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RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND AFRICAN AMERICANS' TRAVEL BEHAVIOR:

THE UTILITY OF HABITUS AND VIGNETTE TECHNIQUE

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Abstract

This study investigated African Americans' travel behavior using Bourdieu's concept of habitus and vignette technique. In-depth, face-to-face interviewees were conducted with 13 middle class African Americans. Five salient themes were identified: (1) racial discrimination during traveling, (2) indirect experience of racism, (3) fear of racism (4) Black travel habitus: racism-related travel choice, and (5) accommodating park officials. The findings showed that informants' strong fear of racism is manifested in their distinctive travel behavior. They affirmed that African Americans' travel pattern needs to be conceived as a defensive mechanism against potential racial discrimination.

Keywords: travel behavior, African Americans, racism, habitus, vignette technique

Racial Discrimination and African Americans' Travel Behavior: The Utility of Habitus and

Vignette Technique

African Americans' travel behavior has been a topic of few studies. Although the

economic impact of African American travel market is estimated more than $48 billion

(Mandala Research, 2011), there have been only a few scholarly studies on this topic.

Existing studies and survey reports have documented that African Americans possess

distinctive travel patterns. African Americans have the lowest rate of national park visitation

and they are usually the most under-represented racial group in America's great outdoors

(Floyd, 1999; Taylor Grandjean, & Gramann, 2011; Weber & Sultana, 2013). Moreover,

compared to White Americans, African Americans tend to travel shorter distance within

larger group, prefer structured and organized travel patterns, and visit destinations specific to

African American heritage (Mandala Research, 2011; Philipp, 1994; Williams & Chacko,

2008).

Some researchers argue that African Americans' travel behaviors can be explained by

historical racial discrimination (Carter, 2008; Foster, 1999; Philipp, 2000). Institutionalized

racism and Jim Crow laws certainly restricted African Americans' mobility and accessibility

to many parks and public recreational spaces (Brandimarte & Reed, 2013; Byrne & Wolch,

2009; Holland, 2002). In many cases, African Americans encountered life-threatening and

humiliating racial mistreatment from White owned tourism businesses when they traveled to

unfamiliar places (Rugh, 2008). Although Jim Crow laws and segregation practices were

officially banned in the 1960s, its brutality lingers in the social memory of African American

community and continues to negatively impact travel patterns of Blacks (Cater, 2008;

Johnson, 1998). Thus, researchers have correctly asserted that many characteristics of

African Americans' travel behavior need to be comprehended as the legacy of racial

discrimination (Carter, 2008; Philipp, 1994).

Although existing studies provide a convincing explanation of Black travel pattern, a few issues remain unaddressed. First, existing studies have failed to explain African Americans' travel behavior using a viable theoretical framework. Existing studies remain largely descriptive and anecdotal due to the lack of solid theoretical underpinnings. Second, although prior studies ascribe Black travel pattern to past racial discrimination and its legacy, this assertion is contentious due to the insufficient empirical evidence that links institutional racism to the travel patterns of young Blacks today who have not experienced institutional racism. Finally, existing studies have paid relatively little attention to racism that African Americans experience in tourism contexts today. Indeed, investigation on Blacks' experience of racial discrimination while traveling and its impact on future tourism decisions is in serious need.

The purpose of this study is to fill these research gaps. This study uses the concept of habitus and vignette technique to investigate African Americans' travel behavior and their experience of racism. Habitus is known as group members' shared cultural traits or distinctive dispositions and explains human actions in respect to the dialectical relationship between agents and social structure (Bourdieu, 1984; Maton, 2008; Swartz, 1997). Vignette technique refers to a specific data collection method that uses "short scenarios or stories in written or pictorial form which participants can comment upon" (Renold, 2002, p.3). It is a particularly useful data collection technique for eliciting cultural norms derived from respondents' attitudes and beliefs about a specific situation (Barter & Renold, 1999). By employing these unique analytic approaches, this study pursues theoretical and methodical advancements in the study of African American travel. This study attempts to address three specific research questions: (1) How does institutional racism in the past, such as Jim Crow laws, impact travel behaviors of today's African Americans? (2) Do African Americans

experience racial discrimination within tourism context? and (3) if so, how do they deal with racism when they travel?

Literature Review

Race has been rarely a subject of scientific investigation in the field of tourism study, yet for the past decade tourism scholars began to notice its importance for understanding behavior among tourists (Richter, 1995). Topics of existing studies on race and tourism include British travel industry's business practices targeting Asian populations (Klemm & Kelsey, 2004), local African Americans' role in nature-based and heritage tourism development (Gallardo & Stein, 2007), history of African American travel agents and their struggles (Butler, Carter, & Brunn, 2002), the manners in which slave cabins and Black history are portrayed in heritage tourism destinations (Small, 2013), and African American history in Mammoth Cave in Kentucky (Algeo, 2012).

To date, only a handful of researchers have examined African Americans' travel characteristics and they tended to focus on the difference between African Americans and White Americans in travel preference and activities. For example, Agarwal and Yochum (1999) investigated spending of Black and White overnight visitors to Virginia Beach. They found that visitors' spending was almost identical across different demographic groups, suggesting race was not significantly related to travel spending. Williams and Chacko (2008) investigated Black and White travelers to New Orleans and found that Blacks rated tourism attractions specific to African American heritage and sport/recreation activity more importantly than Whites. Moreover, Blacks were more satisfied with the city's family atmosphere, African American heritage, and sport/recreation activity compared to Whites. Similarly, Philipp (1994) compared travel preference between Blacks and Whites and found that Blacks preferred to travel with a large group, avoided unplanned stops, and ate at well-known restaurant chains. Philipp contended that Blacks preferred more organized and

systematic travel patterns due to fear of racial discrimination. In a different study, Philipp

(1999) examined differences between middle class African Americans and White Americans

in their perceptions of how well Blacks would be welcomed at different leisure settings.

Unlike White respondents, Black respondents believed that Blacks would be less welcome in

16 of 20 leisure activities. However, there was agreement between Blacks and Whites that

Blacks would be welcome playing basketball, going to the mall, dancing, and fishing. Blacks

and Whites also agreed that Blacks would not be welcome at country clubs. Since Blacks and

Whites held a common belief that Blacks' participation in certain leisure activities are not

socially well-accepted, Phillip asserted the prevalence of racial discrimination and urged

more research on the impact of racism among Black travelers. In sum, existing studies have

documented clear difference between Blacks and Whites in travel pattern and they have

discussed racial discrimination as the underlying reason for the identified difference.

Some researchers have cited a historical relationship between racial discrimination

and Black travel patterns. Historically, African Americans have constantly been the target of

violent racial discrimination. Black slaves existed throughout the colonial era and up until the

end of Civil War in 1865 (Feagin, 2006). Although slavery was banned in the U.S. after the

Civil War, racial discrimination towards African Americans sustained during Reconstruction

period (1867 to 1877) and Jim Crow era (1877 to 1960's). During both eras, thousands of

African Americans were harshly attacked, raped, lynched, and murdered (Brundage, 1997;

Feagin, 2013). This historical condition had made leisure travels extremely problematic for

African Americans. Blacks had to use segregated facilities at restaurants, hotels, railroads,

and gas stations; and in many cases they were refused services while traveling (Foster, 1999;

Rugh, 2008). African Americans tended to engage in leisure activities close to their home

due to slave codes, and they encountered numerous cases of humiliation and physical abuse

while traveling (Holland, 2002). When Blacks traveled long distance, they had to

meticulously plan and organize their itinerary, travel additional distance to avoid certain

locations, and pay more money to receive services (Carter, 2008; Foster, 1999). Thus, this

line of reasoning suggests that Blacks' distinctive travel patterns should be comprehended as

coping strategies or defensive mechanisms against potential racial discrimination (Carter,

2008; Philipp, 1994; 1999).

While prior studies have made unique contribution in tourism literature, further

research is needed in three areas. First, African Americans' travel patterns have not been

explained by a viable theoretical framework. The majority of leisure and tourism studies have

utilized Wahburne's (1978) ethnicity and marginality hypothesis to explain African

Americans' leisure and travel behavior. However, conceptual ambiguity and theoretical

weakness of ethnicity and marginality hypothesis have been acknowledged by several

researchers (Floyd, 1998; Philipp, 1994; 2000). Findings from previous studies remain

largely descriptive and anecdotal due to the lack of solid and systematic theoretical

underpinnings. Second, researchers provided little empirical evidence that links travel

patterns of contemporary African Americans and historical racial discrimination. To derive

more conclusive results about the connection between past racial discrimination and travel

patterns of contemporary Blacks, we need to examine the way in which the legacy of

institutional racism impacts multiple generations of African Americans. Finally, existing

studies have paid relatively little attention to racial discrimination that African Americans

experience in contemporary tourism contexts. Racism persists in contemporary American

society (Feagin, 2010). It is reasonable to expect that many Blacks experience blatant racial

discrimination while they travel which, in turn, negatively impacts their future travel decision.

Habitus

Bourdieu's concept of habitus is promising theoretical framework for investigating

African American's travel patterns. Bourdieu (1990) defined habitus as:

A system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to

function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize

practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes

without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the

operation necessary in order to attain them. (p. 53)

Habitus is the system of dispositions by which cultural norms or model behavior are

internalized and institutionalized within groups through socialization (Browitt, 2004). More

simply, it is group members' mode of conduct that determines what is appropriate or

inappropriate, available or unavailable, and possible or impossible in given social situations.

Habitus is therefore developed unconsciously through habits, feelings, and thoughts within

individuals in response to their surrounding social environment while simultaneously serving

as an active expression of the legitimacy of collectively held cultural meanings (Lovell,

2000). Moreover, habitus is both the *product* and *producer* of social structures. Habitus is

shaped by individuals' given socio-historical circumstance so that it is called *structured*

structure or internalized social structure, yet it also reinforces existing social structures and

the status quo when agents act upon their habitus so it is also called *structuring* structure

(Swartz, 1997). As such, habitus tends to reproduce those actions consistent with the

condition under which it was produced.

Habitus' novel insight into group culture, historical explanation of human behavior,

and reciprocal relationship between agents and structures offers unique analytic perspective

to tourism study. It explains that one's choice of travel destination or activity is not

spontaneous or impulsive personal decision, but the result of the complex interplays between

the agent and socio-historical circumstance. Thus, any tourism behavior should be

comprehended as a manifestation and reinforcement of social class, cultural traits, lifestyles,

and upbringing. Tourism researchers have used the concept of habitus as a theoretical tool to

investigate various topics such as the importance of incorporating local culture in tourism

development and destination branding (Campelo, Aitken, Thyne, & Gnoth, 2014; Cave, Ryan,

& Panakera, 2007), the relationship between individuals' daily lifestyles and travel

destination activities (Lee, Scott, & Packer, 2014), distinctions in travel preferences and

destination activities of tourists who visited the similar destination (Ahmad, 2014) and

African Americans' visitation to Rocky Mountain national park (Erickson, Johnson, & Kivel,

2009).

The present study utilizes habitus to investigate African Americans' travel patterns. It

focuses on the impact of past and present racism in contemporary African Americans' travel

behavior. Due to its novel approach, this study is expected to provide fresh insight into the

topic and deepen our understanding in African Americans' travel pattern and its relationship

with racial discrimination.

Methods

A qualitative research approach was used to gain rich insight into African Americans'

expereince of racism and its impact on their travel pattern. In-depth, semi-structured, face-to-

face interviews were conducted with 13 middle class African Americans who lived in south

central region of the United States. Individuals who held a college degree and had an annual

income of at least $45,000 were defined as middle class. These categories were used as

recruitment criteria in order to identify African Americans who do not have a substantial

financial constrains for traveling. Informants were recruited by purposive snowball sampling.

Two government officials were key informants. We asked two key informants to provide a

list of individuals who met the recruitment criteria. Interviews were conducted from October

2012 to March 2013 at respondents' office, local coffee shops, and the authors' offices. The

sampling was terminated when it reached the point of redundancy where new interviewee did

not provide new information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In qualitative inquiry, the validity,

meaningfulness, and insightfulness of the findings and the researcher's analytical capability should outweigh the sample size (Patton, 2002). We terminated the data collection with 13 interviewees because of our belief that 13 interviews yielded exceptionally rich and profound information about Black travel. Table 1 summarizes characteristics of informants. Pseudonyms are used throughout.

The interview questions were developed based on McCracken's (1988) guidelines and organized into three sections. First, informants' demographic information was asked to identify their background information and build some degree of rapport (e.g., Could you briefly introduce yourself?). Second, informants' travel behaviors were asked (e.g., Where is your ideal tourism destination? What do you consider when you decide your vacation destination?). Finally, interviewees' were asked if they ever experienced racial discrimination while they traveled and if so how the experience impacted their future travel choice.

Vignette technique was utilized during the last stage of interview. Vignette technique refers to a specific data collection method that uses "short scenarios or stories in written or pictorial form which participants can comment upon" (Renold, 2002, p.3). It is particularly useful data collection technique for eliciting respondents' attitudes and beliefs about a specific topic (Barter & Renold, 1999). Moreover, the technique has been wildly used to investigate potentially sensitive issues such as racism and sexual abuse (Bartner & Renold, 1999). We used vignette technique in order to provide a reference point that allowed interviewees to comfortably talk about their experience of racism. It was also used to minimize socially desirable responses and collect candid and detailed accounts from the interviewees.

Three short stories of racial discrimination were used as vignettes (Appendix). The first story was created based on the first author's knowledge that it is a typical racial prejudice that many African Americans experience. The second story was based on a

Washington's (2012) article on Black male code. The third story was based on our literature review and it was more specific to tourism context. These three vignettes were used to illustrate various forms of racial discrimination. Interviewees were asked to read all three stories and then followed-up with open-ended questions (e.g., "What do you think about these stories?" and "Have you ever experienced similar incidents?"). The three vignettes were used as reference points where informants can comfortably talk about their experience and opinion of racial discrimination. The vignette technique allowed us to gently introduce the topic of racism during the interview without creating awkward atmosphere.

To bolster the trustworthiness of the data generation and study findings, member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was conducted upon completion of transcriptions. We also employed a number of tactics that ensure honesty among participants (Shenton, 2004). From the outset of each interview, we emphasized there are no right or wrong answers to interview questions and encouraged interviewees to be candid. In addition, we honestly answered interviewees' questions about my background, academic career, and experience of racism. Through these techniques, we were able to quickly establish rapport with the participants and obtain candid responses.

Interview data was analyzed by Marshall and Rossman's (2006) seven fundamental steps of qualitative data analysis method. First, interview data was transcribed and organized based on interviewees' demographic characteristics. Second, we reviewed interview transcripts repetitively to immerse in the data and become intimately familiar with collected information. Third, recurring ideas or languages in interview data were identified as salient themes. Fourth, salient themes were coded using abbreviations of key words. Fifth, we combined all coded themes, examined interrelations among them, and established integrative interpretations. Sixth, we searched alternative explanations of study findings and examined

whether our interpretation is the most plausible. Finally, we reported study findings in a

comprehensive writing.

Findings

Five salient themes emerged from that data analysis. They were: (1) racial

discrimination during traveling, (2) indirect experience of racism, (3) fear of racism (4) Black

travel habitus: racism-related travel choice, and (5) accommodating park officials.

Racial Discrimination during Traveling

Many informants articulated that they directly experienced various forms of racial

discrimination while traveling. They encountered racial mistreatments from service providers

or other White patrons at various settings such as airplanes, restaurants, country clubs, and

gas stations. For example, Steven described his business trip with a White female co-worker:

> I was in Reno, Nevada. We went up there for six days so we got to talk about racism
>
> and discrimination. So I was telling her, how, even though during this time, they
>
> (Whites) are discriminating, [She said,] "Ah, no, no, no way" so [I said,] "OK, watch,
>
> let's go to the restaurant." We already picked up our restaurant, we went to the
>
> restaurant. I said, "You watch and see where they seat me." They seat me back
>
> towards the back. They seated her towards the front. There was seats available all
>
> over. So I asked [the waitress], "Could I be seated a little bit closer to the front?"
>
> "Well, we don't have anybody serving that area." But they were seating people over
>
> there that area. OK? So Next day…we [had a] breakfast together. I said, "You watch
>
> where they seat us, they are gonna seat us towards the back." Again, we went to
>
> breakfast together, that's where they seated us. Back towards back. Another
>
> restaurant. So when people come in the restaurant, they don't see me. Quickly they
>
> will see other folks. It's (racism) alive. Alive and thrive. I see it all the time.

Steven visited two different restaurants with his co-worker and demonstrated how routinely African Americans experience racial discrimination. Importantly, Steven never visited those two restaurants previously, yet he was certain that he would not be seated at front tables because of his race. The fact that his anticipation was actualized two consecutive times indicates the pervasiveness of racism during traveling. Anne also shared her experience at a local restaurant when she was on a tour with her university's gospel choir:

> So we were stuck in Connecticut (because of a blizzard), and you know we were on a tour. But there was a little restaurant next to the hotel…then we walked over there, order our food, and they made us go to the kitchen to pick up our food. They didn't bring the food to us, we didn't know they, we thought they were taking us to a table or, we didn't know where we were really going, and they took us to the kitchen to pick up our food. She (the waitress) said, "Why don't you go pick that (food) up and go back to your place?" I just remember thinking, 'I rather be hungry then pay for this food.'

Anne and her friend received poor service and felt insulted by the restaurant workers. Similar to Steven, Anne stressed that the incident happened in the early 2000s and she felt that racism remains prevalent in the United States. Justin explained his experience at a country club. When he traveled to the Northwest region of the U.S. and visited a country club with his friends, the club refused their entrance:

> They didn't wanna let me in, they said that I couldn't, I couldn't get in. Then they found out that I was actually one of the new members. They, they were very uncomfortable about me being there, and I found out only three of us who are African Americans in that whole club. They weren't comfortable with me being there.

Intriguingly, Justin's story resembles the findings from Philipp's (1999) study that middle class Blacks and Whites commonly believe country clubs are one of the most unwelcoming

leisure settings for Blacks, suggesting that country clubs often conduct exclusionary business practices that discourage Blacks' entrance. Justin shared another incident of racial prejudice in an airplane:

> I had an elder lady next to me when I got on the airplane. She didn't wanna sit next to me. And she said, because I was bigger, cause I used to be a lot bigger, but she sat next a White guy who was bigger than I was. But she didn't want sit next to me.

Justin's two stories exemplified that many African Americans encounter racial mistreatment from *both* service provides and other customers. Steven described that racism sometimes create a life-threatening situation. While driving to Mount Rushmore with his 13 years old son, Steven stopped at a small general store in a rural community to buy some snacks. Shortly after he left the store, Steven misstepped on a cattle guard and cut his leg severely. Steven depicted this experience:

> It was real bad. So I go back in this little store and I'm bleeding like somebody just cut me open, yeah, it was pretty bad. I say "Do you have a doctor here?" [The person at the counter said] "No we don't have a doctor here…we don't have a doctor in this town." So I said "What do you guys do when you have an emergency?" "Oh, we go to Casper." Casper, Wyoming which is 35 miles away from there. I had to drive to Casper, Wyoming with paper towels on my leg because my son was only 13. He couldn't drive…Loosing blood, cause they wouldn't wait on me. They said they don't have a doctor, you know they have some kind of doctor. They have some type of first aid kit if they have nothing else….they show no compassion, you know, do you think we were waiting on until get dark?

> Thus, the majority of informants provided numerous accounts of racial discrimination they experienced during traveling. They argued that their experience is not unusual for

African Americans and many Blacks constantly experience similar mistreatment on a daily basis.

Indirect Experience of Racism

Some younger informants had indirectly experienced racial discrimination. Although they may not have encountered racial mistreatment or directly experienced institutional racism, they had learned the brutality of racism from older generations in their family. Anne recalled how she learned about racism when she was traveling with her father and grandfather:

My grandfather was the one who always told us the story [of racism.] And I remember, when I graduated from [college] and I had my car, we drove back from D.C. to Dallas. And he was in the car with me and I remember one night…it was really late at night we were in Mississippi or something like that. And we needed to get gas, so my dad, he was born in 60s, so my dad was just thinking "Oh, we are just gonna stop at a gas station," you know. Whereas my grandfather's thought process was, "This is Mississippi…we don't just stop anywhere!" And so, ever since that, when I travel, I just think about that experience and his thought process. Not that it [makes me stop going] certain places or things like that….But I will say that I do think of incidents like that when I do travel. Or just in general, daily interactions.

Anne dramatically changed her perception about racism and safety via traveling with her father and grandfather. Although Anne never directly experienced institutionalized racism or lived under Jim Crow laws, she learned from her grandfather the vulnerability of African Americans, especially in the Deep South states such as Mississippi. Other young informants also received more explicit lessons about racism and safety. For example, Susan explained safety lessons she received from her parents:

My parents or my dad told me like "you need to be aware of your

surroundings"….For instance, "if you get pulled over [by police officers at a remote

place], call 911, tell them that you are being followed by the police officers. They can

radio that police officer that you are not trying to run away, you just wanna be in a

safe space before you decide, before you just had to stop." So those are conversations

that I've had growing up with my parents and things that I'm aware of….it's just like

you need to be aware of your surroundings all the time and be careful and make sure

you have trusted people around you, so I just grew up with that frame of reference

and I feel like it makes me view the world a little bit differently.

Susan's parents taught her that Blacks might be more critically scrutinized by law

enforcements so she needs to be careful when travels to unfamiliar places. Susan stated that

her parents' teaching substantially influenced her worldview. Kevin also described how his

parents taught him to be cautious and protective when he drives in unfamiliar places.

My parents gave me that talk. It's not like you know, "there's racism out there." They

told me to be careful….They just try to inform you to be aware of what you are doing

and who you hang around, what might be happen to you, so….my mom told me just

to be careful when stop a place for gas, just look around and if you are in a small area,

if something happens just stay in the car, call [911], somebody will come get you and

help you out just, just because I'm Black and this is kind of country town, it might be

some people, they might have more racism towards Black people just because they

are from, like country area, like Texas, West Texas…it's kinda scary dangerous thing,

need to think about sometimes.

Similar to Susan, Kevin's comments suggest that younger generations of African American

learned about the danger of racial discrimination from their predecessors. Steven articulated

how he teaches his son to be circumspective of surrounding environment in order to avoid

racism:

> You have to be cognizant in what's going around you at all the time. I taught my kids,
>
> especially my son, when you walk in unfamiliar place, you make sure you find, you
>
> look at where the exits are. You need to know. If you have to get outta there, other
>
> than the way you came in, what way do you go? But that's a part of survival too. So
>
> it's not as racial as much as it is survival in today's time. But a lot of that survival
>
> instinct comes from, because of racism.

Steven stressed that his teachings were more than generic safety instructions that any parents

would provide to their children. Rather, he explained that he had to give these safety

instructions due to racism. Thus, they were specifically designed as coping strategies against

potential racial discrimination.

In sum, despite of young informants' no experience with institutional racism and

racial mistreatment, they have learned the vulnerability of African Americans via storytelling

and teachings from older generations in their family. Their indirect experience of racism

significantly influenced their worldview and made them to be fearful of racism while

traveling.

Fear of Racism and Its Reproduction

Informants' direct and indirect experience of racism formed a strong fear of racism in

their mind and has been passed down to generations of African Americans. The concept of

habitus explains that group members' perspectives and behavior tend to be socially

reproduced across generations. Informants' fear of racism provides a clear example of this

process in operation. The previous section illustrated how younger informants were taught to

be constantly wary and protective of potential racism when they travelled to unfamiliar

places. Older informants' were especially more concerned about racism, which partially

stems from their direct experience of segregation and Jim Crow laws. David recalled his

travel experience immediately after the Civil Right Acts in 1964:

> I knew how powerful racism was. That's the way it was. I knew I couldn't go to the
>
> restaurant in downtown, without someone saying it. You knew the parameters. In
>
> 1964, we went from [my hometown] to Columbus, Ohio to visit my sister. And, I
>
> never forget my dad asking [a hotel staff at St. Louise], "Can colored people stay in
>
> hotels?" They said, "Yeah." That's the first time I stayed in the hotel in my life. Next
>
> morning, we got up and drove across the line to Illinois, stopped [at a restaurant] and
>
> asked "Can colored people eat breakfast here?" They said "Yes." That's the first time
>
> I ate in the restaurant in my life….generation before me was, they were very fearful,
>
> even my generation is fearful of what can happen to you if you are in the wrong place
>
> at the wrong time. You can go to jail and go to prison for something you didn't do.

David's story showed that institutionalized racism and fear of racism significantly impeded

African Americans' mobility and negatively impacted their tourism activity. David further

explained that racial discrimination remains an on-going issue in American society and many

Blacks are still afraid of visiting new places due to fear of racism. As an avid campers and

national park visitor, David described the reason why there is disproportionally small number

of Blacks in the America's great outdoors.

> My friends never went camping. They never had any interest. Like, my wife will not
>
> go. They are afraid….There is a fear that someone will come in the park with a gun
>
> and shoot you or whatever. Yeah, it is directly tied to racism. Things like what
>
> happened down in Jasper (Texas) that you will find some guys who are like, quote
>
> and quote "I wanna have some fun" and come and harass you…There is always a fear
>
> that Blacks will be victimized. African Americans are so easily identifiable. You
>
> can't hide it in the crowd.

David used the murder case of James Byrd, Jr. in Jasper, Texas[1] as an example and described

enduring racial discrimination in American society and the vulnerability of African

Americans. He described that fear of racism has been deeply embedded in the Black

community and it curtails African Americans' visitation to natural environment or remote

areas. David's explanation was confirmed by several other informants. Sean described his

fear of being in a rural setting:

> Yes, I am little uncomfortable being out in, I wouldn't say wooden areas, but non-
>
> urban areas, really cautious about that. When I first [moved to Texas], there was a
>
> church event and it was in one of these little small towns. We were driving in this
>
> little small town and somebody was following us and I got really nervous. And, I had
>
> also another church related event. But it was in East Texas. And to get there, you
>
> have to take a lot of back roads and I was really uncomfortable, because in East Texas
>
> it's known that there is the Klan.

Sean stated that his safety concern is heightened in rural settings for fear of potential racial

discrimination. Similarly, Steven explained how fear of racism shaped his recreational

decisions:

> I won't spend a night at the park by myself without other guys with me. Because you
>
> never know whose watching you and you never know [if somebody] comes out to
>
> you in night time and do stuffs. I believe that. So no, I won't spend a night, unless it
>
> is a hotel or some type of room. I would do that. But camping out? Nah.

These comments from older informants illustrate that they were afraid of visiting remote

natural environment due to strong fear of racism. There was an agreement that many African

---

[1] James Byrd Jr., a 49 years old African American male was murdered by three White supremacists in Jasper, Texas in 1998. He was lynched, chained his ankles to a pickup truck, and dragged for three miles in a remote wooded area. Later, three men dumped their victim's torso in front of an African American cemetery. This murder case drew national attentions due to brutality and diehardness of racism.

Americans possess heightened safety concerns when they visit rural areas and wildlands—all due to racism.

Thus, informants explained that African Americans share strong fear of racism which remains deeply embedded in the Black community. Although institutionalized racism ended in 1960s, older informants were still fearful about racial discrimination that targeted Blacks and were acutely concerned for their safety when traveling to unfamiliar places. Moreover, young informants' comments showed that fear of racism has been socially reproduced across generations in the Black community via storytelling and teaching from older generations in the family.

Black Travel Habitus: Racism-related Travel Choices

Fear of racism exerted considerably negative impacts on the travel behavior and destination selections of many informants. Informants stated that African Americans in general, including themselves, employed a number of tactics to avoid racial discrimination when they travel. They intentionally avoided certain locations where they might be mistreated, used well-established tourism infrastructures, and sought companions who are familiar with the destination when they travel to places regarded as potentially unsafe. These tactics were surprisingly consistent with the findings from existing studies on African Americans' travel behavior. It indicates that informants have internalized their socio-historical condition and developed unique travel patterns. The following interview excerpt from Steven nicely summarizes this situation:

> I'm always cautious of it (racism). I don't go out and look for it. I see this person and say, "Oh, this person will be bad." No. I don't do that....Now what [racism] does do for me is certain area, certain place where I just know, I just know there is not a place I wanna be when sun goes down. You know, this is not a place I wanna be where I feel comfortable and safe...you know small rural towns that, those small towns,

generally, they are old fashion….When we travel, I stay in 4-5 star hotels, I'm not

gonna stay in the hinky dinky hotel….[Franchise hotels] are gonna be careful about

what they do and how they do as oppose to mom and pop places. I make sure that,

when I'm traveling, I'm not breaking the law. Because certain town, certain part of

the country, you get stop [by police officer], you are in trouble.

In this comment, Steven mentioned he had four specific rules for traveling: always be observant of the surrounding environment, avoid small towns where few minorities live, use well-established hotels, and comply with the laws. Other informants also had similar strategies. Jennifer stated that she carefully selects travel destinations and avoids areas in the Deep South unless she has family or friends living in the region:

If you're going through the South, yeah, there are some places that we just avoid

unless we have family living in there. Because you will be treated like a stepchild.

And so in the South, folks are very careful on where they go or not go. And I know

different, I listen to how folks have been killed and shot and misused right here in the

South, so yeah, I pick and choose where I wanna go.

Stephanie stated that she only traveled to familiar places, and preferred bringing someone who is accustomed to the area if she had to go to unfamiliar locations:

I usually go where I'm familiar with or [I'm going with] someone who is familiar

with. So safety is definitely an issue. There are places I would like to visit outdoor,

like Mount Rushmore. I'd love to take the kids and visit around Mount Rushmore.

But, where Mount Rushmore is located? (chuckle). There are very few minorities

(chuckle). Yeah, so …I will tell you that it will be a concern, unless I am going with

someone I feel safe and comfortable.

Stephanie's travel mobility was significantly constrained by fear of racism. She stated that safety concerns made it difficult for her to freely visit Mount Rushmore, one of the most iconic landmarks in the United States, and she is highly selective about where she visits.

Nevertheless, some informants stated that they do not employ particular strategies to protect themselves from racism. Instead, they faced the risk of racial discrimination with their strong belief in human rights and social equality. Justin mentioned his point of view:

> See, my thing is, I don't care [how others view my race]. You don't have to sit next to me [if you don't like my race]. I still enjoy myself. I didn't allow those negative images to affect my actions. I'm maybe more cautious, maybe more aware of my surroundings, but it didn't stop me doing what I want to do. It causes some stress when I have my children with me to make sure that I'm protecting them. But that's about it, [the majority of people] are actually good people. I just don't, I am not going to make the good pay for the bad. But as far as them to having their personal preferences, you have every rights to yours. I have right to mine.

Justin strongly believed that he has a right to be equally treated wherever he goes. He affirmed that it is not his problem if he is discriminated based on his racial identity. Amanda was another informant who was not particularly concerned of racial discrimination. When we asked how her experience of racism impacted her travel behavior, Amanda made the following response:

> Not at all, not at all. Because I have that experienced with that one location, I'm not gonna let that one location, that bad experience put me in this little shell, and I can't go and see the rest of the world, you know, there's so much out there to see….It not at all impacted me. Because I wanna go to see the world,….you have to just move on with life. Just kept keep going. Kept keep going.

Amanda believed that she should not let racial discrimination dictate her worldview.

Thus, some informants employed specific strategies to minimize the risk of experiencing racial discrimination while some other informants confronted the risk with aggressive manners and did not allow potential racism subvert their travel behaviors and decisions. Although the letter group's approach might look courageous and admirable, it is clear that all informants, and probably most Blacks in contemporary America, are constantly exposed to potential racism while they travel.

Accommodating Park Officials

Although many informants experienced various forms of racial discrimination while traveling, it is important to note that they had not experienced any racial mistreatment within federally managed recreation areas such as national parks and state parks. They articulated that their interactions with park officials and other recreationists were pleasant and positive. David stated that everybody he encountered in these parks were accommodating and nice:

> Park rangers, especially national parks are very accommodating. I remember we were at the trail road at the Rocky Mountain National Park. The boys and I, we sat through the park ranger [who] gave [us] a lecture about elks and, educational, it was good, it was real good….I never felt anything like "What are you doing here?" or you know, No, never had. In fact, what I'm saying is people who go out there is little different. They are more accommodating and open minded. You don't see any booing, everybody is nice. They are, talk to you, they are friendly, um my experience all have been pleasant. You know, people you have something in common. We are seeing at different places and we come back at the campsite and I never had something stolen or vandalized or anything like that. Everybody is very, very accommodating.

David was not particularly concerned by racism and safety issue when he visited national and state parks because he never had unpleasant interactions with park officials or other visitors. In fact, he recalled that his interactions with other people in parks have been always

enjoyable and pleasant. He also stated that people seem to have more open-mind in places like this. Sean also mentioned that he never had unpleasant interaction with other people who fished.

> There's just, kinda affinity among people who fish and so it's like, if you fish, that put you in the club. So yeah, I interacted with [White fishers]. Cause, typically most fishermen will....Most of them communicate where the fish has been caught.

Similarly to Sean, Anne stated that she had not really experienced any discrimination when she was at parks. She recalled that her interactions with other recreationists were delightful:

> I think, I, when I am camping or hiking, it's just more so everybody just there having fun. You know, "Hey, where are you from?" or you know, "What part of Texas are you from?" or "What brought you here", you know. I think when you are in that type of environment, it just more so laid back and people are just kind of friendly, just the environment and atmosphere which has really [make people to have different mindset]….yeah so everybody was just there to enjoy, you know, and have fun. It was never be like "Oh, look" or anything like that.

Anne believed that the reason why she did not experience any unpleasant interactions with other people is because national and state parks infuse a friendly attitude among visitors. She also posited that people who visited these sites hold a common focal point, which is having fun and a good time, so it promotes harmonious and friendly interactions.

> In sum, informants articulated that their interactions with other recreationists and park officials at national parks and state parks were pleasant and positive and they do not recall any unpleasant experience. Informants' account implied that federally managed recreational sites such as national and state parks are relatively racism-free context and Blacks often encounter racial discrimination primarily in private sectors and on their way to the parks.

Discussion

Using qualitative research approach and the concept of habitus, this study investigated how racial discrimination affects African Americans' travel patterns. Habitus offered unique analytic scope and persuasive explanation about the status of Black travel. Moreover, vignette technique helped us to gain rich and detailed information about the informants' experience of racism and how it impacted their travel behavior. The findings showed that racism is a fundamental explanation of African Americans' travel patterns.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship among the first four salient themes identified in the present study. First, many informants articulated that they directly experienced racial discrimination when they traveled. It is evident that racism remains pervasive in American society and many informants frequently encountered racial mistreatments from both service providers and other patrons of tourism-related businesses. Second, although some younger informants have not directly encountered racism, they have learned its severity and brutality from their parents or grandparents and indirectly experienced racial discrimination. Subsequently, both direct and indirect experiences of racism have formed strong fear of racism in informants' mind. The fear was especially stronger among older informants due to their experience of Jim Crows before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed. Moreover, the fear was considerably intensified when informants traveled to unfamiliar places, rural areas, and Southern states. Informants' fear of racism was in turn manifested in their distinctive travel behavior. They tended to carefully plan their trip, travel with a large group, use established accommodation facilities, visit places where family or friends live, and avoid remote and unfamiliar locations. Although institutional racism ended in the 1960s, informants felt that fear of racism remains deeply inculcated in the fabric of Black culture. Therefore, many African Americans employ methodical coping strategies against potential racism when they travel.

It is worth highlighting that informants' coping strategies were similar to the findings from existing tourism studies on African Americans' travel patterns. Studies have documented that African Americans are usually under-represented in outdoor recreation settings (Floyd, 1999; Taylor Grandjean, & Gramann, 2011; Weber & Sultana, 2013) and tend to travel short distance with a large group, prefer structured and organized travel patterns, and visit destinations specific to African American heritage (Mandala Research, 2011; Philipp, 1994; Williams & Chacko, 2008). However, previous studies were unable to explain these travel patterns with a viable theoretical framework and sufficient empirical evidence. The concept of habitus and rich interview data from this study show that Blacks purposefully practice those travel behaviors in order to minimize the probability of encountering racial discrimination. Informants indicated that historical racial discrimination has forced African Americans to develop distinctive travel habitus and they are still negatively impacted by racism.

This study also acknowledges the effectiveness of the vignette technique for investigating racial issues. Three vignettes we used during interviews allowed us to obtain rich data in regard to informants' experience of racism and their travel patterns. All informants, except Jeff, stated that the vignettes portray common racial mistreatment targeting Blacks and they have experienced similar incidents. After they read the vignettes, informants talked about their experience of racial discrimination without hesitation and shared intimate details of their life stories. While establishing a certain level of rapport with interviewees is critical in qualitative interview (Patton, 2002), the vignettes provided a point of departure that interviewees could comfortably share their personal stories and they quickly and naturally led us to the in-depth discussions of racism without creating an uncomfortable atmosphere. Vignette technique's effectiveness in collecting vivid accounts warrants its utility in racial studies and the investigation of other sensitive topics.

This study possesses two limitations. First, this study recruited middle class African Americans who possess above-average income, have professional career, and are college educated. Although our data provide rich information about Black travelers, adding insights from African Americans of other social class is desirable to better understand African Americans' travel patterns and their experience of racism during traveling. Second, all informants were recruited from in south central region of the United States. Since southern states are known to be conservative area where racial prejudice is stronger than other places in the country, recruiting informants from Northern states or other regions in the U.S. might provide another insight and yield deeper understanding in the present topic.

The findings from this study show that African Americans' travel patterns is not an issue limited in the field of tourism, but a serious social problem in the United States. Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited racial discrimination in tourism business such as hotels and restaurants, it is clear that many African Americans continuously suffer racism while they travel and this negative experience substantially limits their mobility and tourism activity. Moreover, while tourism activity provides various social and health benefits, as well as educational opportunities to learn about history and culture (Chen & Petrick, 2013; Philipp, 2000), African Americans are less likely than other racial groups to be the beneficiaries of these positive effects of tourism. What is even more problematic is that many Blacks might not fully understand the unfairness of the current condition of Black travel. Habitus explains that agents are usually unaware of the root of their own disposition because they have accustomed to their habitus for a long period of time and it is historically deep-seated customary behaviors and thinking (Bourdieu, 1977; Swartz, 1997). In Bourdieu's term, this condition is called symbolic violence, the violence that makes agents unaware of the unfairness and arbitrariness of their social condition and readily accept the status quo. Although the majority of informants seemed to be fully aware of how historical racial

discrimination has shaped unique travel behaviors of African Americans, it is possible that

many African Americans believe their travel patterns are inherent Black culture and failed to

conceive them as specific coping strategies that they have developed in response to the

centuries of racial oppression. This is a pressing issue in social justice and equal rights in the

United States. Although we were not able to find sufficient empirical evidence of symbolic

violence within Black tourism, future researchers are encouraged to pursue this line of

inquiry.

      How can we eradicate racial discrimination in tourism and fear of racism among

Black travelers? Clearly, it is a formidable task that cannot be accomplished without

collective effort from tourism industry and beyond. Existing studies suggest that tourism

organizations and professionals have a long way to go. Historically, tourism sector has been

racially segregated industry so the businesses have served their own race or ethnic groups

and lacked proper understanding of consumers from different background (Butler, Carter, &

Brunn, 2002; Klemm & Kelsey, 2004). Moreover, Black employees are considerably under-

represented in tourism-related industry, especially in upper management position (Shinew &

Hibbler, 2002). Although African Americans prefer tourism destinations that acknowledge

Black history and culture, Black heritages are often misrepresented or omitted in tourism

destinations (Lockhart, 2006; Small, 2013; Taylor, 2000). Similarly, African Americans'

opinions and inputs were neglected in the decision making of a tourism development plan

(Gallardo & Stein, 2007). Given these empirical evidence, it is questionable if the industry is

truly ready and capable of serving this historically disfranchised population group (Scott,

2000). To dispel racial inequality within tourism sector, professionals and policy makers

need a greater effort to fully integrate African Americans in the field and accommodate

African American travelers by providing safe and comfortable tourism experience.

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Table 1.
Characteristics of Informants

I-1. Sean; late 50s; male; works for a city government; had lived in Southeast Dallas area for 13 years; an enthusiastic angler; visited CHSP a few times for fishing.

I-2. Risty; mid 30s; male; works for a city government; had lived in Southeast Dallas area for seven years; never visited CHSP.

I-3. Jennifer; mid 50s; female; works for a city government; had lived in Southeast Dallas area for three years; has three daughters and one boy; never visited CHSP.

I-4. Stephanie; mid 40s; female; works for a city government, had lived in Southeast Dallas area for 12 years; used to enjoy outdoor recreation at her father's large property; never visited CHSP.

I-5. David; early 60s; male; retired; had lived in Southeast Dallas area for five years; an enthusiastic outdoor recreationist and has visited multiple national and state parks; never visited CHSP.

I-6. Jeff; early 50s; male; used to work for a city government; lives at Northwest Dallas area; not interested in outdoor recreation and has never visited CHSP.

I-7. Sam; late 50s; male; used to work for a city government; had lived in Southeast Dallas area for 30 years and very familiar with the history of the community; does not have a strong desire to visit CHSP.

I-8. Justin; early 40s; male; a business man; born and raised in Dallas area; does not like outdoor recreation because he is afraid of snakes; never visited CHSP.

I-9. Steven; mid 60s; male; retired; lived in the Las Vegas and moved back to Southeast Dallas area 5 years ago; visited CHSP with his friend for fishing; never saw any advertisement about the park.

I-10. Amanda; early 40s; female; had lived in Southeast Dallas area for 10 years; married for 15 years and has three children; not interested in outdoor recreation; never visited CHSP.

I-11. Anne; late 20s; female; a school teacher; had lived in Dallas all of her life; recalled that racial demographic of her community started to change in the mid-1990s; never visited CHSP.

I-12. Susan; early 20s; female; graduate student; had lived in West Dallas area her entire life before going to graduate school; does not like outdoor recreation; never visited CHSP.

I-13. Kevin; early 20s; college student; lives in the North Dallas area in a racially diverse community; enjoys basketball and football; not interested in outdoor recreation; never visited CHSP.
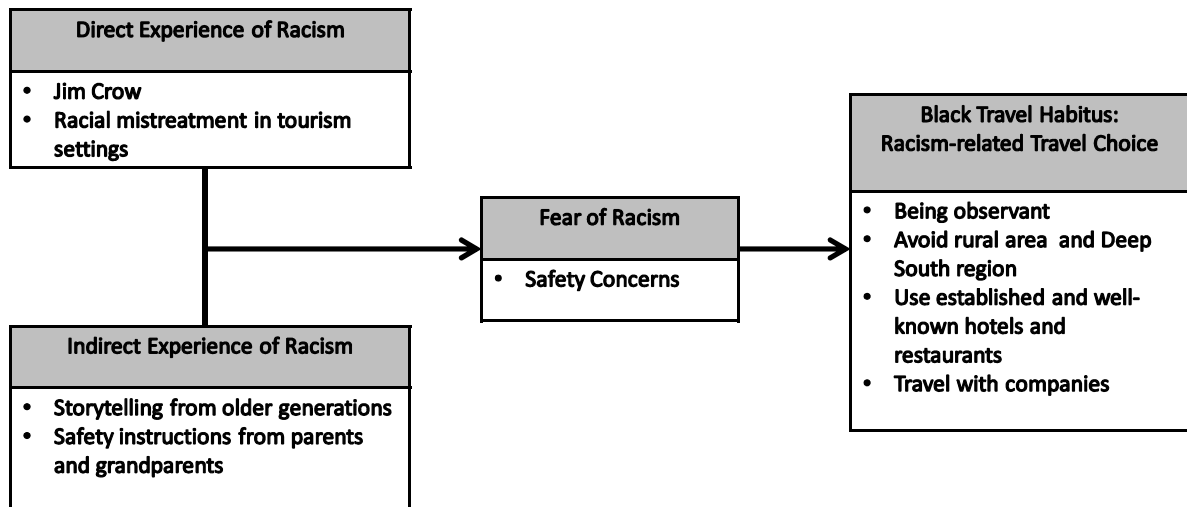
Figure 1. The causal relationship among direct and indirect racism, fear of racism, and Black travel habitus.

Appendix

Vignettes

1) My wife entered a department store. While she was looking for a gift, she realized that she was constantly watched by both customers and workers in the store as if people are curious or confused about her presence. She noticed that most of people in the store were Whites and she was the only person who is non-White. She felt uncomfortable being in the store and had to go out. The male store clerk followed her outside the store and said that he has to check her bag without any particular reasons. There was no business ethical reaction.

2) I thought my son would be much older before I had to tell him about the Black Male Code. As I explained it, the Code goes like this: Always pay close attention to your surroundings, son, especially if you are in an affluent neighborhood where black folks are few. Understand that even though you are not a criminal, some people might assume you are, especially if you are wearing certain clothes. Never argue with police, but protect your dignity and take pride in humility. Please don't assume, son, that all white people view you as a threat. Suspicion and bitterness can imprison you. But as a black male, you must go above and beyond to show strangers what type of person you really are—parents are talking to their children, especially their black sons, about the Code. It's a talk the black community has passed down for generations, an evolving oral tradition from the days when an errant remark could easily cost black people their job, their freedom, or sometimes their life.

3) When I make a decision for traveling and going somewhere, I always think about the possibility that I encounter racism. I don't want to be mistreated and ruin my vacation. I don't want to go to a wrong place at wrong time. There are many places that I want to visit, yet I'm not sure whether some of those places are OK to visit. I realize that I spend extra energy and time for gathering information about the destination and if it is safe place to visit.