Working Out Race, Class and Gender: A Study of Barriers to Gym Memberships in Baltimore City

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Dedication

The author wishes to dedicate this work to black women and girls whom have ever felt marginalized, stifled and forgotten about in their quest to live a bountiful and healthy life. You are visible. You are worthy. You are beautiful. May this work disrupt narratives and undermine agendas created to trap you. Be blessed.
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Abstract of Thesis

Working Out Race, Class and Gender: An Intersectional Analysis of Gyms in Baltimore City

Using narrative data derived from field notes and interviews with black women living in Baltimore city, this study explains how the city’s spatial layout, and black women’s socio-economic status, time allocation and body image impede them from securing gym memberships. Black women are the largest demographic group in the city and battle chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and breast cancer, which can be remedied through exercise. The focus on gym memberships is relevant as black women report the highest level of inactivity due to poor access to the safe and spacious neighborhoods, parks, trails and tracks that serve as alternative routes to exercise. Gyms can be a salient option for this population as they provide the safe space, equipment, resources and social support needed to navigate the world of fitness. Political, social and economic mechanisms that reproduce racial residential segregation force black women into fitness deserts, relegate them to poverty, foster a lack of time and contribute to their invisibility in gym advertisements. These realities both, discourage and impede black women living in Baltimore city from pursuing gym memberships.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Baltimore is the home of great walkability scores, 55,000 acres of park land, popular professional sports teams and over 100 boutique and commercial gyms (Boone 2009; Casagrande, Stark, Gittlesohn, Zandeman, Evans, L & Webb, 2011). It is also one of America’s few remaining chocolate cities as 63 percent of the residents are black (U.S Census Bureau, 2017). Black women are 54 percent of the black population and 34 percent of the city’s total population, making them the highest demographic group in the area (U.S Census Bureau, 2017). Three black women have held the mayoral position as well, making Baltimore city the conversation of progressive leadership. However, interlocking barriers exist that work to hinder black women from garnering equitable access to this fitness mecca (Collins, 2000, Ray, 2014). Because 16 percent of black women live below the poverty line, they are exposed to the risk of being sedentary (Bland & Sharma, 2017; Cox, Boyle, Davey, Feng & Morris, 2007; U. S Census Bureau, 2017). These women report the highest inactivity in the city and are at a greater risk for coronary heart disease, hypertension, diabetes and breast cancer (Baltimore City Health Department, 2017; Orr, James, Gary & Newton, 2006; U.S Centers for Disease and Control, 2017). Black women are poorly educated and lack the skills needed to secure lucrative employment, leading them to hold low level positions and lack adequate healthcare (Holland & DeLuca, 2016).

Vanessa Bland and Manoj Sharma performed a systematic narrative review of physical activity interventions for black women and concluded that walking coupled with healthy food options were salient strategies to promote exercise and alleviate the health ailments they experience (Bland & Sharma 2017). However, these strategies may not be a
viable option for the black women of Baltimore city. Sarah Stark Casagrande investigated walkability in Baltimore city and determined that those living in poverty occupy high walkability neighborhoods, however, they do not engage in walking as they view their neighborhoods as unsafe (Casagrande, 2011). Other research suggests that access to parks, though riddled with its own set of barriers, will increase the physical activity of black women (Cohen, McKenzie, Seghal, Williams, Golinelli & Lurie, 2007). However, the presence of parks does not promote fitness among this population as women in general are not encouraged to explore the urban space in the same ways that men are (Boone, Buckley, Grave & Sister, 2009; Markusen 1980; Taylor, Lees, Hepworth, Feliz, Volding, Cassels & Tobin, 2007). Christopher G. Boone’s investigation of park land divulged that the distribution of parks in Baltimore is an environmental justice issue (Boone et al., 2009). A higher portion of blacks have access to parks within walking distance (defined by 400 meters or less) than whites, however whites have access to more acreage within walking distance than blacks (Boone et al., 2009). Parks areas that are predominantly black have a higher level of congestion and are less desirable to utilize for fitness endeavors (Boone et al., 2009). These areas have morphed into sights of insecurity, exclusion and fear born out of historical precedent and collective memory (Boone et al., 2009; Finney, 2014).

Studies that highlight the barriers to these alternative routes indicate that spatial layout, time allocation, income and body size perceptions hinder black women from utilizing such (Baruth et al., 2014; Bland & Sharma, 2017; Jones & Paxton, 2015; Joseph, Ainsworth, Keller & Dodgson, 2015; Ray, 2014). Because alternative routes to exercise fall short for black women, gyms may be a suitable option for this population. Research
divulges that low-income women have relayed that free gyms, among other interventions, would be the greatest option that could assist them in exercising (Taylor et al., 2007). Popular conceptions of gyms depict these facilities as masculine spaces, however, emerging research asserts that the “organizations use of technology and labor mobilizes customers participation in a feminized organizational culture of nonjudgmental and non-competitive sociability. Organizational processes create a context that foster gendered interactions and identities among customers” (Leeds-Craig et al., 2007, p. 676). Contemporary gyms need to take a racial component into consideration. Gyms are heavily populated within the city; however, no detailed investigation has been conducted to highlight the barriers black women face in joining these institutions. This research probes such through a use of participant observation, interviews and questionnaires. I utilize theory to explain how the local, state and federal government weaponized racial residential segregation and forced black women into underserved areas that expose them to structural barriers to gyms. I then utilize narrative data derived from interviews and questionnaires to contextualize the intimate experiences black women have with these barriers. I seek to explain the role gyms play in the high levels of inactivity amongst the population and record the voices of black women, highlighting their frustrations and suggestions for change. Questions to be addressed include a) how does the spatial layout of Baltimore city hinder black women from obtaining a gym membership, b) what realities lead them to lose the leisure time needed to utilize a gym, c) what forces create the income disparities that stifle their ability to purchase a gym membership and d) how does their invisibility in advertisements discourage them from pursuing a membership? Answering these questions
will effectively identify the structural processes and agents that have a stake in the marginalization of black women. With this knowledge advocacy groups can battle for equitable resources, black fitness entrepreneurs can design successful and salient interventions and city officials can be urged to establish partnerships ran by black women that provide the population with a space for exercise.
Chapter 2: Baltimore in Context

A thorough understanding of Baltimore is needed to accurately grasp how black women struggle to pursue gym memberships in the area. This section will trace the origins of black life in Baltimore city and the many injustices the community has faced throughout the years. Attention will be given to the legal and social action taken to marginalize blacks and the black community’s response to such. The section will begin with a discussion of the black slave population in the city as Baltimore played a pivotal role in the slave trade. I will then explain how the city’s racial ordinance forced blacks into isolation and laid foundation to exclusion. I then discuss the mechanisms city officials and residents utilized to uphold racial residential segregation as well as the Federal governments tools to reproduce such. I situate black women’s fight to secure a gym membership, in a discussion of racial residential segregation, capital accumulation and uneven development, relaying that the barriers stem from political, social and economic isolation. The section closes with a discussion of contemporary Baltimore and the state of the black community.

Blacks in Baltimore

Since Baltimore was founded in 1729, blacks contributed to the city’s economic growth and stability (Crenson, 2017; Pietila, 2010; Power, 1982). Baltimore was a powerhouse in the slave economy of the 1800s (Powers, 1982). However, physical evidence of the city’s once thriving slave trade has been erased (Clayton, 2002). Slaves labored in the railroad, shipping and ship building industries as the city garnered major commercial activity due to the creation of the Baltimore-Ohio Railroad in 1836 (Powers, 1982). More than a dozen slave traders led store fronts along Pratt and adjacent streets as well as advertised regularly in The Sun and other publications (Clayton, 2002). Negroes, Negroes,
Negroes and 5,000 Negroes Wanted were featured headlines in these publications and slave dealers were consistently listed in the city’s directories (Clayton, 2002). Slave merchants owned pens called slave jails along Pratt street at Camden Yards (Clayton, 2002). These spaces housed runaway slaves, slaves who accompanied white visitors to the area and slaves who would be shipped to transport in the following days (Clayton, 2002).

Slaves were chained in iron shackles along Pratt street and Fells Point during times of transport, many of which were carried to New Orleans (Clayton, 2002). Nearly one million slaves were taken from the upper south (Virginia and Maryland) and sent to the deep south (Louisiana, Alabama, Florida and Texas) in the early 1800s (Clayton, 2002). By the Civil War there were 10 free blacks for every slave in Baltimore city (Clayton, 2002).

With nearly 92 percent of blacks free, Baltimore housed the highest free, black population of any city in the country (Clayton, 2002; Powers, 1982;). From 1880 to 1900, the black population grew from 54,000 to 79,000 (Clayton, 2002; Powers, 1982; Stein, 2011). The national search for employment led many unskilled blacks and whites from the rural south to the area (Powers, 1982). They often congregated in alley districts that became the sight of blight and poverty (Pietila, 2010; Powers, 1982; Stein, 2011). Poor access to healthcare led to the spread of communicable diseases and the birth of racially charged public health initiatives (Powers, 1982). The 1902 tuberculosis outbreak fueled such endeavors as the black death rate was more than twice that of whites (Powers, 1982). Whites presented requests for racial residential segregation to protect the health of the white population (Powers, 1982). Narratives were formed that described blacks as “unrestrained, and prone to engage in deviant, high-risk behaviors” (Strings 2015, p. 108). Black women are characterized as “deadly agents of disease” that are “oppressive
burdens on public health” (Strings 2015, p. 108). Such assertions fail to acknowledge that social, economic and environmental determinants are the fundamental causes of illness (Strings, 2015). Black women’s fight against being viewed as the “racialized and gendered other” began during the colonial era as notions of normativity purported that all women and people of color were deviant from the white male norm (Strings 2015, p.109). These underlying views fueled the creation of racially inequitable legislation in Baltimore city. In 1903, mayor Thomas Hayes referred to blacks as “wretched abodes” that were “menacing to both health and morals” (Powers 1982, p. 294). His remarks and the growth of the black population led to the launch of racial ordinances designed to segregate the city (Powers, 1982).

Baltimore was the first city in the county to utilize racial residential segregation to protect white individuals, families, homes and businesses (Pietila, 2010; Powers, 1982). The racial ordinances served as blueprints that major cities, like Chicago and Detroit, utilized to legitimize segregation in their respective areas (Pietila, 2010). Ordinance 610 was a policy designed to quarantine blacks and protect the whites who ruled the city (Powers, 1982). The policy was proposed when black lawyer George W.F McMechen purchased a home on McCulloh Street, nearly ten blocks away from his former house on Prestman street (Powers, 1982; Stein, 2011). Moving into one of the most prestigious neighborhoods in the city violated the prevailing color line established after the abolition of slavery (Powers, 1982; Stein, 2011). Whites from neighboring streets met with the Eutaw Place Improvement Association and urged the city council to seal off their neighborhood from black residents (Powers, 1982; Stein, 2011). In December 1910, mayor John Berry Mahool signed into law the racial ordinance stating, “no negro can move into a block in
which more than half of the residents are white” (Powers, 1982, p. 299; Stein 2011). Those who violated the ordinance could face a “$100 fine or imprisonment from 30 days to 1 year, or both” (Powers, 1982, p. 299). Mahool presented the ordinance as a progressive reform, designed to “reduce incidents of civil disturbance, prevent the spread of communicable diseases into white neighbor-hoods and protect the property values among the white majority” (Powers 1982, p. 301). The ordinance, however, was politically flawed and difficult to apply. Within a month, twenty-six criminal cases were sent to court (Powers, 1982). The Supreme Court ruled the ordinance “ineffective and inaccuracy drawn” going through several substantive changes within its seven-year existence (Powers, 1982, p. 303). In 1917, the Supreme Court ended the reign of terror by ruling to overturn the use of racial ordinances (Powers, 1982). However, the legislation is cemented into the fabric of Baltimore city, giving rise to de-facto and de-jure means to foster racial segregation (Crenson, 2017; Pietila, 2010; Power, 1982; ). Public officials and civic leaders introduced various mechanisms that were designed to continue the legacy of segregation (Orser, 2015; Pietila, 2010; Powers, 1982; Rothstein, 2015). Slum clearance, restrictive covenants, redlining, block-busting and initiatives spearheaded by the Federal government promoted racial residential segregation (Orser, 2015; Pietila, 2010). These various iterations will be discussed in grave detail in a later discussion of the city’s spatial layout as it trapped black women in poor conditions and stifled their ability to pursue a gym membership.

**Blacks and Capital Accumulation in Baltimore**

Baltimore city underwent radical change in the 1960s due to deindustrialization, desegregation and civil unrest. The decline in manufacturing led to widespread unem-
ployment in the black community as jobs were either outsourced or replaced by automation (Fernandez-Kelly, 2017; Levine, 2000; Hanlon & Vicino, 2007). Steel mill and factory closures further challenged black families as many found employment in this sector (Fernandez-Kelly 2017; Hanlon & Vicino, 2007; Levine, 2000). The city further crumbled as powerful savings and loans corporations went bankrupt, inhibiting citizens from accessing their funds (Rizzo, Fricker & Muolo, 2015). Blacks focused on fighting to maintain the political and social wins that accompanied integration, however, it proved to be an inglorious battle (Elfenbein, Hollowak & Nix, 2011; Kananagh-Oneill, 2017). The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. sparked an uproar in the black community that led to mass fires and looting (Elfenbein et al., 2011; The Maryland Crime Investigation Commission, 1968). The area covered by the riots were bounded by Patterson Park Avenue (East), West Belvedere Avenue and 33rd (North), Hilton Street and Hilton Road (West) and Washington Boulevard (South) (Elfenbein et al., 2011; The Maryland Crime Investigation, 1968). White owned commercial spaces in black communities were targeted (Elfenbein et al., 2011). Over 1000 fires and 1049 businesses were damaged (Elfenbein et al., 2011; The Maryland Crime Investigation, 1968). Nearly all of the 5,512-people arrested were black (Elfenbein et al., 2011; The Maryland Crime investigation, 1968). The National Guard was called in to intervene as a State of Emergency was declared in the city (Elfenbein et al., 2011; The Maryland Crime Investigation, 1968). At one point, 12,100 troops occupied the city and six hundred people were injured (Elfenbein et al., 2011; The Maryland Crime Investigation, 1968). All of the six individuals killed during this time were black (Elfenbein et al., 2011). Historian Rhonda Williams offered that the uprisings divulged blacks’ frustration and desire to combat exploitation (Williams, 2005).
The city fell into further decay due to the series of civil disturbances causing urban renewal and redevelopment projects to ensue, however, these redevelopment projects focused on the business and tourist corridor of the Inner Harbor and excluded black communities.

Baltimore’s economic decline caused panic amongst white elites who held power in the city. The area was publicized as one of the most blighted in the country an unworthy to inhabit. The bleak depictions of the city gave way to efforts for redevelopment that continue to disrupt the lives of blacks contemporary Baltimore. The election of mayor William Donald Schaefer in 1971 prompted a radical change in the city’s political, social and economic affairs (Harvey, 1991). To boost the economy, Schaefer transformed Baltimore city into a growth machine where powerful entities worked unanimously to revitalize the economy and change the narrative that haunted the area (Harvey, 1991; Levine, 1987). He merged public and private institutions to form quasi-public agencies that would eventually absorb the city’s budget with their efforts to redevelop the area and establish commercial enterprises (Harvey, 1991; Levine, 1987). These quasi-public agencies worked with private developers to rebrand Baltimore city as a tourist site with the introduction of social events, corporate buildings, new housing and leisure activities (Harvey, 1991; Levine, 1987). Schaefer circumnavigated open meeting laws and other regulations to create a shadow government, where the opinions of black residents were ignored (Harvey, 1991; Levine, 1987). The creation of lavish sites of entertainment and business led to the destruction of black communities and the displacement of black residents (Harvey, 1991; Levine, 1987). Schaefer’s administration took a passive role on Civil Rights issues to strategize ways to bring consumers to the city (Harvey, 1991; Levine, 1987).
Immediate efforts sought to bring attention to the downtown area to foster collectiveness through an elaborate cultural fair (Harvey, 1991; Lyall, 1983). The successful endeavor brought two million people to the downtown area and fortified the belief that the space was central to the strength of the economy (Harvey, 1991; Lyall, 1983). Schaefer utilized tax-increment financing (TIF) to galvanize his pursuits and birthed a legacy of racially inequitable redevelopment projects (Harvey, 1991; Levine, 1987). These public funds were used in 1962 to develop the 22-acre business district known as Charles Center (Harvey, 1991). Schaefer followed such efforts and bypassed normal banking procedures to provide white business leaders, with TIF funds to build their institutions in the downtown region (Harvey, 1991). His efforts led to the emergence of department stores, leisure businesses and corporate companies like USF&C Insurance and IBM (Harvey, 1991).

Schaefer’s public subsidies funded the Hyatt building in downtown Baltimore (Harvey, 1991). Hyatt only funded $500,000 of the $3.5 million it to erect (Harvey, 1991). These development endeavors were influenced by the narratives associated with racial residential, which urge the protection of white communities from blacks (Harvey, 1991). The Maryland Science Center was designed to mimic a fortress whose purpose was to protect neighboring white communities from blacks (Harvey, 1991). The solid, brick backside faces the black community known as Sharp Ledenhall, to prevent blacks from breaking windows and trashing the area in the aftermath of the riots (Harvey, 1991). Promises to reconstruct black neighborhoods and cultural mainstays, like Lexington Market, never came to fruition (Harvey, 1991). Five thousand public housing units were demolished to make room for these redevelopment projects (Harvey, 1991; Levine, 1987). Blacks fell deep into poverty and homelessness as alter-native housing options were never created.
Schafer's administration hoped that redevelopment would yield revenue through the increase in property taxes and consumerism (Harvey, 1991). Such revenue was intended to be distributed throughout the city to revitalize decaying housing projects, deteriorated buildings and factories (Harvey, 1991). However, the administration endured a series of net losses (Harvey, 1991; Levine, 1987). Tax flows rarely matched public expenditures as funds traveled outside the city in the form of profits given to firms or payments for imported goods (Harvey, 1991; Levine, 1987). Schaeffer’s efforts absorbed the education budget and decreased expenditures on social services by 45 percent (Levine, 1987). The forms of employment that were available were low-skill positions that failed to bring blacks out of poverty (Levine, 1987). Waves of investment followed in the decades to come to eradicate the issue, however, the city was unable to recoup for such losses (Levine, 1987).

Contemporary Baltimore

Capital accumulation in Baltimore city manifested in a geographical context as its processes and success were contingent upon the renovation of the built environment (Harvey, 2001). Economic strength in Baltimore was thought to be achieved through a successful use of the valued land (Harvey, 1991; Harvey, 2001). This tactic led to the strengthening of white communities at the expense of those inhabited by blacks (Levine, 1987). This uneven development continues to plague the city today. Office buildings and leisure attractions have been introduced to rebrand the city as one of charm and prosperity. Alley homes that were occupied by blacks are now redeveloped and inhabited by whites (Levine, 1987; Rothstein, 2015). The redlined areas still lay in decay due to years of uneven development as well as political and social isolation (Levine, 1987; Rothstein, 2015). Black residents continue to be displaced to introduce commercial property and
they earn a gross income half that of their white counterparts (Rothstein, 2015; U. S Census Bureau, 2017). Baltimore city is a racial paradox that conceals white supremacy behind the election of black women mayors. Seventy-two percent of mayor Catherine Pugh’s cabinet members are white (Brown, 2017). The agencies and institutions that influence the lives of residents are led by whites as well. The Police department, the Baltimore Corporation as well as the Housing and Community Development and Planning corporation are all led by white men (Brown, 2017). These forces create a discouraging reality for blacks as they endure racial profiling, stop and frisk and poor access to health and nutrition (Brown, 2017). The hyper segregation of Baltimore city finds black communities in the eastern and western districts, while white communities occupy the northern and southeastern regions. Morgan University Professor, Dr. Lawrence Brown, refers to these racial enclaves as the “Black Butterfly” and the “White L” (Brown, 2017). Throughout the duration of this paper I will refer to these enclaves as such. Figure 1 consists of three maps of Baltimore city that display the areas that have the highest concentration of blacks, the distribution of income and the communities that have the highest concentration of unemployment. These maps reveal the racial disparities present in Baltimore city that came to fruition at the hands of racial residential segregation. Years of isolation created the poor conditions of black enclaves in the city, vulnerable income and unemployment. These circumstances have made Baltimore city an area that houses “two cities”.
**Figure 1. Socioeconomics of Baltimore**

Source: 2013 American Community Survey Estimates, U.S Census Bureau; Open Baltimore, City of Baltimore; Reuters

The first map confirms that the black population occupy the eastern and western districts as Brown asserts. The second map reveals that the wealth is unevenly distributed in the city due to the legacy of racial residential segregation. The third map confirms that highest levels of unemployment lie within these black communities. The central and southeastern regions that comprise the “White L” have low levels of unemployment, depicting the vast difference between the two areas. Table 1 displays six communities in Baltimore city that have varying racial compositions. These communities are found within the Black Butterfly and the White L. Investigating the social and economic make-up of these communities enable one to further discern the ways in which racial composition correlates with wealth distribution and education in Baltimore city. Black Americans of the city experience a different Baltimore than their white counterparts in many facets of everyday life.
Loch Raven is a black middle-class neighborhood with a median income of nearly $48,000. Seventy percent of these homes are headed by single parents, most of which are black women (Baltimore City Health Department, 2017). Twenty-two percent of residents have obtained a bachelor’s degree and eight percent have earned graduate degrees (Baltimore City Health Department, 2017). However, these black women are unable to access their class privilege. They endure battles with fitness deserts, poor time, vulnerable income and lack of visibility in advertisements. Many black women in the area identify as single and do not possess the economic mobility to live in communities of prosperity throughout the city. Loch Raven has high crime rates dilapidated housing and poor performing schools (Baltimore City Health Department, 2017). The nearest gym is in the Towson area, nearly four miles away. Canton and Sandtown-Winchester are two racially
homogeneous neighborhoods in Baltimore city that have stark differences in resources and enterprise due to income distribution. Canton is located in the south eastern region of the city and houses a population of 7,968 residents (Baltimore City Health Department, 2017). Historically, the area was a hub for waterfront industrial enterprise and the home of blue-collar European immigrants (Niedt, 2006). The green area in this space is abundant and businesses continue to claim property across the land, leading to a surge of employment opportunities in the area. It is 90 percent white and has a median income of $91,736 (Baltimore City Health Department, 2017). Residents benefit from high performing schools and access to the downtown area. Canton is known for its Waterfront park, soccer arena, high end restaurants and leisure activities. The 350-acre area houses over 20 gyms and is reported to be making room for more in the coming months (Simmons, 2018). Sandtown-Winchester is a neighborhood located in the western region of the city that houses 15,518 residents (Baltimore City Health Department, 2017). The area received much attention in recent years as it is the home of the late Freddy Gray, whom died from spinal cord injuries incurred while in police custody. The area is 96 percent black and has a median income of $24,374 (Baltimore City Health Department, 2017). The community battles unemployment, low student achievement, substance abuse and a lack of enterprise (Baltimore City Health Depart-men, 2017t). The area houses two gyms, both of which are boxing centers. Efforts to transform Sandtown-Winchester go as far back as 1994 when leaders partnered with res-idents to better understand the challenges they faced (Cohen, 2001). However, efforts were abandoned as new leadership took office (Cohen, 2001). Nearly half of the area’s residents live in poverty compared to two
percent of Canton dwellers (Baltimore City Health Department, 2017). These demographics mirror the make-up of nearly all black and white enclaves in the city.

This paper will investigate the ways in which racial residential segregation aids in the creation of four barriers that impede black women from obtaining gym memberships in Baltimore city. These themes have been identified as barriers to general fitness, however, no research discusses how they affect one’s pursuit of a gym membership. Interviews with black women will contextualize how these barriers manifest and identify other forces that may be at play. Highlighting these factors will alter the ways in which health leaders approach the heightened inactivity of black women in the city. New spaces or fitness interventions can be created that are informed and specific, rather than drawn from over generalized conclusions.
Chapter 3: Structural Barriers to Fitness amongst Black Women

In the literature discussing black women and fitness, four themes have consistently been identified as barriers that impede the population from engaging in the recommended amount of exercise. Spatial layout, time allocation, income and body image create hindrances black women must navigate to pursue fitness (Baruth et al., 2014; Bland & Sharma, 2017; Jones & Paxton., 2015; Joseph et al., 2015; Ray, 2014). These studies fail to discuss how these barriers block access to specific routes utilized to exercise (i.e. gyms, tracks). This research explores how these barriers impede or discourage black women’s pursuit of gym memberships. These barriers are not unique to black women, however, black women’s unique intersections at race, class and gender forces them to experience overlapping forms of oppression that are starkly differently than their white counterparts (Collins, 2002). Black women’s unique standpoint and experience with these barriers needs to be documented for Baltimore city official’s and fitness leaders to create a gym that caters to their circumstances. Literature discusses how the structure of urban cities discourages women from utilizing the land in the same ways as men, however no study discusses how the spatial layout affects one’s access to gyms. I investigate how the placement of gyms and communities affects black women’s pursuit of gym memberships. Lack of time is consistently cited as a barrier to fitness, however, no study discusses what fosters poor time allocation in Baltimore city and how it affects the pursuit of gym memberships. This discussion will focus on how the city prompts sparse leisure time in the lives of black women and how they navigate these circumstances. It has been well documented that income becomes a barrier to gym memberships as women lack the leisure income to purchase such. However, this paper probes how Baltimore city fosters black
women’s lack of disposable income and the way gyms foster exclusion through membership pricing. Black women’s ideal body image is often discussed as a self-constructed barrier to fitness. This research counters this argument by discussing how the invisibility of black women’s ideal body in gym advertisements actively discourages them from pursuing a membership. The results section will include narratives from black women in Baltimore city that were generated from questionnaire responses and interviews. The narrative serves as contextual evidence for the presence of the barriers, the ways they manifest and the sentiments of the black women population. Each section will conclude with recommendations and proposals for change that were given by the participants, as well as political and academic leaders in Baltimore city.

Spatial Layout

Feminist scholars have pioneered research that highlights the disparaging circumstances women face at the hands of the urban city. Cities have a built environment that is inherently exclusionary towards women as they have had little to do with the planning or construction of such (Gilbert, 1998; Markusen, 1980). Baltimore, like other cities, is structured to reflect men’s activities and thoughts of what constitutes a suitable settlement space (Gilbert, 1998; Markusen, 1980). Men facilitated the restrictive nature of urban cities by supporting initiatives and mandates that grant them control and power over the land. The city regulations, budgets and property proposals are filtered through white men’s perspectives (Gilbert, 1998; Markuen, 1980). White men control the flow of capital in the city and foster a lack of development in the black community (Gilbert, 1998; Markusen, 1980). Black women’s recommendations for land use and equitable access to amenities is ignored. Baltimore city’s history of uneven development created a spatial disparity that traps black women in communities that are fitness deserts. These deserts are
areas that are void of fitness facilities or resources. Their presence is the result of the city’s quest to establish separate, heavily resourced and prosperous white enclaves at the expense of black communities. The locations of these fitness deserts are consistent with the locations of historically redlined communities in the city, linking the disparity to the city’s lineage of uneven development. Black women who identify as middle income lose access to their class privilege as their communities, too, are void of fitness facilities. The spatial disparities that black women face lay foundation to issues with time allocation, income and body image as they are isolated from social and economic opportunities. Such will be discussed in subsequent sections of the research.

Baltimore city endured periods of spatial transformation that worked to render black communities isolated and resource depleted (Levine, 1987). Under the guise of public health, political leaders enacted and consistently updated racial ordinances that violently remapped black bodies across the city (Powers, 1982). Described as the most comprehensive Jim Crow measure on record, ordinance 610 legalized racial segregation (Power, 1982). The legislation prohibited blacks and whites from occupying the same blocks and forced blacks into the eastern and western districts, while whites occupied the northern and southeastern regions (Brown, 2017; Levine, 1987;). The seven-year life span of racial ordinances proved to be insurmountable as they gave way to a series of social and political policies and initiatives that worked to maintain racial segregation, long after it was ruled unjust 1917 (Powers, 1982). City leaders and residents coalesced and introduced racially restrictive covenants to cement blacks in communities of decay and whites in areas of prosperity (Powers, 1982). Because the Buchanan vs. Warley case that ruled racial zoning unconstitutional dealt only with legal statutes, private agreements
were formed to perpetuate segregation (Bernstein, 1998). These covenants were imposed in a deed upon the buyer through cooperative efforts between real estate boards and neighborhood associations (Pietila, 2010; Rothstein, 2015). Such became common in 1926 after the U.S Supreme Court decision, Corrigan vs. Buckley, which validated their use (Pietila, 2010; Rothstein, 2015). These covenants grew nationally acceptable in 1937 when ten communities were awarded a “shield of honor” for such restrictions (Understanding Fair Housing, 1973). When these covenants were ruled unjust by the Supreme Court in 1948, the city’s banking institutions utilized a source developed by the Federal Government’s New Deal agenda to uphold racial segregation (Pietila, 2010). The Home Owner’s Loan Corporation colored-coded and divided the neighborhoods of 239 cities in the United States, according to their perceive mortgaged loan insecurity (Pietila, 2010). White neighborhoods were labeled as good investments and colored green, while black neighborhoods were labeled as risky investments and colored red (Pietila, 2010). This redlining practice, as it is called, made blacks communities lose the financial support needed to reach prosperity (Pietila, 2010). Lenders refused to give funds or extend credit to blacks looking to purchase a home in a white community (Pietila, 2010). This process led to the formation of the first white community in the city, known as Roland Park. The neighborhood still remains racially homogeneous and amongst the highest earning areas in the city. Development planers avoided establishing commercial enterprise in black communities and public funds were never utilized to revitalize these areas (Pietila, 2010). Even though redlining was ruled unconstitutional through the Fair Housing Act of 1968, lenders still continue to practice such (Pietila, 2010). These institutions refuse to administer loans to individuals in specific zip codes or areas that house high poverty and crime
rates (Pietila, 2010). Real estate agents continue to steer clients to particular neighborhoods. These agents further reproduced racial segregation through a practice known as blockbusting. Blockbusting is the antithesis of gentrification where agents capitalized on racial fear to maximize profit (Orser, 2015; Pietila, 2010). These agents induced whites into believing that the value of their homes would depreciate if blacks moved into their neighborhoods (Orser, 2015; Pietila, 2010). White residents sold their homes to these agents at reduced prices and the agents re-sold these homes at higher rates (Orser, 2015; Pietila, 2010). This practice would continue until the agent acquired the entire block of homes and the white presence dwindled (Orser, 2015; Pietila, 2010). Whites coalesced in new segregated communities upon moving. Subsidies provided by the Federal Government further worked to maintain racial segregation in Baltimore city. Automobiles, once a luxury for the rich, gave white Americans greater mobility and factory positions (Ingrassia & White, 1995). By 1958, 67 million cars were registered the U.S (Ingrassia & White, 1995). The Federal government capitalized on white mobility by providing them with highways to travel to other communities. The Federal Aid Act enabled whites to flee to suburban areas and establish homogenous communities outside the city (Pietila, 2010). These communities were federally subsidized through the Federal Housing Act 1937 (Pietila, 2010). Whites were given mortgage assistance to dwell in their communities as blacks were confined to poor slums. Black communities were destroyed for the construction of such highways. Between 1973 and 1977 between nine-hundred and seventy-one row houses and sixty-two businesses came down in West Baltimore to make way for the construction of the East-West highway (Giguere, 2009; Pietila, 2010). The highways were built over black communities in attempts to hide the city’s poor conditions from
commuters. These historical processes fortified racial residential segregation and continue to influence the layout of the city today. The Housing Choice Program in contemporary Baltimore city works to reproduce racial residential segregation (Darrah & DeLuca, 2014; Galvez, 2010; Williams, 2004). Individuals are given the opportunity to choose the neighborhood they want to reside in, after two years of living in low income white neighborhood (Darrah & DeLuca, 2014; Galvez, 2010). However, developers fail to set aside housing for low income tenants and landlords are not yet prohibited from refusing to accept tenants with federal rent subsidies (Darrah & DeLuca, 2014). The various locations that participants can relocate to fall within the Black Butterfly. Blacks do not have the choice to integrate into the developed communities of the White L and are relegated to live in poverty throughout the duration of their time in the program.

The segregation of bodies in Baltimore city culminated into the segregation of the local, state and federal resources delineated for the area. Inhabitants of the “White L” enjoy resources, amenities and privileges that those in the “Black Butterfly” do not, as much attention has been paid to revitalizing these areas (Harvey, 1991; Levine, 1987;). The growth of these communities prompted uneven development throughout the city and destroyed black neighborhoods. Businesses followed the spatial pattern of in-vestment popularized through redlining and fail to pursue black communities (Harvey, 2001; Levine, 2000). Publicly financed development projects in Baltimore city all lie within the White L and further render black communities as resource depleted areas (Krumholz, 1991; Youngman, 2011). Led by TIF funding, these efforts force blacks to finance their own displacement and the influx of opportunities for whites and their communities. Sagamore Development Company, backed by Under Armour CEO Kevin Plank, will utilize a
$535 million TIF to pay for infrastructure improvements as part of the redevelopment of Port Covington (Meyes, 2016; Vyas, Rathbone-Webber, Terranova, Brown, Prevas, Athens & Croft, 2017). This 260-acre plot of abandoned industrial space is located in South Baltimore (Meyes, 2016; Vyas et al., 2017). Over the course of twenty-five years, Baltimore city will issue bonds to fund the infrastructure (Meyers, 2016; Vyas et al., 2017). Developers are building 1.5 million square feet of office space, 200 hotel rooms and 7500 residential units (Meyers, 2016; Vyas et al., 2017). The bonds would be repaid through an increase in property taxes (Meyers, 2016; Vyas et al., 2017). Under Armour also intends to build a 3.9 million square-foot global headquarters on 50 acres of Port Covington (Meyers, 2016; Vyas et al., 2017). TIF funds will not be used for such. Leaders offer that the development deal will lead to jobs and housing opportunities, however, there is no guarantee that these opportunities will be available to the black population, just as with Schaefer’s downtown endeavor (Vyas et al., 2017).

Gyms are spaces that are representative of the commodification of fitness (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1987). During the fitness boom of the 1970s individuals, communities, governments and businesses became increasingly aware of the benefits of exercising (McKenzie, 2013). Companies and corporations recognized that fitness could become a profit-generating commodity and established gyms as spaces to engage in exercise (McKenzie, 2013). Gyms in Baltimore city were introduced by Schaefer to amass revenue and further expand the city. The institutions and businesses brought in by Schaefer coalesced to promote the economic growth of the city (Harvey, 1991; Levine, 1987). These entities operated with the intent to identify and pursue a target consumer and maximize profit (Harvey, 1991; Levine, 1987). Consumerism in Baltimore city leads gyms to
cater to white spaces and faces to find success. The gyms in Baltimore city are extensions of the corporate sector and exist to advertise and sell a service (McKenzie, 2013). Gyms, too, follow the same spatial pattern as varying enterprises. Fitness enterprises continue to view black communities as risky investments and avoid establishing their presence in these areas. These communities are fitness deserts that lack boutique or commercial gyms due to the legacy of racial residential segregation. The locations of these fitness deserts are consistent with the location of redlined communities. Figure two is a map of Baltimore city that displays the black communities that were redlined in the 1930s. These communities are primarily clustered in the “Black Butterfly”. Figure two consists of two maps. The first of which displays gym distribution in the city and the second displays the location of redlined communities.

Figure 2. Gym distribution in Baltimore city & Redlined communities in Baltimore City
Source: Yelp; Garret Powers; Home Owners Loan Corporation

The yellow areas in the first map represent communities that house gyms, both boutique and commercial. It is apparent that facilities are clustered primarily in the White L. The second map features redlined communities shaded in red. Very few of these communities are among those that house gyms. These images confirm that fitness deserts are found in
the Black Butterfly and were catalyzed by racial residential segregation and its de-facto iterations. Middle income black women are unable to access their class privilege in Baltimore city. Blacks that earn higher income still endure battles when navigating gym memberships as they, too, occupy fitness deserts. Middle class neighborhoods normally house high performing schools, less crime, higher appreciating homes as well as parks, trails and fitness facilities (Ray, 2014). However, neighborhoods with these amenities are more likely to be predominantly white. Because of their proximity to poor communities, black middle-class neighborhoods are deemed unworthy of investment (Ray, 2014). These neighborhoods less safe, resource depleted and void of gyms.

The spatial layout of Baltimore city hinders black women from securing and utilizing a gym membership as the history of uneven development left black communities void of gyms in close proximity. Racial residential segregation and its de-facto iterations facilitated the flow of money, enterprise, employment and fitness amenities to white enclaves throughout the city, while impeding black communities from housing such. The scarcity is consistent among black communities that are of middle income, revealing that the lack of gyms may be an intentional endeavor on behalf of white leaders.

*Time Allocation*

The gendered effects of the man-made city and racial residential segregation cause black women to accrue sparse leisure time due to the second shift and extended commutes (Gilbert, 1998; Markusen, 1980). Because the city is a man-made endeavor, its institutions, processes and regulations reproduce patriarchal notions that encourage women to engage in household work (Markusen, 1980). Black women lose valuable time performing unpaid household labor and working multiple jobs (Gilbert, 1998). Because they are trapped in poor conditions and isolated from enterprise and fitness amenities,
black women endure extended commutes to their occupations and gyms (Gilbert, 1998). These circumstances both decrease black women’s leisure time and discourages the population from pursuing a gym membership.

Scholar Ann Markusen argues that women living in urban cities are spatially trapped in their communities as the built environment is a reflection of men’s attitudes and desires (Markusen, 1980). Because the city is a man-made, patriarchal endeavor, its governing institutions promote processes and utilize mechanisms that reinforce traditional gender roles (Markusen, 1980). The roles require women to perform duties that diminish their leisure time. City structures aid in the reproduction of the labor force as they discourage women from exploring the area and bind them to their homes as house-hold workers (Markusen, 1980). Women must work in the public sphere for income and perform unpaid labor in the private sphere for their families (Markusen, 1980). Because they labor in both spheres, women must be strategic in determining the location of their occupations and homes (Markusen, 1980). They often wrestle with the decision to either live in the suburbs and travel to the city for work or live in the city near their places of employment (Markusen, 1980). Historically, white women chose to reside in the suburbs and endure long commutes to their occupations (Markusen, 1980). These women often worked low-wage, part-time positions as a means to secure the necessary time to complete their duties at home (Markusen, 1980). Working in both spaces as well as enduring extended commutes leads them to lose time and energy (Markusen, 1980). Though Markusen’s theory is sound in its discussion of white women, it fails to consider a racial perspective.
Sixty-five percent of homes in Baltimore city are female-headed leaving these women to perform all second shift duties (U. S Census Bureau, 2017). Black women also work multiple occupations to remain stable. Borrowing from Markusen’s theory, Melissa Gilbert reconstructed a thesis around black women’s experiences with the urban city. She relays that black women deal with spatial entrapment, yet, establish survival strategies and networks in their rootedness (Gilbert, 1998). However, they experience a more arduous battle with time allocation than previously presented (Gilbert, 1998). Due to gentrification in Baltimore city, white women no longer lose leisure time due to commute to works (Gilbert, 1998). Consistent with Gilbert’s assertions, Baltimore city’s changing landscape and influx of white-collar positions attracts whites to the area (Gilbert, 1998). White men and women now live in the city closer to their places of employment (Gilbert, 1998). White women’s leisure time increases due to the decrease in their commute times (The Baltimore Neighborhood Indicator Alliance, 2016). A time-use survey conducted in 2017 discovered that white women in Baltimore city have an average commute time of 15 minutes or less (The Baltimore Neighborhood Indicator Alliance, 2016). The city has seen a surge in programs that work to assist white women in facilitating these faster commutes. The Live Near Your Work program offers employees the opportunity to live in communities close to their occupations (“Live,” n.d.). It is a home-buying incentive for individuals that is partially funded by employers and the city of Baltimore (“Live,” n.d.). Funds can be used toward an individual’s down payment or closing costs associated with the purchase of a home (“Live,” n.d.). Education and Health employers are those who primarily provide this option to employees (“Live,” n.d.). Not only are these programs primarily located in the “White L”, they are only open to high ranking employees within the
organization (“Live,” n.d.). The wavering support and poor transportation amenities cause black women to lose more leisure time than their white counterparts.

Melissa Gilbert asserts that black women travel further than their white counterparts for work and receive less compensation for such labor (Gilbert, 1998). Because they are trapped in economically isolated communities, black women work multiple jobs that are often far from their communities (Gilbert, 1998). These positions are often located within the city’s business district or outside the area in the county, resulting in lengthy commutes (Gilbert, 1998). The modes of transportation available in black communities are poor and further absorb the sparse leisure time that black women possess. Seventy-five percent of black women rely on the city’s transit system to travel throughout the area (U. S Census Bureau, 2017). However, the system is a product of racial residential segregation and fosters a transit apartheid that dates back twenty-six years (Brown, 2017; Bullard, Johnson & Torres, 2004, Rio, 2016). The Maryland Transit Administration created bus, Light Rail, Marc Train and subway routes that serve white communities in ways that black communities do not receive. Historically, the services were created to transport whites to leisure events and activities, as well as their occupations (Brown, 2017; Bullard et al., 2004; Rio, 2016). Efforts to remedy this issue were blocked in 2015 when Maryland governor Larry Hogan suspended plans to expand the Metrorail’s RedLine train to Baltimore city (Brown, 2017; Rio, 2016). The expansion would have assisted black women in shortening their commute time and venturing out-side the city to find employment and adequate housing. The funds were instead used to introduce additional highways to white communities (Brown, 2017; Rio, 2016). The Transit Equity Coalition took the issue to Federal government in 2017, however, found no success in overturning the
endeavor (Brown, 2017). Baltimore’s bus system underwent radical change in 2017 and continues to build upon the transit apartheid. The recent $135 million update to the city’s bus services, entitled BaltimoreLink, have done very little to address the segregation (Sweeney, 2018). Blacks must utilize a fare-based bus system that is notoriously unreliable. These buses run throughout the city and county on an hourly schedule, however, prove to be challenging for black women to navigate successfully. Residents have had grievances with the removal of service from specific areas, the poor location of new stops, the various changes that make commutes longer and the spike in fares (Krauss, 2017, Sweeney, 2018). Those in the “White L” have access to the free public transit bus known as the Charm City Circulator. The bus consists of two routes- the Purple Route and the Orange Route, both of which run through the city’s business districts and leisure areas (“Charm,” n.d.). The Purple route runs from Penn Station to Federal Hill, and the Orange route runs from Hollins Market to Harbor East (“Charm,” n.d.). These buses run ten minutes apart and only travel through two black communities that are adjacent to the University of Maryland, Baltimore and John Hopkins University (Brown, 2017; “Charm,” n.d.). Other modalities funded or approved by Baltimore city also work to fortify the transportation apartheid. The subway runs East to West only, while the Light Rail run only North and South (“Baltimore,” n.d.). Baltimore’s Bike Share program and Zipcar modalities are only present in two black communities near the aforementioned universities (Brown, 2017). These poor means of transportation result in black women enduring a mean travel time of 45 minutes (U. S Census Bureau, 2017). The bulk of black women’s leisure time is wasted in commuting throughout the city.
Black women in Baltimore city lack the leisure time to secure and utilize a gym membership as they are trapped in communities of poverty that are isolated from employment and gyms (Harvey, 1991; Harvey, 2001). These women often hold multiple occupations to battle poverty, must work the second shift at home, and endure pro-longed commutes to these occupations and gyms that results in a loss of time (Gilbert, 1998).

**Socioeconomic Status**

Black women lack the education to secure lucrative employment and develop the leisure income needed to purchase a gym membership. The city’s history of uneven development left black women in communities of decay that lack racially equitable academic resources (Harvey, 1991). These women lack the skills to succeed in the science and technology driven labor market and are forced to work low level positions or face unemployment. The sparse income, in conjunction with financial obligations, impede their ability to fund a membership.

Baltimore city public schools are the state’s oldest and only to have its own police force. Black schools in contemporary Baltimore city are underfunded, physically deteriorating and low performing (Orr, 1992; Stringfield & Yakimowski-Srebnic, 2005). Black schools have battled underfunding and mismanagement since the Schaefer administration (Orr, 1992; Stringfield & Yakimowski-Srebnick, 2005). The mayor absorbed nearly one-third of the city’s education fund in his efforts to bring commercial enterprise to the downtown area (Levine, 1987; Orr, 1992). His endeavor led to a 15 percent decline in municipal spending on education between 1974 and 1982 (Levine, 1987; Orr, 1992). Remaining funds were allocated for the development of schools in the “White L”, while those in the “Black Butterfly” were ignored. Blacks schools are facing a declining student population due to the forced relocation of blacks prompted by rental evictions, mortgage
foreclosures, public housing demolition and housing mobility pro-gr-ams (MacIver, 2010; Siedel, 2016; Stringfield & Yakimowski-Srebnick, 2005). The school systems’ funding is generated on a per pupil basis, resulting in a shrinking budg-et and discussions of perma-
nent closure (Brown, 2017; Siedel, 2016; Stringfield & Ya-kimowski-Srebnick, 2005).
Those who remain in these communities receive less academic support and preparation as the landscape continues to shift and blacks are pushed out. These schools also have poor infrastructure which hinders blacks from garnering a sound education. In 2017, Baltimore City Public Schools was under scrutiny when stu-dents were photographed wearing coats in class as the facilities heaters were broken (Hellgren, 2018). The frigid temperatures prove problematic to the academic atmosphere. The system has endured such troubling circumstances for years as revitalization efforts have been abandoned due to insufficient funds or corruption (Orr, 1992; Orr, 1998; Stringfield & Yakimowski-Srebnick, 2005).
Between 2004 and 2008, eleven city school maintenance and facilities employees, including the head of facilities management, were criminally convicted in a corruption scheme that had operated since 1991 (Stringfield & Yakimowski-Srebnick, 2005; Brown 2017). The renovations that were proposed never came to fruition (Stringfield & Yakimowski-Srebnick, 2005). In 2011, it was estimated that upgrading the entire systems’ facilities would cost an estimated $2.8 billion (Bowie, 2011). In 2017, the Baltimore Education Coalition pushed a campaign for adequate funding that urged law makers to reintroduce the Thornton Commission, thereby granting an additional $290 million annually to city schools (Liebmann 2017). The effort was designed to address the stagnant level of aid city schools received over the last nine years (Liebmann, 2017; Stringfield, 2007;). However, the law has yet to be reinstated. Baltimore city introduced the 21st century Program
in 2016 to renovate school buildings and foster a collaborative partnership between the residents and the local businesses (“21st,” n.d.). Only nine of twenty-eighth schools have been completed thus far (“21st,” n.d.). The discouraging academic atmosphere and lack of resources have decreased student performance. Student achievement remains low on national reading and math exams (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2018). In 2017, only thirteen percent of fourth and eighth graders were proficient in reading (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2018). Fourteen percent of fourth graders and eleven percent of eighth graders were proficient in math (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2018). These schools, also, lack black faculty who can speak to the circumstances of students and support them in achieving higher. Black women are left to navigate these troubling circumstances alone, resulting in the lack of preparation for the city’s labor market.

Racial residential segregation forced black women into a school system in which they were void of satisfactory resources, problematized, un-prioritized and ill-prepared. These women face these circumstances at every level of education. The ways in which school systems criminalize and problematize black boys is well documented, however, researchers fail to discuss how these forces affect black girls (Carter-Andrews, 2017; Crenshaw, 2015). Emerging research argues that black girls endure criminalization at higher rates than their black male counterparts (Carter-Andrews, 2017; Crenshaw, 2015). Black girls in the Baltimore City Public School System comprise nearly 80 per-cent of the female student population; however, they account for 95 percent of suspensions and 92 percent of expulsions (McClellan & Gall, 2018). These girls are more like-ly to be punished for “speaking out in school, defying authority and causing disturbances”
(McClellan & Gall, 2018). Ninety-five percent of girls that were suspended the 2016-17 academic year were black (McClellan & Gall, 2018). Black girls tend to be viewed as “less innocent and more adult like” than white girls causing teachers, school administrators and police to subsequently view these students as more culpable for their actions and deserving of harsh punishments (McClellan & Gall, 2018). The school system ignores their circumstances and fail to provide support to those dealing with urban PTSD or the remnants of historical trauma (Jain, Davey-Rothwell, Crossnohere, & Latlin, 2018; Mendelson, Darius Tandon, Brennan, Leaf & Longo, 2015).

Baltimore City Public Schools fails to encourage black women to pursue college degrees, leading them to be exploited by the for-profit institutions in their area (Cotton, 2017; Holland & DeLuca, 2016). Those who do pursue degrees endure economic hardship due to their academic endeavors. Megan Holland and Stefanie DeLuca interviewed black students about their post-secondary education choices and 58 percent of students offered that they attended for-profit schools (Holland & DeLuca, 2016). These students believed that these institutions would aid in them in swiftly transcending poverty (Holland & DeLuca, 2016). However, the certifications that they receive do not provide them with lucrative forms of employment as employers refuse to accept the certification (Cotton, 2017; Holland & DeLuca, 2016). For-profit institutions exploit black women’s vulnerability and lack of information by defrauding career placement statistics as well as offering certification and degrees that are 30 to 40 percent more expensive than credentials from non-profit institutions (Cotton, 2017; Holland & DeLuca, 2016). Those who fail to complete their program are left unskilled, in debt and with credits that do not easily transfer (Cotton, 2017; Holland & DeLuca, 2016). Sixty-two percent of students enrolled in
for-profit colleges in Maryland are black females (Center for Responsible Lending, 2016). Those who graduate are burdened with a debt that ranges between $29,947 and $34,891 (Center for Responsible Lending, 2016). Strayer, Lincoln College of Technology and Kaplan University are among the top for-profit institutions in Maryland. ITT Tech, DeVry Institute and Fortis College are among the institutions in the Baltimore region that were characterized as aggressively recruiting poor black women and urging them to apply for the maximum amount of student aid (Cotton, 2017; Holland & DeLuca, 2016). Black women who pursue degrees from accredited universities face similar circumstances. This population is left with debt that ranges from $21,605 to $23,638 dollars (Center for Responsible Lending, 2016). They, too, are urged to pursue degrees that do not yield lucrative employment in the city’s job market. Experiencing corrupt leadership, vulnerable resources and wavering support at nearly every education level render black women unable to secure a stable income and pursue a gym membership.

It is well documented that one’s education is highly correlated with one’s socio-economic status (DeLuca, Rhodes & Garboden, 2016; Mirowsky, 2003). In Baltimore city, black women battle for adequate education at the primary, secondary and post-secondary level, limiting their ability to obtain lucrative employment in the city (DeLuca et al., 2016). They often lack the necessary skills to secure employment in a market that seeks candidates educated in science and technology. Black women occupy low wage positions and battle against limited resources and poverty. These troubling circumstances became the financial barrier to those interested in obtaining a gym membership.

As Baltimore continues to evolve into a technology city, the labor market will continue to reflect an uneven development of high and low-wage positions (Roos &
This transformation dates back to Schaefer’s administration and the efforts to transform the city into a tourist attraction. As retail and service industries grew in great abundance, low wage positions began to monopolize the job market (Harvey, 1991; Levine, 1987). Some blacks were able to obtain such positions after facing unemployment and the closing of shipping factories (Levine, 1987). In 2017, the city saw a 36 percent increase in tech positions (U. S Census Bureau, 2017). The technology boom in Baltimore’s current climate works to erase middle income positions as many are re-placed with automation. Considered hub for tech start-ups, the city will soon only include high end technology or research positions, and low-end service occupations (Baltimore Workforce Funders Collaborative, 2017; Roos & Shroom, 2017). Fewer than one in six workers in the city’s leading field of science and technology are black (Li, 2018). Blacks are highly concentrated in the retail, transportation and warehousing, healthcare and social assistance and administrative support and waste management industries (Li, 2018).

Black women comprise 71 percent of the low wage female workforce in Baltimore city (Li, 2018). These stark labor circumstances foster a racial wealth gap where blacks earn a median income of $33,000, nearly half the $62,000 that whites earn (Li, 2018). Racial disparities exist even among those sectors that black workers dominate. In transportation and warehousing, white workers earn $64,740 while blacks earn $37,116 (Li, 2018). When discussing retail, whites earn $37,116 while blacks earn $25,680 (Li, 2018). Black women live in poverty earning a median income of $27,000 (Li, 2018). Sixteen percent of this population lives below the poverty line (U. S Census Bureau, 2017). Of the 16 percent of black women who hold bachelor’s degrees, seven percent live in poverty (U.S Census Bureau, 2017). Sixty-three percent of black workers are employed in these low
wage sectors rendering the process to fund a gym membership costly (U. S Census Bu-
reau, 2017).

Technological advances have transformed gyms into luxury commodities equipped with leisure amenities and equipment (Kelly, 2016, McKenzie, 2013). Such additions make a gym membership indexical of higher social standing and belonging (Kelly, 2016, McKenzie, 2013). These private institutions dictate the pricing and stipulations of membership pricing and create a sense of belonging and exclusion among those who can and cannot afford to purchase one. These institutions attempt to generate consistent revenue by selling memberships that fall out of the income range of black women. By appealing to white, wealthy consumers their institutions can grow in revenue and pop-
ularity, thus, cementing their space and reach in the city.

Gyms in Baltimore city have monthly membership pricing that black women are unable to fund. The sparse leisure income is utilized for sustenance rather than conspicuous consumption. One can find both traditional gyms and boutique facilities in Balti-
more city. Historically, traditional gyms are those that are privately owned and have a chain of locations throughout the area (Kelly, 2016, McKenzie, 2013). Boutique facilities are often leased spaces ran by independent instructors (Kelly, 2016, McKenzie, 2013). They are small, offer unique or specific services and charge a day or class fee for particip-
ation (Kelly, 2016, McKenzie, 2013). The average gym membership in Balti-more city is $74, while the average fee for a boutique facility falls between $19-$31 per session (Statistical Brain Research Institute, 2018). A substantial portion of facilities in Baltimore city offer a combination of both styles. Yoga Works in Fells Point, Balti-more, located in the downtown area offers individuals class for $20, class packages that range from $170
to $290 and a yearly membership of $159 (Kathy, personal communication, January 10, 2018). Merritt Clubs is a traditional gym with nine locations throughout the Baltimore region. It is one of three organizations under Merritt Companies and bills itself as one that is “designed to meet the needs of the neighborhood it serves” (merritt.com). The corporation owns the most land in the Metropolitan area and is in current plans to expand further. Merritt Clubs has membership pricing that differs by location and available amenities. Three of the nine Merritt locations are referred to as Express gyms, which are smaller in size and lack several leisure amenities. Those who pursue a membership at these locations pay a monthly rate of $49 and are restricted to utilizing this facility only (George, personal communication, February 3, 2018). The remaining six gyms are referred to as One Pass locations which give you access to all the Merritt fitness facilities (George, personal communication, February 3, 2018). These locations are large, have abundant leisure amenities. Three of these locations feature a center for children. Adults (between ages 18 to 25) and seniors, are required to pay $59 while all others pay $79 (George, personal communication, February 3, 2018). Spouses and children may be added to one’s membership for $59 (George, personal communication, February 3, 2018). No option exists for those of lower income status, however, dis-counts are given to first responders. Black women are unable to fund such memberships.

Racial residential segregation stifles black women’s ability to purchase a gym membership by exposing them to education and employment battles that work to absorb their leisure income. The mechanism trapped black women in under-resourced schools that criminalized their bodies and encouraged them to pursue certification programs rather than the academic degrees employers are more likely to hire (Deluca, 2016). Black
women subsequently lack the leisure funds to pursue a gym membership in the city, as these institutions seek to provide a luxurious social experience for an unattainable price.

**Body Image**

Racial residential segregation and capital accumulation have made whites both the ideal body and ideal consumer as forces have bolstered the populations communities, income and leisure time. Gyms seek this ideal consumer by featuring white thin bodies in their advertisements and presenting the facility as a white-only space. Black women are othered and encouraged to believe that their invisibility is an attack on their natural, curvy bodies, and a reflection of the facilities’ lack of support for those who desire such. This discourse discourages them from pursuing gym memberships in the city.

It has been well documented that black women prefer thick, curvy physiques over thin or slim frames (Capodilupo & Kim, 2014). They seek to store fat around the buttocks, breast and thighs and look to tone their bodies rather than lose weight (Capodilupo & Kim, 2014). Emerging research offers that even among black women who prefer thin frames, their desires for such did not stem from a fear of fat (Kelch-Oliver & Ancis, 2011). This is not an attempt generalize as body image goals vary de-pending on one’s socioeconomic status, environment and/or resources. A study con-ducted in the 1930s highlighted that middle-class black women embraced anti-fatness and promoted slender black bodies in attempts to assimilate into the dominant narratives of beauty proposed by whites (Kelch-Oliver & Ancis, 2011). Recent research on black women in Baltimore also found that exercise goals vary by one’s Body Mass Index (BMI) (Guthman, 2012). However, I take this position as years of research reveals that that black women have and de-sire shapely frames. It must be made clear that this celebration of curves is not void in the
world of fitness as independent entities create opportunities for women to achieve such body ideals. The black women’s body has been appropriated to sell clothing, fitness equipment, supplements and videos. However, the broader gym culture presents an opposing discourse that propagate anti-fatness as well as “other” and problematize the black female body (Hicken, Lee & Hing, 2018). Body Mass Index (BMI) is a measure that influences the discourse in gyms, however, the measurement yields racially disparate outcomes that depict black women as obese and unhealthy (Hicken et al., 2018). BMI relies on one’s height and weight to determine one’s appropriate percent of body fat (Hicken et al., 2018). Black women, however, have higher BMI measurement’s due to their thicker frames and are falsely viewed as unhealthy and overweight (Hicken et al., 2018). The measurement is problematic as it was created by and for European men (Hicken et al., 2018). The foundation upon which gyms stand is influenced by a standard of European beauty that problematizes the natural black female body.

The gym advertisements in Baltimore city include words, symbols, icons and images that are indexical of body shapes of white men and women (Plous & Neptune, 2006). These words and images, reinforce and establish societal power relations and hierarchies that exclude the realities of black womanhood (Plous & Neptune, 2006). Black women are disproportionately featured in these advertisements. Those that appear in the advertisements are fair-skin and thin. These advertisements can be found in the “White L”, where enterprise booms and residents frequent during their commutes throughout the city. The invisibility of black women encourages the population to believe that these gyms will discourage their participation. The facilities present themselves as spaces that
exist to produce thin, white bodies that are void of fat and curves. This veneration of white bodies actively discourages black women from pursuing a gym membership.

Racial residential segregation has worked to make white Baltimoreans the ideal body and consumer. The mechanism has given white communities of investment, access to educational resources, a pathway to lucrative employment and access to transportation amenities. Whites have inherited the commercial land, income and leisure time needed to make them the ideal gym member fitness enterprises desperately long for. Figure three is a banner designed by Merritt Clubs to promote their gym memberships. The advertisements feature white men and women exercising and are featured on the company’s website and billboards.

*Figure 3. Merritt Clubs’ Banner*
Source: https://grafik.agency/case-study/merritt-clubs/

A visual content analysis of Merritt Clubs media images was conducted to investigate whether or not black women were featured. The company’s website, personal training staff, Instagram and YouTube member testimonials were viewed to determine such. The analysis was conducted in March of 2018, therefore, the number of images including black females may have changed. The analysis revealed that black women and their ideal body type is scarcely represented in media images and the workforce. Merritt Clubs’ YouTube page features exercise tutorials as well as employee and member testimonials.
These videos date back to May 2010. Of the 28-member testimonials, nearly ten percent featured black women. Such is severely less than the city’s average of black women. One of these individuals fit the ideal body type. The company’s website is quite comprehensive as it provides membership information, floor plans, handbooks and nutritional advice. The 86 banners and images were the focus of the analysis as they feature both members and models. Six percent of these images featured black women, none of which embodied the ideal body type. At the time of the investigation, the company amassed 5000 followers on Instagram and posted 951 images. Twenty-five percent of the posts were analyzed as attention was given to the individuals featured, the context in which they were featured and their body frame. Of the 237 images viewed, three percent featured black women. Four of these women presented the ideal body type. These spaces employ a workforce that features very little women with the ideal body frame or black women in positions to offer culturally informed fitness support. Of the 48 personal training staff featured on the website, only one was a black female. This is not to imply that black female trainers do not exist in the company, however, they are invisible on their premier platform for advertisement. Without individuals who can identify with their corporeal desires and nutritional needs, black women view these gyms as spaces that were not designed for them.

Baltimore city’s media-based productions of the “consensual” understandings of black female fitness reveal that gyms proliferate the notion that they are spaces designed for whites. Whites are overrepresented in gym advertisements leaving black women to feel isolated and excluded. This attack on black women’s bodies has historical roots in
health discourses that situate them as deviant and problematic. Black women’s low in-
come, deteriorating communities and lack of leisure time makes them undesirable con-
sumers. Gyms in Baltimore city “other” black women through advertisements that only
feature white women with slim body frames. These women feel like outsiders within their
own communities as these images construct the way they view and experience gyms, as
well as the way they fit into the broader world of fitness.
Chapter 4: Methods

The methodology consisted of a two-year ethnographic investigation of Baltimore city led by participant observation, questionnaires and interviews. Being embedded in the community enabled me to focus on the institutions that control the city, the interactions that black women have with those institutions and the gyms that occupy the land. The research took place in two phases. The first of which consisted of visits to the gyms in the city. I visited 20 gyms that were a combination of traditional gyms and boutique facilities. During these visits I recorded field notes detailing the facilities layout, amenities, membership pricing, leadership, locations, accessible forms of transportation and advertising. This information assisted me in understanding the social context of Baltimore city and draft questions for phase two of the research.

The second phase of the research consisted of tools that enabled me to devise personal narratives from black women in the city. I developed a 40-item questionnaire to extract demographic information from the participants and their experiences with gyms. This information would be used to guide the interviews that I would engage a select view participants in. I visited transit stops throughout the city to recruit black women for the study as these individuals are more likely to live, work and travel throughout the city. I approached these women and briefly spoke about the research endeavors and provided them with an informed consent sheet, a written link to the survey and my contact information. The women were instructed to contact me if they agreed to participate. To be included in the study the women had to identify as black, be at least 18 years old and live in the city. The inclusion criteria were imperative as they would ensure that the population was personally affected by the barriers presented in the research. Participants were given
pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality. The information provided by the participants was used to give contextual evidence to the barriers. Of the ten women included in the study, four were chosen for an interview as their responses on the questionnaire were consistent with the arguments in the literature. This is not to suggest that the other responses were insignificant. However, they did not warrant a follow up discussion. Interviews were conducted at a location chosen by participant and lasted between 25 and 30 minutes. The presented assertions, opinions and experiences of the women were crafted into narratives that supplemented the barriers addressed in the research. This choice ensures that the voices of these women are heard rather than diluted with objective interpretations.
Chapter 5: Results

The results of this study consist of narratives provided through interviews with four black women in Baltimore city. Each woman explained how one of the barriers manifested in their daily life and worked to impede them from obtaining a gym membership. The four participants were chosen because they answered all survey questions and had responses that were more indicative of one barrier. All the participants experienced the pressures associated with each barrier, however, one barrier was made apparent.

Table 2 displays the demographic data of all participants in the study. One participant chose not to provide demographic data for the study, however, her responses were still taken into consideration for the analysis.

Table 2

Demographics Data of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Martial Status</th>
<th>Household Size</th>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Income (k)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khadidjah</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lakeland</td>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>$30-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Posidoc</td>
<td>$40-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rieterstown</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>$40-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shatera</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lakeland</td>
<td>Cashier</td>
<td>$30-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrice</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Greenmount</td>
<td>Cashier</td>
<td>&lt; $30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mt. Vernon</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lauraville</td>
<td>Adjunct faculty</td>
<td>&gt; $60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Greenmount</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>&lt; $30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eighty-six percent of respondents that divulged their residence lived in areas found within the Black butterfly. Sixty-seven percent of respondents who disclosed their marital status were single. Eighty-six percent of participants who noted their household size has at least three individuals occupying their residence. Three of these homes had
over five individuals present in the household. Seventy-eight percent of individuals who divulged their age were under 40. Fifty-seven percent of individuals were in their twenties. Ninety percent of participants were employed. Only one individual was retired.

Eighty-six percent of individuals that disclosed their employment and income information occupied middle to low-income positions. Two individuals identified as earning an annual income less than $30,000. Table 3 displays participants’ responses to questions that were deemed of high importance to the study. These questions focused on the barriers presented in the study. These responses were reviewed to determine the group of participants that would engage in a follow up interview.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>More Exercise</th>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>Gyms within 1 mile</th>
<th>More Gyms</th>
<th>Do you Have Time</th>
<th>Hours worked per week</th>
<th>Commute Time</th>
<th>Ads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khadijah</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No gym</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>&gt;40</td>
<td>1-20</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>&gt;40</td>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>&gt;40</td>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Body</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>&gt;40</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shatera</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Income</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrice</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pain</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>&gt;40</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>&gt;40</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the participants desired to engage in more exercise. Only forty-five percent of participants who fully answered the questions that focused on spatial barriers state that they do not have a gym within one mile of their home. However, all the participants
stated that they desire to have a gym in their neighborhood as it would increase their exercise activity. Fifty-percent of the participants who answered all questions regarding time allocation work more than 40 hours a week. Sixty-three percent of these individuals have a commute time that exceeds 30 minutes, resulting in seventy-five percent of these respondents relaying that they lack the time to utilize a gym. However, only three participants highlighted time allocation as their primary barrier. Two participants identified income as their primary barrier, while just one identified body image as their primary barrier. Khadijah, Shatera, Patrice and Tracy were chosen to complete a follow-up interview as they answered all questions.

Spatial Layout

The spatial layout of Baltimore city impedes black women from obtaining a gym membership as they are bound to fitness deserts where facilities are scarce. The locations of these fitness deserts are consistent with the location of redlined areas of the 1930s, proving that the lack of gyms is a result of years of uneven development and racial residential segregation. An interviewee, Khadijah, discussed how these forces work to hinder her ability to purchase a membership. Khadijah is a 29 years old single woman who lives in Lakeland, Baltimore located in the southern region of the city. Khadijah asserts “life in the city has its ups and downs just like anywhere else…but Balti-more…Baltimore is different” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). Khadijah was raised in both Prince George’s and Anne Arundel county. She says, “my life out in PG was short…I moved to Anne Arundel County when I was seven and stayed until I was 20” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). She asserts “from what I can re-member PG was cool…Anne Arundel County was big cause’ I spent most of my life there” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). When asked to describe her up-bringing Khadijah relayed,
we made ends meet…of course it wasn’t easy cause it was so many of us living in that house out PG and in Anne Arundel county for real…our house was the house you came to when you got kicked out. (personal communication, October 11, 2018)

When asked to discuss the significance of exercise in her youth Khadijah relays, “I was into sports…I played softball and was a cheerleader so working out was always something I liked as a kid” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). Khadijah shares a townhouse with her parents, sister, sisters’ boyfriend and her niece and nephew. “I’ve been in Baltimore for almost ten years now…the county and the city all feel the same depending on where you at…the struggle is real” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). When asked to elaborate Khadijah asserted, “black people where ever you go are trying to figure it out…money, food, health…it’s a problem for real” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). Khadijah has lived in her current residence for three years after relocating from Baltimore county. She received certification in medical coding and billing from Fortis College after leaving community college. She described the traditional academic process as “long winded and too drawn out” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). She relays, “Fortis was quick, and I learned some good stuff…after years of searching for the right fit, I finally found it (personal communication, October 11, 2018). Khadijah has two occupations that are located 11 miles away from her home in Anne Arundel county. The roundtrip commute totals 50 minutes by car. Monday through Friday she is employed in a position that requires the usage of her acquired skills in medical coding and billing, while her weekend occupation does not.
Khadijah relayed, “exercise is extremely important to me. I used to be an athlete. I couldn’t let it go even if I wanted to” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). She further asserts,

gyms are necessary because everyone needs a place to work out. Everybody doesn’t wanna go outside and do something…and if it rains or snows what am I gonna do. I wanna get a membership but there’s nothing here…we got one gym that’s close…its more on my way to work but that ain’t enough, I need options. I would have to drive to the closest one…what if I wanted to walk or jog? It’s too damn far. I wouldn’t do that anyway cause’ it ain’t safe, but what if I wanted to? I’m glad I got a car cause’ I don’t do the bus. And it’s the same in other parts of the city too…we stuck with nothing. (personal communication, October 11, 2018)

When asked about her issues with the city she asserts,

I’m never there anyway…so I guess I don’t think about it as much. It’s [the city] like get out. I can’t find a job or a gym so I’m like ghost. I get like two hours a day to do anything before I gotta go to sleep. (personal communication, October 11, 2018).

Khadijah’s words illustrate how the spatial layout of the city is a hindrance to gym memberships. She expresses an earnest desire to obtain a membership and details how the lack of gyms in her community is a hindrance. Khadijah also expressed feelings of displacement brought on by the city. Her belief that the city is commanding her to “get out” communicates the exclusion and lack of ownership Markusen relays that women innately feel and experiencing urban cities (personal communication, October 11, 2018). The lack of gyms is a micro-aggression that contributes to a later narrative of exclusion and displace-
ment that leads black women to feel like outsiders within their own environment. Khadijah feels that fitness deserts can be overturned through neighborhood reinvestment and reformation. She asserts, “

these owners need to stop looking at black communities as worthless for real…how we gon’ get a membership if there ain’t no membership to get…I’m close to the county and still barely see gyms, just imagine the neighborhoods in the real city…they can buy up that land and put a gym there. (personal communication, October 11, 2018).

Exploring a virtually untapped market works to the benefit of both the business and black women. By establishing themselves in the black communities throughout the city these leaders can provide an adequate fitness option, redirect the flow of money and attract more business into the areas. Khadijah further asserts, the city needs to renovate these community centers and add some gym equipment and classes…they in every other community so why not ours…they may see a change in the neighborhood. (personal communication, October 11, 2018).

Political and social agents can enlist the support of community members and to ensure that these facilities meet the needs of the immediate population. Leaders have begun to address the fitness deprivation by renovating a recreation center in the neighboring minority community. Cherry Hill is a low-income black community located nearly three miles from Lakeland. A blueprint has been developed to revitalize the Patapsco Recreation Center and Cherry Hill indoor pool (Lee, 2015). The space will be transformed into a 32,000 square foot fitness and wellness center designed to aid the population in meeting the accurate amount of exercise (Lee, 2015).
**Time Allocation**

Black women in Baltimore city lack the time to secure and utilize a gym membership as they are work multiple jobs and endure long commutes. This wasted time discourages black women from pursuing memberships. Interviewee, Tracy, discussed time allocation battles that were consistent with the literature. Tracy is a 32-year-old single woman who lives in Greenmount West, Baltimore located in the eastern region of the city. Tracy has resided in Baltimore city her entire life and relays, “living in the city ain’t easy…it ain’t never been easy” (personal communication, October 3, 2018). When asked to describe her upbringing she asserts, “we made the most of what we had…we struggled but we had fun” (personal communication, October 3, 2018). When asked to elaborate Tracey offered,

we moved to a couple spots in the city, but it wasn’t like they were any better for real…we just had to make it work…my father loss his job a couple times so things were bad for a little minute, but we eventually got it together. (personal communication, October 3, 2018).

When asked to discuss the significance of exercise in her youth Tracy relayed, “I was never one to always wanna workout or anything, but I did like running track a lot and playing sports. I had a mean shot at one time” (personal communication, October 3, 2018). Tracy now lives in a row-home and has occupied this residence for six years. She is also single and does not have children. Tracy received a certificate in visual communications from ITT Tech, however, is employed in two occupations outside of the field. When asked to explain the motivation behind attending the for-profit institution, she responded “college wasn’t on my radar” (personal communication, October 3, 2018). During our conversation, Tracy relayed her sentiments toward utilizing a gym. She asserts,
gyms are important, I definitely wanna go to a gym more and we definitely need more around here. I went to one out where my sister lives and it was cool. That was a couple months ago but I do think about going again. It’s just a lot to think about with my situation. (personal communication, October 3, 2018)

When asked to discuss the primary barrier that impedes her ability to secure a gym membership, Tracy asserts “time, time, time” (personal communication, October 3, 2018). When asked to elaborate Tracy relayed, “I just don’t have the time to go to a gym with everything I got going on” (personal communication, October 3, 2018). Tracy works over 65 hours a week. When asked to describe her typical day Tracy offered,

I work two jobs and then volunteer one Saturday out the month at a dental office. Hopefully it will lead to a job…and it’s like, even if I don’t have any kids or whatever, I just don’t have the time or energy to go to a gym…for three days I work a double shift, 8-hours overnight until 6 am, then I gotta get to my next job by 10 am for another 6-hour shift’. I be tired. I just go home in between and try to get some sleep, but that don’t work all the time. So…I might do something around the house or try to prepare for the next [job], but most of the time I be bored…wasting time doing nothing. (personal communication, October 3, 2018). When asked to explain what influences her choice to hold multiple jobs, Tracy asserted, “I need money to pay these bills…you can’t get any help in the city unless you got kids…and even if you do you still gotta have a couple jobs or a hustle. It’s hard out here” (personal communication, October 3, 2018).

Consistent with Markusen and Gilbert assertions, Tracy performs household work and endures long commutes that contribute to a loss of time. When asked to dis-cuss her
household responsibilities Tracy relays, “I still gotta keep my house in order and stuff…its annoying sometimes cause’ I be tired, but I still get it done” (personal communication, October 3, 2018). The Greenmount-West area that Tracy occupies is burdened with the aforementioned transit apartheid. The commute from her home to her occupations is 3.2 miles. The 13-minute car ride is 38 minutes on public transportation. Tracy relays,

the bus works but sometimes it’s too damn long [laughter]. I want to get a car but it’s too high…paying for the bus or a Uber is cheaper than insurance or gas. But I take the bus so much that anything over 30 minutes is too much…I can’t do it if it ain’t for work. (personal communication, October 3, 2018).

Tracy offers that her daily commute is nearly an hour and a half. She relays that Tues-day and Friday evenings after 2 are the only times she would be able to utilize a gym, however, her woes with transportation still hinder from taking advantage of such. Tracy states, “I don’t wanna go to the gym on a bus…a car is better. Carrying a change of clothes on the bus or being sweaty is not where it’s at (laughter)” (personal communication, October 3, 2018). Tracy feels that time allocation issues can be remedied with a solid understanding of black women’s circumstances and innovative practices on behalf of gym owners. She asserts,

    gyms need to do exactly what you doing, asking the people what they need and what they want…ask us about out schedules, what time we usually free and stuff like that…the they can set aside something for us like a class for working black women or something. (personal communication, October 3, 2018).
She urges gyms to create a transit service to assist member in traveling to and from the location. Tracy says, “they can have a little shuttle for members that go through the city or something, just to help us get back and forth quicker” (personal communication, October 3, 2018). She further communicates the desire for gyms to provide equitable access to amenities as well. Tracy relays, “they need to be open 24-hours and have a little spot for children to go to cause’ a lot of us got little kids” (personal communication, October 3, 2018). Tracy’s suggestions have come to fruition in various cities across the country and have been adopted by gyms in the city as well. Gym leaders have come to realize the need for childcare and have equipped their facilities with such. Three of the nine Merritt Club’s locations have kid zones designed for childcare and fitness (merrit-clubs.com).

There is no shuttle service offered by gyms in the area, however, entrepreneurs nationwide are creating mobile gyms where members exercise on a bus while they ride to their destinations (Sumitra, 2014).

*Socioeconomic Status*

Years of racial residential segregation produced a racial income disparity in Baltimore city that renders black women financially vulnerable and unable to purchase a gym membership. Uneven development at the hands of regimes associated with segregation accomplished so by stifling blacks’ women’s ability to obtain an adequate education and lucrative employment. Interviewee, Patrice, discussed her struggles with in-come that were consistent with the aforementioned assertions. Patrice is a 20-year-old single woman who also lives in Greenmount, Baltimore located in the eastern region of the city. Patrice asserts, “living in the city comes with a lot of b.s (laughter), especially for black people …no matter how long you live here” (personal communication, October 9, 2018).
When asked to elaborate she relayed, “it’s like you never get used to how things be out here…even though they never change…it’s always the same thing…struggle and sacrifice” (personal communication, October 9, 2018). Patrice went out to relay, “everybody has good times, but you be tryna hold on to them and the moment you get a grip it’s like something else comes up” (personal communication, October 9, 2018). Patrice has resided in Baltimore city her entire life. She offered, “we moved around a little but that ain’t out the norm…you know how it goes” (personal communication, October 9, 2018).

When asked to elaborate she relayed “life happens, and you just come up short sometimes, but you just keep moving” (personal communication, October 9, 2018). In a discussion of the significance of exercise during her youth Patrice relays, “I wasn’t really into exercising…the closest thing was walking or running every now and then…I wasn’t the girl who play sports (laughter), but I did dance” (personal communication, October 9, 2018). She lives in a row home and has occupied this residence for four years. Patrice enrolled in college courses following high school, however, left the program as “family issues” began to arise (personal communication, October 9, 2018). Patrice is employed in two occupations in Baltimore county that force her travel outside the city.

When asked to discuss her views of gyms Patrice asserts, “everybody needs to at least have the opportunity to go to a gym even if it’s just to get away…you don’t gotta go crazy you can do something slight” (personal communication, October 9, 2018). She elaborates, “some of them have dance studios and pools and stuff so you don’t gotta be a muscle head to go or like it for real” (personal communication, October 9, 2018). Patrice asserted, “of course I wanna go out to a gym more. I was always into it but couldn’t do it
like I wanted to” (personal communication, October 9, 2018). When asked to discuss the primary barrier that impedes her from securing a membership she relays,

I’m in the middle of nowhere with no money so [laughter] it’s kinda tough. I don’t have the money to pay for them memberships… they too high…they need to lower them for people like me [laughter]. She elaborates, “I can’t spend my last on a membership that I can’t use. What if something happens. I need it for a rainy day. (personal communication, October 9, 2018).

As Deluca and Lindsay suggest, black women often choose to pursue certificate programs in order to swiftly reach economic stability. Patrice states, “after graduating from Mervo [Mergenthaler Vocational Technical High school] I went to CCBC, but I had some family issues and had to drop out…it took too long anyway. I don’t know how people do it ” (personal communication, October 9, 2018). When asked to explain how her school contributed to her knowledge of higher education Patrice stated, “they didn’t really talk to us about college…I mean they did but it wasn’t really alot…or enough to stick for real…we didn’t have that many people come in and talk about it” (personal communication, October 9, 2018). When asked to describe her path after high school Patrice relayed, I went to ITT Tech for two years and got a certificate in visual communications” (personal communication, October 9, 2018). The certificate, though well-earned could not yield lucrative employment in the job market and brought on financial debt. Patrice offered, “I couldn’t really find a good job with it…and I’m not the only one who couldn't. So, I found something that I can do to get some money and keep me out of trouble. I wish I did something with it…long story…and yes indeed I have debt” (personal communica-
tion, October 9, 2018). Patrice yields less than $30,000 a year through her current positions. She offers that she is left with less than ten percent of her monthly income after all expenses are met, totaling between $70 and $80. Patrice feels that her inability to purchase a membership can be remedied with through changes in the city’s employment and fitness market. She asserts,

these gyms need to have a low-income option for people like me…everybody don’t got 60 or 70 dollars to spend…Planet Fitness is cheap but it ain’t even that many of them in the area…or even some type of discount or something so we can use it for a couple days or something…or some type of voucher for a gym. (personal communication, October 9, 2018).

Baltimore city officials would benefit from partnering with social services and usher in a new wave of gyms that cater to low income individuals by offering modified memberships. The change would allow black women of all walks of life to have fitness option that they can utilize. She further asserts, “these jobs could pay us more money to cause’ we barely making ends meets with what they give us…it’s like you working yo ass off for nothing” (personal communication, October 9, 2018). To begin addressing the racial wealth disparity, Baltimore city needs to provide black schools with racially equitable funding and resources. Leaders need to invest in school counseling services as well as incorporate a trauma-informed education and restorative justice practices (Lumpkin & Bowie, 2018). Implicit bias training needs to be made available for teachers as well as learning materials that are current and include the voices of women of color (Lumpkin & Bowie, 2018). The system needs to offer more comprehensive college preparation courses and resources as the greatest injustice is the lack of support and guidance for
those interested in pursuing higher education. These changes may disrupt the narrative that encourages low self-efficacy and interrupt the false reality that these options are a faster route to success. Equitable pay would also assist in alleviating the pressures black women feel about having vulnerable income.

Body Image

The media-based images associated with gyms presents a female body-type that is neither ideal, aspirational or natural to black women. These images discourage black women from pursuing gym memberships as they feel as if these facilities will not welcome them, understand them or assist them in reaching their fitness goals. Interviewee, Shatera, discussed her experiences with gym advertisements that were consistent with the aforementioned assertions. Shatera is a 26-year-old single mother of two, who lives in Lakeland Baltimore, located in the southern region of the city. Shatera relays, “living in the city has been alright…it could be better but I won’t complain…as long as my kids are safe and I got a job I’m happy” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). Shatera resided in Prince George’s and Anne Arundel County before taking residence in the Baltimore region. She says, “living in PG is a blur because I was so young, but I still claim it cause’ I’ve spent a lot of time there with my cousins…Anne Arundel county raised me through” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). When asked to de-scribe her upbringing Shatera relayed, “it was cool…we didn’t have everything that we wanted to and my brothers and sisters got on my nerves (laughter) but we had fun…we had what we needed and that was enough” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). When asked to discuss the significance of exercise in her youth, Shatera offered “I was never one to work out or play sports…I never did any of it except for maybe walking around my neighborhood…sports weren’t my thing, but I think about it differently now” (personal
communication, October 11, 2018). Shatrera now shares a townhouse with her parents, sister, boyfriend, and two children. She’s lived at this residence for three years after relocating from Baltimore county. She relayed that she plans to move with her boyfriend and children within the next year. Shatera enrolled in college classes following high school graduation, however, reconsidered as the road to the degree “took too long” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). Shatera is employed 17 miles away from her home in Anne Arundel County and relies on public transportation to reach her destinations. The 26-minute drive is an hour and a half commute by bus and train.

When asked to discuss the primary barrier that impedes her ability to secure a membership Shatera asserted, “I don’t think these gyms in the city are gonna give me the body that I want for real (laughter)...it’s all about being super buff or skinny...no thanks” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). When asked to describe her sentiments towards gyms Shatera asserted, “gyms become more important for exercise as you age...you can’t really do it the old way anymore...we need them” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). She relays, “I need to go to a gym...they have every-thing I need when it comes to equipment...they need more around here” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). She asserts, “yes, I see ads all the time on my way to work and it aint nothing but white people. You might see one or two black people but it aint often” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). When asked if advertisements have an impact on her gym choice Shatera offered, “ads definitely change my mind about going to the gyms in the city... I be like what is this...it’s all white people. If you’re not showing my complexion why would I go to your gym” (personal communication, October 11,
2018)? When asked to reflect on the body types presented in advertisements Shatera asserted,

getting my body together is way more important to me now cause’ I just had a baby…I need to go to a gym that has people like me who understand what I want to look like…. I don’t wanna have to explain that. I don’t wanna look like them women in them billboards…no disrespect. (personal communication, October 11, 2018)

When asked to comment on a gym employees’ ability to assist her in achieving her body goals, she relayed,

white women [trainers] might understand the body I want cause they want it too, but I think a black woman would give me better advice and help…especially after pregnancy cause’ my body is different…. definitely not those women on them billboards all in the city, it’s ridiculous. My cousin is black, and he works at Merritt, so I know it’s more black people there. (personal communication, October 11, 2018).

When asked to describe an advertisement that would encourage her to pursue a membership, Shatera offered, “they need to get more black women in the advertisements to make me wanna go there” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). Going off they ads, no gym in the city will be able to help me get the body I want” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). Shatera feels that disrupting the normalcy associated with gym advertisements and employment can remedy the body image issues that lead to the lack of memberships secured by black women. She asserts, “the first thing they can do is out us in the ads (laughter) then hire us…we can do the same thing everybody else can” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). She further explains, “we might actually feel
like we can get what we need instead of what somebody else wants for us…and then they can make some classes with our type of dance moves or music and stuff…or work with some of the black schools or groups in the city” (personal communication, October 11, 2018). As Shatera asserts, interrupting the discourse of black female invisibility must be a priority of fitness entities. Gyms need to include racially inclusive advertisements, programs and initiatives, as well as employ a racially diverse workforce to reach this untapped sector of the market. This will encourage black female participation and establish spaces that consider their cultural background and expectations.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

This investigation divulged that the barriers black women face to secure and utilize gym memberships is influenced by racial residential segregation. The mechanism has worked to maintain the unjust hierarchies and systematic practices that produce the inequality. The research sought to explain how the city’s spatial layout, and black women’s time allocation, income and body image hinder them from securing and utilizing gym memberships. The first question addressed probed how the spatial layout of Baltimore city hinders black women from obtaining a gym membership. It was found that black women live in fitness deserts due to the remnants of racial residential segregation. The second question investigated the realities that led to the loss of leisure time on behalf of black women. It was discovered that black women’s labor in the public and private sphere contributes to wasted time. The third question probed the forces that birthed the income disparities that stifle black women’s ability to purchase a gym membership. Racial residential segregation was discovered to be a determinant of poor education and employment outcomes, thus, limiting black women’s available leisure income. The final question addressed the poor representation of black females’ bodies in gym advertisements in the city, and the ways it may discourage the population from pursuing a membership. It was revealed that these images present gyms as white only spaces that will problematize the natural, curvy black female body. Being immersed in the field and conducting interviews aided me in capturing the voices of black females and their struggles with such. Black women are actively discouraged by institutions from pursuing health interventions in Baltimore city. This form of state deprivation works to systematically punish black women of the city as they reject traditional gender roles and challenge white masculinity (Collins, 2000; Gunthman, 2012). These women, in large
numbers, battle patriarchal systems by raising children alone, engaging in self-definition, developing individual beauty standards and working alongside men (Collins, 2000; Gunthman, 2012). This is consistent with the control, coercion and exploitation black women’s bodies have historically endured during slavery, reconstruction and be-yond. these attacks have been done to produce normative citizenry and encourage docility.

The research proved that previous theories discussing black women and fitness hold true. As Ray suggest, this population does lack adequate exercise, however, they express a desire to engage in fitness. All the participants stated in the survey that exercise was important to them and that they desired to spend more time in a gym. The participants also relayed that they would visit a facility at least one to two times a week. Exercise is important to this population as these individuals consistently pursued such. David Harvey’s theory of capital accumulation informed the arguments presented in the research as this process led to uneven development and the city’s spatial layout. These forces birthed racial residential segregation, which laid foundation to the creation of fitness deserts, as well as black women’s wasted time, unstable come and invisibility in gym advertisements. Markusen’s theory on the gendered effects of the city is foundational to this study as black women had no stake in the creation of the city and endure wasted time and the second shift due to such (Markusen, 1980). However, Markusen lacks a racial discussion of race and led many to believe that white women navigate the same circumstances as black women. However, due to gentrification and racial residential segregation, white women live closer to their occupations and accrue more leisure time. These women have a commute time of 15 minutes or less, which is significantly
shorter than their black counterparts. Black women travel further to occupations and receive less compensation than whites (Gilbert, 1999). As Gilbert suggests, these women are rooted in their conditions, however, black women’s rootedness is not a resource when discussing fitness. These women receive no assistance from their established net-works to secure and utilize a gym membership.

The limitations of this study involve the participants. Ten individuals participated in the survey, however, only four individuals completed it. This made the pool of candidates for follow-up interviews rather small. Future studies need to interview more women and include more narratives that discuss their experiences with gyms. Each participant experienced battles with each barrier, therefore, future studies need to address the overlap to determine how each barrier effects each other and is contingent upon the other. Future studies can also explore the role sexuality may play in one’s choice in a gym or one’s perceived barriers. The study is strong in that it brings attention to the inequalities that effect black women on a smaller scale. It overturns the modern notion that individuals do not need gyms by illuminating the harsh realities black women’s face in the city. The chief strength is the inclusion of black women’s voices. No longer is the population silenced or ignored. They can be heard demanding equality and fighting injustice. They own their experiences and are not subject to having an individual speak on their behalf. Future studies need to take such positions and explore black women’s experiences with other health related institutions.

With these findings, policy leaders can, again, be reminded that health disparities in Baltimore city begin with racial residential segregation. These leaders should begin to desegregate access to resource and opportunity through focusing on radical neighborhood
transformations. City policies can begin to allocate resources, such as TIFs and transportation equitably across the black communities (Brown, 2017). A social equity TIF needs to be pursued in order to alleviate the issues with lead paint poisoning and pursue community development and bring enterprise to the area. Budgeting needs to be racially equitable. Families should not be displaced as the community beings to bolster. The Community Reinvestment Act of 1977 needs to be reinforced to stop banks from redlining and sub-priming in black neighborhoods (Brown, 2017). Power need to be given back to the community. Residents should elect a neighborhood council of 15 people to decide how the money should be administered. The group will implement projects and initiatives for the community. Council seats should be reserved for teenagers, youth, elders, LGBTQ and returning citizens. Urban planners need to adopt gender mainstreaming policies and collect data to determine how black women desire to utilize space. These suggestions should be utilized to provide this population a viable fitness option.

This examination of black women’s experiences with gyms in Baltimore city works to overturn narratives that label this population as lazy, unmotivated and unconcerned. Through narratives that divulge the complexities of black life the research under-mines the consistent attempts of researches to use biological explanations to under-stand social inequality. By including black women in these spaces, one is including black women in the broader society where notions of health, body and pathology can be challenged.
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