

Leisure Spaces as Potential Sites for Interracial Interaction: Community Gardens in Urban Areas

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Finding ways to alleviate racial tension is an important societal issue. A well-established strategy is to increase positive contact between members of different racial groups, which is hypothesized to lead to improved racial attitudes if the contact takes place under certain conditions. Bridging racial divides, however, has historically been a difficult process. Leisure settings can be ideal environments for interracial interaction to occur due to qualities of free choice and self-determination. This study focuses on a specific type of leisure environment, community gardens located in urban settings. More specifically, the purpose of the study was to examine whether urban community gardens are perceived as spaces in which people of different races can successfully integrate. The study also sought to examine race and its relationship to perceptions, motivations, and benefits of community gardening. The study focused on African American and White gardeners in St. Louis.

KEYWORDS: *Leisure settings, community gardens, race, interracial interaction.*

Introduction

Race relations between Black and White Americans continue to be a serious issue in today's society and some believe after decades of struggle, the racial climate between these two groups has not significantly improved (Kohatsu, Dulay, Lam, Concepcion, Perez, Lopez, & Euler, 2000). Recent events such as racially related deaths, police brutality, and anti-affirmative action proposals have augmented an increasingly visible chasm between the two groups (Kohatsu et al., 2000). Despite these tensions, many White Americans continue to under-estimate the existence of racial disparities (Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002) and endorse the idea that America is a country of equal opportunity for all racial groups (Robinson & Ginter, 1999; Sears, 1998). For example, between 40% and 60% of Whites responding to a recent survey (depending on the question asked) viewed the average

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Black American in the United States as faring about as well, and often better, than the average White American (Morin, 2001). Conversely, Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, and Hodson (2002) reported in a recent public poll (Gallup, 2001) that nearly half of African Americans (47%) indicated they were treated unfairly in their own community during the previous month. Further, Sigelman and Welch (1993) found in their examination of interracial contact and levels of hostility that 26% of African Americans, compared to only 5% of Whites, estimated most White Americans share the same racial attitudes as the Ku Klux Klan. More generally, Whites see racism as the providence of "only a tiny portion of the public," whereas African Americans perceive it as "rampant." "Simply stated, Blacks are much more likely than Whites to perceive black-white relations as problematic." (Sigelman & Welch, 1993, p. 792).

Given the magnitudes and persistence of these different views, it is not surprising that current race relations between Black and Whites Americans in the United States could be characterized by racial distance and racial distrust. Given their past treatment, many Black Americans have a deep distrust for the police, the legal system, and "about a third are overtly distrustful of Whites in general" (Dovidio et al., 2002, p. 89). Similarly, Sigelman, Bledsoe, Welch, and Combs (1996) described the racial climate between Blacks and Whites as "hostile and unequal" (p. 1306). Current prejudices shape the perceptions of White and Black Americans in ways that hinder communication and trust, which is critical to developing long-term positive interracial relationships (Dovidio et al., 2002). Further, the different perspectives and experiences of White and Black Americans that can occur on a daily basis can have cumulative effects over time, and contribute to the climate of miscommunication, misperceptions, and distrust (Dovidio et al., 2002; Feagin & Sikes, 1994).

Given these implications, finding ways to improve race relations is an important societal issue. One approach often suggested in the literature is to increase positive contact between members of different racial groups, a strategy hypothesized to lead to improved attitudes and behaviors. Contact theory posits that contact, especially close and sustained contact, with members of different racial groups promotes positive, unprejudiced attitudes (Allport, 1954; Williams, 1964). Proponents of contact theory argue interracial contact provides direct information regarding the values, life-styles, and behaviors of other racial groups. In essence, the theory argues if you bring people together, their contact with one another will demonstrate their negative attitudes are unjustified, which will lead to positive attitudinal and behavioral change. The theory has been supported in the literature (Aberbach & Walker, 1973; Robinson, 1980; Sigelman et al., 1996; Sigelman & Welch, 1993), particularly when people interact under conditions of relative equality (Jackman & Crane, 1986). The contact theory operates under the assumption that attitudes and behaviors are causally connected in that if attitudes are changed, behavioral change will follow, a linkage that has been ques-

tioned in the literature (Clark, 1992; Jackman & Crane, 1986). Nevertheless, both attitudes and behaviors are instrumental in race relations, and thus how they form and change must be better understood.

Bridging racial divides, however, has historically been a difficult process and hence any effort to encourage positive interracial interaction is generally viewed as a favorable initiative. Leisure settings can be ideal environments for interracial interaction to occur due to qualities of free choice and self-determination, which are important because they give individuals the opportunity to freely choose their companions without the restrictions that often exist in work and other formal settings. Thus, interracial interactions that occur in leisure settings have the potential to be more genuine and sincere as compared to the more obligatory interactions that take place in formal settings. However conversely, because no laws have been enacted to ensure racial integration of leisure spaces (Philipp, 2000), they are often racially demarcated (Floyd & Shinew, 1999; Gobster, 2002; Johnson, Bowker, English, & Worthen, 1998; Lee, 1972). For example, Lee (1972) theorized that people often choose settings and activities that are part of a shared scheme of order which exists between people of similar racial identities, allowing certain norms to be taken for granted and resulting in distinct patterns of participation and/or separate leisure settings. This proposition is consistent with Gobster's (2002) finding regarding interracial contact in a Chicago park. He concluded that very little interaction took place between racial groups and a few users reported conflicts occurred when park users tempted to cross-racial boundaries.

This study focuses on a specific type of leisure environment, community gardens located in urban settings. More specifically, the purpose of this study was to examine whether urban community gardens are perceived as spaces in which people of different races can successfully integrate. The study also sought to examine race and its relationship to perceptions, motivations, and benefits of community gardening. The study focused on African Americans and White gardeners in St. Louis and was guided by contact theory (Allport, 1954; Williams, 1964).

Community Gardens

Participation in outdoor gardening has increased in recent years, and projections indicate this trend will likely continue due to the aging population, and the easy access to and low cost of the activity (Kelly & Warnick, 1999). Similarly, community gardening has become increasingly popular in urban areas. Community gardens are often grassroots initiatives aimed at revitalizing low-to-moderate income neighborhoods in urban settings (Landman, 1993; Linn, 1999; Pottharst, 1995). By converting urban spaces into gardens, neighborhood liabilities are transformed into tangible (e.g., fresh produce, sitting gardens for recreation) and intangible (e.g., community cooperation, citizen empowerment) neighborhood assets. Community gardens are often intended to improve the appearance of neighborhoods, reflect the

pride of the participants, and become community focal points and catalysts for neighborhood improvement. Moreover, they serve as a setting for many leisure-related activities.

There are numerous benefits associated with community gardening. As its name suggests, a community garden is meant to foster a sense of community among the residents of the neighborhood in which it is located. In this regard, the garden intermixes residents into a denser network of relations than urban roles ordinarily allow (Glover, 2003). Research indicates that urban life offers special challenges to the process of community building because, although residents have contact with a variety of people during the course of their urban experiences, they generally choose to associate with a small group of people (Lyon, 1999). Conversely, community gardens act as "neighborhood commons" (Linn, 1999) that build social capital by encouraging neighbors to work together and socialize (Glover, in press). While community gardening provides an opportunity for residents to "bond" with others of their own group, it is purported to also serve as a "bridge" among diverse groups (Langhout, et al., 1999; Swezey, 1996).

Because community gardening often occurs in diverse neighborhoods, the "bridging" function of the garden has the potential to be particularly beneficial. By working towards the construction and maintenance of a community garden, residents who belong to different racial, ethnic, and class-based groups address collective concerns, such as crime and urban decline, together (Glover, in press; Linn, 1999). Under this premise, the garden is an inclusive grassroots endeavor that depends upon the collaborative efforts of diverse residents to succeed (Glover, 2003). Presumably, the garden fosters greater social trust among diverse groups, forms norms of reciprocity, and strengthens social networks within the neighborhood.

Residents have a variety of motivations for becoming involved in community gardens. Some residents are primarily interested in growing food and consider the garden an economic resource for their families. For many, the food is an important benefit, but their primary motive may be to have a safe environment for outdoor activities. Others may be motivated by a love of gardening, and still others may be motivated primarily by a sense of wanting to improve the neighborhood by bringing some sense of nature into the area (Schmelzkopf, 1996). Oftentimes, residents' motives may be mixed, or even misunderstood among neighbors. Anderson (1990), for instance, described the skepticism demonstrated by African Americans with respect to the motives of their White counterparts who were attempting to "gentrify" their neighborhood. Perhaps not surprisingly, community gardening has been linked to the gentrification of urban neighborhoods (Linn, 1999). Thus, it is conceivable, therefore, that some residents, even though they might participate as gardeners, perceive the outcomes of community gardening differently, maybe even more negatively, than others and that such differences might be a reflection of racial tension. Similarly, Waliczek, Mattson, and Zajicek (1996) conducted a nationwide survey of community gardeners that questioned individuals on the importance of community gardens related

to quality of life perceptions. The results indicated several racial differences regarding the benefits and motivations associated with community gardening.

Although the popular (Black, 1998; Kellum, 1997; Swezey, 1996) and academic (Langhout, et al., 1999; Peters, et al., 1999; Schmelzkopf, 1995) presses proclaim community gardens are effective sources for bringing together racially diverse groups, little empirical work has been conducted to test this assumption. In essence, it has been documented that community gardens offer places where people can gather, network, and identify as residents of a neighborhood (Linn, 1999; Moncrief & Langsenkamp, 1976; Schrieber, 1997), but the interracial bridging that occurs in such settings remains understudied. Given that racial segregation continues to be a problem in society, the potential for interracial bonding in a neighborhood setting is noteworthy and warrants attention.

Residential Patterns and Interracial Interaction

Despite legislative attempts, residential racial concentration has declined very little in the United States. In many metropolitan areas, including St. Louis, at least 80% of African-Americans would have to relocate to achieve a desegregated residential pattern (Massey & Denton, 1993, p. 64). Moreover, Massey and Denton reported that the majority of African Americans do not want to live in "all-Black" neighborhoods; most prefer roughly "half-Black" neighborhoods (p. 89). Similarly, when Sigelman et al., (1996) asked in a 1992 survey whether people would rather live in a neighborhood that is "all black, mostly black, half black and half white, mostly white, or all white," 44% of White Americans answered "mostly white" and 30% said "all white"; whereas 81% of Black Americans answered "half black and half white." Thus, the high concentrations of many Black neighborhoods cannot be explained by the preferences of African Americans. Finally, Sigelman's et al. (1996) found that the frequency of close personal contact (i.e., having neighbors in one's home) between Black and White American neighbors has undergone little change. Commenting on this trend, they noted interracial contact was "Rare in the late 1960s, it remains rare today" (p. 1313).

Residential racial segregation makes bridging between racial groups difficult. In a description of the many "wrongs" of residential segregation, Young (2000) argued "the social and spatial differentiation segregation produces seriously impedes political communication among segregated groups, thus making it difficult to address the wrongs of segregation through democratic political action" (p. 205). She argued that segregation exacerbates prejudicial attitudes that group members may have towards others, making it difficult to engage in productive debate and discussion. Segregation causes groups to have different everyday experiences that may be culturally distinct, and because segregation impedes sensitivity and awareness of these cultural differences, the groups are likely to misunderstand and misrepresent one another. For these reasons, any effort to integrate a neighborhood or bridge its residents through a common leisure activity is presumably beneficial.

Even in fairly segregated neighborhoods, there are some physical sites, such as community gardens, where interracial interaction could occur. As suggested in the literature, physical propinquity is a precursor to positive interracial social interaction. Simply stated, primary relationships, such as friendships, are more likely to form among individuals who have contact with one another (Berscheid & Walster, 1969; Festinger, Schacheter, & Back, 1950; Sigelman et al., 1996), although obviously physical contact does not automatically lead to positive relationships. Nevertheless, racially integrated community gardens at least provide the opportunity for interracial friendships to develop. Accordingly, as neighbors become integrated by race, we would expect some convergence in values, norms, and lifestyles (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). Understanding and facilitating positive interracial contact is extremely important if we hope to improve race relations.

Contact Theory

Contact theory (Allport, 1954; Williams, 1964) is one of the most prominent theories in the prejudice literature (Jackman & Crane, 1986). It asserts the cleavage between the social lives of White and Black Americans promotes Whites' misconceptions and ignorance about Blacks. This ignorance feeds "erroneous, oversimplified, negative beliefs about blacks, which in turn engender feelings of hostility and discriminatory social and political predispositions towards blacks" (Jackman & Crane, 1996, p. 460). Advocates of the theory believe when information is gained through direct and long-term contact, the information is apt to be relatively accurate and largely favorable in content. This positive first-hand information may then be generalized into a positive perception of the group as a whole. Moreover, interracial contact, especially when it occurs early in life, enhances the likelihood of close cross-race friendships as adults (Ellison & Powers, 1994).

Although several decades of empirical research have produced mixed findings, there is ample evidence that interracial contact can have beneficial effects. The research in this area, however, has received some criticism, notably that there is a dearth of "real-world" studies about the attitudinal impact of interracial contact. Many of the empirical studies have been conducted within carefully orchestrated settings, including racially integrated housing projects, schools, hospitals, military institutions, and laboratory experiments (Ellison & Powers, 1994), rather than in typical neighborhoods, churches, and workplaces. Thus, some critics have asserted that interracial contact may promote positive racial attitudes only under ideal conditions. Based on previous empirical research, Jackman and Crane (1986) summarized the four conditions under which contact should occur:

First, the contact should not take place within a competitive context. Second, the contact must be sustained rather than episodic. Third, the contact must be personal, informal, and one-to-one. Fourth, the contact should have the approval of any relevant authorities. Finally, the setting in which the contact occurs must confer equal status of both parties rather than duplicate the racial status differential. (p. 461)

Likewise, Cook (1985) concluded that intergroup contact, under conditions similar to those specified by Jackman and Crane, could induce friendly interracial behavior and promote cross-racial respect and liking. Wilner, Walkley, and Cook (1955) observed in their seminal study of racial integration in low-income public housing projects "the more intimate the contact, the more favorable the attitude-without exception" (p. 99). However, most of the time these conditions do not exist, and much of the interracial interaction that does occur is considered insufficient to "remove whites' blinders and allow them to perceive blacks in a fresh light" (Jackman & Crane, 1986, p. 461). The question then arises as to whether limited contact that does not occur under the "right conditions" is enough to positively affect racial attitudes. Interestingly, studies have reached distinctly different conclusions regarding the value of the contact hypothesis. Jackman and Crane (1986) recommended abandoning research on the contact theory in favor of a framework that focuses more directly on racial differentials in power and status, whereas Sigelman and Welch (1993) presented findings supporting the basic premise of the contact hypothesis, particularly as it relates to the racial attitudes of Whites, in that interracial friendships increased Whites' general desire for more interracial interaction. Moreover, "on no occasion" did they witness a "worst-case scenario" of interracial contact leading to more negative racial attitudes (p. 793). Emerson, Kimbro and Yancey (2002) supported an "extended version" of the contact theory, one that expands its focus to include social ties and other behaviors, and found prior racial contact had a significant and independent effect on the racial diversity of respondents' contemporary social groups. In other words, those who had experienced prior interracial contact were more likely to have racially diverse social groups and friendship circles.

Many of the conditions of the contact theory can be applied to community gardening, and thus it could be argued this type of leisure setting has the potential to facilitate positive interracial interaction. As stated earlier, although the popular and academic presses have proclaimed that community gardens are effective sources for bringing together racially diverse groups, no empirical work has been conducted to test this assumption. Moreover, previous research (Glover, *in press*) has indicated that gardeners may perceive the outcomes and benefits of community gardening differently, and such differences might be a reflection of racial tensions. To assess whether the benefits of community gardening are shared collectively by all of the participants, a detailed focus on race and its relationship to perceptions of community gardening is needed. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine whether urban community gardening is perceived as a space in which Black and White residents successfully bridge. The study also sought to examine race and its relationship to perceptions, motivations, and benefits of community gardening.

Methods and Results

The study was conducted in partnership with Gateway Greening, a not-for-profit organization that promotes urban gardening in low-to-moderate

income neighborhoods in the Greater St. Louis region. Established in 1984, Gateway Greening has provided tools, training, and material resources to over 150 neighborhood associations with the intent to build or maintain community gardens.

The subjects for the study were gardeners associated with Gateway Greening. Community gardeners were selected randomly from a database maintained by Gateway Greening and asked to participate in a telephone interview. Prior to selection, the gardeners were stratified by zip code to achieve a sample with an adequate representation of Black and White Americans. Telephone interviews, which lasted approximately 25 to 30 minutes, were selected as an appropriate method of data collection given the nature of the research questions. Two research assistants were hired to conduct the interviews. The research assistants reported very few gardeners (less than 5) declined to participate in the telephone interviews. In fact, many of the gardeners were anxious to provide additional information about their gardens, and agreed to participate in follow-up interviews that took place at a later date. The information collected from the follow-up interviews is not included in the analyses that follow.

The telephone interviews were designed to generate information on a wide range of topics including psychological identification with a group (Mael & Tetrick, 1992) and sense of community (Chavis, Hogge, McMillan, & Wandersman, 1986). The actual interview questions were modified from these standardized scales. The interviews also included questions about the gardeners' motivations for involvement, and the socialization, including interracial socialization, that was occurring as a result of the community gardens, and the racial composition of their neighborhoods and gardens.

Telephone interviews were completed with 195 community gardeners, although the analyses for this paper were limited exclusively to the 52 Black Americans and 128 White Americans who participated. A total of 8 people of other races (3 Asian Americans, 1 Hispanic/Latino/Mexican and 4 "other") were dropped from the analyses, and the 7 people did not want to give their race were also excluded from the analyses. Most were female (71%) and the majority (67%) had completed college. Many (48%) worked full-time, while others worked part-time (15%) or were retired (23%). Most (61%) indicated their household income last year was above \$35,000. The two racial groups statistically differed on two demographic variables, educational attainment ($X^2 = 34.00$; $p < .01$) and income ($X^2 = 9.39$; $p < .05$). African Americans reported lower levels of both education and income when compared to their White counterparts.

To assess the racial composition of the neighborhoods and the community gardens, we asked participants to respond to the questions, "Out of 100%, what percentage of your *neighbors* are . . .," and "Out of 100%, what percentage of the people involved in your *garden* are . . ." Response options for both questions were "Asians," "Hispanic, Latino, or Mexican," "African American," and "White." Their responses were categorized by race and are displayed in Table 1. The percentages for Asian and Hispanic/Latino/Mexican were fairly low for both questions. As supported in the literature, African

TABLE 1
Racial Composition of Neighborhoods and Community Gardens by Race

Racial Groups	Means	
	Black Americans (<i>n</i> = 53)	White Americans (<i>n</i> = 128)
<i>Out of 100%, what percentage of your neighborhood is . . .</i>		
Asian	2.6	4.5
Hispanic/Latino/Mexican	1.5	4.6
African American	79.3	42.9
White	16.2	48.6
<i>Out of 100%, what percentage of your garden is . . .</i>		
Asian	1.3	1.9
Hispanic/Latino/Mexican	0.4	1.6
African American	73.7	23.7
White	23.4	72.4

Americans indicated they lived in predominantly Black neighborhoods (80% black) whereas Whites reported living in mixed neighborhoods (49% White and 43% Black). The results for the racial composition of the community gardens were interesting in that they almost mirrored one another. African Americans reported that 73.7% of the people involved in their gardens were Black, and Whites indicated that 72.4% of their gardeners were White.

For most of the analyses, comparisons were made between the two racial groups. However, given one of the goals of the study, comparisons were also made by level of interracial contact in the community gardens. Respondents were divided into two contact groups (*low* interracial contact and *high* interracial contact) based on their response to the question, "Out of 100%, what percentage of the people involved in your garden are . . ." For Whites, the low interracial contact group (*n* = 70) was comprised of gardeners who indicated that 20% or less of the people involved in their garden were Black whereas the high interracial contact group (*n* = 47) consisted of gardeners who reported that *more than 20%* of the gardeners were Black. The low interracial contact group for Blacks (*n* = 30) consisted of gardeners who indicated that 20% or less of those involved with their garden were White, while the high interracial contact group (*n* = 20) were those who reported that *more than 20%* of the gardeners were White. The 20% mark was selected after carefully examining the data, and matches the percentage Floyd and Shinew (1999) used to represent "racially mixed communities."

To assess the level of trust gardeners felt towards the people in their neighborhood, as well as people of different races, they were asked to respond to the statement, "Since my involvement at my community garden, I trust the people in my neighborhood." A five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) was used. This question was followed

by, "I trust more of my [*Hispanic/Latino/Mexican, African American, White, Asian*] neighbors." If they had indicated in a previous question that the percentage of one of these groups in their neighborhood was fairly small, the question was not asked for that particular group. The findings are presented in Table 2. The two racial groups did not respond differently to these questions. Overall, their responses were fairly neutral, indicating they did not necessary trust or distrust their neighbors, regardless of race. Comparisons were also made between the two contact groups, and again, no significant differences were found.

To get a sense of how involved the participants were with their garden, they were asked, "During the gardening season, how many hours in a typical week do you spend in your garden?" This question was asked to assess how much opportunity they would have to interact with other gardeners. The two racial groups reported significantly different time commitments ($t = 2.46; p < .05$); Black gardeners spent a mean of 6.40 hours per week in their gardens compared to Whites' mean of 4.15 hours. However, there was no significant difference in their response to the question, "In a typical week, about how many times do you talk or visit with other community gardeners from your garden, either face-to-face or over the phone?" The means for both groups were between two to three times weekly.

Respondents were asked to react to four statements regarding their psychological identification with their garden. These questions were adapted from the Identification with a Psychological Group (IDPG) Scale (Mael & Tetrick, 1992) that measures shared experiences and shared characteristics of a group. A five point Likert-type scale was used as the response format (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Items included: "When someone

TABLE 2
Reported Levels of Trust by Race

Items	Means(SD)*	
	Black Americans	White Americans
<i>Trust people in my neighborhood</i>	3.37(1.03)	3.52(.83)
<i>Trust in African American neighbors</i>	3.08(.98)	3.23(.93)
<i>Trust in White neighbors</i>	3.28(.94)	3.22(.86)
	Means(SD)	
	Low IR Contact	High IR Contact
<i>Trust people in my neighborhood</i>	3.48(.86)	3.40(.98)
<i>Trust in African American neighbors</i>	3.17(.93)	3.10(.98)
<i>Trust in White neighbors</i>	3.20(.87)	3.24(.97)

*Note: Means are based on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

criticizes my community garden, it feels like a personal insult," "I'm very interested in what others think about my community garden," "When I talk about my community garden, I usually say 'our garden' rather than 'their garden,'" "I am like the people who use my community garden." These items are part of the Shared Experience subscale of the IDPG. MANOVA results indicated there was not a significant difference between the two racial groups on the items. Both groups tended to agree with the statement that they refer to the garden as "our garden" rather than "their garden" (Blacks = 4.33; Whites = 4.38). Their responses were fairly neutral when asked if someone's criticism of the community garden felt like a personal insult (Blacks = 3.37; Whites = 3.34) and whether they felt they were like the people who use their garden (Blacks = 3.88; Whites = 3.55).

An adapted Sense of Community Index (SCI) (Chavis et al., 1986) was used to reflect respondents' identification with their particular neighborhoods (i.e., It is important to me to live in this neighborhood). MANOVA results indicated there was no significant difference between the two racial groups' sense of community. Most gardeners reported a fairly strong sense of community in that they indicated they felt their neighborhood was a good place to live, felt comfortable in their neighborhood, and expected to live there a long time. A summary of the results is presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3
Gardeners' Sense of Community

Items	Means(SD)*	
	Black Americans	White Americans
I think my neighborhood is a good place to live	4.20(.66)	4.27(.77)
My neighbors and I want the same thing from our neighborhood	3.82(.78)	3.77(.89)
I can recognize most of the people who live in my neighborhood	3.91(1.04)	3.55(1.07)
Most neighbors know me	3.87(1.08)	3.70(1.08)
I care about what other neighbors think of what I do	3.60(1.16)	3.53(1.14)
I have influence over what this neighborhood is like	3.91(1.08)	4.14(.90)
If there is a problem in this neighborhood, the people who live here get it solved	3.80(.84)	3.75(.88)
It is important to me to live in this neighborhood	4.04(.85)	4.04(.83)
People in this neighborhood get along with one another	3.82(.81)	3.86(.87)
I feel comfortable in this neighborhood	4.24(.61)	4.15(.78)
I expect to live in this neighborhood a long time	4.13(1.01)	3.94(1.08)

*Note: Means are based on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

A series of questions were asked regarding sense of belonging to assess how connected respondents felt to their garden and community. More specifically, they were asked to indicate if they “felt connected to” their “neighborhood,” “St. Louis”, their “community garden,” and their “racial group.” A dichotomous response format (yes/no) was utilized and in each category, an overwhelming majority responded favorably to these questions. In terms of their neighborhood, 98% of Blacks and 93% of Whites reported they felt connected, and similar results were found for their connection to St. Louis. When asked about their community garden, 98% of Blacks and 94% of Whites responded favorably. The only category where the two groups statistically differed was in their connection to their racial group; Blacks were more likely to indicate a connection with their racial group (Blacks = 92% versus Whites = 76%; $X^2 = 7.38, p < .05$).

Gardeners were asked to respond to several questions regarding their motivations for getting involved in community gardening. The items were based on previous research (Schmelzkopf, 1996; Waliczek et al., 1996) regarding gardeners’ motivations for involvement. MANOVA results ($F = 3.40; p = .002$) indicated there was a significant difference between the two groups. Follow-up univariate analyses indicated both groups responded most favorably to the following motivations: “improve my neighborhood,” “enjoy nature,” and “relax.” After the Bonferroni adjustment, the two groups differed on only one item; Black gardeners were significantly more motivated to “provide food for others.” The findings are displayed in Table 4.

Respondents were asked about the socializing associated with community gardening, including the interracial interactions that occurred in the garden. The items were inspired by Putnam (2000) and the Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (Saguaro Seminar, 2001). MANOVA results indicated there was not a significant difference between the two racial groups

TABLE 4
Gardeners’ Motivation for Getting Involved with their Community Gardens

Motivations	Means (SD)#	
	Black Americans	White Americans
<i>I garden to . . .</i>		
Meet my neighbors	2.98(1.18)	2.78(1.04)
Improve my neighborhood	4.06(.83)	4.04(1.88)
Enjoy nature	4.37(.53)	4.26(.60)
Relax	4.27(.79)	4.14(.80)
Socialize with other people	3.96(.91)	3.58(.97)
Feed my family	3.33(1.20)	3.00(1.26)
Provide food for others*	3.85(.94)	3.02(1.19)

#Note: Means are based on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). *Statistically significant after Bonferroni adjustment ($p < .01$)

on the items. The findings are displayed in Table 5. Both groups responded favorably to the statement, "Community gardening brings together people who belong to different racial groups." On a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), Black gardeners had a mean score of 4.04 and White gardeners had a score of 3.91. Gardeners also tended to agree with the statement, "Community gardening brings together people who wouldn't normally socialize together." Comparisons for these items were also

TABLE 5
Socializing Associated with Community Gardening

Items	Means(SD)*	
	Black Americans	White Americans
Community gardening brings together people who belong to different racial groups	4.04(.88)	3.91(.94)
Community gardening brings together people who wouldn't normally socialize together	3.96(.85)	4.03(.68)
Community gardening brings together my family with other families	3.65(1.04)	3.56(1.02)
Community gardening brings together the same groups of people who socialized together before the garden was in place	2.71(1.03)	2.54(1.08)
Community gardening brings together the members of my family	3.31(1.17)	3.10(1.12)
A community garden leads to higher income families pushing out lower income families	2.02(.84)	1.89(.85)
	Means(SD)	
	Low Contact	High Contact
Community gardening brings together people who belong to different racial groups	3.97(.93)	3.88(.85)
Community gardening brings together people who wouldn't normally socialize together	4.13(.60)	3.88(.93)
Community gardening brings together my family with other families	3.62(1.05)	3.67(.94)
Community gardening brings together the same groups of people who socialized together before the garden was in place	2.52(1.09)	2.74(.97)
Community gardening brings together the members of my family	3.15(1.11)	3.27(1.25)
A community garden leads to higher income families pushing out lower income families	1.87(.85)	2.02(.87)

*Note: Means are based on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

made by level of contact. MANOVA results indicated there was not a significant difference between the two contact groups.

Summary and Conclusions

This study examined whether community gardens are perceived as spaces in which people of different races integrate successfully. As suggested by contact theory, interracial contact is one of the first steps to improving racial attitudes and behaviors. The study also examined whether the perceptions, motivations, and benefits of community gardening varied by race. In general, the findings indicated very few differences by race or by level of contact; however, the study's findings did suggest that in many of the community gardens some level of interracial contact was occurring between the two racial groups. These results contribute to previous research regarding race and leisure settings that have suggested many leisure spaces are racially demarcated (Floyd & Shinew, 1999; Gobster, 2002; Johnson, Bowker, English, & Worthen, 1998). For example, Johnson et al. (1998) concluded in their study of wildland recreation use in the rural south that African Americans used certain areas of the forest, and Whites used others. In their study, conversations with residents suggested that Black and White locals were aware of unspoken rules that made the forest "racially and socially defined places much like the churches, social clubs, youth hang outs, and other places in the community" (p. 116). Conversely, the findings of our study indicated that most gardeners felt connected to their community garden and many believed community gardening brought together people of different races. This discrepancy in findings might be explained, in part, by the more unbiased nature of community gardens as opposed to the historically negative connotations many African Americans associate with wildland recreation places. Further, in community gardens, people must work together to achieve collective aims, whereas wildland recreation is often a more instrumental pursuit. Hemingway (1996), in his article about leisure emancipation, discussed the idea of instrumental leisure as consumption-oriented and therefore something that fails to liberate people.

Results of the racial compositions of the neighborhoods and the community gardens also suggested that some level of interracial contact was occurring. However, some of these findings require further explanation. As often cited in the literature (Masey & Denton, 1993), African Americans reported living in predominantly Black neighborhoods. Yet inconsistent with the literature, Whites indicated that they lived in racially mixed neighborhoods. This finding must be viewed within the framework of the current study. This research was conducted in partnership with Gateway Greening, a not-for-profit organization that promotes urban gardening in low-to-moderate income neighborhoods, and thus the White gardeners interviewed for the study were living in these types of neighborhoods. Residential pattern statistics indicate that "mostly white" neighborhoods are most common in higher-income neighborhoods (Masey & Denton, 1993). This point helps

explain why the low-to-moderate income White gardeners in this study reported living in more racially mixed neighborhoods than is often common among most Whites. The racial composition of most community gardens was also racially mixed. For African Americans, the community gardens were often more racially mixed than were their neighborhoods, giving support to the idea that even in fairly segregated neighborhoods, there are some physical sites, such as community gardens, where interracial interaction may occur.

Physical contact is a precursor to positive interracial social interaction, although as stated earlier, contact only certainly does not ensure positive relationships. However, as suggested in the literature (Berscheid & Walster, 1969; Festinger et al., 1950; Sigelman et al., 1996), interracial friendships are more likely to develop among individuals who have contact with one another. Several of our findings suggest that community gardening is effective in promoting interracial contact. Both African American and White gardeners tended to agree that community gardening brings together people who belong to different racial groups, and that it brings together people who would not normally socialize together. When comparisons were made by level of contact, however, the findings were less convincing. We expected those respondents who came from racially mixed gardens to respond more favorably to these items than those who were from more homogeneous gardens, but this was not the case. Also, we expected the high interracial contact group to report higher levels of trust towards their neighbors of the other race. However, again, the findings did not support our expectation.

One explanation for the lack of significant difference between the two contact groups may be that the level of interracial contact was not measured effectively. Simply asking gardeners for the percentage of the "other" race of individuals who were involved in the garden may not have been a good indicator of interracial contact. It is conceivable that even though there was a mixture of both races involved in the garden, the actual interracial contact may have been minimal. As posited by Jackman and Crane (1986), limited contact that does not occur under the "right conditions" may not be enough to positively affect racial attitudes. However, Sigelman and Welch (1993) reported in their study that on no occasion did interracial contact lead to more negative attitudes, which suggests that *any* level of contact may be worthwhile. Thus, while we did not detect a significantly positive effect as a result of the contact, we also did not find a negative effect. More generally and beyond the scope of our results, casual contact in desegregated leisure settings may have little direct bearing on African Americans' perceptions of a white-dominated society. Such contact, however, is notable for other reasons in that it may facilitate the development of interracial friendships, convey information about racial differences in interactional styles, or counter negative stereotypes. In any event, the potential for interracial friendship is important because these intimate ties can lead to more favorable racial attitudes.

We also examined whether African Americans perceived the same level of benefits as a result of their involvement in community gardening as did

Whites. The findings indicated that both groups felt very positive about their involvement in community gardening and furthermore, there did not appear to be a great difference in the potential benefits received by the participants. These findings differ from previous research that examined benefits of community gardening by race (Waliczek et al., 1996). Our findings indicated that both racial groups reported some sense of psychological involvement with their gardens. Both African Americans and Whites indicated they refer to their garden as "our" garden rather than "their" garden. Further, the two racial groups did not statistically differ in their sense of community. Both groups tended to think their neighborhoods were good places to live, and they also reported that they felt comfortable in their neighborhoods, and expect to live there a long time. These findings support previous research that has suggested community gardens foster a sense of community among the residents in which it is located (Schmelzkopf, 1996; Waliczek et al., 1996). For example, Schmelzkopf (1996) commented in her study "over and over, gardeners told of how gardening and the socializing in the gardens make them feel as though they are a part of the community and a part of the land . . ." (p. 373).

This study also examined the motivations of the gardeners. Previous research has suggested that residents become involved in community gardens for various reasons (Anderson, 1990; Schmelzkopf, 1996). The two racial groups responded similarly and positively to many of the motivations (i.e., improve my neighborhood, enjoy nature, relax), with only one racial difference. African Americans were more likely to agree that the garden provided them with the opportunity to "provide food for others." African Americans reported significantly lower income levels than did their White counterparts, which may be why providing food was more important to them. Interestingly, there was not a significant difference in their response to "feed my family." Additionally, we reported earlier that often residents' motives for community gardening might be misunderstood among neighbors. Anderson (1990) described the issues of gentrification that have been linked to urban neighborhoods. However, when we asked respondents if "a community garden leads to higher income families pushing out lower income families," both racial groups and both contact groups tended to disagree with the statement.

Another reported benefit of community gardening for residents is a sense of belonging, and this was supported in our study. Both racial groups reported they felt connected to their neighborhoods, St. Louis, and most relevant to our study, their community garden. This finding is noteworthy given previous research regarding leisure settings and activities. African Americans often perceive leisure activities and spaces unfavorably due to the discrimination that can occur in leisure contexts (Floyd & Shinew, 1999; Gobster, 2002; Hibbler & Shinew, 2002; Johnson, Bowker, English & Worthen, 1998; Philipp, 1999). The finding that community gardens represent a space in which African Americans feel connected, particularly given most of these gardens were comprised of both African American and White gardeners, is encouraging. Not surprisingly given previous research in this area

(Aries et al., 1998; Thompson, 1994), African Americans reported a greater sense of belonging to their racial group compared to their White counterparts. In fact, interviewers for this study reported that White respondents were often confused, or frustrated because they did not think race mattered, when asked if they felt connected to their race, while most African Americans responded to the question with ease. African American gardeners' strong racial connection is consistent with previous studies regarding racial identity (Brookins, 1994; Thompson, 1994).

The findings in this study raised many issues that merit attention in subsequent research. Additional research is needed to further explore whether community gardens foster interracial contact, and whether the perceptions, motivations, and benefits of community gardening vary by race. These preliminary findings, however, contribute to the field of leisure studies in several ways. The findings can be used to evaluate community gardening, a leisure activity, as a potential mechanism for building community and as a potential setting for encouraging positive interracial interaction. Future studies should consider employing more precise measures of interracial contact that directly tap into face-to-face interracial contact as opposed to the more general contact that was measured in this study. Similarly, gardeners' motivations and socialization were measured using items that had been developed for this study. More established measures and/or scales might have produced different results. Further, a longitudinal study that examines whether the interracial contact that occurs in the leisure setting actually results in more positive attitudes and behaviors would be useful. This study examined one type of leisure setting, and thus further research is needed to explore a variety of other types of leisure spaces and activities, such as sports and cultural settings and activities. Our study examined two racial groups, Black and White Americans, and hence additional research is needed on the interracial interaction patterns of additional racial groups. Finally, this type of study lends itself to qualitative data collection methods. For example, an ethnographic account of interracial relationships that began in the garden, or observational data focused on level of contact, would provide a great deal of insight.

To summarize, this study was designed, in part, to gain a clearer picture of urban life within a neighborhood setting and the potential role that leisure could play in bridging diverse groups. Given the current racial climate in society, any effort to encourage positive interracial interaction is generally viewed as favorable. Recent events such as racially related deaths and anti-affirmative action proposals have caused casual Black-White contact to occur under increasingly strained conditions, which may reinforce African Americans' images of negative race relations and may ultimately impede the development of interracial friendship. Many leisure settings offer opportunities for equal-status and cooperative interracial contact, and therefore we should continue to examine leisure settings as potential sites for fostering positive interracial relationships. We hope the findings of this study lead to a broader discussion of the role of leisure in increasing positive interracial interaction and in building a greater sense of community in a diverse society.

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