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Keywords
consumer, discrimination, profiling, race, restaurant service

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Exploring Subtle Forms of Service Discrimination against Black Diners

Zachary W. Brewster, Michael Lynn & Shelytia Cocroft

Abstract

In this paper we advance scholarship on consumer racial profiling (CRP), in general, and the practice as it occurs in restaurant establishments, in particular, by presenting findings from a survey of restaurant consumers that was designed to ascertain the degree to which discriminate service is evident in Black and White customers' perceptions and evaluations of their servers' behaviors. We found no evidence of interracial differences in subjects' perceptions of being the recipients of subtle server behaviors that are discretionally conveyed (e.g., recommend entrée, compliment food choice, joke with, etc.) or those that constitute standard markers of service quality (e.g., eye contact, smiling, expressing appreciation, etc.). We did, however, find some evidence of CRP in customers' perceptions of their servers' attentiveness/promptness. Additionally, we found that African Americans' tend to subjectively appraise their servers' performance less favorably than their White counterparts and this is the case even when other indicators of service quality are held constant. Findings taken as a whole suggest that servers' extend similar cues of hospitality but do so in qualitatively different ways (e.g., less sincere) across racial groups. We discuss the implications of these findings and conclude by encouraging additional scholarship on the subtle nature of racial discrimination in consumer settings.

Key Words: Consumer, Discrimination, Race, Restaurant

In contrast to the overt manifestations of racial biases that characterized earlier historical eras, the vast majority of racial discrimination today is said to be expressed in subtle, covert, and insidious ways (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Coates 2007). Scholars have further noted that much of contemporary racial discrimination emerges from firmly embedded cognitive biases that can function to unconsciously undermine the behaviors of even those with strong commitments to racial equality (Dabney, Dugan, Topalli, and Hollinger 2006; Dovidio, Kawakami, and Gaertner 2002; Nier Gaertner 2012).). While racial minorities report experiencing discrimination across a wide domain of public spaces an emerging body of literature indicates that they might be particularly vulnerable to subtle and covert forms of mistreatment when engaging in commercial transactions (Ainscough and Motley 2000; Cobas and Feagin 2008; Feagin and Sikes 1994; Feagin 1991; Gabbidon 2003; Gabbidon and Higgins 2007; Harris 2003; Harris, Henderson, and Williams 2005; Hein 2000; Schreer, Smith, and Thomas 2009).

Racial discrimination in such contexts has been generally conceptualized to fall under the umbrella of consumer racial profiling (CRP) defined by Harris et al. (2005, p. 163), "as a type of differential treatment of consumers in the marketplace based on race/ethnicity that constitutes denial of or degradation in the products and/or services that are offered to the consumer." While this definition is broad enough to include discrimination that occurs in all consumption contexts scholarship on CRP has tended to focus on market experiences that are relatively rare (e.g., real estate transactions, automobile purchases, mortgage lending, etc.). Considerably less scholarship has been done on CRP in markets utilized more frequently (see Antecol and Cobb-Clark 2008; Pager and Shepherd 2008; Siegelman 1998, p. 70; Yinger 1998). Only within the last 10 years, for instance, has there been a notable increase in the number of studies conducted on racial

profiling in retail settings (see Gabbidon 2003; Dabney et al. 2006; Schreer et al. 2009). Dining away from home, like shopping, is another quintessential American activity and yet only a limited number of studies have explicitly assessed the issue of race-based consumer discrimination in the restaurant context (e.g., Brewster 2012; Brewster and Rusche 2012; Dirks and Rice 2004; Perry 2005; Rusche and Brewster 2008).

From the limited number of studies that have been done on the topic it can be surmised that full-service restaurants constitute a market context within which customers of color are particularly vulnerable to mistreatment (Brewster 2013a). Considerably less is known, however, about the form or nature of race-based discrimination in this setting. Given that racial biases harbored by individuals in contemporary society are more generally acknowledged to become manifest in subtle ways, researchers have speculated CRP in restaurants to be evident in subtle interpersonal server behaviors (e.g., verbal/nonverbal cues of friendliness) that function to optimize (or impede) customers' dining experiences (cf. Brewster 2012; Brewster and Rusche 2012; Rusche and Brewster 2008; Brewster and Mallinson 2009; Dirks and Rice 2004; Lynn 2012). While there are both theoretical and empirical sources of support underlying this line of reasoning there are no existing studies that have assessed this possibility directly.

Thus, in this paper we advance scholarship on CRP by analyzing data derived from a survey of consumers that was designed to explore the degree to which the perceptions and evaluations of servers' behaviors vary across Black and White restaurant patrons. Specifically, we first test for Black-White differences in customers' perceptions of their servers' attentiveness/promptness. Next, we test for interracial differences in customers' perceptions of the interpersonal behaviors that are conventionally expected of restaurant servers (e.g., smiling, eye contact, etc.) as well as those that are extended to customers on a discretionary basis (e.g.,

joking with customers, complementing their food choices, etc.). Finally, we draw from the literature on emotional labor to explore the possibility that customers of color are extended the same objective cues of hospitality but experience them in qualitatively different ways than their white counterparts. African Americans and whites alike may, for instance, be greeted with a smile from their server and yet as a result of implicit and explicit server biases African Americans might experience this gesture of interpersonal friendliness as less authentic than their white counterparts. In other words, and as the old adage goes, perhaps it is not what service providers say (or do) but how they say it that is of importance towards understanding the experiences of customers of color in consumer settings. To situate the current study in extant literature, we begin with a more nuanced discussion of the literature on the subtle nature of racial discrimination in consumer markets, in general, and restaurant establishments, in particular.

The Subtleties of Discriminatory Service

Ascertaining with certainty when and under what conditions an advantageous, or detrimental, outcome is attributed to an individuals' race is a difficult undertaking regardless of the physical and social context (see National Research Council 2004). However, there is one salient reason to believe that, relative to even other commonly utilized markets (e.g., retail), African Americans might be particularly vulnerable to profiling in the restaurant context. This increased vulnerability stems from the common sentiment among servers that African Americans are poor tippers relative to their white counterparts (see Brewster and Nell Rusche 2012; Dirks and Rice 2004; Lynn 2012; Mallinson and Brewster 2005; McCall and Lynn 2009; Mallinson and Brewster 2005; Noll and Arnold 2004; Rusche and Brewster 2008). Thus, servers are able to rationalize discriminatory service delivery to African Americans by couching such mistreatment

within the context of their economic dependence on customer gratuities.[1] In other words, they are able to justify giving less attention to Black patrons (i.e., discriminate) because they do not perceive that they will be fairly compensated for their efforts (Ayres, Vars, and Zakariya 2005; Brewster 2012, 2013a, 2013b; Brewster and Rusche 2012; Brewster and Mallinson 2009; Lynn 2004, 2006, 2011, 2012; Margalioth 2006; Dirks and Rice 2004; Rusche and Brewster 2008). It is undoubtedly only by couching racial biases and discriminatory behaviors within such an economic frame that servers are willing to not only openly covey their disdain towards minority customers, African Americans in particular, but also to readily admit to sometimes giving these customers relatively inferior service (see Brewster and Rusche 2012; Rusche and Brewster 2008). Thus, the remuneration structure of restaurant serving coupled with persistent societal structures of white hegemony is likely to render racial and ethnic minorities particularly vulnerable to mistreatment in the full-service restaurant market. [2]

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[1] In fact, because of low hourly wages and tax withholdings, the majority (as much as 100 percent) of servers' take home income is in the form of tips (Azar 2003; Lynn 2006b). Servers working in the restaurant where this study was conducted, for instance, earn an hourly wage of only $2.65 (before tips).

[2] The popularity of dining out in the United States also increases consumers' vulnerability to race-based mistreatment in this setting (see Brewster and Rusche 2012). During an average month, over 90% of the adult population dines out at least once (Scarborough Research Group 2006), and 43% report that restaurants are an essential part of their lifestyle (National Restaurant Association 2013).

In some cases such mistreatment is egregious and overt. When a group of black teenagers visited a Denny's in San Jose, California and were asked to surrender a "sitting fee" of two dollars and pay for their meals in advance before they would be seated and served there was little uncertainty that they had been victims of racial profiling (Relin & Gaskins, 1995). However, despite episodic incidences of such overt forms of mistreatment, social scientists generally agree that contemporary racial discrimination is more commonly expressed in subtle and covert ways (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Coates, 2008; Harris 2003; Harris, et al. 2005; Feagin, 1991). The subtlety of racial profiling in consumer settings is sometimes evident in racial minorities being made to wait relatively longer periods of time to be served in commercial settings (Ainscough and Motley 2000; Chou and Feagin 2008; Cobas and Feagin 2008; Harris 2003; Harris et al. 2005; Myers, Bellows, Fakhoury, Hale, Hall, and Ofman 2010; Walsh 2009).

Ainscough and Motley (2000), for instance, found in an audit study that when black confederates attempted to return an unopened compact disc to retail stores without a receipt they were made to wait twice as long for service as comparable white confederates. Similarly, Myers, Bellows, Fakhoury, Hale, Hall, and Ofman (2010) found a racial disparity in wait times in their study of Boston coffee shops such that black customers were observed to wait longer durations than whites.[3] In the restaurant context, longer wait times to be seated and/or served is an inevitable outcome of the "games" that at least some servers play to avoid providing service to minority customers (Dirks and Rice 2004; Harris 2003; Harris et al. 2005; Schmit and Copeland, 2004). Racial differences in time spent waiting to be seated, served, or otherwise cared for in restaurants might more generally reflect the relative lack of attention devoted to

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[3] Although this difference was found not to be statistically significant the small number of black customers in this study (n=14) might have led to a type II error.

customers of color who are perceived to be poor tippers. A respondent in Dirks and Rice's (2004, p. 43) study, for instance, states matter-of-factly: "I…I hate to admit, but… I try to concentrate myself on tables who I know are going to tip well."

Racial profiling has also been shown to be manifest in service providers' verbal and nonverbal communications with customers of color. Validating victims' self-reports of racial profiling in retail settings (Gabbidon and Higgins 2007; Gabbidon et al. 2008), field experiments have found customers of color to be subjected to more intense surveillance tactics when shopping (e.g., staring, following, etc., see Schreer et al. 2009). Even when not suspected of shoplifting (cf. Gabbidon 2003) there are reasons to suspect that customers of color might more generally experience differential treatment in their interactions with service workers in the form of less friendliness, professionalism, respect, appreciation, and enthusiasm (see King et al. 2006; Heble et al. 2002; Walsh 2009). Instances of such interpersonal differences in the treatment of racial minority consumers, in some cases, reflect the explicit racially biased attitudes held by some employees. In other cases, subtle differences in the way customers are treated in consumer settings likely emerge out of employees' unconscious cognitive racial biases (Dabney, Dugan, Topalli, and Hollinger 2006; Dovidio, Kawakami, and Gaertner 2002; Fiske and Taylor 2008; Quillian 2006; Vanman, Paul, Ito, and Miller 1997; Vanman, Saltz, Nathan, and Warren 2004).

In a study by Vanman, Paul, Ito, and Miller (1997), for instance, the authors showed subjects pictures of Black and white individuals and asked them to imagine working and interacting with those observed in the photographs. While overtly expressing *no* racial biases toward the Black subjects in the pictures, analysis of facial expressions revealed that most respondents harbored implicit racial prejudices, evident in fewer positive facial expressions (e.g., smiling) when asked to imagine working with African Americans (see also Vanman, Saltz,

Nathan, and Warren 2004). Similarly, research by Dovidio, Kawakami, and Gaertner (2002; see also Kawakami, Young, and Dovidio 2002) found implicit racial attitudes to adversely affect the interpersonal behaviors of non-prejudice subjects. The authors note that effects of implicit racial biases are particularly pronounced with regard to nonverbal behaviors that are not easily controllable and which correlate with perceptions of friendliness (e.g., smiling, eye contact). Moreover, research shows that even in the event that a person is aware of their implicit racial attitudes and has the motivation to resist the effects of such biases on their behaviors they will likely not be successful in situations that require decisions to be made quickly under conditions of high cognitive demand (see Correll, Park, Judd, and Wittenbrink 2002; Quillian 2006).

Moreover, even if extended the same the objective cues of interpersonal friendliness as White patrons there are reasons to believe that such cues might be conveyed to African Americans in a less authentic and sincere way. Specifically, servers' implicit/explicit biases towards Black Americans are likely to lead them to engage in surface acting when waiting on African Americans and deep acting when waiting on White patrons. Deep acting is a form of emotional regulation wherein employees' emotional expressions (e.g., smiling) are congruent with their actual emotions (e.g., happiness, cf. Grandey 2003; Hochschild 1983). In such cases, employees comply with organizational expectations regarding the appropriate display of emotions by extending "service with a smile" because they have cognitively induced authentic feelings of happiness (Grandey, Dickter and Sin 2004). Surface acting, on the other hand, is a strategy used by employees to comply with organizational display rules that entails suppressing or feigning their emotions so that they can display an emotion (e.g., smiling) that is otherwise incongruent with how they actually feel (e.g., anger).

While both strategies can be effectively used by service providers to regulate their emotions to comply with organizational display rules, existing research has found deep acting to be more strongly associated with favorable customer evaluations of their service providers (Grandey, Fisk, Mattila, Jansen, and Sideman 2005; Groth, Hennig-Thurau, and Walsh 2009; Hennig-Thurau, Groth, Paul, and Gremier 2006). Additionally, in a study of restaurant server-customer dyads, Chi, Grandey, Diamond, and Krimmel (2011) found that servers who utilized deep acting were more likely to exceed their customers' service expectations relative to those who used a surface acting strategy. Further, consumers have been shown to be quite proficient at detecting when a service provider is surface acting and under such circumstances they have been found to evaluate their service encounter less favorably than when surface acting is not detected (Groth et al. 2009).

In sum, existing research indicates that racial minority restaurant patrons, African Americans in particular, are vulnerable to subtle forms of discrimination when dining in American restaurants. First, given servers' a priori expectations of inadequate tips from African American customers some servers are likely to consciously withhold emotional and physical labor from such tables. In other cases servers are likely to unconsciously discriminate against these customers in subtle ways as a result of implicit cognitive biases that have been shaped and sustained by the long history of racial oppression and contentious race relations in the United States. The effects of these cognitive biases are likely to be further compounded, or alternatively created, by discourses of racial prejudice that have been shown to be quite common in restaurant workplaces (e.g., racist comments, coded argot, etc., cf. Brewster 2013b; Brewster and Rusche 2012; Dirks and Rice 2004; Rusche and Brewster 2008). Given the cognitive and time demands associated with waiting tables (cf. Gatta 2002) the effects of servers' implicit racial biases are

likely to become manifest in the interpersonal behaviors of even those with a strong commitment to extending equally good service to all of their guest (see Correll, Park, Judd, and Wittenbrink 2002; Fazio 1990; Quillian 2006). Further, if servers' have a greater propensity to engage in surface acting when waiting on Black customers, as logic would suggest, it is likely that these diners will experience less authenticity/sincerity in their interactions with their servers even if all the objective benchmarks of good service delivery are perceived to have been met.

For the aforementioned reasons we posit that relative to White customers, African American patrons are, on average, receiving comparatively less when they dine in U.S. restaurants although we are aware of no studies that have quantitatively explored this hypothesis directly. Thus, in the following sections we advance the literature on consumer racial profiling by presenting findings from a restaurant exit survey designed to test for Black-White differences in customers' evaluations of not only the subtle and yet concrete aspects of service quality (e.g., server attentiveness/promptness) but also differences in customers' perceptions and evaluations of subtle verbal and nonverbal interpersonal server behaviors that function to convey friendliness, sincerity, appreciation, professionalism, and interpersonal warmth (Martin and Adams 1999; Schreer et al. 2009).

METHOD

<u>Sample</u>

Customers were approached after stepping out of a restaurant located in a large northern city and asked if they would be willing to complete a short questionnaire about their dining experience that evening. The restaurant seated approximately 175 persons, was moderately priced (average entrée $17.00), and had a diverse clientele but disproportionately consisted of

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White and Black consumers.[4] The research site in this study was conveniently chosen upon the recommendation from a colleague who was aware that the authors were interested in conducting an exit survey of diners. To be eligible to participate in this study subjects must have eaten dinner at the restaurant in question and paid a bill. Data were collected on 40 separate occasions in August and September of 2012 between 5:30pm and 9:00pm (Monday – Saturday).   Of the 821 customers that were solicited to participate 515 agreed to complete the questionnaire thus resulting in a 63% participation rate.[5]   After deleting cases where the subject was determined to

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[4] To discourage servers from behaving in response to their awareness of being studied we administered our survey to customers outside of the establishment. As a result, the researchers had very few interactions with the restaurant's wait staff and only rarely, in the beginning of our data collection efforts, did a server inquire about the purpose of our research. In these cases they were simply told that that it was a study on the experiences of restaurant customers. Given the spatial disconnect between the researchers and servers, the lack of detail conveyed to servers regarding the content of the survey, and the duration of data collection (2 months) we do not think servers' delivery of service was affected by virtue of the study design.

[5] Of the 306 individuals that refused to participate in this study, 25% were identified by the researchers as African American (n=21), 68% as White (n=194), and 7% as being non-Black and non-White (n=21). Information on the race of the remaining 20 customers that refused to participate was not documented. A comparison of the racial profile of non-participants with the racial profile of our analytic sample indicates that Black customers were more likely to participate in our study than were Whites.

be disengaged from the survey instrument (n=30), [6] wherein the subject failed to answer the race

question (n=5), identified with a racial group other than white or black (n=40), or were missing

data on one or more of our dependent measures (n=36) the sample consisted of 241 white

customers and 163 black customers (n=404). [7] To avoid loss of additional cases and statistical

power a multiple imputation procedure was then performed to replace missing values on all of

the remaining independent variables used in the analysis. [8]

Primary Variables of Interest

To assess whether African American customers are on average more likely than their

white counterparts to experience inattentive service in restaurants we asked customers to indicate

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[6] Subjects were determined to be "disengaged" from the survey instrument if they reported to

either agree or strongly agree that their server "appeared distracted" and "appeared

inconvenienced," but also "met expectations," and "appeared authentic." analysis.

[7] After deleting those cases that were determined to be disengaged we assessed whether subjects'

who were list-wise deleted differed in some meaningful way from those that were retained in our

analysis. First, we created a dummy variable wherein subjects' who self-identified as being of a

race other than White or Black (e.g., "other race") and those that had missing data on one or

more of the key variables in this study (customers' race, attentiveness, discretional/required

server behaviors, and subjective appraisal) were coded as missing (=1, n=81). Next, we

conducted independent sample T-tests on each of our dependent variables wherein item means of

those who deleted were compared with those who were retained in our analysis. We found no

mean differences in this analysis at the conventional (p. <.05) level of statistical significance.

[8] Less than 10 percent of the 404 observations were missing values on any one of our control

variables.

on a nine point scale how much they disliked (1) or liked (9) their servers' attentiveness and

promptness. Answers to these two questions were averaged to form an index we label server

attentiveness (Cronbach's alpha = .88). Subjects were also asked 14 questions designed to

ascertain information about their interactions with their servers' during the service encounter.

Specifically, subjects were asked to indicate on a 5 point scale (1=strongly disagree – 5=strongly

agree) how much they agreed or disagreed with each of the following statements:

1. My server recommended a food item when taking my order.
2. My server complimented me on my choice of a particular dish.
3. My server joked around with my table and made me laugh.
4. My server squatted or sat down at the table when taking my order.
5. My server smiled throughout the encounter.
6. My server gave his/her name when greeting my table.
7. My server maintained appropriate posture throughout the encounter.
8. My server maintained eye contact when talking to me.
9. My server thanked me for visiting the restaurant.
10. My server appeared distracted when taking care of me this evening.
11. My server made me feel like I was inconveniencing him/her when I made a request.
12. My server made me feel comfortable and welcome in the restaurant.
13. My server met my service expectation this evening.
14. My server was authentic and seemed to sincerely care about my dining experience.

Items 10 (distracted) and 11 (inconvenienced) were reverse coded so that higher scores reflect

more favorable evaluations of their servers.

Using the variables "recommend food item," "complimented food choice," "joked and

made laugh," and "squatted/sat at table" (items 1-4) we created a summated index measuring

subjects' perceptions of what we label discretional interpersonal server behaviors (Cronbach's

alpha = .68). [9] Next, the variables "smiled," "gave name," appropriate posture," "eye contact,"

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[9] It was confirmed with the management of the restaurant where these data were collected that

these behavior are not required of their wait staff (e.g., recommending food items is not required

as part of an up-selling policy). Our conceptual distinction between "discretional" and "required"

and "thanked" (items 5-9) were used to create a composite index measuring subjects' perceptions of hospitable behaviors that servers are conventionally expected or required to convey (Cronbach's alpha = .76). Finally, whereas items 1-10 measure subjects' perceptions of objective server behaviors (e.g., server either did or did not give his/her name, smile, recommend a food item, etc.), the questions "did not appear distracted," "did not appear inconvenienced," "comfortable and welcome," "met expectations," and "authentic and sincere" are evaluative in nature. Thus, we used these variables to create a composite index measuring customers' subjective appraisals of their servers' performance (Cronbach's alpha = .71).[10]

A rotated (Promax) principle components factor analysis was conducted separately on the items used to create each of these composite measures (discretional interpersonal, required interpersonal, and subjective appraisal) and in each case the items loaded on a single factor. However, the variable "squat/sat at table" did not load on the discretional interpersonal behaviors factor as strongly as the other three items in the index. Similarly, the variables "did not appear distracted" and "did not appear inconvenienced" failed to load on the subjective appraisal factor as strongly as the other three items in the index. Given these empirical observations, as a test of robustness we estimated each of the models in Table 2 after omitting these variables from the indices. The substantive conclusions derived from the results from these analyses were not

hospitable server behaviors is also supported by the observed mean differences between the two indices (e.g., the discretional behaviors are considerably less common than the required behaviors).

[10] Subjects that failed to respond to at least at least 60% the questions used to create each of the discrimination indices were omitted from the analysis using list-wise deletion (n=36).

notably different from those that we present in the main text. Also, as would be expected, the associations between our four measures of service discrimination were all positive and statistically reliable (at p < .001). However, the four measures did capture unique aspects of service as the attentiveness index correlated with the discretional interpersonal behavior index only .25 and with the required interpersonal behavior index only .49. The strongest correlation between service discrimination measures was observed between the required interpersonal and subjective appraisal indices (r = .67).

Our primary independent variable of interest in this study was measured by asking respondents to indicate whether they identify themselves as Black, White, or Other. Given the ambiguity concerning the race of those subjects' who identified with a racial group other than White or Black (n=40) we decided to omit them from the analysis and code customers' race to reflect whether or not the customer was Black (=1) or White (=0).

Control Variables

In our analysis we also control for the effects of several other variables that have been implicated in restaurant servers' proclivities to discriminate in their service delivery. First, because servers' have been shown to harbor biases towards customers who are perceived to be female, elderly, or of a lower socioeconomic background we control for the effects of subjects' sex, age, education, and income. Respondents sex was coded to reflect whether or not they were female (=1) while their age was calculated from a question asking them to identify the year that they were born. Additionally, subjects' were asked to indicate the highest level of education they had obtained (1 = less than High School degree, 2 = High School degree, 3 = Associates or Trade School degree, 4 = college bachelors degree, and 5 = Graduate degree) and their annual income (1 = below $30,000, 2 = $30,000 -$49,000, 3 = $50,000 - $69,000, and 4 = $70,000 or more).

Education and income are admittedly crude measures of the socioeconomic status of customers as perceived and categorized by restaurant servers but we nevertheless include them because education and income have also been shown to affect African Americans awareness of racially motivated mistreatment in public settings (cf. Feagin and Sikes 1994; Weitzer and Tuch 2002).

Second, interracial differences in the subtleties of hospitable server behaviors and customers' subjective dining experiences might, in part, be predicated on the race of their server. Customers might, in other words, be extended objectively more hospitable cues and/or interpret those objective cues as being more authentic or sincere when their server is of the same race (Lynn and Sturman 2011). To assess this possibility we asked subjects' to indicate whether their server was Black, White, or Other. Server race was coded to reflect whether or not the server was Black (n = 0, yes = 1). There were 7 cases, however, wherein the server was reported to be of an "other" race but because there were no servers employed in the restaurant during the study period that were not White or Black these cases were recoded to reflect having had a Black server (=1).

Third, because male servers have been shown to harbor more stereotypical views towards the tipping practices of African Americans (McCall and Lynn 2009) than females, we include a measure of servers' gender by asking subjects to indicate if their server was male (=0) or female (=1). Fourth, we include a control variable for the frequency in which our subjects' dine in the restaurant wherein these data were collected. Specifically, respondents were asked how often they ate at the restaurant and were prompted to report the number of times per week, month or year and to indicate which time period they used. Responses were converted to times per year and log transformed to provide a measure of patronage frequency. Finally, because servers might be more likely to provide discriminate service to African Americans when the restaurant is busy

(cf. Ainscough and Motley 2000) we include a binary variable in our models comparing

respondents who dined in the restaurant on Monday through Thursday (=0) with those that dined

in the restaurant on Friday or Saturday (=1).[11]

RESULTS

As shown in Table 1, the analytic sample used in this study is demographically quite

diverse. The results of multivariate Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analyses modeling

the effects of subjects' race on their perceptions and subjective appraisals of their servers'

behaviors are presented in Table 2. As shown in Model 1, African Americans are less likely than

their white counterparts to perceive that their servers delivered attentive/prompt service, although

this difference is not statistically significant at the conventional 95 percent confidence level (B =

-.263, t(394) = -1.91, p = .056). Further, as shown in Models 2 and 3, there were no reliable

Black-White differences in customers' perceptions that their servers conveyed to them the types

of hospitality enhancing behaviors that are discretional (B = -.064, t(394) =-.534, n.s.) or

professionally mandated (B=-.116, t(394)= -1.31, n.s.). The subjective appraisals of servers'

interpersonal behaviors predicted in Model 4, however, were found to be significantly lower

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[11] Ainscough and Motley (2000) found, for instance, that wait time of black confederates relative

to whites was inversely related to length of the line when the study subject arrived. The authors

interpret this as retail clerks' impeded ability to ignore black customers when they are 'next'

inline and in close proximity. Thus, discriminatory service delivery, even if expressed in subtle

ways, is likely to be most common when the restaurant is particularly busy as it is during such

times that servers could be more confident that the lack of hospitality conveyed to black

customers would be attributed to the hectic environment rather than to their own racial biases

(see Dovidio and Gaertner 2000).

among African Americans in this study relative to those of comparable white customers (B= -.235, t(394) = -3.08, p<.01) and as shown in Model 5 (Table 2) this difference cannot be accounted for by interracial differences in perceived server attentiveness, discretional, or required interpersonal service behaviors (B=-.145, t(391) = -2.65, p <.01).[12]

In an attempt to further explore this observed Black-White difference in customers' subjective appraisals of their servers' performance the product of customer race and each of the control variables were separately added to Model 5 (Table 2). In these analyses we found no statistically significant interaction effects thus indicating that the Black-White difference in subjective appraisals of their servers is robust across both customer (e.g., gender, age, income,

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[12] Recall that subjects who reported to either agree or strongly agree that their server "appeared distracted" and "appeared inconvenienced," but also "met expectations," and "appeared authentic" were identified as being "disengaged" from the survey instrument and thus deleted from our analysis. However, as a reviewer of this article pointed out, rather than an indication of subjects' disengagement with the questionnaire it is possible that this response pattern represents a meaningful dining experience. For instance, a customer who perceived their server's performance to be authentic but also had expectations that they would be "distracted" and "inconvenienced" because the restaurant was busy would have been incorrectly identified as disengaged and omitted from our analysis if their expectations were met. Unfortunately, we are not able to distinguish such subjects' from those that did not carefully read the questionnaire and as such, we error on the side of caution by deleting these cases. As a test of robustness we did, however, estimate models that included those subjects' who were identified as being disengaged from the survey instrument and the substantive conclusions derived from this analysis mirror those derived from the main analysis.

education, patronage frequency, weekend dining) and server characteristics (e.g., servers' race, gender, attentiveness, and discretional/required interpersonal behaviors).[13] The statistically insignificant effect of the product term between customers' race and servers' race in this analysis is particularly noteworthy. In contrast to existing research suggesting that customers' evaluate their servers more favorably when they are of the same race (see Lynn and Sturman 2011), these results suggest that African Americans' perceptions of less authenticity/sincerity are not sensitive to the perceived race of their servers.

[Tables 1 and 2 about Here]

DISCUSSION

It is routinely acknowledged that African Americans continue to be vulnerable to subtle forms of discrimination in consumer markets. However, researchers have rarely explored the nature of such subtle mistreatment. Thus, in this study we advance the literature on CRP by presenting findings from an exit survey of Black and White restaurant consumers who were asked a series of questions about the subtle cues of hospitality that servers have been posited to differentially convey to customers according to their race. In contrast to what others have speculated (cf. Brewster 2012; Brewster and Rusche 2012; Rusche and Brewster 2008; Brewster and Mallinson 2009; Dirks and Rice 2004; Lynn 2012; Walsh 2009), we found no evidence of server racial biases in customers' perceptions of being the recipients of subtle hospitality

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[13] We also explored how subjects' race might interact with each of the covariates in our analysis to predict our other three measures of service discrimination (e.g., server attentiveness, discretional behaviors, and required behaviors) and found no statistically significant interaction effects in these analyses.

enhancing service behaviors that are either conventionally required or discretionarily conveyed to restaurant customers. While contrary to our predictions, these results are consistent with research by Martin and Adams' (1999) on worker-customer interactions in retail settings. The authors systematically observed 309 service encounters in metropolitan shopping malls and coded for many of the subtle interpersonal employee behaviors that were analyzed in the current study (e.g., eye contact, thanked customer, smiled, etc.). The authors also found no evidence of employee behavioral biases against African American customers.

Our finding do, however, lend some credence to existing qualitative research that has documented servers' propensities to avoid or otherwise not give as much attention to Black customers (Dirks and Rice 2004; Harris 2003; Harris et al. 2005; Schmit and Copeland, 2004). Moreover, we found that African Americans expressed lower levels of satisfaction (e.g., sincerity, authenticity, welcoming, etc.) with their servers' performance than did Whites and this was the case even after controlling for customers' perceptions of being the recipients of the objective, albeit subtle, markers of service quality assessed in this study. Thus, while providing service that is objectively speaking perceived to be quite equal, both Black and White servers are perceived to be doing so in comparatively less enthusiastic, welcoming, and sincere ways by African Americans. Consistent with existing scholarship on the dynamics of emotional labor, we interpret the perceived insincerity that is embodied in African Americans' perceptions of their interactions with their waitress/waiter as a manifestation of servers' tendencies to engage in surface acting when waiting on these patrons. In other words, racial biases that have been shaped and sustained in the cognitions of servers by societal structures of racial subjugation and compounded by discourses of racial prejudice (e.g., blacks don't tip) within restaurant workplaces (Brewster 2012) lead servers to feign positive emotions when serving Black patrons.

To the degree that servers' emotional labor strategies are predicated on the race of their customers the Black-White difference in customers' subjective appraisals of their servers' performance that we observed alongside interracial parity in customers' perceptions of objective hospitable server behaviors (e.g., display rules) makes sense. That is, by providing inauthentic service that is nevertheless delivered with a (fake) smile servers are able to conform to their organization's display rules and thereby avoid negative sanctions while simultaneously refraining from exerting the cognitive energy required to induce actual feelings of happiness when waiting on Black patrons who are perceived to be "difficult to wait on" and to not tip well (Brewster and Rusche 2012). However, as these findings suggest, they are not fully successful at preventing their true feelings from being detected by Black customers.[14]

While theoretically grounded, our interpretation of African Americans' relatively lower subjective appraisals of their servers' performance should be directly tested in future studies. In this vein scholarly efforts should work towards illuminating the subtleties in servers' interpersonal interactions that lead some Black patrons to perceive servers as insincere, inauthentic, and unwelcoming. Such efforts should include measures of servers' behaviors that are sensitive to not only the presence/absence of hospitable cues but also to nuanced differences

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[14] It is interesting to note that restaurant servers are likely to experience a sense of agency in an otherwise constraining labor process as a result of their ability to choose the extent of emotional energy they devote during service transactions (Bolton and Boyd 2003; Brewster and Mallinson 2009; Brewster and Wills 2013; Erickson 2004; Gatta 2009). Paradoxically then, racial discrimination in service delivery can be understood, in part, as a latent consequence of the organizational control structures (e.g., company specified interactional scripts) that are intended to ensure equitable service delivery by standardizing service labor processes.

in the way such cues are delivered. To this end researchers might consider unobtrusively collecting and analyzing video/audio data on service encounters involving White and Black restaurant diners. With such data researchers could develop more sensitive measures of subtle verbal/nonverbal server behaviors and test their roles as mediators of the Black-White difference in perceived authenticity of servers' performance.

Such research might find, for instance, that interracial differences in perceptions of server sincerity reflect morphological differences in the smiles conveyed to White and Black customers that we were not able to detect in this study (cf. Frank and Ekman 1993; Otta 1994). In other words, and as existing research has demonstrated, not all smiles are equally authentic nor do all smiles equally convey happiness (Ambadar, Cohn, and Reed 2009; Grandey et al. 2005; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2006). Similarly, the structure of servers' verbal delivery of hospitable cues (e.g., pitch and volume variation) (cf. Mino 1986) or even the posture of their heads (tilted vs. upright) (Otta, Lira, Delevati, Cesar, and Pires 1994) might systemically vary by customers' race in ways not assessed in this study that could produce perceived differences in sincerity/authenticity. Researchers advancing this line of inquiry should also be sensitive to potential interracial differences in the motivations underlying subtle forms of discriminatory behaviors among Black and White servers. It is possible, for instance, that Black servers deliver "service with a fake smile" to African American customers primarily in response to the expectation of receiving a below average tip. The discriminatory service behaviors of their White counterparts, on the other hand, may be driven not only by economic concerns stemming from perceived race-based tipping differences but also by firmly entrenched racial prejudices that they have acquired and internalized via societal structures of white hegemony.

Future studies that directly test our interpretation of these findings against alternative explanations are also needed. It is possible, for instance, that Black-White differences in customers' perceptions of server authenticity/sincerity emerge from African Americans' cumulative experiences with discrimination and racial stereotyping in consumer markets. Higher rates of prior mistreatment coupled with their awareness of racial stereotypes (e.g., blacks don't tip) might, in other words, function to shape African Americans' perceptions of their servers such that they come to perceive insincerity in their interactions with their servers where none exist. Likewise, our findings might more generally reflect lingering effects of the overt and egregious nature of racial discrimination in consumer markets that was normative throughout most of our history. That is, irrespective of customers' prior experiences with mistreatment the history of de jure racial discrimination faced by African Americans as a group might have cultivated a general sense of mistrust in places of public accommodation thus leading them to feel unwelcome even when they are in fact welcome.

While our data do not allow us to adequately assess this possibility we were able to explore its' plausibility by conducting a post-hoc analysis wherein the interaction effects between servers' race and servers' perceived attentiveness/required/discretional interpersonal behaviors on African Americans' subjective appraisals of their servers' performances were assessed. We reasoned that if past discrimination/prejudice has cultivated a sense of skepticism towards service providers then the effects of servers' attentiveness and discretional/required interpersonal behaviors on Black customers' subjective appraisals of service should be stronger when their server is of the same race than when their server is White. In other words, African Americans may be reluctant to believe that friendly and attentive white servers are sincere/authentic due to past discrimination and prejudice, but as a result of their shared

positioning in the historical racial order this should be less likely to be true when they are being

waited on by a Black server. The results presented in Table 3, however, do not support this

alternative interpretation of our results. The effects of African Americans' perceptions of their

servers' attentiveness (Model 1), discretional service behaviors (Model 2), and required service

behaviors (Model 3) on their subjective appraisals of their servers are not predicated on whether

or not their server was Black or White.   Nevertheless, given our data limitations additional

research is needed that more adequately assesses the effects of past racial discrimination on the

sincerity and authenticity that is (or is not) perceived by customers to be embodied in the service

provided by restaurant servers.

[Table 3 about here]

We also note that research on CRP should be expanded to include members of other non-

White groups. In this study we, like most CRP researchers, assessed only African Americans'

experiences with discriminatory treatment[15] but as Harris et al. (2005, p. 163) point out, "CRP

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[15] The restaurant wherein this research was conducted is frequented primarily by White and

Black clientele and thus our attribute set for our customer race variable included only "White,"

"Black" and "Other." As previously stated, given the ambiguity associated with the race of those

who were identified as "Other" we omitted them from the main analysis. We did, however,

estimate the models we present in Table 2 after including a dummy variable for "other" (=1) race

and found statistically reliable White-Other differences in customers' perceptions of server

attentiveness (B= -.484, t(429) = -1.98, p < .05) and their subjective appraisals of servers'

performances (B= -.385, t(429) = -2.84, p < .01). Further, the subjective appraisals of those

customers reporting to identify with an "Other" race remained marginally significantly (B=-.177,

t(426) = -1.82, p = .07) lower than their White counterparts even after controlling for the effects

affects members of minority groups beyond those classified as black/African American, such as Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, and Arab Americans." The relative absence of scholarship assessing the consumption experiences of Hispanics and Asians is particularly problematic given the relative size and rapidity of growth of these groups in the U.S. population (Humes, Jones, and Ramirez 2011). According to the 2010 Census there were over 50 million Hispanics residing in the United States and together they comprised nearly 16% of the total population (Humes, Jones, and Ramirez 2011). While Asians, on the other hand, only made up about 5% of the population in 2010 this was a 43% increase over their representation in the population in 2000 thus making them the fastest growing minority group in the United States (Humes, Jones, and Ramirez 2011). Given these statistics it is perhaps not surprising that Hispanics and Asians had a combined purchasing power of $1.7 trillion in 2010 and this number is projected to continuously increase for the foreseeable future.[16] There is clearly a fissure between existing scholarship on the experiences of Asian and Hispanics in consumption settings and their representation in population.

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of our other measures of service discrimination. These findings not only highlight the need to include members of other non-White groups in future studies on CRP but also lend credence to our interpretation of the Black-White differences that were found in the main analysis. In other words, given servers' biases towards people of color more generally ("Hispanics, Asians, Foreigners, etc. don't tip" cf. McCall and Lynn 2009) it makes sense that members of other non-White groups would be treated by servers in similar ways as are African Americans.

[16] See http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/newswire/2012/young-mobile-and-growing-the-state-of-us-hispanic-consumers.html and http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/newswire/2012/asian-american-consumers-base-has-tremendous-buying-power-still-growing.html

Finally, we highlight a secondary contribution that emerged in this study that should inform future research on the causes of interracial differences in tipping practices that, in part, sustain the servers' negativity towards African American patrons. Extant research has consistently found that African Americans do indeed tip their servers significantly less than their White counterparts (see Lynn 2006a for a review of this literature; for recent evidence see Lynn 2011, 2012) and researchers have posited that this robust Black-White tipping differential can, in part, be attributed to servers' propensities to racially discriminate in their service delivery by differentially allocating the subtle cues of quality service (e.g., smiling, joking, thanking, etc.) that are predictive of greater tips (cf. Brewster 2012; Brewster and Rusche 2012; Rusche and Brewster 2008; Brewster and Mallinson 2009; Dirks and Rice 2004; Lynn 2012). Given that we did not find any reliable Black-White differences in customers' perceptions of such subtle server behaviors that are either optional or required, the explanatory power of this posited source of interracial differences in tipping behaviors is likely to be limited. There are, however, a seemingly infinite number of subtle ways that servers might differentially treat customers based on their race that were not included in the present study that could contribute to the observed Black-White tipping differential. It is possible, for instance, that servers' responsiveness to service failures vary by customers' race. Similarly, servers might anticipate the needs of white customers while making their black customers convey their desires explicitly. In short, future research on this topic should broaden the scope of interpersonal server behaviors that are scrutinized as potential mediators of interracial tipping differences.[17]

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[17] It is of course possible that perceived inattentiveness and insincerity that characterizes African Americans' interactions with their servers might be a partial explanation underlying Blacks' tendency to tip less than Whites. While this question is beyond the scope of this paper, we did

Notwithstanding the contributions and implications for future research detailed above, we would be remiss not to highlight that our study relied on a relatively small sample of consumers who had dined in a single restaurant. The generalizable limits of our findings are thus unknown. It is possible, for instance, that the experiences of the customers in our analytic sample differ in meaningful ways from those customers who frequent other types of establishments (e.g., quick service, fine dining, etc.) in different regions of the country. Further, because the effects are directionally consistent with our expectations, our failure to find statistically significant Black-White differences in customers' perceptions of discretional and required hospitable server behaviors could reflect Type 2 errors. For instance, with a sample of 163 Black and 241 White subjects, a standard deviation of .84 for required server behaviors, and a true mean Black-White difference of .21 (1/4 of a standard deviation), we would have observed a significant effect ($p <$ .05) 69 out of 100 times. Given these realities our results need to be replicated using larger samples of restaurant customers who diverge in meaningful ways from the sample used in this study.

CONCLUSION

Empirical and theoretical elaborations on the subtle nature of contemporary racial discrimination are needed. While most scholars across disciplinary boundaries agree that modern discrimination is most often evidenced in subtle ways there is considerable less known about what modern discrimination actually "looks like" (Nier and Gartner 2012). By

conduct analyses predicting tips as a percentage of the bill and the results did not support this possibility. We found that Black customers tipped their servers significantly less than Whites (B= -1.47, t(393) = -2.37, p < .05) even after controlling for the effects of subjects' perceived attentiveness and subjective appraisals of their servers' performance.

conceptualizing contemporary discrimination in the full-service restaurant industry as the inequitable distribution of nuanced server behaviors that collectively contribute to cultivating or alternatively undermining a hospitable and satisfying dining experience we have taken a small incremental step towards giving discrimination in this specific context a discernible face. Specifically, our findings suggest that CRP in the restaurant context cannot be adequately understood by merely assessing interracial differences in the perceived presence or absence of subtle hospitable server behaviors. Rather, our findings point towards the strategies used by service providers to manage their emotions at work (e.g., surface vs. deep acting) as being a potentially fruitful area of inquiry to advance this line of research.

While there is a large body of literature on various aspects of the emotional labor required of front-line service providers there have been no studies that we are aware of on CRP that have been directly informed by this literature. Research assessing the effects of consumers' race on the way in which service providers manage their emotions during service encounters could be an effective way to make contemporary discrimination visible and thus more easily understood and eradicated. If surface acting is empirically demonstrated to be the dominant strategy employed by service providers when interacting with African Americans and other consumers of color future research will then need to begin working towards identifying the exact mechanisms by which surface acting undermines the dining experiences of non-White restaurant patrons. In the absence of research deploying innovative ways to reveal the subtleties that characterize modern racial discrimination the mistreatment itself will remain elusive and exist only at the level of abstraction thus making it difficult to resolve. We hope that this paper encourages such efforts.

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Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Variables in Analysis (n=404)

Variable	Min. – Max.	Mean	SD
Principle Variables of Interest			
Server Attentiveness Index	3 - 9	7.89	1.30
Discretional Interpersonal Index	1 - 5	2.67	1.14
Required Interpersonal Index	1 - 5	4.14	.844
Subjective Appraisal Index	1 – 5	4.42	.720
Customer Black (yes =1)	0 - 1	.400	.491
Covariates			
Customer Female (yes =1)	0 - 1	.552	.498
Age	19 - 72	43.20	13.19
Educational Attainment	2 - 5	4.00	.914
Income	1 - 4	2.80	1.14
Server Black (yes =1)	0 - 1	.182	.387
Server Female (yes =1)	0 - 1	.440	.497
Patronage Frequency (log transformed)	0 - 5.56	1.47	1.38
Weekend (yes =1)	0 - 1	.314	.465

Table 2 Metric Coefficients from Ordinary Least Squares Regression Analyses Predicting Subjects' Perceptions and Evaluations of Their Servers' Interpersonal Behaviors (n=404)

Variable	Model 1 Attentiveness	Model 2 Discretional Interpersonal	Model 3 Required Interpersonal	Model 4 Subjective Appraisal	Model 5 Subjective Appraisal
Constant	7.72***	2.59***	4.00***	4.40	4.49***
	(.133)	(.115)	(.086)	(.074)	(.053)
Customer Black (=1)	-.263	-.064	-.116	-.235**	-.145**
	(.137)	(.119)	(.089)	(.076)	(.055)
Customer Female (=1)	.260	.064	.101	.120	.039
	(.137)	(.118)	(.088)	(.076	(.055)
Age	.011	-.004	.001	.000	-.002
	(.007)	(.006)	(.005)	(.004)	(.002)
Education	-.101	.052	-.009	-.028	-.010
	(.079)	(.067)	(.050)	(.044)	(.031)
Income	-.046	.012	.005	-.010	-.007
	(.086)	(.068)	(.053)	(.052)	(.033)
Server Black (yes =1)	.325	.215	.230*	.029	-.121
	(.172)	(.150)	(.112)	(.097)	(.070)
Server Female (yes =1)	.105	-.098	.139	.050	-.031
	(.134)	(.116)	(.087)	(.074)	(.054)
Patronage Frequency	.065	.141**	.093**	.045	-.006
	(.048)	(.042)	(.032)	(.027)	(.020)
Weekend (yes =1)	.087	.250*	.078	.059	.013
	(.141)	(.122)	(.091)	(.078)	(.054)
Server Attentiveness					.131***
					(.023)
Discretional Interpersonal					-.012
					(.025)
Required Interpersonal					.479***
					(.037)
Subjective Appraisal					-
R^2	.044	.056	.047	.036	.502

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; Notes: To facilitate interpretability of the intercepts in these models all continuous variables have been centered at their mean values. Standard Errors are in parentheses.

Table 3. Metric Coefficients from Post-Hoc Regression Analysis predicting Server Race Interaction Effects on African Americans' Subjective Appraisals of their Servers' Performance (n=163)

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	4.21***	4.12***	.4.30***
	(.117)	(.132)	(.095)
Customer Female	.169	.235	.134
	(.122)	(.137)	(.099)
			.003
Age	.000	.003	(.004)
	(.005)	(.007)	
Education	.010	-.026	.008
	(.075)	(.082)	(.060)
Income	-.052	-.055	-.011
	(.083)	(.087)	(.064)
Server Black (yes=1)	-.159	-.098	-.122
	(.146)	(.173)	(.119)
Server Female (yes=1)	.052	.093	-.052
	(.114)	(.130)	(.094)
Patronage Frequency	.079	.101*	.041
	(.042)	(.047)	(.035)
Weekend (yes=1)	-.072	-.125	-.084
	(.127)	(.144)	(.103)
Server Attentiveness	.275***		
	(.046)		
Discretional Interpersonal		.164**	
		(.063)	
Required Interpersonal			.642***
			(.058)
Server Black X Attentiveness	.132		
	(.116)		
Server Black X Discretional		.014	
		(.151)	
Server Black X Required			-.084
			(.123)
R^2	.303	.116	.543

*$p < .05$, **, $p < .01$, ***$p < .001$; To facilitate interpretability of the intercepts in these models all continuous variables have been centered at their mean values. Standard Errors are in parentheses.