Community engagement efforts have long been part of higher education’s mission based on a university’s ability in establishing balanced ties that not only benefit university affiliates, but also their local communities (Watson, Hueglin, Crandall, & Eisenman, 2002). Service learning and community engagement is important among all higher education institutions, but for Historically Black College and Universities (HBCU’s), community engagement services as core to their existence since their founding over 150 years ago (Lomax, 2005). Benefiting university students, community engagement allows students to apply course content and theory in a real-world setting—best identified as service learning (Warren, 2012)—while addressing issues within their local and regional communities. Service learning opportunities enrich student’s academic experience and allows them to gain entry level skills in their respective fields of study. The current study examined the influence of engagement and personal development of aspiring leisure service providers in a Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (HPER) program at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) who partnered with youth community members to form a Youth-Adult Partnership (Y-AP) while planning a community recreation sport event.

Method
The study consisted of 18 collegiate and high school students from a rural town in the Midwest. Nine high school participants were classified as youth, and nine collegiate students were classified as adults to form a Y-AP. The high school students were all girls ranging from 9th – 12th grade. Collegiate student participants included six male and three female collegiate students from a Historically Black College University (HBCU) situated fifteen miles away from the high school. The collegiate student’s age ranged from 19 to 23 years old. The partnership lasted for 8 weeks where participants met twice a week for 1 hour during school time. Analysis of qualitative data was collected based on responses from pre- and post-partnership focus group sessions led by the author and co-author. Focus groups were held exclusively for youth and adult participants. Pre and post focus group sessions lasted between 35-50 minutes. Adult focus groups centered on perceptions of leadership and perceived personal and professional benefits of the Y-AP. Generated qualitative data were transcribed and analyzed through various phases of coding to establish major themes (Charmaz, 2006). Illuminated themes were compared to theoretical assumptions of a youth-adult partnership.

Results
Analysis of the adult’s responses reflected their experience and perceptions of a Y-AP that offers insight into the thoughts and social processes afforded to the partnership. Their responses produced three major themes: leadership, enhancement of youth voice, and value of extended partnerships. The Y-AP was described by adult participants as a process that provided a unique opportunity to enhance their personal and professional aspirations in the leisure industry. The adult participants believed engagement in the Y-AP allowed them to further develop and refine their leadership skills by balancing their superior social positioning over youth participants. Understanding their need to engage youth participants and allow for an increase in youth voice development was a major concern for the adult participants. Actual reflections will be presented to showcase their thoughts when considering the power dynamic of their interaction. As a leader being able to learn the importance of working with and acknowledging peer strengths, while enhancing their civic awareness sharpened their professional acuity as recreation and sport providers.

Extended benefits associated with the partnership directed attention to their HBCU. All adult participants began to discuss long term benefits the partnership may have created. Aside from the personal development afforded from the partnership, relationship ties between the host community and the university were more favorably forecasted. Plagued by negative stereotypes, among other harmful influences, the students recognized the power of their civic
engagement initiative. Their sport for development initiative entered the homes of local community members to exert a positive influence on perceptions and social interactions. To adult participants, the partnership was a reflection of the quality education and values their university instills, which competes with negative stigmas and associations historically produced (Sav, 2010).

Implications.
Recreation professionals seek qualified employees who have prior experience creating opportunities to engage and implement quality services for their communities. Results from the current study show how a youth-adult partnership can serve as a complementary tool in recreation and sport management programs to influence the development of future leisure service providers. The partnership incites unique experiences that employers desire from aspiring leisure professionals. A Y-AP is typically employed to increase benefits for youth, however, this study shows that a Y-AP can be equally beneficial for adult participant’s leadership and personal development within the recreation and sport industry. The inclusion of collegiate students from a HBCU extended the benefits observed from a youth-adult partnership. Adult participants felt that their involvement in the Y-AP would potentially serve as a barrier to program planning in the recreation sport community initiative. In actuality, their participation served as one of the greatest strengths, and complements the intent of the sport and recreation industry—exposure, growth, and enhancement of social connections.