RACE AND TOURISM CHOICE
A Legacy of Discrimination?

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Abstract: This investigation explored racial differences in reported tourism preferences. Respondents were tested using statements related to four basic travel preference dichotomies: dependence vs. autonomy, activity vs. relaxation, order vs. disorder, and familiarity vs. novelty. Data from 213 randomly selected black (n = 96) and white (n = 117) respondents in a Southeastern US metropolitan area provide evidence that some preferences can be significantly associated with race. In addition to the usual theoretical explanations for differences in black/white leisure behavior, marginality, and ethnicity, it appears an understanding of racial prejudice and discrimination may help explain some differences in travel preferences. Keywords: Race, black, United States, leisure, preferences, prejudice, discrimination.

Résumé: Race et choix du tourisme: un legs de discrimination? La présente enquête a investigué les différences raciales dans les préférences qu'on a pour le tourisme. Les sondés ont été interrogés par moyen de déclarations au sujet de quatre dichotomies fondamentales dans les préférences de voyages, opposant la dépendance à l'autonomie, l'activité au repos, l'ordre au désordre, et la familiarité à la nouveauté. Des données de 213 sondés qui ont été choisis au hasard, dont 96 Noirs et 117 Blancs, dans une agglomération urbaine du sud-est des États-Unis, attestent que quelques préférences peuvent être associées, de façon significative, à la race. En plus des explications théoriques habituelles pour les différences entre les loisirs, la marginalité et l'ethicité des Noir et des Blancs, il paraît qu'une compréhension des préjugés raciaux et de la discrimination puisse aider à expliquer quelques différences dans les préférences de voyages. Mots-clés: race, Noir, Etats-Unis, loisir, préférences, préjugés, discrimination.

INTRODUCTION

Nearly 30 million blacks (about 12% of the US population) were counted in the 1990 United States Census of Population (US Census Bureau 1990). More than one-third (11.5 million) of all blacks now work in occupations classified as managerial, professional, and technical (Erdman and Ratan 1992). Additionally, the 1990 census showed well over one million "affluent" black households with incomes greater than $50,000 per year (US Census Bureau, 1990).

A review of the literature will quickly suggest that the tourism attitudes, preferences or choices, and behavior of this large group of Americans has been given very little attention or apparent interest. Indeed, few empirical findings in the literature even mention the respondent's race as an important variable of study. Income, age, and gender variables, however, are almost always mentioned in the litera-
ture. Raaij and Francken (1984), for example, in summarizing vacation decisions, activities, and satisfactions, fail to mention "race" in a comprehensive list of sociodemographic factors. Goodrich (1985) asserts that no large-scale study of black US tourist behavior has ever been published. This situation is not unique to tourism research, but appears to be associated with leisure research in general. Dwyer and Hutchison (1990) stated, "a review of the recreation literature suggests that little is known about the recreation preferences and patterns of the urban black participation" (1990:49). Unfortunately, this situation extends to include most social science research, as Smith, a noted survey analyst states:

The attitudes white Americans hold toward their black counterparts probably comprise the longest running topic in public opinion research. Yet, despite this prominence of race relations topics in scientific sample surveys, until recently black Americans—long the minority group most identified with "racial matters" in the United States—were virtually invisible to serious students of American values (1987:441).

Nearly all comprehensive social investigations of racial prejudice and discrimination discuss the topics of education, housing, and employment; few, if any, even mention the effects of racial discrimination on tourism attitudes and behavior (Bobo 1987). Clarke and Critcher (1985) suggest that holiday behavior is not a leisure activity that renders all participants equal, but is instead associated with all the systematic social inequalities of contemporary society. Interestingly, when Hardy reflects on some of these apparent class differences in tourism behavior, he argues that travel preferences and activities that were once created by "class" discrimination factors have now become associated with the unique "values" of the "underprivileged" group; that is, designed by the users themselves to meet their own particular needs and requirements." He further argues that while "patterns of activity will be socially differentiated, it cannot be assumed that such activity is necessarily inferior" (Hardy 1990:543–544). If one follows this line of theoretical maneuvering, blacks (also part of a well-defined "underclass") may also have developed tourism attitudes and behavior, observed over decades, which seem to reflect a unique set of values or cultural "identity." It seems ill-advised, however, to portray black tourism behavior, which might be a reaction to discrimination, as part of a positive cultural identity. One wonders if behavior influenced by discrimination in education, housing, or employment should likewise be considered to have become a "unique" cultural value among blacks, and then strengthened, perhaps even "celebrated." It seems apparent that discrimination against blacks which might result in unique tourism behavior is no more to be encouraged than either living in "ghettos" or choosing athletics as the only way to gain educational advancement.

Blacks, as a racial group, have long been associated with prejudice and discrimination in the United States (Jaynes and Williams 1989). It seems reasonable to expect that this discrimination would have resulted in black tourism attitudes, expectations, preferences, and behavior
which are different from whites' in many important ways. Prejudice and discrimination, however, are extremely complex issues.

There are many conflicting findings in the earlier empirical research on black/white differences in leisure participation. Cheek, Field and Burdge (1976), for example, find few significant differences between blacks and whites when they are matched on social aggregate variables such as household income or residential area. Washburne (1978), on the other hand, notes significant differences between blacks and whites on “wildland” recreation participation patterns. Some argue that “rurality” differences between blacks and whites may explain leisure participation patterns (Craig 1972; Philipp 1986). Stamps and Stamps (1985) suggest that both social class and race have limited explanatory power as predictors of participation. Woodard (1988), however, maintains that understanding the interaction between social class and regionality provide important insight into participation patterns. Philipp (1988) argues that an analysis of institutional structure and function, and the effects institutions have on blacks and whites, offer an important understanding of measured differences. West (1989) suggests that interracial relations factors play a role in explaining the underrepresentation by minorities in many leisure areas. Empirical findings are offered in the literature that support all of the above theoretical positions (Hutchison 1988; Stamps and Stamps 1985).

A review of the literature suggests that prior research has primarily focused on two theoretical explanations for any reported differences in black/white leisure participation: marginality and ethnicity. Marginality theory centers primarily on differences in income/class between blacks and whites (i.e., blacks are different than whites because of their “marginal” economic position in society). While ethnicity theory refers to the “cultural” characteristics of blacks (i.e., blacks have a distinctive and identifiable subculture apart from whites). These two theoretical explanations have dominated the discussion on black/white differences in leisure behavior for decades, almost completely ignoring the important problems of prejudice and discrimination (Philipp 1993; West 1989). While prejudice is recognized as an important variable in any discussion of education, employment, or housing (see Jaynes and Williams 1989), it is usually “over-looked” in discussions of leisure behavior. Clearly, discrimination has affected current US patterns of marginality, yet that same discrimination and prejudice may also affect the cultural “values” of an oppressed group—as a protective reaction to the dominant culture (Kochman 1981). The purpose of the paper is two-fold: to determine if blacks are significantly different from whites in selected tourism preferences or choices, and to explore some possible explanations for any observed differences.

STUDY METHOD

Subjects and Design

A stratified random sample of 400 households was drawn from a middle-sized (1990 population approximately 250,000) Southeastern metropolitan area (32% black, 66% white, 2% other). 1990 Census
data was used to determine the number of black households in each census track for this area. Census tracks with a predominately black population (greater than 50%) were randomly "over-sampled" (a greater percentage of respondents were randomly drawn from these predominately black tracts than other tracts in the population area) to approximate an even number of blacks and whites available for the overall sample.

An adult member of each household, 18 years and older, was asked to participate in the study. A follow-up visit was made by the interviewer if the initial interview time was inconvenient or other reasons prevented the respondent from completing the interview. The survey was conducted from late April to early June 1991 between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Six student interviewers completed many hours of individualized and group training prior to data collection to help control for interviewer bias. This stratified random sample of 400 households yielded 213 completed interviews (45% black, 55% white); an overall response rate of 53%.

Instruments

McIntosh and Goeldner (1990) present four basic tourism preference dichotomies to help explain travel behavior: dependence versus autonomy; activity versus relaxation; order versus disorder; and familiarity versus novelty. This "model" of basic preferences was selected for testing in the present investigation because it effectively integrated many of the "motives" that have been theoretically and empirically associated with the explanation of tourism behavior.

Cohen (1972) is one of the first to suggest that all tourist roles can be based on a typology of several distinct novelty seeking experience levels. The importance of "novelty" to the tourism experience has now been well-discussed and documented (Bello and Etzel 1985). Crompton (1979) finds that "relaxation" is another of the dominant motives involved in travel decisions. Group social interaction, which is closely associated with dependence on others to provide satisfaction in the experience, has also been shown to be an important component of the tourism experience (Crompton 1979; Snoepenger 1987). McIntosh and Goeldner (1990) argue that "order" in most Western societies is becoming less important, and a desire for informality (disorder) in the tourism experience is becoming more important (e.g., meals at non-fixed times, unplanned stops). All the basic motivations mentioned earlier can be included in the McIntosh and Goeldner (1990) model.

Two short statements were constructed for each of the above eight travel preference areas, yielding a total of 16 statements (e.g., Dependence: "When I travel I like to be part of a large group"). The statements were then randomly selected for placement order on the survey.

After a brief standardized introduction by the interviewer, each respondent was given a one-page survey answer form. It contained 16 numbered lines, using a 6-point scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree. Interviewers then told respondents they were going to read several statements "about what people like to do while
Respondents were told to "think about how well each statement matched the way they like to travel, then indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each statement by circling the appropriate number on the answer form which was given to them." After being read the entire list of preference statements by the interviewer, respondents were then asked to provide selected socioeconomic information about themselves (age, race, and education) or household (income, household size, number of trips taken during the last year). Interviewers recorded the respondent's sex.

**Data Analysis**

Frequency cross-tabulations by race were performed on all the study variables. Differences in the cross-tabulations were statistically evaluated using chi-squared test criterion (2 × 6 tables were constructed by tabulating and matching black/white responses on a 6-point scale for each item). Only 2 statement items (each with 3 cells) had more than 20% (2.4 cells) of the observed cells with fewer than five responses (Cochran, 1954).

**STUDY FINDINGS**

Survey results (Table 1) show that there is no significant difference ($p < .05$) between blacks and whites for the following socioeconomic variables: sex, age, income, and trips taken last year. There are significant differences ($p < .05$) however, for the socioeconomic variables of education and household size.

Table 2 shows that there is a significant difference ($p < .05$) between black and white ratings of tourism preference statements in five of the eight categories tested: dependence, activity, disorder, familiarity, and novelty. When education and household size are controlled in each of these categories, all of the significant differences ($p < .05$) continue to exist between the racial groups; suggesting that education and household size are not responsible for the reported significant differences. Three categories (autonomy, relaxation, and order) show no significant differences between the racial groups. In the "dependence" category, blacks are significantly more likely to agree with the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Chi-Squared Value</th>
<th>Probability Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.853</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>.549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24.06</td>
<td>.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.40</td>
<td>.167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household size</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21.46</td>
<td>.006*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trips last year</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.92</td>
<td>.244</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*$p < .05$. 
Table 2. Racial Differences in Travel Preference Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Travel Preference</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>SGD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SWD</th>
<th>SWA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SGA&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>χ²</th>
<th>Level of Sig.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependence:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>When I travel I like to be part of a large group.</td>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I travel I like to do what others' have suggested is best.</td>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17.23</td>
<td>0.00&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy:</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I travel I like to make my own plans about everything.</td>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I travel I like to set my own pace and direction.</td>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>0.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>When I travel I like fast-paced activities.</td>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I travel I like to have every minute occupied with activities.</td>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>0.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relaxation:</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I travel I like frequent rest periods.</td>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I travel I like to just sit back and relax in one place.</td>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Order:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>When I travel I like to have confirmed reservations.</td>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I travel I like maps well-marked with my route.</td>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorder:</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I travel I like to make many unplanned stops.</td>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I travel I like to frequently change plans along the way.</td>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13.09</td>
<td>0.02&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity:</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I travel I like to eat at well-known restaurant chains.</td>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I travel I like to stay at the same places I've been before.</td>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36.83</td>
<td>0.00&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 2. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Travel Preference</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
<th>Level of Secure</th>
<th>Level of Secure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SGD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SWD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novelty:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I travel I like</td>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be on streets I don’t know.</td>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I travel I like</td>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to stay at motels and</td>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hotels which I have never heard</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>about.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*aAll the significant associations (\( p < 0.05 \)) presented in this table continued to be demonstrated (\( p < 0.05 \)) when black/white respondents were later controlled (i.e., “matched”) for education and household size with \( \chi^2 \) test procedures.

SGD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, SWD = Somewhat Disagree, SWA = Somewhat Agree, A = Agree, SGA = Strongly Agree.

\( p < 0.05 \).

The two prevailing theoretical explanations for black/white differences in leisure behavior, marginality and ethnicity, provide limited help for interpretation of the present findings. One, blacks and whites continue to show differences on several important socioeconomic measures (education and household size), but these measures failed to account for reported differences in the present investigation. Two, there may be some possible “subcultural” differences between the racial groups (i.e., blacks show significantly more agreement with wanting to be part of a large group while traveling than do whites in the present investigation; possibly part of black subcultural values). However, other theories that are based on the concepts of prejudice and discrimination may also offer considerable help in explaining the present findings. If the “outside world” has been associated with “hostility” and “pain,” then it is not unreasonable to believe a group of individuals who have personally felt this hostility would travel in larger, more secure groups to known areas, patronize hotels and restaurants with familiar names, avoid streets they do not know, make few unplanned stops, and keep moving from one activity to another to avoid being in
one place too long. Blacks show a significant agreement with these tourism "preferences" in the present investigation. Whites, on the other hand, possibly feeling less threatened by the "outside world," show a significant agreement with desiring smaller groups in search of lesser-known areas, eating and sleeping at places that are unknown, traveling on streets they do not know, seeking a smaller number of activities to do on the trip, and making many unplanned stops along the way. While these preference differences may be explained as socioeconomic (i.e., blacks will eventually show no difference from whites in tourism preferences when economic/class differences are adequately equalized) or subcultural in nature (i.e., blacks have different cultural values than whites), they may also reveal the effects of prejudice and discrimination on black tourism behavior. The present findings should only be viewed as preliminary or suggestive in nature; it is the task of future large-scale research projects to comprehensively address many of the complex issues revolving around prejudice/discrimination at US tourism destinations.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper shows that blacks and whites have several significant tourism preference differences. The effects of prejudice and discrimination over decades, or numerous other historical/social factors, may account for some of these apparent differences. Since tourism preferences are likely learned behavior (associated with family/peer group values in some manner) and may persist for decades, it becomes essential to understand how these preferences are created and maintained from one generation to another (Pearce 1982).

Travel may be conceptualized as an important part of one's "education." Yet, it seems few are interested in understanding how blacks approach and understand their participation in varied tourism environments and experiences. Such preferences may have the effect of producing an "unequal" education for many black Americans. Few would equate the educational decision to stay in high school or drop out with a tourism decision to explore an unknown street or stay on a known street. These quite different decisions, nonetheless, may result in many similar outcomes during one's life (i.e., knowledge of a larger world, and "networking" with important others), at both a professional and personal level. Tourism preferences, as Gradburn (1983) argues, may be associated with education and class, and lead many persons to associate some preferences with "under-class" status. Black tourism preferences, rather than being associated with vaguely defined black subcultural desires, may also reflect the effects of prejudice and discrimination. If linked to future behavior, they may hinder black educational development and social advancement.

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