

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. In-depth and face-to-face interviews were conducted with 13 middle-class African Americans. Vignette technique was used during the interviews. The study identified four salient themes: (1) racial discrimination during travel, (2) fear of racism, (3) storytelling and safety instructions: social reproduction of the fear of racism, and (4) race-related travel choices. The findings showed that informants' travel behavior was linked to an acute fear of racism. They affirmed that African Americans' travel patterns need to be conceived as a defensive mechanism against potential racial discrimination. Implications for research methods and tourism management are discussed.

Keywords

travel behavior, African American, racism, habitus, vignette technique

Introduction

African Americans' travel behavior has not been a major topic of scientific investigation. Although the economic impact of African American tourism is estimated at more than \$48 billion (Mandala Research 2011), only a few studies have examined travel behavior among African Americans. Those studies have focused primarily on differences in travel activities, preferences, and satisfaction between African Americans and whites (Agarwal and Yochum 1999; Mandala Research 2011; Philipp 1994; Williams and Chacko 2008). Studies have documented that compared to white Americans, African Americans tend to travel shorter distances with a group of people, avoid unplanned stops, eat at well-known restaurant chains, and visit destinations specific to African American heritage (Mandala Research 2011; Philipp 1994; Williams and Chacko 2008). Moreover, African Americans have the lowest rate of national park visitation, and they are usually the most underrepresented racial group in America's great outdoors (Floyd 1999; Taylor, Grandjean, and Gramann 2011; Weber and Sultana 2013).

Some researchers attributed African Americans' structured and organized travel patterns to historical racial discrimination (Carter 2008; Foster 1999; Philipp 2000). African Americans were legally enslaved in the United States and they were a subject of treacherous exploitation. Slavery existed throughout the colonial era and up until the end of Civil War in 1865 (Feagin 2006). Although slavery was later outlawed, institutional racism was sustained until 1960s, and numerous African Americans were brutally attacked, raped,

lynched, and murdered (Brundage 1997; Feagin 2014). Under this historical condition, leisure travel was extremely problematic for African Americans because they encountered physical abuse and humiliation and had to use segregated facilities at restaurants, hotels, parks, public transportations, and gas stations (Holland 2002; Rugh 2008). When African Americans traveled long distance, they had to methodically plan and organize their itinerary, travel additional distance to avoid certain locations, pay more money to receive services, and use travel guidebooks specifically designed for African Americans in order to avoid racial mistreatment (Alderman and Inwood 2014; Carter 2008). For centuries, racism ideology has certainly restricted African Americans' mobility and accessibility to many tourism destinations.

Although segregation and institutional racism were officially banned in the 1960s, researchers argued that its brutality lingers in the social memory of the African American community and continues to negatively impact their travel patterns (Cater 2008; Johnson 1998). Indeed,

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many African Americans believe they would not be welcome in many leisure settings (Philipp 1999). 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).

While existing studies have provided insights into the African American travel behavior, a few important issues remain unaddressed. First, existing studies lack a viable theoretical framework. The majority of leisure and tourism studies utilized Washburne's (1978) ethnicity and marginality hypotheses to explain minorities' leisure and travel behavior. However, several researchers acknowledged theoretical weakness and conceptual ambiguity with the hypotheses (Floyd 1998; Philipp 2000). The literature needs solid and systematic theoretical underpinnings. Second, although the prior studies ascribed African American travel patterns to past racial discrimination and its legacy, this assertion remains descriptive and anecdotal because of a lack of empirical evidence. To derive more conclusive results regarding the connection between past racial discrimination and travel patterns of contemporary African Americans, we need more data that demonstrate how the legacy of institutional racism impacts multiple generations of African Americans. Finally, existing studies have paid relatively little attention to the racism that today's African Americans experience in tourism contexts. It is reasonable to expect that many African Americans still experience blatant racial discrimination while they travel and, in turn, it negatively impacts their future travel decisions.

The purpose of this study is to fill these research gaps. This study uses the concept of habitus to investigate African Americans' travel behavior and experience of racism. Habitus is known as group members' shared cultural traits or distinctive dispositions (Bourdieu 1984; Maton 2008; Swartz 1997). It explains human behavior in terms of socio-historical conditions and the way in which individuals react to them. This study also employs vignette technique during the data collection. Vignette refers to "short scenarios or stories in written or pictorial form which participants can comment upon" (Renold 2002, 3). It is a particularly useful data collection technique for investigating sensitive issues such as domestic violence and sexual abuse, as well as cultural norms derived from respondents' attitudes and beliefs about a specific situation (Barter and Renold 1999). By employing habitus and vignette technique, this study pursues theoretical and methodological contributions in the study of African American travel. This study attempts to address three specific research questions: (a) How does institutional racism in the past impact travel behaviors of today's African Americans? (b) Do African Americans experience racial discrimination within tourism contexts? and (c) If yes, how do they deal with discrimination when they travel?

Literature Review

Habitus

The concept of habitus was developed by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu provided somewhat different definitions of habitus in his oeuvre, yet the concept has been commonly accepted as a system of dispositions by which cultural norms or model behaviors are internalized and institutionalized within social groups (Bourdieu 1990; Browitt 2004). 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 meaning (Lovell 2000).

Bourdieu (1977, 1984) used habitus to link reciprocal relationships between agency and structure. Habitus is shaped by individuals' given sociohistorical circumstance, yet it reinforces existing social structure when agents act upon their habitus (Swartz 1997). As such, it tends to reproduce those actions consistent with the condition under which it was produced. Thus, habitus is a mediating concept of agency and structure and encourages a broader analytic perspective that investigates "the experience of social agents and . . . the objective structures which make this experience possible" (Bourdieu 1988, 782).

Habitus is also a slippery concept. For example, while individuals in the same social group share a uniform habitus, some of them can hold different habitus since each individual's social trajectories diverge (Bourdieu 1990). Moreover, habitus is not fixed, but it gradually evolves based on how individuals respond to their surrounding environment. Although some scholars criticized this conceptual fluidity (see Jenkins 1992), it is a strength of habitus that acknowledges the power of agency-individuals' ability to transcend the existing social condition.

Because of these characteristics, habitus is a promising theoretical framework for investigating African Americans' travel patterns. It explains that one's choice of travel destination or activity is not spontaneous or impulsive personal decision, but rather the result of a complex interplay between the tourist and his/her social and historical circumstances. Thus, African Americans' tourism behavior should be comprehended as a manifestation and reinforcement of social environment, upbringing, cultural norms, and social class. Moreover, habitus encourages a historical investigation on the manners in which African Americans' travel behaviors have been socially reproduced across generations and eventually settled as a distinctive disposition.

Nevertheless, habitus has not been widely used in tourism research. To date, tourism researchers have used it to investigate various topics such as incorporating local culture in

tourism development and destination branding (Campelo et al. 2014; Cave, Ryan, and Panakera 2007), the relationship between individuals' daily lifestyle and travel destination activities (Lee, Packer, and Scott 2015), differences in travel preferences and activities among tourists who visited similar destinations (Ahmad 2014), and African Americans' nonvisitation to Rocky Mountain National Park (Erickson, Johnson, and Kivel 2009). To contribute this body of knowledge, the present study employs habitus to investigate how racial discrimination impacts African Americans' travel patterns. Because of its novel approach, this study is expected to demonstrate habitus' theoretical utility in tourism research and deepen our understanding in the historical relationship between racial discrimination and African Americans' travel pattern.

Vignette Technique

This study used vignette technique during data collection. This research method uses photographs, videos, or short scenarios that research participants can comment upon (Renold 2002). The technique takes diverse forms, length, and administration methods, yet participants are typically exposed to vignettes and then asked to respond to follow-up questions (Hughes and Huby 2002). Vignettes are thought to gently introduce potentially sensitive issues and help participants disclose personal experiences without damaging their emotion and dignity (Barter and Renold 1999). Thus, researchers have used vignettes to investigate domestic violence, drug usage, HIV/AIDS, and date rape (Barter and Renold 1999; Bradbury-Jones, Taylor, and Herber 2014). Moreover, the technique can transcend national and cultural boundaries during data collection (Bradbury-Jones, Taylor, and Herber 2014).

However, vignettes need to be developed and administered with caution. Vignettes can be developed based on various resources such as literature reviews, real-life experience (existing data), or imagination. Regardless of their source, vignettes are less effective when respondents find them unrealistic or believe that they do not resemble their life experiences (Hughes and Huby 2004). Moreover, the technique may frame interview conversation too strictly and thus deteriorate the exploratory nature of qualitative studies. Paring open-ended questions with vignettes is considered to be more desirable in exploratory research than using closed or forced-choice questions (Hughes and Huby 2004). Thus, researchers need to balance the flexibility and structure that vignettes impose during data collection, and make them realistic, simple, and brief enough that interviewees can quickly understand and easily related to the stories (Barter and Renold 1999; Bradbury-Jones, Taylor, and Herber 2014).

Although researchers from various disciplines have used vignette technique, it has rarely been employed in tourism research. A few exceptions include Araña and León's (2013) quantitative study and Shooter and Galloway's (2010)

discussions on the technique's utility beyond quantitative research. The present study used vignette technique in qualitative research, exploring its utility for investigating racial discrimination within the context of tourism. Since the technique is effective for examining potentially sensitive topics, we expected that it would facilitate a discussion about racism and produce rich interview data.

Moreover, we used the technique to explore if it can alleviate potential disadvantages from racial mismatch between the researchers and respondents. The authors are not African American, and some scholars have argued that researchers who are outside of their subjects' racial category tend to have only a cursory knowledge of the group and rarely establish a rapport with their subjects; consequently, they hardly collect rich and meaningful data (Hill 2002; McCorkel and Myers 2003; May 2014). The gist of these arguments lies in the assumption that the most effective interview strategy is for researchers to build intimacy and rapport with their subjects (May 2014; Young 2003). While the vignette technique has been recognized as creating a nonjudgmental environment in which interviewees can comfortably talk about sensitive issues, it can be an effective strategy to counteract racial mismatches in qualitative investigation.

Methods

A qualitative research approach was used to gain rich insight into African American travel pattern. This study was guided by Bourdieu's conceptualization of habitus. Researchers advocated habitus as a research method that allows for a detailed analysis of the social structure and dominant ideology that perpetuate social inequality (Bourdieu 1984; Reay 1995). Thus, we focused on how African Americans' socio-historical living condition and experiences of racism shape their distinctive habitus. We tried to understand this complex and dynamic process via African Americans' own voices.

In-depth, semistructured, and face-to-face interviews were conducted with 13 middle-class African Americans living in the south-central region of the United States. We selected this location because of its large middle-class African American communities. Individuals who held a college degree and had an annual income of at least \$45,000 were defined as middle-class. These recruitment criteria were used in order to recruit African Americans who did not have significant financial constraints for traveling. Informants were recruited via purposive snowball sampling. Two government officials within the local community were identified as key informants. They provided a list of other potential interviewees for this study. Interviews were conducted from October 2012 to March 2013 at the respondents' places of employment, local coffee shops, and the authors' offices. The sampling was terminated when data saturation was reached and when new interviewees no longer provided new information (Lincoln and Guba 1985). In qualitative inquiry,

Table 1. Characteristics of Informants.

I-1. Sean; late 50s; male; works for a city government; an enthusiastic angler; afraid of visiting remote places.
I-2. Risty; mid-30s; male; works for a city government; experienced various racial discriminations.
I-3. Jennifer; mid-50s; female; works for a city government; has three daughters and one boy; carefully select travel destinations and tend to avoid Deep South states.
I-4. Stephanie; mid-40s; female; works for a city government; concerned about safety issues during traveling.
I-5. David; early 60s; male; retired; believed he is an unusual African American because he loves outdoor recreation and has visited multiple national and state parks.
I-6. Jeff; early 50s; male; used to work for a city government; does not worry too much about racism when he travels.
I-7. Sam; late 50s; male; used to work for a city government; selective about where he travels because he wants to visit "welcoming places."
I-8. Justin; early 40s; male; a businessman; does not worry about racial discrimination because of his strong belief in racial equality; does not like outdoor recreation because he is afraid of snakes.
I-9. Steven; mid-60s; male; retired; lived in Las Vegas and moved back to the south-central region of the United States 5 years ago; experienced various racial mistreatments; always uses franchise hotels and restaurants when traveling.
I-10. Amanda; early 40s; female; married for 15 years and has three children; does not have many opportunities for traveling due to children.
I-11. Anne; late 20s; female; a school teacher; rarely experienced racial discrimination directly, yet learned about African Americans' vulnerability from her grandfather's storytelling.
I-12. Susan; early 20s; female; graduate student; received various safety instructions from parents; constantly on guard when travels to small rural area.
I-13. Kevin; early 20s; college student; lives in a racially diverse community; enjoys basketball and football; received safety instruction from his parents.

the findings' validity, meaningfulness, and insightfulness as well as researcher's analytical capabilities should outweigh the sample size (Patton 2002). We terminated the data collection after 13 interviews because we believed that they yielded exceptionally rich and profound information about African American 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 sought to identify their respective background and build some degree of rapport (e.g., Could you briefly introduce yourself?). Second, informants' travel behaviors were elicited (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 traveling and, if so, how the experience affected their future travel choices.

The vignette technique was used during the third section of the interview. We constructed three short stories of racial discrimination (Appendix). The first story was created based on our expertise in racial prejudice about African Americans. The second story was based on Washington's (2012) article on the black male code and Trayvon Martin's case. The third story was based on our literature review. A hypothetical individual describes how he/she deals with racism within the context of tourism. We created these three vignettes to gently introduce racism as a main discussion topic and gradually lead interviewees to discuss racism in tourism settings. Based on the recommendations of previous studies, we made these vignettes realistic, short, and simple (Bradbury-Jones, Taylor, and Herber 2014). We used written vignettes because they were considered to be a more efficient and economical approach than video vignettes. Informants were asked to read all three stories; subsequently, several open-ended questions were asked (e.g., What do you think about these stories? and Have you ever experienced similar incidents?).

We also employed a number of tactics to bolster the trustworthiness of the collected data. While we used the vignettes to focus on the impact of racism in African American tourism, we also encouraged different perspectives to preserve the exploratory nature of this study (e.g., Can you think of other factors that influenced your travel patterns or other African Americans?). We also performed member checking upon completion of transcriptions (Lincoln and Guba 1985). From the outset of each interview, we emphasized there were no right or wrong answers to the interview questions and encouraged interviewees to be candid. Furthermore, we honestly answered interviewees' questions. Through these techniques, we were able to quickly establish a rapport with the participants and obtain candid responses (Shenton 2004).

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

Findings

Four salient themes emerged from the data analysis. They were: (1) racial discrimination during travel, (2) fear of racism, (3) storytelling and safety instructions: social reproduction of the fear of racism, and (4) race-related travel choices.

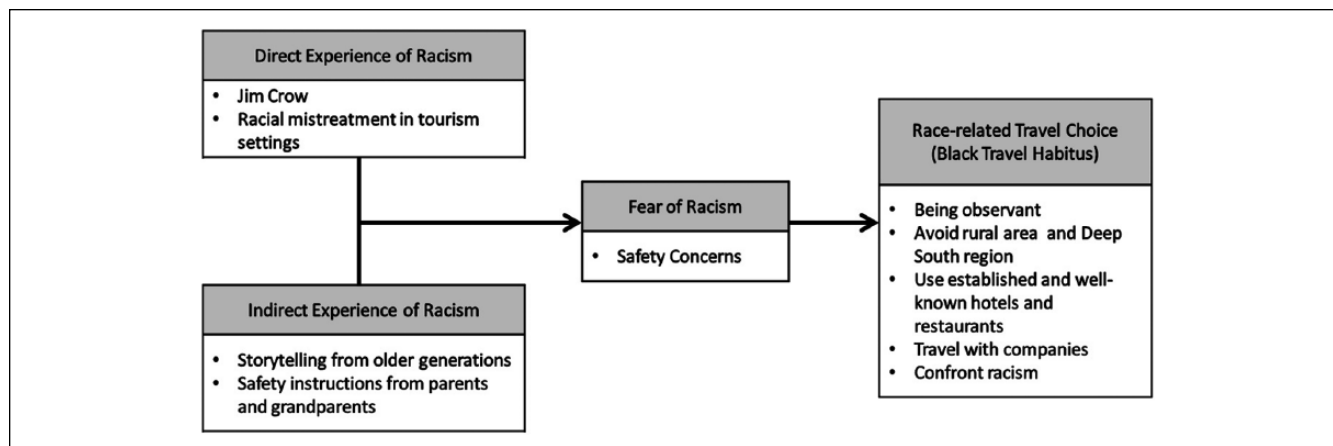


Figure 1. The causal relationship among direct and indirect racism, fear of racism, and black travel habitus.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationships among these themes. We found that many informants directly experienced racial discrimination when they traveled. Their direct experiences of racism have created a strong fear of racism in their minds. Moreover, although some of the younger informants had not experienced racism, they had still experienced it indirectly via storytelling and safety instruction from their older family members. Such indirect experiences of racism also made them realize their vulnerability as African Americans and shaped their fear of racism. Informants suggested that such fear had been historically internalized and socially reproduced, and in turn developed into a unique habitus that manifested in distinctive travel behaviors. Each salient theme is described in greater detail below.

Racial Discrimination during Travel

Many informants offered their experiences of racial discrimination during travel. All but one informant (Jeff) commented that the three vignettes closely resembled their experiences and readily shared their stories. They encountered racial mistreatments from service providers and other white patrons in various tourism settings such as airplanes, restaurants, country clubs, and gas stations. This finding is an important backdrop for understanding informants' travel habitus. For instance, Steven described his business trip with a white female coworker:

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 [were] 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 [in] 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 the back. Another restaurant. So when people come in the restaurant, they don't see me. Quickly they will see other folks. It's [Racism is] alive. Alive and thrive. I see it all the time.

Steven visited two different restaurants with his coworker and demonstrated how routinely African Americans experienced racial discrimination. Importantly, Steven never visited those two restaurants previously, yet he was certain that he would not be seated at a front table. The fact that he was twice proven right indicates the pervasiveness of racism in tourism settings. Anne also shared her experience at a restaurant:

There was a little restaurant next to the hotel . . . then we walked over there, ordered our food, and they made us go to the kitchen to pick up our food. They didn't bring the food to us, the waitress was like, "follow me" and, 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 said, "Why don't you go pick that [food] up and go back to your place?" I just remember thinking, "I'd rather be hungry than pay for this food."

Justin described his experience of racism. When he traveled to the northwest region of the United States 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 [that there were] 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 Philipp's (1999) study, which found that country clubs are commonly viewed as one of the most unwelcoming leisure settings for African Americans. Justin shared another incident of racial prejudice that occurred on 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 to a white guy who was bigger than I was. But she didn't want to sit next to me.

Justin's stories suggest that many African Americans encounter racial prejudice from service providers *and* other customers.

Steven described how racism can sometimes lead to life-threatening situations. While driving to Mount Rushmore with his 13-year-old son, he stopped at a small general store in a rural community to buy snacks. Shortly after he left the store, Steven tipped on a cattle guard and severely cut his leg. He described this experience as follows:

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 [said], "Do you have a doctor here?" and, [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?" [The response was,] "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. . . . Losing 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 [showed] no compassion, you know? Do you think we were waiting on until get dark?

Steven's story poignantly illustrates how racism can seriously jeopardize individuals' lives and safety.

David shared his experience with institutional racism and its negative impact on African Americans' mobility and travel activity. He recalled his travel experience soon after the Civil Rights Act was passed 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 [people] at St. Louis, "Can colored people stay in hotels?" They said, "Yeah." That's the first time I stayed in a 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 a restaurant in my life.

David's story provides a snapshot of the historical conditions surrounding African American tourism. In 2010, 25% of the African American population was 50 years old or older, suggesting that many of them lived with institutional racism (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). This means that a quarter of all African Americans could have experiences similar to those of David.

In sum, the majority of the informants provided numerous accounts of past and present racial discrimination. They stated that their experiences were not unusual for African

Americans, and many other African Americans experience similar mistreatments on a daily basis. This finding provides important background information on the formation of African American travel habitus.

Fear of Racism

While habitus explains how individuals' sociohistorical condition and life experiences shape their perspectives, the informants' past and present experiences of racial discrimination formed a strong fear of racism in their minds. Moreover, informants explained that such fear was common in the African American community. As an avid camper and national park visitor, David described how the fear of racism was deeply embedded in the African American community and why many African Americans were still afraid to visit new places, especially outdoor environments:

The generation before me was, they were very fearful [about institutional racism]. 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. . . . My [African American] 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 that you will find some guys who are like . . . "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 of James Byrd Jr. in Jasper, Texas,¹ as an example of the vulnerability of African Americans. He explained that a fear of racism has been shared by generations of African Americans, curtailing their visit to natural environments and other remote areas. David's opinions were shared by several other informants. Sean described his fear of being in rural settings:

Yes, I am a little uncomfortable being out in, I wouldn't say wooden areas, but non-urban areas, really cautious about that. When I first moved here, 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 concerns were heightened in rural settings. It was clear that Sean was deeply anxious about racial mistreatment, especially when traveling to nonurban areas and east Texas. Similarly, Steven explained his fear of racism and how it shaped his travel decisions:

I won't spend a night at the park by myself. Because you never know who's watching you and you never know if somebody

comes out to you in [the] night time and do stuff. 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.

Thus, informants commented that they and many other African Americans possessed heightened safety concerns when they visited unfamiliar places, rural areas, and wildlands—all due to racism. The finding suggests that African Americans share a fairly consistent viewpoint (*habitus*) with regard to particular types of destinations.

Storytelling and Safety Instructions: Social Reproduction of the Fear of Racism

Our interview data revealed that older informants' fears regarding racism were socially reproduced across the generations, and shared by younger African Americans. Although some of the younger informants had not personally encountered racial discrimination or institutional racism, they indirectly experienced racism via storytelling and safety instructions provided by older family members. The storytelling and safety instruction instilled the fear of racism in young African Americans, putting them on guard. *Habitus* explains that group members' perceptions and behavioral patterns tend to be socially reproduced across the generations. The fear of racism shared by informants illustrates the operation of this process.

After reading the second vignette, informants articulated their experiences with the black code. Steven explained how he taught his son to be circumspect of surrounding environment:

You have to be cognizant in [of] what's going [on] around you all the time. I taught my kids, especially my son, when you walk in an 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* [emphasis added].

Steven stressed that some of his directive were more than ordinary safety instructions that parents might give to their children. Rather, they entailed specific coping strategies for dealing with racial discrimination. Susan described the safety instruction 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 in 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.

Kevin also described how his parents taught him to be cautious when 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 [a] country town, it might be some people, they might have more racism towards black people just because they are from, like country area, . . . it's kinda scary dangerous thing, [that you] need to think about sometimes.

Both Susan and Kevin illustrated that their parents' safety instructions were racially based. It is clear from their descriptions that these safety instructions made them aware of the severity of racism.

Similarly, some informants realized their vulnerability as African Americans by observing older family members. Although Anne never directly experienced racial segregation or blatant racial discrimination, she learned from her grandfather about the lingering effect of institutional racism and the vulnerability of African Americans in the "deep south" states:

My grandfather was the one who always told us the story [of racism.] And I remember . . . we drove back from D.C. to Dallas. I remember one night . . . we were in Mississippi. . . . 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 keeps me [away] from certain places or things like that. . . . But I will say that I do think of incidents like that when I do travel.

Anne's comments vividly illustrate how institutional racism continues to impact the lives of older African Americans. Moreover, this particular incident significantly changed Anne's perceptions about her safety, and made her slightly more cognizant of racial threats. Her grandfather's fear of racism was passed down to her.

In sum, informants illustrated how their fear of racism had been reproduced across generations. Young informants learned about their vulnerability through storytelling and teachings from older generations. This indirect experience of racism significantly influenced their worldview and made them cautious of racial discrimination when traveling.

Race-related Travel Choices

Fear of racism had a considerable negative impact on many informants' travel behaviors and destination selections. Habitus explains that individuals internalize their respective sociohistorical conditions and develop unique patterns of thinking, specific behaviors, and tastes. Consistently, informants expressed that they and other African Americans had developed unique behavioral patterns in order to avoid racial mistreatment. Their travel patterns were surprisingly consistent with the findings of existing studies on African American travel behavior. Steven articulated his travel habits:

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 it [racism] does do for me is, certain area, certain place where I just know, I just know that is not a place I wanna be when [the] 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 fashioned. . . . When we travel, I stay in 4-5 star hotels, I'm not gonna stay in the hinky dinky hotel . . . those [franchise] hotels are gonna be careful about what they do and how they do as opposed 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.

Steven mentioned four specific rules he followed when traveling: (1) always be observant of the surrounding environment, (2) avoid small towns in which few minorities live, (3) use well-established hotels, and (4) comply with the law. Other informants also had similar strategies. Jennifer stated that she carefully selected travel destinations and avoided the "deep south" area unless family or friends live 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 [about] 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.

Similarly, Stephanie stated that she only traveled to familiar places, and preferred to bring someone with her who was 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 is Mount Rushmore 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.

Due to her fear of racism, Stephanie's travel mobility has been significantly constrained. She was hesitant to visit Mount Rushmore without a companion. Her statements indicate that she, and possibly many other African Americans, are less likely than their white counterparts to gain the social and educational benefits of tourism activity (Chen and Petrick 2013; Philipp 2000).

However, some informants were more confrontational about the risk of racial mistreatment, and explicated that they would not allow it to alter their travel behaviors and decisions. For example, Justin stated that he did not employ particular strategies to protect himself from racism. Instead, he faced the risk of racism with his strong belief in human rights and social equality. He stated:

See, my thing is, I don't care. 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.

Justin strongly believed that he had the right to be treated equally wherever he went, and decided to be confrontational about racism rather than submissive. Amanda was another informant who expressed a strong will to overcome racism. When asked how her experiences with racism impacted her travel behavior, she commented:

Not at all, not at all. Because I have that experience 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 keep going. Keep going.

Thus, some informants employed specific coping strategies against racism while other informants aggressively confronted it, refusing to let it subvert their travel behaviors. Informants varied by the extent to which they challenged existing social conditions. This finding was consistent with the theory of habitus, in that members of the same racial group can possess slightly different dispositions.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our findings confirmed the utility of habitus in the investigation of African American travel behaviors. Habitus allows historical examinations on the way in which group members' behavioral characteristics have been shaped and reproduced over time. We found that centuries of racial oppression had a substantially negative impact on African American travel patterns. Although some of the younger informants never directly experienced racial discrimination, the storytelling

and safety instructions from older family members made them realize the danger posed by racism and the overall vulnerability of African Americans. Informants' both direct and indirect experiences of racism shaped their strong fear of racism.

Informants articulated that their fear of racism had been socially reproduced across generations, deeply embedded in the fabric of African American culture, and developed into distinctive travel habitus. They stated that many African Americans, including themselves, tended to avoid unfamiliar places and view remote rural areas and wildlands as "off limit." They carefully planned their trips to avoid such locations, traveled with large groups, used established accommodations, and visited places where family or friends live. These travel patterns echo the findings from existing studies (Floyd 1999; Mandala Research 2011; Philipp 1994; Taylor, Grandjean, and Gramann 2011; Weber and Sultana 2013; Williams and Chacko 2008). Thus, this study revealed African Americans' distinctive travel patterns serve as specific defensive strategies for coping with longstanding racial oppression. Although caution should be taken when attempting to generalize our findings, the clear alignment of the interview data and the findings from earlier studies indicate that informants' descriptions reflect the condition of many African Americans today. Using the concept of habitus, this study was able to excavate the roots of African American travel patterns and the continuing marginalization of African Americans within the tourism context.

Moreover, we found that informants varied in their perceptions and attitudes toward racial discrimination. The fear of racism was especially strong among older informants because of their experiences with institutional racism, and it was intensified considerably when they traveled to certain locations. In contrast, some informants were less concerned about potential racism and therefore more confrontational. These mixed attitudes clearly illustrated the transformative power of personal agency in the formation of habitus. Bourdieu (1977, 1990) contended the social spaces are inherently fields of struggle where individuals constantly challenge existing power inequalities and the social order to establish their distinctive social statuses. Thus, the finding can be comprehended as informants' struggle for hegemony, resistance to existing social inequality, and constant battle with the dominant social order. By taking into account the complex interplay of agency and social structure, habitus allows us to transcend a structural-functionalistic perspective and offers a more nuanced analytical approach to African American travel patterns.

We also found the vignette technique to be an effective data collection method not only for investigating racial issues but also for surmounting racial mismatches between researchers and participants. All but one informant stated that our three vignettes portrayed common racial mistreatments targeting African Americans and they have experienced similar incidents. The vignettes introduced racism as a

central discussion topic without creating an awkward atmosphere. It also alleviated the informants' stress and embarrassment associated with recalling their past experiences of racial discrimination. Moreover, we believe the technique minimized the negative impact of racial mismatch between researchers and informants. Despite some researchers' critiques on the racial mismatch, we did not notice any reservations from the informants discussing racial issues. Instead, after reading the vignettes, informants readily responded to our open-ended questions and shared intimate details of their experience of racial discrimination. Overall, the vignette technique greatly facilitated garnering of insightful and profound information regarding the phenomenon under investigation.

Future studies are encouraged to conduct more investigation into the effectiveness of vignettes in racism research. One interesting research direction might be to compare the effect of written and video vignettes. For example, Sled et al. (2002) found that written and video vignettes generated different responses from participants. It is worth exploring if participants respond differently to the story of racism, depending on the format of the vignette.

This study possesses three limitations. First, although Bourdieu advocated for the utility of both qualitative and quantitative data and comprehensive investigation in social science research (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), this study relied exclusively on qualitative data. Collecting numerical information would enhance the findings' generalizability and provides a bigger picture of African American travel patterns. Second, this study recruited middle-class African Americans with above-average incomes, professional careers, and college education. Although our data provided rich information about African American travelers, adding insights from African Americans of other social classes would be desirable. Similarly, all informants were recruited from the south-central region of the United States. Since southern states are known to be conservative and areas of strong racial prejudice, recruiting informants from northern states or other regions in the United States might yield additional insights and a deeper understanding of the topic.

The findings of this study indicate that African Americans continue to experience discrimination when they travel in the United States. Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed racial discrimination in tourism businesses such as hotels and restaurants, it is clear that racism remains pervasive in American society and many informants reported frequent racial mistreatments from both service providers and other patrons of tourism-related businesses. Such negative experiences substantially limited their mobility and overall tourism activities. While tourism provides various social and health-related benefits, as well as educational opportunities to learn about history and culture (Chen and Petrick 2013; Philipp 2000), African Americans are less likely gain those benefits than other racial groups. This is a pressing issue in social justice and equal rights.

How can we eradicate racial discrimination in tourism and the fear of racism in African American travelers? Clearly, it is a formidable task that cannot be accomplished without collective effort from the tourism industry and beyond. Existing studies suggest that tourism organizations and professionals have a long way to go. Historically, tourism has been a racially segregated industry; the businesses have served their own race or ethnic group and lacked a proper understanding of consumers from different backgrounds (Butler, Carter, and Brunn 2002; Klemm and Kelsey 2004). Moreover, African American employees are considerably underrepresented in tourism-related businesses, especially in upper management positions (Shinew and Hibbler 2002). Although African Americans prefer tourism destinations that acknowledge African American history and culture, their heritage is often misrepresented or omitted from tourism destinations (Lockhart 2006; Small 2013; Taylor 2000). Similarly, African Americans' opinions have been neglected in the decision making surrounding tourism development plans (Gallardo and Stein 2007). Given this history of neglect and marginalization, it is questionable whether the industry is truly ready to address this issue or capable of serving this historically disfranchised population group (Scott 2000).

To dispel racial inequality within the tourism sector, researchers, professionals, and policy makers need a greater effort to fully integrate African Americans into the field and accommodate African American travelers by providing safe and comfortable tourism experiences. Given the paucity of research examining African American tourism, the general public and travel industry will benefit from further research in this area. As Bourdieu encouraged, researchers can conduct additional investigation and enhance social awareness about African Americans' travel behaviors. Moreover, tourism businesses and associations should work harder to develop their knowledge of African American customers and cultivate cultural competency in their workforce. Market research targeting minority tourists, mandatory diversity trainings for employees, and community-based marketing and promotion designed to build trust with minority patrons are all strongly recommended. Continuous efforts in these areas are indispensable for changing African Americans' travel habitus and addressing the social inequality that has been perpetuated in the United States.

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 the 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 ethnical business 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 a safe place to visit.

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Note

1. James Byrd Jr., a 49-year old African American male was murdered by three white supremacists in Jasper, Texas, in 1998. He was lynched, his ankles chained to a pickup truck, and dragged for three miles through a remote wooded area. Later, the three men dumped Byrd's torso in front of an African American cemetery. This murder case drew national attention due to its brutality.

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