as women. Girls in this study constantly conveyed their concerns about *LADY*'s antiquated model of finer womanhood and expressed their ideas about the interests of today's emerging Black woman. For example, girls expressed their interests in more involvement in community activities and social events. In order for the club to continue to exist, girls' experiences, needs, and desires have to be taken into consideration.

Scholars in Girls' Studies have explored girls' experiences in various contexts. However, there has been limited scholarship dedicated to studying Black girls' lives in diverse settings. Findings from this study differ from current scholarship about Black girls' lives because researchers have typically focused on exploring low-income, working-class (Brown, 2009; Leadbeater & Way, 1996) and middle-class Black girls' school experiences (Carroll, 1997; Horvat & Antonio, 1999). Though these studies are important and have provided profound insight into Black girls' lives, scholars have yet to examine middle-class African American girls' embodied realities in a social club context.

Implications for Black Feminist Theory

LADY incorporates many of the facets of BFT. For example, *LADY* invites Black women to conduct all of their workshops and activities to provide Black female role models for girls. Social clubs are a way to capture and pull together Black history and this is why girls should have access to *LADY*. Due to *LADY*'s emphasis on finer womanhood, girls do not learn about the intersecting oppressions that inform their subject position in society. As a result of Black

women's bodies being viewed as deviant and accessible to anyone, Black women employed the politics of respectability which emphasized finer womanhood in order to gain equal treatment in society. Although Black girls in *LADY* are taught behaviors that coincide with finer womanhood, girls are not on the same page as advisors and their parents. Leadership could bring more value to *LADY* through teaching members about BFT, specifically the intersection of racism and sexism that their Black feminist foremothers experienced which was the driving force behind the creation of organizations such as the NACWC.

Girls' experiences challenge BFT since age is a component missing from BFT which is essential to understanding Black girls' embodied realities. Findings from this study revealed that youth can be oppressed. Participants whose parents made them seek membership in *LADY* exercised their authority to subject their daughter to finer womanhood training. Girls in this study were under their parent/ guardian's control and were socialized in a way that aligned with their mother's ideas about Black womanhood.

Currently, Black girls transitioning to womanhood do not have a theoretical platform that encompasses their age as a category of difference. As it stands, BFT, a theoretical framework developed to understand Black women's lives, is being used as a lens to critique Black girls lived experiences. It is important to consider age as a category of difference because Black women's experiences can not be interchanged with Black girls' lives just because they share the same race and gender. In order to move to include age as a category of difference in BFT, the use of storytelling can be adopted as a theoretical tool to reframe and expand BFT. Through storytelling Black girls' narratives can be illustrated in various contexts.

Recommendations for Further Research

While this study provided much needed research about how social clubs influence Black girls' preparation for Black womanhood, there are still areas in which this research can be expanded to learn more about the various ways social clubs socialize Black girls for womanhood. Expanding this study to encompass more clubs would be valuable in identifying practices and behaviors learned in other Black girls' clubs. Surveying additional groups would provide a larger geographic sample. This study was limited to the data from one site in Taylor Town where there are three social clubs for Black girls.

While this project explained ways *LADY* trained participants for Black womanhood, the study did not give a detailed description of the skills all Black girls learn through membership in social clubs similar to *LADY*. In addition to increasing the number of sites, it would be interesting to address the overarching research questions through an ethnographic methodological approach. An ethnographic investigative orientation permits the researcher to be a participant-observer and gain first-hand accounts of participants' experiences. The ethnographer could spend time daily with members to learn about other areas of their lives to have a better understanding of how *LADY* influenced their ideas about Black womanhood. In addition, an ethnographic study would lend itself to a longitudinal study. It would be beneficial to follow a cohort of members throughout their tenure in the club and 1 year post-club membership to ascertain the skills they learned in the club and what they perceived was helpful as they entered Black womanhood.

Conclusion

The research conducted in this study provides data and research on a population that is often overlooked in sociological and education literature—middle-class Black girls. Different

from early 19th century representations, Black girls have diverse models of Black womanhood. Though many local social clubs for youth have diminished due to lack of funding and the busy lifestyle of youth, there are still mentoring organizations that take on the task of socializing girls for Black womanhood. This research emphasizes a significant, complex, and unique relationship Black women have with Black girls.

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Appendix A

Pilot Study Observation Guide

Study title: Exploring Black Girls' Experiences in Social Clubs

Jeena Williams, Graduate Student

University of Alabama

This research project uses an emergent study design so the researcher is able to look for themes as they emerge in the research. With that in mind, the researcher wants to leave space for themes that may not be present in scholarship that explores adolescent Black girls' lived experiences.

There is limited research that has been published exploring adolescent Black girls' educational experiences. However, based on the minimal literature during observations the principal investigator will be looking for themes in three following areas:

- 1) Peer interactions
- 2) Interactions amongst participants and their mothers
- 3) Relationships between adolescent Black girls and club advisors

Appendix B

Pilot Study Interview Protocol

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
2. When did you first join *LADY*? Who encouraged you to seek membership?
3. Tell me about *LADY*.
4. In what *LADY* events have you participated? Tell me about that event.
5. What *LADY* events have you helped organize?
6. What are some educational events hosted by the Club?
7. How have these events helped you with in school?
8. What school do you attend?
9. What are your favorite subjects? Why?
10. What are your least favorite subjects? Why?
11. How has membership in *LADY* helped you excel in your favorite subjects?
12. How has membership in *LADY* helped you in your least favorite subjects?
13. What are your educational goals?
14. What steps do you plan to take to reach your goals?
15. How has *LADY* helped you develop the plans to reach your educational goals?
16. What *LADY* events have resources have been most helpful to reaching your academic goals?

Appendix C

Letter of Correspondence

November 20, 2011

Dear *LADY* Club,

My name is Jeena Williams and I am a doctoral student at the University of Alabama. As a graduate student I am interested in learning about adolescent Black girls' experiences who in relation to their social identity development. The goal of this project is to learn about *LADY* members' social identity development in the context of you club. With your permission, I am interested in attending monthly meetings and scheduled activities to observe how participants interact with each other, community members and leaders with of the organization. In addition, I am interested in meeting with at least ten club members, at least five members' parents/guardians, all club supervisors, and the founder of *LADY* to hold one-on-one interviews to learn about their experiences in *LADY* Club.

Information learned through observations and interviews will be used to heighten my understanding of adolescent Black girls' identity development in social clubs. Data gathered from interactions with the organization will not be shared with anyone under the name of the organization. I appreciate the opportunity to learn about *LADY* Club.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Jeena Williams
Graduate Student
University of Alabama

Appendix D

Letter of Support

**MRS. MARY HUTT
LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUTH CLUB
33 LANE DRIVE
TAYLOR TOWN, ALABAMA**

January 13, 2012

Mrs. Jeena A. Williams
Doctoral Candidate
Instructional Leadership
The University of Alabama

Dear Mrs. Williams:

I, Mary Hutt, Advisor of Leadership And Development for Youth Club, grant you permission to conduct interviews with members of Leadership And Youth Development for Youth (*LADY*), *LADY*'s parents/guardians, the founder of *LADY*, observe *LADY* club events and collect as well as analyze *LADY*'s documents.

If you need further information please give me a call.

Sincerely,

Mary Hutt

Mary Hutt, Advisor
Leadership And Development for Youth

cc: Mrs. Harris, Assistant Advisor

Mrs. Alverton, Assistant Supervisor

Appendix E

IRB Approval

Office for Research
Institutional Review Board for the
Protection of Human Subjects



November 2, 2012

Jeena Williams
Dept of ELPTS
College of Education
Box 870302

Re: IRB#: 12-OR-021-R1 "Between Loud Girls and Finer Womanhood:
Analyzing Black Girls Experiences in a Social Club"

Dear Ms. Williams:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your renewal application.

Your protocol has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your application will expire on November 1, 2013. If your research will continue beyond this date, complete the relevant portions of the IRB Renewal Application. If you wish to modify the application, complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the study closes, complete the appropriate portions of the IRB Request for Study Closure Form.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,



Office of Research Compliance
The University of Alabama



358 Rose Administration Building
Box 870127
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487-0127
(205) 348-8461
FAX (205) 348-7189
TOLL FREE (877) 820-3066

Appendix F

Interview Protocol

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
2. What grade are you in?
3. What high school do you attend?
4. How did you learn about *LADY*?
5. How long have you been a member of *LADY*?
6. How many times did you apply to *LADY*?
7. What made you join *LADY*?
8. Please describe *LADY* and what they do.
9. What are some common characteristics amongst *LADY* members?
10. What are some good reasons that a girl would be selected for membership into *LADY*?
11. What relationships did you have with *LADY* members before joining the club?
12. Why was *LADY* created?
13. What does the motto "Lifting as We Climb" mean to you?
14. What is the significance of mind, body, soul and race in the clover?
15. How do the concepts of mind, body, soul and race relate to your life?
16. Why does *LADY* focus on community service?
17. What *LADY* events, programs or workshops promote mind, body, soul and race? How?
18. Why are their requirements to dress business casual at meetings?
19. Please tell me about your role on the club.
20. What are major events the club hosted last year?
21. What is the process for gaining membership into *LADY*?
22. What are the executive board positions in *LADY* and what are their duties?
23. What does the clover which represents National Colored Girls Association mean to *LADY*?
24. What national, regional or regional conferences have you attended with *LADY*?
25. What is the purpose of the *LADY* Pageant?

Appendix G

Interview Protocol—Revised

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
2. What grade are you in? High school? Extracurricular activities?
3. What is *LADY* Club?
4. When was it created? Why?
5. What is the purpose of *LADY*?
6. How did you learn about the club?
7. Why did you apply to *LADY*?
8. Please explain the application process.
9. How do you all advertise *LADY* to prospective members?
10. What are you looking for when selecting new girls? Why?
11. What do you have to pay for each year as a member?
12. What are some things *LADY* does? Why? How?
13. What is the purpose of the *LADY* Pageant?
14. What positions do you hold in the club? Why did you select those positions?
15. What committees are you on? How are the committees formed? What is the committee responsible for? Why did you select those positions?
16. How do you interact with other members?
17. How do you interact with advisors? *Community Mothers*?
18. Why do you have a clover on everything (binder, jackets, etc.)? Meaning?
19. Why do you dress business causal at meetings?
20. Tell me about the national, local, and regional conferences?
21. Why do you say “Lift as We Climb” at the end of every meeting?

Appendix H

Advisor Interview Protocol

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
2. Please describe *LADY* and what they do.
3. Please tell me about your role on the club.
4. What encouraged you to get involved with *LADY*?
5. How long have you held your leadership position with *LADY*?
6. What are you looking for when looking for potential *LADY* members? Why?
7. What are some common characteristics amongst *LADY* members?
8. What is the significance of mind, body, soul and race in the clover?
9. How do the concepts of mind, body, soul and race relate to your life?
10. What *LADY* events, programs or workshops promote mind, body, soul and race? How?

Appendix I

Parent/Guardian Interview Protocol

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
2. Please describe *LADY* and what they do.
3. Please tell me about your role on the club.
4. What are some common characteristics amongst *LADY* members?
5. What are some ways that you are involved with *LADY*?
6. Were you involved with *LADY* before your child joined the club?
7. How long has your child been a member of *LADY*?
8. What made your child seek membership in this organization?
9. What is the significance of mind, body, soul and race in the clover?
10. How do the concepts of mind, body, soul and race relate to your life?
11. What *LADY* events, programs or workshops promo mind, body, soul and race? How?

Appendix J

Founding Member Interview

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
2. How long have you been involved with *Community Mothers*?
3. What does *Community Mothers* mean?
4. Why did you seek membership in *Community Mothers*?
5. What year was *LADY* founded?
6. What was the mission of *LADY*?
7. Please tell me about the first year of *LADY*.
8. Why did LA create a junior organization?
9. How were things in Tuscaloosa during that time?
10. How were things in Alabama at that time?
11. How were things in the nation at that time?
12. Please describe your role with *Community Mothers*?
13. Please talk about your role with *LADY*.
14. What are you looking for when looking for potential *LADY* members? Why?
15. What are some common characteristics amongst *LADY* members?

Appendix K

E-mail to Participants Regarding Transcript

Hello Participant,

I hope all is well. I have attached a copy of the transcript from your interview regarding your experiences with **Leadership And Development for Youth Club (LADY)**. Please let me know if there are any discrepancies, if you have questions or if you would like to follow up regarding anything discussed during your interview.

Also, if you would like to create a pseudonym, which is a fake name so you cannot be identified, please contact me. If I do not receive a response regarding a pseudonym I will create one for you. In addition to email I can be reached at (###) ###-####.

Take good care,

Jeena A. Williams

Appendix L

Observation Guide

Study title: Dissertation Proposal

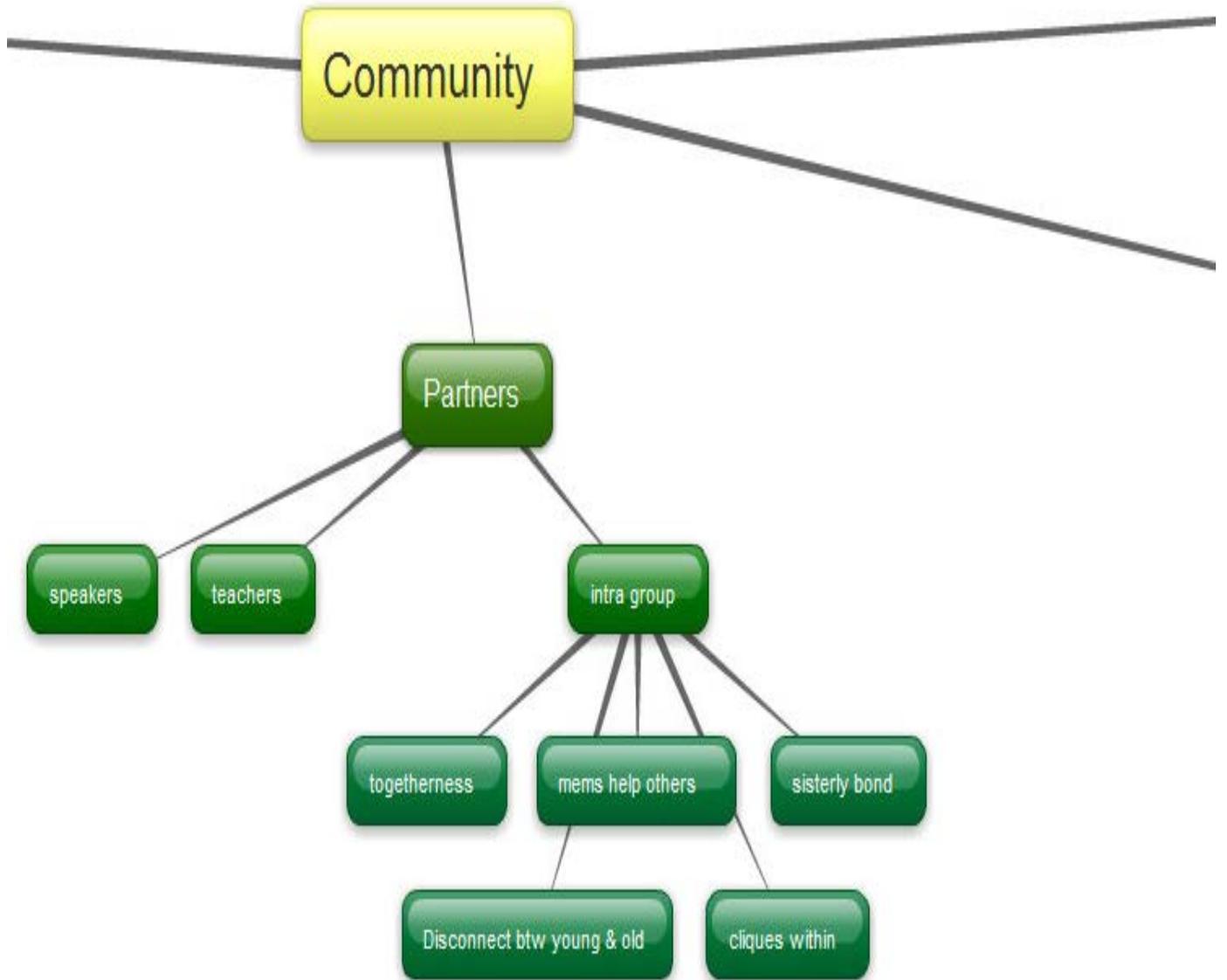
Jeena Owens, Graduate Student

The University of Alabama

This research project uses an emergent study design to investigate the various ways adolescent Black girls in a social club come to learn about their gender, raced and classed identities. During observations, areas of focus will consist of:

- 1) Interactions amongst club participants during *LADY* events
- 2) Interactions between participants and adults (e.g. mothers/guardians, club supervisors)
- 3) Club participants' reactions to supervisors directives

Appendix M
Mind Map—Example



Appendix N

Club Song

LADY, LADY

We love thy name 'tis true
Friendliness is what we stand for
It means equality, It means equality,
And let us now proclaim
May God forever bless us, In all our daily plans

LADY, LADY

Citizenship is one of our aims,
Tho' patience, love, and friendship
We'll do so to proclaim
We'll do so to proclaim
In respect to our club's name;
We know the value of club work.
We will press on until the end.

LADY, LADY

To thee we will be true.
We will always love and cherish
Respect and honor, too;
Let this our motto be,
That God will always lead us, To Success and Victory

~ P. M. Tucker

~R. F. Williams

Appendix O

Lift Every Voice and Sing

Lift every voice and sing, 'til earth and Heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise, high as the listening skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
Let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod, bitter the chastening rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat, have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered,
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered;
Out from the gloomy past, till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,
Thou who has brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who has by Thy might, led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee.
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee.
Shadowed beneath Thy hand, may we forever stand,
True to our God, true to our native land.

~James Weldon Johnson

Appendix P

Supervisor Prayer

For the youth of our race and the for the opportunities for service
which challenged their keen minds and open hearts

We thank Thee, O God.

For the training by which consecrated souls are ever shaping their lives for
the present-day scheme of Sisterhood;

For the vision with which they are being equipped and love with which
they are being stimulated;

We raise our voices in gratitude and praise.

Our petition is for the strength of your youth, and for the development
of their loyalty to race, and for the strengthening of their faith in Thee,
for the revealing of Thy presence in all things,

For the unfolding of life's great purpose to them;

For the enlargement of their souls and the deepening of their lives.

May Thy youth of our rare through Thy grade ever see the tasks set
before them, and with understanding pursue them.

Mary McLeod Bethune
Eight NACWC President

Appendix Q

State Prayer

Eternal Father in whom we live move and have our being,
we give thanks for the opportunity of meeting again
Reverently we commend our lives to thee and pray
Thy guidelines in all of our affairs.

Give our leaders clear thoughts of duty,
Courage and above all, Christ-like attitudes and help us be kind.
We thank thee and the Godly women who across the years have
Lives valiantly and heroically, and whose lives not challenge its.

We are grateful for the noble task of lifting and climbing.
Use our varied gifts and talents for Thy glory and for the good
of all mankind.

Help us to build a better world.
In Jesus' Name. Amen

~Paraphrased from Eliza C. McCabe's Club Women's Prayer~