

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE CAREER MOBILITY PATTERNS
OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN WORKING
IN PUBLIC PARKS AND RECREATION AGENCIES**

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DEDICATION

To my heavenly Father – my path had been predestined to be a change agent, and none of this would have been possible without your guidance and protection. To my village of family and friends – thank you for your encouragement, prayers, and unwavering support throughout this journey. Each of you has impacted my life, which I will forever be grateful for and appreciative of. I dedicate this research to the future of women of color working in the parks and recreation profession. I hope the findings will be used to empower, motivate, and direct your career pathways. May this work also serve as a testament to my siblings, niece, nephews, and future family generations that you can accomplish anything your heart desires with dedication, perseverance, hard work, and prayer.

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past my time as your doctoral student. I look forward to where my journey leads me next.

The marathon continues!

ABSTRACT

African American (AA) women are among the most underrepresented and under-researched groups in the parks and recreation profession. The purpose of this study is to explore the career mobility patterns of AA women currently working in public parks and recreation agencies. To achieve this purpose, the study examines the career mobility patterns of 169 AA women over a five-year period. The study also examines their ascent into executive leadership positions in their profession. The following research questions guided the study: (1) What job positions and classifications are held by a sample of AA women currently working in public parks and recreation agencies?; (2) What is the career mobility status of a sample of AA women currently working in public parks and recreation agencies?; and (3) What factors influence the career mobility of a sample of AA women currently working in public parks and recreation agencies? Career mobility serves as the dependent variable, whereas the independent variable focus on the factors influencing career mobility: likeability, job satisfaction, organizational climate and culture, the importance of thriving and networking, and perceptions of stress in the workplace. Purposive and snowball sampling strategies were utilized to recruit participants through professional organizations (i.e., National Recreation and Park Ethnic Minority Society, National Forum for Black Public Administrators, and state affiliates with the National Recreation and Park Association). The researcher developed an online survey containing four sections: (1) perceived occupational status (importance of the position within an agency) of 18 common occupational titles; (2) mobility information over the past five years; (3) perceptions of factors influencing mobility; and (4)

demographic information. Overall, the majority of the sample (74.0%, $n = 125$) experienced no change in occupational mobility during the five years; 14% (13.6%, $n = 23$) were upwardly mobile, while 2.4% ($n = 4$) experienced downward mobility. Data found significant differences in job satisfaction ($F(3,162) = 6.99, p < .001$) among those employed in supervisory roles. Respondents reported having significantly lower job satisfaction than any other occupational group. No significant differences were found between mobility and the other influencing factor variables.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Occupational mobility embodies everything an individual does, from the moment they enter the workforce until they retire. Waller, Wozencroft, Scott, Shaw, and Picariello (2020) refer to occupational mobility as an employee's movement within a profession (upward, downward, and lateral/no movement) or a change in occupation. Gabriel (2003) defines upward occupational mobility as moving from low-wage to high-wage employment. In contrast, downward mobility occurs if an employee moves from any high-wage to a low-wage occupational category (Gabriel, 2003). Lussier and Hendon (2019) define occupational mobility as employment-related activities that endorse professional development or expand employment responsibilities. Mobility can result from the individual's personal choice or management's decision. Lussier and Hendon (2019) also state that occupational mobility is related to career advancement, professional growth, and job satisfaction. Occupational mobility ensures that employees move to jobs suitable to their aspirations, goals, and skills (Waller et al., 2020).

Managers are concerned with career progress – how people are promoted, the ability to take on greater responsibilities and roles, or how they enhance their skills and abilities (Armstrong, 2009). Career mobility embodies an individual's occupational movement, professional attitudes, and behaviors (Taylor, 2017). People striving for career advancement and success must attain positive mobility in their respective professions. However, professional promotion through career mobility is only possible if a person has access and availability to advancing employment opportunities. Parratt (2013) suggests that career mobility is beneficial for employees and employers because if mobility is suitable for the employee, it will lead to

satisfaction, leading to the individual striving for success. Good mobility leads to an influx of qualified candidates as jobs become available.

Career mobility permits individuals to take advantage of alternative employment opportunities, which serves as a means of upward social mobility (Lipset & Bendix, 2018) or avoiding unemployment (Angrave & Charlwood, 2015; Chakraborty, 2013; Simpson, 1992; Worth, 2016). They usually have three options when faced with a lack of relevant employment opportunities. According to Simpson (1992), the first option is to remain in the current occupation or state of unemployment. The second option is to accept another position if the person is overqualified. Lastly, an individual can search for a job in another city or state. The first two options typically lead to underemployment, while the third option requires an individual to relocate or commute long distances to work. The choice of opportunity is a matter of restrictions rather than preference (Ham, 2002). According to Angrave and Charlwood (2015), women who experience underemployment tend to have lower levels of job satisfaction and subjective well-being.

Differences in career paths vary based on an individual's skill and education and the progression of one's occupation. However, much research explores the likelihood that gender heavily influences the career paths of women (Smith, 2002; Trentham & Larwood, 1998). Women strategically decide which career to pursue based on dominant hiring practices and traditional gender roles in society. Existing research provides insight into common career mobility barriers for Black men and women. One common barrier is the idea of cronyism, which suggests that there is a form of corruption within an organization that causes discriminative hiring practices. Cronyism can be summarized by the saying, "it's not what you know, but who

you know" (Hollomon, 2016). Hiring authorities sometimes hire people as a returned favor for something that individual did to benefit the organization or the hiring authority directly. Another mutual barrier is a lack of organizational integrity in supporting diversity initiatives (Bimper & Harrison, 2017). The lack of corporate integrity implicates employers failing to implement and enforce diversity policies, although many have established such policies.

Career construction focuses on how individuals value their career development. Savickas (2005) conceptualized how careers are constructed when people make decisions that allow self-expression and authenticate their goals in the social reality of work roles. Career development and choices are affected by gender. Wolfinger, Mason, and Goulden (2008) identified family obligations and reproductive roles as two potential barriers that attribute to women's lack of educational attainment and career development. Women must decide if they will juggle the career/spouse/parent roles, and if so, they must consider how that combination could be structured.

According to Lovejoy-Capers (2020), African American "women live in a society that devalues and restricts them ideologically, socially, politically, and economically" (p. 57). Research suggests that society often boxes women into subordinate and submissive occupations (Gatwiri & McLaren, 2016). Lovejoy-Capers (2020) posits how essential it is for researchers to investigate African American women and explain how they thrive in the face of oppressive social inequalities experienced in the workplace. Black women face more significant career advancement challenges than any other ethnic demographic, both male and female (Smith, Watkins, Ladge & Carlton, 2019). Despite these challenges, African American women found

ways to achieve educational advancement, permeate leadership roles, and become successful professionals.

Employee well-being embodies how the emotional, psychological, and physical aspects of a person's health synergistically works together to affect individuals in different ways (DeJoy & Wilson, 2003). Thriving in the workplace identifies an individual's psychological well-being (Seligman, 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Researchers reported a strong association between a person's job satisfaction, happiness, and workplace performance with the fairness of organizational justice and well-being (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter & Ng, 2001). Prilleltensky (2012) conveyed relationships between organizational justice and well-being. Although African American women achieve educational and career advancements, they often feel isolated because they work in a dominant White work environment and must ensure their colleagues feel comfortable around them. If Black women do not conform to the dominant White organizational culture, they sacrifice acceptability from colleagues (Edmonson-Bell & Nkomo, 2003).

Despite feelings of isolation, African American women still attain optimal levels of thriving that Prilleltensky (2012) defined as striving to achieve full potential within settings where most types of justice prevail. Buettner (2010) insinuated that thriving happens when people achieve success and reach their full potential despite challenges. Suppose an individual has supportive superiors who effectively communicate and has established an atmosphere of respect and trust. In that case, a healthy work environment is formed for people to thrive (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein & Grant, 2005). Boyd (2015) advised that an organization's overall performance depends on its ability to provide employees with

opportunities to reach their full potential and thrive. Professional and personal development are valuable tools in an individual's ability to succeed (Boyd, 2015).

The concept of thriving differs from parallel ideas, such as resilience, well-being, and flourishing (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Porath, Spreitzer, Gibson, and Garnett (2012) define thriving as “the psychological state in which individuals experience both a sense of vitality and learning” (p. 250). Relatedly, Hennekam (2017) defines thriving as the act of learning, investing in oneself, and overcoming adverse situations. It indicates the engagement in life-expanding activities, meaning-making, spiritual elevation, and total satisfaction with life (Seligman, 2011; Seligman, Parks & Steen, 2004). By thriving, people conduct self-reflection which allows them to reach their full potential. Individuals recognize their personal growth, values, and skills despite others' opinions.

Thriving can be a necessary coping style since adverse situations impact people negatively. Individuals showcase their ability to thrive when they bounce back and survive adverse events. Researchers have associated thriving to resiliency and stress-coping strategies to understand how people overcome adversity. Researchers have also indicated differences between thriving and resiliency (Dreyer, 2015; Ickovics & Park, 1998). Ickovics and Park (1998) posited that thriving is a transformational journey transcending beyond adapting to traumatic experiences. Relatedly, Dreyer (2015) described resiliency as the ability to adapt positively to an adverse situation.

Research shows a direct correlation between an organization's culture and its employee's ability to thrive (Carter, Smith & O'Morrow, 2014). Sauter, Lim, and Murphy (1996) define a healthy workplace as "an organization that maximizes the integration of worker goals for well-

being and company objectives for profitability and productivity" (p. 250). A healthy culture in which employees can thrive is essential to the success of contemporary parks and recreation, including therapeutic recreation (Brazil, Wakefield, Cloutier, Tennen & Hall, 2010; Wozencroft, Scott & Waller, 2019). The healthier the organization's culture, the more employees will thrive and perform better (Brazil et al., 2010; Helfrich, Li, Mohr, Meterko & Sales, 2007). Research also shows a strong relationship between organizational leadership, organizational climate, and thriving (Zeng, Zhao & Zhao, 2020).

The current study examines the career mobility patterns of African American women working in public parks and recreation agencies by assessing participants' occupational titles over the past five years to determine if their respective departments provided them with opportunities for career advancement. The study also aids in discovering participants' personal and professional identities and understanding the decision and values behind their career paths. The focus of the study is to determine the contributing factors influencing the career mobility of the sample of African American women.

Problem Statement

Although there is an increase in African American employment in parks and recreation agencies, a disproportionate number of African Americans occupy executive leadership positions (Allison, 1999; Beekman, 2021; Godbey & Henkel, 1976; McDonald, 1981; Outley & Dean, 2007; Shaw, 2017; Shinew & Hibbler, 2002; Tapia & Kvensny, 2004; Waller, 1989; Waller et al., 2020). Moreover, there is a shortage of research examining the recruitment and retention of African American women in parks and recreation agencies. Reviewing the career experiences of

African American women in parks and recreation agencies could assist in improving the diversity challenges many organizations face.

Literature regarding women in public parks and recreation agencies sought to identify the occupations women held in their respective agencies yet primarily focused on the experiences of Caucasian women (Shaw, 2017). Work-related experiences in public and private sector agencies differ for Black women compared to White women (Durr & Wingfield, 2011; Holder, Jackson & Ponterotto, 2015). Shaw (2017) conducted the first study on the career experiences of African American women leaders in parks and recreation organizations. Other literature discussed women's challenges in parks and recreation organizations, such as barriers to upward mobility, discrimination, and inequities.

Significance of the Problem

This study contributes to the literature by addressing the aspects of race, gender, barriers and challenges, and mobility of African American women working in public parks and recreation agencies. Research examining the careers of African American women is significant for two reasons. First, there is a shortage of career mobility studies related to parks and recreation professionals. Henderson, Grappendorf, Bruton, and Tomas (2013) noted that "the status of women in parks and recreation in the United States has not been examined for several years" (p. 58). Overall, most of the contextualized and foundational studies date back to the late 1970s (Godbey & Henkel, 1976) and 1980s (McDonald, 1981; Waller, 1989), with three research efforts conducted recently (Jenkins, 2021; Shaw, 2017; Waller et al., 2020). Furthermore, there is no research on how to recruit and retain this group of women working in public parks and recreation agencies. On a practical level, the current study may inspire parks and recreation

organizations to investigate their workplace diversity efforts. Results from this study may also increase awareness among hiring authorities of the barriers and provide valuable tips on recruiting and retaining African American women.

Secondly, African American women are underrepresented and under-researched in the parks and recreation profession (Waller et al., 2020). A study on the career mobility of African American women contributes to understanding their career experiences and potential barriers to career progression. Most parks and recreation researchers have studied gender through the lens of women in management and supervisory positions (Henderson, 1992; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1990; Shinew, Anderson & Arnold, 2000), race (Floyd, 1998; Floyd & Mowatt, 2014; Murphy, 1972), inequities and barriers (Anderson & Shinew, 2001; Henderson et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2012), and the upward mobility of African Americans (Outley & Dean, 2007; Worsley & Stone, 2011). Though Shaw (2017) has researched the career experiences of African American women, the researcher designed the current study from research addressing the issues women face working in the parks and recreation industry.

Purpose of the Study

This study explores the career mobility patterns of African American women working in public parks and recreation agencies. At this stage in the research, we use Waller et al.'s (2020) definition of career mobility, the movement within a profession (upward, downward, and lateral/no movement) or a change in occupation. For this study, public parks and recreation agencies include city, county, and special district organizations that derive their funding from local property and other taxes to operate (Crompton, 2009). To achieve this purpose, the researcher developed a quantitative research design to examine the career mobility status of

African American women and the factors that influence their progression to executive leadership positions. Finally, the researcher uses the terms African American, Black, Caucasian, and White interchangeably throughout this paper despite the political contexts of each demographic.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the current study:

1. What job positions and classifications are held by a sample of African American women currently working in public parks and recreation agencies?
2. What is the career mobility status of a sample of African American women currently working in public parks and recreation agencies?
3. What factors influence the career mobility of a sample of African American women currently working in public parks and recreation agencies?

Connections to the Problem Statement

Research Question 1: What job positions and classifications are held by a sample of African American women currently working in public parks and recreation agencies?

Work-related experiences in public and private sector agencies differ for African American women compared to White women (Durr & Wingfield, 2011; Holder et al., 2015). Much of the research regarding female parks and recreation professionals sought to identify the positions held within the hierarchy of organizations. Still, the primary focus is generally on the experiences of Caucasian women. Some studies focused on African American women in parks and recreation and the positions they held in their respective organizations (Godbey & Henkel, 1976; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1995; Henderson et al., 2013; McDonald, 1981; Waller, 1989; Waller et al., 2020). The current study aims to build on previous research on the topic and desires

to see how much has changed from earlier studies on African American women working in public parks and recreation. The researcher will answer this question by analyzing respondent occupational data from the survey results.

Research Question 2: What is the career mobility status of a sample of African American women currently working in public parks and recreation agencies?

Over the last few years, research suggests women have made progress in occupational status and mobility in the parks and recreation industry (Jenkins, 2021; Waller et al., 2020). According to Henderson et al. (2013), women hold various occupations in public parks and recreation agencies across the United States, with 51% senior managers, 41% supervisors, and 8% entry-level positions. Even though progress has been made, occupational mobility barriers persist, including gender bias, lack of respect, pay inequity, and gender discrimination (Waller, Wozencroft, Trendafilova & Hobart, 2015). The self-reported data on position titles, geographical regions in which they lived, and respondent career evolution address this research question. The researcher will investigate all the occupational titles respondents have held over the last five years.

Research Question 3: What factors influence the career mobility of African American women currently working in public parks and recreation agencies?

Previous studies related to the career mobility of African Americans in parks and recreation identified barriers which include education, gender, race, lack of leadership experience and networking and mentorship opportunities, the race of the hiring authority, and personal choices (McDonald, 1981; Shaw, 2017; Shinew & Hibbler, 2002; Waller, 1989; Waller et al., 2020; Worsley & Stone, 2011). Analysis of data collected from the survey will enable the

researcher to identify specific variables that influence career mobility among the sample and isolate statistically significant ones.

Chapter Summary

The study aims to explore the career mobility patterns of African American women working in public parks and recreation agencies by examining the career mobility status of African American women and the factors that influence their progression to executive leadership positions. Although there is an increase in African American employment in parks and recreation organizations, a disproportionately small number of African American women occupy leadership positions at the executive level. The current study contributes to the existing literature by providing an update on the occupational status of African American women working in public parks and recreation agencies. It will also highlight the factors influencing their progression to leadership positions. Results from this study will also provide recommendations on how to retain and recruit African American female parks and recreation professionals.

Organization of the Dissertation

The researcher has organized this dissertation as follows: Chapter I provides an overview and introduction of the study, a problem statement, the significance of the problem, the purpose of the study, and research questions. Chapter II includes a review of the relevant literature on women in recreation and collegiate sports organizations, barriers women of color face in parks and recreation organizations, mobility of women, the intersectionality of race and gender, workplace stress, resiliency, thriving, recruitment and retention of African American women, and the conceptual framework. Chapter III describes the methodology and data analysis procedures for the study. Chapter IV presents the results and findings from the data analyses.

Lastly, Chapter V discusses the findings and limitations of the study and concludes with implications for further research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the literature on occupational mobility among African American women professionals. The literature review offers a historical background of women working in recreation and sports organizations by providing research on the barriers that influence the mobility of women working in parks and recreation and collegiate athletics. This section also provides an overview of women's mobility across the following disciplinary areas: business, local government/public administration, and the nonprofit sector. This section offers insight into intersectionality, stress, resiliency, and thriving in the workplace. Finally, the literature on the recruitment and retention of African American women provides recommendations on hiring, supporting, and retaining African American women working in public parks and recreation agencies.

Historical Background of Women in Recreation and Sports

During the playground and recreation movement in the early 1900s, women had a strong presence as recreation professionals (National Recreation Association, 1930). Men did not begin to dominate the industry until the 1940s (Henderson, Bialeschki & Sessoms, 1990). The early 1900s showcased the strength of women striving for civil and voting rights. Women's fight for voting rights prevailed when Congress passed the 19th Amendment of the United States Constitution in 1920 (Imbornoni, 2006).

Mary McLeod Bethune organized the National Council of Negro Women in Harlem on December 5, 1935, to fight for the advancement of Black women. The organization fought for equitable rights in housing and jobs, against disenfranchisement and discrimination in employment. Women continued to fight for rights until December 14, 1961, when President John

F. Kennedy established the President's *Commission on the Status of Women* to investigate women's equality in the workplace. He appointed Eleanor Roosevelt as the Commission's chairperson. The committee's primary goal was to examine the discriminatory policies and practices women faced at work. Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibiting unfair hiring and employment practices (Imbrononi, 2006).

Even with the significant strides women made in gaining voting and civil rights and access to the workplace, Henderson et al. (1990) contended that despite having a solid presence in the leisure service workforce, women faced many barriers in obtaining leadership positions. Traditionally, women worked in caregiving positions, while men held most management jobs resulting in occupational segregation. The researchers questioned whether occupational segregation resulted from workplace discrimination or employee choice. Henderson et al. (1990) suggest that women choose careers that minimize the conflict between job responsibilities and duties of spouse and parent.

Discriminatory social practices contribute to an ongoing cycle of workplace structures that only permit women to pursue traditional roles instead of leadership positions. As women held the traditional caregiver roles, organizations provided men opportunities to seek management positions because society considered them more suitable for leadership roles (Henderson et al., 1990). Whether intentional or not, these social practices and workplace stereotypes serve as barriers for women continuing to pursue and obtain management positions in the parks and recreation industry. As a result, Henderson et al. (1990) stated that women might make career choices and select flexible employment options rather than management positions which require "uninterrupted experience and organizational relationships" (p. 1). Some women

believed they had more caregiving attributes than managerial abilities, which suggested women caused career segregation due to personal choices.

Similarly, career segregation meant employers hired men for management positions because men preferred physical labor. Job segregation inferred that those negative perceptions of women and their skills were rooted in the dominant organizational social structures and produced oppressive structures that prohibited women from obtaining managerial positions. Additionally, researchers suggest that women held assumptions about management requirements due to the dominant organizational social practices. Career segregation among women and men grew apparent between 1940 through 1980 when men began dominating occupations in the parks and recreation industry. According to a 1980 United States Census report, forty-five percent of women identified as recreation workers in 1970 and sixty-eight percent in 1980. Although the report demonstrated a drastic increase in female employees, most recreation positions were either part-time or seasonal. Research conducted on female recreation employees in Wisconsin discovered that most women occupied positions in senior services and therapeutic recreation areas, while men predominately worked in parks, recreation programming, and outdoor recreation areas (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1980; Henderson & Baaske, 1985). Perhaps career segregation forced women to accept jobs deemed more suitable for women and may have been the means for maintaining employment during that time.

Despite the large percentage of female recreation workers, more women began studying parks and recreation management than men (Bialeschki & McAllister, 1989). Due to the increasing number of female students studying parks and recreation management (Anderson, 2001; Bialeschki, 1992; Henderson, 1992; Henderson et al., 2013) and the increase of women

employees, the need to examine their career experiences transpired. Henderson and Bialeschki (1995) surveyed 300 female practitioner members of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) about their career development and experiences in the workplace. 25.0% of the respondents held front-line positions, 43.0% mid-management, and 38.0% senior management positions. Ninety-four percent of the respondents identified as White, with only six percent identifying as women of color. Researchers noted that due to the low participation of women of color in the sample, they could not compare differences among the racial groups.

Henderson et al. (2013) conducted a national study of 1,146 female parks and recreation professionals to examine their employment status. Half of the respondents were senior managers. About forty percent were supervisors, while the remaining respondents held entry-level positions. Ninety-two percent of the respondents identified as White, with only eight percent identifying as women of color. Compared to the findings of Henderson and Bialeschki (1995), these results reveal a significant decrease in the number of women in entry-level positions and a significant increase in supervisory and senior management positions. Due to the minimal representation of women of color in these studies, researchers faced difficulty examining their career experiences.

Women working in collegiate and professional sports organizations face comparable barriers and challenges as those working in parks and recreation organizations, especially their underrepresentation in leadership positions. Women in collegiate athletics have been constantly underrepresented in athletic director (AD) positions at Division-I (D-I) institutions (Lapchick, 2014). In 2016, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) reported that women coached only forty percent of all women's teams, and twenty percent of women were athletic

directors. Lapchick (2016) reported seven White women held AD positions compared to 102 White women. Unfortunately, he also stated that no women of color occupied an AD role in any D-I football program at a predominately white institution.

The following year, the NCAA made strides as reports indicated hiring more female ADs (Lapchick, 2017). In 2017, two women of color broke barriers when they accepted AD positions at their respective institutions. The University of Virginia hired Carla Williams as the first African American female AD, and the University of Nevada – Las Vegas hired Desiree Reed-Francois as its first Latina athletic director. Lapchick (2016) also expressed an alarming disparity when comparing the number of Black women student-athletes and coaches in D-I basketball. About 47.0% of women's basketball student-athletes identified as Black, compared to only 11.0% of head coaches.

Since 2019, collegiate institutions have shown improvement in diversity efforts in their hiring practices; however, women and people of color are still underrepresented in leadership positions (Lapchick, 2022). The coaching statistics disparities in women's collegiate sports remain the most disadvantaged statistics reported. During the 2020-2021 academic year, only thirteen women (nine White, three Black, and one Latina) served as ADs at football bowl subdivision (FBS) institutions (NCAA, 2021). Lapchick (2021) noted that "women held only 41.3 percent of head coaching jobs of women's teams in Division I, 35.3 percent in Division II, and 44.4 percent in Division III. Overall, women held 41.1 percent of head coaching positions for women's teams across all three divisions combined" (p. 30). The comparison between African American female head coaches and student-athletes is still alarming. In 2020-2021, 18.5 percent

of head women's basketball coaches identified as Black, compared to 40.7 percent of student-athletes (Lapchick, 2021).

Barriers Women of Color Face in Parks and Recreation

Allison and Schneider (2008) indicated that people of color encounter various barriers and challenges when ascending to management-level positions. One of the prominent barriers for women in parks and recreation is that the preponderance of recreation organizations is government operated. One can argue that a person's job depends on their organization's mayor-council system. Usually, a city manager establishes tenure within an organization based on their relationship with the mayor and council members. If an organization is part of a robust mayor-council system, it can expect various changes after each election cycle. Most strong mayoral systems host an election every four years, and often the organization experiences turnover. Many at-will positions are in jeopardy whenever a city completes an election cycle. One cannot change the nature of city charters that permit a newly hired city manager to select staff. Through personal experience, I have witnessed tenured directors terminated due to a newly appointed mayor and city manager.

Unfortunately, racism and sexism in the workplace create barriers that inhibit career progression for women. Brewer (1999) analyzed Black feminist theorizing on race, class, and gender relative to the work and mobility of African American women. The researcher explained how Black women's labor experienced different barriers than Black men and White women due to the racial norms and values of hiring authorities. The dominant racial and gender values established by White men influence the career mobility of African American women. Brewer

(1999) posited that these organizational structures “anchor a disproportionate number of African American women at the bottom of the service sector” (p. 36).

Relatedly, Seabrook and Wyatt-Nichol (2016) contended that historically, “institutional oppression and structural racism has been the overarching form of social control used to maintain dominance over the African American community” (p. 20). Intersectionality refers to the intersected nature of social constructs such as class, gender, and race as they relate to a particular individual or group. Moreover, intersectionality details the “various ways race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of black women's employment experiences” (Seabrook & Wyatt-Nichol, 2016, p. 21). Most importantly, the researchers say that intersectionality is essential in understanding the intersection of structural racism, oppression, and the cultural climate of unnecessary perceptions and stereotypes of Black people in America.

Women often experience the glass ceiling, which symbolizes the invisible barriers that hinder their career advancement. Relatedly, African American and Latina women experience the black/brown ceiling phenomenon. This philosophy explains the additional barriers women of color experience due to gender, race, and stereotypes (Durr & Wingfield, 2011; Sepand, 2015). Furthermore, a byproduct of the glass ceiling for Black women is the occurrence of pigeon-holing (e.g., placing workers in particular jobs based on racial and gender stereotypes). Pigeon-holing stunts an individual’s professional development and impedes future career advancement opportunities. Previous research insinuates that African American women became pigeonholed in leadership, supervisory, and support positions in public parks and recreation and leisure services agencies (Allison, 1999; Outley & Dean, 2007; Waller, 1989).

Mobility of Women in Parks and Recreation

Godbey and Henkel (1976) conducted the earliest and perhaps the most informative workforce study in the public parks and recreation profession. The study aimed to examine the characteristics of full-time public parks and recreation workers by occupational title. Researchers disseminated 5,014 surveys to public parks and recreation agencies, resulting in a 51.0% response rate. The study sample comprised 58.0% of state parks and recreation agencies, 42.0% of county agencies, and 44.0% of special districts. Researchers analyzed data by agency type, education, gender, occupational title, race, and region of employment.

Results indicated that most minorities occupied leadership, skilled, and lower supervisory positions. However, the results also highlighted the underrepresentation of minorities at the upper administrative level. Whites comprised about 93.0% of all administrative positions. The most significant Black representation in the study occupied the positions of community center director (38.6%), recreation program leader (30.9%), and recreation aide/attendant (27.8%). The most significant Black underrepresentation occurred at the chief executive level (1.5%). The findings of Godbey and Henkel's (1976) study illustrate two critical points: (1) although Blacks worked across various occupational categories, they rarely occupied head administrative positions; and (2) men dominated the administrative and supervisory positions. Traditionally, organizations usually reserved these positions for males. Findings from this study highlight the early occupational disparities for African American women.

Despite recent studies that examined the occupational status among women in the industry, few studies have focused on the factors that influenced the occupational mobility of Black professionals. McDonald (1981) identified four potential variables – education, family

type, gender, and geographic mobility – that could influence the mobility of Black parks and recreation professionals. The sample population consisted of members of the NPRA Ethnic Minority Society. McDonald disseminated eighty-two surveys, and fifty were returned, yielding a 47.0% response rate; however, only 39 of the 50 surveys were deemed usable. The researcher analyzed data by calculating means and percentages to develop the respondents' descriptive information and chi-square tests to test the four independent variables.

Results indicated a significant relationship between all four variables and occupational mobility. Men outnumbered women by double at the administrative level, occupying 67.0% of the positions compared to 33.0% of women. Most of the respondents in the sample had graduate degrees. Geographic and occupational mobility was related; however, some respondents reported downward mobility when relocated to another state. McDonald's (1981) study did not contain measures of barriers and challenges faced by respondents. The researcher suggests additional detail is required to understand why respondents experienced downward mobility.

Upward mobility depicts the movement from a lower to a higher occupational position. Waller (1989) examined perceived barriers to occupational mobility among Black municipal recreation and park employees in Michigan. He studied education, gender, job satisfaction, the race of appointing authorities, the presence of an affirmative action plan, and years of related work experience. Waller's study indicated no differences between occupational mobility and education, gender, or years of related work experience. The majority of the women held administrative and supervisory positions. The researcher supposed that employees become better equipped for higher-level positions as their years of experience increase. Still, the study discovered no significant differences between occupational mobility and years of work

experience. Waller (1989) also suggested that the type of experience could dictate occupational mobility opportunities, not the years of experience.

Although the findings were not statistically significant, results indicated that out of a sample of 111 African Americans, 11.7% experienced downward mobility, 31.6% experienced upward mobility, and 56.7% remained stable. Even though Waller's study reported data on potential factors that could describe occupational mobility, the study was limited to Black parks and recreation employees in Michigan. The study also highlighted various external factors related to African Americans' occupational mobility, such as family support, community ties, and economic outlook (Waller, 1989).

Limited research has explored the upward mobility experiences of African Americans in the parks and recreation industry. These studies reveal that inequity and discrimination remain prominent in public parks and recreation agencies. Due to the limited research, it is crucial to investigate recent studies to understand further the potential factors that influence the upward mobility of African American parks and recreation professionals. Shinew and Hibbler (2002) conducted multiphase research to examine the perceptions of African Americans in public parks and recreation regarding discrimination, inequity, and promotion opportunities. The first phase encompassed phone interviews with the eleven study participants. Researchers transcribed all interviews using dictation equipment and coded the data using Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparison technique. Researchers guided a focus group during the second phase, while the third phase included disseminating questionnaires to African American full-time workers.

Results revealed that most respondents perceived workplace discrimination, inequity, and marginalization, especially at the upper administrative level. They also reported having fewer

career advancement opportunities than their White counterparts. Moreover, respondents also reported unpreparedness for an upper-management appointment and a lack of mentors. Respondents believed lack of mentor support restricted professional and personal development opportunities, while their White counterparts benefited from having more options and supportive mentors.

Outley and Dean (2007) conducted a qualitative study of 37 senior managers employed by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Of the 37 participants, eleven identified as Black and 26 as White. Researchers utilized semi-structured telephone interviews to ask respondents about their career experiences and perceptions regarding a) barriers to upward mobility; b) whether barriers differ between Whites and Blacks; c) how barriers affect employees; and d) how employers which candidates are hired, nurtured, and promoted to senior-level positions. Five themes emerged from the data: 1) The Old Boy Network, 2) Need to Assimilate, 3) Candidate Screening and Profiling for Upper Management Positions, 4) Being Pigeonholed, and 5) Community Perceptions. Kanter (1977) defined homosocial reproduction as the process by which members of a dominant group recruit, nurture, and promote individuals with similar characteristics and attributes. Kanter suggested that homosocial reproduction serves as a barrier to upward mobility for African Americans.

Byrd and Scott (2014) indicated that the “good ole boy” network represents an organization's social culture and allows biases to dictate who is accepted into the dominant group. Outley and Dean (2007) described The Old Boy Network theme as the association when those in a dominant group, typically White males, give critical positions to individuals who resemble them. The Need to Assimilate implied that individuals integrate into the dominant

group to attain career advancement opportunities. Candidate Screening and Profiling for Upper Management Positions suggested that hiring authorities had preconceived thoughts concerning candidates' demographic characteristics to succeed in specific organizations.

Being Pigeonholed describes how many organizations place African Americans in positions and are expected to serve in specific locations, mainly the inner-city—being pigeonholed limited the exposure opportunities for African Americans to obtain managerial training and experience. If African Americans gain the necessary training and experience, they usually get screened out of the selection process based on specific demographic characteristics. This continuous cycle of discriminatory practices is deeply rooted in the historical, social, and organizational structures which force African Americans into a more significant systemic problem. The Community Perceptions theme described the fear of placing minority workers in predominately White communities. Employees believed that program participation and memberships would decrease if an organization in a predominately White community had a minority leader.

Worsley and Stone (2011) interviewed ten African American parks and recreation professionals who held entry- to mid-level manager positions and discovered six significant themes that emerged from participant interviews: 1) Angry Tokens; 2) It's Not What You Know, But Who You Know; 3) Work Environment Needs Overhaul; 3) Go-Getters; 5) Crabs in a Barrel; and 6) Mentors Matter. These themes suggested harmful social practices in the workplace negatively impacted the study participants' career experiences by reflecting on the barriers and challenges African Americans faced to attain leadership positions in parks and recreation organizations.

Angry Tokens refers to the feeling respondents perceived when their superiors, usually White men, advertise them as the promise for other African Americans' upward mobility. The It's Not What You Know, But Who You Know theme describes how superiors favor subordinates based on personal relationships rather than their qualifications and competencies. This theme occurs within a social system like the "good ole boy" network that constrains African Americans' upward mobility (Coleman, 1998; Outley & Dean, 2007). The theme, Work Environment Needs Overhaul, reflected chaotic, hostile, and negative work environments where employees flaunted negative attitudes and inflated egos. Minimal workplace communication occurred between managers and African Americans, accompanied by minimal training opportunities. This theme also suggested that African Americans' upward mobility is constrained if organizations do not provide proper training or employment opportunities.

Worsley and Stone (2011) recognized two other themes that revealed the resiliency of study participants who discovered meaningful opportunities to assist with career advancement despite their challenges. Go-Getters are ambitious people who push forward to accomplish their goals and seek additional education and training opportunities. The theme, Mentors Matter, defined mentoring as a developmental partnership through which colleagues share skills, information, knowledge, and personal and professional development perspectives. Sosik and Godshalk (2000) conveyed that effective mentorship positively impacts career commitment, compensation, job satisfaction, promotions, and self-esteem. Polidore, Edmonson, and Slate (2010) maintained this belief that the career progression of African Americans depended on their ability to foster positive relationships with role models and mentors.

Shaw (2017) conducted a qualitative phenomenological study on the career experiences of African American women leaders in the parks and recreation profession. The study examined the barriers African American women faced throughout their careers and highlighted the negative impact of social structures intended to limit career advancement. She conducted semi-structured interviews with twelve African American women leaders to understand perceptions about their experiences – she also collected data through field notes, observations, artifacts, resumes, and demographic information forms. The researcher performed document analyses on participants' resumes and demographic information forms to understand their educational backgrounds, personal life, organizational memberships, and salary. She recorded, transcribed, coded, and categorized all interviews for data analysis.

Shaw (2017) discovered several significant themes from participant interviews. The following themes emerged that describe participants' pathway to leadership: 1) Be resilient and bounce back; 2) It's a faith walk; 3) A positive attitude is everything; 4) Positive relationships matter, and 5) It's about the community. Most participants discussed the importance of spirituality and religiosity and how they influenced participants' resiliency. Participants also believed that having positive attitudes, relationships, and viewpoints assisted them along their career journeys. When asked about the barriers that affect progression to leadership, four themes emerged: 1) Race and gender are still a problem; 2) Negative perceptions of African American women; 3) The workplace needs a facelift; and 4) Hiring processes are intense. Eight women discussed challenges with race, while nine participants believed negative perceptions presented barriers. All the participants had negative experiences regarding gender, race, or negative perceptions of African American women. Four themes also emerged from the perceived

strategies and mechanisms that facilitated participants' progression to leadership: 1) Early introduction to the profession; 2) Prepare, prepare, prepare; 3) Strategic thinking required, and 4) Patience is key. Most participants shared that strategic thinking and preparedness are vital when a new career opportunity presents itself.

Waller et al. (2020) conducted a study to update the status of African American working women in public parks and recreation in the United States. This study aimed to 1) examine the positioning of African American women within the hierarchy of public parks and recreation organizations, 2) examine the pattern of occupational mobility, and 3) investigate the impact of gender and race in occupational mobility among the sample. Researchers developed a 50-item electronic questionnaire and disseminated 217 African American female parks and recreation professionals. After four weeks, researchers obtained 113 completed surveys, yielding a 52.0% response rate.

Researchers utilized a procedure used by McDonald (1981), Dex (1987), Waller (1989), and Newman (2006) to measure occupational mobility. Respondents indicated their current and full-time positions held between 2010 and 2015. The research team assigned occupational status scores to the most recent job and the role held at the end of the five years. The lower the occupational status scores, the higher the perceived importance of the job. Researchers then measured mobility by calculating the difference in both occupational status scores. A positive score indicated upward mobility, a negative score indicated downward mobility, and no change in status score indicated stability. A five-point Likert-type scale assessed the perceptions of the status of each occupational title. Researchers calculated means and standard deviations for each

occupational title, indicating that the lower the score, the higher the perceived quality of the position.

Waller et al. (2020) conducted chi-square tests to explore the factors that hindered occupational mobility from determining any associations between the study's variables. The independent variables included: age, the highest level of education, marital status, number of children, years of parks and recreation experience, and occupational category. Mobility patterns served as the dependent variable. Results indicated that about 80% (79.6%, n=90) of the sample did not experience any mobility, about 16% (15.9%, n=18) were upwardly mobile, and 4.4% (n=4) experienced downward mobility. The association between mobility pattern and position type was weak but significant. However, results showed no significant associations between age, education, income, marital status, minor children at home, years of experience in the field, and mobility patterns. Respondents also believed their gender or race served as facilitators or deterrents to occupational mobility.

Mobility of Women in Collegiate Sports

Women in collegiate sports face similar barriers and challenges as women working in parks and recreation organizations to obtain executive leadership positions. In the NCAA, women and minorities are significantly underrepresented in leadership occupations (Burton, 2015). Caucasian women working in parks and recreation organizations showcased progress in obtaining leadership positions, while Caucasian women working in collegiate sports indicated no improvement in receiving AD jobs. Few women received D-I coaching jobs; however, a disproportionate number of African American women represented the D-I coaching ranks compared to White women. Considering the marginalization of leadership among African

American women in recreation and collegiate sports, many scholars question how gender or race affects their career advancement. During the 2019-20 academic year, 30 minorities (nine women and 21 men) worked as ADs at D-I institutions (Lapchick, 2019). Of these nine women, only three were of color: Lisa Campos at the University of Texas at San Antonio, Desiree Reed-Francois at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and Carla Williams at the University of Virginia.

Self-efficacy is a relevant concept of career mobility that denotes an individual's perception of their ability to establish and implement strategies needed to attain desired performance levels. Individuals acquire self-efficacy through learning experiences influenced by environmental and contextual factors, social interactions, and task difficulty; personal attainment is the most effective source of self-efficacy (Brown, 2002). Ethnic minority and female senior-level administrators share similar self-efficacy as White men. Still, these individuals encounter more barriers, lower choice goals, and unfavorable outcome expectations for becoming a D-I AD (Wells & Kerwin, 2017).

As African Americans aspire to become ADs, research revealed emerging themes, including a lack of mentors and role models, stacking, and structural barriers within athletic departments (Singer & Cunningham, 2018). Minorities aspiring to become ADs are often discouraged due to the lack of professional role models and mentors. Wells and Kerwin (2017) found that organizations often stack minority and female athletic administrators into peripheral roles (e.g., academic services, compliance, senior women administrator). Relatedly, Elliott and Kellison (2020) found that, in most instances, senior-level women administrators were not prepared when presented with career advancement opportunities. This notion of unpreparedness

is attributed to minimal training opportunities offered in transitional jobs that are supposed to develop and prepare people for advancing their careers.

There is a dearth of research on career mobility for African American ADs; however, recent studies indicate the deficiency of Black athletic directors (Hollomon, 2016; McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017; Spenard, 2011; Steward & Cunningham, 2015; Taylor & Hardin, 2016). Truiett-Theodorson (2005) explored the career patterns of four African American ADs at predominately white institutions by conducting case study interviews and cross-case analyses. Results showed that most ADs had head coaching experience, which propelled them into athletic administration. Participants emphasized the importance of having expertise in multiple areas within an athletic program and strong communication skills. Still, many participants avoided academic support and compliance positions because most athletic programs pigeonholed Blacks to limit their progression to senior administration positions. Other studies examined the barriers and challenges, the impact of race, and intersectionality for African American female ADs (Hollomon, 2016; McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017; Steward & Cunningham, 2015).

Mobility of Women Across Parallel Disciplines

According to Manzoni, Härkönen, and Mayer (2014), career mobility patterns “vary across the life course, as a function of both the stage of the working career one finds oneself in and other (e.g., family-related) factors” (p. 1287). The researchers claim that wherever an individual finds themselves within an occupational hierarchy does not depend solely on how much progress they experience in the workplace but, instead, on their position when they first entered the workforce. DiPrete and Eirich (2006) argued whether career mobility could improve

initial disadvantages or whether those who enter the workforce at lower-level occupations experience an ongoing cycle of disadvantages.

Business

A significant challenge for business organizations is the management of an increasingly diverse workforce. As a result of the increasingly diverse workforce, fewer Caucasian males enter the labor market than Caucasian women, people of color, and immigrants (U.S. Department of Labor, 2021). Previous research suggests that although workplace discrimination may be less visible, subtle forms occur at every level within an organization (Coleman, 1998; Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King & Gray, 2016). When subtle forms of discrimination occur consistently, they create patterns of exclusion, especially for women and people of color. Subtle forms of discrimination often diminish the self-esteem of women and people of color and inhibit them from fully engaging with colleagues or advancing careers (Coleman, 1998; Walker, Corrington, Hebl & King, 2022). Biased behaviors stem from learned stereotypes that shape our attitudes towards people different from ourselves. People often develop myths that conceal the underlying issues of equal opportunity in the workplace. The ‘glass ceiling’ concept directly results from these common myths. Coleman (1998) defines the glass ceiling as “artificial barriers based on an attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward into management-level positions” (p. 5).

Coleman conducted a qualitative study utilizing the glass ceiling concept as the theoretical framework to ascertain perceived barriers influencing the career mobility patterns of Black and White female administrators in government, education, and business organizations in Minnesota. The study investigated respondents’ perceptions of the consequences that gender

underrepresentation and gender and race discrimination have in administrative positions. Coleman highlighted individual (personal and family), group (support), and organizational (professional and discrimination) barriers to career advancement. In a similar study, Bell and Nkomo (1994) identified these core groups of barriers. Individual barriers focus on factors affecting one's psychological and social well-being. In contrast, group barriers encompass interdependent relations with differentiated roles, expectations, functions, and recognized identities. Organizational barriers identify the attention given to administrative policies, structures, and formal and informal systems.

Coleman's (1998) study sample consisted of 49 female administrators (39 Caucasians and 10 African Americans) who responded to a survey instrument containing two questionnaires: Survey of Minnesota Employers and Employees (Minnesota Planning, 1995) and the Administrator's Barrier-Strategy Inventory (Beason, 1992). Coleman utilized the 19-item, Survey of Minnesota Employers and Employees (workforce survey) to acquire demographic data regarding the participants and their current occupations. The Administrator's Barrier-Strategy Inventory (barriers survey) consisted of 60 items identifying the perceived barriers to career mobility. Readers should note that the researcher did not include the reliability and validity measurements for the two survey instruments.

Results indicated a low percentage of respondents occupying employment at the executive level, with about one percent (0.9%) of Caucasian respondents and no African American female reported having an executive position. About six percent (5.5%) of Caucasian respondents reported at the supervisory level, compared to only 0.2% for African American respondents. The lowest reported percentage for African American females is 0.04% at the mid-

management level. Respondents had an average of fourteen years of occupational experience and 11.5 years working in administrative roles. Respondents were age 33 when they received their first managerial job and spent an average of 75.0% of their time performing administrative duties at work.

African American respondents identified racial discrimination (88.0%), no opportunity for upward mobility (75.0%), exclusion from the old boys' network (71.0%), and negative attitude toward women in administration (71.0%) as their most frequent barriers to career advancement. Sixty-three percent of African American respondents identified the following items as barriers: sex discrimination in hiring, no support for women, lack of female role models, negative attitude toward women by employers, and lack of geographic mobility. Caucasian respondents listed the most frequent barriers as exclusion from the old boy's network (79.0%), negative attitude toward women by employers (55.0%), negative attitude toward women in administration (48.0%), and lack of professional networking (52.0%). Coleman's (1998) findings suggest that the glass ceiling exists for African American and Caucasian participants. However, the African American respondents identified significant discrimination and support barriers compared to their Caucasian counterparts.

Giscombé and Mattis (2002) conducted a mixed-methods study to assess the career experiences of African American, Asian, and Hispanic women in corporate management. The multiphase research design included: 1) a survey of professional and managerial women of color in thirty organizations; 2) national census data; 3) qualitative analyses from 59 focus groups and 83 individual interviews, and 4) diversity policy analyses at 15 organizations. Researchers mailed over 6,000 surveys to full-time women of color managers and professionals employed in

Fortune 500 companies, yielding a 26.0% response rate. Of the 1,735 completed surveys, 54.0% identified as African American, 24.0% were Asian American, and 21.0% were Hispanic.

Analyses of national census data discovered that women of color are underrepresented in senior management positions, even though more women of color were in the managerial pipeline.

Data showed that women of color experience more difficulty succeeding than White women due to their current work environment. The findings indicate that developing and sustaining supportive relationships between supervisors and women of color is necessary to impact career mobility positively. Respondents strongly/somewhat agreed that the following factors were essential to career advancement: access to high-visibility assignments (51.0%); communicating well (47.0%); having an influential mentor or sponsor (44.0%); and performing over and above expectations (49.0%) – the retention of women of color positively correlated with supportive behaviors of supervisors. Approximately half of the respondents (47.8%) acknowledged their organization's commitment to hiring a diverse workforce; however, few respondents reported that hiring authorities promoted women of similar racial/ethnic identities to senior management positions.

Although there has been an increase in the number of women occupying supervisory and management positions, African American continue to be underrepresented at the executive level in organizations. Similar to Coleman (1998), Mitra (2003a) posits that women face a 'glass ceiling' that inhibits them from ascending to supervisory and management roles in the workplace. This obstacle is even more significant for women of color. Mitra (2003b) obtained data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth of 1998 to analyze variables that affected the occupational status of African American women in management positions. Data from the

national survey comprised 12,686 individuals. Mitra's research focused on full-time workers between the ages of 33 and 41. Respondents provided detailed answers about their labor market status, human capital, background, and personal characteristics. Human capital variables comprise the respondent's highest level of education. Background variables included the highest level of parent's education, region of residence, and community type (rural or urban). Personal characteristics include respondents' personality, physical characteristics (i.e., weight and height), gender, and marital status. Job characteristics include the company size, gender of the respondent's boss, whether respondents occupy supervisory roles, and the nature of their position.

Mitra (2003b) posits that analyzing supervisory positions by job contents and skill requirements offers greater insight into why increased job responsibilities lead to fair compensation for African American men and Caucasian women supervisors. Results also indicate that African American women have higher educational attainment yet earn lower wages than African American men and Caucasian female supervisors. The fact that companies often segregate women in predominately female occupations is attributed to the lower earnings of these women supervisors. Although African American women have less experience than Caucasian women, they have been employed in their current organizations longer than any other group in the study. Length of tenure and experience led to increased wages for all African American supervisors. However, African American women do not earn considerable compensation associated with supervisory duties more than African American males and Caucasian women.

African Americans are not the only marginalized ethnic group in the workplace – Blacks in other countries also experience barriers to career mobility. Souza and Dias (2018) utilized content analysis of interviews conducted with 25 Black managers working in public and private companies in Brazil. The study aimed to examine the discourse focused on personal merit as an explanation for participants' career advancement. Researchers analyzed the functionalities, assumptions, and productive character that the idea of individual merit assumes in the interviewee's discourse. The practical nature of the meritocratic discourse indicates that it significantly contributed to generating a specific interpretation of the racial discrimination experienced by Black managers.

Souza and Dias (2018) characterized the managerial work of these Black professionals based on the requirement of specific qualifications, job responsibilities, and the nature of their relationship with clients, colleagues, and supervisors of their respective organizations. The majority of study participants identified as Brazilian middle-class, had a college degree and were married with children. Managers identified the following workplace barriers: family social status, perceptions of life prejudices, the need to enter the labor market early, and the difficulty of attaining higher education. Most respondents experienced intra- and inter-generational mobility, mainly motivated by not reproducing their childhood challenges (especially racism). Despite the barriers and challenges most interviewees encountered in the career advancement process, they all confirmed that their effort, competence, and education contributed to career achievement. Many respondents perceived race and skin color as a disadvantage they overcame through commitment, qualification, and dedication to work.

Kim, Twombly, Wolf-Wendel, and Belin (2020) researched foreign-born faculty members employed in social science and STEM fields at 4-year colleges and universities in the United States to understand their mobility patterns. Researchers posited that exploring the mobility patterns of this population is vital due to the growing numbers in STEM fields within the higher education system in the United States. Foreign-born faculty members in American universities almost doubled from 11.7% in 1973 to 20.4% in 1999 among all disciplines and 18.6% to 34.7% in engineering (Chellaraj, Maskus, & Mattoo, 2005). Foreign-born faculty members have a greater representation in these fields than American-born minorities.

Kim et al. (2020) examined the National Science Foundation's (2013) Survey of Doctorate Recipients to determine the mobility patterns of tenure-track faculty members between 2003 and 2013. Researchers covered the period when the United States experienced a recession and a simultaneous decrease in higher education support in government (Mortenson, 2012). Of the 3,446 full-time faculty members who completed the survey, foreign-born respondents accounted for about 19.4% ($n = 669$) of the sample. Researchers suggested that the economic environment potentially harmed the recruitment and retention of faculty members and individuals' ability to move.

The researchers used three separate dependent variables: 1) mobility one indicated whether respondents left academia and occupied jobs outside of higher education; 2) mobility two indicated whether those who stayed in academia moved to another higher education institution; and 3) mobility three indicated those who stayed in academia but went from teaching and research positions to administration. The independent variables included individual demographic characteristics, professional experiences, and characteristics of the current

institution. Individual demographic variables included gender, marital status, and family responsibilities. The professional experiences variables included academic discipline, job-related duties, rank, tenure status, job satisfaction, and research productivity. Researchers created two composite measures of satisfaction: satisfaction with work conditions ($\alpha = 0.78$) and satisfaction with compensation ($\alpha = 0.62$).

Researchers performed logistic regression analyses to investigate the predictors of mobility, including differences in mobility patterns between foreign-born faculty members and American respondents. Kim et al. (2020) also identified the effects of predictors moving to an administrative role, moving to other higher education institutions, and leaving academia entirely. Results indicated that nearly 13.0% had left academia by 2013, and of those who stayed, 19.0% had moved to another higher education institution. Twenty percent of those who stayed in academia had a primary role in administration positions. Findings indicated that the only significant difference was that foreign-born Asian faculty members were less likely to move into administration than Caucasian faculty members. African American faculty experienced significantly higher inter-institutional mobility rates than their Caucasian counterparts. Inter-institutional mobility means individuals are more likely to move to another higher education institution even if they have similar professional experiences and individual characteristics as their counterparts (Kim et al., 2020). In mobility to other universities or businesses, there were no significant differences between foreign-born faculty members and American faculty members. This finding differed from a previous study (Kim, Wolf-Wendel, & Twombly, 2011) that found that foreign-born faculty members were more likely to change their place of employment than their American-born counterparts.

Local Government/Public Administration

Women have made great strides toward more prominent roles in local government (Waller et al., 2020). There is value in the active parts of women in governing institutions because they bring different office priorities, perform more constituent services, and have other policy preferences than men (Fox & Schuhmann, 2000; Richardson & Cooper, 2003). However, Riccucci (2009) argued that women are still underrepresented in the most executive leadership positions within local government management. Riccucci (2009) also indicated that women's ascension to executive leadership positions in local government is often restricted due to a combination of organizational structures and management, and gender stereotypes. For agencies to achieve workplace equality, it is essential to hire more women and minorities in managerial positions (Maume, 1999; Shaw, 2017). When it comes to race and sex differences in administrative roles, Maume (1999) inferred that both Caucasian and African American women are disproportionately excluded from supervisory authority.

Aguado and Frederickson (2012) studied women who aspired to occupy executive leadership roles within local government. The study sample consisted of 311 (196 men and 115 women) graduates of the University of Kansas Master of Public Administration program – a program with a reputation for placing its students in city management positions. Researchers used a two-pronged approach and two data sets to test the study hypotheses. The first analysis sought to find the effects of gender and marriage on the probability of being a city manager. A simple logistic regression model determined respondents' chances of becoming city managers. Results indicated that females are less likely to become city managers, and married women with children have the most difficulty ascending to higher positions in city management.

To find the factors that affect career advancement, the researchers developed a questionnaire based on earlier research on gender and public service success (Hale & Kelly, 1989). All 311 graduates received the questionnaire in the mail, yielding a response rate of 49.5% (n = 154). Of those who responded, fifty-two (33.8%) were female, and of those females, only eleven were city managers. Researchers found that women believed gender and age are two significant barriers to overcome in the workplace. Nineteen percent of women reported they experienced gender discrimination, compared with four percent of males. Almost ten percent of female respondents said they have resigned or terminated because of their gender compared with two percent of males.

The most significant difference between males and females has to do with choice. When asked, “*My progress toward a local government administration position has been held back by my own choice,*” 37.0% of males but 52.0% of females agreed or strongly agreed—family choices and circumstances often trump the desire for women to become city managers. Women are less likely than men to be willing to relocate due to family dynamics. Researchers also suggested that women were appointed to department head and assistant city manager positions by remaining in a single jurisdiction and climbing the hierarchical ladder. This suggestion helps explain why some women remain employed with one municipality to attain the upward mobility they seek.

Before the new governance reforms, the “service” model of public sector employment predominated and played an essential role in creating favorable mobility prospects into white-collar occupations for African Americans (Byron, 2010; Wilson, 2006). Wilson and Roscigno (2016) examined occupational mobility patterns of public sector employees during the reform

period of 2005-2010. Findings showed that the “service” model of public sector employment played an essential role in creating opportunities for advancement into white-collar occupations for African Americans. The model is a function of the job families in public sector employment, which adds options for promotion, as in the case of positions in public parks and recreation organizations. Arnold, Glover, and Beeler (2012) define a job family as a group of occupational titles that share increased levels of knowledge, abilities, skills, and responsibilities which leads to more opportunities for promotion. Wilson and Roscigno (2016) concluded that managerial discretion in hiring practices often widens the gap in upward mobility for African Americans relative to Caucasians.

Nonprofit Sector

African American women face unique and challenging obstacles pursuing leadership positions in the nonprofit sector. Previous research argued that navigating informal social networks and battling racial and gender stereotypes are considerable barriers to the upward career mobility of African American women (Combs, 2003; Reynolds-Dobbs, Thomas, & Harrison, 2008; Wilson, 2012). Wilson (2012) found that the career mobility disparities between African Americans and Caucasians were attributed to the fact that Blacks had to solely rely on formalized processes for obtaining greater job responsibilities or promotions. Relatedly, Combs (2003) revealed that African American female managers felt that their career advancement had been inhibited due being isolated and excluded from the informal social systems and networks within their workplaces. Reynolds-Dobbs et al. (2008) identified five stereotypical images which African American women must battle in order to be successful in the workplace. Each image influenced how Black women are perceived in the workplace, and how these perceptions can be

harmful and detrimental to their career development. As a consequence of these barriers, African American women may experience unique discriminatory practices such as race stratification.

Race stratification in the nonprofit industry can be understood as grouping one racial group in executive leadership roles and another at the front-line and entry-level positions. Nonprofit organizations are overwhelmingly led by Caucasian men and women, despite occupying a diverse staff (DeVita & Roeger, 2009). Financial supporters of nonprofit organizations are now more interested in providing resources to organizations that showcase diversity at the executive level (Cohen, 2011). Research suggests that most nonprofit organizations produce positive performance when they have minority representation within leadership (DeVita & Roeger, 2009). However, questions remain regarding the strategies people of color utilize to maximize work performance and achieve upward mobility. Although previous research confirms the racial and ethnic disparities in nonprofit management, there is a scarcity of research focused on how minorities communicate and navigate within the existing power structures to have successful careers in the nonprofit industry (Cohen, 2011; DeVita & Roeger, 2009).

African American women inhabit a unique space in the nonprofit industry. Adesaogun, Flottemesch, and Ibrahim-DeVries (2015) explored the career experiences of thirty African American women working in urban nonprofit agencies in Minnesota. The researchers sought to understand the strategic actions Black women utilized to maximize their career success and how they communicate with their peers throughout their nonprofit careers. Researchers emailed participants a survey inquiring about their experiences working in the profession. After completing the surveys, respondents chose to participate in a semi-structured interview.

Adesaogun et al. (2015) utilized the Minnesota Equal Employment Opportunity data packet from the 2000 census to gather employment and diversity information to gain insights on race stratification within the leadership of nonprofit organizations. Data reflected 61.0% male and 38.0% female employees in management-level occupations. The reported gender balance reflected the state's workforce, with 52.0% male and 47.0% female workers across each industry. The data regarding diversity indicated that management-level positions comprised 93.0% Caucasian employees and six percent minorities (Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, 2000). Researchers posited that the fundamental difficulty in resolving racial and ethnic stratification in nonprofit leadership is attributed to the potential disinterest of current nonprofit leadership members in mentoring minority employees.

African American women's career experiences in the nonprofit industry are primarily disrupted by the challenges in navigating the racism and inequalities faced in the workplace. Results from Adesaogun et al.'s (2015) study indicated that 53.0% of the respondents generally agreed that their current job reflected their level of education and experience. However, 53.0% perceived receiving inadequate compensation. Ninety-three percent of respondents believed it was necessary to communicate with other Black women in the field, while 80.0% often made a point to share within their cultural group. Researchers discovered four significant themes from participant interviews: 1) Communication tactics, 2) Perception, power, and stratification, 3) Challenges facing Black women in nonprofits, and 4) Strategic tactics utilized by Black women in nonprofits.

The researchers observed how Black women tactically communicated and interacted with one another throughout the workplace. Most of the women communicated in secluded areas or

would utilize coded speech when surrounded by colleagues of different ethnic backgrounds. Respondents' perceptions of their positions within their respective nonprofit organizations impacted how they chose to navigate existing power structures. The women also identified a number of challenges that impeded their upward mobility (i.e., perceived need for self-preservation, navigating real and perceived discrimination and racism, and facing maltreatment by Caucasian women in leadership positions). Similarly, Ortiz and Roscigno (2009) found that regardless of occupational status, Black women experience discrimination mostly from their coworkers and supervisors who also tend to be white and female. The researchers also indicated that Black women are more likely to experience higher levels of harassment and racial discrimination in hiring in promotion.

Because race and gender segregate social capital, White men tend to gain greater access to social capital resources than women and people of color. Lin (2002) defined social capital as the "resources embedded in social networks accessed and used by actors for actions" (p. 25). Social capital serves as an asset by virtue of an individuals' relationships and access to resources in the network of which they are members. To further investigate persistent gender and race inequality in the labor market, McDonald and Day (2010) published an article discussing the informal processes by which social capital provide individuals access to influence, information, and status that impact career advancement. The authors illustrate the role social capital in the reproduction of labor market inequality by presenting research on the 'invisible hand' of social capital to show segregation within social networks. The invisible hand of social capital entails the process of an individual receiving unsolicited job information from someone in their social network and apply for the position (Lin, 2000). Social relationships construct standard methods

whereby people assist their relative, friends, and acquaintances by providing job leads, serving as professional references, or directly hiring someone they know.

McDonald and Day (2010) highlight how social relationships provide access to social capital to aid individuals in navigating the labor market. Yet, access to social capital is often clustered by gender and race in a way that strengthens the advantages of White men and the disadvantages of women and people of color (Green, Tigges, & Diaz, 1999). Women and people of color remain underrepresented in managerial, administrative, and executive positions (Stainback & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2009). Many organizations commonly fill high-level job openings with ‘non-searcher’ – individuals who receive unsolicited job leads that were not presently seeking employment (McDonald, 2008). This informal recruitment process is more effective for Caucasian men than women and people of color, confirming how the ‘invisible hand’ maintains gender and race inequality in the workplace.

Intersectionality

Black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) introduced intersectionality to describe the various social identities of people of color, specifically African American women, within structures and systems of discrimination or oppression. Gender, race, class, age, ability, and sexuality were used discriminate against women. Each construct accentuates that forms of oppression such as racism, classism, and sexism merged to contribute to societal inequality (Knudsen, 2006). For African American women, intersectionality examines the relationship between race and gender in the workplace and culture and the elements of oppressive systems and structures. Moreover, Mowatt, French, and Malebranche (2013) claimed that systemic oppression affects African American women in various, including employment. Crenshaw

(1991) noted the three forms of intersectionality: structural, representational, and political. Representational intersectionality refers to the cultural construction of identity (Crenshaw, 1991). Political intersectionality focuses on an individual's identified group, while structural intersectionality refers to how a person's legal status or social conditions are marginalized (Shields, 2008). Shaw (2017) suggests that it is critical to be aware of and examine the oppressive structures of sexism and racism in society and in the workplace due to social constructs. These oppressive structures created barriers and constrained career advancement for African American women working in public parks and recreation agencies.

Intersectionality, and the concept of double jeopardy in particular (Lloyd-Jones, 2009; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), has emerged in conversations with women of color as they face marginalization concerning race and gender. Black women, for example, must combat multiple stereotypes to experience upward mobility in athletic administration (McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017). Demonstrating the slow pace of change, in 2017, Carla Williams became the first African American woman to serve as AD of one of the 65 institutions in the five largest athletics conferences—commonly referred to as the “Power Five” (Daves, 2017). The intersectional identity of being a Black woman leads to additional barriers, including gender and the racial stereotype of “the angry Black woman” (Hollomon, 2016; McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017; Taylor & Hardin, 2016). These barriers can potentially increase the stress African American women endure in the workplace.

Stress in the Workplace for African American Women

Stress can cause physiological and psychological changes; however, this concept has no consistent definition (Bacchus, 2008). Stress often causes distress for some people yet can be

pleasurable for others – everyone responds differently. Pearlin, Menaghan, Lieberman, and Mullan (1981) define stress as the hardships, problems, or threats that challenge individual's adaptative capabilities. In comparison, Smith and Carlson (1997) define stress as "an event, situation, or combination of a situation in which demands are perceived as exceeding one's capacity to respond comfortably" (p. 232). Stressors often derive from within a person or environment and vary in intensity. Researchers have categorized stressors as chronic or acute (Compas, 1987; Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2011; Taylor, 2006). According to Compas (1987), chronic stressors are "an ongoing aspect of the internal or external environment" (p. 277). In contrast, acute stress consists of changes in existing conditions or a disruption of the status quo.

Any discussion of stress would be remiss without acknowledging the work of Hans Selye, whom many consider the father of stress research. Selye (1946) indicated that stress caused disease, and there is an integrated syndrome of closely interrelated adaptive reactions to non-specific stress known as the General Adaption Syndrome. It develops in three stages: 1) the alarm reaction, (2) the stage of resistance, and (3) the stage of exhaustion. Most of the characteristic manifestations of the alarm reaction disappear or are reversed during the exhaustion phase. Anything that causes stress endangers a person's life unless adequate adaptive responses meet it, and anything that threatens life causes stress and adaptive resources.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that Selye's definition of stress treats stress as a disturbance of homeostasis produced by environmental change and ignores cognition. They conceptualized stress as a person-environment transaction that cognitive appraisal mediates. Cognitive appraisal is an evaluative process determining why and to what extent a particular trade or series of transactions between the person and the environment is stressful. To understand

how people respond to stressful events/situations, we must consider the cognitive processes that intervene between the encounter and the reaction and the factors that affect the nature of the mediation. If you do not consider these processes, it will be impossible to understand human variation under comparable external conditions.

Historically, stress and coping models have posited that environmental stressors, role strains, and daily hassles, in the absence of adequate managing resources, potentially disrupt an individual's psychological equilibrium and cause psychological and physiological distress. Empirical research has demonstrated a consistent relationship between life stress and sorrow. However, the mechanism by which psychosocial resources function as intervening factors in the stressor-distress paradigm is still an open question. One approach (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) has been to conceptualize psychosocial variables as intervening factors that (a) eliminate or modify the source of the problem, (b) alter the meaning of the stimulus to no longer perceived as stressful, or (c) regulate the emotional reactivity associated with the stressor. In this perspective, researchers frame psychosocial resources as reactive elements mobilized to mediate or buffer the potentially harmful effects of stressors. Pearlin and Aneshensel (1986) proposed that individuals must integrate social, biological/physiological, and psychological resources into a comprehensive mapping of coping resources.

Geronimus (1992) proposed the weathering hypothesis to explain how there are ethnic differences regarding biological aging. The concept of weathering encapsulates how social inequality may affect the health of population groups differently and how these differences may intensify with age. Members of minority groups are subject to racial discrimination that can be

costly to health (Geronimus, 1992). The current study asks respondents about their stress levels in the workplace and if stress prohibits them from taking other job opportunities.

Woods-Giscombé and Lobel (2008) provided a comprehensive conceptualization of stress among African American women that consisted of the following dimensions: generic, gender-related, race-related, socioeconomic status-related stress. Findings revealed that for African American women, the experience of gender-related, race-related, and generic stress predicts distress rather than these three categories of stress separately. Although each dimension used in the model can and has been viewed independently, the intersection between all three scopes is more critical for explaining stress among African American women.

Scholar and activist Angela Davis asserts that to understand Black women's current work-related struggles, a person must first examine the historical analysis of Black women's social position (Davis, 1981). This historical analysis begins with slavery, wherein the Black woman's role as a worker and provider for her family was first established. Historically, work has been an essential facet of life for African American women (Riley & Keith, 2003). African American women have a strong presence and will continue to play a vital role in the American labor force. Research suggests that African Americans are at increased risk for exposure to stressful life events (Karlsen & Nazroo, 2002; Williams, Neighbors & Jackson, 2003) and adversity (Nazroo, 2003).

The stressors in the lives of African American women reflect their distinct histories, sociocultural experience, and societal position. These stressors significantly differ among White women, White men, and African American men (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). The usual stressors of the workplace may be unbearable because African American women can be easily

singled out and treated differently than their colleagues. Literature suggests that African American women experience adverse psychological outcomes in the workplace related to race and gender discrimination. Existing literature on workplace stressors and the resilience of African American women provide insight into the specific measures utilized in the current study.

Gender and race discrimination in the workplace are chronic stressors for African American women. Racism and sexism play a part in the occupations selected, the income, and the benefits African American women receive when employed (Brown & Keith, 2003). Hall, Everett, and Hamilton-Mason (2012) explored work-related stressors that affect the lives of Black women and how they cope with them. Five primary themes emerged that identify when African American women perceived racism and sexism as stressors in the workplace. The themes are: (1) being hired or promoted in the workplace, (2) defending one's race and lack of mentorship, (3) shifting or code-switching to overcome barriers to employment, (4) coping with racism and discrimination, and (5) being isolated or excluded. Results from this study indicate African American women use emotion- and problem-focused coping responses to manage stress (i.e., racism and sexism) in the workplace.

Dhanani, Beus, and Joseph (2015) posited that workplace discrimination is positively related to job stress. Interpersonal workplace discrimination towards members of oppressed social groups has become covert and subtle and leads to negative experiences for those individuals. Attell, Brown, and Treiber (2017) assert that women and people of color were affected more by the impact of workplace bullying and less protected by co-worker social support. Individuals who experience workplace bullying reported higher levels of perceived job

stressors. Zurbrugg and Miner (2016) found that sexual minority women reported higher workplace incivility and stress levels than sexual minority men.

Tipre and Carson (2022) conducted structured focus groups to examine Black women's perspectives on stress. Responses from the participants indicated that health, family, and relationships were women's top three stress sources. When asked about the stressors specifically for Black women, the dominant responses were the safety of children and raising Black children, the head of the family/single parenting, and finances. These stressors also affected participants' weight – emotional eating, not having enough time for exercise, and eating fast food due to lack of time or money were voted as the top reasons for how stressors influence women's weight. If an individual experiences stress in the workplace, one must have the ability to respond to or cope with various workplace stressors to be resilient.

Resilience

Resilience is viewed through the developmental lens when observing an individual's professional development and growth. Brodtkin and Coleman (1996) define resilience as developing coping strategies and positive responses despite adverse circumstances. Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000) refer to resilience as an individual's ability to bounce back from adversity. Several factors contribute to how well individuals adapt to adversities; predominant among them are: a) how individuals view and engage with the world, b) the availability and quality of social resources, and c) specific coping strategies (American Psychological Association, 2022).

From a developmental perspective, resilience reflects a dynamic interaction between the environmental conditions and the individual makeup leading to a successful outcome (Masten,

2001; Masten & Narayan, 2012). Masten (2001) identified risk and positive results in children exposed to harsh and traumatic conditions. Her resilience model identified five factors that could threaten normal psychological development: 1) poverty, 2) the number of early life events exposures (e.g., death of a parent), 3) low birth weight, 4) exposure to harmful parental care, and 5) mass community trauma. Despite these risk factors, Masten (2001) found many children met their developmental milestones, were well-adjusted, and excelled academically, denoting a positive outcome. She referred to this type of resilience as "ordinary magic," which means it was more common than expected but still believable given their circumstances.

From a personality or trait perspective, Werner and Smith (1992) provided insight into the protective factors associated with resilience. Werner and Smith's work reflects a compensatory model of resilience in which these protective factors can neutralize exposure to risk (Garmezy, 1993). Researchers conducted a 32-year longitudinal study of children born into poverty in Hawaii. The study revealed a small subset of high-risk children ($n = 69$) who developed into caring, competent, and confident adults. A closer examination of the data revealed common characteristics that marked these resilient children. High-risk but resilient children from infancy to adulthood demonstrated: 1) a leisurely and sociable temperament that responded positively to others, 2) good communication and problem-solving skills, 3) an aptitude for identifying and relating to positive role models, 4) the ability to distance themselves from unhealthy relationships, 5) an optimistic spirit, 6) an internal locus of control, and 7) a positive self-concept. Children not classified as resilient tended to develop significant problems later in life.

Polidore et al. (2010) utilized an ecological and developmental perspective to examine the philosophical views and life experiences of three African American female educators who taught before, during, and after desegregation in the South. The study aimed to understand how the participants' views and experiences contributed to their career resilience. Eight themes emerged from the study that provided a framework to model resilience:

- Autonomy: an individual's ability to self-govern their actions despite hardships
- Deeply committed: a solid commitment to personal activities and relationships
- Education: an individual views education as necessary
- Enjoys change: an individual's ability to view change in an exciting and positive manner
- Flexible locus of control: an individual's perception of controlling life events
- Optimistic bias: an individual's ability to view adverse situations positively
- Positive relationships: an individual's ability to seek and observe positive mentors and role models
- Religion: spirituality serves as a source of inspiration

Polidore et al.'s (2010) theoretical resilience framework provides a lens to investigate African Americans' personal and professional experiences working in the parks and recreation industry. Resilience theory also provides an understanding of the necessary skills to cope with adversity. African American people consistently face adverse challenges on a personal and professional level. However, the Black community routinely overcomes negative situations. Black women are particularly impacted by the challenges and adversity rooted in gender and racial differences. These women believe failure is not optional despite experiencing more adversity and less opportunity (Rosette & Livingston, 2012). Thus, successful Black women in

leadership positions have beaten the odds. Chance (2022) found that African American women use adversity as fuel, which drives them to develop and hone the skills needed for leadership. The ability to be resilient in the workplace influences the overall well-being of African American women.

Black Well-being

Black women continue to have high rates of health conditions that can negatively influence their well-being (Taylor & Holden, 2009). Mental health is an integral part of our general health and well-being and a fundamental human right. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as a ‘state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’ (World Health Organization, 1946). The organization defines mental health as a state of mental well-being that enables a person to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their communities (World Health Organization, 2022). One of the critical facts from the *World Mental Health Report* published by WHO (2022) suggests poor working environments – including discrimination and inequality, excessive workloads, low job control, and job insecurity – pose a risk to mental health.

Black women face challenges in fulfilling career aspirations. In the workplace, Black women tend to have more negative experiences than White men and women (Buchanan & Fitzgerald, 2008). Black women encounter different job demands than their White counterparts and often experience less control. Black women report less access to career development opportunities than White women (Hite, 2004), and organizations may offer fewer organizational experiences such as sponsorship, job discretion, acceptance, and supervisory support to Black

women (Greenhaus, Parasuraman & Wormley, 1990). The lack of organizational experiences and career development opportunities increases the psychological strain on individuals when control is limited. Linnabery, Stuhlmacher, and Towler (2014) utilized the demand-control theoretical framework to examine the challenges that African American women face and how factors such as coping strategies and support can moderate levels of well-being. Researchers examined the impact of Black women's social support and coping strategies on job-family role strain, career satisfaction, and life satisfaction. Study participants included 188 highly educated African American women employed in various occupations who responded to multiple items on an online questionnaire.

The questionnaire included five scale instruments to measure the study variables. Researchers measured self-help coping utilizing the eight-item self-help coping subscale revised by Zuckerman and Gagne (2003). The reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.89 for this scale in the study. The 16-item scale developed by Caplan, Cobb, French, Van Harrison, and Pinneau (1980) measured social support with a reported reliability coefficient of 0.89. The job-role strain was measured using the 18-item scale developed by Bohen and Viveros-Long (1981), with a reported Cronbach's coefficient of 0.76. Greenhaus et al.'s (1990) scale measured career satisfaction, while the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985) measured life satisfaction. The reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients for these scales were 0.88 for career satisfaction and 0.86 for the SWLS. Results of path modeling found that social support is essential to well-being, and self-help coping can overcome deficient social support's impact on well-being. Exploratory analyses revealed that support from one's family, church, coworkers, and supervisor each individually related to aspects of well-being, mainly

when self-help coping is low. Immediate family interactions and support system is of utmost importance to peoples' lives (Halbreich, 2021).

Nguyen, Chatters, Taylor, and Mouzon (2016) examined the impact of informal social support from family and friends on the well-being of older African Americans. Researchers collected data on African Americans from the National Survey of American Life: Coping with Stress in the 21st Century (NSAL; n = 837). The study examined the following three measures of well-being: (a) life satisfaction, (b) happiness, and (c) self-esteem. Researchers measured each variable through a series of Likert-type questions administered to participants. The social support variables included frequency of contact with family and friends, subjective closeness with family, and negative interactions with family.

Nguyen et al. (2016) found that family and friend relationships make unique contributions to the well-being of older African Americans. Results indicated that family contact positively correlated with life satisfaction. The subjective closeness with the family variable is associated with life satisfaction and happiness, and subjective closeness with friends and negative interaction with family are associated with happiness and self-esteem. Findings also indicated significant interactions between family closeness and family contact for life satisfaction, as well as friendship closeness and negative interaction with family for happiness.

The last three years have brought extraordinary change and transformation in the workplace. Due to forced business closures and lockdowns, employees were forced to stay home. During the prolonged time of isolation, many employees had the opportunity to think about their employment and reflect on how they could improve their current situations. People also began to experience a decline in their well-being due to being forced to remain at home. Many

organizations were faced with this phenomenon of “quiet quitting.” According to Formica and Sfodera (2022), quiet quitting refers to the “limited commitment of employees to carry out the assigned duties and to relinquish from any other task not specified in their job description” (p. 900). Quiet quitters are those who have a low investment in their work responsibilities and become disengaged at work. According to a recent Wall Street Journal article, approximately fifty percent of today’s workforce has chosen to limit their commitment to their job (Smith, 2022). Employees have started to communicate to employers that their workplace environment is no longer healthy and conducive to employees’ needs (Ellis & Yang, 2022).

Thriving in the Workplace

Thriving at work refers to a positive psychological state characterized by a shared sense of vitality and learning (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Employees who are thriving experience personal growth by feeling energized and alive (i.e., vitality) and by having a sense of continually acquiring and applying knowledge (i.e., learning). Empirical studies have shown that thriving positively relates to individual characteristics (Patterson, Luthans & Jeung, 2014) and relational characteristics (Frazier & Tupper, 2016). Thriving is also positively associated with essential employee outcomes, such as job performance (Gerbas, Porath, Parker, Spreitzer, & Cross, 2015), job satisfaction (Marchiondo, Cortina & Kabat-Farr, 2018), and personal health (Walumbwa, Muchiri, Misati, & Meiliani, 2018). Although there has been an increase in research on thriving at work, there is still limited research on the experiences of thriving among African American women.

Tanya Lovejoy-Capers (2020) sought to explore the experiences of thriving among Black women who have experienced racial oppression and discrimination by utilizing semi-structured

interviews. The study investigated the perceptions, beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes of how Black women thrive in the context of systematic oppression. The sample population included eight Black women between the ages of 41 to 56 who had experienced racial oppression and discrimination. The researcher recorded and transcribed all interviews and allowed participants to review the transcriptions for accuracy and validity. The researcher used inductive thematic analysis to analyze the data.

Findings indicated eight patterns that the researchers used to develop three emerging themes that participants felt were most important in their ability to thrive. The three emerging themes, with supporting patterns, participants focused on were: (a) an unfair work environment (lack of professional opportunities, workplace bias), (b) self-determination (motivation, self-awareness, inspiration), and (c) self-worth (proving yourself, inferiority complex, alienation, rationalization). Participants discussed their tenacity to thrive and resiliency to prosper, concentrating on self, family, and coping skills.

Waller, Cole, Scott, Wozencroft, and Griffiths (2021) conducted a study to better understand the culture of therapeutic recreation organizations by examining the relationship between thriving, organizational culture, climate, and job satisfaction among recreational therapists. Researchers administered an online survey to collect data from the study participants. The survey consisted of a series of items utilizing the Thriving at Work Scale (TWS; Porath et al., 2012), the Japanese Organizational Culture Scale (JOCS; Tang, Kim & O'Donald, 2000), the Job Satisfaction Index (JSI; Schriesheim & Tsui, 1980), and Work Climate Questionnaire (WCQ) to measure the study's variables. TWS measured vitality and learning, JSI measured overall job satisfaction, and WCQ measured organizational climate. JOCS yielded four

subscales: (1) family orientation and loyalty; (2) open communication and consensual decision-making; (3) team approach; and (4) knowledge of managers not included in other subscales. The reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients for TWS and JSI are 0.88 (Porath et al., 2012) and 0.95 (Schriesheim & Tsui, 1980), respectively. Tang et al. (2000) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the subscales: 0.81 for family orientation, 0.87 for open communication, 0.74 for a team approach, and 0.82 for knowledge of managers.

Findings indicated that most of the sample thrived because of learning and personal commitment to learning in the workplace. About ninety-six percent ($n = 226$) of the respondents agreed that they often find themselves learning, whereas 86.9% agreed on developing a lot as a person. Much of the sample population experienced a positive workplace culture and job satisfaction because their supervisor encouraged teamwork and communicated well with staff. Eighty-four percent of respondents agreed that their supervisors encourage employees to work in groups to exchange opinions and ideas. The majority of the sample also experienced a positive climate in the workplace for recreation therapists because their managers supported them in establishing a positive workplace climate.

Waller et al. (2021) provided implications and strategies for improving the culture and thriving in parks and recreation organizations. Organizations must ensure they offer services and programs that are person-centered, lifelong learning, highly supported, and opportunities for leadership development. If an individual feels valued, continuously learns, has excellent relationships, and feels emotionally safe, it enhances their ability to thrive in the workplace. Many organizations experience traumatic events that disrupt core organizational activities. While some affected organizations never recover their prior level of well-being, others surpass their

pre-trauma state. Alexander, Greenbaum, and Shani (2021) explored the phenomenon of posttraumatic organizational growth by investigating how an organization emerged and transformed after being traumatized by extensive theft committed by a senior leader. Through a series of semi-structured interviews, researchers analyzed data by transcribing interviews and utilizing open coding. Findings indicated that in the theft's aftermath, the company changed and grew differently over time. The company's financial position improved due to increased revenue and membership. The company also leveraged social and economic capital by expanding cultural activities and services.

Recruitment and Retention of African American Women

African American women's struggles regarding recruitment and retention in the workplace appear related to democracy. However, the meaning and practice of democracy are complex within our society. For many, it stands for freedom – as it relates to being valued within the systems of White male power and structure. This freedom has been challenged and stifled for African American women, often requiring conformity or even masking their true selves to be what White society would have them to be (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003).

Tapia and Kvasny (2004) examined retention strategies for women and minorities and found that both women and people of color experienced marginalization in promotions, salary increases, layoffs, and terminations and usually had limited social capital. Women and minorities lacked role models and mentors who could offer advice and guidance, leadership, and social networks necessary for attaining upward mobility. Research suggests that employees with increased social capital often benefitted from frequent salary increases, promotions, and desired occupations (Coleman, 1986). African Americans are disproportionately disadvantaged in

obtaining executive leadership positions in parks and recreation organizations due to limited social capital.

Considering the hegemony of White male appointing authorities, various biases can hinder hiring practices comparative to selecting personnel. Wilson and Roscigno (2016) concluded that managerial discretion in hiring practices sometimes amplifies the disparities in upward mobility for African Americans relative to their White counterparts in local government agencies. For example, a common human resource practice often found in municipal civil service systems is known as the "Rule of Three" which suggests that hiring authorities can request the names of three applicants for a particular job to determine whether they acquire the necessary abilities, knowledge and skills required for the job. The hiring authority usually conducts a final screening interview to select the most qualified candidate. Hiring authorities can hire anyone, without challenge, if they meet job requirements.

The hiring party often bypass women and minorities as part of a selection process burdened with discretion. Researchers suggests that a significant solution to this issue is for executive leadership to closely supervise the hiring practices. Lussier and Hendon (2019) infer that it is appropriate for individuals to contest hirings in regard to the municipality's diversity, equity, and inclusion goals.

In public administration, two effective treatments of diversity are those of Light (1994) and Rice (2007). Light (1994) argued that those embarking on recruiting minority employees—specifically chairpersons and members of search committees—need first to value differences. Recruiting through a wide range of platforms is essential to ensure they are creative and aggressive in addressing the academic market. However, Light posits that when search

committees fail to value differences, they often fail in their recruitment efforts. The researcher contends that a positive valuation of differences is the key to successfully recruiting minority faculty. Successful recruiting also depends on how well organizations can prevent biased hiring or preferential treatment among minority candidates.

Rice (2007, 2008) has contributed to the treatment of the topic by considering the necessary diversity competencies required for managerial and organizational success in the public sector and how specialized training programs may inform these. Relatedly, Johnson and Rivera (2007) furthered Rice's argument by considering the peculiar challenges that public affairs programs face in developing and implementing a framework to improve minority faculty representation. Management could indefinitely extend a review of specified best practices. Whether these measures will suffice to counter the subtle impact of discrimination and racism in the workplace depends on how sustained, systematic, and widespread they become.

Successful recruiting also depends on how much these efforts can prompt attitudinal and institutional changes and how a positive commitment to diversity prompts increased diversity efforts. A positive commitment to diversity protects academic programs from receiving discrimination claims. An academic institution should not expect discrimination claims if it values differences and embraces cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity. There must be accommodation of dissent regarding both (1) openness to the airing of discrimination grievances without fear of reprisal and (2) academic freedom, respecting the role of faculty tenure. Two essential elements necessary to achieve a commitment to diversity are tolerance for conflict and contention (Palfreyman, 2007).

Recruitment Recommendations

Yee (2007) conducted a case study focused on how the intersection of race and gender influences the career paths of women of color collegiate athletic administrators. One component of the semi-structured interviews asked participants to provide recommendations to a young woman of color seeking to achieve a similar position as theirs. Some suggestions included creating formal and informal mentoring programs, training programs, and professional associations that address the unique issues for women of color athletic administrators. Although several associations and organizations provide spaces and voices for women administrators, they do not push the issues that minority women face. Instead, they assume that all women face the same problems because of their gender. This assumption ignores the intersectional experiences that women of color administrators have due to their race and gender (hooks, 2000).

For the past four years, I have been a member of NRPA and realized that even though African American women employ various positions within the field, not many of us are in executive leadership positions. To create a space for women of color to network, Sonya Shaw (2020; North Carolina Central University) organized the Women of Color in Recreation and Parks (WCRP) affinity group for currently employed or retired parks and recreation professionals. The group has a private Facebook page where nearly 200 members share stories, exchange resources, and encourage each other as they navigate the parks and recreation field. Through this network, I have gained countless insights into the career experiences of current African American women leaders in the profession. Most women who hold executive leadership positions have held various positions in local government.

Johnson (2020) studied the City of Seattle to explore hiring guidelines and promotional practices of a municipal organization with an underrepresentation of female leadership. Johnson recommends that human resources personnel identify affordable and practical ways to diminish the leadership gender gap by implementing and providing more networking opportunities for women to exchange experiences and receive support. The study also recommended how city government leadership can prevent workplace discrimination when selecting qualified candidates for career advancement, mentoring, and professional development. Government leaders can hire more women in upper-management occupations and achieve equitable compensation by investing in their professional development and education and providing more training opportunities.

Another finding from Johnson's (2020) study was that women employed by the City of Seattle formed several support groups to address their needs and concerns. The researcher recommended that municipalities establish similar women empowerment groups for networking, collaboration, and mentorship. Female public administrators do not receive adequate opportunities for professional development, mentoring, and promotions compared to men (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Voorhees & Lange-Skaggs, 2015). Women in parks and recreation, especially women of color, are more open to mentoring each other. Members of WCRP state the importance of having a strong mentor to help navigate their careers. Group members also model what they see from the women who have already obtained executive leadership positions. They use these women to model what it means to be a leader, their behaviors, and the steps a person would take to get into a career pathway.

More women are going through parks and recreation curricula than men, yet we know there is a disproportion in leadership positions. The majority of the participants in Johnson's study witnessed or experienced gender barriers in their pursuit of leadership. Research shows that most organizations rarely acknowledge or recognize how gender barriers exist and impact women's career advancement (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016). In most male-dominant organizational cultures, there is no expectation for women to obtain leadership positions because they constantly face gender barriers in the workplace (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016). Organizations must implement significant changes to diminish the male-dominant mindsets embedded in their daily practices. Johnson (2020) recommended that organizations train supervisors and male employees on implicit gender bias and gender stereotypes to establish safe spaces for women to vocalize their concerns.

Developing the next generation of African American parks and recreation professionals is vital to eradicating systemic barriers (Jenkins, 2021). Jenkins suggests parks and recreation organizations implement recruitment initiatives for African American students and collaborate with universities to bridge education to practice. The benefits of these collaborations foster diversity and equity for African Americans and offer professional experience, mentoring, and networking opportunities to prepare students for successful careers. Jenkins (2021) recommends that parks and recreation agencies develop cooperative programs with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to provide networking opportunities for students and build leadership skills with parks and recreation professionals. Morehouse College (Atlanta, GA) and North Carolina Central University (Greensboro, NC) are examples of academic institutions focused on developing their students. Morehouse College sends its students to work with local

parks and recreation organizations to gain hands-on practical experience. North Carolina Central University has an accredited program that prepares students for entry-level, supervisory management, and administration positions in recreation and leisure services organizations.

Conceptual Framework

The current study of African American women working in public parks and recreation will utilize the following theoretical perspectives: occupational mobility theory (Blau & Duncan, 1967), career mobility theory (Sicherman & Galor, 1990), and career construction theory (Savickas, 2005). These theories guide the research design, methodology, and data analysis. Occupational and career mobility frameworks provide insight into the multiple employment opportunities accessible to individuals in the labor market. Utilizing these theories for this study allows the examination of the differences in career paths for African American women professionals. Career construction theory offers insight into how and why individuals choose specific professions. Utilizing this theory for the study aids in discovering participants' personal and professional identities and understanding the decisions and values behind their career paths.

Similar studies related to career mobility and African Americans utilized these three theories. The occupational theory also permits the examination of self-reported movement within the employment systems of public parks and recreation organizations.

Occupational Mobility Theory

Mobility research is based on the premise that society's occupational structure is the primary factor of social mobility. Blau and Duncan (1967) developed one of the most dependable and frequently replicated mobility research designs. The researchers condensed seventeen occupational titles into three broad classifications: (1) white-collar, (2) blue-collar, and

(3) farm. They developed mobility tables to illustrate the workforce flow within and between occupations, such as the movement within white-collar occupations and from blue-collar to white-collar jobs.

Researchers surveyed over 20,000 males between the ages of 20 and 64. 83% of the sample responded to the survey. Results indicated two significant findings: 1) short-distance geographic mobility exceeded long-distance geographic mobility, and 2) upward mobility was more prevalent than downward mobility. The association between various social ailments and demographic variables affecting occupational mobility included: race; the population of the residing city; ethnic migration; geographic region; geographic mobility; family type; sibling pattern; family's education attainment; marital status; occupational status five years ago; occupational status of father's first job; father's current position; and spouse's father's occupational status.

The findings discovered that race, education, family type, ethnic origin, and geographic mobility significantly correlated with upward occupational mobility. Race had a substantial connection to downward mobility, and marital status had no impact on mobility. Blau and Duncan (1967) stated that African Americans experienced disadvantageous consequences that directly affected their successful careers. Moreover, the authors posited that these disadvantages create "profound inequalities of occupational opportunities" (p. 209) for African Americans.

The early research effort by Blau and Duncan served as the foundational work for future research efforts across multiple disciplines. Kanter (1977) assessed occupational mobility within the American workforce and acknowledged systemic and structural characteristics that affect women's career advancement in organizations. The researcher developed a theoretical framework

that focused on an organization's structure to determine why women are disadvantaged as opposed to personal and societal factors. Occupational mobility theory encompasses three critical elements: (1) the extent to which employees possess the necessary power to accomplish their goals; (2) the extent to which employees are positioned to experience upward mobility; and (3) the relative number of people in social groups that share similar personality traits. This theory suggests that women are empowered to pursue opportunities for career advancement. Kanter also proposes that gender stereotypes are formed because women predominantly occupy lower-level supervisory and support positions in the workplace.

Career Mobility Theory

Sicherman and Galor (1990) theorize that career mobility is an outstanding characteristic of the American workforce by constructing a theoretical model of occupational mobility, optimal career choice, and firm separation. The model is characterized by various available occupations for employees within and across organizations. The authors emphasize that education, job-related experience, sponsorship, and tenure would positively influence upward mobility. Education provides individuals with human capital, impacting their future career earnings. The model also suggests that if the returns to schooling are lower while someone works in a specific occupation, the effect of education on the possibility of obtaining a promotion would be higher.

Taylor and Hardin (2016) used career mobility theory to examine the experiences and challenges of ten female D-I ADs. They conducted semi-structured interviews to understand the participants' inner experiences and thoughts. Four themes emerged from the interviews: (1) lack of female role models; (2) females are not qualified to manage football programs; (3) lack of ability and experience; and (4) benefits of intercollegiate coaching experience. Findings

suggested that these themes are the leading cause of females' inability to achieve maximum mobility in intercollegiate athletics.

Career Construction Theory

The current study examines the career mobility patterns of African American women working in public parks and recreation organizations with specific insight into how these women construct their careers. Savickas (2005) suggested that career construction theory (CCT) provides a meaningful framework for examining social aspects of how individuals select and employ occupations. CCT explores why people do what they do using an interpersonal framework. It explains how people construct their lives, decide their vocational behavior, and interpret their careers. CCT focuses on three perspectives – differential, developmental, and dynamic – to explain individuals' vocational personalities and behavior and how their personalities allow them to adapt to changes throughout their careers.

From the standpoint of differential psychology, CCT examines the content of vocational personality types and the different preferences of others. Savickas (2006) further elaborated on the trappings of CCT by explaining:

From the standpoint of developmental psychology, it examines the process of psychosocial adaptation and how individuals cope with vocational development tasks, occupational transitions, and work traumas. Moreover, from the perspective of narrative psychology, it examines the dynamics by which life themes impose meaning on vocational behavior and why individuals fit work into their lives in distinct ways (p. 84).

CCT encompasses career adaptability, life themes, and vocational personality (Hancock & Hums, 2016). Career adaptability distinguishes the association between occupational interests

and social expectations, and person's skills and abilities, perceived opportunities, and peers' acceptance (Hancock & Hums, 2016). Career adaptability is an individual's ability to cope with developmental tasks, such as learning new skills and social structures (Savickas, 2005).

Organizational social structures could impact an individual's career aspirations.

Life themes comprise the work that motivates people and aids them in making meaningful employment decisions. Savickas (2005) defines vocational personality as a person's "career-related abilities, needs, values, and interests" (p. 47). Personal factors such as gender, human capital, personality, and self-efficacy reinforce individuals' abilities, interests, and needs (Burke, 2007). Gender role socialization and cultural norms may influence women's career aspirations and expectations.

CCT cannot predict someone's career path but can be utilized in personal decision-making (Hancock & Hums, 2016). From a sports management perspective, Taylor et al. (2018) used CCT to explore the career experiences of female NCAA D-I conference commissioners. Results indicated that study participants frequently negotiated allotted time for personal and professional obligations and created relationships with colleagues that evolved into organic mentorship relationships. They also perceived rare occasions of sexism; however, all participants discussed experiencing sexism at some point. Due to minimal interaction with football and donors, many assume that women would be more successful occupying leadership positions on the conference level than in an athletic department.

Conceptual Model

For this research effort, the "Model of Occupational Mobility for Black Recreation and Park Personnel" developed by Waller (1989) aided in constructing the model for the present

study. Waller created his model using Sandefur's (1981) "Occupational Boundaries and Upward Shifts" model and the "Women's Occupational Attainment Model" developed by Robinson (1986). The variables contained within McDonald's (1981) and Waller's (1989) model include the following: education and experience, which will impact job satisfaction; duration (years of experience) and the presence of an affirmative action plan, which will positively impact mobility; and age, gender, and race of appointing authority, which will negatively impact mobility. The model suggests the variables to select for this research effort—predictions about the variables within this model aid in developing assumptions to be analyzed in the current study.

The models fail to identify the impact of variables such as family composition (marital status and the number of children), networking, and sponsorships on occupational mobility. Based on the way significant variables were predicted to influence mobility in the model developed by Waller (1989) and the way the variables are treated in the literature, the following predictions are relevant to the variables selected for the current study:

Positive Impacting Variables

- Education
- Experience
- Diversity Plan
- Job Satisfaction
- Networking/Sponsorships

Negative Impacting Variables

- Gender (Female)
- Race of the Appointing Authority (Non-Black)

- Family Composition

Figure 1 (in Appendix B) provides a graphic representation of the conceptual model of occupational mobility developed for this current study. In this model, an individual enters an organization with attained education and work experience. Over time (tenure/duration), job satisfaction occurs. As job opportunities arise, an organization must fill vacant positions to achieve its organizational demands. The organization begins internal recruitment by considering qualified, current employees. The attained education and related work experience are positive factors that will impact occupational mobility. Married women with children may be constrained due to family obligations, hindering occupational mobility.

When selecting a qualified candidate, the gender or race of the applicant and the race of the appointing authority may serve as negative factors. The primary assumption is that these variables will prohibit the selection of an individual when race and gender differences between the applicant and appointing authority. Also, the diversity plan will be a positive factor in the selection process. When an agency has an imbalance in race or gender, an assumption is that the agency reserves the position for a minority candidate. The employer has the final say so on which employee to select for a given job. Employees who opt to remain with the organization will experience intra-organizational mobility. In contrast, employees who leave the organization due to not being selected experience inter-organizational mobility.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of literature relevant to the occupational mobility and career experiences of African American women working in public parks and recreation agencies. The research discussed in this chapter proved the need for more research on this demographic of

women. The literature review offered extensive evidence that Black women are underrepresented in leadership positions and face many challenges and barriers to career advancement. The conceptual framework provided a perspective to examine how African American women enter the profession and the variables that influence their career advancement. The current study seeks to explore the occupational mobility status of African American women and the contributing factors that influence their progression to executive leadership positions. The next chapter describes the methodologies used in the study.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This study explores the career mobility patterns of African American women working in public parks and recreation agencies. At this stage in the research, the researcher defines career mobility as the movement of employees across job positions (both upward and downward) or a complete change in careers. For this exploratory study, public parks and recreation organizations include city, county, and special district agencies that derive their funding from property and other taxes to operate (Crompton, 2009). To achieve this purpose, the researcher developed a quantitative research design to examine the career mobility status of African American women and the factors that influence their progression to executive leadership positions.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide the current study:

1. What job positions and classifications are held by a sample of African American women currently working in public parks and recreation agencies?
2. What is the career mobility status of a sample of African American women currently working in public parks and recreation agencies?
3. What factors influence the career mobility of a sample of African American women currently working in public parks and recreation agencies?

Research Design

Because the researcher is exploring the career mobility of African American women working in public parks and recreation organizations, Creswell and Creswell (2018) state, "quantitative research is an approach for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables" (p. 4). The study variables can be measured, typically on instruments, so that

numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures. Quantitative research begins with philosophical assumptions and uses various inquiry strategies, data collection methods, data analysis, and interpretation to study research questions. Strategies of inquiry associated with quantitative research include experimental designs, nonexperimental designs, and longitudinal designs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The researcher developed the foundation of inquiry for the current study from a nonexperimental design employing survey research. Survey research provides a quantitative description of a population's attitudes, opinions, or trends by studying a population sample (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Survey research includes cross-sectional and longitudinal studies utilizing questionnaires or structured interviews for data collection – with the intent of generalizing from a sample to a population (Fowler, 2008). An advantage of cross-sectional research is that researchers can collect data on many kinds of people in a relatively short time (Johnson & Christenson, 2019). However, some weaknesses are that it can be challenging to establish time order, and studies of developmental trends can be misleading (Johnson & Christenson, 2019).

Before conducting the study, the researcher sought approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure compliance with the ethical guidelines prescribed by the University of Tennessee IRB and the American Psychological Association (APA). The researcher constructed an online survey using the Qualtrics database before obtaining IRB approval. The survey consists of questions on respondent demographics, job characteristics, experiences, and behavioral rating scale items to enable statistical analysis and outcomes of key study variables.

Sampling Strategy

The current study utilizes a purposive sampling strategy to identify African American women who hold entry-level through executive leadership positions in the parks and recreation industry. The researcher also used a snowball sampling approach in which participants were encouraged to suggest other female parks and recreation professionals recruit and participate in the study. Most of the study's population was recruited through the professional networks of the National Recreation and Park Ethnic Minority Society (NRPEMS), the National Forum for Black Public Administrators (NFBPA), and state affiliates with the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). The researcher sent an email to the appointed contact for each organization to identify African American female members. The contact information of the identified members was then added to a current listserv of potential participants developed through my previous research and professional network. A recruitment email containing information about the study was sent to those identified individuals with a link to the online consent form and survey. The researcher also utilized social media platforms related to the field to recruit participants.

Inclusion Criteria

Participation in the current study depended on the following criteria: being African American or Black; female; having a minimum of three years of work experience in the parks and recreation field; and currently working in a park and recreation agency. The sampling strategy deliberately selected African American women who have worked long enough to examine their career mobility status. Assuming a person in a governmental organization would be ready to move around within three to five years is reasonable. There is usually a level of

mastery during the third year of being employed in a position (Lussier & Hendon, 2019). By year five, the totality of an individual's skillset has likely changed to the point where they can work up the organizational hierarchy.

Power Analysis

Because there is no concrete evidence of the number of African American women working in public parks and recreation organizations, a power analysis was needed to determine an adequate sample size. The primary purpose underlying power analysis is to help the researcher choose the smallest sample size suitable to detect the effect of a given test at the desired level of significance (Kraemer & Blasey, 2016). The researcher utilized an online power analysis calculator to produce the target sample size for the current study by inputting the membership numbers provided by the national and state affiliations. After conducting the power analysis, the researcher determined a target sample size of 200 participants suitable for the current study.

Identification and Operationalization of Variables

Career mobility serves as the dependent variable for the current study. Career mobility embodies all job movement possibilities for individuals and related attitudes and behaviors (Vardi, 1980). The term, also referenced as occupational mobility, signifies the movement of employees across positions (both upward and downward) or a complete change in occupation. The current study operationalizes career mobility in terms of the mobility patterns indicated among the study participants.

The independent variables focus on the factors that influence the career mobility of African American women, which include: (a) likeability, (b) job satisfaction, (c) organizational

climate and culture, (d) the importance of thriving and networking, and (e) perceptions of stress. The current study operationalizes likeability regarding the participants' perception of relationships among supervisors and colleagues. Job satisfaction is an overall practical judgment about one's job (Russell, Spitxmuller, Lin, Stanton, Smith, & Ironson, 2004). Organizational climate and culture are operationalized in terms of the perceptions of one's workplace experiences. The current study operationalizes thriving regarding the perception of the importance of thriving in the workplace. Thriving is the psychological state in which individuals experience both a sense of vitality and learning (Porath et al., 2012). It is the act of learning, investing in oneself, and fighting through hostile opposition (Hennekam, 2017).

Instrumentation

To determine career mobility patterns for the sample, the researcher utilized an occupational status procedure used in previous studies on the career mobility of African Americans (Dex, 1987; McDonald, 1981; Newman, 2006; Waller, 1989; Waller et al., 2020). Researchers asked participants to indicate their current position held and any other full-time positions held over the past five years. Researchers then assigned occupational status scores to the most recent position designated and the position held at the end of the five years. The set scores were based on the score derived from the ranking of standard occupational titles used in previous mobility studies in public parks and recreation (Godbey & Henkel, 1976; McDonald, 1981; Shaw, 2017; Waller, 1989; Waller et al., 2020). The lower the occupational status score, the higher the perceived importance of the job.

Waller et al. (2020) tested the occupational status scale for reliability and obtained a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.88. For purposes of this study, the researcher inversed the scale so

that 1 = *Low Status* and 5 = *High Status*, meaning that the lower the mean score, the lower the perceived status of the occupational title. Career mobility is then measured by calculating the difference in scores between the current position and the position held at the end of the five years. A negative score signified downward mobility, a positive score indicated upward mobility, and no change in status score represented stability.

Likeability

Liking is a fundamental characteristic of interpersonal relationships (Stafford & Canary, 1991), and Rubin (1970) conceptualizes the term as favorable evaluation and respect directed toward one another. Many people associate liking with relational outcomes such as loving, commitment, and satisfaction (Floyd, 1997; Myers et al., 1999). Therefore, likeability in the workplace is significant because when individuals like each other, it increases the probability of interpersonal influence and reduces interpersonal conflict (McCroskey, Richmond, & Stewart, 1986). Rubin (1970) introduced a ten-item Liking Scale that asks respondents to indicate their general feelings of liking toward a platonic friend of the opposite sex. The instrument measured a 9-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 9 = *strongly agree*. The reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the Liking Scale were 0.81 for women and 0.83 for men.

Rubin (1970) found that love and liking among men were more highly correlated than among women ($z = 2.48, p < 0.02$). The Liking Scale was moderately associated with the Love Scale ($r = 0.39$ for women and 0.60 for men). Rubin attested to the construct validity of the Liking Scale by the findings that the correlation across couples between women and men concerning likeability was moderate ($r = 0.28$). Prior reliability for this measurement scale reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.87 to 0.94 (Dainton, Stafford & Canary,

1994; Myers et al., 1999; Myers & Johnson, 2003; Sprecher, 1987; Stafford, Dainton & Haas, 2000). For the current study, the instrument measures a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Job Satisfaction

Schriesheim and Tsui (1980) designed the six-item Job Satisfaction Index (JSI) to measure a person's overall satisfaction with their present work. JSI is composed of five items measuring the characteristics of career development, colleagues, organizational support, salary, and work types, which are essential elements of a job. This instrument measures a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Job satisfaction is an overall practical judgment about one's job (Russell et al., 2004). Importantly, job satisfaction is significantly associated with other important organizational outcomes. For example, research suggests job satisfaction is positively associated with higher quality work performance and productivity (Katzell, Thompson & Guzzo, 1992; Parker et al., 2003). Job satisfaction has also been negatively associated with turnover (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002).

The content validity of job satisfaction is another aspect that has received little attention in job satisfaction instruments. Previous literature did not provide reports of validity for this instrument. Schriesheim and Tsui (1980) found the JSI scale reliable, with a reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.95. Prior reliability for this measurement scale was 0.87 (Brayfield & Rothe, 1951), 0.92 (Brief & Roberson, 1989), 0.84 (Rezvanfar, Fadakar, Hashemi & Khoshnudifar, 2012), and 0.87 (Labrague et al., 2020).

Thriving

Porath et al. (2012) sought to build a case for why thriving should be correlated to core self-evaluations, learning goal orientation, positive and negative effects, and proactive personality. Researchers developed and validated a measure of the construct of thriving at work. Thriving individuals experience growth and momentum marked by vitality (e.g., feeling energized and alive) and learning (e.g., a sense of continuous improvement and increased performance). Thriving can be a necessary coping style since adverse situations impact people in various ways. By thriving, individuals successfully achieve self-reflection, allowing them to reach their full potential; they acknowledge their personal growth, skills, and value despite others' opinions. The Thriving at Work Scale (TWS) contains ten items measuring vitality and learning. The instrument measured a seven-point scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Participants responded to each statement by reflecting on their experiences at work. The reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the TWS was 0.88.

In a pilot study, Porath et al. (2012) sought to ascertain the validity of thriving by examining its reliability, factor structure, and the extent to which thriving is comparable and different from related constructs in two relatively diverse samples. Researchers assessed the convergent and discriminant validity of thriving by empirically examining the degree to which correlation patterns between thriving and related constructs conformed to theoretical propositions. The correlations between thriving and positive and negative effects are 0.49 ($p < 0.001$) and -0.31 ($p < 0.01$), respectively. Results also found a significant improvement in fit for thriving as a distinct correlation to theoretically related constructs. Because the correlations between thriving and core self-evaluations ($r = 0.46, p < 0.01$) and positive emotions ($r = 0.52, p$

< 0.01) are both significantly less than one, it further proves evidence of convergent and discriminant validity.

In a second study, researchers evaluated construct validity by determining correlations between thriving and burnout, career development initiatives, health, and job performance, job strain, and leader effectiveness. Results indicated strong associations between thriving and related constructs. Thriving was positively correlated to health and negatively associated with job strain. Findings also suggest that even after controlling for the effects of organizational commitment and job satisfaction, thriving explicates an incremental 10.0% of the variance in both burnout and job strain, 9.0% in leader effectiveness, 8.0% in career development initiatives, 4.0% in job performance, and 3.0% in general health. These findings further support the construct validity of thriving.

Waller et al. (2021) studied the culture of therapeutic recreation organizations by examining the relationship between thriving, job satisfaction, and organizational culture and climate among recreational therapists. Researchers administered an online survey to collect data from the study participants. The survey consisted of items utilizing the TWS, JOCS, JSI, and WCQ to measure the study's variables. TWS measured vitality and learning, JSI measured overall job satisfaction, and WCQ measured organizational climate. JOCS yielded four subscales: (1) family orientation and loyalty; (2) open communication and consensual decision-making; (3) team approach; and (4) knowledge of managers not included in other subscales.

Findings indicated that most of the sample thrived because of learning and personal commitment to learning in the workplace. About ninety-six percent ($n = 226$) of the respondents agreed that they often find themselves learning, whereas 86.9% agreed on developing a lot as a

person. Much of the sample population experienced a positive workplace culture and job satisfaction because their supervisor encouraged teamwork and communicated well with staff. Eighty-four percent of respondents agreed that their supervisors encourage employees to work in groups to exchange opinions and ideas. Much of the sample also experienced a positive climate in the workplace for recreation therapists because their managers supported them in establishing a positive workplace climate.

Organizational Climate

Researchers defined organizational climate as the shared perceptions and meaning ascribed to the policies, practices, and procedures employees experience in the workplace and their value of being rewarded and supported by their superiors (Ostroff, Kinicki & Tamkins, 2003; Schneider & Reichers, 1983; Schneider, Ehrhart & Macey, 2011). Schneider, Ehrhart, and Macey (2013) defined organizational climate as "the meanings people attach to interrelated bundles of experiences they have at work" (p. 361). The current study utilizes the Work Climate Questionnaire (WCQ) to measure respondents' perceptions of their managers. The six-item scale measured a seven-point scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Organizational Culture

Research shows a direct correlation between an organization's culture and its employee's ability to thrive (Carter et al., 2014). Sauter et al. (1996) define a healthy workplace as an organization that "maximizes the integration of worker goals for well-being and company objectives for profitability and productivity" (p. 250). Two critical components in this definition are the organization's performance and the employee's overall well-being (Jaffe, 1995). A healthy culture in which employees can thrive is essential to the success of contemporary parks

and recreation, including therapeutic recreation (Brazil et al., 2010; Wozencroft et al., 2019). The healthier the organization's culture, the more employees will thrive and perform better (Brazil et al., 2010; Helfrich et al., 2007).

The current study utilizes the Japanese Organizational Culture Scale (JOCS) developed by Tang et al. (2000). Researchers examined the factor structures, reliability, construct validity, and differences in JOCS and between employees of the American-owned and Japanese-owned automobile plants in the United States. Researchers argue that, although employees at both plants are American workers, they expect that there will be some significant differences in the JOCS due to the cultural differences in the ownership of the plants. The 15-item instrument yielded four subscales: (1) family orientation and loyalty, (2) open communication and consensual decision-making, (3) team approach, and (4) knowledge of managers not included in other subscales. JOCS measured a seven-point scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Tang et al. (2000) reported the Cronbach's alpha values for the four factors of the JOCS using the whole sample (N = 300) as follows: family orientation and loyalty (0.87), open communication (0.88), team approach (0.78), and manager knowledge (0.80). The Cronbach's alpha for the 15-item scale using the whole sample was 0.92. This instrument will measure respondents' perceptions of their current organizational climate.

The internal consistency was exceptional for the JOCS in this study. Results indicated significant correlations between the average score of the 15-item JOCS, the four factors of the JOCS, and other work-related variables. All four elements of the JOCS were significantly correlated with commitment, organization-based self-esteem, organizational instrumentality, and

intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction ($p < 0.05$). These factors were also significantly associated with age and tenure, offering some preliminary construct validity for the instrument.

Demographic Variables

The following demographic variables were analyzed from the survey instrument: age, the highest level of educational attainment, income, region of employment, number of years employed in parks and recreation, current job title, job titles held over the past five years, marital status, number of children in the household, perceptions of stress, and race of appointing authority. Understanding the race of the appointing management provides insight into another factor contributing to systemic discrimination.

Data Collection

Once IRB approval was obtained, the researcher sent prospective participants a recruitment email containing information about the study and the researcher. The email also included an URL link directing participants to the electronic consent form. If a person consented to participate in the study, they were immediately directed to the survey instrument. All participants completed the survey via computer using Qualtrics, and all responses were anonymous.

The online survey consists of demographic questions regarding age, the highest level of educational attainment, income, region of employment, number of years employed in parks and recreation, current job title, job titles held over the past five years, marital status, number of children in the household, perceptions of stress, and race of appointing authority. Respondents will answer a series of Likert-type items containing items from the instrumentation to analyze the

factors influencing career mobility for African American women. Respondents will also comment on the importance of networking and sponsorship using comment boxes.

The researcher recruited participants through professional networks, social media platforms, and snowball sampling. Due to a slow response rate, the survey link remained open for approximately eight weeks. After the survey was closed, the researcher transferred data into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software for data analysis.

Problems Associated with Measuring Mobility

The most common methodological criticism associated with conducting career mobility research is the use of self-report data. Self-reported data often refers to data obtained using questionnaires or surveys containing items that ask respondents to report something about themselves. When utilizing an electronic survey instrument, the researcher must be mindful of the potential problems of measuring mobility using self-reported data. The use of self-report data is quite prevalent when conducting empirical studies; however, many researchers believe there are severe threats to the study's validity (Chan, 2009). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), there are three types of validity to look for: a) construct validity, b) content validity, and c) predictive validity. A researcher accomplishes content validity when all the questionnaire items measure the intended content. Predictive validity ensures the scores predict a criterion measure, and construct validity ensures accurate measurement of the hypothesized constructs of concepts.

Self-reports appear to be accurate enough for some purposes but not for others. Some study participants may rush through the questionnaire, skip questions, or select any option. The self-reported data may not accurately depict each respondent's mobility pattern.

Data Analysis Procedures

Upon completion of data collection, the data was cleaned, coded, and input into a file in the current version (29.0) of SPSS. The researcher calculated descriptive statistics for demographic and scale variables using frequency distributions, measures of central tendency, and dispersion to determine aggregate survey response patterns. Additional analysis includes correlations to assess the strength of relationships between variables and reliability analysis to determine the strength and consistency of the study scales. Finally, the researcher performed a one-way (ANOVA) and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to assess the differential impact of independent variables on different dependent study variables.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided the methodologies used in the current study. The researcher developed a quantitative research design to examine the career mobility status and factors influencing respondents' progression to executive leadership positions. Purposeful and snowball sampling was used to recruit study participants. Data were collected through an anonymous online survey. Data analysis procedures included: descriptive statistics, correlations, reliability, ANOVA, and MANOVA. The next chapter will present the results and findings of the study.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter contains the results and findings from the data analysis relevant to the career mobility patterns of African American women working in public parks and recreation agencies. To ensure the confidentiality of responses obtained from participants included in the sample, much of the data has been grouped into four occupational categories: (1) administrative; (2) managerial; (3) supervisory; and (4) program/support.

The data is presented in four sections. The first section includes data relevant to the demographic profile of the study participants. The second section examines job positions and classifications, and the third section analyzes data regarding the career mobility status of African American women working in public parks and recreation agencies. Lastly, the fourth section provides an analysis of data regarding the factors influencing the career mobility of African American women. Additionally, this chapter contains detailed data tables pertinent to this research effort.

Demographic Profile

Of the completed surveys received, 169 respondents consented to participate in the study, and one person declined. Table 1 (in Appendix A) presents a profile of the sample of African American women currently working in public parks and recreation agencies who participated in this study. The respondents ranged in age between twenty-two to sixty-five (Mean = 42.27; SD = 11.85). Most respondents were over forty (56.2%, $n = 95$). Over eighty-seven percent of the sample had pursued a college education, with approximately seventy-six percent earning a bachelor's degree. Of these, forty-five percent have earned advanced degrees (master's, professional, and doctorate). With respect to salaries earned by the sample, 18.9% made under

\$49,999 annually. Approximately sixty-six percent of the sample earned between \$50,000-\$99,999 per year, and 15.4% earned over \$100,000 annually. Half of the sample were married, and the other half were unmarried. Nearly sixty percent of the respondents had children.

Approximately eighteen percent of the respondents have 3-5 years of experience in the parks and recreation industry. Over half of the sample had over fifteen years of experience. The majority of the sample (50.9%, n = 86) were employed in agencies located in the southeast region of the country (Alabama, Arkansas, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia). The southwest region (Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas) accounted for 20.7% of the sample, followed by 12.4% employed in the Midwest. Sixteen respondents work in the western region, and eleven represent the northeast.

Job Classifications and Positions

Research Question 1: What job positions and classifications are held by a sample of African American women currently working in public parks and recreation agencies?

Regarding job classifications, 23.7% of the sample held administrative positions. The positions encompassed in the administrative category included: Director of Parks and Recreation and Assistant Director. Those employed in the managerial ranks comprised 19.5% of the sample. The positions designated to the managerial category included: Budget Officer, Business Manager, Director (Superintendent) of Recreation, Director (Superintendent) of Parks, and Parks Planning Director. The supervisory classification included the following occupational titles: District Supervisor, Facility Manager, Functional Supervisor, and Senior Park Operations Staff.

Those working in the supervisory area constituted 23.7% of the sample, while the remaining 31.4% were employed in positions composed of program/support staff.

Some positions were not represented by anyone within the sample and therefore, not included in the analysis. The jobs with no representatives included: Custodian and Park Patrol Officer. Some of the occupational titles held by a few respondents differed from those used in the analysis. Thus, a category entitled "other" was included for the titles used to indicate the current position. Occupational titles in the "other" category included in the analysis: Naturalist, Safety and Compliance Officer, and Software Commissioner. Respondents employing these three positions accounted for 1.8% of the sample.

Table 2 (in Appendix A) summarizes the number of African American women employed in each occupational category. The table provides frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations for the occupational titles used in the study. Approximately twenty-four percent (23.6%) of the sample occupied the positions of Assistant Director and Director of Parks and Recreation. Directors of Recreation and Directors of Parks comprised 7.7% of the sample. Respondents occupying the titles of District Supervisor, Facility Manager, and Functional Supervisor accounted for about twenty-three percent. Administrative Assistant (4.1%), Park Operations Staff (4.7%), Recreation Leader (9.5%), Special Program Coordinator (5.9%), and Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (7.1%) were classified in the program/support category and accounted for a majority of the sample.

Career Mobility Status of African American Women

Research Question 2: What is the career mobility status of a sample of African American women currently working in public parks and recreation agencies?

The Occupational Status Scale was tested for reliability utilizing Cronbach's alpha, and a score of 0.92 was obtained. This score was comparable to the alpha scores obtained in previous studies conducted by McDonald (1981), 0.82, Waller (1989), 0.84, and Waller et al. (2020), 0.88. Occupational status scores ranged from 2.88-4.65 (Mean = 3.66; SD = 0.28). The occupational titles with the lowest mean scores included Custodian (Mean = 2.88; SD = 1.23); Park Operations Staff (Mean = 3.09; SD = 1.07); and Recreation Leader (Mean = 3.09; SD = 0.97), respectively. The occupational titles with the highest mean scores were Director of Parks and Recreation (Mean = 4.65; SD = 0.91); Director (Superintendent) of Parks (Mean = 4.46; SD = 0.87); and Director (Superintendent) of Recreation (Mean = 4.26; SD = 0.80), respectively.

Mobility Patterns of the Sample

To determine career mobility patterns for the sample, the researcher asked participants to indicate their current position and any other full-time positions over the past five years. Occupational status scores were assigned to the most recent position designated and the position held at the end of the five years. The researcher measured career mobility by calculating the difference in scores between the current position and the position held at the end of the five years. A positive score signified upward mobility, no change in status score indicated stability, and a negative score indicated downward mobility.

Overall, the majority of the sample (74.0%, $n = 125$) experienced lateral movement or no change in occupational mobility during the five years. Approximately 14% (13.6%, $n = 23$) were upwardly mobile, while 2.4% ($n = 4$) of the sample reported that they experienced downward mobility over the past five years. Seventeen respondents indicated they had a change in

occupational titles but did not report their previous position held. Therefore, mobility patterns for these respondents are unknown.

Table 3 (in Appendix A) summarizes the direction of movement for the fifty-two respondents who reported changes in job position and provided their previous occupational titles. Approximately ninety percent (88.9%, $n = 8$) of those who held administrative positions remained in administrative occupations, while one person (11.1%) currently has a title in the program/support category. Of those in the managerial category, one person (33.3%) moved up to an administrative position, one (33.3%) stayed the same, and one respondent went down to a supervisory role. Relatedly, two respondents (10.5%) who held supervisory positions now have occupational titles in the program/support category.

Moreover, when respondents were asked if they were presently seeking a position considered to be career advancement, 60.4% ($n = 102$) indicated "yes," while the remaining 39.6% ($n = 67$) responded "no." Respondents were also asked if their current department offered a position they considered an opportunity for advancement they would accept it. The majority (74%, $n = 125$) indicated "yes," and the remaining 26% ($n = 44$) responded "no." Relatedly, when asked about the potential for accepting a position in another city or state, approximately sixty-nine percent (68.6%, $n = 116$) of the sample indicated that they would take the job. The remaining 31.4% ($n = 53$) said they would not. Table 4 (in Appendix A) provides additional information about the respondent's career mobility efforts.

Factors Influencing the Career Mobility of African American Women

Research Question 3: What factors influence the career mobility of a sample of African American women currently working in public parks and recreation agencies?

The researcher tested each scale used in the survey instrument to measure the influencing factors for reliability utilizing Cronbach's alpha. Each scale obtained the following scores: 0.84 for job satisfaction; 0.96 for likeability; 0.90 for thriving; and 0.95 for organizational culture and climate, respectively. The mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for each scale and used in a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test for differences among the four occupational categories. Regarding likeability ($F(3,162) = 1.83, p = 0.14$), thriving ($F(3,162) = 2.11, p = 0.10$), organizational culture ($F(3,162) = 0.76, p = 0.52$) and climate ($F(3,162) = 0.47, p = 0.70$), there were no significant differences among any of the categories. However, there were significant differences in job satisfaction ($F(3,162) = 6.99, p < .001$). The mean score for each category was 5.45 for administrative ($SD = 0.98$), 5.21 for managerial ($SD = 1.02$), 4.50 for supervisory ($SD = 1.14$), and 5.28 for program/support ($SD = 0.90$), respectively. Those in the supervisory category had significantly lower job satisfaction ($p < .001$) than any other group. There were no significant differences between the other three categories.

A correlation analysis was used to test for any correlations between the mean scores of the scales. Results indicated that all the scales were positively correlated. The relationship between likeability and thriving ($r = .40$), organizational climate and thriving ($r = .48$), organizational culture and thriving ($r = .51$), job satisfaction and thriving ($r = .58$), and organizational climate and job satisfaction ($r = .59$) had moderate correlations. The strongest correlation was between organizational culture and climate ($r = .86$). Table 5 (in Appendix A) presents the correlations matrix of the scales.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to assess the differential impact of stress in the workplace amongst the four occupational categories. Four items related to

perceived stress levels were tested against the occupational categories. There were no significant differences ($F(12,421) = 1.16, p = 0.31$) among the categories regarding stress in the workplace. Due to the small number of respondents who experienced mobility, no other analyses were run.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the results and findings from the data analysis relevant to the career mobility patterns of African American women working in public parks and recreation agencies. Majority of the sample experienced lateral movement or no change in occupational mobility during the five years. Approximately 14.0% were upwardly mobile, while 2.4% of the sample reported that they experienced downward mobility. About sixty percent of the sample currently seek career advancement, while 69.0% indicated they would accept a position in another city or state.

There were no significant differences among the four occupational categories regarding likeability, thriving, organizational culture, and organizational climate. However, there were significant differences in job satisfaction. Those in the supervisory category had significantly lower job satisfaction than any other group. There were also no significant differences among the categories regarding stress in the workplace. The relationship between all the scales was positively correlated, ranging from moderate to strong correlations.

The next chapter will address the following: a discussion of the findings, conceptual framework, study limitations, and implications for future research.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the career mobility patterns of African American women working in public parks and recreation agencies. To achieve this purpose, I developed a quantitative research design to examine the career mobility status of African American women and the factors that influence their progression to executive leadership positions. The study utilized the following theoretical perspectives to guide the research design, methodology, and data analysis: occupational mobility theory (Blau & Duncan, 1967), career mobility theory (Sicherman & Galor, 1990), and career construction theory (Savickas, 2005).

The researcher selected three theoretical frameworks to help ground this study. The occupational and career mobility frameworks were the most useful in providing insights into the employment opportunities accessible to the women in the sample. These theoretical frameworks allowed for examining the differences in career paths for female African American professionals. Career construction theory offered insight into how and why individuals choose specific professions—utilizing this theory aided in discovering participants' personal and professional identities and understanding the decisions and values behind the career paths.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What job positions and classifications are held by a sample of African American currently women working in public parks and recreation agencies?
2. What is the career mobility status of a sample of African American women currently working in public parks and recreation agencies?
3. What factors influence the career mobility of a sample of African American women currently working in public parks and recreation agencies?

This chapter begins by discussing the results and findings related to the conceptual framework that guided the study. Next, the chapter provides a discussion based on each research question. Lastly, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's limitations, implications, and recommendations for future research.

Study's Relationship to Conceptual Framework

Based on the conceptual model presented in this study, the occupational mobility and career construction theories were most relevant because the data generated in the present study suggested that women in the sample experienced some mobility, despite racial and gender barriers and made personal decisions on whether to seek career advancement or remain in their current positions. In the early 1960s, Blau and Duncan (1967) discovered that race, education, family type, ethnic origin, and geographic mobility significantly correlated with upward mobility. Race had a substantial connection to downward mobility, and marital status had no impact on mobility. Career construction theory examines the social aspects of how individuals select and employ occupations.

Previous research studies found that variables such as age, education and experience, gender, job satisfaction, race of the appointing authority, social networks, social clubs, the presence of an affirmative action plan, and years of experience were significant when helping to explain the occupational mobility patterns of African American parks and recreation (Anderson & Shinew, 2001; Becker, 1975; Coleman, 1986; Kanter, 1977; McDonald, 1981; Outley & Dean, 2007; Shinew et al., 2000; Waller, 1989; Waller et al., 2020). Education and experience (which impacts job satisfaction), years of experience, and the presence of an affirmative action plan positively impact mobility, and age, gender, and race of the appointing authority negatively

impact mobility. The current study modified the conceptual model to include important factors such as networking and sponsorships, which positively impact mobility, and family composition (marital status and the number of children), which negatively influence mobility.

Influence of Race and Gender

Results from the current study reported that about sixty percent of the sample felt that race and gender prevented them from obtaining a promotion. However, there was no significant finding that indicated race and gender negatively influenced the mobility of the women in the sample. This finding is not consistent with previous research, which suggests African American women are becoming more aware of the intersectionality of gender and race and learning how to cope with structural barriers in the workplace (Dickens & Chavez, 2018; Dickens, Womack & Dimes, 2019; Holder et al., 2015; McDowell & Carter-Francique, 2017). It is almost impossible for intersectionality to not play a role in this study because for African American women, there will always be some sort of intersection of constructs in their lives (i.e., race, ethnicity, gender, family composition, social status, etc.).

A partial explanation for this phenomenon potentially lies in the fact that the majority (53.8%, n = 91) of the sample were hired by Caucasian appointing authorities, and an overwhelming number of respondents (59.2%, n = 100) believed that race and gender prevented them from obtaining a promotion. The majority of the sample (76.3%, n = 129) felt as though their race and gender did not help in their career advancement. Perhaps, the rationale could be attributed to the prevalence of diversity efforts in the workplace, living in a post-racial society, gendered stereotypes, and the power of networking and sponsorships. For example, a recent legal case in Seattle, Washington revealed that discriminative practices were impacting the career

mobility of African American women who worked in the City's parks and recreation department (Beekman, 2021). Relatedly, approximately forty percent of the sample indicated that their respective organizations had a diversity plan; however, sixty-six percent did not believe they obtained their current occupation due to the diversity plan. Although these findings could predict the impact on mobility, there were no significant findings to determine if these variables influenced the mobility of the women in the sample.

Job Classifications and Positions

Research Question 1: What job positions and classifications are held by a sample of African American currently women working in public parks and recreation agencies?

Consistent with previous studies (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1995; Henderson et al., 2013; Henkel & Godbey, 1977; McDonald, 1981; Waller, 1989; Waller et al., 2020), majority of the women in the sample worked in program/support and supervisory positions (55.1%, $n = 93$) within their respective public parks and recreation agencies. This finding could be attributed to research suggesting that African Americans are pigeonholed in these roles within local government parks and recreation organizations (Allison, 1999; Outley & Dean, 2007; Waller, 1989; Worsley & Stone, 2011). Previous research (Dex, 1987; Naff, 2001) reported that African American women working in local government were concentrated in direct service and lower-level supervisory roles. Relatedly, Guy and Newman (2004) argued that men and women are segregated into separate occupations. According to the researchers, the tasks required for women are often "emotive work thought natural for women, such as caring, negotiating, empathizing, smoothing troubled relationships, and working behind the scenes to enable cooperation" (p. 289).

The data generated from the current study revealed that women occupied administrative and managerial positions in public parks and recreation agencies. These results continue the pattern of African American women ascending to executive leadership positions (Shaw, 2017). The sample of women in this study reported ascending into the managerial and administrative ranks within their respective organizations. One person experienced upward mobility from a managerial position to administrative ranks, while three respondents moved from supervisory to managerial, and five respondents moved from supervisory to administrative. Previous research reported similar findings regarding women's progression to upper management positions in parks and recreation organizations (Allison, 1999; Henderson et al., 2013; Henkel & Godbey, 1977; McDonald, 1981; Shaw, 2017; Waller, 1989; Waller et al., 2020). Waller et al. (2020) reported that approximately sixteen percent of African American women experienced upward mobility between 2010-2015. The researcher surmised that this phenomenon could be attributed to various factors, including but not limited to informal mentoring and networking, longer tenure within an agency, being promoted within respective departments, and continued education. However, Riccucci (2009) posits that women are still underrepresented in most senior-level occupations of local government management.

Moreover, the number of women who occupy managerial and administrative positions indicates the continued progression of African American women in the parks and recreation profession. Although data revealed an improvement in the number of women in these positions compared to earlier mobility studies (Henkel & Godbey, 1977; McDonald, 1981; Waller, 1989; Waller et al., 2020), there is still a need for equity in human resources practices in contemporary parks and recreation organizations (Andrade, 2022; Riccucci, 2021). These agencies must

provide more opportunities for aspiring African American women to transition into executive-leadership positions. African American women will continue to be "pigeonholed" into lower-level occupations if they are not regularly given the opportunities to gain more training and professional development, receive more job-related responsibilities, and obtain promotions.

Lussier and Hendon (2019) argue that the constructs of meeting the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) and minimum entrance requirements (MER's) play into the concept of "pigeonholing." If an individual does not possess the necessary KSA's and MER's required for executive-level positions, they will not be a qualified candidate for promotion. Through my lens as a practitioner, I can attest to the fact that it is somewhat pointless to argue that someone is being "pigeon-holed" when they have not prepared themselves to meet the MER's of the next job in the hierarchy ladder.

Career Mobility Status of African American Women

Research Question 2: What is the career mobility status of a sample of African American women currently working in public parks and recreation agencies?

Overall, the majority of the sample (74.0%, n = 125) experienced lateral or no change in occupational mobility over the past five years. Based on the financial and social upheaval and changes in employment strategies pursuant to the advent of the coronavirus (COVID-19) that has occurred within the last five years, some potential reasons for these women not experiencing mobility could be attributed to 1) they could already occupy an executive leadership position within their respective agencies, thus indicating no mobility; 2) family-related barriers (e.g., having children, taking care of elderly parents, a spouse has a good job and cannot relocate to another city or state) prohibit them from seeking another job (Ahmad, 2017; Fagnani, 2012); and

3) they have no interest in seeking another position due to current job satisfaction (Arieli, Sagiv, & Roccas, 2020; Henderson et al., 2013). Regarding age, the majority of the women are in their 40s, and at that age, most people are not trying to relocate for occupational opportunities. Some women may also be satisfied with their current compensation and have no desire to seek another position (Appelbaum, Shapiro, Didus, Luongo, & Paz, 2013).

Perhaps women in the sample are waiting to become more marketable for career advancement opportunities. For example, Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2000) posited that those who wish to enter a particular organization or occupation must overcome difficulties such as a lack of available opportunities or their perception of inadequate skills and abilities. Those who have minimal years of experience working in the industry might not yet perceive to have the necessary skills needed to obtain leadership positions. According to Schulz and Enslin (2014), women aspiring to obtain career advancement to executive leadership positions "must engage in career planning activities that enhance self-awareness; increase visibility into development and advancement opportunities; facilitate networking; and establish mentoring relationships with individuals who can provide advice, coaching and support" (p. 7). Moreover, Haines, Hamouche, and Saba (2014) found a significant association between subjective career success and a person's belief that their skills and experiences are valuable to other employers.

Previous studies by Hewlett and Green (2015) and McCluney and Rabelo (2019) have indicated that African American women report feeling stalled in their careers because they believe their superiors overlook their skills and abilities. This factor could also explain why women in this sample did not experience mobility. Waller et al. (2020) recommended that those who have experienced no mobility consider exiting their organization to achieve career mobility.

Perhaps women of the sample should seek a management opportunity for other parks and recreation agencies in another city, county, or state. Sector switching could also play a factor in the mobility of African American women. Sector switching occurs when people decide to move from the public to the private sector or vice versa (Bozeman & Ponomariov, 2009). Some women could have been working for a public parks and recreation agency and decided to for the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Boys & Girls Clubs of America, or some sport/recreation-based nonprofit organization.

Another rationale for women experiencing no mobility or downward mobility over the last five years could be attributed to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (Dueñas, Campi & Olmos, 2021). As organizations were experiencing economic adversity and having to terminate jobs due to budget reductions, many workers chose to remain to secure their current position. COVID-19 impacted the limited advancement opportunities, and many people had to remain in their current jobs, whether satisfied or not. Kin to the phenomenon of intention to stay, women in this study also indicated that they would be willing to leave their current jobs if they were offered more money or a higher position. According to Carmeli and Weisberg (2006), an employee's intention to leave reflects their readiness to seek alternative employment opportunities outside their current organization.

The idea of quiet quitting could also help account for the percentage of women experiencing no mobility or downward mobility. Quiet quitting became a popular trend during the COVID-19 pandemic because people became disengaged with their current jobs and decided to seek new endeavors. Without any notification to their employers, they just decided that they were tired of their jobs and walked away. If an employee already had low job satisfaction and

engagement, COVID acted as a catalyst for them to walk away from their current position (Formica & Sfodera, 2022).

Several factors potentially contributed to the upward mobility of women in the sample. One factor might have been that respondents occupied positions that afforded increased job responsibilities and job enhancements that prepared them for future opportunities for promotion. Some women may have stated that they were promoted as a result of taking on more responsibilities; however, they could receive an increased salary and not receive a new occupational title. Agencies may have added new positions that represented an advancement opportunity. Additionally, some women may have experienced changes in their family dynamics (i.e., no longer caring for minor children or elderly parents) that permit them to seek better opportunities.

For the women in the sample who experienced downward mobility, some potential reasons could be attributed to 1) accepting a lower position to avoid being laid off, 2) their current position being reclassified as part of reorganizing the hierarchy of an agency, and 3) moving to part-time employment due to out-of-work commitments. Some organizations had to reorganize the hierarchy of their agencies during the COVID-19 pandemic to accommodate for the impact of the great resignation and quiet quitting or realized that they could be more effective with a smaller workforce.

Mobility Patterns

The majority of the women in this sample reported that they were presently seeking an opportunity for career advancement, and the overwhelming majority (74.0%, n = 125) stated that they would accept a career advancement opportunity within their respective department or in

another city or state (68.6%, n = 116). This finding is consistent with previous research (Aguado & Frederickson, 2012; Dex, 1987; Waller et al., 2020). Perhaps, hiring authorities within the organizations that respondents were employed by are more aware of an individual's work ethic and job-related assets than hiring officials in external organizations. Therefore, Waller et al. (2020) suggest that it is advantageous for parks and recreation agencies to begin their search for promotional opportunities within their current organization and surrounding areas while also seeking external candidates.

Regarding the women in this study who were promoted or experienced no mobility, it did not appear that cronyism played a factor because of the fact that there are many controls in place in local government. First of all, the effect of cronyism is one of the reasons why civil service commissions and human resources departments have implemented recruitment rules to guard against such behaviors. Many human resources departments have rules and policies that prohibit unethical conduct among hiring authorities. Another issue is that cronyism was a phenomenon of the early days of personnel management when there were no controls of who got hired for executive leadership positions. In particular, in the strong mayor form of government people were appointed without any credentials to become department directors due to their political affiliations. This is less of a factor these days because organizations like NRPA have made strong arguments about professionalism in government service.

Factors Influencing the Career Mobility of African American Women

Research Question 3: What factors influence the career mobility of a sample of African American women currently working in parks and recreation agencies?

Based on this research question, the results of the data analysis suggested that there were no significant differences among the four occupational categories regarding likeability, thriving, organizational culture, and organizational climate. However, there were significant differences in job satisfaction. Results indicated that respondents in the supervisory category had significantly lower job satisfaction than any other group. This finding could be attributed to the fact that most supervisors have the dual responsibility of managing front-line and part-time employees and making run-of-mill day-to-day decisions determined by executive leadership (Hales, 2005; Lowe, 1992). Factors such as job satisfaction, job roles and responsibilities, and learning to navigate employment systems are important factors in the career mobility of women.

Findings from the study illustrated how women in the sample strongly agreed that likeability, job satisfaction, thriving, organizational culture, and organizational climate influenced their career mobility. However, because most of the sample did not experience any mobility over the last five years, the researcher could not determine if these variables positively or negatively influenced the mobility of African American women. If the majority of the sample 'likes' their boss and has positive job satisfaction, the researcher could assume they would stay in their current positions. However, this study could not determine if this is the reason why women did not experience any mobility. Women in the study also indicated that they worked in a healthy environment, which could be why they perceive themselves as thriving in the workplace.

Results from this study also indicated no significant differences among the occupational categories regarding stress in the workplace. From the researcher's personal experiences as a practitioner and through observation and conversations with members of the Women of Color in Recreation and Parks affinity group, these findings are inconsistent with the lived experiences of

African American women working in the profession. For example, many African American women must navigate their responsibilities as a mother, spouses, employees, and other roles outside the workplace (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Powell, 2018; van Veldhoven & Beijer, 2012; Walia, 2015). These responsibilities often overwhelm African American women and cause depression and anxiety, especially if they experience workplace stressors such as racism and discrimination (Hamm, 2014). Since the COVID-19 pandemic, many people have reported significantly declining emotional well-being, thus negatively affecting their daily routines and responsibilities (Aymerich-Franch, 2023).

Although the findings did not indicate significant differences among the sample of women regarding factors that influence career mobility, the occupational mobility and career construction theoretical frameworks were most relevant because data suggested that women in the sample experienced some mobility, despite racial and gender barriers, and made personal decisions on whether to seek career advancement or remain in their current positions. The majority of the sample experienced lateral or no change in mobility over the last five years; however, some women did report experiencing career advancement. Women of the sample are currently seeking promotion and are willing to relocate to obtain career advancement. These findings could be attributed to the financial and social upheaval and changes in employment strategies pursuant to the advent of COVID-19 within the last five years.

Implications for Practice

There are practical implications that derive from this research effort. First, the researcher must consider how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the workforce. The pandemic changed how organizations and businesses operated, and employees were required to work. Most workers

were forced to work remotely and could not physically work in the office. Few people were promoted during this time due to decreased employment opportunities. Consideration must also be given to how the pandemic altered women's lives. According to Saujani (2022), "working from home for women is vastly different than it is for men thanks to deeply ingrained inequalities in expected gender roles" (p. 54). Women had to work remotely and were responsible for caring for their children, who were also confined at home due to schools closing. There is still no accurate indication of how many people work from home or in alternative forms.

Second, there is a need for more recruitment and retention efforts that target African American women (Shaw, 2017; Taylor, 2014; Waller et al., 2020). Similar to the findings reported by Taylor (2014) and Waller et al. (2020), results from this study suggest a need for public parks and recreation agencies to develop strategic diversity plans that include measurable actions to empower women, especially African American women, prepare for future leadership roles in their respective organizations when opportunities present themselves. There is a need for additional training and continued professional development inside local government and organizations like the NRPA. There is also a need to assess the diversity and gender equity issues that influence the organizational climate of parks and recreation agencies. The focus should be on discovering the policies and procedures that create hostile work environments for women and people of color.

Finally, these findings have practical implications for human resource policy in organizations due to the fact that women were staying in their current positions without making any effort to leave. Women were also being relatively well-paid but yet there was still some concern about their ability to be mobile. Public parks and recreation agencies need to wrestle

with the inequities women face in the workplace (i.e., compensation, hiring practices, responsibilities, etc.). Seven African American women filed a lawsuit against the Seattle Parks and Recreation Department for alleged discrimination in their careers (Beekman, 2021). The women argued that they had been passed over for promotions and worked in a hostile environment. The women hired researchers from the University of Washington to evaluate the hiring practices within the city government. The researchers discovered that there were racial inequities within the parks department where hiring and promotion opportunities were likely to be granted to white people (Beekman, 2021).

Recommendations

In order to help African American women achieve upward mobility in public parks and recreation, agencies must provide opportunities that prepare women to be successful in the application process. When you look at the backgrounds of the women in this sample, in particular to professional development, about 76% of the respondents indicated that they have participated in in-service training or continuing education seminars within the last five years. Many of the women you attend the annual NRPA conferences are usually junior-level employees compared to those in the senior-level ranks. Organizations should place greater emphasis on professional development for women, inclusive of African American women, to help them become employment-ready when promotional opportunities arise.

Another recommendation is for organizations to implement succession planning efforts to ensure that when vacancies occur, women will be prepared to take on new roles and responsibilities. Succession planning is based on the belief that to be successful and adapt to changes quickly, agencies need to fully understand the capabilities and talents of their current

staff (Pynes, 2004). Human resources should implement policies and practices to make necessary changes to improve the agency's goals and objectives. Where there is a possibility for job enlargement or enhancement, organizations should provide additional responsibilities for women to get them ready for promotional opportunities.

Limitations

As the results of the current study are considered, a series of limitations must be addressed. For example, as acceptable as quantitative methods are to mobility research, one of the issues is that quantitative studies do not do well at investigating the intricacies of the research problem. Quantitative research utilizes numerical measurement and analysis to explore a social phenomenon. On the other hand, qualitative research aims to capture meanings or qualities that are not quantifiable, such as feelings, thoughts, and experiences (Gratton & Jones, 2010). The current study analyzed Likert-type scaling on factors that influence mobility; however, the researcher could not measure how respondents truly felt about their career experiences.

Another limitation of the study was that the sample size was smaller than anticipated in the research design. According to Veal and Darcy (2014), "to be sure of the reliability of the results, it is often necessary to study relatively large numbers of people" (p. 39). The survey was open for eight weeks at the end of the Fall semester of 2022. During the holiday season, it is challenging to get responses from individuals because most people take vacations and are not in the office to respond to emails. The survey was shut down so the researcher would have time to analyze the data and present the study's findings.

The smaller sample size can also be attributed to the lack of a viable sampling frame using a national organization (i.e., National Recreation and Park Ethnic Minority Society,

National Forum for Black Public Administrators, and Conference of Minority Public Administrators). None of these organizations had access to a national database that could assist the recruiting efforts for participation. In lieu of the fact that there is no reliable database, it is difficult to locate all the African American women working in the parks and recreation profession. Perhaps if the researcher had used a multi-racial population of women, the results might have looked different; however, that was not the nature of this study.

Finally, survey fatigue potentially impacted the response rate. The accuracy of self-reported data depends on respondents' "own powers of recall, on their honesty, and, fundamentally, on the format of the questions included in the questionnaire" (Veal & Darcy, 2014; p. 280). Survey fatigue was a limitation of this study, although the number of items included in the survey instrument was reasonable. The researcher realized that people are not accustomed to dealing with surveys like the one used in this study. Should this study be replicated, additional scrutiny will be given to the items included in the instrument and the length of scales used to collect responses.

Future Research

In the presence study, resilience was not addressed thoroughly. After considering the work of Shaw (2017) and Johnson (2020), future research should include a greater understanding of the resilience of African American women working in the parks and recreation industry. Johnson (2020) highlights the barriers, challenges, and stereotypes female employees experience due to the implicit gender bias within local government. In the future, additional emphasis should be placed on other factors such as resilience, coping, and a sense of spirituality and religiosity and their relationship to career mobility for Black women. Not only do these factors help with

resilience, but they help form an ethical framework for workplace behavior. Resiliency also serves as a predictor as to why women choose to stay in the current positions. Future research should explore whether women chose to stay for their own personal comfort or to meet their agency's needs. Similarly, the idea of quiet quitting could be another factor to explore. This will help explain why people stay at their jobs, and then one day decide to resign. Future research could also explore women's intent to stay or leave their current occupations.

A second recommendation points to the value of networking and mentorship to the careers of African American women employed in parks and recreation organizations. Most of the sample indicated that networking and mentorship influence their careers. Future research should further explore these variables to see how they impact the career mobility patterns of African American women. The current study asked a few questions about participants' perceived stress levels. Future research regarding stress in the workplace could highlight more insight into the barriers and challenges African Americans face working in the parks and recreation profession. The concept of likeability still has not been explored fully. Future research should investigate this variable to see how it impacts career mobility. Examining likeability by age, occupational category, and occupational closeness can provide a better understanding of how African American women make career decisions.

A third recommendation for future research is to explore the career mobility of African American women by utilizing a mixed-methods research design. Mixed methods involve the collection and integration of both quantitative and qualitative data in a study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Although quantitative research allows for a larger sample size, the current study only highlighted the results of variables analyzed from the survey. This approach would enable

the researcher to gain more insight into the factors that influence the career mobility of African American women working in the profession.

Conclusion

Although women have made strides in career advancement within the public parks and recreation industry, research suggests a marginalization of African American women in executive leadership positions. One critical point that must be acknowledged is that the career experiences of African American women operate differently from Caucasian women in public and private sector organizations (Durr & Wingfield, 2011; Holder et al., 2015; Shaw, 2017; Taylor, 2014). The current study suggests that most African American women working in public parks and recreation did not experience career mobility over the past five years. However, much can be attributed to the societal and workplace challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hiring authorities within public parks and recreation agencies must be strategic in implementing policies and practices that develop and empower women, specifically African American women, to seek career advancement opportunities. Even though federal and state legislation has assisted in enhancing diversity efforts in the workplace, racial and gender constraints to occupational mobility for African American women still exist. Organizations must be able to create a diverse workforce and eliminate workplace stereotypes and biases that impede African American women from obtaining professional development training and opportunities for promotion. There is more work to be done to ensure that women gain equal access and opportunity as men in the profession.

The data acquired from this study can help encourage the next generation of practitioners to become occupationally mobile. As a member of professional affinity groups (e.g., Women of

Color in Recreation and Parks, Faculty Women of Color in the Academy, the University of Tennessee Women of Color Empowerment Network), the researcher has benefited from learning about the career experiences of other women of color who inspire the next generation of Black female professionals. Being a member of an affinity group provides women an outlet to freely express themselves and network with others who share similar backgrounds and experiences. There have been four studies (three qualitative, one quantitative) published on the career mobility of African American women in the parks and recreation profession, and there is still a myriad of questions about what African American women in public parks and recreation administration should do next to enable and empower Black women to ascent to the top. Establishing a solid professional network can positively influence career mobility. The researcher suggests that African American women continue mentoring and sponsoring talented women to help them become occupationally mobile.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Tables

Table 1. *Sample profile (N = 169)*

Variable	Mean	SD	n	%
Age	42.27	11.85		
20-29			26	15.4
30-39			48	28.4
40-49			45	26.6
50-59			35	20.7
60+			15	8.9
Education				
High School			21	12.4
Associates			19	11.2
Bachelors			52	30.8
Masters			72	42.6
Professional/Doctorate			5	3.0
Annual Salary				
Under \$49,999			32	18.9
\$50,000-\$59,999			33	19.5
\$60,000-\$69,999			28	16.6
\$70,000-\$79,999			19	11.2
\$80,000-\$89,999			19	11.2
\$90,000-\$99,999			12	7.1
Over \$100,000			26	15.4
Marital Status				
Yes			86	50.9
No			83	49.1
Children				
Yes			101	59.8
No			68	40.2
Number of children	1.12	1.19		

Table 1. *(continued)*

Variable	Mean	SD	n	%
Years of Experience	16.37	9.93		
3-5			30	17.8
6-10			27	16.0
11-15			24	14.2
16-20			30	17.8
21+			58	34.3
Region				
Northeast (CT,MA,ME,NH,NJ,NY,PA,RI,VT)			11	6.5
Southwest (AZ,NM,OK,TX)			35	20.7
West (AK,CA,CO,HI,ID,MT,NV,OR,UT,WA,WY)			16	9.5
Southeast (AL,AR,DC,FL,GA,KY,LA,MD,MS,NC,SC,TN,VA,WV)			86	50.9
Midwest (IA,IL,IN,KS,MI,MN,MO,ND,NE,OH,SD,WI)			21	12.4
# of Years in Current Position				
1-5			87	51.5
6-10			59	34.9
11-15			15	8.9
16-20			3	1.8
21+			5	3
Occupational Category				
Administrative			40	23.7
Managerial			33	19.5
Supervisory			40	23.7
Program/Support			53	31.4

Table 2. *Mean scores and standard deviations for occupational titles (N = 169)*

Occupational Title	n	%	Mean	SD
Custodian	0	0.0	2.88	1.23
Park Operations Staff	8	4.7	3.09	1.07
Recreation Leader	16	9.5	3.09	0.97
Park Patrol Officer	0	0.0	3.14	0.95
Therapeutic Recreation Specialist	12	7.1	3.27	0.88
Senior Park Operations Staff	1	0.6	3.28	0.84
Administrative Assistant	7	4.1	3.30	1.05
Special Program Coordinator	10	5.9	3.31	0.83
Functional Supervisor	18	10.7	3.38	0.85
Facility Manager	16	9.5	3.72	0.78
Park Planning Director	6	3.6	3.89	0.88
Business Manager	7	4.1	3.93	0.83
District Supervisor	5	3.0	4.01	0.83
Budget Officer	7	4.1	4.08	0.92
Assistant Director	20	11.8	4.17	0.78
Director (Superintendent) of Recreation	10	5.9	4.26	0.80
Director (Superintendent) of Parks	3	1.8	4.46	0.87
Director of Parks and Recreation	20	11.8	4.65	0.91
Other	3	1.8		

Table 3. *Direction of movement from the previous position to the current position (N = 52)*

		Previous Position	Administrative	Managerial	Supervisory	Program/Support
Current Position						
Administrative	n		8	1	5	3
	*%		88.9%	33.3%	26.3%	14.3%
Managerial			0	1	3	3
			0.0%	33.3%	15.8%	14.3%
Supervisory			0	1	9	8
			0.0%	33.3%	47.4%	38.1%
Program/Support			1	0	2	7
			11.1%	0.0%	10.5%	33.3%
Total			9	3	19	21
			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*% within previous position category

Table 4. *Questions related to career advancement/mobility (N = 169)*

Question	n	%
Are you presently seeking a position that you consider to be a career advancement?		
Yes	102	60.4
No	67	39.6
If your department offered you a position that you considered to be a career advancement, would you accept it?		
Yes	125	74.0
No	44	26.0
If you were offered a position in another city or state that you considered a career advancement, would you accept it?		
Yes	116	68.6
No	53	31.4
In the last year, have you been offered a position that you consider a career advancement?		
Yes	71	42.0
No	98	58.0
In the last five years, have you been offered a position within your department that is lower than the one you currently hold?		
Yes	26	15.4
No	143	84.6

Table 5. *Correlations of scales (N = 169)*

		Job Satisfaction	Likeability	Thriving	Org. Culture	Org. Climate
Job Satisfaction	r	--				
	Sig.					
Likeability		.606** <.001	--			
Thriving		.581** <.001	.401** <.001	--		
Org. Culture		.714** <.001	.772** <.001	.512** <.001	--	
Org. Climate		.589** <.001	.762** <.001	.477** <.001	.862** <.001	--

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

APPENDIX B: Conceptual Model

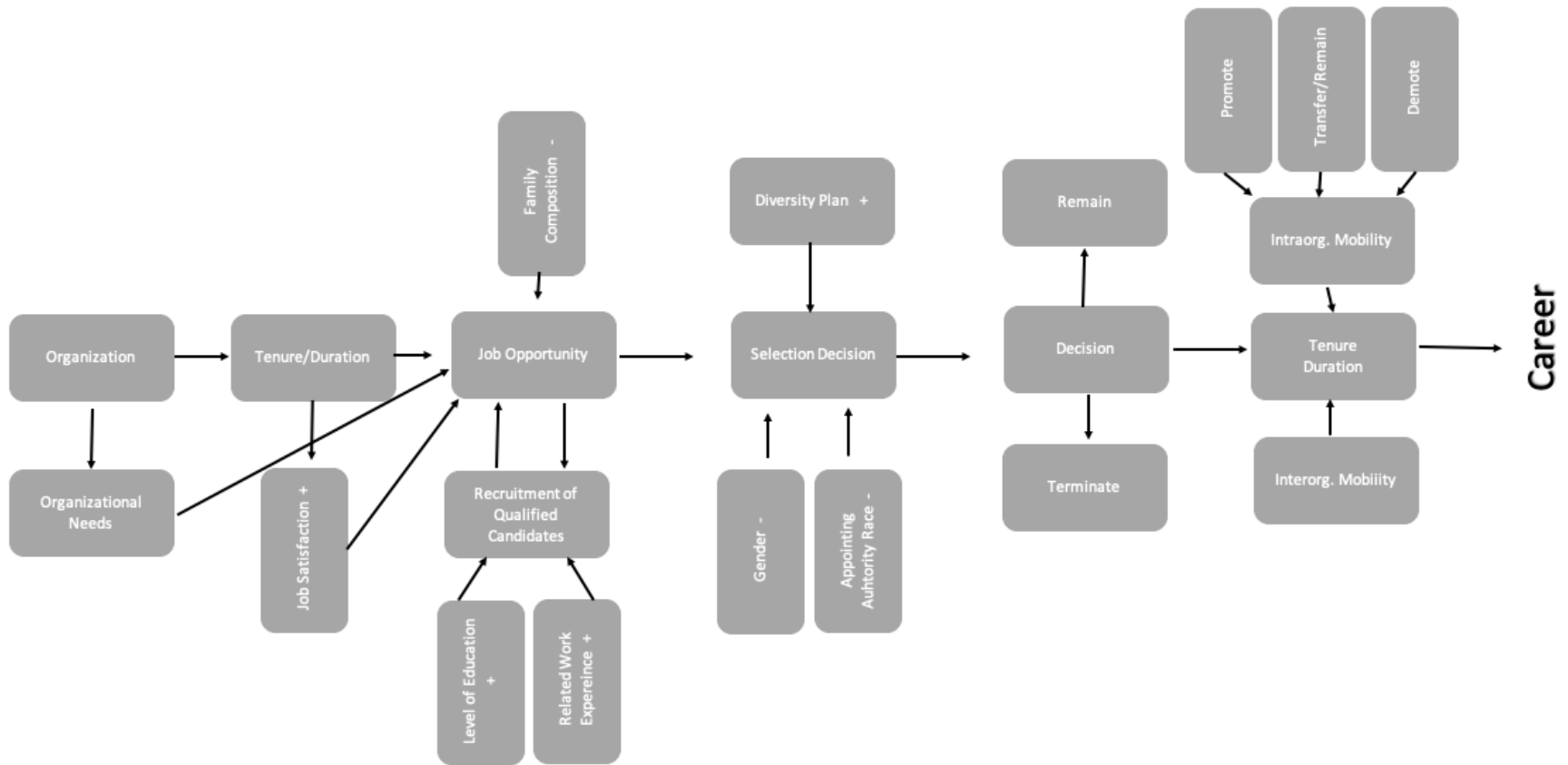


Figure 1. *Model of Occupational Mobility for Black Parks and Recreation Personnel – Modified*

APPENDIX C: Recruitment Email

Greetings,

You are invited to be part of a research study conducted by Chermaine Cole, ABD and Steven Waller, PhD at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. You are invited because you have been identified as a woman working for a public park and recreation agency. The purpose of this study is to explore the career mobility patterns of African American women working in public parks and recreation agencies. We are interested in examining your career mobility status and the factors influencing the progression to executive leadership positions.

If you are interested in learning more about the study, please select the following link:

https://utk.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_08rnicQka2Ni8KO

If you have questions or concerns about this study, contact the researchers, Chermaine Cole (ccole35@utk.edu or 225-202-8830) and Dr. Steven Waller (swaller2@utk.edu or 865-974-1279).

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX D: Informed Consent

Introduction

You are invited to be part of a research study being conducted by Chermaine Cole, ABD and Steven Waller, PhD at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. You are being invited because you have been identified as being a woman working for a public parks and recreation agency. Being in this research study is voluntary, and you should only agree if you completely understand the study and want to volunteer your answers to these questions to be used in our analysis. This form contains information that will help you decide if you want to be part of this research study or not. Please take the time to read it carefully, and if there is anything you don't understand, please ask questions.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the career mobility patterns of African American women working in public parks and recreation agencies. We are interested in examining your career mobility status and the factors that influence the progression to executive leadership positions.

Participation

If you agree to be in this study, you will complete an online survey. The survey includes questions about your occupational status perceptions on the factors that influence mobility. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. You can skip questions that you do not want to answer.

Being in this study is up to you. You don't have to be in this study if you don't want to. You can stop up until you submit the survey. After submitting the survey, we cannot remove your responses because we will not know which answers came from you.

Risks

We don't know of any risks to you from being in the study that are greater than the risks you encounter in everyday life.

Benefits

We do not expect you to benefit from being in this study. Your participation may help us learn more about women working in public parks and recreation agencies who experience challenges in the workplace. We hope the knowledge gained from this study will benefit others in the future.

Confidentiality

The survey is anonymous, and no one will be able to link your responses back to you. Your responses to the survey will not be linked to your computer, email address, or other electronic identifiers. Please do not include your name or additional information that could be used to identify you in your survey responses. Information provided in this study can only be kept as secure as any other online communication.

Information collected for this study will be published and possibly presented at scientific meetings.

Contact Information

If you have questions or concerns about this study or have experienced a research-related problem or inquiry, contact the researchers, Chermaine Cole (ccole35@utk.edu or 225-202-8830) and Dr. Steven Waller (swaller2@utk.edu or 865-974-1279).

For questions or concerns about your rights or to speak with someone other than the research team about the study, please contact:

Institutional Review Board
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
1534 White Avenue
Blount Hall, Room 408
Knoxville, TN 37996-1529
Phone: 865-974-7697
Email: utkirb@utk.edu

Consent

I have read this form, been given a chance to ask questions, and have my questions answered. If I have more questions, I have been told who to contact. By selecting “I Agree” below, I am providing my signature electronically and agree to be in this study. I can print or save a copy of this consent information for future reference. If I do not want to be in this study, I can select “I Do Not Agree” to exit the survey.

- I agree to participate
- I do not agree to participate

APPENDIX E: Survey Instrument

Section I: Occupational Status

For each of the occupational titles mentioned below, please select the statement that most accurately indicates your opinion of the status of each job. "Status" is the perceived importance of the position within the agency structure.

Q1: Occupational Titles

	Low Status (1)	Below Average Status (2)	Average Status (3)	Moderately High Status (4)	High Status (5)
Administrative					
Assistant: May be called "Secretary". Performs routine and specialized clerical tasks for recreation, park facility, or central office.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Assistant Director: May be called "Deputy Director." Responsible for delegated functions, including planning, administration, and supervision as delegated by the Department Director.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Budget Officer: May be called "Budget Accountant" or "Finance Manager." Responsible for budgeting and financial administration for the Department of Parks and Recreation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Business Manager: Responsible for executive functions such as budgeting, personnel management, purchasing, and related support function. No direct supervision of other employees.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Custodian: Under the supervision of a higher-level employee, is responsible for maintaining recreation facilities and grounds.

Director of Parks and Recreation: Chief Administrative Officer in a department with recreation and park functions. Ultimately responsible for all departmental operations.

☐
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Q2: Occupational Titles

	Low Status (1)	Below Average Status (2)	Average Status (3)	Moderately High Status (4)	High Status (5)
Director of Recreation: May also be referred to as "Superintendent of Recreation." Responsible for all facets of the recreation program delivery system within the Department of Parks and Recreation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Director of Parks: May also be known as "Superintendent of Parks." Responsible for planning, developing and maintaining specialized or general recreation facilities such as play areas, parks, and other green belts comprising the parks system.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
District Supervisor: Under direction, responsible for the supervision of the work of others in all phases of the recreation program for a district or large geographic section of an urban area.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Facility Manager: Under direction, responsible for administering a particular facility such as a swimming pool/ice rink complex, zoo, community center, golf course, or camp facility.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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Functional Supervisor:
Under direction, responsible for supervising lower-level employees in the planning and organizing of an assigned function or specialized field of the community-wide program. Recreation supervisors may be responsible for programs such as athletics, cultural arts, or special events. Park supervisors may be responsible for landscape design, facility maintenance, or equipment repair.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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Park Planning Director:
May also be called "Landscape Architect."
Duties may include planning and designing park areas and facilities, preparing bid documents and cost estimates, and preparing drawings, sketches, and master plans.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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Q3: Occupational Titles

	Low Status (1)	Below Average Status (2)	Average Status (3)	Moderately High Status (4)	High Status (5)
Park Operations Staff: Under supervision, responsible for performing routine grounds, forestry,	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

or facility maintenance work.

Park Patrol Officer: As a certified law enforcement officer, patrols parks and recreation areas and facilities, enforces laws and park ordinances, and lends assistance to the public.

Recreation Leader: Under supervision, responsible for planning and implementing various programs for a park area or recreation facility.

Senior Park Operations Staff: Under supervision, responsible for various skilled grounds, facilities, equipment, or construction work. May supervise a crew of lower-level employees.

Special Program

Coordinator: Under direction, responsible for implementing specialized programs such as athletics, special events, or cultural arts on a city-wide basis for a facility.

Therapeutic Recreation

Specialist: Responsible for planning, implementing and evaluating a therapeutic recreation program in a clinical or community-based environment.



Section II: Mobility Information

Please select the answer that most accurately indicates your response to the following items:

Q4: Of the occupational titles listed below, which one most accurately describes your current position? (Refer to Part I for position descriptions)

- ☐ Administrative Assistant
- ☐ Assistant Director
- ☐ Budget Officer
- ☐ Business Manager
- ☐ Custodian
- ☐ Director of Parks and Recreation
- ☐ Director (Superintendent) of Recreation
- ☐ Director (Superintendent) of Parks
- ☐ District Supervisor
- ☐ Facility Manager
- ☐ Functional Supervisor
- ☐ Park Planning Director
- ☐ Park Operations Staff
- ☐ Park Patrol Officer
- ☐ Recreation Leader
- ☐ Senior Park Operations Staff
- ☐ Special Program Coordinator
- ☐ Therapeutic Recreation Specialist

☐ Other (Please Specify) _____

Q5: How many years have you worked in your current position?

Q6: Has your occupational title changed over the past five years?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q7: If yes, please select the title(s) and list the number of years you worked in each position held over the past five years.

	Occupational Title	Years Employed
		# of Years
Previous Occupational Title (1)	▼ 1. Administrative Assistant ... 18. Therapeutic Recreation Specialist	
Previous Occupational Title (2)	▼ 1. Administrative Assistant ... 18. Therapeutic Recreation Specialist	
Previous Occupational Title (3)	▼ 1. Administrative Assistant ... 18. Therapeutic Recreation Specialist	

Previous Occupational Title (4)

▼ 1. Administrative Assistant ...
18. Therapeutic Recreation
Specialist

Q8: Are you presently seeking a position which you consider to be a career advancement?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q9: If your department offered you in a position which you considered to be a career advancement, would you accept it?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q10: If you were offered a position in another city or state which you considered to be a career advancement, would you accept it?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q11: If no, if the pay were greater, would you accept the position?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q12: In the last year, have you been offered a position which you consider to be a career advancement?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q13: If yes, did you accept the position?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q14: In the last five years, have you been offered a position within your department that is lower than one you currently hold?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q15: If yes, was this change due to:

☐ Budget Reductions

☐ Disciplinary Reasons

☐ Family Reasons

☐ Furthering Education

☐ Other (Please Explain) _____

Q16: Within the last five years, have you participated in any in-service training or continuing education seminars sponsored by your employer or professional associations such as NRPA?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q17: If no, do you have any plans in the future to do so?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q18: Within the last five years, have you enrolled in a college or university to complete an undergraduate or advanced degree?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q19: If no, do you plan to enroll in the future?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q20: Does the city that you work for have a diversity plan?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Uncertain

Q21: In your opinion, did you obtain your current position because of the diversity plan?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Uncertain

Q22: Who in your department was responsible for hiring you? (Select one)

☐ Immediate Supervisor

☐ Division Superintendent

☐ Department Director

☐ Human Resources Director

☐ Other - Title _____

Q23: What was the race of the person that hired you?

- ☐ Black/African American
- ☐ White/Caucasian
- ☐ Hispanic/Latinx
- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

Q24: What was the gender of the person that hired you?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Q25: Have you ever felt as though race, gender, or both prevented you from obtaining a promotion?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q26: If yes, please indicate whether race or gender and explain in the space provided below:

Q27: Have you ever felt as though your race or gender helped you obtain a promotion?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q28: Have you ever filed charges of discrimination against any of your employers, past or present?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Section III: Influencing Factors - Job Satisfaction

Q29: Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the statements below.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am satisfied with the nature of the work I perform.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am satisfied with the person who directly supervises me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am satisfied with my relations with my co-workers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am satisfied with the pay I receive for my job.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am satisfied with the opportunities which exist in my organization for advancement/promotion.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Considering everything, I am satisfied with my current job situation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section III: Influencing Factors - Likability

Q30: Please answer the following questions regarding the likability of your supervisor.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think that my supervisor is unusually well adjusted.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would highly recommend my supervisor for a responsible job.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In my opinion, my supervisor is an exceptionally mature person.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have great confidence in my supervisor's good judgment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Most people would react very favorably to my supervisor after a brief acquaintance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I think that my supervisor and I are quite similar to each other.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I think that my supervisor is one of those people who quickly wins respect.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel that my supervisor is an extremely intelligent person.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My supervisor is the sort of person whom I myself would like to be.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

It seems to me that it is very easy for my supervisor to gain admiration.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Section III: Influencing Factors - Thriving in the Workplace

Q31: Please indicate your level of agreement to the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I find myself learning often.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I continue to learn more as time goes by.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I see myself continually improving.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am not learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am developing a lot as a person.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel alive and vital.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have energy and spirit.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I do not feel very energetic.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel alert and wake.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am looking forward to each new day.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section III: Influencing Factors - Organizational Culture

Q32: Please indicate your level of agreement to the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My organization tries to create a unique "family atmosphere".	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My organization emphasizes strong loyalty and dedication.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My organization emphasizes open communication.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My organization treats each employee as a total person.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel that my organization has a real interest in the well-being and overall satisfaction of those who work here.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My supervisor encourages people to speak up when they disagree with a decision.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My supervisor gives me the freedom to express ideas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel that my supervisor values my ideas and inputs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My supervisor is open to all questions.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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I have a chance to meet with my supervisor one-to-one at least twice a year to discuss performance and goals.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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My supervisor encourages people to work as a team.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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My supervisor encourages people who work in my group to exchange opinions and ideas.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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My supervisor often communicates the overall organizational goals to us.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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I feel that my supervisor has the knowledge and training to be a good leader.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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My supervisor provides help, training, and guidance so that I can improve my performance.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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Section III: Influencing Factors - Organizational Climate

Q33: Please indicate your level of agreement to the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel that my manager provides me choices and options.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel understood by my manager.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My manager conveyed confidence in my ability to do well at my job.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My manager encouraged me to ask questions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My manager listens to how I would like to do things.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My manager tries to understand how I see things before suggesting a new way to do things.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q34: How important is networking to your career pathway?

	Not Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Important	Very Important
Networking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q35: Please comment on how networking has influenced your career.

Q36: How important is mentorship/sponsorship to your career pathway?

	Not Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Important	Very Important
Mentorship/Sponsorship	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q37: Please comment on how mentorship/sponsorship has influenced your career.

Q38: Do you feel stressed at work?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q39: Please indicate *how often* you felt or thought a certain way about the following statements.

	Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
How often do you feel stressed?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
How often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
How often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
How often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q40: Will stress ever prohibit you from taking another job opportunity in the future?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Section IV: Demographic Information

Please complete the following items to the best of your ability. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Q41: Please indicate the region in which you are employed.

☐ Northeast (CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)

☐ Southwest (AZ, NM, OK, TX)

☐ West (AK, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY)

☐ Southeast (AL, AR, DC, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV)

☐ Midwest (IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI)

Q42: Please indicate the total number of years that you have been employed in the field of parks and recreation. _____

Q43: Which best describes your ethnic identity?

☐ Black/African American

☐ White/Caucasian

☐ Hispanic/Latinx

☐ Asian/Pacific Islander

☐ Other (please specify) _____

☐ Prefer not to respond

Q44: Please indicate your age. _____

Q45: What is your marital status?

- ☐ Never Married
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Partnered
- ☐ Separated
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widowed

Q46: How many children do you have? _____

Q47: What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ High School graduate
- ☐ Associate degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Professional School degree (ex., MD, JD)
- ☐ Doctorate degree (ex., Ph.D., Ed.D.)

Q48: What is your annual salary?

- ☐ Under \$49,999
- ☐ \$50,000 - \$59,999
- ☐ \$60,000 - \$69,999
- ☐ \$70,000 - \$79,999
- ☐ \$80,000 - \$89,999

- ☐ \$90,000 - \$99,999
- ☐ \$100,000 - \$109,999
- ☐ Over \$110,000

APPENDIX F: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



October 12, 2022

Steven N Waller

UTK - Coll of Education, Hlth, & Human - Kinesiology, Recreation and

Re: UTK IRB-22-07158-XM

Study Title: An Exploratory Study of the Career Mobility Patterns of African American Women Working in Public Parks and Recreation Agencies

Dear Steven N Waller:

The Human Research Protections Program (HRPP) reviewed your application for the above referenced project and determined that your application is eligible for exempt review under 45 CFR 46.101, Category 2: Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if the information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Your application has been determined to comply with proper consideration for the rights and welfare of human subjects and the regulatory requirements for the protection of human subjects.

Therefore, this letter constitutes full approval of your application (version 1.1) as submitted, including the following documents that have been dated and stamped IRB approved:

- Informed Consent v 1.0
- Survey Draft v 1.0
- Recruitment Contact Listserv Request v 1.0
- Recruitment Email v 1.0

You are approved to enroll a maximum of 200 participants. Approval of this study will be valid from 10/12/2022.

Any revisions in the approved application, consent forms, instruments, recruitment materials, etc., must be submitted to and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. In addition, you are responsible for reporting any unanticipated serious adverse events or other problems involving risks to subjects or others in the manner required by the local IRB policy.

Approval of this study is valid for three years. If a Study Update Form is not submitted in iMedRIS and approved by the IRB prior to 10/11/2025, the study will be automatically closed by the IRB and no further study activity will be permitted until a Study Update Form is received. Please be sure to also submit a Study Closure Request (Form 7) when all research activity, including data analysis, has been completed.

Sincerely,

Lora Beebe, Ph.D., PMHNP-BC, FAAN
Chair

Institutional Review Board | Office of Research & Engagement
1534 White Avenue Knoxville, TN 37996-1529
865-974-7697 865-974-7400 fax irb.utk.edu

VITA

Chermaine Danielle Cole, a native of DeSoto, Texas, is a third-year doctoral student in the Sport Management program at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK). Before beginning her postgraduate studies at UTK under Dr. Steven Waller, Chermaine received her bachelor's in Kinesiology (concentration: pre-physical therapy) from Louisiana State University and a master's in Sport Administration from Georgia State University. She has taught several lecture courses, including Sociocultural Foundations of Sport and Recreation, Developing and Evaluating Therapeutic Recreation Programs, and Administration of Therapeutic Services.

Her pursuit of parks and recreation began as a seasonal employee at her hometown's local public swimming pool. She then worked as a part-time recreation attendant before being promoted to Business Manager in the parks and recreation department. As a practitioner, she oversaw the department's operating budgets, purchasing procedures, daily operations, and accreditation standards.

Chermaine's current research interests include human resource management (i.e., organizational behavior, career mobility of women in underrepresented groups); programming development in recreation and sports organizations (i.e., resource allocation in swimming); and managerial leadership of recreation and sporting organizations (i.e., communication, likeability, satisfaction).

Chermaine is currently seeking a position as a faculty member in higher education.